

Volume 21.1 Spring 2018

Good NEWS

A Publication of THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Forty Years of Service

to 'Those Most in Need in Delaware

Also in this issue:

- A Familiar Face in the Halls of Hallahan High
- 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

*I*n a world fraught with multiple global concerns and political turmoil, I need inspiration to encourage and propel me to continue hoping and striving to generate a world of justice and peace. One of the most inspiring passages in Scripture is Matthew 5:3-10, the Beatitudes. As children we learned the eight Beatitudes and are still challenged daily to put them into practice. They continue to **inspire** us—inviting us to share in Jesus' way of loving.

In 2016 Pope Francis proclaimed the message of Jesus when he offered a new list of six beatitudes for modern Christians that complement the traditional ones:

- “Blessed are those who remain faithful while enduring evils inflicted on them by others and forgive them from their heart.
- Blessed are those who look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalized and show them their closeness.
- Blessed are those who see God in every person and strive to make others also discover him.
- Blessed are those who protect and care for our common home.
- Blessed are those who renounce their own comfort in order to help others.
- Blessed are those who pray and work for full communion between Christians.”

Beatitude living is inspirational. In this issue of Good News, you will read about the Ministry of Caring in Wilmington, Delaware, where several sisters have partnered with Brother Ronald Giannone, OFM Cap., in being messengers of God's mercy and tenderness. Each day in the various ministries, the sisters look into the eyes of the abandoned and marginalized and show them their closeness. Here God's revelation is received and communicated.

In Philadelphia Sister Ida Marie continues to motivate young women at Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School with her ability to see God in every person and strive to make others also discover him. With frequent words of wisdom and calls to service, mutual respect, and excellence, Sister Ida is teaching the students to live a life of love for God and for all people.

As we reflect on the stories in this issue, let's not forget the potential we each have to be an inspiration to others through our own Beatitude living.



Sister Mary Kathryn
Dougherty, OSF
Congregational Minister

Blessings on you and your loved ones,

Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty, OSF



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Sister Ida Marie Nicklas is a bit of a legend at Hallahan High School in Philadelphia. Her history with the school dates back an astounding 75 years to her own time as a student there. She currently volunteers five days a week staffing the school store along with her longtime friend and colleague, Sister Marie John Holland.

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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

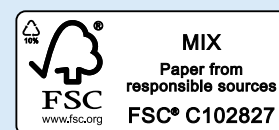
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Graphic Design
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The purpose of *Good News* is to further the Gospel mission of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia by sharing the good news of the congregation with our friends, family, companions, 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: Brother Ronald Giannone visits with children at Guardian Angel Child Care, one of the many ministries under the umbrella of the Ministry of Caring in Wilmington, Delaware. Brother Ronald, who started the Ministry of Caring 40 years ago, is still the backbone of this organization which has had a positive impact on countless numbers of Wilmington's most vulnerable citizens.

▼ Brother Ronald Giannone maintains a personal connection with the people of Wilmington—especially the poorest among them. Here he takes part in morning activities at Guardian Angel Child Care.



▲ Sister Kathleen Pollard delights in her work at Guardian Angel Child Care which serves 55 children of working parents with low incomes. Children at the center range from one-year-old through kindergarten age.

Forty Years

“THE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR THE MINISTRY AND HAVE LEFT A LASTING, INDELIBLE MARK.”

It is 8 A.M. and Sister Kathleen O'Donnell, one of four managers and a coordinator of the noontime meal volunteers at the Ministry of Caring's Emmanuel Dining Room (EDR) in Wilmington, Delaware, arrives at the west location to join the group of volunteers who are already serving breakfast. After the meal, she helps with clean-up before gathering a supply of bread, milk, and canned goods and heading to EDR South to begin preparing their main meal of the day.

Around the same time, Sister Kathleen Pollard, site manager at Ministry of

Caring's Guardian Angel Child Care, is getting ready to greet the little ones coming through the door of the center. As the children arrive, they greet Sister Kathleen with smiles and hugs, sharing stories or showing her pictures they have drawn. The parents say hello, too—some stopping to fill Sister Kathleen in on what is going on in their lives.

Over in the Trinity Vicinity neighborhood, Sister Patricia Kerezsi walks into the lobby of Sacred Heart Village I, the affordable senior housing complex where she serves as property manager. She says good morn-

ing to a couple of women in the sitting area known as the “train station” before heading to her office to see what needs to be done to keep the 78-unit property running smoothly.

In the afternoon, Sister Bernadette McGoldrick assists Sister Kathleen O'Donnell at EDR South in New Castle, responding to whatever task needs attention. Sister Patricia Kane also joins them twice a week. Technically considered a retired volunteer, Sister Bernadette's 21 years as manager of EDR have made her service incredibly valuable.



▲ Sister Bernadette McGoldrick reads scripture with Garry Dickinson, a frequent volunteer at Emmanuel Dining Room South. Garry is a street preacher who always carries his bible with him.



▲ Sister Patricia Kerezi enjoys a moment with Sacred Heart Village resident, Elizabeth Fountain, who loves to crochet and is finishing a blanket she is making for a friend.

of Service to Those Most in Need in Delaware

Although each sister is focused on serving those in her own corner of Wilmington, together they are part of a larger ministry being undertaken by the Ministry of Caring—an organization with an incredible 40-year legacy of helping the city's poorest and most vulnerable through its 19 high-quality programs.

