

# NEWS

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## *The Light Within*

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#### Commitment Statement

We recommit ourselves  
to “rebuilding the Church”  
by living the passion of the Gospel  
in the discerning spirit  
of our Franciscan charism and tradition.

We are willing to take the necessary risks  
to be a healing, compassionate presence  
in our violent world especially with women,  
children, and those who have no voice.

We desire to reflect this commitment  
in our dialogue with the entire Church,  
in our own governing structures, and  
in our relationship with one another as sister.

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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel  
mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia  
by sharing the good news of the congregation with  
our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through  
this publication, we hope to share the charism of our  
congregation and invite others to become involved in  
our mission.

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## POINT OF VIEW

### *Experiencing the light of compassion in dark times...*

**T**he faces of our sisters and brothers who are teetering on the brink of poverty, who are struggling to heal from domestic violence, addictions, trauma, depression, or physical illness are marked with the same lines of pain and anxiety regardless of the country in which they live. How transforming it is when these same faces ease their lines of worry when they experience the compassion of others who are willing to listen to their story and respond to their need at a very fragile time in their lives. Compassion is truly like a beam of light breaking through the darkness when a person is touched by someone being consciously aware of the distress and desiring to help to ease the burden that is uniquely their own.

In this issue of *Good News* we travel from Nashua, New Hampshire, to Dublin, Ireland, focusing in both places on the transformative light of compassion beaming from the Corpus Christi Food Pantry and Assistance Program and the Beacon of Light Counseling Center.

In Nashua, New Hampshire, we meet the dedicated staff of the Corpus Christi Food Pantry and Assistance Program, particularly Sister Joan Koliss, the program’s director. This nonprofit organization pools the resources of nine Catholic parishes and serves nearly 20,000 people yearly, the majority of them with food and sundries from the pantry. Sister Joan spends most of her time assisting about 1,000 clients a year in untangling their web of troubles to avoid impending disaster. Through her encouragement and facilitation, other social service agencies in Nashua have collaboratively networked with Corpus Christi to provide a more user-friendly approach to receiving assistance. Tracy Acevedo shares her experience of being treated with dignity and compassion when she received help with her finances after being served with an eviction notice that would have made Tracy and her three children homeless. Her worried face was transformed by the compassion of Corpus Christi’s helping hands!

The Beacon of Light Counseling Center is situated in Clondalkin, a suburb of Dublin, Ireland. Over the last thirty years this area has experienced significant poverty and despair. Despite the current upswing in the Irish economy, the residents of Clondalkin are facing the ravages of unemployment, drugs, racial tensions, and crime. Recognizing the great need for residents to have a place in their own neighborhood where they could access resources to help them deal with their mental health issues, Sisters Patricia Kidd and Carmel Earls, along with colleague Maureen O’Mahony, joined forces to make a dream become a reality. While counseling clients through St. Peter Parish services, they developed a plan to approach the South Dublin County Council, requesting that they remodel a nearby abandoned house for use as a counseling center. Within a year the Beacon of Light opened its doors.

Today the Beacon of Light staff touches the lives of thousands of Clondalkin residents, providing them with compassionate presence and listening ears. For many clients it is the first time that they have had an opportunity to process their pain with qualified professionals to assist them. Read about the wonderful staff of Beacon of Light and the hope that they offer their clients for healthier, more peace-filled lives.

As we ponder the faces of our neighbors or consider the needs of our own family members, friends, parish community, or workplace, let us challenge ourselves to be compassionate to those who are struggling to avoid disaster in their lives, who are aching for healing from the ravages of physical or emotional illness, abuse, or addiction. Might we challenge ourselves to be beams of compassionate light breaking into the darkness of another’s need?

May your summer be rich in blessings for you and your family!

Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin, OSF  
Congregational Minister

**On the cover:** Sister Patricia Kidd, cofounder and counselor at the Beacon of Light Counselling Centre near Dublin, Ireland, consults with Maureen O’Mahony, cofounder and the coordinator of the Beacon of Light. “Early intervention is crucial,” says Maureen. “Every childhood lasts a lifetime.”



Sister Patricia Kidd listens to a client during a counseling session at Beacon of Light in Clondalkin, a suburb of Dublin, Ireland. Sister Patricia founded the Beacon of Light Counselling Centre along with Sister Carmel Earls and Maureen O'Mahony.



# The Light Within

“WE LEARNED THAT WE HAVE TO BE INVOLVED TO BE HEARD,” SAID SISTER CARMEL. “IT’S OUR JOB TO BE A VOICE FOR THE MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN WHO LIVE HERE.”

## A Counseling Center in Ireland Helps Residents Through Dark Times



▲ Angela Keane, Chairperson of the Board of Management of the Beacon of Light, shares a light moment with Sister Patricia Kidd, a counselor at the center and its cofounder. Sister Patricia joined the Sisters of St. Francis in 1957; worked as a teacher in California, Wyoming, and Alaska; and did advanced studies in Rome and Los Angeles before returning home to Ireland.

When the Beacon of Light Counselling Centre opened its doors in 2002 in a refurbished house in the Dublin suburb of Clondalkin, even the president of Ireland, Mary McAleese, came to join the celebration. Clondalkin has seen its share of troubles over the last thirty years and drugs, crime, and despair—a legacy of decades of entrenched poverty—still plague its residents. The center’s opening marked the advent of a significant new resource for people trying to overcome such a prolonged period of disregard.

The Beacon of Light offers individual and family counseling services and workshops to more than eighty people every week. “I find it a great support,” said Susan McHugh. She grew up in Clondalkin and raised her daughter, now twenty, in the neighborhood.

After working in low-wage jobs for years, Susan recently returned to school. “People in this area are dealing with addictions, stress, and relationship problems. Coming to the center is the first time most people have ever experienced anyone who listened to them one hundred percent,” Susan explained. “It’s a warm, friendly place, not some big intimidating building you have to travel to. It’s local, right in the neighborhood. I think people value that.”

### A Neighborhood In Transition

Clondalkin was a village of 17th-century stone buildings and pastoral fields until the mid-1970s when the government began to build thousands of units of public housing (called county council estates) and new families like Susan McHugh’s began to move

into the area. “I didn’t like it at first,” Susan said. “It was like we had moved to the country, just fields everywhere. There were no buses, no schools, and no shops.”

