

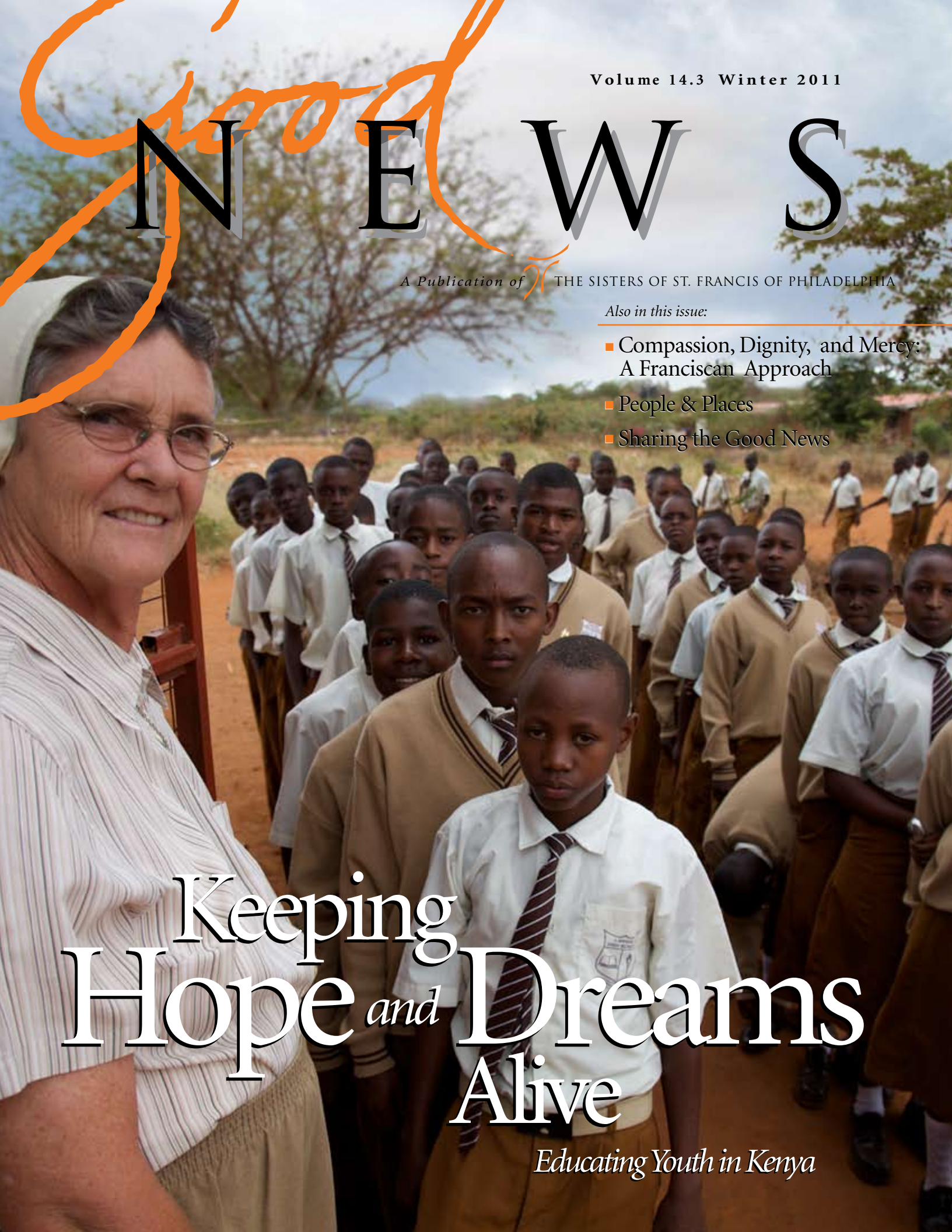
Volume 14.3 Winter 2011

Good NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Also in this issue:

- Compassion, Dignity, and Mercy:
A Franciscan Approach
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News



Keeping Hope *and* Dreams Alive

Educating Youth in Kenya

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.

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.

POINT OF VIEW

From Blessing to Blessing

Last year, our sisters gathered in regional groups to pray and to share on topics related to our mission. The opening ritual invited us to reflect on thresholds that we had experienced in our lives and to identify blessings received. Scripture often refers to thresholds as pathways, entrances, or crossings that can be a starting place for a new experience or state in life. The sisters told stories of changes in ministry, of relocations to new places, of losses of loved ones through death, of coping with serious illnesses, and of changes that had occurred in relationships. At the end of the sharing, each sister wrote a blessing that she had received in the transition process.



**Sister Esther Anderson, OSF
Congregational Minister**

In late June, 400 of our sisters gathered for a congregational assembly with the theme “From Blessing to Blessing.” We prayed together, were enriched by a variety of speakers, celebrated the 25th anniversary of our Franciscan Companions in Mission, and reflected on the directional statements from our 2008 Congregational Chapter. At various intervals throughout the gathering, we read aloud the blessings that sisters had written at the preceding regional meetings.

Our Franciscan tradition is rich in invoking blessings on others. St. Francis and St. Clare extended blessings to people in all walks of life, especially the sick and those on the margins of society. Francis exuberantly blessed all God's creatures. He believed that a blessing was like a circle of light drawn around a person or creature to heal, protect, or strengthen.

Each of us can bless another. When we show kindness or compassion, we are setting a blessing in motion. In Maryland, Sisters Kathy Dauses and Michele Kriczky serve as pastoral care chaplains and receive many blessings from their ministry to elderly, sick, and dying persons. They in turn are blessings to residents and families who are encountering significant thresholds in their lives. In Africa, Sisters Frances Cassidy and Rose Monica Katusz awaken hope and possibility for students suffering painful loss and displacement. Both sisters find joy in making a difference in the lives of others through education.

May we be blessed and may we be instruments of blessing for others!