From Humble Beginnings

The mission of the Ministry of Caring has always been to identify and fill gaps in services for the poor. The ministry was established by Brother Ronald Giannone, OFM Cap., who was sent to Wilmington by his order in 1976 to determine how best to

help the city's most vulnerable. The incredible poverty he found struck a chord in him and he immediately began making plans to address what he saw as the most immediate unfilled need—an emergency shelter for women.

In search of sisters who could staff the shelter, Brother Ronald got in touch with Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer who was the superior general for the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. Sister Corda Marie put out a call for sisters who were interested in serving in the new ministry and in no time had enlisted three willing volunteers—Sisters Catharine (Euthalia)

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Essence, 6, and her brother Todd, 3, hug one another after enjoying their hot lunches at Emmanuel Dining Room East.



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Cassidy, Ann Marguerite Gildea, and Eva Fink. With that, the Ministry of Caring's



▲ *Former Vice President Joe Biden greets and thanks Sisters Esther Anderson and Corda Marie Bergbauer at a 2010 Ministry of Caring gala where Valerie Biden-Owens was awarded the Sister Ann Marguerite Gildea Award for her commitment, leadership, compassion, and caring for the Wilmington community.*

first project, Mary Mother of Hope House, opened in 1977. Later Sister Cordula Brand, a Wilmington native, volunteered where needed.

Since that time, the Ministry of Caring has grown from that first eight-bedroom emergency shelter to a refuge for thousands in need of housing, food, medical and dental care, jobs,

childcare, and other supportive services. Throughout the ministry's four decades, many Sisters of St. Francis have served side by side with Brother Ronald to help ensure that his motto—"the poor should never

be treated poorly"—is carried out in every encounter with the Ministry of Caring's many programs.

This past November, the Ministry of Caring celebrated its 40 years of helping the poor of Wilmington with a major gala and fundraiser. At that event, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia were honored for their contribution to the ministry with a gold medallion inscribed with the Ministry of Caring's logo. "The Sisters of St. Francis are the heart of the Ministry of Caring," said Brother Ronald. "They laid the foundation for the ministry and have left a lasting, indelible mark."

Feeding The Hungry

The first addition to the Ministry of Caring's services after the emergency women's shelter was Emmanuel Dining Room. Today the meal program has three separate locations in New Castle County which have

"THESE SERVICES MEAN A LOT TO PEOPLE. SOME FAMILIES COME IN AND TELL US THEY HAVE NOTHING AT HOME."

There are many Americans living with HIV/AIDS and about half of them are not receiving medical care. The House of Joseph II addresses that need by providing both quality healthcare and a home for men and women living with the disease. Sister Bernice Pelczar volunteers at the home two days per week, replacing Sister Jean Rupertus (pictured below, inset) who was there for several years as director.



► Sister Kathleen O'Donnell takes a moment to talk with Elkinah Smith about his recent struggles. These kinds of personal relationships built with guests at the Emmanuel Dining Room locations are as life-giving as the hot meals the dining rooms provide.

served nearly seven million meals since the beginning. Meal preparation at the dining rooms is a group effort with an army of committed volunteers from churches, synagogues, businesses, and other organizations lending a hand. Some groups bring in food already prepared; others cook the meals on site. On days when the shifts are not covered by volunteer groups, Sister Kathleen, the other managers, and their helpers prepare meals themselves—often using donated ingredients. Meals are served restaurant style in a warm, cheerful setting. As an added bonus, every Wednesday a volunteer, Peter McCarthy, provides live music for diners.

“These services mean a lot to people,” said Sister Kathleen O'Donnell. “Some families come in and tell us they have nothing at home. In addition to needing a meal, people also look forward to the social interaction. There is a great spirit and a sense of deep gratitude for life even though their lives are filled with concerns.”

In addition to the noontime meal, sandwiches are often available for people to take home for the evening. For those who can't get out, Sister Kathleen even makes deliveries. “I drop food off at the home of a woman who had part of her foot amputated,” she explained. “She has a daughter who is in jail and an infant grandson for whom she is responsible.”

“These dining rooms are lifelines,” Sister Bernadette McGoldrick agreed. “Many of our guests have a place to live but need help with food in order to have enough money to keep roofs over their heads. Others are in homeless shelters or worse. To see the looks on their faces when they get that plate of wholesome food in front of them makes it worth the time and energy.”

The nourishment many of these people receive goes beyond the body. “We would like to believe that our interaction with guests helps instill some measure of renewed hope and a new sense of self respect,” said Sister Kathleen. “Many of our clients and volunteers come here



▲ Volunteer Dennis Bowman gathers dirty dishes from the lunchtime guests. Volunteers like Dennis make the service at Emmanuel Dining Rooms possible.

► Deborah Benson has only worked at Emmanuel Dining Room West for three weeks but she plates the dishes quickly to make sure the lunchtime crowd gets their meals while they are hot.



homeless—sometimes with criminal backgrounds and addictions. I have witnessed the tremendous progress made by several of these individuals to the point where their sense of self-worth has been restored. Many have found gainful employment—some within the Ministry of Caring—and a few are my coworkers at Emmanuel Dining Room.”