Gradually residents began to campaign for better services and infrastructure, employing one of their greatest strengths: their connections to one another. “It wasn’t until people got together and began to organize that they built the community centers for youth programs and community meetings,” said Aileen O’Donoghue, manager of Clondalkin Partnership, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve life for people living in Clondalkin. The partnership jointly sponsors a family therapy program with Beacon of Light. Aileen also chairs the Clondalkin Drug Task Force, a major funder of the center.

*continued on page 4*



Sister Carmel Earls, a cofounder of Beacon of Light, is deeply involved in the lives of the residents of the surrounding neighborhood. “It’s our job to be a voice for the people,” she said. “Men, women, and children.”





*Carmel Mugan is a receptionist for Beacon of Light, helping to connect hundreds of men, women, and children to the services they need. Carmel and two other receptionists participate in a government initiative that helps men and women gain new skills and opportunities. “They are essential to organizations like Beacon of Light,” says Sister Patricia Kidd. “We could not do without them.”*

# “AS COUNSELORS WE HAVE THE JOY OF WITNESSING THE TRANSFORMATION THAT CAN HAPPEN IN AN INDIVIDUAL. IT IS LIKE WATCHING A FLOWER COMING INTO FULL BLOOM.”

*continued from page 3*

Today, while life has improved, there are pockets of Clondalkin where life continues to be very difficult, with an unemployment rate of 23.2% (compared with 9.3% nationally). Families from places as far-flung as Africa, Eastern Europe, and China have immigrated to Ireland in the last fifteen years and many have settled in Clondalkin where housing is affordable. Their arrival has stirred tensions among some native residents as schools and social agencies must try to stretch limited euros to accommodate everyone. College remains out of reach for most families.

What happened to Susan McHugh, now forty, may be emblematic of others. Susan dropped out of school when she was fifteen years old to take a job working in a hostel as house-keeper. “I didn’t have a high opinion of myself,” she said. “The likes of me didn’t go for things like education and college.”

## The Beginnings of Beacon of Light

Sister Patricia Kidd, OSF, grew up in Dublin and joined the Sisters of St. Francis in 1957. After living and working in the United States for thirty-four years and completing a master’s degree in family therapy, she returned home to Ireland in 1991. She soon found herself “in a little room in the back of a church” offering counseling to men and women in Clondalkin. “We were just getting so many people who needed help,” Sister Patricia said. Sister Carmel Earls, OSF, also counseled residents who came to St. Peter the Apostle Church, “seeing them even in the chapel if we had to.” Maureen O’Mahony, a special education teacher who had gone back to school to train as a counselor, became the third therapist to offer services in the cramped quarters. Something had to give.

The three women had their eye on a house that had stood empty for nearly fifteen years. While counseling continued for the people who found their way to St. Peter’s, Sister Carmel and Sister Patricia began to



*Board member Sister Carmel Earls is often out and about in Neilstown, near the Beacon of Light, talking with people. “The poor areas are still poor,” she said. “We have to be involved at all times to be heard.”*

organize support in the community for a new counseling center. They approached the South Dublin County Council with an idea. Could the council, perhaps, remodel the abandoned house for that use?

“We learned that we have to be involved to be heard,” said Sister Carmel. “It’s our job to be a voice for the men, women, and children who live here.”

County council members listened. They knew that the counselors at St. Peter’s were providing a valuable service and had growing community support. “They were very gracious after I explained to them what we needed,” Sister Carmel said.

For years, various local and national initiatives and job programs had sought to make a difference there but therapeutic support for Clondalkin residents remained rare. A sympathetic councilperson steered the Franciscan sisters to the right officials and helped them over bureaucratic hurdles. Before long, the council had agreed to restore the house.

Nine months later Beacon of Light opened its doors.

The refurbished house proved to be a big improvement over the old quarters at St.

Peter’s and residents quickly found their way there. “People find it helpful and they tell their family members and friends,” said Susan McHugh.

## The Mission

While Sister Carmel was busy securing the help of the County Council, Sister Patricia worked behind the scenes to establish the center as a nonprofit charitable company and lay the foundation for its operations: the personnel and filing systems, job descriptions, and professional standards.

“Her presence has been vital to setting the ethos of Beacon of Light—its respect for clients and staff—while at the same time keeping standards very high. That’s a difficult balance to keep,” said Maureen O’Mahony, now coordinator of the Beacon of Light. “Sister Patricia did all of the hard work that has made it a professional organization.” Maureen took over the leadership in 2006 and continues to work with the small paid staff and twenty volunteer counselors.

The strong foundation allows the center’s counseling staff to devote its attention to the needs of clients. “People have a lot of issues and need space to process them,” Sister Patricia said. “Depression, addiction, suicide, domestic violence, grief—people need time and a place to work through these things.” Beacon of Light’s mission is to address the damage that years of deprivation have left on the psyche of the local community. Residents often express a sense of hopelessness, and low self esteem seems to pervade many in the neighborhood. To counter the despair, Beacon of Light acknowledges the light within every individual and the name itself reflects this principle. “We see the light in every person,” said Sister Patricia. “The more whole each individual becomes, the more the family can become whole and this wholeness increases the well-being of the nation.”



*The president of Ireland, Mary McAleese, attended the opening celebration of the Beacon of Light Counselling Centre near Dublin. She helps to plant a tree in the courtyard while Sister Carmel Earls (far left) and Sister Patricia Kidd (far right) look on.*



*Staff and board members meet for a conversation about Beacon of Light: (left to right) Maureen O’Mahony, a counselor and the coordinator of Beacon of Light; Sister Patricia Kidd; Michael O’Donougue, a counselor; Chair of Board of Management, Angela Keane; and Kay Healy, a counselor. A new program called Family First allows two-person teams of counselors to work with everyone in a family to address issues together.*



*Counselor Kaye Healy shows off the puppets in the children's room at Beacon of Light. The staff have made it a warm and inviting place for children and their families.*

No one is turned away for lack of funds. “Services are provided on a sliding scale to ensure availability to people who might not have the money to access counseling to help them sort out the situations in their lives,” said Angela Keane, chair of the center’s board of management and a former member of the Sisters of St. Francis. “I really do believe that people in the area are trying to develop themselves—against great odds. You can feel people trying to get themselves going. There’s no pretension, just people trying to look at their lives honestly and openly.”