Sister Esther Anderson, OSF



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Students at Lawson High School in Kenya, Africa, are beating the odds and making plans for promising futures because they have been provided the opportunity for a quality education. Sisters Frances Cassidy and Rose Monica Katusz, along with seven other Kenyan teachers, have made it their mission to help these students reach their goals through secondary education.

Written by Elena Perri
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Sisters Kathy Dauses and Michele Therese Kriczky have been providing compassionate pastoral care to the elderly, the sick, and the dying at Stella Maris Nursing Home in the Baltimore area for many years. The ministry, which many might think to be a depressing one, actually offers the opportunity to build relationships, find peace, and offer comfort when it is needed most.

Written by Elena Perri
Photography by Andrea Cipriani-Mecchi

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Communications Office
609 South Convent Road
Aston, PA 19014
Tel (610) 558-7726
Fax (610) 558-6131
goodnews@osfphila.org

Managing Editor
Florence Smith

Assistant Editor
Sister Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

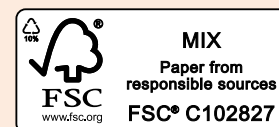
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Graphic Design
Geneen Pintof

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.

Good News is published three times a year (spring, summer, winter) by the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. We welcome your feedback and comments; correspondence should be addressed to *Good News* at address above.

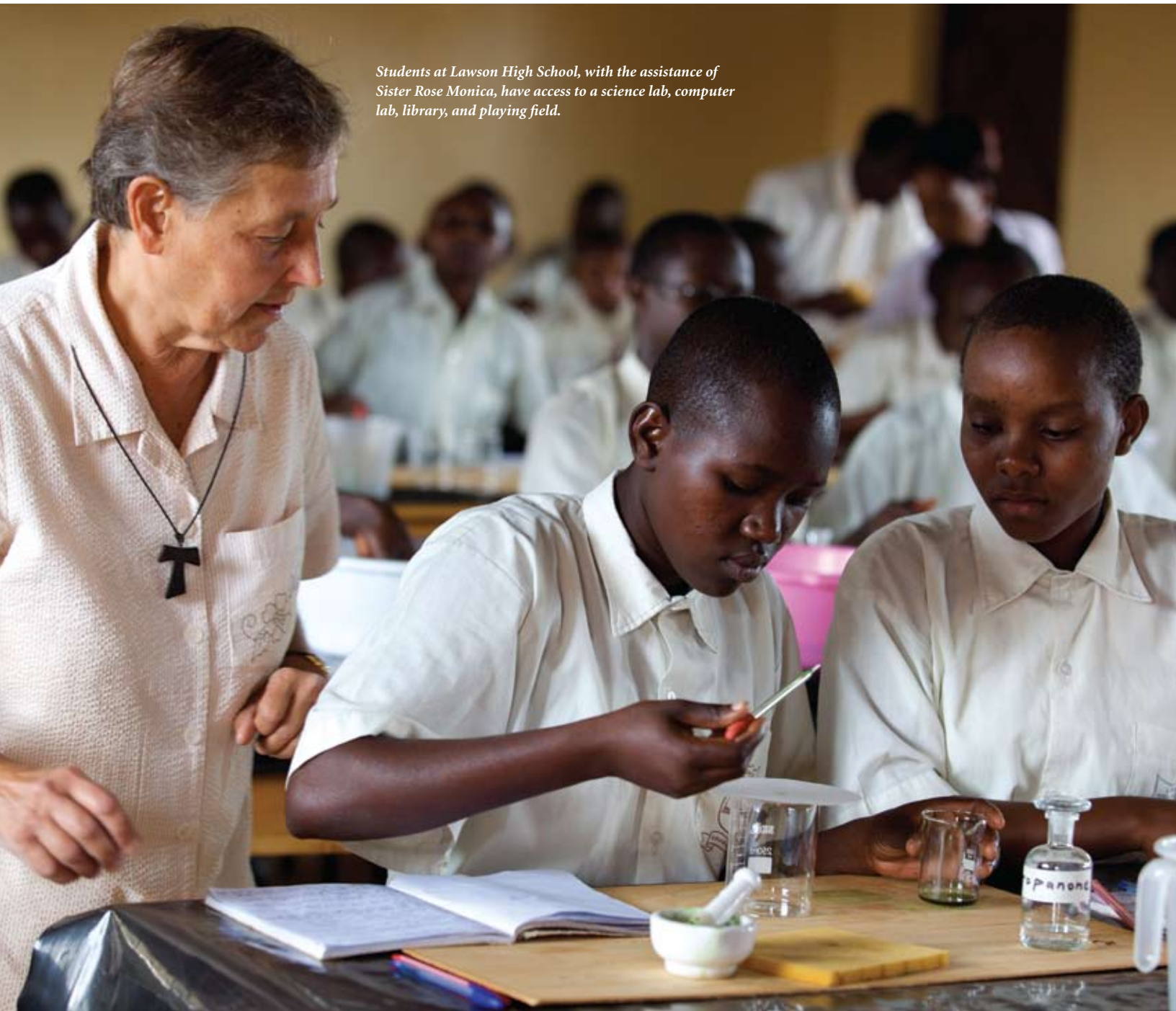
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On the cover: The vision of Lawson High School is to “create an environment where young people can grow and develop academically, spiritually, emotionally, physically, and socially in order to be prepared to take their place in the world of today.”

Students at Lawson High School, with the assistance of Sister Rose Monica, have access to a science lab, computer lab, library, and playing field.



 NYUMBANI, WHICH IN SWAHILI MEANS “HOME,” HAS INDEED FOCUSED ON THE NEED FOR

It is hard to imagine losing more than one million people to AIDS in one year but that tragic situation happened in Kenya in 2009. The AIDS epidemic in Africa in recent years has led to a catastrophic legacy across that continent. Nearly 90 percent of the 16.6 million African children orphaned by AIDS live south of the Sahara Desert with more than one million orphans living in Kenya. Two people very familiar with the impact of this epidemic

are Sisters Frances Cassidy and Rose Monica Katusz. They teach orphaned children at Lawson High School, a new high school which opened in February 2010 in Nyumbani Village in Kitui, Kenya, a rural town approximately three hours south of the city of Nairobi.

