

Volume 20.1 Spring 2017

Good NEWS

A Publication of  THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Welcoming All *as* Brother *and* Sister

Also in this issue:

- Challenging Young Minds:
Taking a STEM Approach
- People & Places
- Sharing the Good News

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

As I reflect on our global community and its many challenges—poverty, war, consumerism, racism, terrorism, and violence in all its forms—I am drawn to the beginning words of the Peace Prayer attributed to St. Francis of Assisi: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love... It is our call as people of faith to sow love, to make tangible in our world the love of God for all people and creation. Each small effort to love and to make peace shines the light of hope into our world and into the hearts of those who suffer.



Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF
Congregational Minister

Sister Marie Lucey has been about sowing love for many years as an advocate for peace and justice. In her various ministry positions, Marie has worked tirelessly to right the wrongs of our nation and world. She has raised our awareness of injustice and the systemic causes of inequality. In this issue of Good News, we read of her work as a lobbyist for justice and peace at Franciscan Action Network. Based in Washington, DC, she has won the respect of many legislators with her knowledge and perseverance in advocating for refugees, just immigration reform, and gun control. Her recent work in bridging relationships with our Muslim brothers and sisters inspires us to see new possibilities and approaches to generating a truly peaceful and just society.

In Ringwood, New Jersey, Sister Theresa Firenze is principal at St. Catherine of Bologna School, an official STEM certified school. Through her leadership, the children's activities focus on creative problem solving developed through science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In this environment the children are learning to work together, communicate, think critically, and be imaginative. This excellence in academics aligns well with the faith development fostered by the mission of the school. St. Catherine's cultivates an acceptance of one another which reflects God's everlasting love. Their hope is that the love experienced here may more and more abound. As these children become rooted in Gospel values and learn early to solve problems creatively, I trust that as they mature they will carry these skills into their adult lives. They will be the ones creating a future global community where problems will be resolved with critical thinking, creativity, and peace.

Through education and advocacy for justice and peace, we participate in bringing about a world where God's love is experienced, where light dispels darkness. Let us all strive to sow love in the fields that surround us.

Blessings,

Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF



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Principal Sister Theresa Firenze of St. Catherine of Bologna School in Ringwood, New Jersey, is proud that the school is one of only three to have received official STEM certification through AdvancED. Using creative, thought-provoking activities, students experience hands-on learning in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

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

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

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On the cover: Sister Marie Lucey embraces Noor Phillips, assistant to the director of outreach and interfaith programs at the Zubaida Foundation. The two have been central figures in the effort to forge meaningful relationships between the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia and members of the local Muslim community.

Welcoming All *as*

✠ “WE ARE HOPING TO INSPIRE PEOPLE TO
TAKE RISKS TO PROMOTE PEACE.”

▼ In March 2011, a group of sisters and companions made their first visit to the Zubaida Foundation, an Islamic organization which supports interfaith dialogue. Since then, the two groups have met several times a year, alternating the location of the gatherings between the mosque and the motherhouse. At these meetings they exchange information and experiences about their beliefs, rituals, and cultures. They share prayer, meals, celebrations, and service. Here the groups pose together in front of an anti-bigotry sign outside the motherhouse in Aston, Pennsylvania. The banner was placed there in response to recent anti-Muslim rhetoric.

Franciscan Action Network (FAN) lobbyist, Sister Marie Lucey, OSF, has been working for justice and peace since the early 1970s. It is something she says, “May just be in my DNA. I’ve always had a sense of fairness.” Her early experience teaching Catholic Social Teachings and addressing racial discrimination deepened her conviction that social justice is integral to the Catholic faith and to her own Franciscan spirituality. It was this realization that started the ball rolling on what has become an extraordinary example of living the Gospel and bringing

to light the injustices in our world. Known also for her work with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and her role as previous congregational minister for the Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Marie has been recognized countless times by various organizations for the good work she is doing. Recently, for example, she was honored by Pax Christi USA with the Peacemaker Award for her ongoing work to promote peace. It was fitting that the presentation of the award coincided with the world premier showing of the docudrama, *The Sultan and the Saint*, a project on which she and other members of FAN have been collaborating with Muslim film production company Unity Production Foundation (UPF) for almost two years.



Brother *and* Sister

While the effort may seem like a departure from her ministry as a lobbyist for faith issues such as human trafficking, immigration reform, and gun control, in reality it fits perfectly with her mission to advocate for Franciscan values and ideals. “Unfortunately, with the rise of new forms of extremism across the Middle East and North Africa, Christians and Muslims around the world are facing a media narrative that pits both communities against one another,” said Sister Marie. “We were and are very excited to be working with UPF to bring about a film that will serve as a counter-narrative to inspire

Muslims, Christians, and others to take risks for peace and greater understanding.”

Coming Together

The Sultan and the Saint came to Sister Marie’s attention during a meeting of the Zubaida Foundation, an Islamic organization with whom the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have developed an ongoing relationship. A number of sisters and companions have been meeting with Zubaida members several times a year to promote greater understanding and friendship between the two groups.

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Sister Marie Lucey has spent much of her life working toward the goal of justice and peace. She also was very involved in last year’s Ecumenical Advocacy Days, a national event that brings people of many faiths together to work toward finding solutions to issues of injustice. She gave the welcome address at the gathering and collaborated with a Muslim group on a workshop session about what Christians are doing to create positive relationships with Muslims.





