

REFLECTIONS
&
Connections



STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes
Promoting Justice, Building Community

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to introduce to you the first issue of *CSA Reflections and Connections*. This publication was designed to combine the various newsletters that have been sent to you from individual departments in CSA, for example, *Blessings*, *Women of Spirit*, *JustPeace*, and *Sponsorship Update*. We hope you will enjoy this new and exciting effort.

Each publication will contain stories and photos that highlight the life and ministries of CSA and offer opportunities for you to share in this gospel mission. Reflections, poetry, and artwork will also be included

to provide moments of beauty and inspiration in response to the many issues of our times.

We'd love to hear from you about which stories or features in this first issue were most informative and inspiring for you. We also welcome your suggestions for future publications.

Gratefully,

Sister Joann Sams, CSA
General Superior



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CSA STATEMENT OF MISSION

WE, THE SISTERS OF ST. AGNES, participate in the mission of Christ by joyful service in the Church, always aware that we, too, are among the needy and are enriched by those we serve. Inspired by our founders—by the missionary zeal of Father Caspar Rehrl, the courageous initiatives of Mother Agnes Hazotte, and the spiritual influence of Father Francis Haas—we continue to respond in our own times to those whose faith life or human dignity is threatened.

Rooted in Christ through prayer and worship we serve in both rural and urban settings throughout the United States and in Latin America. We strive to minister with simplicity and hospitality in the fields of

education, health care, pastoral ministry and social service.

We are committed to transformation of the world, the church, and ourselves through promoting

- systemic change for the quality of life
- justice for the economically poor
- furtherance of the role of women in church and society
- mutuality, inclusivity, and collaboration.

Love binds us together, and by sharing our lives and our faith in community, we support one another to live with singleness of purpose: that among us and in our world the Risen Christ be discovered and revealed.

Blessed Are The *Peacemakers*

Throughout its 153-year history, CSA has been committed to and worked toward peace in both Central America and the United States. With the start of the Gulf War in 1991, an annual prayer service was begun called the “Lighting of the Peace Tree.”

On Tuesday, December 13, 2011, in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, sisters, associates and the public will gather for the 20th annual event to pray for peace. This year’s theme is *Blessed are the Peacemakers*. Attendees will learn what well-known peacemakers as well as invited guests have to say about peace, and thus, be able to clarify their own thoughts and beliefs. We invite those who are unable to attend to join us in spirit.

Other actions CSA has taken to promote peace include publicizing its written statement titled *Stance on Peace and Non-Violence* after the 9/11 attack. They have also joined efforts to close a school operated by the United States to train foreign soldiers in torture, called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. In addition, they have initiated and led peace demonstrations against violence and war. Wherever there is violence, CSA brings the message of peace.



Sister Stella Storch, OP, Justice Coordinator

Blessed are the
Peacemakers for
they shall be called
children of God.

(Matt. 5:9)



Sister Mary Ann Czaja, CSA, Director of Tarboro Community Outreach Center

Three CSA Sisters Serving on Front Lines of *Poverty*

Connected by a common mission and ministry, three CSA sisters serving in three different states share one focus: serving the poor and marginalized. Sisters Edie Crews, Peg Spindler, and Mary Ann Czaja are each passionate about walking in solidarity with women and men in the communities in which they serve who are unemployed, homeless, and without medical benefits.

Sister Mary Ann Czaja has lived and worked in Tarboro, North Carolina, as director of Tarboro Community Outreach for the past 29 years. Services include housing for thirty homeless men, a daily meal program for 100 people in need, and a food pantry supporting hundreds of families with donations from area grocery stores twice a week. "I have previously never seen the number of middle class families with children showing up to receive food. Loss of jobs, unemployment benefits ending, and house foreclosures have created a new group of

Associates in Action

people in poverty who need services,” stated Sister Mary Ann. One woman waiting in the food pantry line shared, “My husband’s job was eliminated, and my hours were cut to twelve a week. We have four children to feed, and if it weren’t for Sister Mary Ann’s help, I don’t know what we would do.”



