

Volume 19.2 Summer 2016

NEWS

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Following Francis

The Order of Franciscan Seculars

Also in this issue:

- Navigating a Path to the Future: A Guiding Presence
- People & Places
- Foundation Annual Report

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

There are “moments” in life when we are deeply touched by mystery, by our loving God. It may be in a moment of quiet when a sense of the divine is felt. It may be in a moment of discontent when life as we are living it feels meaningless. These are extraordinary encounters defying clear articulation. Perhaps God is calling us beyond ourselves to a deeper awareness of who we are, summoning us to a new way of being.

In his encyclical, the Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis states, “Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good.” #9

In this issue of Good News, we read of men and women pursuing a dignified and fulfilling life. They have chosen to strengthen their baptismal commitments by becoming members of the Order of Franciscan Seculars. There was a “moment” when they were inspired by St. Francis and St. Clare’s way of living the Gospel to live the Franciscan values of prayer, simplicity, humility, and ongoing conversion. Through their secular Franciscan vocation, they now reach out to others sharing the joy of the Gospel.

Likewise Sister Isabel Garrett shares her joy of Franciscan life with the young women of St. Hubert’s Catholic High School in Philadelphia where she works as a guidance counselor. There are many challenges in the daily life of a high school student. Sister Belle’s experience, wisdom, and openness allow students to confide in her and resolve the daily hardships. These young women trust Sister Belle. She enables the students to identify their gifts and develop their potential. Each day Sister Belle plants goodness—praying that it takes root and develops so these young women may live dignified and fulfilling lives.

Let us thank God for the moments of mystery that call us to our truest selves. Let us rejoice at the beauty of each person’s unique vocation in life and pray for all who seek to know their vocation.



**Sister Mary Kathryn
Dougherty, OSF
Congregational Minister**

Blessings,

Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF



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Sister Isabel Garrett is an academic advisor in the guidance office at St. Hubert's Catholic High School in Northeast Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In her position, Sister Belle helps to guide and counsel the students at the all-girl school, giving them the tools they need to advance into the future.

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

Managing Editor
Florence Smith

Assistant Editor
Sister Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

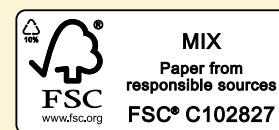
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Graphic Design
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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, 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: Lynne Burns, formation director for the west coast St. Clare Fraternity, presents Sister Loretta Schaff with a bouquet of flowers to thank her for a presentation she gave to fraternity members about her experience in El Salvador.



Members of the St. Clare Fraternity take part in a ritual as part of a presentation by Sister Loretta Schaff on her experience in El Salvador. Participants in the ceremony placed candles alongside the photos of the four churchwomen killed in El Salvador 35 years ago.



Following

The Order of

✠ “FOR ME, BEING A SECULAR FRANCISCAN IS AN EXTENSION AND ENHANCEMENT OF MY BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT.”



In 1983 Marie Clardy was a young, married woman with a new baby, a new job, and a new house near Our Lady of Angels Convent in Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania. She was not looking to add anything to her already busy life when a small article in the local paper announcing the profession of four women into the St. John Neumann Fraternity of the Order of Franciscan Seculars (OFS) caught her eye. Although she had a connection with Franciscan spirituality through the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia who had taught her when she was a child, Marie didn't know any of the lay women making their promises and she had never heard of the Secular Franciscans. Still, something about the notice spoke to her and she went to the profession held in Our Lady of Angels Chapel. The experience is one she says she will never forget.

"I was called by the Holy Spirit that night," said Marie. "I knew I needed to be part of this group." Marie picked up an index card with a name and number to contact for more information about St. John Neumann Fraternity and the OFS group. It took her several days to work up the courage to call the number but once she did, she received a warm welcome and an invitation to attend a meeting. She gratefully accepted.

That meeting was the first step toward what would become an intensely meaningful part of Marie's life—the discernment of, and eventually the permanent commitment to, a



Marie Clardy (left) engages with Sandra Kushner the minister from her OFS group—the St. John Neumann Fraternity in Aston, Pennsylvania. Marie has been part of the St. John Neumann Fraternity for more than 30 years. Her connection to the group is so strong, in fact, that she has remained an active member despite a move to New Hampshire six years ago.

Secular Franciscan vocation. Like all Secular Franciscans, Marie went through three separate stages on the road to her profession. The first stage—*orientation*—provided her with information about the OFS, introduced her to the lives and teachings of St. Francis and St. Clare, and gave her an opportunity to share in the Franciscan fraternity and

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Francis

Franciscan Seculars

► Peg Laub (left) and Jim Mearns review the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order as part of the ongoing formation work the group is doing at monthly gatherings.





Sister Elise Betz explains a dossal of St. Francis depicting significant scenes from Francis' life to Tommy Watts, Dolores Lepori, Teresa Carisio, and Justin Carisio. Sister Elise serves as the spiritual assistant for the San Damiano Fraternity while Teresa Carisio serves as minister.

"AS WE ARE WALKING THIS JOURNEY, IT IS NICE TO HAVE LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE WITH WHOM YOU CAN BE YOURSELF."

