

Volume 15.2 Summer 2012

NEWS

A Publication of



THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Also in this issue:

- Villa Maria Offers Exceptional Services for Exceptional Students
- People & Places
- Foundation Annual Report

Macdonald Center Provides
Hope *in the*
Heart *of* **Portland**

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

The Mosaic of Life

Each year, we gather at our motherhouse to recognize our employees and to award those who have ministered with us for designated lengths of time. This year the theme focused on the image of a mosaic. Employees placed stones in a vessel signifying that each individual is a part of a whole. Alone, one stone, one color, is incomplete; brought together, each individual gift is part of the one creation that we share.

Henri Nouwen, in his book, Can You Drink this Cup?, compares community to a large mosaic and the people in it to little pieces of stone.



**Sister Esther Anderson, OSF
Congregational Minister**

Together in the mosaic, each stone is indispensable and makes a unique contribution. If we bring our faces close to the mosaic, we can admire the beauty of each unique stone. However, when we step back from it, we can see that the stones reveal to us a beautiful picture that no one stone can demonstrate by itself. Together, they can unveil the face of God to the world.

In this Good News, we encounter Sister Theresa Lamkin and the staff and volunteers of Macdonald Center in Old Town, Portland, Oregon, who carry out their mission to enhance the lives of the forgotten. The people served become part of an extended family where they not only receive needed services but are also brought into a circle of love. Each person is genuinely cared for, has a place of standing, and forms an important part of the community.

We also meet Sister Joyce Helfrich and the staff at Villa Maria School in Timonium, Maryland. Sister Joyce is passionate about helping people who struggle psychologically, emotionally, educationally, and socially. Everyone at Villa Maria works as a team and students are appreciated as whole individuals. Children are not judged but loved. Each path a child forges is unique and special but they are all part of the Villa Maria community.

In the mosaic of life, each of us has a unique part to play. Together we can show a world in need how our combined rainbow colors of faith, hope, and love can truly make a difference.

St. Esther Anderson, OSF



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For the forgotten poor in the Old Town neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, the programs offered by the Macdonald Center are a lifeline. By developing deep, abiding relationships and offering support where needed, Sister Theresa Lamkin and the staff at the center offer emotional, spiritual, and financial support to individuals who would be otherwise all alone.

Written by Deb Litman
Photography by Tim LaBarge

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Many of the students at Villa Maria School in Timonium, Maryland, where Sister Joyce Helfrich teaches, have an uphill battle. Many have physical or learning disabilities; all have arrived at Villa Maria after failing to succeed elsewhere. Although her job can be difficult at times, Sister Joyce has made it her life's work to create an environment where children feel safe, respected, and able to learn.

Written by Deb Litman
Photography by Andrea Cipriani-Mecchi

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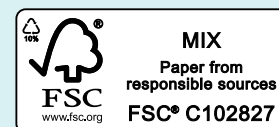
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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, and sisters. Through this publication, we hope to share the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

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.

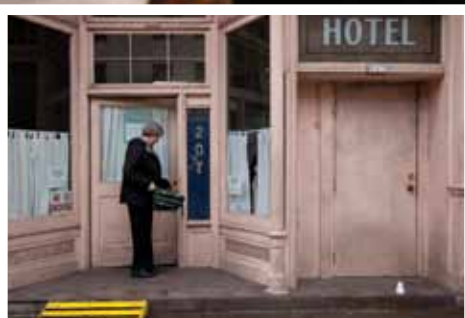
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On the cover: Sister Theresa visits with Henry as part of Macdonald Center's visiting program. The program provides personal connections to those who are poor and marginalized in Portland's Old Town neighborhood.

Residents of Old Town's many single-room occupancy hotels spend much of their time in the cramped room that serves as their home. For those who have lost connections to family and other friends, visits from their friends at the Macdonald Center are the highlight of the week.



Sister Theresa enters the Independent Living Services offices of the Macdonald Center. There, the staff acts as family to more than 80 individuals with mental illness, disabilities, or addiction. The care and services provided help members live independently with as much stability, dignity, and comfort as possible.

“WHEN PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEVER HAD MUCH LOVE AND ATTENTION FINALLY GET ENOUGH OF IT, THEY ARE ABLE TO GIVE IT TO OTHERS.”

Seventy-eight year old veteran, Henry, lives alone in a single-room occupancy (SRO) hotel in Portland, Oregon's poor Old Town neighborhood. The building is run-down, his windowless room is the size of a typical parking space, and he shares a bathroom down the hall. Age and illness keep Henry from venturing out of his room too often and he has no family to visit him. A quick

look at his apartment wall, though, reveals photo after photo of smiling faces—“my friends,” he'll tell you if you ask.

Until three years ago, Henry's walls were empty and in many ways so were his days. With few connections to other people, Henry often went weeks without someone to talk to. Then one day, two women knocked on his door and stayed to talk and to listen. They were volunteers from



Macdonald Center Provides Hope *in the* Heart *of* Portland

Macdonald
Center

David,
605 NW Couch Street
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www.macdcenter.org

Sorry we missed you

Maria and Jan stopped
by to say hello. Have a
good week.

If people are not around when their visitors arrive, they are left a note to remind them that someone is thinking of them.

Macdonald Center, a program whose mission is to enhance the lives of Old Town's forgotten poor through relationships, service, and housing. The pictures on Henry's wall are photos of these women and other visiting volunteers.