### Encouragement And Support

Susan McHugh went to work full-time in a warehouse after her daughter was grown. “I had raised my daughter and I was proud of that but, I’d lost myself along the way. I got angry with myself and with life,” she explained. “There was nothing for me. I was forty years old and working for minimum wage. I felt degraded.”

Susan made the decision to go back to school. “I was scared, really frightened, but I felt I had to push myself,” she said. She found herself drawn to psychology and is now working on her degree. As a part of her course work, she attends counseling sessions with Sister Patricia at Beacon of Light. “I

find these sessions a great support with all my fears, hopes, and ambitions around my courses,” Susan said. “Sister Patricia encourages me. She knows where I’m coming from.” Although Susan finds it very difficult academically and financially, she keeps moving toward her goal. “I love the course and really want to do this. That is what keeps me going,” she said.

### The Future

The Beacon of Light touches the lives of more than twelve hundred individuals and families each year, helping them to heal and to grow. But its success has also brought a new challenge. “We’re bursting at the seams again,” Sister Patricia said. “We need larger premises.” The staff and board are now hoping to relocate the center to a new mixed-income housing development slated for construction in the next two years. In recognition of the value of the center, the South Dublin County Council has offered a piece of land and is willing to work on the blueprints for a new building at no cost. Beacon of Light must raise about a million and a half euro (roughly \$2 million U.S.) for construction.

Sister Carmel, now a Beacon of Light board member, is working with other board

members, the core counseling staff, and the South Dublin County Council to help shape the design of the new Beacon of Light Counselling Centre. “The more people you have involved, the more you can do,” she said. The center continues to act as a voice for residents when necessary but it also enables people to find their own voice and to claim their own sense of power and well-being.

“Those who come here speak of the peace and healing they experience at the center,” Sister Patricia noted. “As counselors we have the joy of witnessing the transformation that can happen in an individual. It is like watching a flower coming into full bloom.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

**Share with us the good news of what you did!**  
Call or email us with the action(s) you took: (610) 558-7726, [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Beacon of Light is raising funds to build a new counseling center. If you would like to help, you can send a check to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia using the donation envelope and your contribution will be forwarded to the center.
- Families in your city or rural community may be facing similar difficulties to those faced by the residents of Clondalkin, Ireland. One way to make a difference is to start small. Is there a community agency or nonprofit organization nearby that works with children and families who may be struggling? A Boys and Girls Club? A women’s shelter? Consider calling an organization that reflects your interests and values and see what volunteer opportunities exist. One caring adult in a child’s life can make all the difference and can ease the burden for harried parents.
- Sisters in your parish may be deeply involved in a mission to aid those who are poor in your community. Talk to them about what they need and how you can help. If you are not in a position to volunteer or donate right now, let them know how much their effort to serve vulnerable families means to you.



*Sister Carmel Earls visits with a woman in the neighborhood near the center. Sister Carmel is Parish Sister (Pastoral Associate) at St. Peter the Apostle Church and over the years has come to know the parishioners well.*

# PEOPLE & PLACES

## Who are the 'Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia'?

Through this section we hope to share a glimpse of our congregation and the individuals who make real its mission.



### AWARDS SPOTLIGHT

While we appreciate the many gifts of our sisters, we are especially pleased when those gifts are recognized by the broader community. The following sisters recently received special awards:

**Sister Dolores Macklin**  
**Daniel Frawley Community Leadership Award**

St. Patrick's Day Society,  
Wilmington, Delaware

**Sister Francis Madaio**  
**Light the Way Award**

Our Lady of Mount Carmel/St. Nicholas  
School, Passaic, New Jersey

**Sister Bernard Helene McGuire**

**Fifty Years in Education Award**  
Archdiocese of Baltimore

**Sister Elizabeth Mary Novak**  
**Fifty Years in Education Award**  
**Award for Teaching Excellence**  
Archdiocese of Baltimore

**Sister Georgine Marie Smith**  
**Sixty Years in Education Award**  
Archdiocese of Baltimore

**Sister Jean Rupertus**  
**Peacemaker Award**  
Franciscan Federation

**Sister Jamesanne Taggart**  
**Community Builders Award**  
St. Anthony of Padua School,  
Wilmington, Delaware

#### WASHINGTON, DC

Sisters Corinne Wright and Ruth Bernadette O'Connor recently participated in a Green Festival in Washington, DC. Featured speaker Bill McKibben was one of many who addressed the issue of global warming. Eating options included an array of organic foods. The market place offered everything from ways to utilize solar and other Earth-friendly forms of energy to pesticide-free fabric and bamboo t-shirts. Highly publicized among books and audiovisual materials were the works of Rachel Carson. The Washington gathering was similar to green festivals being held in many U.S. cities to encourage people to consider consumer choices and to seek alternatives that will reduce our carbon footprint on Earth. Look for a green festival near you and check our website, [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org), to see what else we're doing to help create a sustainable Earth.



#### PENNSYLVANIA

Neumann College administration, faculty, and staff are definitely looking to the future. The college, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in Aston, recently submitted its application for university status to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The application was the culmination of more than a year of research and of collating materials. The project involved collaboration, not only among faculty and administration, but also with students and alumni and included a perception study conducted by an outside research firm. The Neumann community will be waiting for the outcome, a process which may take up to two years.



Dr. Rosalie Mirenda, Neumann College president, displays the reams of research that comprise the college's application for university status. "University status is perfectly congruent with Neumann's mission and strategic plan," Dr. Mirenda said. "Neumann is at a place in its history where it deserves university status."

#### MARYLAND

In March the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia received the Bicentennial Medal from Mount St. Mary's University in Emmitsburg in recognition of their commitment, dedication, and faithful service in helping those who are most in need. Two hundred years ago, Mount St. Mary's was founded by Fr. John DuBois as America's second Catholic university. Today, the university continues to be committed to the pillars upon which it was founded—"Faith, Discovery, Leadership, and Community." As a way to mark their bicentennial, they have chosen a select group of individuals and organizations from throughout the United States whose work has characterized the university's commitment for excellence in building communities in service to others. The Sisters of St. Francis first became associated with the university in 1893. In the subsequent ninety-one years of services, the sisters supervised the maintenance of the dormitories, worked in the seminary and chapels, and staffed the infirmary.



