

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Journeys



SSJ Neighborhood Network 10th Anniversary

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania



SSJ Leadership Team (l-r): Moira Sullivan, SSJ; Mary Ellen Dwyer, SSJ; Joyce Lowrey, SSJ.

From the Leadership Team

As stated in our 150th Anniversary prayer, “Holy Beloved One, we stand, blessed, at a threshold. Behind us rest 150 years of gifts, challenges, fruits.” Standing at that threshold, we continue to honor and remember those who have shared our mission. And we celebrate “you” as we move into the seasons of thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas grateful for your continued friendship.

On the eve of a New Year, we find ourselves on the eve of a new chapter in our ministry to the Diocese and the world.

As we journey through this year, it is our desire to connect, re-connect and renew relationships with those of you we have been fortunate to minister with throughout the years. Most important has been our desire to express our gratitude for all you have given us and the lasting impressions you have left upon us. Thus we chose the theme, *lasting impressions*, for our annual giving campaign.

Throughout this issue, we focus on celebrations and friends. This year, we have had many opportunities to make new friends and visit with long-time friends. We enjoy getting out to areas of the Diocese and are grateful for the welcoming hospitality we receive. We welcomed former Sisters during a Homecoming event in August which was a time of renewal for all. We gathered to listen to the sounds of the Erie Chamber Orchestra with Bruce Morton Wright, a dear friend and past SSJ Spirit of Courage honoree. We welcomed dignitaries and officials who offered proclamations on the occasion of our anniversary. We invited the community to our new office building, to pray and picnic with us at our annual Circle of Friends Celebration, and we welcomed 22 new Associates to journey with us into the future. We also celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, a ministry that continues to respond to the needs of the day in so many ways. And, we celebrate the completion of our history as told by Sisters Leonie Shanley and Mary Francis Becker and offer a glimpse of their book, *Come to the Waters*.

Hearing the name Joe Luckey always brings a smile to my face and warmth to my heart. Having spent part of his childhood at St. Joseph Home for Children and now, in retirement, residing at Saint Mary’s East, Joe is very much a part of our family and is respected and loved by everyone who knows him.

We share with you a beautiful gift of crèches from around the world that was given to us by our friend, Monsignor Edward Zeitler. They offer a wonderful meditation about the unifying love of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Our path to this point in history has been measured by the abundant relationships we have with friends and those we serve -- the people of God. Thank you. We are humbled and grateful.

We remember you in our prayers as we move through these Holy seasons and throughout 2011. May each of us embrace our neighbors, locally and globally, in our prayers and deepen our relationship with God.

Sister Joyce Lowrey, ssj

Joyce Lowrey, SSJ
On behalf of the Leadership Team

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COME TO THE WATERS

*A History of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania
by Leonie Shanley, SSJ and Mary Francis Becker, SSJ*

Come to the Waters is the chronicle of the mission and history of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. Published during this, their 150th anniversary year, filled with inspiring text and photography, *Come to the Waters* anchors us in the tradition of the Sisters. Alternating glimpses of their service (past and present) to 'dear neighbors' with excerpts from their Constitutions, the book instills in the reader the consistency of the Sisters' service to a broad spectrum of people.

The mission of these remarkable women is to serve with the same spirit of love that St. Joseph served his wife and foster son. This volume shows, time and time again, that spirit triumphing over adversity in the Erie Diocese—and beyond. Seeking to spread their message by example rather than words, fifteen decades later, the Sisters of St. Joseph continue to defy the status quo by their constant, yet responsive "prayer in motion," and aspire to make a difference in an ever-changing world.

The publication of this book has renewed a challenge to readers everywhere: to serve and to love as the Sisters do, 'neighbor with neighbor, neighbor with God, without distinction.' Thank you, Sister Leonie Shanley, SSJ and Sister Mary Frances Becker, SSJ. It's evident in reading your book that its creation was, as all work done by the Sisters of St. Joseph, a labor of love.

Maggie Shaughnessy
SSJ Associate

Come to the Waters is a wonderful tribute to all of our Sisters as "Women of Spirit, Courage and Vision!" It is easy reading and, at the same time, factual. The layout of the book with the design, photos and the information of our history in the Erie Diocese, demonstrates how our Sisters met and are still meeting the "dear neighbor." Through ministries and prayers, the Sisters continue to "The More."

Marie Timmons, SSJ
Congregation Archivist

Mary Francis Becker, SSJ (left) and Leonie Shanley, SSJ sign copies of *Come to the Waters* at a special event in honor of the book's release.



COME TO THE WATERS



LEONIE SHANLEY, SSJ
MARY FRANCIS BECKER, SSJ

About the Book

Come to the Waters chronicles the story of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. Citing the beginnings of the Sisters of St. Joseph in the 17th century in Le Puy, France moving into the 21st century, the Sisters tell their story. The Congregation's mission of unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God appears to be the motivating force which created ever-new ministries to answer the needs of the 'dear neighbor' during the past 150 years.