Macdonald Center's Outreach Visiting Program serves 250 people each week through a team of 200 community volunteers and students. Visitors remain as

consistent as possible to allow for personal relationships to grow. Most of the people the visitors call on are just managing to survive in one of the city's 21 SROs. Most have nothing but a roof over their heads, many suffer from physical disabilities, about 70% struggle with mental illness, some battle addiction, and almost all have been abandoned by their families.

According to Sister Theresa Lamkin, pastoral coordinator at Macdonald Center, the visiting program addresses what is often the most pressing problem these people face—social isolation. "Although our folks can find programs to help feed and clothe them, they don't have families and friends who care or who check on them to see if they are all right. We visit them. We listen to them," said Sister Theresa. "For me, it is

a meaningful way to live out the values of the Sisters of St. Francis—working with the poor and marginalized in our society."

For Henry, these visits are a lifeline. In addition to his treasured photographs, his wall is adorned with one other item—a calendar on which the only appointments scheduled are the twice-a-week visits he receives from his friends at Macdonald Center.

Just Stopping By

Volunteers from Macdonald Center, named for Maybelle Clark Macdonald, a compassionate community member with a heart for those who are poor and homeless, have been knocking on doors since 1991 when the center was founded by Father Richard

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The walk to noon Mass gives Sister Theresa and Macdonald Center director Marylee King a chance to talk about the day's joys and challenges.



Mass at a downtown Portland chapel is a daily ritual for Sister Theresa and Marylee.



Giving the "forgotten poor" an opportunity to be genuinely known and cared for is at the core of the Macdonald Center's mission. Here, Sister Theresa talks with Laverne Tate.



"OUR JOB IS TO JOURNEY WITH PEOPLE, LETTING THEM LEAD US IN THE DIRECTION THEY NEED TO GO RATHER THAN DRAGGING THEM WHERE WE THINK THEY SHOULD GO."

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Berg. Since those initial "cold calls," many friends have been found by word of mouth. The visits themselves are as agenda-free as a front-porch conversation with a neighbor. Sarah Knuth, outreach coordinator at the center, describes it as a "care, not cure" approach. "Our job is to journey with people, letting them lead us in the direction they need to go rather than dragging them where we think they should go. We listen with an active ear like we would with our favorite person."

For some people, just knowing someone cares enough to stop by makes all the difference. Several years ago, a pair of volunteers were assigned to visit Brenda every Tuesday but repeated knocks at her door remained unanswered. Each time, the visitors left a note indicating they had been there. After several months of visiting with no contact, Sarah and the volunteers began to wonder whether the woman simply wasn't interested in having visitors. So the next Tuesday, they skipped the stop at Brenda's door. The following day, Brenda came rushing into the center carrying an armful of little notes—every one that had been left on her door in the preceding months. It turned out that Brenda became paranoid if she stayed home all day and so spent her days riding the bus. "But I know if I really needed someone I could stay home on Tuesday," Brenda told Sarah. "And I can't tell you how much it means to see those notes and know that someone cares."

Knowing You Are Known

In addition to the visiting program, the Macdonald Center provides a host of other services designed to nurture mind, body, and spirit. Gathering spaces give people a place to come together and birthday and holiday parties affirm each individual's special place in the community. Once a year, the center even puts on a talent show where people can showcase their gifts. Some sing or dance or tell stories but the talents are as diverse as the people themselves. One year a man came with a coloring book that he had filled in very carefully with crayons. "He went through showing and describing each page," said Laurie Davis who serves as independent living services coordinator at the center. "People were so respectful. They admired each picture and complimented his color choices. It was the most supportive and wonderful space."

Over and over again, the staff at Macdonald Center sees that kind of positive interaction, fundamentally changing people's sense of self. "When people who have never had much love and attention finally get enough of it, they are able to give it to others," said Laurie.

A Helping Hand

Of course, walking with people on their journeys through life isn't all fun and games. It entails a lot of hard work, particularly with people coping with significant mental and physical illness. "Our people



▲ *It's the little things that matter—like remembering to help celebrate someone's birthday. Above, P.J. Mapes blows out candles at a birthday celebration hosted by the Macdonald Center.*

► *In addition to helping P.J. celebrate his birthday, the party gives residents a chance to interact with one another and to get to know the staff at the Macdonald Center better.*



have intensive needs and erratic behavior," said Laurie. "They are demanding."

To help keep members as healthy as possible, the center's Independent Living Services Program provides medication storage and assistance. People come to the center seven days a week to receive medication that is too complicated for them to keep track of on their own.

In addition, the center serves as representative payee for individuals who are incapable of managing their own social security or SSI payments. This means that

members' disability checks come directly to Macdonald Center. Staff members are in charge of banking, paying bills, helping people budget, and releasing spending money according to how much responsibility each person can handle. Some are able to get a week's worth of cash at once to use for food and other sundries. Others come every few days. Still others rely entirely on Macdonald Center staff to manage their expenses.

Some people come to Macdonald Center to find help dealing with insurance com-

panies, doctors' offices, case workers, and lawyers. Some need assistance with laundry, grocery shopping, apartment maintenance, or personal grooming. The care they receive is extremely individualized. What Macdonald Center staff will do for people knows no bounds. What they will not do, however, is anything they feel people can do for themselves. "We have one veteran who has trouble dialing the phone to contact the VA but is able to do the talking once we connect him," said Sister Theresa.

"We will make the call together but we have

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HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Keep those who are poor and marginalized in your daily prayers.
- Visit those in your community who are socially isolated. Check with local churches and social service organizations to see if a visiting program already exists. If not, try partnering with an area agency to start one.
- Help elderly and disabled neighbors by escorting them to the doctor's office, the grocery store, or the bank.
- Do you have a particular skill or talent? Provide pro bono professional services to those who can't afford them. Legal work, massage therapy, dental hygiene, and medical care are scarce and valuable commodities for the struggling poor.
- Use the attached envelope to make a donation to the Macdonald Center.