#### MIDDLE EAST

Sister Marie Lucey represented the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in a delegation of women religious who traveled to Syria and Lebanon to meet with and learn about the needs of Iraqi refugees. Under the auspices of Catholic Relief Services, the delegation met, not only with the refugees, but also with humanitarian aid groups and with Christian and Muslim leaders. One of the aims of the delegation was to create a sense of solidarity with the refugees and to share with Americans the urgency of the refugees' situation. Back home in Washington, DC,

Sister Marie spoke at a rally calling for an end to the Iraq war. She quoted Pope Benedict XVI's plea for an end to war—"Enough with the violence. Enough with the hatred in Iraq." She also spoke of the ongoing need for Catholics to strengthen their efforts to speak out against war.

▼ Both the Reading Room and the Cantic Room at St. Ann Convent provide warm and inviting places for sisters to relax with a good book—or a good friend. The new picture windows fill the rooms with light and provide a view of the courtyard.



#### WASHINGTON

March 29 was a joy-filled day for the sisters at St. Ann Convent in Tacoma. One hundred guests—including the congregation's leadership team—were on hand to share the joy and beauty of the new renovations. From the enlarged sleeping area to the large sun-lit picture windows in the Reading Room and Cantic Room to the Heritage Room with its versatile gathering space, the renovations drew praise from residents and guests alike. The snack room, office renovations, and maintenance storage areas were also part of the tour. A prayer of blessing included a sharing of anecdotes about the history of St. Ann's and a blessing of objects special to each of the residents. Leticia Hamilton and Avelina Noriega, two of the nursing assistants who have worked at St. Ann's since its beginning more than fifteen years ago, led the procession to bless the renovated nursing areas. Following the tour, blessing, and a special presentation to project manager Wade Moberg (see Focus column, page 10), guests and residents enjoyed lunch together and anticipated the next step of the journey—a new, larger chapel; a larger dining room; and a safe outdoor walking path.

## SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



*Our senior sisters gift us with their wisdom, joy, and generosity.*

**Sister Rose Cecilia Case**, 91, lives a rich—and very busy—life in Assisi House, one of the congregation's retirement residences in Aston, Pennsylvania. She is one of several sisters who make follow-up calls to patients who have been recently discharged from St. Agnes Continuing Care Center in Philadelphia. When sisters in Assisi House want Masses said for their deceased friends and relatives, it is Sister Rose who schedules the Masses, keeps track of donations, and posts the monthly schedule. She meets monthly with the Prison Pal Ministry to write letters to prisoners and, as a member of the Food Committee, meets with Food Services to discuss concerns and make suggestions. Sister Rose is also a member of one of the Companions in Faith groups that meets at Assisi House for faith sharing. She is on the Liturgy Committee and serves as a lector at Mass. And if that were not enough, she continues to go to the motherhouse for meetings of the Theology Committee where she shares her rich background in Franciscan spirituality and theology.

When **Sister Eleanor Francis Filist**, 89, retired as sacristan at Assisi House, she was aware of another need at the retirement residence that she felt she could fill. She had heard sisters say that, although they enjoyed reading, the Assisi House library was a distance from some of their rooms. Now Sister Eleanor goes monthly from Our Lady of Angels Convent, the congregation's motherhouse, across the parking lot, and down the driveway to Assisi House to take the library "on the road." She's in tune with each sister's reading preferences as she loads her cart with books. She leaves two or three books with each sister to tide them over until the next visit. She has devised a good workable system of recordkeeping, noting which books she has given to each sister, as well as the date of delivery. On subsequent visits she collects the books, records the return date, and provides the sisters with another month's reading material.



▲ Neumann College students spent spring break working with "Operation Helping Hands" in New Orleans. The students created their own mission statement to guide their efforts at helping to rebuild the city.

► Mask in place, Sister Mary Beth Antonelli lent a helping hand to help restore a home in New Orleans. The team's energy concretized their motto—"One house, one family, one person at a time."



### LOUISIANA

Sister Mary Beth Antonelli accompanied Neumann College campus minister Melissa Hickey and a group of students from Neumann for a week of service rebuilding homes destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Two of the students had been there before and took time to visit the home they had gutted last year. They were discouraged to learn that it remained in the same condition because the elderly gentleman who lived there lacked the funds to rebuild. "It was an eye-opening experience to witness the effects of Katrina after almost three years," said Sister Mary Beth. "To look at the devastation that still exists gives the impression of being in a developing country. There are still so many homes that are not even touched in terms of rebuilding." The students worked at two different houses, scraping, painting, caulking, and sanding. In spite of the devastation they witnessed, the spirit of community and determination they found in New Orleans gave the Neumann group a firmer belief in Isaiah's words: "The ruins shall be rebuilt, the foundations raised up, and the homesteads restored."



### PENNSYLVANIA

In March sixty Franciscan Companions in Mission gathered at Our Lady of Angels Convent in Aston for their annual retreat day. Sister Julie McCole presented several sessions on the topic "Just Breathe in God's Spirit." Using examples from the lives of Sts. Francis and Clare, Sister Julie encouraged the companions to appreciate the breath of God in their own lives, identifying the inspirations that often go unnoticed. Before the retreat closed, Sister Marijane Hresko spoke to the group about the congregation's upcoming

chapter, welcoming those companions who would be present for the chapter and asking for the companions' prayers and blessing on the chapter proceedings. To learn more about the Franciscan Companions in Mission and about the General Chapter, visit our website, [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org). To receive information about the Companions in Mission, contact [companions@osfphila.org](mailto:companions@osfphila.org).



### PENNSYLVANIA

The Sisters of St. Francis and representatives of Neumann College met with Representative Joseph Sestak to exchange ideas, opinions, and possible actions around closing the School of the Americas (SOA) in Fort Benning, Georgia. The congregation has long worked for closure of the school which trains Latin American security personnel in combat, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics and whose graduates are responsible for some of the worst human rights abuses in Latin America. Although Representative Sestak did not share the same views as those present at the meeting, he did listen to the rationale for closure and shared his own views on the school's achievements. Those present at the gathering felt assured that Representative Sestak would follow through on some areas of deep concern, particularly in seeking greater transparency from the school.

