

REFLECTIONS

&

*Connections*



STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY



**CSA**

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

# 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.

## Contents

- 3 Living on the Edge
- 4 Mother Agnes Projects – 2012 Annual Fund Appeal
- 5 The Church of the Laity
- 6 Carrying on the Healing Ministry of Jesus
- 7 “Traveling Together in Hope”
- 7 In Memoriam – Walking with God
- 8 Skiing Uphill



Sister Celia Fernández’s “yes” to God’s call to vow for life as a woman religious, as a Sister of St. Agnes, and to further the mission is a blessing for CSA and all the people of God. CSA’s hearts are filled with joy and gratitude.

# Living on the *Edge*

*S*ituated on the Niagara Escarpment, our CSA motherhouse is truly “on the edge.” This 400-million-year-old limestone cliff runs all the way from eastern Wisconsin to Niagara Falls. The phrase “living on the edge” has no single or universal meaning and is often equated with living dangerously.

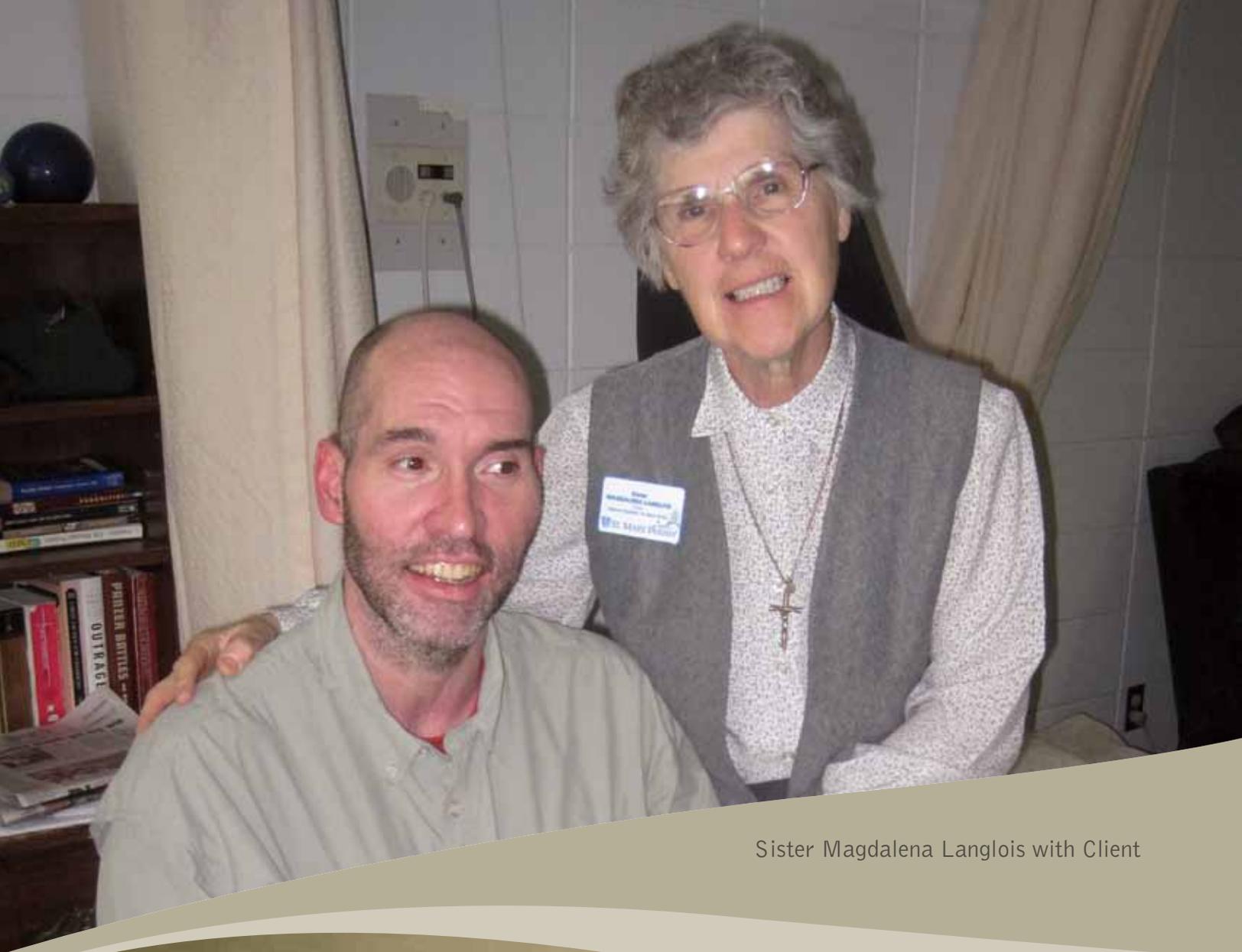
Oftentimes the Spirit can offer us opportunities to “live on the edge” through a call to discern that unique part of ourselves that hungers to make a difference in the world. Time and again we are challenged to be voices that break through the rock of oppression and marginalization so that “streams” of compassion can bring comfort and courage to all.