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him speak for himself. We honor people and respect their abilities so that they can begin to honor and respect themselves."

Food For The Soul

As people's basic needs for food and shelter, love and companionship are met, many find themselves able to begin looking for deeper meaning in their lives. As pastoral coordinator of the center, Sister Theresa facilitates satisfying that spiritual hunger. "I try to be present to people's spiritual needs, whatever they are," said Sister Theresa.

One woman who cannot read wants Sister Theresa to sit with her and read her a Bible story. Others want help in finding services from their own spiritual traditions—whether that means a Buddhist meditation group or a Jewish Passover Seder. Others simply need to be reminded that they are worthy of God's love.

"Theresa radiates and mirrors the presence of God and I believe she has been instrumental in our getting back to the spiritual essence of our mission," said Center Director Marylee King. "Many times non-profits that are started by religious groups can begin to get so careful not to offend

that our faith and spiritual side get white-washed but Theresa has helped us to keep it as an integral part of who we are."

The center's pastoral program offers daily reflection, a men's spirituality group, a women's sacred circle, and a monthly volunteer reflection. When someone in the community dies, Sister Theresa conducts a memorial service to celebrate that person's life. Sister Theresa also takes a group of approximately 20 women on a spiritual retreat once or twice a year. The experience gives the women an otherwise unimaginable opportunity for quiet reflection—a chance to rest in God's love and explore what it means to be a woman of faith, hope, and love. In addition Sister Theresa works with seminarians and Franciscans to offer them an opportunity for weekly pastoral experience and monthly theological reflections.

"It is humbling to work with people who are so marginalized, especially those with mental illness, and yet whose closeness to God and whose insights are so inspirational," said Marylee. She tells the story of one man in particular whom she and

"Most of the people who come to the Macdonald Center have roofs over their heads and enough food to eat," said Sister Theresa. "What they don't have is someone to listen to them and care about them, someone to show them that they matter." Here, Jim Huck visits with Sister Theresa.

“IT IS HUMBLING TO WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE SO MARGINALIZED, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS, AND YET WHOSE CLOSENESS TO GOD AND WHOSE INSIGHTS ARE SO INSPIRATIONAL.”



▲ Sarah Knuth, outreach coordinator at Macdonald Center, visits with Von Treba M. Griffith (known as Lil Bit). “So often our folks have been treated as ‘less than,’” said Sarah. “We treat them with the dignity they deserve as human beings.”



▼ The staff at the Macdonald Center gathers daily for reflection.



◀ The volunteer board holds name tags for the more than 350 people who donate their time to the center. The work of Macdonald Center volunteers totals approximately 18,000 hours each year—equal to the work of nine full-time employees.

Sister Theresa see at the downtown chapel where they go to Mass each day. Robert, who is schizophrenic, often calls out loudly to people he recognizes. After one particularly challenging morning at work, Marylee was complaining to Sister Theresa as they walked to Mass. But as they entered the chapel, Robert was there and ready to greet them. “I love you, Marylee King! I love you, Marylee King! I love you, Marylee King!” he shouted. “And I thought to myself, ‘That is probably what God is saying to us as we enter but we are too busy to hear it,’” said Marylee. “It brought me back to what is important.”

In The Arms Of Family

As it is for most people, what is important to the people of Old Town Portland is family. And, in a very real way, that is precisely what Macdonald Center is—a supportive family that treats each and every person in need as one would his or her own mother or dearest friend. Together these people share the trials and triumphs of everyday life—coping with the mundane, weathering the storms, and rejoicing in the successes. Together they develop deep, abiding relationships and offer and receive unconditional love.

“The people who come to the center are not clients; they are friends,” said Sister Theresa. “Many of them can be very challenging but we never give up on them. They know that they are genuinely cared for and that they have a place of standing in our community. That is really what everyone wants and deserves.”

At Macdonald Center, that is just what they get. ■

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



◀ Two virtual ninth-graders, Karee York and Tamira Sherrod, presented Sister Esther Anderson, congregational minister, with a painting done by a DNA student.

PENNSYLVANIA

On March 10 **Drexel Neumann Academy**, an independent Catholic school in Chester, Pennsylvania, celebrated its fifth anniversary. Begun as a Pre-K-8th grade school, Drexel Neumann provides a safe haven for children in the Chester area. As evidence of the school's success, Drexel Neumann added a virtual ninth grade for the past school year. In addition to faculty, students, parents, and board members, more than 350 guests were on hand for the gala. Several groups received special recognition, including the school's cosponsors. Five years ago, when the announcement was made that St. Katharine Drexel, the last Catholic School in Chester, was slated for closure, Neumann University, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and St. Katharine Drexel Parish joined ranks and Drexel Neumann Academy was born. Also recognized at the anniversary celebration were AmeriMercy Health, one of Drexel Neumann's community partners, and the Connelly Foundation for their support of the virtual ninth grade. The school's promising future is evidenced in their plans for a virtual tenth grade to be added for the 2012-2013 school year!

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.