The village, operated by the Children of God Relief Institute (COGRI), is one of three entities under the “Nyumbani umbrella.” Nyumbani, which in Swahili means “home,” has indeed





The library at Lawson High School provides a resource for students to reinforce their classroom studies as well as to explore new areas of learning.



Sisters Frances Cassidy (left) and Rose Monica Katusz (right) responded to the request of Sister Mary Owens (center), executive director of COGRI, to establish Lawson High School. The school's mission is to "assist young people to reach their highest potential by developing their abilities and talents in order to be prepared for their future as citizens of Kenya and of the world."

Keeping Hope *and* Dreams Alive

Educating Youth in Kenya

A HOME FOR FAMILIES WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN DEVASTATED BY THE AIDS EPIDEMIC.

focused on the need for a home for families whose lives have been devastated by the AIDS epidemic. The Nyumbani Children's Home in Nairobi, founded in 1992, provides a home and medical care for HIV-infected children. Some of these children will eventually test negative for the virus, allowing them to be adopted. The children who continue to test positive receive medical and supportive care in a loving

and warm environment. Leo Toto, Swahili for "to raise the child," is a home-based outreach program providing services to HIV-positive children and their families in a number of communities near Nairobi.

Nyumbani Village represents Father Angelo D'Agostino's vision to create a self-sustaining community to serve orphans and elders who have been left behind by the HIV pandemic. The village provides

a family-like setting for orphaned children under the care of elderly adults—or "grandparents." Usually the grandparent cares for 10 to 12 children. Although some of the grandparents have biological grandchildren living in the house, most are not related to the children. The village seeks to harness the energy of youth and the maturity of adults, creating blended families

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HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Remember in prayer those whose lives have been affected by AIDS, especially the children in Nyumbani Village, the Children's Home, and Leo Toto.
- Investigate opportunities in your area for becoming an AIDS buddy or for providing a supportive presence for families who have lost a loved one to AIDS.
- Check out schools in your area that might be in need of volunteers. Or perhaps you might find ways to collect needed school supplies for the children.
- Educate yourself about the struggles faced on a daily basis by the people of Kenya whose survival often depends on the whims of nature.
- Use the attached envelope to make a donation to help support Lawson High School.



Life in Nyumbani Village evidences an ethic of life that respects both vulnerable children and experienced elders. Approximately 70 "grandparents" care for 700 children with an envisioned capacity of 100 adults and 1,000 children.



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that foster healing, hope, and opportunity. The structure provides a mutuality of benefits, ensuring that the children receive love, sustenance, healthcare, education, and psychosocial and spiritual development while at the same time providing holistic care and support for the grandparents in their later years.

Approximately 700 children live in the 1,000-acre village. When the children complete the village primary school, they can choose to attend either a polytechnic school which offers skill subjects such as masonry, wood work, welding, dressmaking, tailoring, and mechanics or Lawson High School, an academic high school named after a British couple, Geoffrey and Carole Lawson who financially support the school.

The involvement of Sisters Frances and Rose Monica in Lawson School came as the result of a request from COGRI for sisters to help establish the new school. Sister Frances arrived in August 2009 and, working closely with Sister Mary Owens, executive director of COGRI, began ordering books and equipment. The school officially opened in February 2010. Today Sister Frances serves both as principal and math teacher. Sister Rose teaches sciences. Seven other teachers—all native Kenyans—are responsible for courses in English, Swahili, geography, history, agriculture, computer science, business studies, Christian religious education, and physical education—all of

Water is a precious commodity in the area surrounding Nyumbani Village. Lack of rain during the long dry season often results in loss of crops and food shortages.



which are required courses for the school's first and second year students. Lawson will eventually offer a full four-year program with fourth-year students sitting for the country-wide national exams. Performance in these exams will have a great bearing on the students' continuing education.

Happy, Enthusiastic Students

Life at Lawson High School has both challenges and rewards. The school year runs from January to late November with two breaks during that time. The 116 students attend classes in single-story buildings. Compared to Western customs, the school day at Lawson is a long one—6 A.M.-7 P.M. The rationale for the long day is a very practical one—the availability of light. The school buildings are powered by solar panels but at home the students would need to study by candlelight or lamps. Students start their school day with a breakfast of porridge and a study period. They attend classes until 4 P.M. after which they participate in athletic or club activities and study until 7 P.M. Mr. Muli, who teaches mathematics and business studies, said, "There is one thing that I am amazed at in this school and that is the management of time. I don't think that you can find it in any other school in Kenya. In fact, I would like to invite some of my teacher friends to come here and experience it." Mr. Makau, vice principal and teacher of English and geography, agrees. "There is discipline and order among our students," he said. "I am



It's time for lunch at Lawson High School—providing both a break from classes and a nourishing meal.

“I FEEL THAT I AM HELPING THE STUDENTS HAVE A CHANCE FOR A FUTURE WHICH WILL HELP TO UPLIFT THEM AND THEIR FAMILIES FROM A LIFE OF HOPELESS DESTITUTION AND POVERTY.”

amazed at the way Sister Frances can monitor everything that is happening with the staff and our students. She just seems to know everything that is going on.”

“Many of the students are traumatized and they are just getting over some very sad situations in their lives,” said Sister Frances. Despite the tragedies of their lives, however, the children are happy and eager to learn. “We like working with the students because they want to learn; they are very obedient—just overall ‘good kids,’” Sister Frances said. “While some students struggle

academically, they do well considering all they’ve been through.”