This colorful cross depicts scenes from the lives of the people of El Salvador. In El Salvador, there is a tradition of producing colorful crucifixes. This bright, religious symbol has a figure of Archbishop Oscar Romero at the center and includes images of the local Salvadoran landscape.



prayer life. The second stage—*inquiry*—focused on the more in-depth study of the Franciscan spirit and history and gave her the time and space to continue her discernment. Once those two stages were complete, Marie was received into the OFS and entered *candidacy*, the final formal period of initiation which culminated in a permanent commitment to the Gospel life.

"It is about a 30-33 month process from the time of orientation to the time of profession," said Sister Jude Marie Seaman who serves as spiritual assistant for the St. John Neumann Fraternity to which Marie belongs. "It is a time for people to learn more about Francis' life, to deepen their

own spirituality, and to figure out how they can live out Franciscan spirituality in their own lives and work."

For Marie, the call to life as a Secular Franciscan was strong and clear.

Though she understood the weight and significance of the commitment toward which she was moving

during her time in formation, she was confident that she was where she needed to be. "I did question along the way as to whether I was going to be able to live this for the rest of my life. However, I never questioned that this was where God wanted me to be," said Marie. "For me, being a Secular Franciscan is an extension and enhancement of my baptismal commitment. I resolve every morning to try to live the Gospel according to Franciscan values. Sometimes I get to 9:30 A.M. and I have already messed up. Some days I do better. It is an ongoing conversion. But that is part of being human."

Secular Franciscans In The Church

Marie is in good company. For 400,000 women and men around the world, the Secular Franciscan Order provides a framework to follow in the footsteps of Jesus in the way St. Francis did. The OFS is open to any Catholics not bound by vows to another religious order and consists of both the laity (nonclerical men and women) and secular clergy (deacons, priests, and bishops) who wish to deepen their baptismal commitment by embracing the Franciscan way of life. Founded even before the Third Order Regular in which members profess

religious vows and live in community, the Secular Franciscan Order is a public association in the Catholic Church governed by the universal law of the Church as well as by its own Rule and Constitutions originally approved by Pope Nicholas IV in 1289. Pope Paul VI approved the present Rule in June 1978. The OFS is divided into local fraternities that meet regularly to pray together, deepen their understanding of Franciscan theology, and support one another in living the Gospel.

Individual fraternities have spiritual assistants—like Sister Jude Marie—who journey with the Secular Franciscans and help with ongoing formation. “We are amazingly blessed to have the example of Sister Jude Marie and the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia,” said Marie. “She brings a quiet dignity to our meetings.”

confidence to release it,” said Sister Elise. “I tell them ‘It is your vocation. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?’”

Although the role of the spiritual assistants is to accompany rather than lead, the sisters bring with them a deep knowledge of the Franciscan spirit that enriches the fraternities of which they are a part. Sister Elise remembers introducing Duns Scotus’ take on the Incarnation—that even if Adam and Eve had not sinned, Jesus would have come anyway—during a discussion with the members of her fraternity. “The idea generated a lively discussion. A rather new member of the fraternity was present that day who had never heard this idea. It was so different from what she had been taught that it was hard for her to accept. As time went on, though, she came to appreciate it and to believe it herself,” said Sister Elise.



Sister Loretta presents a slide show chronicling the life of Oscar Arnulfo Romero, an archbishop of the Catholic Church in El Salvador who spoke out against poverty, social injustice, assassinations, and torture. He himself was assassinated in 1980 while celebrating Mass. Presentations like this help fraternity members reflect on the work of others.

In fact, a number of Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have been appointed as spiritual assistants for Secular Franciscan fraternities around the country. In Wilmington, Delaware, Sister Elise Betz serves as spiritual assistant for members of the San Damiano Fraternity. She describes her role as that of coach. “My job is to see where the potential is and to give them the

Answering The Call; Living The Commitment

For Bruce Siggins, a member of the St. Clare Fraternity in Portland, Oregon, the opportunity to learn from Sister Loretta Schaff, the spiritual assistant of his fraternity, has been a gift. “Sister Loretta has a depth of spirituality I find awe-inspiring,”

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OFS Spiritual Assistants

Over the years many sisters have had the opportunity to be spiritual assistants to Secular Franciscans in various fraternities around the United States. Some of these include:

Current:

Sister Elise Betz
San Damiano Fraternity
Wilmington, Delaware

Sister Kathleen Ganiel
Fraternity of St. Clare
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Sister Guadalupe Medina
San Buenaventura Fraternity
Portland, Oregon

Sister Jude Seaman
St. John Neumann Fraternity
Aston, Pennsylvania

Sister Loretta Schaff
St. Clare Fraternity
Portland, Oregon

Sister Patricia Helen Warman
Queen of the Universe Confraternity
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Former:

Sister Anne Leo Broadhurst
Sister Helen Budzik
Sister Albertus Dougherty
Sister Isabelle Garrett
Sister Eileen Hennessy
Sister Mary Patricia Johnson
Sister Patricia Kane
Sister Bridget McNamara
Sister Mary Walsh
Sister Christa Marie Thompson

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- **Want to become a Secular Franciscan?** To become a Secular Franciscan, you must be an actively practicing Catholic (of any of the rites in union with Rome). Visit: www.nafra-sfo.org.
Not a Catholic? If you are Anglican/Episcopalian, please visit the Third Order Society of St. Francis (www.tssf.org). If you are a member of another Christian denomination or simply prefer an ecumenical Franciscan community, please visit the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (www.oeffranciscans.org).
- Make time each day for prayer. Seek out opportunities to deepen your spirituality and look for the sacred in simple activities and pleasures.
- Be a peacemaker in your home, your neighborhood, and your workplace. Be a thoughtful and active steward of the Earth and all of creation.
- Volunteer to work with those who are poor or to become an advocate for those who struggle with poverty and powerlessness.