OREGON

For the past 12 years, **Sister Loretta Schaff** has served as an adjunct Catholic chaplain at Lewis and Clark College in Portland. As she moves on to other ministries (teaching at Marylhurst University, teaching OFM postulants, serving as a spiritual assistant to a local Secular Franciscan fraternity, and doing retreat work and spiritual direction), Sister Loretta recalled memories of Lewis and Clark. "My fondest memories are of times that students responded to different programs and especially the times I was privileged to prepare students for full initiation into the Church or to prepare others for confirmation," she recalled. "I will truly miss the energy of the youth that surrounded me." Sister Loretta's last official act at Lewis and Clark was to deliver the invocation at the graduate school's commencement. She found this particularly fitting both because most of her ministry was at the grad school campus and because the grad school is located on the grounds of "The Hill," our former western provincialate.



PENNSYLVANIA

On April 29 our sisters gathered in Our Lady of Angels Convent chapel for a special liturgy welcoming **Sister Maria Orlandini** as a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Sister Maria had previously made her perpetual profession of vows as a Cannossian Sister. Over the years she felt that God was calling her to a different way of living out that vowed commitment. She requested to transfer to the Sisters of St. Francis and for several years continued her discernment as she lived and worked with our sisters. During the liturgy on April 29, Sister Maria was officially received into the congregation, professing her vows for the first time as a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia.

The chapel at Our Lady of Angels Convent filled with the sounds of joy as congregational minister, Sister Esther Anderson, officially welcomed Sister Maria Orlandini as a member of the congregation.





Sister Pat Millen, center, executive director of St. Joseph Family Center, and Gonzaga University students gather for a group photo during the 18th annual April's Angels project at the center. (Photo courtesy of Dan Pelle, The Spokesman-Review)

WASHINGTON

Gonzaga University's 18th annual April's Angels project provided a great boon for **St. Joseph Family Center** in Spokane. Teamed up with the nonprofit group, Rebuilding Together Spokane, the volunteers arrived—180 strong and comprised of students, faculty, alumni, staff, trustees, and regents. They spent a busy Saturday renovating and repairing. Tasks ranged from scraping paint, repainting, digging sod to help with parking lot drainage, and doing yard work to sanding furniture and cleaning outdoor statues. For projects that required more skilled labor, members of Gonzaga's maintenance department were there to lend a hand. To learn more about St. Joseph Family Center, visit their website, <http://www.sjfconline.org>.



DELAWARE

Each year Delaware's HIV Consortium presents its Red Ribbon Awards to individuals and corporations in recognition of the positive impact they have had on direct client service, philanthropy, community leadership, and volunteerism in the field of HIV/AIDS. This year the Guardian Angel Award was presented posthumously to **Sister Dolores Macklin** for her many years of service to people whose lives have been affected by HIV/AIDS. In her honor, the award has been renamed the "Sister Dolores Macklin Guardian Angel Award." Sister Dolores was one of the consortium's longest serving board members. An article in the consortium's newsletter stated, "She will be greatly missed but her spirit lives on in all of the people she touched over her many years of service."

DELAWARE

The Ministry of Caring's Mardi Gras dinner was hosted by **Sister Jean Rupertus**, program director at House of Joseph II. The 200 guests enjoyed a New Orleans-style dinner. After dinner Sister Jean spoke about the people who live at House of Joseph II which offers permanent housing for people with AIDS who have no other housing option. "Besides caring for them medically, we all share a responsibility for loving life, respect, and dignity back into them," she said. "Although we can't cure their disease, we can cure them of the hard emotions they encounter when people hear they have AIDS. We are surrounded by miracles every day." This year's Mardi Gras dinner raised \$5,658 to support resident services. The Ministry of Caring is looking forward to making the celebration an annual event.



MASSACHUSETTS

Sisters Frances Will and Mary Walsh recently attended the 2012 Blessed Sacrament School Gala in Walpole. Both sisters had previously ministered as principal of Blessed Sacrament. The gala followed a Hollywood theme—complete with the awarding of Oscar Statues and a Legacy Winners Wall of Fame. Sisters Frances and Mary accepted this year's Legacy Award in the name of the Sisters of St. Francis. The Legacy Award recognizes the remarkable contributions recipients have made to the character, mission, and legacy of Blessed Sacrament School.

FLORIDA

January was a busy month at **St. John Vianney School** in Orlando—and by extension for the congregation as well. The school, which opened in January 1962 with only a few grades and a group of dedicated lay teachers, celebrated its 50th anniversary. The following September, thanks to the prayers of parishioners and the perseverance of the pastor, four Sisters of St. Francis and five new classrooms were added. Today the school has more than 600 students and 64 staff members. Documenting its academic achievements, the U.S. Department of Education selected the school as a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. At the 50th anniversary celebration, **Sister Esther Anderson** was one of the keynote speakers. She outlined the congregation's early history at the school and accepted, in the name of the congregation, the parish's 2011 Stewardship Award. The award was given "in gratitude for serving as living witnesses to God's abundant blessings." Principal **Sister Elizabeth Murphy** also received special recognition in January. She traveled to a principal's meeting, knowing that awards were to be presented but not suspecting that she would be one of the recipients. To her surprise she received the Most Reverend Norbert M. Dorsey Award for Distinguished Service to Catholic Education.

The surprises continued when Sister Elizabeth Murphy returned home to find her office decorated and her staff waiting to congratulate her.



Sister Joyce Helfrich works with Michel, 15; Tatianna, 12; and Shydae, 14 in the library of Villa Maria School. Villa Maria provides intensive educational and clinical services for students who have failed to thrive in more traditional settings.