From Challenge Comes Opportunity

Students like Brian Mutie Kimwele understand the fact that the sisters want to provide them with a good education but also acknowledge all that has happened in their lives. “They give me words of encouragement and reveal to me all my potential capabilities,” he said. “We also share our problems with them and they help us solve

them in a very friendly way.” Brian said he wants the sisters to stay at Lawson because “we would miss their parental care and love. They are like our parents.” Brian, who dreams of being a pilot, also likes having Sister Frances as a teacher. “She has a wealth of experience in the field of mathematics and happily explains all the concepts to us,” he said. Emmaculate Katunge, who wants to be a lawyer, echoed those sentiments. She said that both sisters help her to grow academically and spiritually. She added

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that if they left the school, she would feel “like I lost my beloved mother.”

Sister Rose Monica noted that a major challenge for the students is learning English, the language of instruction in Kenya. “Although their knowledge of English is limited because they speak primarily their native language, Kikamba, they are making efforts to improve their language skills,” she said. “I find the students very cooperative and willing to try.” Nduko Caroline Ndunge is typical of the students who had difficulty learning English when she started attending classes at Lawson but whose

perseverance paid off. “I didn’t know much English but the teachers helped me and now I am able to communicate in English,” she said.

In addition to the language challenge, Sister Rose Monica said the students are unfamiliar with common things in the United States such as ice, refrigerators, and thermometers. They also did not know how to use a test tube or set up equipment to complete an experiment. “By the end of the year, it’s like they’ve been doing it forever,” she said. “One of the joys is seeing them develop their skills in a year’s time in the laboratory.” Emmaculate Katunge shares

in that appreciation, “Sister Rose is a very kind and loving sister. She explains chemistry well. When some of the chapters are hard to understand, she finds extra time to explain them to me.”

Challenging Living Conditions

While both sisters have been educators for years, living in an arid area such as Kitui adds a unique dimension to their ministry. “The climate is very harsh. When we go out, even in the morning, within five minutes we’re soaking wet,” said Sister Frances who has been an educator in Kenya for 25 years.

“WE FIND JOY IN WHAT WE DO. WE FEEL GRACED BY WHAT WE DO BECAUSE THIS IS WHERE WE FEEL GOD HAS CALLED US AT THE PRESENT TIME.”



Like students everywhere, Lawson High School students welcome the break from academics that gym class provides.



Students at Lawson High School have the opportunity to join a variety of clubs which encourage an interest in drama, dancing, science, farming, environmental issues, math, choir, debate, and journalism.

Kenya is primarily an agrarian society where the people raise the food they need to live. The climate is difficult and the people struggle because of the lack of rain and water—but they survive. “Right now there’s a shortage of food because the rains did not come and most people were unable to harvest anything,” Sister Frances said. “If the people planted their fields, the seedlings died as soon as they came up because of the lack of rain and the blistering sun. We have 18 children from the outside community coming to our school and at home there’s very little for those children to eat.”

The sisters also live more simply due to a lack of modern conveniences like washers and dryers. “We wash our clothes when we have a day off,” said Sister Rose Monica, who has taught in Kenya for eight years. “We get out there and scrub and hang the clothes up on the line.”

Living in a rural area means no nearby supermarkets. The sisters travel at least 45 minutes to go grocery shopping. They have also adjusted to a dearth of entertainment opportunities. “There aren’t a lot of diversions here but we do have pets that amuse us,” said Sister Rose Monica with a laugh. “There are no TVs and very few radios here. We do have telephone and internet access which is a real help.”

Although their leisure activities are limited, the sisters don’t have much free time because their daily schedule is filled with teaching classes, planning lessons, and grading exams. “We must be ready for school the next day,” Sister Frances said. “We’re up by 5 A.M. We pray, get our breakfast, and go to school.”



At home with their grandparents, students assist with family chores, including food preparation. Since 2009 the village has moved from dependence on purchased and donated food to using produce, meat, eggs, and dairy products produced on land cultivated by the village staff using organic and sustainable methods.

Lifting up the Oppressed

Sister Frances’ and Sister Rose Monica’s devotion to the students flows from their Franciscan charism of serving those who are poor, marginalized, and oppressed. “I feel that I am helping the students have a chance for a future which will help to uplift them and their families from a life of hopeless destitution and poverty,” Sister Frances said. “Our students are marginalized, bearing the stigma of being AIDS orphans and being dependent on the institute for all their basic needs. As a Franciscan, I try to develop their sense of self-worth and

enable them to see themselves as beautiful children of God—talented and capable of being whatever they dream of being.”

Both sisters feel they were called by God to serve these children in Kenya. “People think we’re doing something extraordinary by being out of the country but this is just an extension of our teaching backgrounds,” Sister Rose Monica said. “We find joy in what we do. We feel graced by what we do because this is where we feel God has called us at the present time.” ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

PEOPLE & PLACES



This internet café in Haiti bears Sister Maureen Duignan's name.

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.

Sisters Mary Breen, Marie Linehan, Margaret O'Brien, and Mary Kenny work to sort and package the rice and pinto beans.



HAITI

Sister Maureen Duignan learned recently that there is an internet café in Haiti named after her! A letter from her friend Jennifer Pantal, executive director of Zanmi Lakay, an organization working with children in Haiti, told Sister Maureen about the café and included a photo. The children in the photo are part of the Zanmi Lakay project, a project which helps to foster the children's photographic talents, not only boosting self-esteem and teaching practical technical skills for the future but also inspiring self-reflection and life changes empowering the young students to improve their lives. Using donated cameras and supplies, the children contributed to the Jouk Li Jou Kan Fot photography exhibit which in Haitian means "we'll never stop until the day is over, working hard to see a better life, and we'll keep fighting to the end."

FLORIDA

When Sister Trinita Balbach moved back to the north after more than 50 years of service in Florida, the Naples paper did an article and a series of photos covering her years of ministry there. During her years in Naples, Sister Trinita ministered in various capacities at both St. Ann Parish and St. Peter the Apostle Parish. She also worked for many years at the Kramer Foundation which provides funding for Catholic schools throughout the U.S. The article described Sister Trinita as a "beautiful, faith-filled person who has dedicated her life to Christ and his service." For a link to the original article, visit the *In the News* section of our website, www.osfphila.org.