Caring For The Children

For those transitioning back into the workforce and for the working poor in general, the inability to find and afford reliable childcare can be a significant barrier to stable employment. To address that issue, the Ministry of Caring operates three childcare centers, each of which responds to an

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Sister Kathleen Pollard visits the toddler class at Guardian Angel during the early morning outdoor playtime.

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acute need for affordable childcare for the children of the homeless and working poor.

“Places like Guardian Angel Child Care give parents peace of mind knowing that while they are at work, their children are being cared for, talked to, and loved,” said Sister Kathleen Pollard. “It also makes them feel secure to know that their children are being prepared to succeed once they get to kindergarten.”

In addition to taking care of the administrative work at Guardian Angel, Sister Kathleen also serves as a tremendous resource for families, directing them toward needed services or simply listening while they talk through their difficulties. She also is an additional warm and caring presence for the children. “They will climb up on chairs so they can talk to me when they come in or pop into the office just to give me a hug,” she laughed.

Having a safe and welcoming place to bring their children is particularly important



for the families of Wilmington where gun violence among people under age 18 is the highest in the nation. “So many of the center’s families have been very closely touched by violence,” Sister Kathleen explained. “One woman’s brother was shot while recording music at Wilmington’s community center. Another family lost a child who was killed in the crossfire at a barber shop. When they are here, though, they feel safe.”

A Place To Call Home

Finding a safe, secure, and affordable place to live is also an issue for many of

Wilmington’s seniors whose neighborhoods are plagued by violence. “It’s a rough area—so much drug activity and gun violence,” said Sister Patricia Kerezsi. “People are very poor. Many of our residents here at Sacred Heart Village I have children who have been murdered. A lot of residents are dealing with grief—loss of children and grandchildren. But they are able to feel safe within these walls.”

Sacred Heart Village I, with 78 units available to very low-income seniors, is an oasis for its residents. It boasts full-time security, a beautiful lobby with places to socialize,

Residents at Sacred Heart Village develop a strong sense of community with one another. Every morning upon waking, each resident marks themselves “OK” outside their front door. If a resident has not updated his or her status, resident Samuel Roy (below) knocks to make sure everything is all right.



▶ Annie Fields (seated left) shares a laugh with Rosetta Davis (standing) and Pricilla Coleman during a visit. All three ladies have apartments in Sacred Heart Village. Rosetta Davis has been a resident since 2001 but just recently moved into a newly renovated apartment on the first floor.



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Keep those who live in poverty in your prayers. Read and reflect on Scripture passages or other texts that illustrate the importance of service to the poor and vulnerable.
- Identify the unmet needs in your own community and seek ways to fill them. Don't be afraid to start small. Even modest efforts can have a significant impact on those in need.
- Volunteer with an organization that is already doing good work in your area. Make an effort to push yourself out of your comfort zone by working with a population that you may not have had much interaction with in the past. You may find that you gain as much as you give.
- Track and support legislation that benefits people who are poor. Such legislation might focus on social welfare, access to healthcare, taxes, housing and community development, education, or a myriad of other issues.
- Donate to the Ministry of Caring.

a fitness center, arts and crafts room, hair salon, and café. In addition, free bus transportation is provided to places throughout the city and a hot lunch is available for \$2 five days a week. A \$12,000-per-year grant from the Sisters of St. Francis Mission Fund provides monies to assist with transportation, housekeeping, or other tasks that have become too much for the residents.

"Many of our residents have never lived as well as they live here," said Sister Patricia. "Brother Ronald based the facility on what he would want his mother to have—some-

thing safe, secure, comfortable, and affordable. The facility is beautifully maintained. People say it reminds them of the Hotel Dupont!"

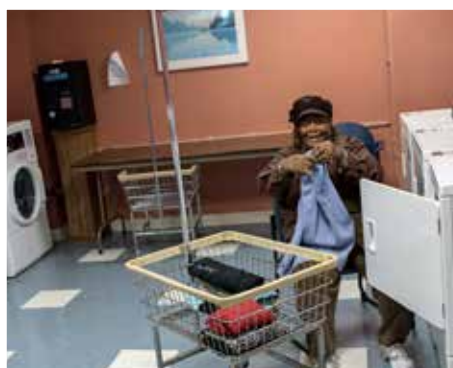
To help keep all this going, Sister Patricia oversees a great team of managers and staff, including security, housekeeping, and maintenance who work around the clock. But the practical aspects of managing property the size of Sacred Heart Village I is just one piece of the ministry. Sister Patricia takes time to get to know residents personally and to help them deal with

their day-to-day struggles—a task that is helped by her background in teaching and counseling. "I deal with people on a personal level," Sister Patricia said. "I know their families, their situations. I support and help them with the issues going on in their lives." Sister Assunta Prunty also helps support residents as a volunteer at Sacred Heart Village II two days per week.