Villa Maria offers Exceptional Services for Exceptional Students

It's a Tuesday morning at Villa Maria School in Timonium, Maryland, and Sister Joyce Helfrich and other staff members are greeting students as they get off the bus at this suburban school set among the rolling hills. This routine serves two purposes. It helps the students feel welcome and it allows staff members to get a feel for where students are coming from on any given day. It's one of the constants that students can count on at Villa Maria, a 12-month, day and residential

school that provides intensive educational and clinical services for children ages 6-13 with severe emotional, learning, and other disabilities.

For Sister Joyce, being at Villa Maria is a natural fit. Her ministry has focused on special education since the 1970s when she realized as a young teacher in the Catholic schools that there was not enough being done for elementary school students struggling to learn to read. "Remedial reading services at that time were very limited," said

Sister Joyce. "There was a remedial reading teacher who would take a few students out of their regular classroom each week to work with them but it wasn't enough. I felt that if there were a special education classroom, children could be given what they needed to learn every day within their own classroom environment."

It was at that point that Sister Joyce decided to pursue a master's degree in special education and reading and, at the same time, developed a dedicated classroom in

“EVERYONE WORKS AS A TEAM—PARENTS, TEACHERS, THERAPISTS—
AND WE LOOK AT EACH STUDENT AS A WHOLE INDIVIDUAL.”

her school for children that weren't being adequately served in the regular classroom. Forty years later, Sister Joyce is still just as passionate about helping children who struggle to learn get the most out of their educational experience. “It is so important that we meet the educational needs of each child,” said Sister Joyce. “This is the foundation for the rest of their lives.”

Complex Little People

Many of the students at Villa Maria where Sister Joyce now teaches face a particularly uphill battle. Typical diagnoses for students at the school include schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, oppositional defiance disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and multiple learning disabilities. Many of the children have a history of physical and sexual abuse. Some have been neglected. Some come from families with layers of mental illness. All have arrived at Villa Maria after failing to succeed in a less restrictive educational setting. “It is a complex young person who comes to us,” said Carol Gilbert, education director of the Type 3 Diagnostic/Prescriptive Program at the school.

In a school in which just getting students into the classroom and seated can be a major accomplishment, moving students to a point where they are ready to learn can be an epic struggle. Toward that end, students earn points every hour for their



According to associate director of education Gregory Matthews, a student-to-teacher ratio of 1:4 means that students at Villa Maria receive highly personalized instruction.

behavior, working on skills such as not cursing, staying in their seats, and being respectful. By the end of each day, they will have had the opportunity to earn up to 100 points which they can use to buy items from the school store or, for residential students, purchase privileges such as extra computer or gym time.

Of course, incentives aren't always enough to keep disruptive conduct in check. “These children are very intense and unpredictable,” said Sister Joyce. “We have to be on the lookout for any behavior that might evolve into a problem so we can intervene before things become explosive. At the

blink of an eye, a student could start fighting or throwing books or upsetting tables.”

Sister Joyce recalled several incidents where she was on the receiving end when a student temporarily lost control. Notably, she remembers these incidents, not with anger or frustration, but with compassion. “We are the most trusted adults that the majority of these students have ever come in contact with,” said Sister Joyce. “While they are with us, they are safe. Many will try to get us to yell and scream at them but it is just not going to happen. It is our job not to get angry. Even when we are in pain, we are called to forgiveness.”

Making A Home

Perhaps nowhere in the school is that kind of compassion more vital than in the residence house, St. Vincent Villa. Students who live there either have no place else to live or are too troubled to remain with their families.

Great care is taken to make the residence feel like a true home. Each child has a “primary”—a particular staff member who takes a special interest in him or her. Dinner is served in the residence and children and staff eat together. Each student has his or her own room, clothes, and toys. In the evenings they play games together and get ready for bed together just as a

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Sister Joyce and other staff members greet students as they get off the buses each morning. This allows them to get a sense of how each student is doing at the start of the day. For students who live at Villa Maria's residence, counselors send down a daily report.



Residential treatment counselor Ben Chernick talks with Carol Gilbert regarding children residing in Genesis house.



Part of what makes Villa Maria so special is the commitment of a whole team of experts to each child. Here, Doreen Scott, Villa Maria's clinical supervisor, meets with Sister Joyce.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for children who struggle with emotional and learning disabilities.
- Volunteer at your local school. Many schools are looking for help reading in classrooms, organizing science fairs and talent shows, and running fundraisers.
- Be a mentor for a child who needs a positive role model. Tell stories and listen to them, share a pizza and a joke, bestow some of your wisdom and get some in return.
- Get involved in the pets-on-wheels program in your area. You and your dog or cat could bring much-needed love and affection to children and adults in institutional settings.
- Use the attached envelope to make a donation to Villa Maria School.

▼ *Carol Gilbert checks in on a child who lives in Genesis House at Villa Maria.*



▼ *Nurse Jeanae Tatum administers medication to students as needed.*



► *Medicine of another kind—love—is given in big doses by Rosie, the dog. “The children just love her,” said clinical supervisor Doreen Scott. “We find that often the most unsettled children calm down and sit quietly to pet her when she is here.”*



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typical family would. On birthdays, children celebrate and receive presents; on Christmas morning staff members are there when students wake to share in the excitement of the day.

More Than The Three Rs

Of course, academics are also an important part of Villa Maria’s mission. According to associate director of education Gregory Matthews, ninety percent of Villa Maria students are one to three years behind academically when they arrive. Some can’t read at all and many have few, if any, math skills. Special intervention programs for reading and math help students with special needs make progress and highly individualized and innovative academic instruction helps break through the barriers of learning and emotional disabilities.