NEW JERSEY

Congratulations to Sister Donna Jo Repetti and her coworkers at Benedictine Academy. The school's Students in Action team received the prestigious Gold Medal in the Jefferson Awards Regional Competition for the state of New Jersey. The Jefferson Awards for Public Service were created by Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis; U.S. Senator Robert Taft, Jr.; and Sam Beard to create a Nobel Prize for public community service in America.



WASHINGTON

Sisters Mary Breen, Marie Linehan, and Margaret O'Brien volunteer weekly at Francis House in Puyallup. Francis House provides services to those who are poor and in need. Rice and pinto beans are high on the priority list of needs at Francis House. Beans are incredibly healthy, one of the healthiest products of the world. Rice is rich in starch, Vitamin B, and protein. Both staples are affordable when times are hard. Our sisters at St. Ann Convent in Tacoma took on the project with glee, raised money, and purchased large bags of rice and pinto beans. A group of our sisters worked together to fill smaller bags with rice and beans. The sisters joyfully took their beans and rice to Francis House where they were greeted with smiling faces and happy hearts.

Sister Mary Beth Antonelli (kneeling center), surrounded by Neumann University students and staff, said of the trip, "It was a great experience being a part of a gathering like this, especially with so many young people who had such energy and enthusiasm to celebrate their faith."

SPAIN

Sister Mary Beth Antonelli, codirector of the Sisters of St. Francis vocation program, accompanied students and staff members from Neumann University to the 2011 World Youth Day in Madrid, Spain. The Neumann contingent was part of the approximately 1.5 million people gathered from around the world. In his opening address, Pope Benedict XVI was greeted enthusiastically by the young adults as he addressed the theme, "Planted and Built Up in Jesus Christ, Firm in the Truth." The pope urged the young people to "listen closely to the words of the Lord that they might be for you...a rule of life." He encouraged them also to "communicate the joy of your faith to others," adding "The world needs the testimony of your faith."



PENNSYLVANIA

Anna's Place in Chester continues to evolve and grow its programs to meet the needs of some of the region's poorest individuals. Anna's Place staff pride themselves in creating a feeling of community and personal growth among their visitors. New this year was a basketball camp for children sponsored by Neumann University's male basketball team. The camp was for boys age

7-17 and Anna's Place sent five children. One nine-year-old boy from Anna's Place won the "Hot Shot" Award in his age group for making the most baskets. Each participant received a report card which graded the child on leadership skills, teamwork, attitude, attention to direction, and overall improvement in skill. The experience was a very positive one—helping to build self-esteem in the children. Programs will continue through

the winter and hopefully next year, a girl's basketball camp will be added. Are you interested in sponsoring a child for next year's camp? Contact Sister Julie McCole, (484) 361-5900 or jmccole@osfphila.org, to make a donation.



Four of the five boys from Anna's Place joined the basketball team this year. The little fellow holding the paper won the Hot Shot award for his age group. Seen here with Sister Julie McCole, the boys loved the camp and it was a huge success.

MISSOURI

Our novices, **Sisters Simona Botezatu** and **Sara Marks** are currently part of the Third Order Regular Common Novitiate, a collaborative effort of 33 Franciscan congregations across the United States. Simona and Sara, together with four other novices from various Franciscan congregations, will spend nine months in St. Louis. They will focus on the shared charism of the Third Order Regular Franciscan way of life—a life lived in community—and will study a variety of Franciscan and ecclesial topics. They will work to develop a balanced rhythm of contemplation and service and will have the opportunity to build peer relationships within the Franciscan family.



WASHINGTON, DC

Sister Ronnie Grier was among the 60 African American women religious and the 65 priests and deacons who gathered for the 2011 Joint Conference of the National Black Sisters' Conference and the National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus. Speakers addressed the importance of religious vocations among African Americans. Currently 100 Black Catholic sisters and 400 Black Catholic priests and deacons minister in the United States. African American sisters serve as doctors, lawyers, social workers, parish administrators, educators, and healthcare workers.

Sister Michele Kriczky offers a smile, a warm greeting, and a bit of lunch to resident Bernadine Fleckenstein.



You might think that working with the elderly and dying is a depressing experience. On the contrary—it can actually be a wonderful opportunity. Just ask Sisters Kathy Dauses and Michele Therese Kriczky who serve as pastoral care chaplains at Stella Maris Nursing Home in

Timonium, Maryland. A sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, Stella Maris has been providing compassionate, comprehensive health and housing services for the elderly, the sick, and the dying in the Baltimore area for more than 50 years. As their motto proclaims, “Our Mission is Compassion. Our Mission is Dignity.

Our Mission is Mercy.” For Sisters Kathy and Michele, Stella Maris’ mission offers a good fit for living out their own Franciscan mission. Both sisters serve as part of a pastoral care team to which they bring a compassionate presence to those who need them.

Compassion, Dignity, and Mercy: *A Franciscan Approach*



“WE HAVE SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP FAMILIES IN THEIR SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS AND TO BE WITH FOLKS AT THEIR END-OF-LIFE JOURNEY.”



Sister Kathy Dauses often meets with families in a beautiful room overlooking the Loch Raven Reservoir. Families of patients in the hospice unit also utilize the outdoor patio to visit or just to have a quiet time for reflection.

Easing the Pain of Difficult Transitions

Sister Kathy began working part-time in the inpatient hospice unit at Stella Maris in 2003 and eventually was hired as a full-time pastoral care chaplain on the unit. Bringing a loved one to hospice can be an especially painful experience for family members but the beautiful environment in the inpatient hospice unit at Stella Maris helps make a difficult situation less traumatic. “They come with a sense of dread because hospice means their loved one is going to die soon,” Sister Kathy said. “To have everything so beautiful relieves the formality they’ve experienced in the hospital.”