A History Of Making A Difference

From the first three sisters to respond to Brother Ronald's call for help in 1977, to those sisters currently on the front lines of responding to the needs of Wilmington's most vulnerable, to the dozens who have served within the Ministry of Caring in between, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have been unswerving and devoted partners in the effort to respond one day at a time, one person at a time to the poor of Wilmington. Even Sister Corda Marie—who is now in her 90s—continues to be involved today by collecting clothing and other essentials and sending them to the various sites. "There is a whole litany of sisters who are heroes who have worked in the Ministry of Caring," said Brother Ronald. "They are remarkable, incredible women." ■

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



◀ Resident Patricia Matthews folds her laundry in Sacred Heart Village's laundromat. In addition to laundry facilities, residents have access to a beauty shop, an arts and crafts room, and a café—all in a building with security, housekeeping, and maintenance.

▼ Sister Patricia Kerezsi straightens up the fitness room after hours. Sacred Heart Village employs a certified fitness instructor who is present to work with residents while they exercise.



▲ This tree is a plaque for residents to remember their friends and neighbors who have passed away while living at the center.



Three of our sisters—Sisters Joan Roddy, Ann Lupita McNamara, and Jude Connelly—were part of the ribbon cutting ceremony at the opening of a new urgent care center in West Seattle.

WASHINGTON

In early October a group of our sisters were present for the opening of a new urgent care center in West Seattle. The center is the most recent outcome of a partnership between CHI Franciscan Health and CityMD. In a memo to directors and trustees of local health organizations, Ketul J. Patel, chief executive officer of CHI Franciscan Health, thanked the sisters, board members, and staff for their “vision and support to improve access to premier urgent care services throughout the region.” He called the clinic—the second of its kind—“a testament to our strategic initiative to develop a regional network of comprehensive care services throughout the Puget Sound.”



PENNSYLVANIA

Members of the **Zubaida Foundation** joined us recently for an informative program on our congregation's corporate stands. Sister Dominica LoBianco explained that we see these stands as pertinent to our call to live as sister to all. She delineated the process used, the efforts taken to be properly informed about the issue, and the needed votes for passage. Sisters Marie Lucey and Maria Orlandini discussed in more detail the corporate stand on immigration and the need for comprehensive, compassionate immigration reform. Sister Catherine O'Donnell explained the difference between immigration and sanctuary. The final speaker was Sister Nancy Lamey who explained



Members of the Zubaida Foundation, an Islamic organization which supports interfaith dialogue, peruse the congregational history display in the halls of Our Lady of Angels Convent. Since 2011 our sisters and members of the Muslim group meet twice a year, alternating the location of the gatherings between the mosque and the motherhouse.

the work she has been doing with a group in Philadelphia. Called New Sanctuary, the organization works to make immigrants better aware both of their rights and of tactics that some people might use to violate those rights. Following the presentation, our guests shared some of their own experiences.



WASHINGTON

Transitions, one of our cosponsored ministries in Spokane, recently broke ground for a new undertaking—24 small homes or cottages. The cottages are in a residential neighborhood,” explained Edie Rice-Sauer, Transitions’ executive director. After completion, the cottages—called Home Yard Cottages—will be made available to people who are homeless. Edie was quoted in an article in *SpokaneFavs* in which she cited the importance of “home.” “For many of us, I think home means a place to recover, to get back our energy from the day, to recalibrate and maybe find some respite,” she explained. “But in Spokane every day, 1,300 people do not have a place to call home. Transitions is trying to respond to that concern by building these cottages.”

Edie Rice Sauer, Transitions executive director of mission and services, and Sister Patricia Millen, Transitions board member, study the projected diagram of Home Yard Cottages.



PENNSYLVANIA

Sister Clare Christi Schiefer recently received dual recognition for her 35 years of service and dedication to the church in Pennsylvania and to the mission of healthcare—first by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference Board of Governors



Sister Clare Christi Schiefer received the 2017 Presidential Humanitarian Award from Neumann University. The award was established in honor of Dr. Rosalie Mirenda and Tony Mirenda.

and their administrative board and by the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Catholic Health Association of which she serves as president. Both awards followed earlier acknowledgement in April when Sister Clare was recognized by Neumann University as one of its 2017 Presidential Humanitarian Award recipients. The award acknowledges individuals “whose life reflects a commitment to serve humanity and empower the underserved in our society; devotion to religious and family values; dedication to excellence; value for philanthropy and giving back; willingness to take risks in the pursuit of vision, and a demonstrated value for education and a positive intellectual life.”



CALIFORNIA

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development presented **Sister Maureen Duignan** with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her “more than 30 years of providing legal services with compassion to immigrants and refugees in the East Bay... and assisting immigrants with transitional housing for many years as director of

Oakland’s Casa Esperanza. Sister Maureen’s experience with the immigrant community began in 1982 when, at the height of the civil wars in Central America, she began working with Guatemalan and Salvadoran refugee camps and later initiated the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant. Today she continues to serve as its executive director.” During the presentation of the award, she was described as “the real deal... (who) brings warmth, compassion, competence, a deep commitment to justice, and unwavering determination to provide safety and sanctuary to those in our community who need it most.”



PENNSYLVANIA

In November we held a fundraiser for our volunteer program—**Franciscan Volunteers: No Risk, No Gain**. The fundraiser, organized by the Sisters of St. Francis



Bianca Martinez, one of this year’s volunteers, displays one of the door prizes. Everyone was in awe at the crab dish served by Caffé Galato.