Sister Edie Crews, CSA

“I see myself as an instrument of God’s love. When working with clients, I see Christ in them.”

— Sister Edie Crews

“I see myself as an instrument of God’s love. When working with clients, I see Christ in them. I strive to treat them with respect and compassion,” said Sister Edie Crews, who is an intake coordinator at People’s Resource Center in Wheaton, Illinois. One of her clients, Kelly, was six months pregnant when she lost her job. In Kelly’s words, “I couldn’t afford to live where I had been living. Sister Edie helped me to make very difficult but good choices. Without her help, I would have been homeless.”

Sister Peg Spindler is co-director of Sojourner Truth House in Gary, Indiana, which serves as a women’s day shelter and resource center. Maria is a client who turned to Sojourner Truth House as a shelter from domestic violence. “No matter what I did, I was always getting hit,” shared Maria, who finally decided to leave a relationship after suffering a violent attack in which she lost all of her teeth and her unborn child of seven months. “Sojourner Truth House helped me to find a new life. Sister Peg helped me to see that my life could be so much better.”



Sister Peg Spindler, CSA

Together, CSA members live the gospel message by feeding the hungry, giving rest to the weary, and welcoming the stranger.



Pictured left to right: Sister Magdalena Langlois, Theresa Gill, Felice Lomangino, Midge Harden, Heide Lomangino, a shelter employee, Sister Janet Ahler

“...We, too, are among the needy and are enriched by those we serve...”

— CSA Statement of Mission

Offering a safe haven and nourishment for body and soul, associates from Mobile, Alabama, give their time and culinary talents, not to mention their hearts, to the women of McKemmie Place, a shelter that houses up to 65 women. For three years and counting, associates have prepared and served meals every month, each one contributing according to ability and gift. Associate Eileen Harden said, “There was no safe haven in Mobile to house single women. Often they were forced into dangerous situations to keep a roof over their heads. That has changed now.”

CSA’s mission invites associates to work towards systemic change for the quality of life and justice for the economically poor. In Monroe, Wisconsin, Sybil Teehan and other associates live the CSA mission by serving as board members, fundraisers, and volunteers. Family Promise, a nationwide Interfaith Hospitality Network dedicated to helping homeless and low-income families to achieve sustainable independence, is their place to live the mission.

CSA associates help families to have a safe place to live, access to resources for education and employment, and most of all – someone in their corner.

CSA Ministries Cause

Ripple Effect

*W*ith a heart for mission, CSA associates and long-time financial supporters of CSA ministries Kathryn Polmanteer and Jim McCann see the gospel story of the loaves and fishes reflected in the work of the sisters.

“The Sisters of St. Agnes are inspiring on many levels,” shared Kathryn, who traveled to Nicaragua in 2008, along with Jim, to witness the work of the sisters in Latin America. They are strong, brave, and intelligent women with a genuine sense of hospitality. When they give to others, it has a ripple effect, multiplying more than we can ever imagine.

“I support the sisters financially, because I feel that I want to give back to them,” she continued. “I know exactly where the money goes, because they tell me how it was used. I love receiving all of the information I can so that I can stay connected to these wonderful women.”

During their visit to Latin America, Kathryn and Jim visited rural schools and clinics and saw the impact of the work of the sisters on the lives of individuals, their families, the community, and future generations. “I am amazed by their spirit and tireless commitment to empowering others,” added Jim. “Their work in the area of social justice, especially with the issue of human trafficking, is very forward-thinking.”

Thanks to the ongoing financial support from friends of CSA, ripples of change can continue to multiply and transform lives today and into the future.

For more information about development ministry, visit the website at www.csasisters.org.



Jim McCann, an Associate of CSA, visited Nicaragua in 2008 to learn about CSA ministries in Latin America. CSA Associates are long-time supporters of the work of the sisters. They embrace the mission and its power to transform lives.