Located on the top floors, the hospice unit’s large windows overlook the picturesque Loch Raven Reservoir. One gentleman who brought his mother to the hospice unit told Sister Kathy, “My mother never experienced anything this beautiful in her life. It’s so great that she is going to be able to have this toward the end of her life.”

While the environment is comforting, families are understandably sad and distressed about losing a loved one and Sister Kathy is always available to listen to family members, help them with the grieving process, and guide them through the final days of their loved one’s life. “It’s a sensitive and delicate time for many people because

they’re bringing their loved one into our care and trusting that we will help them to die peacefully,” she said.

A peaceful death for patients is a primary focus for the staff on the hospice unit—a difficult goal to achieve, particularly when there are unresolved family issues. “I sometimes talk about unfinished business with families,” Sister Kathy said. “Without prying into their personal affairs, I ask about siblings who aren’t there and inquire whether their mom or dad might want to see them.”

At times Sister Kathy coaches a family through the dying process. “Some families have never really journeyed with a person

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Sister Michele prays with residents in the nursing care unit and shares a daily scripture passage with them.



Sister Michele admires the artistry of resident Angelina Pastore. Angelina and other residents enjoy making bead necklaces.

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who is dying,” she said. “I try to meet with them as a family and give them suggestions on how they can be with their loved one. They always feel so helpless. They want to do something to help.” Sister Kathy emphasizes the importance of just being with the dying person—not trying to force them to eat or drink or open their eyes. She also encourages family members to talk with the dying person, even if they’re not sure they will be heard.

Providing Calm and Comfort

Father Larry Johnson, who serves as director of the pastoral care department at Stella Maris, said Sister Kathy definitely brings a “Franciscan calm” to her ministry and is extremely perceptive about family dynamics. “She is a very calming, peaceful presence in what can be an emotional time for the family,” Father Larry said. “Some families bring all their dysfunctional baggage with them and Sister Kathy’s very good at wading into the middle of all that and bringing some order to the situation.”

Debbie Bittrick, a registered nurse who has worked on the inpatient hospice unit for 19 years, has also witnessed Sister Kathy’s calming presence when a patient is dying. “I think the families find her a comforting presence,” Debbie said. “She’s very compassionate and patients find comfort in the presence of somebody who is caring and wants to spend some time with them—even if they don’t want to pray or talk about religion.”

Sister Kathy feels her ministry has been effective when family members are able to

acknowledge that, although they will grieve the death of a loved one, they can also express gratitude that their loved one will not suffer any more.

A Response to the Needs of the Elderly and Infirm

Sister Michele Kriczky also finds her work as a pastoral care chaplain in Stella Maris’ skilled nursing and dementia unit a way to minister that is in keeping with her own Franciscan values. Families face an emotional and challenging experience when confronted with the need to move a loved one into a nursing home. For the past twenty-one years, Sister Michele has assisted families with this transition. “When we get a new admission, I’m there for family members who are experiencing all kinds of emotional reactions when they have to admit their loved one,” Sister Michele said. “My role is to be present and to be supportive to them.”

Sister Michele also looks forward to her interactions with residents at Stella Maris. “I really just enjoy the energy I get from them,” she said. “In long-term care, you get to appreciate their lives, their history, and their stories because you have more time with them. I really get to be part of their family and be present to them in so many other ways.” Being present to the residents, especially those with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, is a special part of Sister Michele’s ministry. When residents become agitated or restless, she is there to comfort them. “In my Franciscan way, I like to bring that calming, peaceful, and caring atmosphere into their lives,” said

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Remember in prayer the elderly, those who are dying, their families, and those who minister with them.
- Do you have an adult daycare in your area? Find out how you might be of service.
- Become a volunteer at a local hospice. There are many ways you can be of service.
- Do you have a relative, friend, or neighbor who is a full-time caregiver? Ask what you can do to help them. Perhaps you can run errands for them or relieve them for a few hours by staying with their loved one.

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.



Sister Kathy Daus supports members of the Mann family at their mother's bedside. The Manns are one of many families who expressed appreciation for the compassionate support Sister Kathy offered them at the time of a loved one's death.

Sister Michele. "They may not remember my name but they know I'm a familiar face they see every day. Even if they're agitated and I walk over to them and hold their hand or rub their arm, they look at me and I'm sure they think, 'This is a face I know.'"

Sister Michele said she is amazed when her patients with dementia and Alzheimer's can readily recite prayers and sing hymns. "It just blows me away every day when I tap into that reservoir of spirituality," she said. "When I make the sign of the cross or when I lift the host to give them Communion, they're right with me because it's always been a part of their lives. They can still sing some of the same hymns and they can say the Our Father."

For Sister Michele, the calling to work with the aging and infirm is one that began early in her life. "I've always had a love for the elderly," she said. "My mother used to tell me that when I was little, I would get on the bus and gravitate to the older folks. I had a 'curiosity' back then but I've grown to understand the wisdom and the life experiences of the elderly—their stories, and their life history. Their wisdom fascinates me and I love listening to them."



Sister Kathy covers a patient with a prayer shawl. The shawls are made by volunteers who pray for the recipients.

Always There to Listen and Help

Residents like Julia Rose appreciate Sister Michele's willingness to listen. "Her heart just opens up to us," said Julia who has lived at the home for two years. "No matter how busy she is, she always has time for you. If you have a need, no matter what it is, she's always there. When my brother died, she was there to comfort me. She prayed with me and we talked about my brother. She's a blessing."

Sister Michele brings a variety of gifts to her ministry, including being nonjudgmental and patient. "She is very quick to respond and is very sensitive to residents and their families," Father Larry said. "Residents are quick to seek her out and families know they can call on her. When Sister Michele

walks onto the unit, the residents are very aware that she's there and they desire her presence. They want one-on-one interaction with her because they know her."