Acknowledging the geographic location of the Congregation on Lake Erie, the prologue offers the biblical theme of water as an initial reflection. Throughout the book, photos of waters illustrate the meditative opportunities mirroring the events through the centuries. The water photos were all taken by members of the Congregation, lending an authenticity to the reflections.

Quotes from the Sisters' current Constitutions, along with excerpts from the original 17th century Constitutions, tie together the movement throughout the 150 years.

Come to the Waters documents 150 years of the ministries of the Sisters continually responding to contemporary needs.

To obtain a copy of *Come to the Waters*, contact Sharon Urban at 814-836-4204 or sharon.urban@ssjerie.org
Suggested donation, \$15.00

When six-year old Bryeonna came to the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN), she was in first grade and couldn't read. Born with a mass on her brain, there was little hope for normal development and a severe dog bite left her without hearing in one ear. Bryeonna was tutored through the SSJNN reading program. Thanks to the efforts of many volunteers, two years later she is reading at a first grade level and hopes are good that she will make steady progress with the continued help of the instruction she receives at the SSJNN.

Bryeonna is just one of the miracle stories that have come from the SSJ Neighborhood Network. This young ministry demonstrates how the vital work of the Sisters continues and, in keeping with the same mission of 150 years ago, came about in response to a need.

The Sisters wanted a presence in the inner city, Saint Vincent Health System wanted to give back to the neighborhood and statistics indicated an area in the northwest portion of the city, including historic Little Italy, was deteriorating rapidly.

So the Sisters, with the help of Saint Vincent, opened the SSJ Neighborhood Network ministry in January of 2000. The ministry's mission is to partner with residents and the community to bring about revitalization and a sense of ownership among the people in that area.

Sisters Mary Herrmann and Carol Wilcox canvassed the neighborhood, going door-to-door to assess the needs of the neighborhood.

International Flavors Community Garden



Pictured, clockwise from above: Sisters Carol Wilcox (l) and Mary Herrmann with Bryeonna. SSJNN staff members Wally Brown, Sister Phyllis Hilbert and Sister Carol Wilcox. The Community Garden. Sue Ann Wisniewski, SSJNN Development Director.



They found a high percentage of non-English speaking residents which led Sister Christine Quirk to begin offering English as a Second Language instruction in the homes. A tutoring and reading program was started as well as a Soup Kitchen at St. Paul's Church.

In 2003, the ministry relocated from 16th & Peach Streets to 425 West 18th Street, in the heart of Little Italy, and more accessible to the neighbors. More programs were added as needs became apparent: Time Out for Moms, a program that offers networking, enrichment, education and support; individual financial mentoring; programs in music, sewing, and cooking with an emphasis on nutrition, manners and food safety. Today, a staff of five persons and numerous volunteers carry out these efforts.

Ten volunteer mentors each spend a minimum of one day a month with a child doing various activities in the community. The SSJNN Genesis Home Program offers three housing units for rent to families who receive support and mentoring to help them become homeowners. The SSJNN also works closely with HANDS (Housing and Neighborhood Development) to develop new housing in the neighborhood.

"I think the biggest impact we have had is with our mentoring and reading programs, and developing relationships with the people," said Sister Mary. "We've established trust. We also bring a sense of security and stability to the neighbors, even in the midst of violence when it occurs."

One of the most visible effects of the Sisters' presence is the community garden, a collaborative effort with the Erie School District.

Led by volunteer Gary McEnery, "the creator and shepherd of the garden," neighbors, students from Irving school and Sister Phyllis Hilbert, prepared and maintain the garden. "Sister Phyllis won't let a single weed sprout in that garden," said Sister Mary. The garden is a source of pride in the neighborhood and, surprising to some, no vandalism, littering or unauthorized picking has occurred. Neighbors have asked, "How were you able to do that here?" Adding to the ambiance the garden provides is a mural that was painted on a building bordering the garden by Steve Mikolajewski, an Americorp volunteer (*the mural is shown as the background of these pages.*)

Guided by a Board of Directors, the SSJNN is funded, in part, by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Saint Vincent Health System, grants, private donations and through fund-raising efforts such as an annual appeal and its *Guess that Tune Gala*.

Looking ahead to the next ten years, Sister Mary said the SSJNN is secure, stable and well-established. "We look forward to further neighborhood development and working with the residents to encourage them to take responsibility for their future," she said. As always, and as with other SSJ ministries, everything centers on identifying the needs of the day and finding a way to respond.

Recently, a child stopped in after school and asked Sister Mary if it was her day to be there. Sister answered no, but the young girl politely asked if it would be okay if she stayed for a while anyway, "just for a little quiet." "Of course," Sister told her, realizing yet another need. "A lot of people here just want the time and place to just be...peacefully," she said. "We're working on that."