◀ *Clare Reidy (far right) leads the members of the St. Clare Fraternity in prayer as Lete Davis and Michael Reidy follow along.*

▼ *Fraternity meetings include prayer, ongoing formation, and opportunities to break bread together.*



Jerri Wagner and MaryLou Betzing (center) lift their voices in praise and glory.

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said Bruce. "I turn to her for the support and wisdom that come out of living vocation in a different way than we do. Her insights are of great value."

Bruce's journey as a Secular Franciscan began more than 30 years ago while he was stationed in Japan. Drawn to the Franciscan principle of living simply in a complex world, he was determined to answer God's call to the OFS despite the fact that there was no fraternity close to him. He began his orientation through correspondence and made his profession while still overseas. In the years that followed, he described himself as a "wandering Franciscan," living out his commitment to his Secular Franciscan vocation in a variety of places in Asia, the United States, and Europe. "I moved a lot but what was consistent for me was the Franciscan simplicity of life," said Bruce

who is now retired and has settled in as part of the St. Clare Fraternity. "That has played out in how I encounter people—looking at everybody as the face of Christ coming toward me and living out a preference for the poor."

"It is Francis of Assisi who draws people," said Sister Loretta. "The way Francis lived his life resonates with them—his sense of joy, service to the poor, humility, contemplation, providence, and a deep prayer life."

The sense of fraternity is also very important for Secular Franciscans—the ability to share faith with one another and to support one another in living out the Gospel in a way that is consistent with Franciscan theology. Not only do members of fraternities gather at their monthly meetings, but many of them also get together between meetings to connect. "We call it 'fraternity,'"

said Marie. “As we are walking this journey, it is nice to have like-minded people with whom you can be yourself. When most of the world does not think like you, our gathering is a place where you can feel embraced by one another.”

Being a Secular Franciscan also means putting the Gospel into action (Rule #4: “Gospel to life, life to Gospel”). Each member of the OFS is expected to have an apostolate. For Kay Haberlach, also a member of the St. Clare Fraternity, that means volunteering at the county jail—a ministry to which she was introduced by another member of the fraternity. Kay brings Catholic materials to the inmates, does communion services, and serves as a presence for those who are incarcerated. In the San Damiano Fraternity, members live out the Gospel in many ways, including working together to gather donations for Sister Elise’s ministry with Mexican immigrants.

“I am edified by how Secular Franciscans—married or single—will embrace and deepen their baptismal call by adding this

dimension to their lives,” said Sister Loretta. “My ministry with the Secular Franciscans has been an invitation for me to deepen my own Franciscan vocation. It has been a beautiful complement to my own efforts to be a Franciscan in the world today.”

For Marie Clardy, the connection she felt more than 30 years ago in the chapel of Our Lady of Angels has only deepened during her decades as a member of the OFS. When she and her husband moved to New Hampshire six years ago, Marie decided to remain a member of the St. John Neumann Fraternity in Aston. She now makes the nine-hour drive each month to attend meetings there. “There is a fraternity about an hour away and perhaps someday—when I can’t make the trip anymore—I will go there, but for now I don’t feel called to switch,” said Marie. “My fraternity in Aston is my home.” ■

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



Donna Adams, a first year inquirer, and Tammy Feil, a candidate, discuss what the group has brought into their lives. Secular Franciscans are young and old, married and single. They come from all kinds of backgrounds and hold a wide variety of professions. One thing they have in common, however, is a strong desire to commit themselves to living the Gospel according to Franciscan spirituality as secular members of the Church.

Sister Kathleen Moffatt gives a presentation to the San Damiano Fraternity. Fraternity members take turns leading ongoing formation sessions on topics relevant to the Franciscan life, spirituality, and charism.





◀ Newly inducted members of the Catholic High School of Baltimore Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer Chapter of the National English Honor Society. Sister Corda is in the second row (far right).

MARYLAND

During **Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer's** 14 years at the Catholic High School of Baltimore (1956-1970), she taught English, served as chair of the English Department, and was advisor of the TCHS newspaper, *The Highway*. Recently she received a letter from members of the school's current English department telling her about the school's newly initiated National English Honor Society and informing her that they had chosen to name it the Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer Chapter of the National English Honor Society in honor of her years of dedicated service. She was invited to attend the first induction ceremony. In addressing the students, Sister Corda thanked them for the honor and recalled some of her own experiences in TCHS. She closed her comments by reminding them of the values Catholic High continues to hold dear. "You, too, like me, will leave TCHS," she said, "but may TCHS never leave you."