Mutually Blessed

Both Sister Kathy and Sister Michele feel that they themselves receive many blessings from their ministries with the elderly and the dying. "To be able to minister in hospice is a blessing in itself," Sister Kathy said. "We have so many opportunities to help families in their spiritual journeys and to be with folks at their end-of-life journey."

Sister Michele is grateful that her ministry at Stella Maris provides a way to be able to fulfill the Franciscan charism of serving the marginalized and oppressed. "Some of our residents have no family and they are among the forgotten," she said. "I'm a strong advocate for all of them, regardless of whether they have family or not. In a way we become their family and their advocate. As a chaplain—and in being that Franciscan presence there—I want to be sure they get the compassionate care they deserve." ■

For more information or comments on this article, contact goodnews@osfphila.org.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Taking Action — Holding Companies Accountable

Once again, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have taken the “necessary risks” to add our prophetic voice to corporate engagements and work to transform corporate policies and practices. The following actions give insight into our shareholder engagement for 2010-2011. “Executives have amassed untold wealth while a billion people suffer from poverty and food insecurity,” Sister Nora Nash said at the Goldman Sachs annual meeting on May 6, 2011. “We’ll never know the impact of the message but we’ve taken the risk to speak to the issue and stand with those who cannot speak for themselves.” Another high profile action for this year was our resolution with McDonald’s, asking them to assess whether or not

their policy responses regarding fast food create negative impacts on children’s health, including childhood obesity and diet-related diseases. The Sisters of St. Francis have also been at the forefront of hydraulic fracturing for the past three years and are still very concerned that our national energy policy and the gas industry have taken precedence over community health, human rights, and our environment. These examples are just a few of the many actions taken in 2010-2011. To review the entire good works of corporate social responsibility, visit our website: http://www.osfphila.org/justice_peace/csr_success.



Sister Nora Nash and Tom McCaney, director and associate director of corporate social responsibility, address policy and justice issues with CEOs and boards of major corporations. To view more of their efforts, visit the CSR section of our website: www.osfphila.org.



▲ *The sisters bless Sister Rose Mary Eve Holter as she renews her vows.*

▶ *Sister Esther Anderson, center, welcomes candidates Simona Botezatu, left, and Sara Marks, right, into the novitiate program and presented the women with congregational gifts.*



A Warm Welcome

Summer 2011 boasted of several significant celebrations for our sisters. On July 17 more than 120 sisters gathered in Our Lady of Angels Chapel in Aston to witness the reception into the novitiate of our candidates, Simona Botezatu and Sara Marks. Each candidate spoke of her desire to enter the novitiate and were welcomed by Sister Esther Anderson,

our congregational minister. Sister Esther presented the novices with copies of the congregation’s constitutions and the Third Order Regular Rule, a Franciscan rosary, and a San Damiano crucifix. Celebrations continued on August 6 when sisters again gathered in Our Lady of Angels Chapel to witness the renewal of vows of Sister Rose Mary Eve Holter. Following the beautiful Eucharistic liturgy, the visiting sisters joined the motherhouse community for supper.



In Memoriam

Sister Helen Young
(formerly Sister Helen Marynia)
June 2, 2011

Sister Helen Martin
(formerly Sister Mary Ethel)
June 9, 2011

Sister Cecil Gabriel DePrisco
June 28, 2011

Sister Margarita Guggy
(formerly Sister Margaret Teresa)
July 10, 2011

Sister Francis Regina McBride
July 13, 2011

Sister Marie Moughan
(formerly Sister Joachim Marie)
July 23, 2011

Sister Rosemary Matt
(formerly Sister Xavier)
August 17, 2011

Sister Miriam Eidenshink
(formerly Sister Mary Robert)
August 18, 2011

Sister Ann Teresa Mundy
September 5, 2011



Turning 100 Never Looked So Good!

Sister Ann Teresa Mundy, who would have turned 100 on December 4, 2011, was honored with an Exemplary Citizenship Award by the Delaware County Office on Aging. Sister Ann Teresa went home to the Lord on September 5, 2011.



Sister Marie Lucey Joins Franciscan Action Network (FAN)

Since 2003 Sister Marie Lucey has served as Associate Director for Social Mission of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). In this capacity, Sister Marie served as LCWR's liaison to several justice and peace organizations including the Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking, Justice for Immigrants of CRS/USCCB, Catholic Coalition for Climate Change, Jubilee USA, National Religious Coalition Against Torture, and Religious Working Group on Water. She is also an ex-officio board member of NETWORK, a Catholic social justice lobby, and a participating observer at board meetings of the Catholic Health Association (CHA).



In September 2011, Sister Marie joined the staff of Franciscan Action Network (FAN) as Director of Advocacy and Member Relations. Read and learn more about FAN by visiting their website: www.franciscanaction.org.

Learning to Address Human and Community Needs Together

Nancy Laplante, an assistant professor of nursing at Neumann University, recently published an article in the *Community Works Journal* entitled "A Nursing Program Comes Together with Community Supported Agriculture." The CSA in point was, of course, our own Red Hill Farm. Dr. Laplante drew on her own love of gardening to design a service learning project for her nursing students. Projects included work that would normally be expected of farm experience—planting, weeding, and tending the growing crops. However, the students also helped to build a cement retaining wall, painted shelves to hold the summer's harvest, and helped to make new plant beds—a chore which involved moving 300 cinder blocks from one part of the farm to another. "The keys here for me are the reflective component which helps students connect the service to coursework and life and the focus on addressing human needs," Nancy shared. "What better way to address human needs than through the food we eat and organic farming." To read Dr. Laplante's article, visit <http://www.communityworksjournal.org/articles/aarticles-text/nursinggardenlaplante.html>.



► Sister Catherine Ellen Kearney, who introduced Joel to the congregation many years ago, reflects that “he is a shining light for all of us.”



FoCUS

JOEL ZIFF

FOR JOEL, WORK IS MINISTRY, ESPECIALLY IN HIS COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE AND HIS SENSITIVITY TO THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO ARE POOR.