Within CSA’s history and ministries, the congregation has also “lived on the edge,” surviving many difficult circumstances over 153 years of existence, including the threat of being disbanded. Many of our members have been willing to take the risk of “moving to the edge” in the fields of health care, education, social services, and specialized ministries in wellness, art, retreats, spirituality, social justice, and prison ministry. Whether protecting newly arrived immigrants at Ellis Island, establishing educational and healthcare facilities where there were none, founding community organizations to assist victims of abuse and addiction, or challenging unjust social systems, the sisters “live on the edge.”



“Sometimes when you think you are done, it is just the edge of beginning...It is beyond the point when you think you are done that often something strong comes on.”

— American Author, Natalie Goldberg



Sister Magdalena Langlois with Client

# Mother Agnes Projects

## 2012 Annual Fund Appeal

With courage and determination, Mother Agnes sent forth her sisters to those in need. Today, CSA members continue to heal and transform lives in communities around the nation. *The Mother Agnes Projects* is an initiative to support the work of the sisters within the United States, and gifts from friends of CSA help to ensure the continuation of these ministries. In support of this project, the first CSA Annual Fund Appeal began in January and will continue throughout 2012.

Through this initiative, a single mom struggling to overcome a drug addiction turned her life around, reconnected with her family, and is now the manager of a successful restaurant, and a battered young woman was able to seek refuge at a community shelter



Mother Agnes Hazotte

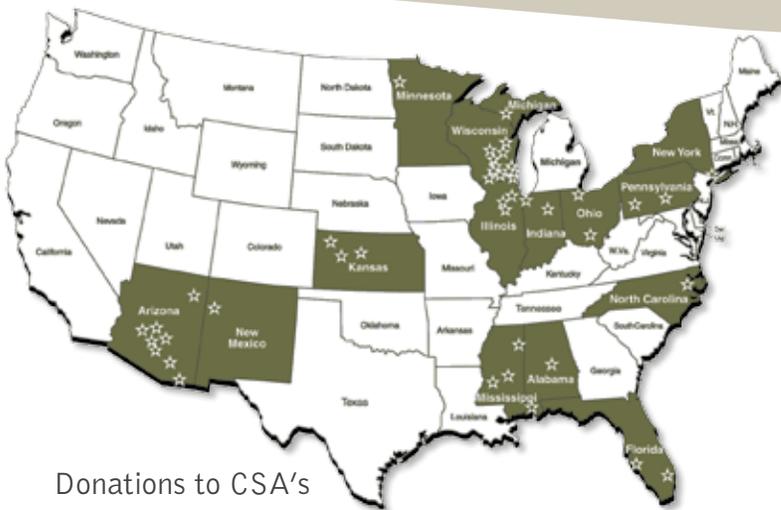
where she found the courage to begin a new life.

Whether mentoring at-risk youth in impoverished urban neighborhoods, counseling prison inmates, or comforting cancer patients, the sisters help to build healthier families and stronger communities. Working within organizations or with populations who cannot

afford to pay for services, many of the sisters receive little or no compensation or benefits. *Mother Agnes Projects* is an effort to provide nominal living expenses for these sisters, so that they can continue to live and work in these areas.

Supporting CSA's *Mother Agnes Projects* means that a struggling student will learn to read, an unemployed father can find shelter and food for his family, and the loved ones of a hospice patient will know peace and friendship during difficult days.