**It's a Beautiful Day
in the Neighborhood**

**SSJ Neighborhood Network
Celebrates 10th Anniversary**

TAKING BACK THE SITES

by Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ
Social Justice Coordinator

Reclaiming locations where violence has occurred

On a very hot summer afternoon in July of this year, more than 150 people gathered at the gazebo in Perry Square in Erie to participate in a *Take Back the City* prayer vigil. Sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Benedictine Sisters of Erie and the Sisters of Mercy, the vigil was organized in response to a series of murders and acts of gun violence in the city of Erie, which this year reached an all-time high, claiming twelve victims.

The event was patterned after the *Take Back the Site* vigils the group has held for ten years. The group gathers at locations where homicides have occurred to pray for the victims and to “reclaim” the sites for nonviolence. The Benedictines for Peace began the vigils in November 1999 and were soon joined by the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy.



Front, left-right: Mary Fromknecht, SSJ; Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ; Jean Baptiste Diluzio, SSJ and Mary Herrmann, SSJ participate in one of the Take Back the Site vigils.



Nancy Prenatt, SSJ (second from right) is joined by Sisters from other Congregations, the victim's friends and family members at a vigil.

The vigils bring healing and reconciliation to the victim's family and friends. At the *Take Back the City* vigil, Sonja Arrington, founder of the group Mothers Against Teen Violence whose 19-year old son, Steven, was killed in January was quoted in the *Erie Times News* as saying, “it's sad that we all have to come together for something like this, but it helps me and others who have lost children to violence.”

In addition, it is hoped that the vigils spread the message of nonviolence as a way of life, while calling for an end to violence in our community. Words of consolation don't stop bullets, but we can bring about some healing, reconciliation and comfort and show people that we do care and respect all human life. The vigils are beneficial and we will continue them as long as is necessary. But our goal, of course, is that none are needed.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), each year more than 1.5 million people worldwide lose their lives to violence. However, for every person who dies as a result of violence, many more are injured and suffer a range of physical and psychological problems. The causes of violent behavior are as varied and complex as the acts committed.

In recent years, much research has been conducted throughout the world to determine these root causes, and of finding ways to prevent violent behavior. Through these efforts, a number of effective violence prevention interventions have been identified, particularly when dealing with youth or partnership violence. The challenge is to make these intervention approaches available to target groups.

Recently, eleven 1 first and second grade students from the SSJ Neighborhood Network participated in the Ophelia Project (www.opheliaproject.org) and were taught about self-esteem, teamwork, attitude and respect (STARS). They also discussed how to handle bullying in school and during after school hours. In addition, many mothers have attended a program at the SSJ Neighborhood Network called *Time Out for Moms* which includes presentations on developing healthy relationships. These may appear to be insignificant undertakings toward resolving the violence that the UN labels a ‘universal challenge,’ however, it is through such community programs that the seeds of nonviolent living will be planted and perhaps eliminate the need for *Take Back the Site* vigils in our community.



Sisters, families and friends at one of 12 vigils held this year.

JOYS AND CHALLENGES OF TEACHING ESL TO ‘ELDERS’

by Josette Gocella, SSI

Motivated partially by my experience in France where my facility with the language was limited, I decided last spring to volunteer with Kentucky Refugee Ministries (KYRM). My interest led me to assist a master teacher, Aimee Zaring, in an ESL (English as a Second Language) class of “elders” two mornings a week. The refugees, who are 65 or older, come from a variety of countries and cultures.

The classes, offered jointly by KYRM and Catholic Charities, are divided according to four skill levels. I assist with women and men who are totally new to this country. Many of them can speak, but not read or write, their own native language. You can imagine the struggle to learn an alphabet, especially English, with all the possible vowel sounds to say nothing of the blends, diphthongs, silent letters, etc. We try to teach them to write their name, address and country of origin, but even trying to remember the upper and lower case letters and their formation is a major challenge.

The women and men in our class are native to Burma, Bhutan, Cuba, Somalia and Burundi. Some were in refugee camps for more than 18 years. Through an interpreter, we learned that many came to the U.S. so their children might be educated. Some left land, cattle, and homes prior to becoming refugees. Once here, to earn citizenship, they must learn basic English and some specific things about U.S. history and government.

What we might term “progress” in learning the language is extremely slow. They may be able to memorize the recitation of the months of the year and days of the week, but when one of these is isolated, out of order, the memorized list fails. What keeps me engaged are their indomitable spirits and their ability to laugh at

themselves. I revere them for their courage and persistence, for their ability to be happy with so little. After each class, as they leave us, they all bow giving us a “Namaste.” Even students from last semester stop by the classroom to do this.

I am a mentor to one particular refugee, Tulasha Phuyal, from Bhutan. Tulasha came to the U.S. in September 2009 with one of her sons, his wife and their two children. She is 79 years old and suffers from asthma which renders many of her nights sleepless. Our very hot, humid summer did not help her condition. She has some arthritis as well. Though she has medication, she is often too uncomfortable to concentrate.