Members of both groups are always happy to see one another at their regular gatherings. (Left) Here, Fr. Joseph Genito shakes Iman Mohamad Cheble's hand before the meeting. (Top) Sister Kate O'Donnell greets a member of the Zubaida Foundation.



▲ *Sister Hope Bauerlin kisses the hand of Noor Phillips of the Zubaida Foundation. The personal relationships that have formed through the interaction between the sisters and companions and the members of the Zubaida Foundation have been the most transformative part of the interfaith experience. "We have gone from being formal acquaintances with one another to being friends," said Noor.*

"WE BOTH BELIEVE IN ONE GOD. WE BOTH BELIEVE IN PEACE AND THE CENTRALITY OF PRAYER. WE BOTH HAVE A REVERENCE FOR CREATION AND A STRONG TRADITION OF SERVICE TO OUR NEIGHBORS."

"About four and a half years ago, several Sisters of St. Francis in Aston decided they should follow the lead of St. Francis and get to know some Muslims on a more personal level," said Noor Phillips, assistant to the director of outreach and interfaith programs at the Zubaida Foundation. "They wanted a relationship, not a one-time lecture. Since then we have gone from being formal acquaintances with one another to being friends." The Franciscans have joined the group for Eid dinners—an important Muslim tradition that marks the end of Ramadan—and other celebrations as well as for more casual get-togethers and educational programs.

In October 2014, a group of sisters and companions went to a presentation by Jawaad Abdul Raman at the invitation of the members of Zubaida. A producer and director of development for UPF, Jawaad spoke about an exciting new project entitled *The Sultan and the Saint*, a film that would tell the story of a little-known encounter between St. Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malik Al-Kamil. These two leaders met during the Fifth Crusade and each was transformed in notable ways by their time spent together. Told through cinematic-style reenactments and interviews with historians and religious thinkers, the film would center on these men who discov-

ered a way of relating peacefully during a time of great religious conflict between their faiths.

As soon as Sister Marie learned of the project, she knew she wanted to be involved. She went back to FAN and talked with executive director Patrick Carolan who agreed that they should get connected with the project. “We both felt it was something FAN should be a part of,” said Patrick.

Making And Promoting The Film

Sister Marie got to work immediately, helping to raise funds for production and engaging Franciscan scholars to participate in the film. “Sister Marie and the team at the Franciscan Action Network were wonderful to work with. They helped introduce the film to the Franciscan community nationwide and contributed to the overall fundraising effort to pay for the production budget,” said Jawaad. “We also took her advice on scholars to include in the film and potential screening partners within the Franciscan community.”

During the filming of the movie, Sister Marie went to Baltimore to meet the director and cast members. She also viewed one of the filming sessions. Once the film

was completed, a new phase of the project began. Along with other members of a group comprised of both Christians and Muslims, she viewed the film and worked to create a study guide to go along with it. That guide is an essential part of the viewing experience, helping to lead viewers through a discussion of its themes. “My hope is that people will be more engaged in building relationships beyond the film,” she said. “We are hoping to inspire people to take risks to promote peace.”

Sister Marie is no stranger to risk. She has put her freedom on the line—at times risking arrest to stand up for what she believes. Some believe her actions to be courageous but when asked about that courage, she responded, “I’m not a particularly courageous woman but when I am convinced that a cause is just and true, I feel compelled to speak out and take action.” This film and the study guide will hopefully bring about the feeling in others to speak out and take action.

A Story To Be Told

Response to the film’s release has been excellent and screenings are scheduled throughout the country. As cities where the film will be screened are identified, FAN works to encourage people to attend through their various connections and

networks. In other instances, organizations have approached both FAN and UPF asking about how to set up an opportunity for a screening. Universities, religious congregations, and other organizations are showing the film which will also air on PBS.

“We have had so much interest and anticipation around this film from people from all faith traditions,” said Patrick. “That tells us that there is a real need for this story to be told and for the dialogue that it sparks to happen.”

“I am very excited about the project and I see all of us growing in our understanding of one another,” said Noor. “The film talks about two people on opposite sides of a war who came out with deep respect for each other. That is something that this world needs—a roadmap of how to do that today. I think this film can help us get there.”

“Despite what comes out in the media, there are fundamental beliefs that we share,” said Sister Marie. “We are both part of the Abrahamic tradition. We both believe in one God. We both believe in peace and the centrality of prayer. We both have a reverence for creation and a strong tradition of service to our neighbors. All of this is not to say that we do not acknowledge our differences. However, we also work to point out our commonalities.”

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Although expanding their own interfaith understanding is a wonderful first step, Companion Mary Furlong and others at the meeting talk at length about ways to bring the message of compassion, religious freedom, and mutual respect to the larger community.



Trust, respect, friendship, and understanding have grown during the five years that the Franciscans and Zubaida Foundation members have been meeting.



Members of the Zubaida Foundation pray together after the meeting and before dinner.

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Encouraging Understanding

Of course, promoting interfaith understanding through the film project is just one piece of a much larger puzzle for Sister Marie Lucey. Much of her work in Washington, DC, highlights the need to open hearts and minds to the values that Christians and Muslims share. “We talk with legislators about refugees and some of the briefings are quite appalling—refugees portrayed as terrorists,” she said. “Some legislators are very receptive but some are very anti-Muslim and anti-refugee. Unfortunately too many of our visits are in opposition to bad bills rather than in sup-

their representatives for just immigration reform through action alerts and postcard campaigns. “If there is anyone who can do it, it is Sister Marie,” said Patrick. “She is one of the most knowledgeable and respected faith advocates in Washington, DC, and one of the leading advocates of immigration reform. We go to meetings and Vice President Biden comes over and gives her a hug. She is bringing Franciscan spirituality into discussions on Capitol Hill.”