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.



PENNSYLVANIA

Sister Constance Davis received the St. John Neumann Award at the Annual Mass for Religious Education held at the Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. Following the liturgy, Archbishop Charles Chaput presented the catechetical anniversary awards. Sister Constance's award represented her five years of service in the Religious Education Program at St. John Fisher Parish in Boothwyn.

PENNSYLVANIA

Sister Dominica LoBianco and two of our Companions in Mission—Mary Lou Pappolla and Mary Furlong—were invited to the Muslim wedding of Nour Chebli, Iman Chebli's daughter. Sister Dominica described the event as one that was very different from our American weddings, but one at which they were made to feel very welcomed. Rather than the type of ceremony to which we are accustomed, there was a simple signing of contracts by both families and a talk by the officiating Iman. The marriage contract, Sister Dominica learned, is actually a contract between families. For U.S. legal purposes, however, the couple would have gone through the county to acquire the license.



Companion Mary Lou Pappolla, Muslim friend Noor, Sister Domnica LoBianco, and Companion Mary Furlong were happy to be invited to attend the Muslim wedding of Nour Chebli.



NEW JERSEY

About six years ago, St. Catherine of Bologna School in Ringwood was invited to be one of eight New Jersey schools piloting STEM education (science, technology, engineering, and math). Over the intervening years, five of those schools moved out of the program for various reasons. The three remaining schools—one of which



This work of art is a triptych—a pictured designed in three side-by-side panels. Donated to the congregation by CHI St. Joseph Health, the triptych is the work of artist Freeman Stoltzfus, a Lancaster County native. His talent was evident at an early age, particularly his depiction of the people and landscapes of the Amish community. In his work Stoltzfus utilizes a variety of materials and art forms—painting, drawings, print making, photography, and sculpture—to reflect a wide range of personal interests: music, nature, poetry, Amish quilts, Gothic architecture, and geometry.

was St. Catherine’s—are the first Catholic elementary schools in the U. S. to receive STEM certification. **Sister Theresa Firenze**, principal of St. Catherine’s, described the program’s emphasis on the inquiry method. “Science, technology, engineering, and math ‘blur’ their lines” she explained, “and connections, exploration, and problem-solving are at the service of making discoveries that will make the world better for all.”



MARYLAND

Sister Patricia Hutchison was part of a panel presentation at a program coordinated by the Murphy Peace and Justice Initiative, one of our cosponsored ministries in Baltimore. The program, entitled *The Saint and the Sultan*, was an interfaith exploration of the encounter between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik al-Kamil of Egypt during the Crusades and the foundation that this encounter provides for fostering mutual understanding and cooperation today. Sister Patricia presented the story from the Franciscan perspective with a focus on the manner in which this encounter impacted Francis, the Franciscan perspective on the dignity of every human being, and the importance of engaging in interpersonal communication.

PENNSYLVANIA

At Neumann University’s Annual Scholarship Gala, **Sister Elizabeth Kirk** received the Presidential Humanitarian Award. A listing of her contributions in both elementary and secondary education and her 25 years of dedication as parish services director at St. Francis deSales Parish in Lenni exemplify her qualifications as a recipient. In her current ministry, for example, Sister Betty oversees religious education for both children in the CCD program and the parish school. She is involved in various social services, launches food drives, and oversees collections for newborns.



▲ **Sister Elizabeth Kirk** gives her thank you speech after receiving Neumann University’s Presidential Humanitarian Award.

PENNSYLVANIA

A beautiful new art display graces the front hall of our motherhouse in Aston. The work—actually a three-paneled triptych—is a gift from **CHI St. Joseph Children’s Health** in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The triptych is the work of artist Freeman Stoltzfus and was inspired and commissioned by CHI St. Joseph Children’s Health. The panels reflect the components of the organization: care for God’s children, founding by the Sisters of St. Francis, a location of Catholic Health Initiatives, and their local role in Lancaster County. **St. Joseph the Worker** depicts Joseph’s association with those who work with their hands. Joseph is depicted here with the young Jesus. The artist imaged the construction of hospitals, clinics, and buildings which have, over many years, bettered the lives of many. **St. Francis and St. Clare** depict those who devote their lives in service to those who are poor, sick, and in need. The third panel illustrates the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. **The Emmaus story** is central to Catholic Health Initiatives and its mission in the communities it serves.



Sister Belle joins the student body to listen to speeches from student council nominees.



St. Hubert's draws students from more than 50 elementary schools in Philadelphia and its surrounding suburbs. More than 98% of St. Hubert's graduates pursue education beyond high school and many receive financial aid packages that help make those continued studies possible. In fact, in the past four years St. Hubert's graduates have received more than \$57 million in college and university scholarships and grants.



Because Sister Belle is extremely busy tending to the needs of all of her students, she recruits help each year from student volunteers. Seen here are seniors Julianna Ruiz (left) and Kelsey McIlhenny who run errands and assist with just about anything Sister Belle needs.