Foundation in conjunction with Sara Marks, director of the volunteer program, was an enjoyable experience for all who participated. The evening began with the Eucharistic liturgy celebrated in Our Lady of Angels Chapel. Following liturgy guests moved downstairs to the dining room for a delicious crab cake dinner prepared by Caffé Gelato. The current volunteers, of course, were on hand and were also joined by several of last year’s volunteers. Always ready to be of service, they even assisted in serving some parts of the meal and in sell-

ing raffle tickets. We are now in the third year of the program and continue to be impressed with the generosity and desire to serve that is so evident in the young women and men who have given a year of their life to serve with us. All who attended the fundraiser—the volunteers and members of the volunteer board, members of our Franciscan Companions in Mission, a number of our sisters, members of the foundation staff and board, and a variety of friends enjoyed everything about the evening—especially the opportunity to share with friends and, of course, the delicious meal.



NEW YORK

Maybe you have heard of **Sister Nora Nash** in the news lately. Sister Nora, the director of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), tends to be a thorn in the side of many corporations worldwide. Why? Because she has committed herself to holding corporations accountable with a moral and ethical perspective and exercises our rights and responsibilities as shareholders to work toward right social and environmental policies and practices. Sister Nora recently took the congregation’s work “to Wall Street by campaigning against online-only shareholder meetings. The order of more than 400 Catholic nuns have filed resolutions with ConocoPhillips, the oil group; and Comcast, the telecoms company; over their decisions to abandon physical AGMs for shareholders,” *IR Magazine* reports. Virtual meetings would deprive shareholders the right to personally engage with management directly. The resolution asks businesses to reintroduce face-to-face meetings with direct access to boards alongside virtual events. This is just one action from the CSR office. In recent years, the Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia have also issued AGM resolutions on climate change, drug pricing, corporate lobbying, business practices at Wells Fargo and much more. Visit our website to learn more: <http://osfphila.org/corporate-social-responsibility/>.



Sister Maureen Duignan (center) was presented a lifetime achievement award for her work with refugees. With her are Monica Clark, a CCHD local committee member, and Marc McKimmey, diocesan CCHD coordinator.



Sister Ida Marie Nicklas talks with a group of Hallahan students during lunch. She has a wonderful rapport with the girls at the school and keeps up with what is going on in their lives. In addition, she often works closely with students on a variety of service projects.



Sister Ida Marie Nicklas as a senior at Hallahan in 1945.



Sister Ida Marie Nicklas as a teacher at Hallahan.

“SISTER IDA IS A BEAUTIFUL TESTAMENT EVERY DAY TO WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A HALLAHAN GIRL.”

The cafeteria is buzzing with conversation during the lunch shift at John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls’ High School in Philadelphia when Sister Ida Marie Nicklas slips out of the school store and heads to the PA system with a message. Used to these impromptu pearls of wisdom, the girls become quiet, anxious to hear what today’s message will be. Sister Ida begins with a little song and then segues into a reminder about getting involved in the school’s upcoming service project—a canned food drive.

Such lunchtime interjections are common at Hallahan where Sister Ida is something of an institution. Her history with the school goes back more than 75 years to her own time as a student there, through

her years as a teacher, an employee in the advancement office, and today as the manager of the school store. “The students listen attentively to everything Sister Ida says,” said school president Denise Kasseker. “She is beloved here at Hallahan.”

“Sister Ida is funny with a very warm, caring heart,” said Carla Marandola, a junior at the school. “When she talks to the student body at lunchtime, she usually starts by singing a song or telling a joke but then she gets her point across about giving back to other people.”

Getting Started In Education

Sister Ida herself has lived a life of service, graduating from Hallahan in 1945

First a student, then a teacher and basketball coach, Sister Ida Marie now stays active at Hallahan by managing the school store.



John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School in Philadelphia was built in 1901 and is the oldest of all girls' archdiocesan high schools in the United States.

A Familiar Face *in the* Halls of Hallahan High

and entering the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia one year later in August of 1946. After completing her own education, Sister Ida spent the next sixteen years in elementary education in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia before being assigned to Allentown Central Catholic High School in 1968. In addition to teaching business at the school, Sister Ida coached the girls' basketball team, lead-

ing them to a Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) State Wide Championship in 1973—the first time that a Catholic school had won the title. She later was honored with induction into the Allentown Central Catholic Hall of Fame and with the establishment of a scholarship named in her honor and given to a student who excels both academically and as a team player.

The scholarship is a particularly appropriate tribute to Sister Ida whose coaching philosophy centered on the importance of working as a team. "I'm sure all of the girls I coached remember hearing from me that the secret to our success was being mindful that there is no "I" in TEAM," said Sister Ida.

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Fransican Nun-In Tennis Shoes-Coaches Champions



Sister Ida Marie, coach of Allentown Central Catholic's championship girls' team, shows assorted emotions in watching her team defeat Sharpville for the title.

A newspaper clipping from 1973 shows Sister Ida Marie and her full range of emotions while passionately coaching the girls' basketball team during the Championships.