Noor Phillips supported that assessment. “Sister Marie is someone who lives her religion; that gives her such credibility,” she explained. “She speaks very quietly and very peacefully but with great strength.”

The film’s website, www.sultanandthesaintfilm.com, has up-to-date information on available screenings in your area. A trailer for the film can be found on YouTube.



These two were indeed seeking peace in the midst of war so they were open to being transformed

▲ Though set in a past period of East-West conflict, *The Sultan and the Saint* speaks with urgency to our present struggle for understanding among followers of different faiths. It is the story of Francis of Assisi and the Sultan of Egypt, two men of faith who bucked a century of war, distrust, and propaganda in pursuit of mutual respect and common ground. The film also weaves in narration of important historical details by historians and theological experts.

port of good ones. What we really want is immigration reform with special attention to keeping families together.”

Sister Marie is working to urge the United States to increase the resettlement of refugees and urge Congress to increase funding to assist refugees. In addition to her own one-on-one meetings with legislators, she is committed to encouraging others to lobby

Sister Marie brings that voice to many organizations, including the Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC), a partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform, educating faith communities about immigration issues, and serving immigrant populations. As part of her involvement with the IIC, she has worked to promote



▲ Jawaad Abdul Rahman, producer and director of development for Muslim film company Unity Production Foundation; Sister Marie; and film director Alex Kronemer celebrate the film's release at a premiere held November 12, 2016.

► Sister Marie Lucey and Faatimah Knight receive peace awards for their interfaith and humanitarian activism from UPF founders Alex Kronemer and Michael Wolfe.



"Welcome Refugee" dinners in which faith communities invite recently arrived immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to join them for a meal. This provides a forum in which to build relationships and to learn from one another. "I am very grateful to have learned more about Muslim traditions and to develop friendships that reach beyond the differences," said Sister Marie. "The more people who can do that, the better off we will be. That is the first step toward peace."

"The key to all of this is relationship," said Sister Marie. "That is a core value in our Franciscan tradition. That's where Francis was with the Sultan—reaching out beyond his own tradition—greeting everyone as brother and sister."

Sister Marie commends her congregation, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, for helping her fulfill her ministry call. "I was called not only by my conviction but also by the support and leadership of my congregation," she explained. "The opportunities afforded to me broadened my world, my thinking, and my engagement to work for justice and peace." She hopes that *The Sultan and the Saint* as well as other interfaith efforts around the country and the world will continue to broaden the world and thinking for others—to forge the kinds of relationships that will bridge the distance between us and lead us all toward greater understanding and peace. ■

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



▲ Sister Marie Lucey was supported by many other Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia on the night of the film premiere, including current congregational minister Sister Kathy Dougherty (right).

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Pray for all those being persecuted for their religious beliefs.
- Stand up and speak out against anti-Muslim rhetoric wherever you are.
- Become more familiar with religious texts from outside your own faith. You may be surprised to learn how much the world's religions have in common.
- Invite members of a different faith tradition to your place of worship for a meeting and a meal to begin discussing ways to promote understanding and relationship-building between the two groups.
- Find the nearest screening of *The Sultan and the Saint* and organize a group to go and be part of the experience of seeing and discussing the film.

PEOPLE & PLACES



Sister Anne Patrice Hefner receiving the Franciscan Heritage Award.

MARYLAND

On October 7, 2016, **Sister Anne Patrice Hefner** received the Franciscan Heritage Award which is presented annually to an alumna of the Catholic High School of Baltimore who demonstrates each of the Franciscan Core Values and who joyfully serves those who are poor, leads initiatives for social justice, empowers others to reverence creation, and gives witness to the Franciscan spirit in the world. That spirit is evidenced in the work that Sister Anne did during her years in Catholic education; in the Village Wellness Project in Tanzania, Africa, initiated while ministering at St. Joseph Medical Center; and in her current work with Asylee Women Enterprise.

anniversary. Between them, the sisters share several decades of history at the facility where both currently serve as board members. Sister Jude commented on the changes both in nursing and in healthcare since she was a student at St. Josephs. Today the medical center is part of CHI Franciscan Health and continues to follow the goal of fulfilling the spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of the people they serve.



Sister Patricia Millen welcomed guests and encouraged them to take time to remember the history of St. Joseph's Family Center.

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

Friends of **Sister Mary Teresa Coll** gathered at St. Mary Franciscan Shelter on October 2 not only to celebrate her retirement, but also to acknowledge her many years of service at the shelter in Phoenixville—service she began rendering in 1990. The 150 guests who gathered for the occasion celebrated her ongoing care for others, her ever present sense of humor, and her love that reached out to others—humans and animals alike! Acknowledging Sister Mary Teresa's own generous giving of self, guests contributed to the newly established Sister Mary Teresa Fund which will help to provide services for those who seek shelter at St. Mary's!

WASHINGTON

St. Joseph Family Center in Spokane closed in September. Sisters, companions, former members, staff, and board members gathered to celebrate the facility's 126 years of service—as a home for children, a personal growth center, a counseling center, a place to simply find spiritual refreshment. **Sisters Patricia Millen and Patricia Smith** addressed attendees. Following the liturgy presided over by Father Ty Schaff, attendees spent the day remembering the stories and the people, recalling the history and all that this history meant to those involved. And in the telling and the sharing, the reality that is our Franciscan heritage—the heritage that birthed St. Joseph's in all of its "incarnations"—will continue to be part of our presence in Spokane.