### DELAWARE

When Sister Miriam Eileen Murray began working as a volunteer at the Pierre Toussaint Dental Clinic in Wilmington, neither she nor the clinic staff knew the impact her presence would make. She initially assisted the clinic's director in whatever was needed. However, when the director, Anne Isaacs, wife of Dr. Gary Isaacs, died of cancer, Sister Miriam stepped in and helped keep things going until a new director was hired. Her work during that difficult interim period was invaluable, particularly because she was able to maintain the accounting and billing systems. The dental clinic, one of the many programs under the auspices of the Ministry of Caring, welcomes "homeless and low-income individuals, providing them with genuine, dignified care." The Sisters of St. Francis have had a long history of involvement with the Ministry of Caring and recently provided assistance to the dental clinic in the form of a Social Justice Grant. Through similar types of financial support, the "Pierre Toussaint Dental Office will continue, not only to expand accessibility to dental care for those who need it most, but will also likely change their lives in the process."

Staff of the Pierre Toussaint Dental Office include (left-right) Dr. Michelle Robinson, Beverly Byrd, Bernetta Dacus, Sister Miriam Eileen Murray, Lynn Wilfong, and Dr. Gary Isaacs. The office recognizes the need for both restorative and preventive dental care within low-income communities.



Right: Volunteer Barbara Brennen greets a family at the Corpus Christi Food Pantry and begins the process of getting them the groceries they need. Far right: Team work in action: volunteers Sal Salvias, Peter Desautels, and Bob Hesseltine unload food destined for the pantry shelves.



# Making Ends Connections Count



▲ Families check-off the groceries they need from a request list and volunteers like Nancy Gaudette do their best to fill it.

## *New Hampshire Social Programs Work Together To Better Serve People Falling Behind*



Tracy Acevedo and her three children enjoy a visit from Sister Joan Koliss (far right) in their home. Earlier in the year, Tracy had contacted Sister Joan, director of the Corpus Christi Food Pantry and Assistance Program, for help when she got behind on her rent. “I’d like to make a donation to help other families when I’m back on my feet,” said Tracy.

When it comes to what ails the economy, Americans by now know the bleak diagnoses: a growing crisis in the housing markets, soaring healthcare costs, wages that fail to keep pace with rising costs. The economic ills mean that more families are struggling to make ends meet and keep food on the table. Fortunately for people in Nashua, New Hampshire, the Corpus Christi Food Pantry and Assistance Program is part of a unique collaboration between social service agencies that allows limited public and private dollars to be stretched further and for people to be served faster.

“We all have a limited pot of money,” said Franciscan Sister Joan Koliss who serves as the director of the Assistance Program at Corpus Christi. “Families are in crisis—they’re beside themselves with worry. What we can’t do alone for them, we’re able to do by collaborating with other agencies. Collaboration is the key.”

Tracy Acevedo lives in Nashua, forty minutes northwest of Boston. She is a single mother of three young children. When she lost her job, she expected to have little trouble landing another. But finding work proved harder than she’d expected and she quickly fell behind in her rent and bills. “I was completely stressed,” she said. “It looked like we were going to lose our home.”

Tracy is not alone. Rents have gone up significantly in the last several years in the Nashua area. Jobs in agriculture, fast-food restaurants, and the service and financial industries—where most low-wage workers are employed—typically don’t offer medical benefits and sick leave. A major injury or illness can spell financial ruin. Veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars face long waits for medical disability and their numbers are on the rise.

“The families we see are just one step away from disaster—no savings; a car breaks down; a child gets sick; a job is lost. That’s

all it takes,” Sister Joan said. “Many people today are in a position where they have to ask for help and they’ve never been there before. They don’t know where to turn.”

### **Making The Connections**

That’s where Sister Joan and a network of colleagues in Nashua social service agencies come in. “It’s all about relationships,” Sister Joan said. “I personally know the social workers at the other agencies and the caliber of their work. When one of them calls asking if we can help, I already know that the requirements and procedures of each of our organizations will be met. It means that someone in crisis doesn’t have to run around to five different places only to find out that they can’t be helped. My job is to stay connected to what’s going on in the city and state (welfare offices) as well as other agencies and to journey with the families to make the connections.”

Those connections don’t happen by chance. They are the result of a deliberate effort by



◀ Volunteer Julie Jean and Executive Director Kay Golden review paperwork before submitting food orders to the volunteers in the back room who will fill grocery requests.

# Meet:

✧ “MANY PEOPLE TODAY ARE IN A POSITION WHERE THEY HAVE TO ASK FOR HELP AND THEY’VE NEVER BEEN THERE BEFORE. THEY DON’T KNOW WHERE TO TURN.”

Sister Joan and others in Nashua to leverage limited resources in order to better serve people in the community. Karen Emis-Williams works for the City of Nashua Welfare Office. Eighteen months ago Karen joined other service providers in the area to launch the Financial Assistance Network; its members now meet once a month to learn about one another’s processes and regulations and to improve their services to the families who come for help. “Sister Joan was an intricate part of pulling us all together,” Karen said.



Volunteer Joanne Charpentier helps a client, Barbara Melason, with her groceries. “But for the grace of God, there go I,” said Joanne. “I try to put myself in their shoes.”

“We’ve all been doing the work all along, all of us, to help people who have fallen on hard times. But now it’s more formal. It’s really a pleasure. It allows us to see what’s going on with each other’s agencies and gives us a place to bounce ideas off each other.”

The Universal Assistance Form is one of the ideas that came from the meetings. Social workers like Karen knew that service agencies often duplicated efforts. People in need had to visit multiple agencies to cobble together

enough help; at each stop they had to present many of the same documents, answer the same questions, tell the same harrowing story over and over again. “Now, instead of the person having to go to each agency, we can fax over the Universal Form and supporting documents from one agency to another,” Karen said. “It saves time for everyone—workers and clients. It helps us resolve an urgent crisis.”

## When The Ends Don’t Meet

The Nashua City Welfare Office is usually the first stop for people who have run out of options. As the months went by and Tracy Acevedo couldn’t find a job, she found herself forced to rely on public assistance for the first time in her life. It kept the wolf from the door—but just barely. “I had unpaid bills; the rent was piling up,” she said. “What do you do? You pay the rent and get behind on bills or you pay the bills and lose your home. Either way it’s a bind.” With three children, Tracy couldn’t stretch the welfare check far enough. Stiff rents and accelerating food and gas costs meant that more and more residents like Tracy were finding themselves in the same predicament. “You don’t realize until you’re in that situation what it’s like,” Tracy said. “I wonder how some people do it.”