Sister Josette Marie Gocella (left) with her student, Tulasha Phuyal.

As I try to work with her, one-on-one, telling her the English word for this or that item, she wants to teach me that same word in Nepalese. She is a very social person according to her son, Bal (who speaks English perfectly and was a college teacher in Nepal). That penchant for socializing comes out in our interaction. So, I think it has to be frustrating for her not to be able to communicate with me easily. From my French days, I know that feeling very well. And I told Bal at one visit, that it is really a privilege to try to help.

MINISTRY MOMENT



A bit like the Energizer bunny, Sister Bernardine Pais keeps going ... and going ... and going ... when it comes to serving others through ministry. At 93, she is the oldest member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania -- a fact she seemed surprised to learn. She is still active in ministry and modest about the significance of that.

Her quick wit and spirited personality lead you to believe she is much younger, but it's her faithful service through ministry

that is uniquely inspiring.

Sister Bernardine lives independently at Saint Mary's East where she has ministered for at least 40 years, even while teaching full-time in area Catholic elementary schools.

Each morning, she sees that the residents on her floor are awake and she assists in getting them where they need to be to get their medications before she joins many of them for Mass. She has been called a “master decorator” and devotes her time and talent to decorating much of Saint Mary's for the various holidays, including adorning each resident's door.

“It's work I like to do,” she says when asked why she continues. “It's a pleasure to do and it makes it a little more like home for the residents. It makes them happy.”



Thank You
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ST. JOSEPH NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA



LIVING SIMPLY

by Martha Ann Rinderle, SSJ

Sharing Stories with Joe Luckey

During our 150th anniversary, we asked for stories and memories about our Sisters. One person holds memories of the Sisters that “span a lifetime.” Robert “Joe” Luckey, 82, now a resident at Saint Mary’s East, spent part of his childhood at St. Joseph Home for Children. He shared some of his memories with Sister Martha Ann Rinderle SSJ, who also spent some of her early years at the orphanage.

Joe was born in Alabama in 1928 and placed in an orphanage. After seven years, he was transferred to St. Joseph Home in Erie, where he was first introduced to the Sisters of St. Joseph. That was the beginning of a relationship that continues 75 years later, through half of our history in the Diocese.

A keen storyteller with a remarkable memory, Joe smiles as he recalls many of the Sisters by name: Sister Rita, Sister Agnes, Sister Margaret Arcelia, Sister Alberta, Sister Michael, Sister Bernard, Sister Alphonsus, Sister Emerentia, Sister Marie Antoinette and Sister Evarista. With each name, he offers a memory, mainly about Sisters Callista Wright and Celine Rinderle, a relative of mine.



Joe Luckey as a child at St. Joseph Home for Children, 1940.

a little nest egg to get started. She encouraged those without family to join the military and faithfully corresponded with them and prayed for their safety. She welcomed them with open arms, hot meals and a bed in the dormitory when they came home on leave. She was tough, but fair, he said.

It wasn’t until years later that I was at “the Home,” as it was known, and Sister Celine was still there. She was, as Joe said, tough but fair, and solicitous of their welfare. He recalls a boy standing on the slanted roof washing dormitory windows while Sister held onto him from inside. Since she was a cousin to my father, my sister and I had to report to her each week so she could tell my grandmother how we were doing.

Joe stayed at the Home until 1942 when he joined his mother and grandparents in Sharon, Pennsylvania and completed high school. I believe it was during those years at the Home that Joe witnessed the lived

experience of the Maxims of Perfection as embraced by the Sisters. Written by Jean-Pierre Medaille, SJ, a missionary and spiritual director to our earliest Sisters, the Maxims are guides for those who “aspire to great virtue.” They call for stripping of self and imitating Christ in hidden and public life. As a young Sister, I recall feeling very much at home living out the tenets of our Holy Rule and practicing the virtues stated in the Maxims. I had observed and absorbed the messages in both throughout my formative years. Seeing this in the Sisters must have made an impression on Joe. It’s easy to see the virtues of St. Joseph -- prudent, faithful, patient, just and strong -- evidenced in Joe’s life and work. And like St. Joseph, Joe is a simple man living a simple life and yet making lasting impressions.

*Desire neither praise
nor reward for your
good works in this
life and you will have
deeper and fuller life
in eternity.*

Maxims of the Little Institute
Jean-Pierre Medaille, SJ

He tells how Sister Callista, with her long skirts pinned up, participated in sports with “her boys.” When she wasn’t in the game, he said, she was busy earning her nickname, “coach.” The boys admired her and how she kept up with them. “She never



Sr. Callista Wright, SSJ



Sr. Celine Rinderle, SSJ

let us down,” he said, and she taught them that fair play was the only acceptable play.