Navigating a Path to the Future: A Guiding Presence

Sister Isabel Garrett's office at St. Hubert's Catholic High School is a favorite spot for many of the students who attend this Northeast Philadelphia all-girls school. During free periods, students drop in to volunteer, to share stories, or just to say hello. She is an academic advisor in the guidance office and, while helping students find their way through the college admissions process is a big part of her job, her role at the school encompasses much more than filling out forms and assembling transcripts.

Applying to college is a stressful prospect for the students. The inevitable questions—"Will I complete these applications on time? Will I get in? Am I going to be able to

handle college?"—creep into the minds of even the most competent and confident students. Having Sister Belle in their corner helps the girls navigate this tumultuous time.

Patty Riedlova, a student volunteer, applied to four schools and is waiting expectantly to hear back from her first choice. She credits Sister Belle with helping her keep her feet firmly planted during the ups and downs of her final year of high school. "I thought senior year would be more stressful than it has been and I think that is because of guidance from Sister Belle," Patty explained. "She is always there to answer questions and always makes sure I get everything done."

Looking To The Future

With so many balls to keep in the air between school work, extracurricular activities, and preparing for college, students value the one-on-one attention Sister Belle provides. She meets with each junior and senior to plan for the future and to set the wheels in motion to get there. Juniors focus on identifying strengths and aligning their interests to long-term college and career goals through the use of the Naviance program, a software-based personality profile that helps get students thinking about their direction. "Sometimes their immediate reaction is, 'That's not for me' but I encourage them to think critically about what aspects of each suggested pursuit might be

Sister Belle talks with Patty Riedlova about selecting a college. Patty is just one of the many St. Hubert's students and parents who are enormously grateful for Sister Belle's support and direction during the college application and selection process. Sister Belle works with the school's juniors and seniors on everything from identifying schools that are a good fit to crafting application essays and navigating the maze of financial aid forms.



“SEEING THE CHOICES THEY MAKE MAKES ME HOPEFUL. IT ENCOURAGES ME THAT WE ARE DOING ALL RIGHT.”

a good fit,” said Sister Belle. “It helps them broaden and deepen their thinking about possible choices.”

In the late junior and early senior year, the emphasis shifts to identifying colleges that fit each student’s criteria in such areas as academics, geography, culture, size, and cost. Then the real work starts—asking for and assembling letters of recommendation, writing admissions essays, scheduling on-campus visits, searching for scholarships, and filling out financial aid forms. Sister Belle does whatever it

takes to help students and their families succeed. “She reminded me of deadlines and helped my mom understand the application process,” explained Patty.

“I have gone to her for help diffusing situations between parents and daughters,” said St. Hubert’s principal, Dr. Joanne Walls. “Sometimes parents don’t want their kids to go far away or they don’t agree about which school would be the best fit. Sister Belle is very good at moderating these discussions.”

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▲ Senior Kelsey McIlhenny proudly affixes the banner of Holy Family University to a corkboard that displays schools where St. Hubert’s graduates will be heading in the fall.



Sister Belle works with students on the Naviance program, a software-based course that guides the girls through a series of self-discovery tools. The program offers a variety of features, including college research and matching tools, career assessment and personality tests, and surveys to help students connect what they are doing in school to what they would like to do once they complete their education.

The next step is often the hardest—helping to calm nerves while the girls wait for word. Once the college acceptances and financial aid packages arrive, Sister Belle brings the girls in—often with their parents—to help them wade through the offers and decide on a school. “We line up colleges and money and whittle down their choices,” she said. “We compare and contrast—figure out which path will best lead them to their end objectives.” When that path requires more money, Sister Belle will help locate additional sources of funding or even help students find jobs to bridge the financial gap.

Dealing With Today

As important as the college application process is in Sister Belle’s ministry, her role goes beyond that of college coach. She also sees girls for personal counseling and meets with students who are struggling academically or behaviorally. “Working in

a guidance office in a school of more than 600 girls, Sister Belle wears a lot of hats,” explained Dr. Walls. “Fortunately for us, she has a wealth of knowledge and a breadth of experience. She is an experienced counselor, a former principal, a theology teacher, a fluent Spanish speaker—the list goes on. Plus, the students trust her. They see her as someone they can go to who won’t have an agenda.”

What makes Sister Belle such a trusted member of the St. Hubert’s staff? The answer lies in her life experiences and ministry history. She worked both as a teacher and principal in many inner-city schools and has witnessed violence in many forms—the rape of a young woman on the street below the convent, a drug war shootout, the poverty that leads to suicide and murder. She was working at Cardinal Dougherty High School in Philadelphia when a senior, Eddie Polec, was murdered

by teens from another school in a very violent assault. She will never forget the phone call alerting her that Eddie was dead and knowing that 1,000 students would need help dealing with the tragedy. Always concerned but often feeling helpless, Sister Belle said that “like the prophet Samuel, it took me a while to respond, ‘Here I am, Lord.’” Yet she credits each incident with leading her to opening the Franciscan Peace Center in 2000.