## Offering Food And Assistance

Corpus Christi Food Pantry and Assistance, Inc., is located in the basement of a shuttered parish church, St. Stanislaus, in downtown Nashua. The food pantry is directed by Kay Golden, whose dedicated service shaped and grew the pantry since 2000. The nonprofit organization, which pools the resources of seven Catholic parishes in Nashua, served

nearly 2,000 families in 2007. Sister Joan provides the “assistance service” part of the equation for about 1,000 clients a year. She spends most of her time talking to families, connecting them with appropriate public and private services, helping them unravel the tangle of troubles that weigh them down. A third of the families who consult with Sister Joan receive financial assistance of \$50 – \$200 to prevent evictions and utility shut-offs, and for other basic needs. Combined with other resources, it often helps them steer clear of utter ruin.

Eighty volunteers keep the shelves stocked at the Corpus Christi Food Pantry; sort donations; and assemble bags of food, toiletries, and even birthday presents for children. Joanne Charpentier is one of the volunteers. She sometimes takes a break from her work in the pantry to assist Sister Joan. “Sister Joan is the heart, face, and hands of God,” she said. “She shows very deep compassion for people. They sense her empathy.” Joanne was shocked when she began volunteering to realize the number of people in her community who needed help. “People who come for help are often embarrassed,” she said. “Let’s face it: it’s not an easy thing to do, to ask for help.”

## Faith Into Action

When her landlord served an eviction notice, Tracy Acevedo had to face the fact that she needed additional help. It was that or move into a homeless shelter with her three children. A social worker at City Welfare agreed to help with the back rent but the city couldn’t do it all. She referred Tracy to Sister Joan at Corpus Christi.

*continued on page 10*



▲ Volunteer Maureen Brown makes sure grocery bags are filled with requested items. Corpus Christi Food Pantry and Assistance program serves nearly 20,000 people each year.

**Share with us the good news of what you did! Call or email us with the action(s) you took: (610) 558-7726, [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).**

# HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Your community food bank may need volunteers. Do you have a morning once a week you could give to sorting groceries or other tasks? Your skills as a bookkeeper, grantwriter, or carpenter might be just what they need right now. Call and find out.
- Churches and other places of worship often sponsor food drives for local food banks. Why not organize one in your parish or neighborhood? Sometimes food coops and grocery stores will aid in the collection of canned goods. You might ask friends and neighbors to consider donating products like baby diapers, personal hygiene products, and paper towels for distribution by the food bank. That will help working families having a tough time meeting expenses to stretch their limited dollars.
- If you’d like to make a cash donation to the Corpus Christi Food Pantry and Assistance Program, you can send a donation using the enclosed envelope.

Sister Joan Koliss, left, is the director of the Assistance Program at Corpus Christi. She works closely with other social service programs to make limited dollars go further. Here she meets with her colleague, Karen Emis-Williams, who works for the City of Nashua Welfare Office, often the first stop for families struggling to pay the bills.





Volunteer Ruby Yunknewicz fills bags with washing detergent. Often supplies are donated in bulk quantities and volunteers like Ruby repackage them in smaller containers for distribution to families.

## Making Ends Meet: Connections Count

*continued from page 9*

“I had heard of the Corpus Christi Food Pantry but I didn’t know they did the financial assistance piece,” Tracy said. She talked to Sister Joan by phone that day and went to Corpus Christi the next morning. Together they called Tracy’s landlord and talked about what it would take to get her out of the eviction status. Sister Joan was able to provide a check made out to the landlord that, when combined with other resources, did the trick.

Sister Joan’s efforts to increase collaboration among service providers in Nashua are paying off. By working together, the providers are able to respond more quickly and have a greater impact on the prospects of people like Tracy Acevedo and her children. Tracy now works for an insurance company and is inching her way back into the black.

Poverty is a kind of violence affecting both body and spirit, and often people are left to face that cruel struggle alone. But Sister Joan and others offer a healing, compassionate presence in our violent world that can make that struggle less lonely and frightening. “They helped me out of the jam I was in,” said Tracy Acevedo. “I never felt uncomfortable. Some people look at you like, ‘Why can’t she make ends meet?’ But it was a pleasant experience with Sister Joan. She made follow-up calls to me to see how things were going. She asked if I needed other help. There was never any ‘we’d-like-to-but’ at Corpus Christi.”

Corpus Christi embodies the integration of faith and action. “Faith is fine,” said volunteer Joanne Charpentier. “But if you don’t put it into action, what good does it do?” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

*Sister Joan Koliss talks with Lisa Crosier, who had come as an advocate for a friend who was unable to visit the office. Joan and Lisa participated in a conference call with the gas company in an effort to keep her friend’s account in good standing.*



# Focus

## WADE MOBERG

WADE INSISTED THAT HE WOULD VOLUNTEER—HIS WAY OF REPAYING WHAT THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA HAVE DONE FOR HIM IN HIS LIFE.

“Managing a big monopoly game”—that’s how Wade Moberg, property manager for Franciscan Health System since 1989, describes his work. His duties include developing and managing the medical office buildings, leasing the buildings, maintaining all the legal documents associated with this work, facilitating the governance of the building projects, and consolidating the management of all remodeling for the buildings.

Considering this background, it seemed natural for Sister Jude Connelly to contact Wade to assist with the renovations at St. Ann Convent, the congregation’s retirement residence in Tacoma, Washington. Her intent was to hire Wade but he insisted that he would volunteer—his way of repaying what the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have done for him in his life.

Wade values his association with the congregation because of their focus on mission and the spirit of St. Francis that permeates Franciscan Health

System. This focus has helped him realize the importance of giving back to the community. Wade’s staff meetings open with a discussion on some aspect of mission; staff members discuss ways to concretize that mission in their work. For Wade and his staff, mission compels and underlies the work they do.

Family is central to Wade’s life. He and Jean, his wife of more than twenty years, have one daughter—Emily, a high school junior. Realizing that Emily would soon be leaving for college, the family spent several weeks last summer traveling in the Mediterranean, adding to their large store of wonderful family memories. Many of those memories revolve around



*Sister Jude Connelly (left) and Sister Lynn Patrice Lavin (right) recognized Wade’s positive spirit and generous gift of time as project manager of the renovations at St. Ann’s by presenting him with the Franciscan Humanitarian Award. Sister Lynn explained that the small bronze statue of St. Francis is a replica of the large one at the motherhouse.*

skiing, an experience where Wade learned something that he applies to all parts of his life—don’t panic...just go with the flow!