Sister Celine monitored the boys as they grew to be young men and was their constant champion. He told me how she arranged summer jobs at the Diocesan Cemetery for the older boys and squirreled away their earnings so that when they left, they had

Despite time and distance, Joe never lost contact with the Sisters and some of the children from the Home. Even today, he remains close with Brother Thomas Vincent, SSJ and Monsignor Carter who were both there with him. After Sunday mass, Joe and Monsignor Carter often reminisce about their days at the Home. Brother Tom, who lives in Washington, D.C., visits Joe each year. “We were in the same groups for a long time,” recalled Brother Tom. “We liked each other’s company then and still do.”

Joe later served as a chaplain assistant in the Army and then worked at General Electric before enrolling at Gannon College in

1952. When he had to put his studies on hold due to a lack of funds, he was offered a position in Gannon's maintenance department. Joe



Joe Luckey as Santa.

fell in love with Gannon and held his position for 55 years. He is considered by many to be a "Gannon legend." Joe was a vital and loyal employee, living a simple, humble life. Though he never married, he considered his co-workers, the students, faculty, administration, and friends to be his extended family.

He committed himself to his work and to helping others when he could. "He did everything for anybody, knew every

nook and cranny on the Gannon properties, and cared for materials and equipment as if they were his own," expounded Ray Luniewski, a co-worker for many years. "He went the extra mile helping the residents move from one apartment to another as the occasion arose." Ray also shared how Joe began playing Santa at Gannon Christmas events and private parties.

Joe recalled Christmas at the orphanage when "Santa would literally come down a papier mâché chimney in the gymnasium." He talked about the children's excitement. I, too, remember the annual Christmas performances and eagerly awaited the jingling of bells, the ho, ho, ho, and then Santa himself. Years later, when Joe would visit the Home and see Santa come down the chimney, it "brought a tear to my eye," he said. That was the inspiration that led him to don the Santa suit for many years.

Another inspiration Joe recalls from his days at the Home came from listening to Sister Rita play the organ. "I remember sneaking up to hear her," he said. "I loved to hear her play." Joe developed a passion for the organ and, as an adult, spent many hours reconstructing the Shea Theatre organ, which is kept at Gannon. Joe's dream is that it will someday be at the Warner Theatre. I asked him how he learned to rebuild an organ. "I taught myself," he said. "I subscribed to journals, asked questions, attended conventions, and corresponded with like-minded people." Like St. Joseph, he used his hands and simple tools to accomplish his work. He was instrumental in founding the Erie Theater Organ Society, and has been an ac-

tive supporter of the National Theater Organ Society. Ironically, Joe doesn't play the organ.

For years, he awarded the Joe Luckey Service Award to a graduating Gannon senior and he established two endowed scholarships at the University. He was a special honoree at the 2008 Gannon University Distinguished Alumni Dinner but, like St. Joseph, he is not one to seek praise or glory for the good deeds he does.

In the spirit of the Maxims, Joe chose, through his life and work, all that corresponds to God's greater glory, and finds joy in others' happiness. Today, at St. Mary's Home East, Joe is once again in the care of the Sisters of St. Joseph. He is at ease in his surroundings, loves company and enjoys sharing memories of the Sisters and his days at the Home. When asked about the irony of both his childhood and his retirement being in the care of the Sisters, he said, "It's like coming home." With his ready smile and a twinkle in his eyes reminiscent of the man in the big red suit, it's clear that Joe is peaceful and happy living his simple, humble life.



Joe Luckey at Saint Mary's Home with Sr. Nancy Prenatt, SSJ.

Joe Luckey, pictured below with Sr. Martha Ann Rinderle, SSJ. The background is a photo of artwork titled *St. Joseph Home for Children*, an original pen and ink drawing by James E. Sabol, © 1999.



MINISTRY NEWS

St. Patrick Haven, a 23-bed homeless shelter for men, will receive a much needed financial boost due to a bequeath from an estate. The Haven, in its 26th year of operation, has always operated on unsolicited donations. With the present economic situation, it has been surviving day-to-day and will have to look to fund-raising for the first time in its history.

Villa Maria Elementary School invites you to an Integrated Arts Performance at the Erie Art Museum in honor of the Sisters of St. Joseph 150th anniversary. Save the date: May 15, 2011 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Saint Mary's Home of Erie was voted as Erie's Choice Retirement Community in the 2010 Erie's Choice Awards presented by the Erie Times News. The Administration and employees of Saint Mary's Home thank everyone who voted for Saint Mary's and offer a special thank you to the Sisters of St. Joseph for their ongoing support and dedication.



Saint Vincent Health System welcomes Sister Carol Morehouse, SSJ, as Senior Vice President of Mission Integration. Sister Carol will provide leadership in developing initiatives for teaching, promoting and monitoring the mission and values of Saint Vincent Health System. She will do this with respect to the history and tradition of the Sisters of St. Joseph, founders of the Health System, and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Sister Carol has served in educational ministries both as a teacher and in administration at Villa Maria Academy. More recently, Sister Carol was a partner in a law firm. At Saint Vincent, Sister Carol served on the Saint Vincent Health Center Board of Trustees and the System Board of Trustees. Sister Carol has also served on Boards at Gannondale Residential Center for Girls, Harborcreek Youth Services and the Institutional Review Board at Gannon University.