CSA needs the financial support of its friends to keep these vital programs going. Please consider making a gift to the CSA 2012 Annual Fund Appeal to support the *Mother Agnes Projects*. For more information about the initiative, its purpose, or the ministries which it sustains, please visit [www.csasisters.org/our\\_ministries](http://www.csasisters.org/our_ministries).



Donations to CSA's *Mother Agnes Projects* are restricted to supporting USA ministries.

# The Church of the *L*aitiy



Amory, Mississippi, is located at the midpoint between Memphis, Tennessee, and Birmingham, Alabama, with a population of 7,000 residents. It is the home of Sister Lael Niblick's new ministry as an "Ecclesial Pastoral Minister."

"I moved to Amory in July 2011, after having spent 16 years as a missionary in Nicaragua," shared Sister Lael. "I serve St. Helen's Parish which has 85 families. For the past twenty years St. Helen's has not had a priest assigned on a regular basis. The priest comes twice a month to say Mass on Sunday; he also oversees five other parishes for the diocese. My role is similar to being a pastor and working with the parish council. I make preparations for all funeral, wedding and baptism celebrations, and distribute communion. I write homilies and lead the Sunday prayer service."

"This is truly the church of the laity," continued Sister Lael. "I am the only paid person. The parishioners are involved, everyone knows each other and together they have kept their parish thriving. They volunteer to visit the sick, teach religious education, serve on the parish council, contribute to a variety of charitable efforts and participate in 'Renew' groups."

"Not having an assigned priest has created a very strong faith community for us," said Karen, treasurer of the parish council. "We have bonded together, each person giving of their talents. We have carried on even when we were without a pastoral minister. People just stepped in and kept things going. There is no place like St. Helen's. We are blessed to have Sister Lael join us."

# Carrying on the Healing Ministry

# of Jesus

**T**hroughout its history, CSA has responded to healthcare needs of communities, building and staffing hospitals. Today, these sponsored ministries carry on the healing ministry of Jesus. Agnesian HealthCare in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, is one of these institutions.

Visionary leadership and a mission-driven commitment to meeting the needs of patients, families, and the communities in its service area have positioned Agnesian HealthCare as a ministry leader. Its faith-based philosophy reflects the fingerprint of Gospel values in decision-making, patient care, and associate relations – none of which would have happened without the guidance and vision of Bob Fale, who served as president and CEO for 16 years until his recent retirement.

During his tenure, Bob was instrumental in developing a strong, collaborative partnership with physicians, forming an integrated healthcare system, and preparing other leaders within Agnesian HealthCare to continue the healing ministry into the future. He helped shape the delivery of healthcare and the Catholic health ministry locally, regionally, and nationally.



“The mission of CSA is central to what Ann and I were called to do,” commented Bob Fale, pictured here with Sisters Mary Noel Brown (left) and Joann Sams. “CSA expresses their mission and then nurtures individual expressions. The mission of Agnesian HealthCare is powerful, because it is identical to the CSA mission, just communicated in different words.”

“Bob has been a transformative presence at Agnesian HealthCare. He recognized the importance of formation for the board and leadership to ensure that decision-making was mission-focused,” shared Sister Mary Noel Brown, executive director of sponsorship for CSA. “He has led through collaboration, dialogue, respect for diverse viewpoints, and an unwavering commitment to excellence and advocacy for the poor and vulnerable.”

“We are grateful for our relationship with Bob which began when he was a student at St. Peter Claver School in Sheboygan,” added Sister Joann Sams, general superior of CSA. “Bob has been an exemplary leader in carrying on the healing ministry of Jesus and we look forward to his continued service as a member of CSA’s Development Advisory Board. We wish Bob and his wife Ann abundant blessings in the unfolding of their life’s journey.”

# “Traveling Together in Hope”

Two disciples walking to Emmaus after Jesus’ resurrection were anxious until the stranger (Jesus) joined them on the road. With Jesus in our midst, the most difficult issues can be faced.



Gilberto and Sister Mary Rose Obholz

“Traveling Together in Hope” is the statement by Wisconsin bishops to help educate us on immigration. “We affirm that every human being is created in God’s image... Just as we work to protect the innocent unborn...we cannot turn our back on 12 million immigrants in our midst...” “But they are illegal,” many say. To which the bishops respond by asking if the punishment is excessive since it is a civil violation of law and not a criminal act to overstay one’s visa or enter the U.S. without inspection. To see the documents, go to

<http://www.csasisters.org/pdfs/justice/ttinhopepastoral.pdf> and  
<http://www.csasisters.org/pdfs/justice/ttinhopeqa.pdf>.