The Franciscan Peace Center

Father Paul Kennedy, then president of Cardinal Dougherty High School, donated office space from which Sister Belle operated the newly developed Franciscan Peace Center. The center provided nonviolence education programs and emphasized realistic problem-solving techniques geared to students from Pre-K to 8th grade—using hand puppets for the lower grades and

adapting to meet the students' needs for the higher grades. The programs dealt with peacemaking and ranged from anti-bullying to communications skills and conflict resolution techniques. Sister Belle was often invited to bring her programs to other schools where the Sisters of St. Francis taught. Before presenting the programs, she met with the faculties and PTA groups of each school to determine the specific need. Through her Franciscan congregation, she brought the program to schools in Philadelphia, Delaware, Trenton, Baltimore, and Boston. "I finally took hold of the mission of Francis and Clare," Sister Belle said, "to be a peacemaker in my time as they were in theirs."

In 2010 Cardinal Dougherty School closed its doors. Sister Belle invited sisters who wanted the materials from the peace center to take them and use them in their schools. At St. Hubert's she continues her peacemaking endeavors, assuring each student that "God loves you just as you are and where you are"—and challenges them to ongoing growth.

Guiding The Way

It is that kind of experience and credibility that allows the girls to open up to Sister Belle about what is going on in their lives. They know that she will keep confidences when necessary and bring stakeholders together to solve problems when warranted. This past year, a group of girls who were concerned that one of their friends was being bullied on social media by another classmate went to Sister Belle for help. She got the girls involved and their parents

together and resolved the situation. "I talked to them about the importance of being kind to one another and of communicating face-to-face," she said. "I also stressed the limitations of any form of communication that removes the ability to see the facial expressions that help determine the real meaning behind what is being said."

These kinds of teachable moments are at the heart of what Sister Belle hopes to accomplish at St. Hubert's—an impact that goes beyond getting into a top-notch school or securing a scholarship. When the girls of St. Hubert's receive their diplomas and go out into the world, she hopes they will bring with them the skills they need to be the young women they want to be in their friendships, in their families, and in their Church.

When she thinks about her ministerial journey, Sister Belle stated, "I know that any success or blessings on my ministry have not come merely from my effort. It has come from God who listens to my prayers and the prayers, examples, and the help of my Franciscan sisters and the laity with whom I have ministered." And for the girls at St. Hubert's? "I hope that they understand their Catholic identity and the different ways for them to become committed members of the Church and the world," explained Sister Belle. "From what I see, most of them are already doing their best to live that. They are good young women. Seeing the choices they make makes me hopeful. It encourages me that we are doing all right." ■

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

Seniors Nicki Soder (right) and Jacqueline Detrich practice the basics of infant care as part of a child development class offered at St. Hubert's.



The connection that students have with the Sisters of St. Francis go beyond the school walls. Here, senior Natalie Flores gives Sister Belle a "fidget blanket" intended for sisters living at Assisi House. These blankets help soothe patients with Alzheimer's by keeping their hands busy.

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for the young people who will be our next generation of leaders.
- Utilize your particular skills to help high school students who are applying for college. People with strong writing and editing skills can help with essays. Those who know their way around a tax form can help fill out financial aid applications. Anyone who has been through the process themselves (and survived!) can help the young people in their lives to keep things in perspective.
- Volunteer to represent your alma matter at a local college fair. Alumni representatives play an important role for many college admissions offices and can serve as a wonderful introduction for prospective students.
- Contribute to a scholarship fund that helps hardworking students pay for the cost of higher education.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Sisters of St. Francis Foundation 2015 Annual Report

Dear Friends,

*I said to the almond tree:
Speak to me of God;
and the almond tree blossomed
— Nikos Kazantzakis*



In spring, a jubilant time of year, we are in awe and wonder as we witness the magnificent changes occurring in nature. Much of what is happening in nature can be likened to the lives you touch. Individuals you have never and probably will never meet experience a transformation because of your good will and generosity. Young children at Drexel Neumann Academy in Chester, Pennsylvania, receive an education in a safe environment. Immigrants at East Bay Sanctuary in Berkeley, California,—in search of a better life—receive support and assistance to continue their journey. In Philadelphia women who have been trafficked can avail themselves of a home called Dawn's Place. Soon Clare of Assisi House in Reading, Pennsylvania, will open its doors and give women whose lives have been filled with major difficulties a second chance. We are deeply grateful that you partner with us in ministry and we ask our good and generous God to shower abundant blessings upon you and your loved ones. Together we are building the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Always we thank God for you,

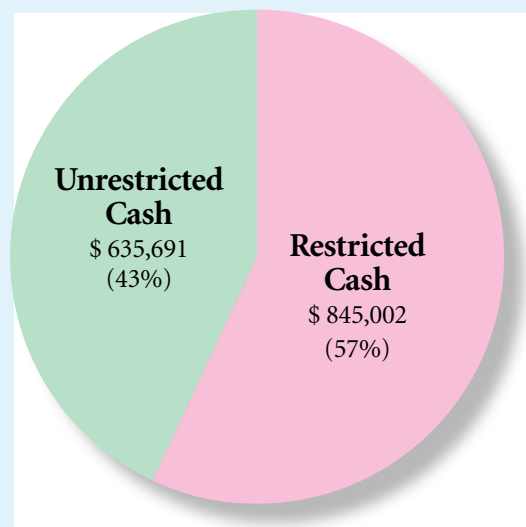
Sr. Mary Vandergeest, OSF

Sr. Mary Vandergeest
Executive Director

Total Donations: \$ 1,480,693

Restricted: \$ 845,002 (57%)