ASSOCIATES LIVING THE MISSION

When asked why she became an Associate in 2002, Mary Lou Rathes pointed to the wall hanging in the Associate office and said, "Those words written there." It reads: *I desire to deepen*



my spiritual life by actively living the mission of unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God as an Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

Mary Lou is a wife, mother of four adult children (one deceased) and has seven grandchildren. Like many Associates, she was aware of the Sisters' ministries and was acquainted with some of the Sisters. It was Sisters Nancy Fischer and Jean Baptiste DiLuzio who encouraged her to become an Associate.

Long involved in volunteering at places including Community House for Women, the Kids Café, Mercy Center for Women, Saint Mary's at Asbury Ridge and St. Patrick Haven, Mary Lou feels that as an Associate, she is more aware of serving others and living the mission of the Sisters. "Being an SSJ Associate has inspired, enabled and encouraged me to do the things I had only thought about doing before," she said.

For 10 years she has participated in the Sisters' Christian Meditation ministry. She initiated the Associates' Shawl Ministry and remains a participant. Mary Lou serves on the SSJ Spirit of Courage committee and volunteers at the Sisters' annual Thanksgiving Dinner. She recently became a Hospice volunteer, something she became acquainted with during her 44-year old son's illness and death in 2004. She knew it would be another way for her to live the charism of unity of neighbor with neighbor and neighbor with God.

A volunteer coordinator's dream, Mary Lou will most often respond by saying "yes" when called for a special project, like knitting a beautiful shawl or visiting St. Patrick Haven on short notice.

During her formation to become an Associate, Mary Lou wrote, "My spiritual journey has taken many routes, detours and stopovers through the years. Each phase has been a learning experience, from childhood as a protestant, a convert at 14, years of so-so spiritual and religious connections to the renewal of my spiritual quest about 20 years ago. I'm looking forward to continuing the journey as an Associate of the Sisters of St. Joseph community."

The Christian Meditation group meets Tuesdays at 9:30 a.m. at the Poustenia on the Villa Campus. Shawl Ministry meets at 1 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month. New members are welcome to both.

We remember prayerfully our Associates who recently died:

Grace Starr - August 19, 2010
Ardrienne Windahl - October 1, 2010
John Danowski - October 12, 2010
Mary (Peg) McConnell - October 28, 2010



Annual Thanksgiving Dinner

The annual Thanksgiving Dinner is an example of how we learn the needs of the community. We talk to people, we see people in their homes during meal deliveries and we make sure

they know they can turn to us if they need help. This year, our 22nd annual dinner, was another success. We served nearly 1,000 meals. The fund also supports area food pantries, outreach organizations and social service agencies which help people throughout the year. These organizations help find housing, clothing, food, education, jobs, and medical services. Hundreds of people make this happen: students who decorate placemats and hold fundraisers, Girl Scouts and Sunshine Groups that make centerpieces and favors, volunteers and more than 700 benefactors. We are blessed. For more information about the Thanksgiving Dinner Fund, visit our website www.ssjerie.org

SSJ Spirit of Courage

This year's SSJ Spirit of Courage had a "little" something extra special. We were honored to have Amy Roloff of The Learning Channel's (TLC) "Little People, Big World" co-emcee the event. Amy is a wonderful example of someone who demonstrates the spirit of courage. She shared stories of growing up as a little person and persevering through challenges. While here, Amy stayed at the Community Living Center and spent time getting to know the Sisters and learning about our ministries. She visited some schools and shared an anti-bullying message. She was very genuine -- what a spirit!

We receive many Spirit of Courage nominations each year. If there is someone in your life who has the SSJ Spirit of Courage, please consider a nomination. Nomination forms are on our website www.ssjerie.org (print or electronic), or we can mail one to you. Please contact the Development Office at (814) 836-4202.



Amy Roloff's appearance was made possible by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield.

ADVANCING THE MISSION . . . LEADING THE WAY FOR THE VISION . . .

Mother Agnes Spencer, SSJ Legacy Society

Our foundress, Mother Agnes Spencer, was a visionary. Her revolutionary thinking, swiftly followed by action, has propelled our mission. Imagine 150 years ago -- Abraham Lincoln was President, the Civil War was beginning, the Pony Express was starting and oil had just been discovered in our region, and here was this young woman religiously finding the resources to open hospitals, orphanages, schools, and homes for the elderly.

Flash forward a century and a half. We continue finding ways to address the needs of the people and offer support. Just as Mother Agnes invited others to invest in the Sisters' ministries, we also know how important you are to fulfilling our mission. We provide opportunities for giving to guarantee that our mission will continue.