“I try to keep to a regular curriculum but I have to be very flexible and super creative,” said Sister Joyce, who teaches library, media, and reading skills. “These students’ attention is hard to get and even harder to maintain. But it is so important that they have the opportunity to be in a situation where their needs are met so they can learn.”

On-site speech and occupational therapy supports students with needs in those areas. Enrichment in art, music, computers, and physical education supplement the core subjects. Students also take part in prevocational programs where they develop independent living skills such as meal-planning, cooking, budgeting, sewing, and wood-working through hands-on activities.

The Whole Picture

In addition to the academic program, the school offers clinical programs that respond to students’ individual emotional and psychological needs. Each child at Villa Maria attends individual therapy once a week to work on issues specific to him or her. Once-a-week group therapy sessions supplement that—focusing on topics such as anger management and social skill development. Three psychiatrists on staff provide diagnostic and prescriptive services and nurses dispense medication to the students who need it. Behavioral specialists help children who need time out of the classroom, therapists are on call to deal with whatever comes up, and case managers make sure that each student is getting what he or she needs.

Sister Joyce initiated the visiting pet program at Villa Maria. She regularly brings Rosie the greyhound to interact with students.



“It becomes a one-stop shop,” said Doreen Scott, Villa Maria’s clinical supervisor, explaining how important that is for children with the constellation of psychological, emotional, educational, and social issues that Villa Maria students struggle with. “Everyone works as a team—parents, teachers, therapists—and we look at each student as a whole individual.”

Family therapy and parent workshops are part of that holistic approach. “Often these are families who have been looking for help and not finding it where they have been. Parents often say they have finally found what they have been looking for here,” said Doreen.

That was certainly true for Janera Tiell and her son Malachi who has a multitude of developmental disorders that affect his learning abilities. Malachi attended Villa Maria from 3rd through 8th grade and lived

in the residence home for seven months. “The move to Villa Maria was great for both of us,” said Mrs. Tiell. “For me the relief was two-fold. The most important thing was that I knew he would be safe there. The other thing, and this was important too, was that we finally felt supported. They didn’t judge Malachi at Villa Maria; they loved him. And I went from being condemned as a parent to being affirmed.”

Malachi thrived at Villa Maria. Now at 14 years old, he is living at home and attending a special program housed within a public school. No matter where students go after Villa Maria, they know they always have a trusted adult to rely on. “Just today I had a student who is getting ready to leave come up to me and ask, ‘who am I going to talk to at my new school like I talk to you?’” said Doreen. “I gave him my number and told him he can always talk to me, any time, no matter where he is.”

Little Successes, Big Strides

The path for every student at Villa Maria is different and, of course, so is the outcome. Some students are able to be mainstreamed back into a regular school. Some eventually go on to live on their own in the community. Others move to group homes. “Some of our students never make it to what some people might consider the top but they make strides—little successes along the way,” said Carol.

The staff at Villa Maria knows how big those little successes really are. “I often talk about the intensity of our children’s challenging behaviors,” said Sister Joyce. “I think the corollary to that is that when teachers, parents, and even students here see a glimmer of hope or a sliver of progress, the intensity of the joy we feel is astounding.” ■

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

*With hearts filled with gratitude
The Sisters of St. Francis*

Thank You

*for enabling us to respond to the
needs of our brothers and sisters
with our diverse gifts and your
generosity!*



▲ Thanks to wonderful and supportive educators—like Sister Rose Monica Katusz—Lawson High School students in Nyumbani, Kenya, are able to reach their highest potential by developing their abilities and talents.

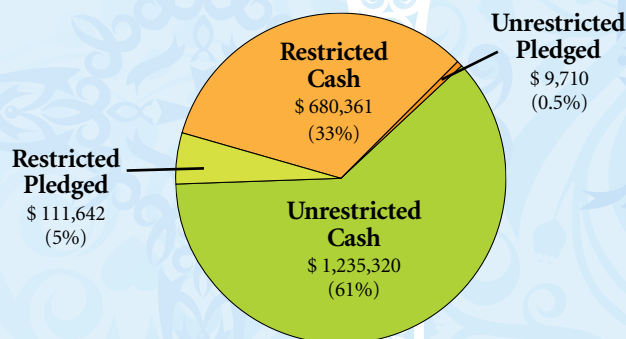
2011 Annual Report SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION

In preparing this annual report, we are touched by the reality that a good steward is the caretaker of God's many gifts. You have been a gift to us despite the financial struggles of these days. Both those we serve and our sisters are grateful for your gifts and we thank God each day for your support. This report shows you how your funds are received.

Total Donations: \$ 2,037,034

Restricted: \$792,004 (39%)

Unrestricted: \$1,245,030 (61%)



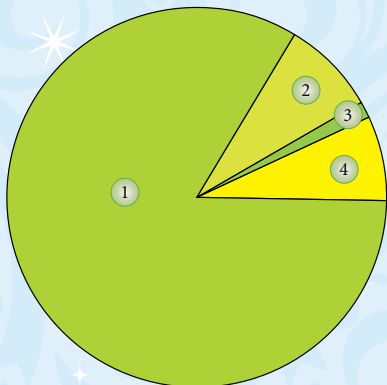
Sources of Donations: Raffle, Golf Outing, Direct Mail Appeals, Good News, E-News, Memorial Gifts, Memorial Cards, Estates and Inheritances, and Capital Campaign Pledges.