Unrestricted: \$ 635,691 (43%)



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

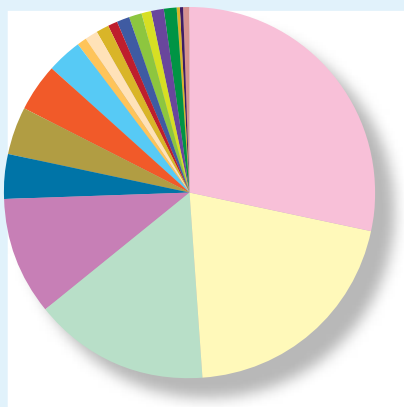
WITH HEARTS FILLED WITH GRATITUDE
THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Thank You!

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

Distribution of Unrestricted Funds:

\$ 675,000*



* Total Unrestricted Funds distributed in Fiscal Year 2015 included an additional \$ 39,309 which was from Fiscal Year 2014.

- Assisi House Capital Improvements \$ 192,000 (28%)
- SOSF Retirement \$ 133,000 (20%)
- Neumann University Capital Campaign \$ 100,000 (15%)
- OSF Volunteer Program \$ 70,000 (10%)
- St. Ann Convent Furnace \$ 30,000 (4%)
- Haiti \$ 30,000 (4%)
- Transitions Capital Campaign \$ 25,000 (4%)
- Franciscan Spiritual Center Aston \$ 20,000 (3%)
- Anna's Place \$ 10,000 (1%)
- St. Francis House \$ 10,000 (1%)
- The Catholic High School of Baltimore \$ 10,000 (1%)
- Syrian Refugees \$ 10,000 (1%)
- Asylee Women Enterprise \$ 8,000 (1%)
- Catholic Relief Services to Nepal \$ 5,000 (1%)
- Dawn's Place \$ 5,000 (1%)
- Hispanic Ministry of Delaware County, PA \$ 5,000 (1%)
- Pilgrimage to El Salvador \$ 5,000 (1%)
- St. Francis Inn \$ 3,000 (0%)
- St. Katharine Drexel Parish \$ 2,000 (0%)
- Solidarity with Sudan \$ 2,000 (0%)



In Memoriam

Sister Evelyn Cahill
(formerly Sister Marie Philomene)
March 2, 2016

Sister Trinita Balbach
March 13, 2016

Sister Rosa Carmichael
March 19, 2016

Sister Evelyn Marie Hartnett
(formerly Sister James Michael)
April 6, 2016

Sister Marie Linehan
(formerly Sister Marie Urban)
April 19, 2016

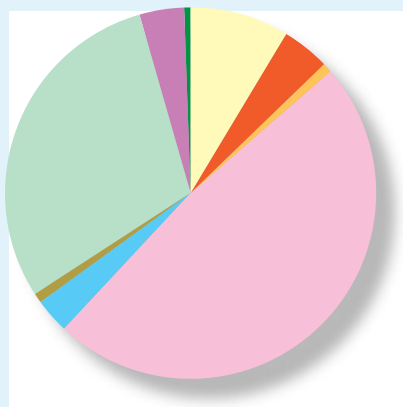
Sister Helen Veronica Hamill
May 21, 2016

Sister Mary Rita Barbernitz
(formerly Sister Johnanna Mary)
May 24, 2016

Sister Eleanor Augustine Beckman
May 26, 2016

Distribution of Restricted Funds:

\$ 845,002



- Assisi House \$ 413,955 (49%)
- Retirement \$ 250,540 (30%)
- Shelter & Social Ministries \$ 72,352 (9%)
- OSF Volunteer \$ 32,969 (4%)
- OLA Elevators \$ 30,718 (4%)
- Education \$ 25,999 (3%)
- Foreign Ministries \$ 8,869 (1%)
- Memorial Garden \$ 6,145 (1%)
- Parish & Spiritual Ministries \$ 3,455 (0%)

Distribution of Restricted Categories

Assisi House: Wiring, Renovations (phase 1), enhancement to Gathering Room; **Retirement:** Assisi House, St. Ann Convent, General Retirement; **Shelter and Social Ministries:** Anna's Place, Committee for Responsible Investment, Dawn's Place, Philadelphia Social Services, Red Hill Farm and farm ministry, St. Francis Inn, discretionary fund for the poor, Transitions, St. Joseph Medical Center; **Foreign Ministries:** Africa (Sister Julie Mulvihill), Lawson High School, African Ministries, Haiti, Haiti Clinic, Global Sisters; **Education:** Drexel Neumann Academy, The Catholic High School of Baltimore; **Parish Ministries:** OLA Chapel, OSF Caregivers; **Memorial Gardens:** benches, bricks, trees, pergola; **OSF Volunteer Program; OLA Elevators**

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

► Mary Erickson, executive director of the Franciscan Spiritual Center, said, “Michelle Kroll has been my assistant for eight years and her presence on staff has greatly enhanced what we all do. I am very grateful.”