WASHINGTON

Our congregation's healthcare ministry on the west coast began in 1890 when Mother Agnes Bucher sent sisters to staff St. Joseph Hospital in Tacoma. In October the medical center celebrated 125 years of service. **Sisters Jude Connelly and Anne McNamara** were recent guests on a local TV news feature focusing on the



Candles were lit and quiet filled the chilly night air as the close to 50 people gathered silently remembering those lost lives.

PENNSYLVANIA/ WASHINGTON

Gun violence takes a heartbreaking toll on all of our communities. On both east and west coasts, our sisters held public vigils on December 14, the fourth anniversary of the Newtown shooting. In Aston, sisters and friends gathered in the Blessing Room of the motherhouse where four representatives of the Aston Ministerium offered prayers from their respective faith traditions. The group then processed outside to the corner of Convent and Red Hill Roads for an outdoor vigil, giving witness to all who passed by of the need for prayer to bring an end to gun violence. Sisters on the west coast gathered on the grounds of St. Ann Convent for a similar vigil. Copies of a prayer service were available online for sisters to use in their own convents and parishes.



KENYA

Twenty-five of the children from Nyumbani Children's Home performed with Youth Choir Kenya (YCK) this past year. **Sister Julia Mulvilhill** accompanied the children to the daily rehearsals and to each of the four performances: Galleria Mall (a flash mob performance), Nyumbani Children's Home, Purdy Arms Restaurant, and the

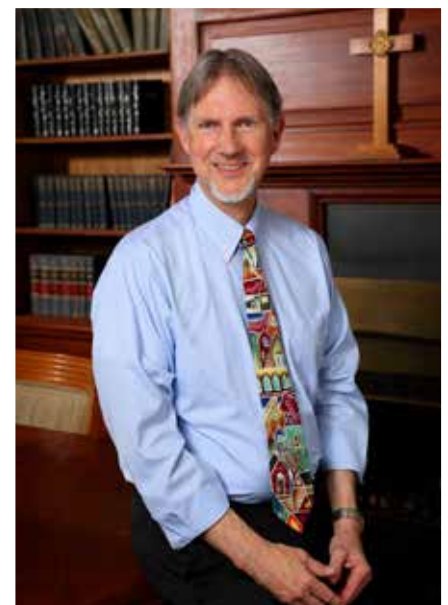
Brookhouse Theater. She was amazed at the skill with which the coordinators of each of the various age groups managed to keep 130 children on schedule for six days of rehearsal, dance instruction, and individual voice lessons. Following the concert tour, Sister Julie asked if some of the teens involved in YCK could spend an hour each Saturday at the children's home to work with the children so that the experience would not be lost. As she explained, YCK will live on through this new project at Nyumbani Children's Home.



OREGON

The Franciscan Spiritual Center in Milwaukie recently welcomed a new director. Reverend Larry Peacock, is a United Methodist minister, spiritual director, and former executive director of Rolling Ridge Retreat and Conference Center in Massachusetts. He is also the author of *A Daybook of Saints, Sages, Psalms, and Prayer Practices*. In looking to what lies ahead, Reverend Peacock explained that the center will be refocusing programs on four Franciscan values: contemplation, peace and interfaith work, leadership to rebuild faith communities, and walking lightly and simply on the Earth. "We have already planned for new

Quiet Days that deepen contemplation," he explained. "New conversations are beginning with local rabbis and with area mainline denominations to expand our ministry. There is new excitement for new possibilities—hallelujah!"



Reverend Larry Peacock, director of the Franciscan Spiritual Center, Milwaukie, Oregon



Challenging Young Minds: Taking a STEM Approach

“STUDENTS ARE MORE ENGAGED AND MORE WILLING TO TAKE THE LEAD.”

Students in the pre-kindergarten class at St. Catherine of Bologna School in Ringwood, New Jersey, are hard at work. Having just read the *Three Little Pigs*, they are getting a taste of the engineering challenges the story’s protagonists faced. Working in groups, they must construct a house that can withstand the wolf’s furious huffing and puffing. The children select their materials from options such as uncooked spaghetti, gumdrops, straws, paper clips, toothpicks, and marshmallows, then confer with their fellow engineers to brainstorm ideas about how to make a strong house. Once the houses are built, the structures face the wolf—a hairdryer sporting floppy felt ears. Those whose houses withstand the barrage celebrate with cheers and high-fives. Those who do not go back to the drawing board, eagerly tweaking their designs for the next round.

This hands-on exploration is just one of many happening at St. Catherine of Bologna—a pre-K through 8th grade school that is one of only three to have received official STEM certification

through AdvancED. Although many schools are shifting their focus toward a STEM approach that focuses on self-directed learning; problem solving; and proficiency in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, St. Catherine has gone one step further to pursue and receive this certification. “It was a very rigorous process,” said principal Sister Theresa Firenze, a Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia. “We were evaluated on 11 different indicators to show that we are delivering a high-quality STEM education.”

The STEM program focuses on how students learn, encouraging inquiry-based discovery that asks students to find creative solutions to real-world problems. “The major difference from when I started in education 37 years ago is that students take more responsibility for their work,” said Sister Theresa. “The catchphrase we use is that ‘Instead of being a sage on a stage, the teacher is a guide on the side.’ Students are asked to think things through rather than parrot back what they have heard.”