After sharing how he first met the congregation, Joel Ziff remarked “To know a holy Franciscan woman is a double blessing.” Joel was referring to Sister Catherine Ellen Kearney who introduced him to the congregation. At that time in 1967, Joel was a partner in Arthur Andersen and Co. responsible for healthcare. He began working with us at the motherhouse; later he interacted with the Franciscan Health System where he came to know many of the sisters in healthcare. “I’ve worked with so many of you over the years,” he reflected. For Joel, work is ministry, especially in his commitment to justice and his sensitivity to the needs of those who are poor.

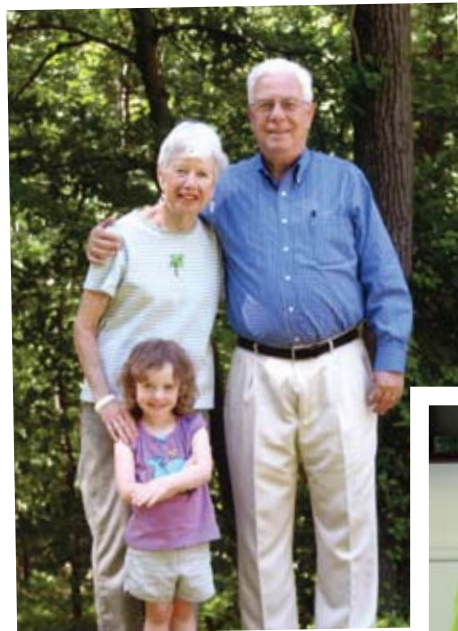
Joel and his wife, Tookie, live in Plymouth Meeting; their five children live nearby. Joel’s love for his children and their families—including 14 grandchildren—flowed through his words, the gentle smile on his face, and the proud stories he recalled.

Joel spoke often of the many influences from religious people in his life. He has not only been influenced; he has responded in service on boards and committees too numerous to list. As Tookie observed, “He has done so many things and he never speaks of himself.” Joel was ordained a deacon for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1990. Although officially retired, his life remains one of service and he generously responds when needs arise. Presently, Joel works with the Sisters of Mercy—another important religious influence.

Joel’s involvement with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia has continued. He is presently finishing his term on the Financial Advisory Board. Joel also shared his expertise and background on the board of Neumann University. The Senior Sisters Advisory

Board was fortunate to have him as a member in its beginning days.

Joel is a fortunate man who has been “doubly blessed” in Tookie who has shared his faith and his desire to serve. Joel was blessed to meet a “holy Franciscan woman”; we have been blessed to have met Joel. Without using the initials OSF, he lives the Spirit of Francis; his relationship with the congregation has been a gift.



▲ Sister Esther Anderson said, “Joel and his wife, Tookie (pictured with their granddaughter Maria Ziff), continually reflect Franciscan hearts and spirit in all their efforts to assist the Sisters of St. Francis.”



▲ Joel was honored by the congregation for his over 44 years of service to the Sisters of St. Francis; among those present for the occasion were Sister Jean Margaret McDevitt (seated center) and Sister Theresa Yanda.

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Since 1855 the Sisters of St. Francis have responded to needs wherever and whenever they were made known. We have ministered on the east and west coasts, in Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska. Beyond the United States, our sisters have responded to our brothers and sisters in Africa, Haiti, Ireland, and the Caribbean.

As a congregation, we have gone from 1200 women religious to 560. Today, our median age is 75 years old. As a result, we no longer have a large enough base of support from younger sisters in active ministry which is why your assistance is more crucial than ever.

Are you willing and able to help? Your support will help us to realize our goal and bring our capital campaign to closure. Your assistance is more crucial than ever to support our retired sisters and our ministries. Read more about our campaign efforts by visiting our website, <http://www.osfphila.org/support/campaign>.

The Sisters of St. Francis
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609 S. Convent Road
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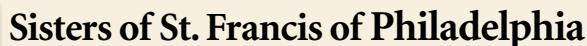
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Accolades Abound

The *Good News* has been getting a lot of attention in recent days. We were awarded the 2011 Golden Hermes Award for best overall design of a color publication. The Hermes Creative Award is an international competition that honors the messengers and creators of this revolution.



Sister Nora Nash Honored at the Franciscan Federation



One of the highlights of the Franciscan Federation's annual conference is the recognition of one sister from each congregation whose life exemplifies the spirit of the conference theme. This year's conference, held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin,

focused on the theme "Becoming a Sacred Flame: Francis, Clare, and John's Gospel." The congregation's 2011 recipient was Sister Nora Nash! Among the criteria established was the call for sisters who spark enthusiasm for the charism, who allow their ministry to be a light to the world, and who live the "Word Made Flesh"—empowering others to "become" and doing so with a passionate love of life and respect for all people. Sister Nora, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility for our congregation, is a tireless advocate for justice and does not hesitate to confront the leadership of a vast array of corporate organizations to challenge their practices. At her recommendation and on our behalf, she has granted monies from our Social Justice Fund to small organizations that work to improve the lot of struggling people both here and abroad. Due to Sister Nora's spark for the charism and enthusiasm for the mission, we are present in places in the world where we would never have been able to go otherwise. Sister Nora enfleshes in so many ways the Word of God present among us.



In September 1976 four happy Sisters of St. Francis (from bottom: Sisters Anne Mancini, Mary Lonergan, Marie Joseph Kerr, and Nora McCarthy) boarded a plane for Zambia, Africa. This journey was a joyous one because it marked a historic event for the congregation—the first ministry for our sisters in Africa. Sister Nora, pictured (inset) assisting a disabled child, remains in Africa, ministering currently with the children and adults at Nyumbani Village. Two other sisters, Sister Frances Cassidy and Sister Rose Monica Katusz, happily carry on the Franciscan presence in Africa by educating the youth at Lawson High School in Kitui, Kenya. Read their story on page 4.