The Mobergs, recognizing that they have been richly blessed, also work to assist folks who are in need. As a nurse for several public schools, Jean saw that many children needed basic items. Working with St. Charles Parish in its annual Christmas shoe collection, the Mobergs obtained 200+ pairs of new shoes for the students. The family was thrilled to hear about one little boy’s excitement when, for the first time, he received a pair of shoes that fit him—and the new shoes were still in the box! This is one of the many ways the Moberg family integrates Wade’s mission statement at work, at home, and in the community.

When Wade began planning the renovations at St. Ann’s, he drew on ideas that flowed from his own background, his dreams, and his values. Growing up on Puget Sound, he remembered waking up, opening his curtains, and having his room filled with images of light and water. He took this natural beauty for granted until he went to college. There, when he looked out his dorm window, he saw—another building. Wade determined from that point on to appreciate the light and beauty of the Northwest. He also told Emily at one point that, if he could have but one wish, it would be to travel in a space craft circling the earth so that he could see all the wonders of the sky. This appreciation of light, beauty, and the vastness of nature came into play when he planned the renovations at St. Ann’s. Aware of the convent’s small, dark rooms, Wade focused on filling the newly renovated space with light. This aim was particularly realized in the large picture window in the Cantic Room. The window floods the room with light and gifts the sisters with a space where they can enjoy the wonders of the sky. And the sisters in return have gifted Wade by calling the window “Wade’s Window.”

# SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

*Everyone has within a piece of good news.*

— Anne Frank (adapted)

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## 2007 Annual Report

### FRANCISCAN MINISTRIES FOUNDATION

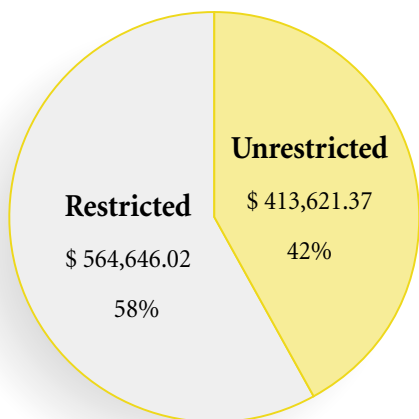
For more than 150 years, the Sisters of St. Francis, trusting in the providence of God, have ministered to the needs of God's people. In 1994, the Franciscan Ministries Foundation was founded with the goal of seeking financial support for sisters' ministries, for retirement, and for other current needs. With hearts full of gratitude we acknowledge the many blessings that come to us through the goodness and generosity of our donors. In the tradition of "Sharing the Good News," we share with you the 2007 Annual Report from the Franciscan Ministries Foundation to show how you enable us to make a difference—to touch the lives of others—and ensure that our ministries will continue into the future.

*With Hearts Filled with Gratitude*  
THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

*Thank You!*

**Total Donations: \$ 978,267.39**

**Sources of Donations:** Raffle, Golf Outing, Direct Mail Appeals, *Good News*, Memorial Gifts, Memorial Cards, and Estates and Inheritances.



▲ (L-R) Terry Cunningham, Tony Capaldi, and Tom Swider get ready to tackle the course at the 2007 Golf Outing.

► Funds restricted to the Retirement Fund help support our sisters in the later years of their lives like those who reside at Assisi House in Aston, Pennsylvania, and at St. Ann's in Tacoma, Washington.



### In Memoriam

Sister Madeleine Francis Skrovanek  
11/18/07

Sister Raphael Balduc  
12/25/07

Sister Daniel Therese Coyle  
1/19/08

Sister Mary Anne Brown  
(formerly Sister Mary Liguori)  
1/28/08

Sister Dorothy Marie Thomas  
(formerly Sister Marie Gonzaga)  
2/9/08

Sister Santos Maria Fernandez  
2/5/08

Sister Edith McLaughlin  
(formerly Sister Mary Thomasita)  
2/14/08

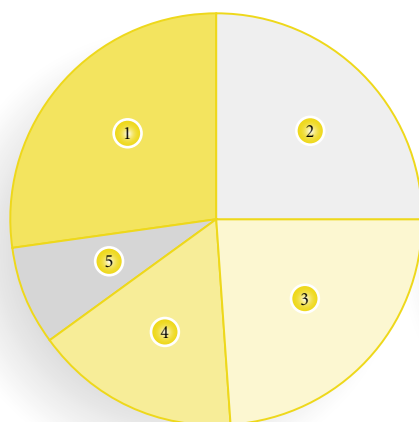
Sister Andrew Persing  
2/29/08

Sister Mona Morrissey  
(formerly Sister Mona Vincent)  
3/3/08

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia assume operational costs of the Foundation; therefore, every dollar that our donors give is used solely for the ministries and retirement. All funds that are received in a fiscal year are disbursed at the end of that fiscal year. Each year congregational leadership determines where the disbursement of unrestricted funds are most needed.

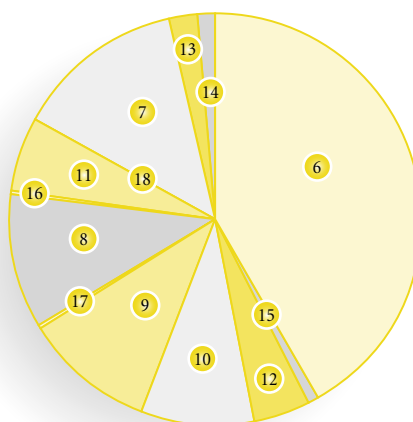
### Distribution of Ministry: Unrestricted

- 1 St. Lucy School: Kenya, Africa \$ 110,000 (27%)
- 2 St. Ann Convent \$ 103,261 (25%)
- 3 St. Mary Shelter \$ 100,000 (24%)
- 4 St. Joseph Family Center \$ 67,000 (16%)
- 5 Drexel Neumann Academy \$ 33,360 (8%)



### Distribution of Ministry: Restricted

- 6 Retirement Fund \$ 236,762 (41.93%)  
Retirement Fund 36%, St. Ann 32%, Assisi House 32%
- 7 Other \$ 74,840 (13.25%)
- 8 Education Ministries \$ 58,650 (10.39%)
- 9 Shelters and Social Services \$ 58,024 (10.28%)
- 10 Campaign Funds \$ 50,494 (8.94%)
- 11 Peace and Justice \$ 33,000 (5.84%)
- 12 AH Equipment \$ 24,194 (4.28%)
- 13 Memorials \$ 13,250 (2.35%)
- 14 Red Hill Farm \$ 6,955 (1.23%)
- 15 Foreign Ministries \$ 4,500 (0.80%)
- 16 Spiritual Centers \$ 2,325 (0.41%)
- 17 Parish Ministry \$ 1,550 (0.27%)
- 18 Motherhouse Restoration \$ 100 (0.02%)