FoCUS

MICHELLE KROLL



Michelle enjoys spending time with her husband, Brian; daughter, Claire; and her extended family and friends

“MICHELLE IS A DEDICATED, COMMITTED STAFF MEMBER. SHE IS CREATIVE AND GENEROUS IN ALL THAT SHE DOES FOR US. MICHELLE CONSISTENTLY GIVES EXPRESSION TO LIVING THE HEART OF OUR FRANCISCAN CHARISM.”

– SR. MARY JO CHAVES

The first voice you hear and the first face you see when you contact the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Milwaukie, Oregon, is that of administrative assistant, Michelle Kroll. In 2008 when Michelle was ready to leave her previous job, a friend put her in touch with Mary Erickson, executive director of the FSC. It was Michelle’s first encounter with the center—and the Sisters of St. Francis

Deeply impressed by the contemplative atmosphere and the spiritual nature of work that provided a creative challenge to streamline office procedures, design creative brochures and program materials, and be a welcoming presence, Michelle began her Franciscan journey. Mary Erickson noted that Michelle’s personal warmth and professional excellence continue to have a strong impact on staff. “Michelle’s ability to handle varied tasks, infuse creativity into our advertising, and present a caring approach with our patrons is an invaluable asset,” Mary said.

Besides her everyday tasks, Michelle assists with fundraising events and occasionally presents spiritual programs. She also acts as a facilitator of the companions program, which, in her words, “provides the opportunity to enhance relationships with the sisters and companions.” Faith-sharing and like-mindedness—gifts she experiences with companions—are becoming an essential component of her life. Participating in and presenting hermitage retreats is a tangible way to fully experience Francis and Clare and the opportunity to travel to Assisi with the FSC Pilgrimage in 2014 was a blessing. Michelle noted that “the Franciscan charism has seeped its way into my system, inspiring me to live more simply, to do what I can to care for creation, and to work joyfully.”

A great part of this joy in life is spending time with daughter, Claire, and husband Brian. Her hobbies include knitting and printmaking, including Franciscan-themed block prints.

Eileen Parfrey, longtime friend of the center and currently part-time staff member, said, “Michelle always makes me feel as if she has waited all day for me to show up. Since I’ve had the opportunity to see her in action with other patrons, I’ve come to realize this is her ministry—this is how she lives the Franciscan charism.” Michelle herself says it very simply: “I am very happy here. I come to work happy. I leave happy.”

◀ Michelle poses with fellow companions, Clair Zentner and Nancy Pyburn, during a 2013 companions gathering. Another companion, Terry Capiello, commented “Despite a humming office with multiple demands, Michelle takes the time to greet and listen to every patron who enters her door. Each time she greets me, I feel welcomed—as if my presence were a gift. That is truly Michelle’s gift.”



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



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- ☐ **Matching Gift** – have your employer or your spouse's employer match your Annual Fund contribution.

- ☐ **Recurring Gift** – set up monthly deductions from your personal banking account. Contact Elaine Twaddell, (610) 558-6132 or etwaddell@osfphila.org.
- ☐ **Honorarium/Memorials** – make a gift in memory or in honor of family or friends. Contact Sister Kathleen Parisi, kparisi@osfphila.org or (610) 558-7714.
- ☐ **Estate Planning** – become a member of the Legacy Society by including the Sisters of St. Francis in your will. Contact the Office of Institutional Advancement, (610) 558-7713.

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Working to Close Pennsylvania Detention Center

In February four of our sisters gathered in Reading with a group of 100 people demanding the release of the mothers and children who had been detained there since August—after having been removed from detention centers in Texas. Earlier in February Judge McGee ordered the center to close because it lacked licensure to house and treat women and children. Failure to comply meant that the detainees were being held illegally. During Lent the sisters at the motherhouse donated money to help the women and children resettle. A parish in Philadelphia is sponsoring two families but will need assistance to cover rent and other necessities.



(Left-Right) Maria Sotomayor and Sisters Kathleen McMullin, Dominica LoBianco, Angela Joseph Lowe, and Eileen Doherty called for the closing of the Berks County Detention Center.



Sister Jean Wickenheiser displays her special M & M Chili which merited a 3rd Place Award.

Sister Jean Enters Chili Cook-Off Contest

Sister Jean Wickenheiser initially signed up for the First Annual Chili Cook-Off Contest at her parish, St. Columbkil's in Boyertown, primarily to boost the numbers and because she enjoys cooking. She learned, however, that her M & M Chili (Mild and Meaty)—based on her mother's recipe—was

very popular and ultimately merited a third place win! Sister Jean described the recipe as “a family favorite—nothing out of the ordinary.” In fact, she added, “The most interesting part of mine was probably the presentation. There was nothing about presentation in the guidelines but it is just part of the way I do things—no big deal!”

▼ The Sisters of St. Francis have taken vows to live a Gospel life in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi and our foundress Mother Francis Bachmann. In 1968, Sisters Maureen Duignan and Mary Griffin made a lifetime commitment to live the vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. For many, religious life is not a path to which they are called. However, the Order of Franciscan Seculars provides another way for Catholic men and women to deepen their baptismal call and to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi. Read more about the Secular Franciscans on page 4.