▲ Sister Maggie Grecco, a nurse practitioner, has been a vital part of the healthcare team at the Mary Howard Health Center—offering medical and psychiatric care to people who are homeless in Philadelphia.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia assume operational costs of the foundation;

Distribution of Ministry: Unrestricted \$ 1,245,030

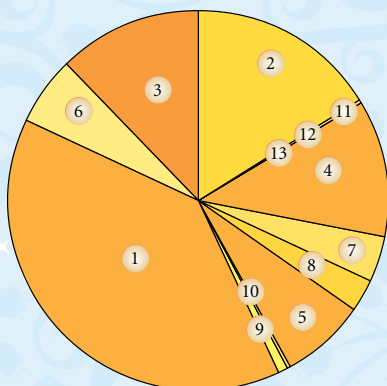


- 1 **General Retirement Fund** \$ 1,038,159 (83.4%)
- 2 **St. Joseph Counseling Center** \$ 100,000 (8%)
- 3 **Drexel Neuman Academy** \$ 20,000 (1.6%)
- 4 **Undistributed** \$ 86,871 (7%)
(Carried over to FY2012)



Principal Sister Mary Farrell is right where she loves to be—surrounded by students at St. Francis de Sales School in Lenni, Pennsylvania. Sister Mary loves interacting with students whom she describes as “the reason St. Francis exists and why the school is so special.”

Distribution of Ministry: Restricted \$ 792,004



- 1 **General Retirement Fund** \$ 309,676 (39.1%)
- 2 **Assisi House Donor Wall & Equipment** \$ 127,861 (16.14%)
- 3 **Assisi House** \$ 97,745 (12.34%)
- 4 **Shelter & Social Ministries** \$ 91,799 (11.59%)
- 5 **TCHS** \$ 57,973 (7.32%)
- 6 **St. Ann Convent** \$ 45,027 (5.69%)
- 7 **St. Ann Chapel** \$ 30,015 (3.79%)
- 8 **Education** \$ 22,931 (2.9%)
- 9 **Parish Ministries** \$ 4,545 (0.57%)
- 10 **Spiritual Ministries** \$ 2,422 (0.31%)
- 11 **Memorial Garden** \$ 1,435 (0.18%)
- 12 **Other** \$ 300 (0.04%)
- 13 **Foreign Ministries** \$ 275 (0.03%)



In Memoriam

Sister Anna May McFeeley
(formerly Sister Marie St. Anthony)
January 13, 2012

Sister Anne Lawrence
(formerly Sister Mary Elisea)
February 6, 2012

Sister Ellen Glynn
(formerly Sister Emmanuel Mary)
March 5, 2012

Sister Marie Immaculate Fay
March 22, 2012

Sister Celine Agnes Jones
March 26, 2012

Sister Mary Ann Shambo
(formerly Sister Judith Marie)
April 19, 2012

Sister Margaret Aloysius McGrail
May 2, 2012

Sister Rita Francis Fiefhaus
May 25, 2012

EXPLANATION OF RESTRICTED CATEGORIES

TCHS: The Catholic High School of Baltimore;
Spiritual Ministries: Spiritual Center West and East;
Parish and Campus Ministries: Emmitsburg, Sr. Loretta Schaff, Parish Ministry (Oklahoma), **Assisi House Donor Wall and Equipment;** Other: OLA Chapel, Vocations, Sisters of St. Francis General Fund; **Memorial Garden:** Trees, Benches, and Bricks;
Foreign Ministries: Africa and Haiti; **Shelter and Social Ministries:** Anna's Place, Human Trafficking (Dawn's Place), Hispanic Ministry, Intercommunity Peace and Justice, St. Mary Franciscan Shelter, St. Joseph Family Center, Prison Ministry, Transitions, Discretionary Fund for the Poor; **St. Ann Chapel;** **Education** (Computer Education at Anna's Place)

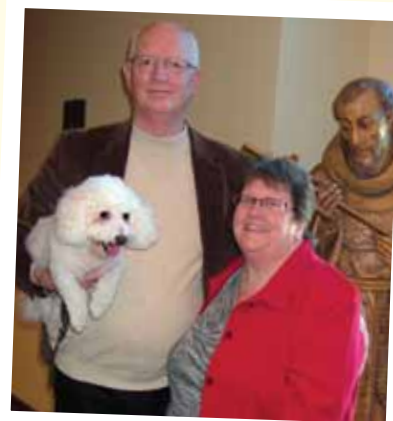
therefore, every dollar that our donors give is used solely for the ministries and retirement.

Fooncus

“THE WORDS OF SAINT FRANCIS, ‘PREACH THE GOSPEL ALWAYS AND IF NECESSARY USE WORDS’ HAS BECOME WHAT WE STRIVE FOR IN OUR DAILY LIVES.”

▼ *Paul grills up tasty burgers and hot dogs at the annual companions’ gathering day. The event is always a great success and Paul is happy to help out.*

► *Paul and Pat St. Clair share many loves—Paul’s son and daughter, their granddaughter, and we can’t leave out their beloved dog, Cozmo.*



PAUL & PATRICIA ST. CLAIR

News spreads quickly through the motherhouse halls on normal days but one Christmas everyone seemed surprised by how quickly this news spread: “He proposed in front of the Christmas crib and she said ‘yes.’” Paul and Patricia (Chesia) St. Clair who first met quite by chance in an MSN chat room were getting married. From the very beginning, they began to realize that they had a lot in common. It was the beginning of a blessed relationship.

Now married, Patricia (Pat) and Paul St. Clair live in the north end of Seattle, Washington, where they continue a long relationship with the Sisters of St. Francis—yet another blessed relationship. Pat first met the sisters in high school and later while working at St. Mary’s Hospital where she worked as a lab technician for 33 years. It was there that she became active as one of the congregation’s first companions. Since then she has been an active member of the Companion in Mission relationship. Now both Pat and Paul are active members of the Tacoma companion group where they continue to form relationships with the sisters at St. Ann Convent.