Coming Home To Hallahan

Although she enjoyed her years teaching outside of Hallahan, Sister Ida was thrilled to return to her alma mater in 1978 to teach business. “I was glad that God gave me the opportunity to come back to



March 2017). Since taking over the store in 2000, Sister Ida has been a fixture there five days a week. She arrives as soon as Mass is over in the morning—around 7:45—and closes up at three in the afternoon. In addition to staffing the store along with her longtime friend and colleague, Sister Marie John Holland, Sister Ida oversees every part of the store’s operations, including keeping up with clothing and candy orders and tracking sales. “She enjoys being an entrepreneur and delights in the fact that she is still contributing to Hallahan through the revenue she brings in from the school store,” said Denise. “She loves it when she has a big day in sales!”

Sister Ida also takes the store “on the road” to school events such as class reunions and the annual Day at the Bay. For the Day at the Bay, she and Sister Marie John drive two hours to the event’s location in Wildwood, New Jersey, work all day, and then drive two hours back. “Sister Ida never ceases to amaze me,” Denise said. “She is full of vim and vigor, as sharp as ever, and has more enthusiasm and energy than many people half her age.”

Inspiring The Next Generation

As much as Sister Ida excels at the business side of things, the favorite part of her ministry at the school store is coming in contact with the students. “She jokes with the students at the candy window,” said Sister Marie John. “There is a really nice relationship there.”

The students seem to feel the same way about Sister Ida as she does about them. “We all love her,” Carla said. “She always asks us how we are before talking about things that are going on with her or with the school. And she always makes sure all the girls are involved.”

Sister Ida particularly nurtures students’ engagement with the school’s Community Service Corps, a program that she herself oversees. The Service Corps undertakes a number of projects throughout the school year, including organizing food drives, preparing sandwiches for local soup kitchens, and visiting sisters at Assisi House, the retirement home of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia. “I try to teach the



The school store sells all kinds of goods—from Hallahan spiritwear to candy and shoelaces. (Above) Freshman Kintan Silvany and Olivia Rescigno purchase a pair of shoelaces from Sister Ida. Each grade at Hallahan has different color shoelaces to identify them. (Top) Sister Ida’s partner in crime, Sister Marie John Holland, helps her manage inventory.

Hallahan to give back in a place that gave me so much,” she said. “When I returned, I found the spirit at Hallahan very much the same as it was when I was a student here. There was—and still is—a great deal of care and concern for one another as well as a tremendous amount of respect.”

Sister Ida had a remarkable impact during the 20 years she taught at Hallahan, making certain that her classes were in line with the latest methods and taking a personal interest in each one of her students. “She was very progressive in her day,” said Denise Kasseker. “She made sure to teach the girls the things they needed to learn in order to be successful in the business community.”

Serving At The School Store

Today Sister Ida utilizes that business acumen in the running of the school store which bears her name (after being dedicated to her in honor of her 90th birthday in



Sister Ida likes to keep the girls involved with their community. (Right) Student Lucie Cusack makes a candy purchase and promptly puts her change into a jar for the poor that Sister Ida keeps by the window. The girls use the collected money to buy supplies to make sandwiches for the homeless.



girls the importance of showing love and kindness to one another and I hope that I am helping to bring them closer to God.”

“Sister Ida is so kindhearted,” said Sara Cavalcanti, a senior at Hallahan and president of the student council. “She really encourages us to be committed to our service projects and to do what we can to help others.”

“Sister Ida is a beautiful testament every day to what it means to be a Hallahan girl,” agreed Denise. “She inspires us all.”

With decades of positive influence at Hallahan under her belt, Sister Ida often finds herself in the position of having grad-

uates from the 1980s and 1990s coming back to introduce her to their daughters. Recently she even had a Hallahan freshman come looking for her. The girl was eager to meet Sister Ida because her mother—now a doctor in Philadelphia—had received the scholarship award in Sister Ida’s name when she was a high school student in Allentown. “Those kinds of interactions touch my heart,” said Sister Ida. “It is very rewarding for me to know that I have touched these girls’ lives. I know they have touched mine.” ■

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

Sister Ida has a contagious enthusiasm for life and likes to keep young and vibrant by staying busy. She brings her Hallahan store down to the beach for school events and recently met Tom Burgoyne, the person who plays the legendary Phillie Phanatic for the Philadelphia Phillies Major League Baseball team.



HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- Use your talents to enrich the lives of others in your community. Start a service project with your family, volunteer at your local high school or community center, or gather supplies to donate to your favorite charity.
- Respect and value the seniors in your life. Older adults often have a wealth of skills, knowledge, experience, and energy to share.
- Help your aging loved ones stay connected. Isolation is extremely common among older adults and can have a negative impact on their mental health and cognitive functioning. Check in frequently via phone and in person. Invite them to dinner or a movie. Include them on everyday errands or family gatherings.
- Stay active as you age. Begin a new exercise program. There are many fitness activities that are age appropriate that can improve your overall health—mentally and physically.

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS

Everyone has within a piece of good news.

— Anne Frank (adapted)

See more good news at www.osfphila.org

Welcoming Our Novices

In September—during an evening prayer service—our three candidates were welcomed into the novitiate. Sisters from each of the novices' local communities as well as members of their area chapters were present at the service. Maria Anna Dela Paz served as leader and antiphonarian during the service. Patricia Platt led the intercessions and Ann Dutrow shared a reading from the writings of St. Clare of Assisi. As the three women presented their request, they asked the sisters to support them in prayer as they continue their discernment. They closed their spoken request with the words of St. Francis: "This is what I want, this is what I seek, this is what I desire with all my heart." During the ceremony Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty presented each novice with a copy of our constitutions, a Franciscan rosary, and a San Damiano crucifix.