### EXPLANATION OF RESTRICTED CATEGORIES

**Retirement Fund:** Distribution to retirement residences on the East (Assisi House, Aston, PA) and the West Coast (St. Ann Convent, Tacoma, WA) and to the general retirement fund. • **Foreign Ministries:** Africa (AIDS children and St. Lucy School in Kenya), African Sisters Education Conference, and Haiti • **AH Equipment:** Furnishings for Assisi House, Aston, PA • **Campaign Funds:** Pledge Payments on St. Ann Chapel, Assisi House and Motherhouse Pascal Candle Stand, Hermitages, etc.) • **Spiritual Centers:** Franciscan Spiritual Center Aston, PA; Franciscan Spiritual Center, Milwaukee, OR • **Education Ministries:** Drexel Neumann Academy, Chester, PA; Most Pure Health of Mary, Mobile, AL; The Catholic High School of Baltimore, MD; Neumann College, Aston, PA • **Parish and Campus Ministries:** Corpus Christi and St. Thomas in Wilmington, Delaware; St. Anthony Shrine and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Emmitsburg, MD; St. Anthony, Baltimore, MD; Sr. Loretta Schaff's Campus Ministry, Portland, OR. • **Peace and Justice:** Congregation's Peace and Justice Fund, Intercommunity Peace and Justice, Seattle, Washington, and Jubilee USA Network-Debt Relief • **Motherhouse Restoration:** Funds for recovery from Our Lady of Angels' water disaster • **Other:** Family of Amish Children Murdered in Lancaster County; Blessed Sacrament School, Walpole, MA; Franciscan Care Center, Brackenville, DE; Carline Project, Dublin, Ireland; Companion Program, Mt. St. Francis, Ringwood, NJ; Family Members, Sisters, or Friends as designated in distribution of Estates and Inheritances. • **Memorials:** Trees, Benches, Bricks, and Pergola entries • **Red Hill Farm:** The Organic Farm and a Peace Pole for the Farm

The Sisters of St. Francis  
of Philadelphia  
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We invite your comments and suggestions about *Good News*. Send to Florence Smith, (610) 558-7726, [goodnews@osfphila.org](mailto:goodnews@osfphila.org).

Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel in the prophetic spirit of Francis of Assisi and our Foundress Mother Francis Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family and with all creation. Calling ourselves and one another to continuous conversion of heart, we commit ourselves to a life of contemplation, poverty and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of collaboration and of mutual service to the needs of others, especially the economically poor, the marginal and the oppressed. Seeking to participate in the Spirit's action in the world, we direct our personal and corporate resources to the promotion of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Filled with trust in the goodness of God, we move forward.

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Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia Launch New Website

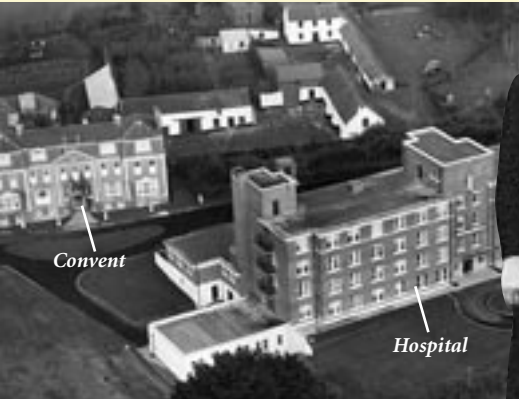
The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia are delighted to announce the launch of their new website. The new site provides users with a comprehensive overview of the congregation and its devotion to serving people in need, access to previous news and obituaries, and educational tips on the environment and other world issues.

Visitors to the site will find the new look to be more user-friendly and full of helpful information. The new home page is inviting with several rotating photos, a musical rendition of the "Blessing of St. Francis," popular prayers, and an easy-to-use search feature. As you browse the site, notice the drawings done by our some of our sisters and the newly created memorial database where you can search for members of the congregation who have since died and find the location of their final resting place. The "Contact Us" form allows you to provide us with your thoughts or inquire into a specific area within our congregation. Please visit the newly created site at [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org).



Deep Irish Roots Build Trust

In 1932, four sisters from the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia left the United States to open a new convent in Ireland. Immaculata, Mount Alvernia (pictured below-left) is situated about two miles from Mallow, County Cork, Ireland, and was the entrance site for an average of thirteen girls per year for the first six years. When the postulants (pictured far right, first two rows) completed their formation in Mallow, passports and travel papers had to be in order to travel to Pennsylvania to finish their formation. Many never expected to see their families again. Before 1953, all travel was done by crossing the Atlantic Ocean in ships which took six-ten days. In 1953, St. Patrick's Franciscan Hospital (pictured below-right) was built on the property of Mt. Alvernia but in 1972 the property was sold due to financial strain. In 1985, the Sisters of St. Francis re-established a presence in Ireland, opening a convent in Neilstown, Dublin. Many sisters have since returned to Ireland for ministry in education, parish work, and social work. On page 3, read about Sister Patricia Kidd and Sister Carmel Earls whose ministry in counseling is helping to empower the people of Clondalkin.



Reclaiming the Franciscan Theological Tradition

Twenty-five years ago, Eric Doyle OFM, beloved Franciscan theologian from Canterbury, England, challenged: "We should immerse ourselves in our theological tradition and enter into fresh dialogue with it, until it becomes part of the very air we breathe and forms the structures of our vision of God, humanity, and the world." With this in mind the Sisters of St. Francis began a program to reclaim the Franciscan Theological Tradition as part of the First Order Friars global initiative that began in 2000. Last year, a group of twenty-one sisters from the Neumann Bachmann branch of Franciscans in the United States presented twelve programs. The programs, which are designed for the laity as well as professed members of congregations, have been gaining momentum with such topics as: the primacy of Christ, the meaning and value of creation, the primacy of charity, and the unique dignity of every individual. The 2008-2009 season promises to be as successful with eighteen programs scheduled in the U.S. as well as Canterbury, England; Scotland; and Ireland. For more information about the program, visit our website, [www.osfphila.org](http://www.osfphila.org)