Principal Sr. Theresa Firenze poses by a sign outside St. Catherine of Bologna School in Ringwood, New Jersey. Sister Theresa worked diligently to help convert the school’s curriculum to one more focused on student-directed learning and problem solving. Her hard work and the work of the rest of the St. Catherine faculty has paid off. The school is now one of only three in the country to have received official STEM certification through AdvancED.

The Advantages For Students

Teacher Maryann Zepponi has been at St. Catherine for 24 years. She sees great benefits to the evolution from traditional teaching methods to a STEM-based approach. “Students are more engaged and more willing to take the lead,” said Maryann. “They

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◀ (Clockwise from top left) Fifth graders work hard in the science lab. • Teacher Linda Mele’s first grade class investigates Newton’s First and Second Laws of Motion by rolling different balls down a ramp. • Pre-K “engineers” work on a building project. • Third graders learn about mapping. • Sister Theresa Firenze’s algebra class works diligently on complex problems.

► *Fourth graders Frank Stoveken and Benjamin Golden discuss strategies while designing a board game to teach children proper manners.*



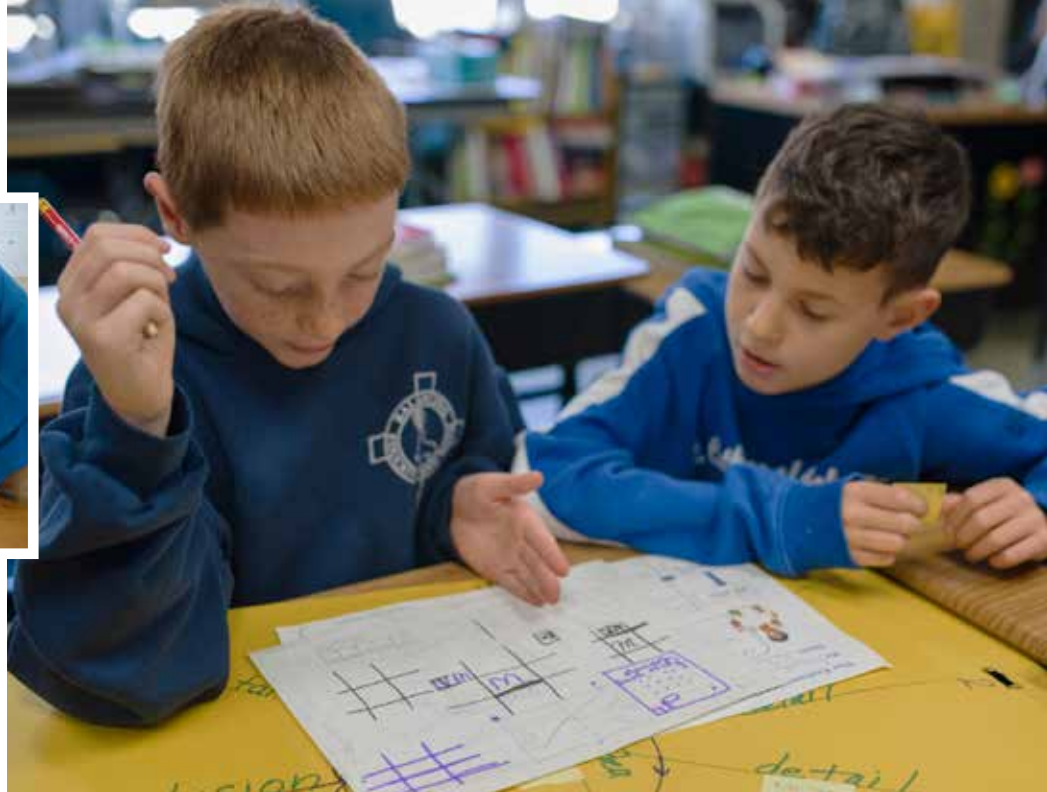
▲ *Teacher Mrs. Zepponi checks on the progress of one group's board game. Students taking part in STEM projects are encouraged to test what they create and make changes to improve their designs.*

try hard to get a task to design but they also understand that if it doesn't work, that doesn't mean they failed. It just means that they have to redesign and try again."

Of course, some of the basics—like memorizing multiplication tables—are still essential. However, following a textbook straight through from cover-to-cover is a thing of the past. In addition to "book-learning," 3-year-olds are building igloos out of sugar cubes as part of their unit on peoples of the world. First-graders are evaluating the safety features of the school's play area and then constructing a "safe" playground for Humpty Dumpty—designing slides, swings, and other equipment that can accommodate a hard-boiled egg without cracking its shell. Eighth graders are marking World Water Day by building water filters using rudimentary materials and then participating in a water walk—carrying a gallon jug of water in each hand back and forth across the parking lot to get a sense of what people in developing countries go through to procure safe drinking water.

"There is a lot of purposeful, hands-on learning," said Sister Annette Lucchese, also a Sister of St. Francis, who served as principal of St. Catherine from 1980-1990 and now works with teachers at the school doing twice-a-month walk-through observations. "And the best part is that the children can explain what they are doing and why."

According to Sister Theresa, that piece of the puzzle is important. She notes that



there is a writing component built into the majority of STEM projects. This element requires students to make observations, identify key information, recognize patterns, and translate what happened in their analysis into a form that can be easily understood by others.

Alternating between working independently and collaboratively also allows students to become comfortable in a variety of roles. Students gain confidence in their own abilities while learning to work together toward a common goal.