► Sister Mary Kathryn Dougherty gave each novice a copy of our constitutions, a Franciscan Rosary, and a San Damiano crucifix. (l-r) Sisters Mary Kathryn, Maria Anna Dela Paz, Ann Dutrow, Patricia Platt.



A sampling of some of the handcrafted items from our 2017 Christmas Craft Fair.

Christmas Craft Fair Brings Good Cheer and Great Deals

Our Christmas Craft Fair is only a few years old but it has become an immense success. The tables present an array of beautiful gift items, all handcrafted by our sisters and their friends: crocheted or knitted items of all kinds, quilted items, hand-made wooden items, Christmas bows, wreaths, hats, framed photography, scarves, cell phone bags, baked goods, fudge...and the list goes on. The tables are staffed and maintained by our sisters, companions, and friends. Visitors are greeted warmly and sisters are on hand to answer questions. The two day event is usually held in November. If you missed last year's, be sure to check out the date for 2018!

Coming Together in Prayer and Thanksgiving

Before Thanksgiving, members of the Aston Ministerium gathered to pray for and to address the issues of hunger, drugs, gun violence, and natural disasters. The first half of the program allowed visitors to view and discuss various projects. Sister Margaret Xavier Romans displayed and shared information about her ministry of making pillows. Sisters Catherine O'Donnell and Patricia Platt offered activities and information about the issue of gun violence and Sister Jean Rupertus provided visitors with information about the services offered at Anna's Place in Chester. The other area churches—Mt. Hope Methodist Church, St. Timothy's Lutheran Church, and Aston Presbyterian Church—also had displays. The evening closed with a prayer service during which Sister Jean Ustasiewski did a Scripture reading and Sister Jean Rupertus responded with a testimony. A number of our sisters were also part of the combined choir that sang during the prayer service.



Sisters Patricia Platt and Catherine O'Donnell set up their table where visitors could take gun-shaped molds of potting soil and pottery clay, roll them into ball, mix them with bird seed, and toss them into the grass to grow into plants.

African Sisters Study at Neumann University

Some years ago Sister Eileen Valerie Kulacz was working at Neumann University in the Mission and Ministry Office and living at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Convent in Morton. One weekend several members of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate, a congregation from Kenya with some ministries in New York and New Jersey, visited the parish as part of the Propagation of the Faith's annual collection. The visitors stayed in the parish convent. One of the visiting sisters, Sister Helen Murage, told the sisters about her desire to become a nurse. She had some practical healthcare experience but wanted to earn a BSN. Sister Eileen suggested that she visit Neumann University; directed her to Dennis Murphy, the VP of Enrollment; and also promised to "put in a good word" for her. Sister Helen was accepted into Neumann's nursing program on a scholarship. During her years of study, she lived in Portiuncula Convent, one of the residences on the motherhouse property. She graduated in 2015 and currently ministers at the Bishop McCarthy Center for Rehabilitation and

Healthcare in Vineland, New Jersey. However, the relationship between Sister Helen's congregation and the Sisters of St. Francis continued. Sister Rosa Rukungu graduated in 2016. She has returned to Kenya where she is continuing her education and hopefully pursuing her dream of becoming a doctor. Sisters Faith Ngugi and Esther Catherine Ndambiri are currently Neumann students. Sister Faith, now a junior, studies nursing as does Sister Catherine



In Memoriam

Sister Rita Marie Burian
(formerly Sister Paul Marita)
January 8, 2018

Sister Mary Francis Madaio
December 31, 2017

Sister Mary Teresa Carmichael
(formerly Sister Eucharistia)
December 28, 2017

Sister Rose Mystica McFadden
December 27, 2017

Sister Daniel Marie McCarthy
November 23, 2017

Sister Rose Marie Eichner
(formerly Sister Mary Eugene)
November 6, 2017

Sister Catherine Georgine Portner
October 10, 2017

who is a second year student. All three received scholarships and lived with our sisters in Our Lady of Angels Convent—the congregation's motherhouse in Aston.

◀ At Sister Rosa Rukungu's graduation party, held at Our Lady of Angels Convent, Sister Faith Ngugi led the singing while Sisters Anne Mugo and Ruth Bernadette O'Connor—both members of their respective congregation's leadership team—cut the cake.



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.

80 years
Professed 1938
RUBY JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANGELA PATRICE POWER
SISTER JEAN CLARE ROHE

70 years
Professed 1948
DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

SISTER ANNA HOPE BAUERLIN
SISTER JORDAN MARIE GOEKE
SISTER FRANCIS ANNE HARPER
SISTER BERNARD HELENE MCGUIRE
SISTER WILLIAM CLARE PLATT
SISTER FRANCES SCHIMINSKY

50 years
Professed 1968
GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

SISTER ROSE RAYMOND BARBA
SISTER PATRICIA BOVE
SISTER HELEN BUDZIK
SISTER CLARE ANDREW D'AURIA
SISTER PATRICIA HUTCHISON
SISTER JANE LAMMANA
SISTER JULIE MCCOLE
SISTER ARLENE McDONOUGH
SISTER KATHLEEN McMULLIN
SISTER KATHLEEN O'DONNELL
SISTER PATRICIA SMITH

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

► An experienced spiritual director and administrator, Brother Michael Laratonda has offered numerous workshops in journaling, dreams, prayer, sexuality, intimacy, and celibacy. He is currently involved in retreat work, spiritual direction, and facilitating programs for various communities throughout the U.S.