“Many Traditions, One Call”

Sponsorship Ministry Forum Explores Changing Cultural and Religious Landscape

Focusing on the deep spiritual beliefs that unite people of different faith traditions, the 2011 Governance and Leadership Forum explored the changing landscape of America’s workforce. This forum, convened by CSA Sponsorship Ministry (CSASM), is held annually for board members and executive leaders of Agnesian HealthCare, Marian University, and Monroe Clinic. It provides an opportunity for congregational and ministry leaders to strengthen this mutual commitment and explore topics related to mission within the context of current societal issues.

Facilitated by Sister Annelle Fitzpatrick, CSJ, Ph.D., an associate professor at St. John’s University in New York, “Many Traditions, One Call,” centered on commonalities and points of synergy among major world religions.

“Our Catholic tradition and common call to ministry compel us to build a culture that welcomes persons of all faith traditions, as we continue Jesus’ mission of love, teaching, and healing,” shared Sister Mary Noel Brown, CSA, executive director of CSA Sponsorship Ministry. “The cultural and religious climate of our country continues to change. Our ministry calls us to inclusive relationships with people of all faiths and backgrounds.”

Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian colleagues shared experiences of working within a Catholic institution. Joan Schilke, CSASM chair, noted, “Through their stories the panelists reflected on their commitment to mission. This forum illustrated how dialogue is a sacred act that increases understanding and appreciation of the gift of different faith traditions.”

Diamond Award - Marian University



Taylor Putz, Sister Joann Sambs, CSA,
Dr. Steven R. DiSalvo, Sister Mildred Ryan, CSA

Marian University began the celebration of its 75th year by recognizing the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes at a Founders Day Dinner. Dr. Steven R. DiSalvo presented a Founders Recognition Award to Sister Mildred Ryan, a member of the first graduating class of 1941. Sister Joann Sambs, general superior, offered a toast to Marian University’s rich history, beginning with the first graduating class of eight students. Taylor Putz, Student Senate president, acknowledged the 3,000 students enrolled today, and Dr. DiSalvo offered a toast to the future.

Over the coming year, several events are planned to celebrate the diamond anniversary of the university. For additional details, visit www.marianuniversity.edu/75anniversary.



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320 County Road K
Fond du Lac, WI 54937

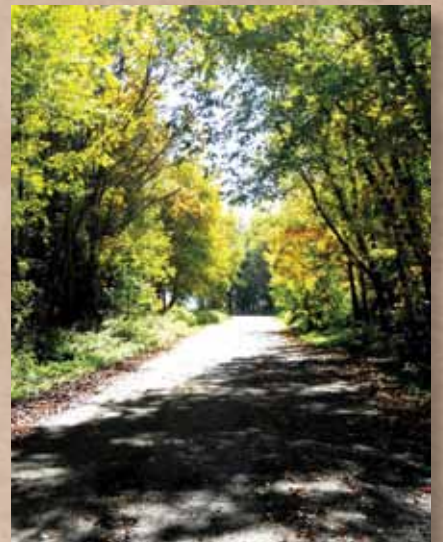
No Ordinary Path

We all have been blessed with a universal vocation given at baptism in which God calls us all to our unique path that will unfold our potential to make a difference in the world. The real challenge is to discover what the best path is for us to actualize our gifts - be it through marriage, religious life, single life, or ordination.

Previously “recruitment” was linked with the approach used by vocation directors to seek out potential candidates for religious life. The woman was invited to a *Come and See Retreat* where she was introduced to the spirituality, ministry, and community life of the religious congregation. This was done in the hope that the woman would eventually choose to enter the religious community.

Today this approach has changed. The discovery process of discernment is ultimately an internal and external listening to the movements of the Spirit while reflecting, praying, and receiving guidance from a mentor. During this process we strive to remain open to make ourselves available to God’s dream for us as we make a choice to walk in faith and trust on our unfolding path.

To learn more about the discernment process, click on www.csasisters.org.



“In the thousands of moments that string together to make up our lives, there are some where time seems to change its shape and a certain light falls across our ordinary path. We stop searching for purpose, we become it.”

— “I Will Not Die an Unlived Life”

by Dawna Markova