Up For The Challenge

Because the emphasis is on student-directed learning, developing inspiring STEM lessons can be particularly demanding for teachers. Faculty must ensure that instruction covers the most important math and science content in a way that can entice even bored or distracted learners. That means developing a variety of approaches that can engage a wide range of student interests and learning styles. "It is more work for the faculty and it has changed our whole method of teaching," said Sister Theresa. "But through it, teachers have found a new energy. They feel good about what is going on here."

That energy can be seen not only in the classroom, but also in the hallways and the lunchroom as well. Teachers seek

out one another for input, support, and opportunities to work together on cross-disciplinary projects. "We are very blessed with our faculty. They take the initiative in coming up with new approaches. They offer one another assistance. They are always adding to their lesson plans," said Sister Annette. "That takes time, work, and creativity. And Sister Theresa is always very supportive of them."

Great Response From Home

Parents have noticed the changes at St. Catherine as well—going from being surprised at what their children are capable of learning to being thrilled at how their children are responding to the STEM curriculum. "We have parents coming to us saying, 'You have no idea what a life change this has been for my child,'" said Sister Theresa. "We have had families of prospective students come for visits in April and May and not want to go back to their own schools to finish out the year."

"I have many parents come in and say, 'My child had such a great time the other day,'" said Maryann. "School is not drudgery. There is a sense of wanting to come in and see what they are going to do each day."

Parents even get to experience STEM-style learning themselves at an annual family STEM night. Families work together on projects where they must rescue a stuffed

animal from a well, design a marshmallow launcher, or keep a can of soup afloat. “It can get quite competitive!” said Sister Annette. “But it is fun for children and adults alike.”

A Change That Is Working

Perhaps the toughest customers—the students themselves—are happy with the change. “It is not as neat and packaged so there were some children who had been excelling with the traditional curriculum who experienced anxiety about the uncertainty of how explorations and projects are going to turn out,” said Sister Theresa. “In the end, though, I see that

the vast majority of the students prefer it. They get excited. They like using their hands and producing something. They are less passive and more engaged in the learning process.”

As they engage in that process, the students are developing an adeptness in critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. These skills will go with them wherever they go—whether as an architect for real-life homes; an inventor of new ways to provide clean drinking water; the writer of a novel or symphony; or simply a confident, competent, and caring citizen of the world in whatever they choose to do.

▼ *In addition to rigorous academics, service is an important component of the curriculum at St. Catherine. One of the many service projects students participated in this year was donating food for the local pantry around Thanksgiving.*



Students enjoy a visit from some furry friends from the North Jersey Community Animal Shelter. The students had gathered donations for the shelter earlier in the school year.

As satisfying as all of these academic benefits and life skills are, however, the kind of STEM program happening at St. Catherine is about more than simply encouraging proficiency and excitement in certain disciplines. The interrelatedness of the program reflects the spirit of pronounced connectivity that is evident in St. Catherine’s mission statement: “We are an extended family who nurtures one another in the celebration of Jesus’ love. Choosing to live Gospel values, we create an environment that fosters a balance of education and faith. We call each other by name affirming that this is where we belong. Acceptance of one another reflects God’s everlasting love. Our hope is that the love experienced here may more and more abound.” ■

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

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Encourage the children around you to observe, ask questions, experiment, tinker, and seek their own understanding of natural and human-made phenomena.
- Partner with your local school to share your knowledge and skills. Get involved with the science fair, lead an afterschool robotics or math team program, start a gardening club, or spearhead a computer programming class.
- Donate money toward computers, up-to-date laboratories, internet access, or STEM project supplies. Unlike their more affluent counterparts, students who live in underserved communities typically lack access to these STEM basics.
- Reach out to policy makers to impress upon them the value of science and technology learning.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Dr. Rosalie Mirenda Announces Plans for Retirement



One of the highlights of Dr. Mirenda's tenure at Neumann was seeing the college achieve university status.

husband plan to take those next steps moment by moment. She views the process as one of “retiring gracefully” and making the transition a seamless one, adding “We’re grateful for the journey and the privilege—and for Sisters Margarella O’Neill, Margaret Bonner, and Kathleen Cronin for leading us here.”

During the 2015-2016 academic year, Dr. Rosalie Mirenda announced her plan to retire in June 2017. Dr. Mirenda began her journey with the Neumann community in 1973 as part of the nursing faculty. She eventually became head of the nursing department, was later named vice president of academic affairs, and in 1996 assumed the role of president. During those 44 years, she has seen many changes in the Neumann community, including a name change, expansion from a woman’s college to a coed institution, expansion of undergrad programs, initiation of graduate programs, development of the Child Development Center, and expansion of the campus, including dorms and, in 2009, the Mirenda Center. But perhaps the change that has the greatest personal significance for Dr. Mirenda is, in her words, “expanding Neumann’s image and identity as a Catholic Franciscan university and the message that its approach is uniquely personal. This is something that I worked very intentionally on each and every day.” And retirement? Dr. Mirenda and her