BROTHER MICHAEL LARATONDA, FMS

SISTER MARIE ANGELA
PRESENZA DESCRIBES MICHAEL
AS BEING “TRULY WELCOMED
AS OUR BROTHER. HE IS
AUTHENTIC, INSPIRING,
AND SPIRIT-FILLED.”

▼ Sisters Miriam Eileen Murray and Catherine O'Donnell are regular attendees of Brother Michael's retreats. Sister Catherine appreciates Michael's "positive way of approaching our relationship with God which allows retreatants to return home convinced of God's love."

If you've visited our Franciscan Spiritual Center, you might have met Brother Michael Laratonda, a Marist brother with a Franciscan heart. Michael began his association with the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia in the early 1990s when some of our sisters attended a sabbatical program at Wellsprings in Glens Falls, New York. After Wellsprings closed, Michael continued to present the program in other venues. Eleven years ago he conducted a Mini Sabbath at our spiritual center in Aston, Pennsylvania, and continues the program yearly. The sabbatical program and two guided retreats yearly allow our sisters opportunities to experience the spiritual gift that Michael shares.

Sisters Catherine O'Donnell and Miriam Eileen Murray had both attended the Wellsprings program and continue to attend Brother Michael's retreats. "He is a dynamic and gifted presenter and spiritual director with brilliant insights into films and their connection to our spiritual lives," Sister Miriam said. "He lives what he preaches and, as St. Francis would say, preaches by his life." Sister Catherine agreed. "Brother Michael keeps the focus on who we are and how much we are personally loved by God."

A special aspect of Brother Michael's retreats is his incorporation of the arts. "The arts are a window into spirituality," he explained. "They reach more to the heart than to the head—and because they are heart-centered, they can be an entry to prayer." Michael also has a special affinity for film. "The stories touch into the heart story of each of us," he said. "Some are deeply spiritual in nature—secular but sacred and spiritual works of art."

How does our Marist brother connect with our Franciscan charism? "I don't do it consciously," he said. "What is key is a spirit of hospitality, inclusivity, and simplicity—living inside of God's love so that we can do nothing but live out of God." Sister Marie Angela Presenza, who works in our spiritual center, sees this criteria as part of who Brother Michael is. "He is authentic, inspiring, and spirit-filled," she explained. "The message of God's extravagant love pours from his very being." And that, my brothers and sisters, is what the Franciscan charism is all about!

◀ Brother Michael Laratonda leads a yearly three week Mini Sabbath at the Franciscan Spiritual Center in Aston. Attendees experience presentations, prayer and reflection time, and spiritual direction. There is also time allotted for other electives such as yoga, massage, basket weaving, art, and film viewing.



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- Red Hill Farm, Aston PA



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Seeking Justice, Peace, and an End to Violence

In October our Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Committee hosted a symposium on human trafficking—Facing the Law: How the Government and Local Law Enforcement Deal with Human Trafficking. The presenter, Pearl Kim, is a Delaware County assistant district attorney and chief of the Human Trafficking Unit. Topics addressed during the symposium included the unique role played by attorneys general in responding to and stopping trafficking, the assistance rendered to trafficking victims by both the National Human Trafficking Resource Center and Polaris BeFree Textline, and the many forms of assistance that the government must provide in order for survivors to recover.

► In December we held our annual candlelight vigil, remembering and calling attention to the many victims of gun violence and the need for sensible gun control. The vigil began at 4 P.M. in Our Lady of Angels Convent where our sisters, friends, and neighbors gathered for a prayer service. Following the service we moved outdoors, lining both sides of the street as we stood in silent prayer and reflection. Many of the participants carried signs and banners which cited statistics on the numbers of gun-related deaths. Other participants held banners calling—once again—for sensible gun control.



Forty years ago three sisters—(l-r) Sisters Ann Marguerite Gildea (hidden), Euthalia Cassidy, and Eva Fink—responded to the request of Brother Ronald Giannone, OFM Cap., (center) to help to serve those who are poor in Wilmington, Delaware. This photo shows the group meeting over a meal in 1978 at the newly opened Mary Mother of Hope House. Read how the Ministry of Caring Ministry has grown over the past 40 years to include over 19 different ministries and how our sisters are still involved today, on page 4.

BY THE NUMBERS

30
years

640
FAMILIES

120,000
nights of
shelter

345,000 MEALS

Providing Shelter for 30 Years

Pope Francis once said, "I call on everyone... to do everything they can to assure that every family has a place to live." St. Mary Franciscan Shelter in Phoenixville has been doing that for the past 30 years. Begun in 1987 by two of our sisters, the shelter has—over those 30 years—provided housing for 640 families, 120,000 nights of temporary shelter, and served more than 345,000 meals. The shelter's website describes the facility as "a safe place along the journey home." For those 640 families, St. Mary's has been just that and much more!