*Shattered Families, The Perilous Intersection of Immigration Enforcement and Child Welfare System*, a recent study by the Applied Research Center, points out that when parents are deported, children are sent to foster homes and often the parents lose custody of their children.

[http://www.csasisters.org/pdfs/justice/ARC%20Report\\_Shattered%20Families\\_FULL%20REPORT\\_Nov2011Release.pdf](http://www.csasisters.org/pdfs/justice/ARC%20Report_Shattered%20Families_FULL%20REPORT_Nov2011Release.pdf).

There are many misunderstandings that need correcting. Immigrants don’t increase the crime rate and most pay federal, state, and local taxes as well as sales tax. They contribute to Medicare and provide as much as 9 billion dollars a year to the Social Security Fund from which they will never benefit. They are neither a burden on the healthcare system nor a drain on the U.S. economy.

<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/index.shtml>.

Immigration is clearly a national issue that needs comprehensive reform. Members of CSA are involved in ministry to the immigrants. Hopefully their efforts and further discussion will lead us to travel together in hope just like the two disciples and Jesus.

## In Memoriam... Walking with God



Sister Kenneth Struckhoff (Esther Marie)

November 19, 2011  
Serving in Nicaragua for 29 years Sister Kenneth’s passion was sharing the gospel, especially the Beatitudes with all she

encountered. Upon returning to the United States, she served in Kansas as a pastoral associate. She returned to Fond du Lac and was a translator for various institutions.



Sister Rose Carmel Schorsch (Ida Mary)

December 22, 2011  
Sister Rose Carmel taught in Illinois, Wisconsin, Indiana, and New York. Upon returning to Fond du Lac she was a homemaker for 13 years.

She loved singing and listening to music and hummed Christmas carols with the sisters who sat with her as she was dying.



Sister Carmella Richie

January 3, 2012  
For more than fifty years Sister Carmella served as a homemaker in various houses of the congregation in Illinois, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania,

Kansas, and Minnesota. Perfection was her goal in whatever she did, whether preparing meals, doing laundry or praying. She retired in 1992 to Fond du Lac.

For full obituaries go to [www.csasisters.org](http://www.csasisters.org). Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.



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Fond du Lac, WI 54937

### Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

<http://www.csasisters.org/>

What's Happening at the UN:

<http://whatshappeningattheun.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Some Call Me Sis:

<http://somecallmesis.blogspot.com/>

(in the front page of our web site)

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/csasisters?sk=wall>

(in the front page of our web site)

YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCSAChannel1>

(in the front page of our web site)

## Skiing Uphill

Sybil Teehan, 79 years old, has been a CSA associate since 1991. She has been volunteering with the special needs ski program for 26 years and shares her story below:

*"The winter of 1986 was very cold with lots of ice and snow. So was my heart as I had recently lost both of my parents after caring for them with my sister. Each evening I sat pondering what I should be doing with my life. God sends unlikely*



*opportunities, mine was assisting in a downhill ski program for physically disabled participants.*

*At first we had only two participants (one blind and one wheelchair-bound) and five volunteers.*

*The program quickly grew and it was not unusual to have 12 special needs participants in adaptive equipment and up to 60 volunteers on the hill at a time. In the early years we skied twice a week and served people with all types of disabilities including cerebral palsy, spinal cord injuries, amputations, spinal bifida, mental illness including autism, and blindness.*

*This program has given me a clearer insight into the courage, patience, and fortitude of those with special needs. They are eager to experience the same opportunities as the rest of us. Seeing their excitement and exhilaration as they come down the ski hill is something to behold! I feel humbled and blessed to have been a partner with them on part of their journey. Another blessing is partnering with other volunteers. They are very special people who give so much of themselves to make life a little more fun for someone else.*

*This ski program embodies CSA values of inclusion and service and has taught and given me so much. I am grateful I had the courage to get involved – to take a risk – and to reach out. I treasure the friendship of the participants and the other volunteers. My life has been forever enriched."*

Program Participant