Celebrating 20 Years: Rooted in the Gospel, Welcoming All

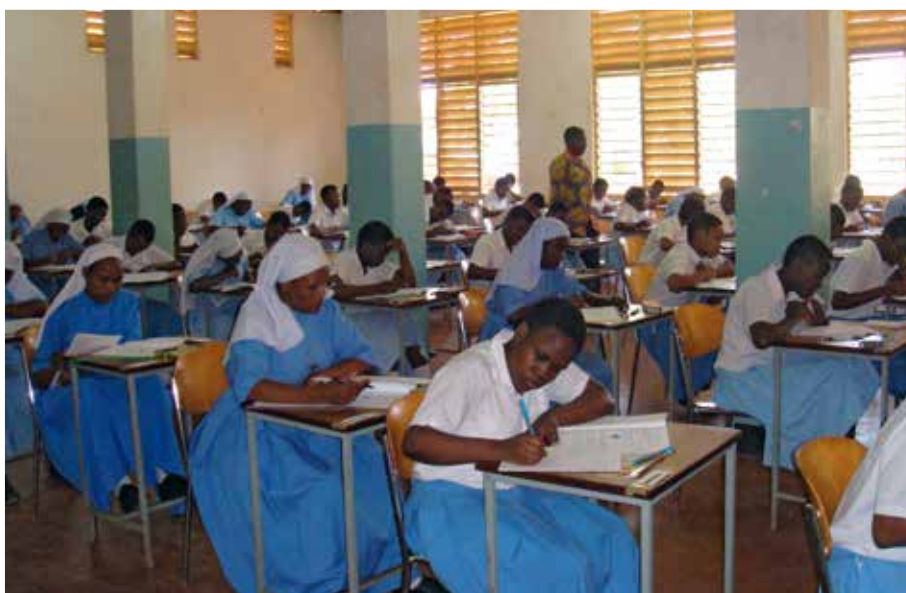
The Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston is celebrating its 20th anniversary! This celebratory year actually opened in October 2016 with a special liturgy, luncheon, and presentation by Bishop Robert Morneau, auxiliary bishop emeritus of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Special 2017 programs include the annual Charism Day in March featuring singer and song writer Marty Haugen. In May a concert featuring violinist Barbara Jaffe and harpist Margaret Love will be held in Our Lady of Angels Chapel. The OLA Choir, under the direction of Sister Andrea Likovich will also perform. The evening will include a program of song and poetry. The final celebratory event will be in June when the center will present An Evening with the Brothers of Taizé led by Brother John. This ecumenical prayer service will include song, readings, and shared silence in an atmosphere of simplicity and tranquility.



*Bishop
Robert
Morneau*



Many individuals and groups come to the center for retreat days as well as week-long and weekend retreats. A three-week sabbatical program directed by Brother Michael Laratonda, FMS, is held each summer.



ASEC sponsors the Bigwa Secondary School which, in addition to educating high school girls, offers opportunities for African sisters to prepare for higher level education.

ASEC Continues Efforts to Provide Education for African Sisters

In 1999 members of four Pennsylvania women's congregations (Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia; Sisters of St. Joseph of Philadelphia; Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Scranton; and the Society of the Holy Child Jesus) and their respective colleges established the African Sisters Education Collaborative (ASEC) to facilitate access to education for women religious in Africa. To date 4,500 sisters have been served by ASEC. Representative of these charter members provide funding and serve on ASEC's Members Board and the Board of Directors. Three of the founding universities/colleges provide online courses for the African sisters. ASEC has also developed partnerships with a number of African colleges and universities where the sisters can attain degrees. Since ASEC's founding, two additional programs have been initiated, both funded by the Hilton Foundation: the Sisters Leadership Development Initiative and the Higher Education for Sisters in Africa Project. Currently Sister Jane Wakahiu, LSOSF, is executive director of ASEC.



In Memoriam

Sister Columkill O'Connor
November 6, 2016

Sister Elizabeth Therese Lutter
November 29, 2016

Sister Margaret VanWagenen
(formerly Sister Florecita)
December 19, 2016

Sister Phyllis Ann Greco
(formerly Sister Mary Coronata)
January 24, 2017

CELEBRATING

Jubilee

AS SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF
PHILADELPHIA

Congratulations to the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia celebrating milestones in their religious life! Join with us in congratulating them on many years of service to the people of God as Sisters of St. Francis.

75 years

Professed 1942

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER THEODORE KLINGSEISEN

70 years

Professed 1947

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANNA MAE COLL

SISTER DORETTA EGAN

SISTER BERNADETTE GARDINER

SISTER GERALDA MESKILL

SISTER MARGARET MARY O'REILLY

50 years

Professed 1967

GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANNA MARIE COSGRAVE

SISTER LISA CURRAN

SISTER KATHLEEN LENORE DAUSES

SISTER THERESA MARIE ELITZ

SISTER JULIA KEEGAN

SISTER ANDREA LIKOVICH

SISTER KATHLEEN PARISI

SISTER LOUISE QUINN

SISTER JOAN CHRISTINE TOBIN

SISTER CHRISTOPHER MARIE WAGNER

SISTER PATRICIA HELEN WARMAN

SISTER CLARE WIECKOWSKI

SISTER CORINNE WRIGHT

25 years

Professed 1992

SILVER JUBILARIANS

SISTER MARY ANNE CRAIG

Recognize a name? Would you like to reconnect or send a congratulatory note? Send communications to Florence Smith; 609 S. Convent Road; Aston, PA 19014; communications@osfphila.org

FoCUS

► Sharon has been thinking a lot about justice and is in the process of finding a place to volunteer—a place to give back and serve those in need. Sister Elaine Thaden said, “Sharon is not only a charming hostess, but is also truly graced and courageous. She inspired me with her committed service to the mission and exemplifies our charism of showing welcoming hospitality to our guests.”