Your planned gift will have meaning and impact for years to come. We honor those who have made a commitment with a gift to the Congregation included in their estate plans.

Those who remember the Sisters in wills, trusts, or other planned gifts are inducted into the Mother Agnes Spencer, SSJ Legacy Society (MAS). The Legacy Society gives you the opportunity to protect and strengthen our mission and ministries.

**You are welcome to discuss planned giving opportunities at any time with our Development Director, however, please contact your lawyer, accountant or financial planner for assistance in establishing a charitable gift.*

MAS members are invited to all events, are recognized in our publications and their names are displayed in the SSJ administration building.

You may choose to give anonymously, however, recognition can be an inspirational experience and may encourage others to make a "gift of a lifetime."

Upon stating your intent to include us in your estate, you will be inducted into the Legacy Society. A gift may be designated to establish a new fund or may be added to any of the existing funds.

Too often, gifts from estates are unrecognized because they happen after the benefactor is deceased. The Legacy Society provides a way to recognize and thank benefactors during their lifetime. If you've already included us in your will, we encourage you to let us know so that we may honor you as a member of the Mother Agnes Spencer, SSJ Legacy Society.

Additional information is on our website, www.ssjerie.org

**Mother Agnes Spencer
Legacy Society Luncheon
Tuesday, May 3, 2011**



2010 SSJ FUND “Lasting Impressions”

Despite the unstable economy, you continue to encourage us with your generosity! We are grateful for your trust to be good stewards, and we take that confidence seriously.

If you have not given to a charity this year, we welcome the opportunity to show you how a gift of any amount can serve our neighbors in simple ways. You can count on us to stretch a gift; we are known for doing more with less.

By supporting the SSJ Annual Fund, you are making a lasting impression on us and, more importantly, upon the people who need our help. Please consider a gift to the SSJ Annual Fund. You have a unique opportunity as an investor in our mission to immediately witness the difference your gift makes in the lives of others. *Thank You!*

Gifts and Prayer Requests Online

The most secure way to give with a credit card

Enclosed in this publication is a remittance envelope for gifts and prayer requests, both which can be done on our website, www.ssjerie.org



For additional information, please contact the Development Office (814) 836-4202 kristina.huber@ssjerie.org

Corrections from 2009-10 SSJ Annual Development Report:
Villa Maria Academy was missing from the Thanksgiving Dinner Fund list. We apologize for the omission.
Photo caption, pg. 14 incorrectly identified Sr. Susan Herzing as Sr. Sally
Page 20 – Mark and Susan Lucas Family
Page 9 – Charles and Mary Jo Stephenson

The story of the crèche, or nativity set, dates back to Saint Francis of Assisi in the 13th century who set up a crèche as a visual reminder of what God had done for us and how much He loved us. The crèche, as Monsignor Edward Zeitler of Notre Dame Parish in Hermitage, Pennsylvania explains, underscores the Incarnation and that God became flesh. He, too, feels the crèche is a reminder that, although different in cultures, beliefs, and color, we are all one family and share the humanity that Jesus embraced. We are called to share in His divinity.

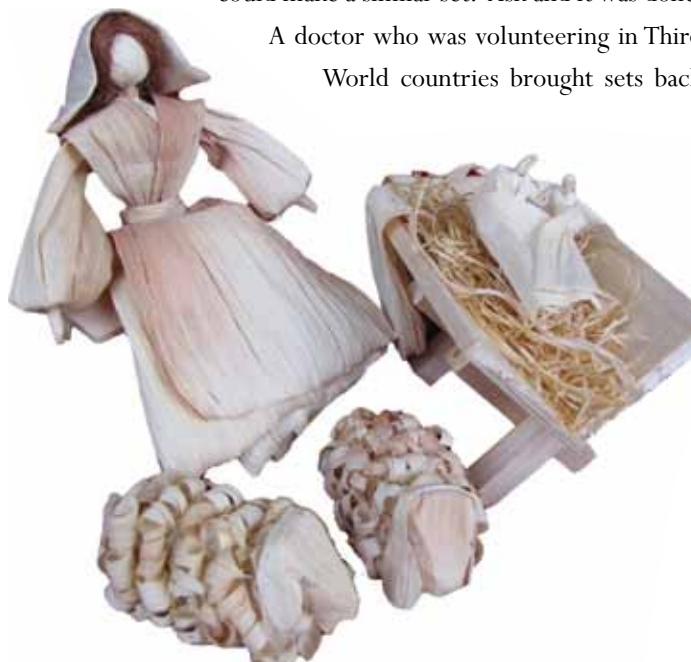
UNTO US

Since his childhood, Monsignor Zeitler has been passionate about nativity sets. The presence of the crib set was important to his family and each year on Christmas Eve, he and his siblings helped to display the family’s nativity. Before he was ordained, he decided to start sets for each of his siblings and add to them each year. He began his own collection in the early 1980s when he asked Father Max Karg, who was travelling to the Holy Land, if he would bring him an olive wood nativity set from Bethlehem. Olive wood is very strong and would last for generations.