Paul and Pat say that “being a companion means being in relationship with God, the Church, each other, and creation. With a faith in God, we as companions commit to live the Gospel values in the spirit of Sts. Francis and Clare. With each other, through our faith-sharing group here in Tacoma, we enter into a spiritual journey to embrace the differences among us. The words of Saint Francis, ‘preach the Gospel always and if necessary use words’ has become what we strive for in our daily lives.”

Pat is currently on the Sisters of St. Francis’ Companion Advisory Board and also works part-time at an insurance agency. In addition, she volunteers at Hermitage Place and at her local parish. Paul is an insurance broker specializing in commercial insurance. When time permits, they like to get away to Seaside, Oregon, for a few days. Their hobbies include spending time with their granddaughter, cooking, and baking. They especially like to find a special recipe, shop for it, and cook it together. The sisters are grateful to have Paul and Pat St. Clair as companions in faith—true examples of God’s loving providence enabling our journey to continue.

◀ *Pat enjoys volunteering her time at Hermitage Place and at her local parish. Being a companion with the sisters has really enhanced her relationship with God, the Church, and creation.*



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- ☐ Community Supported Agriculture: Red Hill Farm, Aston PA ☐ Sisters of St. Francis Foundation ☐ Vocations



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Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia



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Eleventh Annual Raffle

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Consider asking family members, friends, and coworkers to support this important fundraiser. Your donation will help the sisters provide for their elderly members and enable them to continue their ministries.



Grand Prize: \$5,000

Seller's Prize: \$125

Second Prize: \$3,000

Seller's Prize: \$100

Third Prize: \$2,000

Seller's Prize: \$75

Fourth Prize: \$1,000

Seller's Prize: \$50

Fifth Prize: \$500

Seller's Prize: \$25

Sixth Prize: \$250

Seller's Prize: \$15

Seventh Prizes (3): \$150 each

Seller's Prize: \$10

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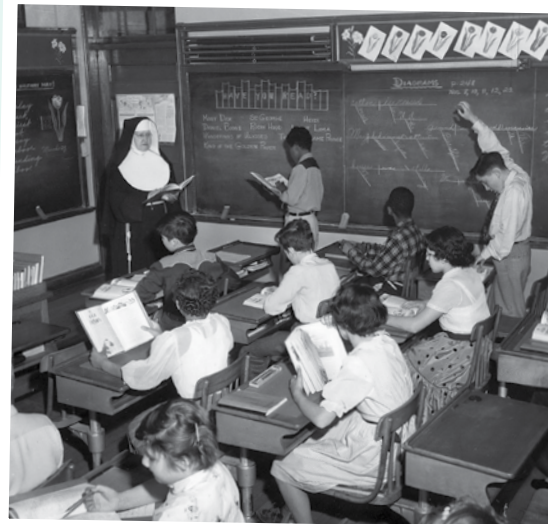
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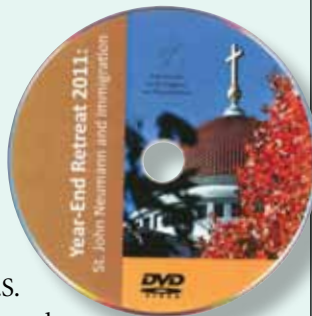


Much like the story featured on page 12 about Villa Maria School, St. Mary's Home in New Bedford, Massachusetts, provided a "one-stop shop" for children who had nowhere else to turn. In the early 1950s, our sisters ministered to the youth at St. Mary's Home, providing everything from shelter, education, and food, down to the very basics of shoes, toothbrushes, etc. However, probably the most essential gift that our sisters gave these children was love and support—someone to talk to and someone who cared.



U.S. Sanctuary Movement Celebrates Anniversary

On March 24 Sister Maureen Duignan, her coworkers at East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, and members of SHARE-El Salvador gathered in Berkeley to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Sanctuary Movement. During its 30-year history, the Sanctuary Movement in the U.S. has challenged unjust immigration policies and the U.S. foreign policies that have fueled the exodus of refugees from their home countries. Supporters of sanctuary and immigration reform have known both success and failure in their efforts. The work continues today as members of the movement affirm politics of love, hope, and the common good over politics of fear, hate, and division. Our congregation has taken a corporate stand on immigration. Our recent year-end retreat focused on the need for comprehensive immigration reform and the difficulties faced by immigrants. We invite you to view the various segments of the presentations. Visit our website, to view the DVD. http://www.osfphila.org/justice_peace/yearendretreat



Sharing our History!

For many years, Sisters Mary Catherine Gurley, Adele Francis Gorman, and Emily Ann Herbes carefully and lovingly researched our history. Their efforts were invaluable in helping us to preserve our legacy and to document our roots and our growth through rich decades of blessing and challenge. Our history unfolded as the Spirit of God, after Anthony Bachmann's death, inspired Anna Bachmann (Mother Francis) to look beyond the personal challenges of raising four children to respond to the unmet needs of those who were poor in her own neighborhood. Her courageous spirit, her daring "no risk, no gain," has taken us far beyond her original imaginings and has endured over more than a century and a half in the hearts of her sisters today.

Would you like to share in our history? We are now offering free copies of *Celebrating the Journey...*, Volumes I and II, a history of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia from 1824-1970. If you would like a copy of this historic journey, please contact Karen McEvoy, (610) 558-7712, or kmcevoy@osfphila.org.