SHARON EKLUND

“SHARON HAS FURTHERED THE FRANCISCAN CHARISM OF BEING SISTER TO ALL WHO CAME TO THE FRANCISCAN PLACE. AS SHE JOURNEYS INTO HER UNKNOWN FUTURE, SHE GOES WITH THE FRANCISCAN CHARISM ALIVE AND WELL IN HER BEING”

– SISTER JOANN CLAVEL

When St. Joseph Family Center in Spokane, Washington, closed at the end of 2016, many people felt sadness and an innate sense of personal loss for a staple that had been part of the community for more than 100 years. Sharon Eklund is one of those people. For the past 10 years, Sharon has been working in hospitality at the center as director of the Franciscan Place. “I feel that my ministry here is so fulfilling by being a Franciscan presence to all who use our space for meetings, spiritual retreats, or overnight accommodations and private retreats,” she explained.

The road to the Franciscan Place for Sharon was both a hardship and a blessing. Sharon returned to the Spokane area in 2006 after her husband was diagnosed with dementia. Sr. Elaine Thaden, then executive director of the center, offered her the position and—sympathetic to the hardships of being a caregiver—told Sharon she could bring her husband to work with her. “I will always be grateful to the sisters for this special gift,” Sharon said. “The difference they made has been life-giving and life-sustaining. I will never forget the kindness.”

Sharon’s ministry at the Franciscan Place was one of hospitality—coordinating and welcoming groups and being a gentle presence to all who entered. However, it didn’t stop there. Sharon was also responsible for teaming up with Gonzaga University and Washington State University to welcome traveling professors and students by providing accommodations. One of her proudest accomplishments was getting needed funds and support to complete the Serenity Garden—a place where visitors found peace and tranquility.

As she moves on in this journey we call life, Sharon plans to take the Franciscan values with her to guide her—values such as community, loving service, ongoing conversion, witness to justice, and stewardship. “I am forever grateful to the Sisters of St. Francis and I have fully learned and now understand the term ‘loving service,’” she said. “I will, to the best of my ability, always use those gifts to benefit the Earth, our society, and each person I meet along my journey.”

◀ Sharon loves spending time with her two granddaughters, Rae Anne and Hayley, as well as her sons, Scott and Justin. Sadly her husband of 43 years passed away in 2013.



▲ Sharon Eklund (second to the left) is joined by Sister Patricia Millen (center) and Sister Patricia Novak (far right) and other members of the St. Joseph Family Center Foundation at a gathering honoring the center.



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Red Hill Farm, Aston PA



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SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS FOUNDATION



Assisi House Needs a New Sound System.

Your Help is Needed.



The existing sound system at Assisi House is inconsistent and of poor quality. The wireless microphones distort rather than enhance sound. While the effect of malfunctioning equipment is more evident in those with limitations, all sisters need this help in social interaction, ongoing growth, and independence. Because it is no longer possible to make the system compatible with other equipment, the cost for a new one is very high—ticketed at \$250,000.

Currently we have raised \$52,000 towards this goal. Since we are unable to respond to this problem without assistance, our sisters would be most grateful for your support.

- ☐ **Yes, I would like to help.** Please accept my donation of \$ _____ to assist with replacing the Assisi House sound system.

NAME _____

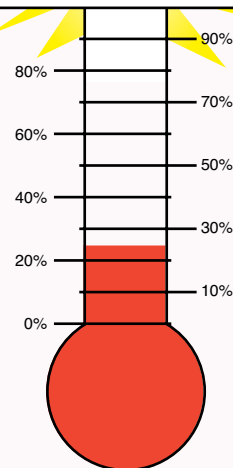
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CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE NUMBER _____ E-MAIL _____

Our Campaign Goal

\$ 250,000



Please mail your donation to: Sisters of St. Francis Foundation, 609 S. Convent Road, Aston, PA 19014. **Donate online by visiting our website:** www.osfphila.org, and clicking on the "Donate" button. **For more information:** Sr. Debbie Krist, OSF, (610) 558-7713, dkrist@osfphila.org.

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SAVE THE DATES

Join us for our 2nd Annual Franciscan Night!



► May 6, 2017 from 7 - 10 P.M.
Our Lady of Angels Convent

Enjoy an evening of food, games, entertainment, and a
silent auction benefiting our retired sisters.

23rd Annual Sisters of St. Francis Golf Tournament

► October 2, 2017
Penn Oaks Golf Club



Do You Have a Franciscan Heart?

#HowsYourCharismToday?

The word charism often comes across as just a “nun thing.” In an attempt to explain that the term simply refers to what it is in us—both as individuals and as a group—that makes us do what we do, we developed an anagram based on the word CHARISM. The anagram was posted on our social media sites and each Tuesday we use the hashtag #HowsYourCharismToday? along with a post that further explains the meaning. Our anagram spelled out **C**are for **C**reation, **H**ospitable **H**ear, **A**ssume **G**oodness, **R**eflective **N**ature, **I**ntegrity, **S**implicity, and **M**utual **R**elationship. What about you? Can you claim any of these characteristics? Chances are you might also have a Franciscan heart!



The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have a long tradition and history of welcoming all as brother and sister—seeing past the bias of the time and lending a hand and heart where it is needed most. Read the article, Welcoming All as Brother and Sister, on page 4. Such was the case in 1946 when three sisters went to Pensacola, Florida, to staff a maternity hospital for African-American mothers at the request of Reverend John J. Raleigh. This was the first such hospital of its kind in the south, a place where women who had been denied basic healthcare and human dignity found hope. “There is a hospital here but it does not admit colored maternity cases,” said Father Raleigh at the time. During the 18 years the hospital was open—prior to desegregation—the Sisters of St. Francis helped to bring nearly 11,000 babies into the world.