Thus began his collection of crèches from around the world. He was intrigued by how the various cultures depicted the Holy Family and found it interesting to see how the sheep differed. He thought perhaps that signified countries where sheep might be non-existent, thus their appearance left to the imagination.

He added to his collection by buying sets he saw in magazines and asking friends who were travelling to other countries to bring them back for him. After seeing a set made of corn husks in a magazine, Ann Stigliano, a Notre Dame parishioner, was asked if she could make a similar set. Ask and it was done.

A doctor who was volunteering in Third World countries brought sets back



from Peru, Ecuador and the Philippines.

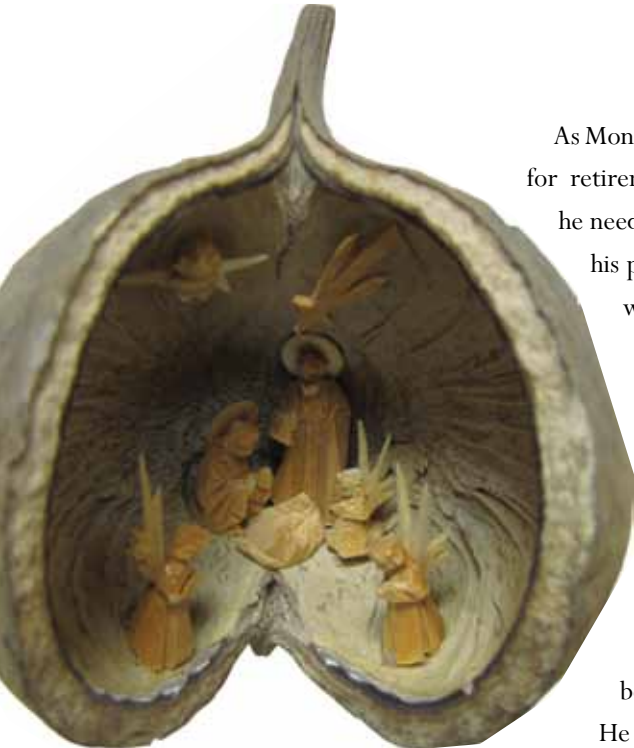
In the early days of his collection, setting up the displays each Christmas meant a lot of work packing, unpacking, repacking and storing them until the following year. Eventually he bought a case and kept the sets on display year-round, much to the delight of parish children and friends who found them fascinating.



... a Child was Born

... a Gift was Given

by Margaret Pellerite, SSJ



As Monsignor prepared for retirement, he knew he needed to downsize his possessions. He wanted to share the nativity sets with those who would preserve them and whose lives would be enriched because of them. He gave the olive wood set from Bethle-

hem to his Godson, knowing it would stay in the family. "The wood is strong, it will last forever." For himself, he kept a little white set that he displays at Christmas. The rest of the collection he generously gave to the Sisters of St. Joseph as he says, "in appreciation for all they have given me." He fondly recalls being taught by the Sisters during his years at St. John's grade school, Cathedral Prep and Gannon and so it was with gratitude that he gave the Sisters these works of beauty.

The collection is exquisite. Each set is uniquely beautiful and reflects the culture of the country from which it came. No two are the same, other than representing God's Son coming into this world as a tiny babe -- just like each of us. He came that we might have abundant life, that we could be convinced of His great love for each of us.

In December of 2007, an Erie Times News article on nativity scenes referred to the collection. Along with the article was a pic-

ture of one of the most intriguing sets from Germany -- an entire Nativity inside a nut shell.

Each year, we loan some of the sets to the Erie DAWN ministry for display in its *No Room at the Inn* exhibit which coincides with the Saint Vincent Auxiliary Festival of Trees on Thanksgiving weekend. After that, we display them at our Community Living Center where Monsignor has seen them. He has also seen the Erie DAWN exhibit; he is pleased that his hopes are being fulfilled.

He recently saw a Vietnamese set made of rolled-up magazine paper in a World Cultures shop in California and is still contemplating purchasing it. His interest in how different countries depict the Holy Family continues and he remains interested and seeking.

One thing Monsignor advocates for is keeping Advent and Christmas separate. He suggests waiting until Christmas Eve to display your nativity, and then enjoy it, and the Christmas season, for the following few weeks.

*For unto us is born a Savior who is Christ the Lord.
Let us adore Him.*





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We are ~ all of us ~ anniversaried people,
filled with memories and gifts.
The One who chooses to embrace our human form,
to walk our way and to create the path,
steadfastly sears through our doubts with relentless love.

May we, can we, will we seize the trust ~ also gift ~ to recognize
the Light pouring over us and in us, wrapping us 'round and
leading us on? In this do we emulate our beloved Joseph at Bethlehem.
In this do we discover the peace of this season.

Peace.

Prayer by Josette Gocella, SSJ