

# Blessings

AUTUMN 2011

CONGREGATION OF SISTERS OF ST. AGNES

a newsletter for benefactors and friends of the Sisters of St. Agnes

*Dear Friends...*

October 2011 marks the 25th anniversary of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a nation-wide effort to educate women about the importance of early detection, treatment, healthy choices, and support services.

According to the American Cancer Society, one in eight women in the United States will develop invasive breast cancer during her lifetime, and women with breast cancer are at an elevated risk for developing a second primary cancer.

Sister Eileen Mahony works with women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer, journeying with them from diagnosis to recovery or through hospice, offering compassion and hope to her patients at St. Elizabeth's Health Center in Arizona.

Inside this issue, you will read her inspiring story, along with learning about the work of Sister Mary Ann Scherer in Chinatown and Sister Janice Funk, who volunteers as a tutor, helping struggling students to learn to read.

*October is  
Breast Cancer  
Awareness  
Month*

## Indiana Reunion Sharing Memories, Laughter, & Faith

Amid the laughter and reminiscing, there were tears of joy and sharing of memories and faith as the Sisters of St. Agnes visited with former students, co-workers, and friends of CSA in Decatur, Indiana, this past August.

The three-day reunion included a tour of St. Joseph School, Mass at St. Mary of the Assumption Church, and a social gathering, where sisters and visitors came from as far away as New York, Mississippi, and Kansas to reconnect. Sisters of St. Agnes taught in the area over the course of more than a century.

"It was simply amazing!" shared Sister Pat Bogenschuetz, who taught junior high school at St. Joseph's for several years. "This is such a wonderful community, where the seeds of faith were planted and have blossomed and multiplied."



*The reunion provided the opportunity to revisit fond memories of teaching and to reconnect with former co-workers.*

"You could simply see the joy in the sisters' eyes as they walked the halls and visited their old classrooms," noted Mary Sue Kriegel, local coordinator of the weekend event. "They have left an indelible mark through their example, compassion, and dedication—there is a love here for the sisters that spans several generations."

For more information about the Indiana reunion and those that are being planned for other areas in which the sisters have ministered, please visit the CSA website or contact the CSA Office of Development Ministry.



## *"I Will Journey With You"* Ministering to Breast Cancer Patients

As the beautiful, young Latina woman walked into her office, Sister Eileen Mahony was astonished to see her leaning on a stick, doubled over with the pain from her cancer, which had spread rapidly to her bones due to late discovery and misdiagnosis.

"I pulled out all the stops," said Sister Eileen, who has worked at St. Elizabeth's Health Center in Tucson, Arizona, for 26 years, focusing on women's health and breast cancer for the past three years. "We collaborate with a number of local facilities and organizations to coordinate care and treatment for our patients, most of whom come from uninsured poor working families."

Mirella was able to receive treatment to reduce her pain and slow the disease, living for two more years. Fear, uncertainty, and panic cause many of the Latina women in the community to delay in seeking help, thus many patients are in advanced stages of the disease by the time they come to Sister Eileen, who reassures them, "I will journey with you from this moment on."

St. Elizabeth's is a faith-based community health clinic operating on a "shoe-string" budget and sliding scale fees that allow low-income patients with little or no health insurance to receive quality care with dignity and compassion.

"It's challenging to get resources for the people who come to our clinic, but the smile on a mother's face who has been relieved of her pain and can have a little more time with her family is very rewarding. We help them to find hope and peace." *(Visit the CSA website to view Sister Eileen's YouTube Video.)*



*Sister Eileen Mahony coordinates the care and treatment of breast cancer patients at St. Elizabeth's Health Center in Tucson, Arizona.*

## A Ministry of Presence in Chinatown *Bringing Joy, Building Community*



*Sister Mary Ann Scherer works closely with Emily Eng-Tran, principal at the kindergarten school of the Church of the Transfiguration in Chinatown, NY.*

Sister Mary Ann Scherer does not speak Chinese, Mandarin, nor Cantonese—she speaks a language of love and hospitality to the parishioners of the Church of the Transfiguration, the oldest Catholic church building in New York and center for the Chinese Catholic community.

For 14 years, Sister Mary Ann has ministered to the Chinese immigrants who settle into an area located six blocks from ground zero and home to several waves of immigrants over the course of America's history.

"You don't have to speak the same language to be able to be kind to people," shared Sister Mary Ann, who coordinates the religious education and RCIA programs as the Pastor Associate for the parish. "My job is to bring joy and build relationships and community. All of the things that I do in my work allow me to show kindness and compassion. Those are my gifts, and this is where I need to be."

The "Church of Immigrants," as it has come to be known, serves not only the residents of Chinatown, but also people from several other areas in lower Manhattan. Coordinating religious education for a K-8 school enrollment of over 400 students and 50-60 new adult immigrant baptisms each year, Sister Mary Ann's ministry of presence creates an environment of welcome and trust.

"The parish needed an American sister who could help the children and their families to fit into their new culture without denying them who they are. I believe that I bring joy to them through creative and meaningful ways of celebrating group prayer and enjoying each other's presence. We build trust and community together."

## Never Retiring from the Service of God

Bringing lessons to life with her stories, Sister Janice Funk shares her experience, insights, and expertise with students who benefit from her one-on-one instruction sessions as a volunteer tutor at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception School in Greenville, Wisconsin.

“We don’t all learn the same way,” she shared. “I create learning activities that present material in a new way to reinforce what’s being taught in the classroom.”

After 50 years as an elementary teacher, Sister Janice “retired,” but has remained actively involved for the past seven years as a volunteer at the school, working each morning with small groups of children who struggle to learn, especially in reading and math.

“When I was a young sister, it became part of our mystique that we never really retire from the service of God. I continue in my ministry because it keeps me connected and I feel that I have something to give.”

Joyfully living the mission of CSA, Sister Janice continues to touch the lives of students, teachers, and families—and, retirement is yet a long way off.



Sister Janice Funk, CSA, volunteers as a tutor, spending each morning working one-on-one and in small groups to help students with reading and math skills.

### Coming Soon... A NEW CSA PUBLICATION

As part of CSA efforts to best utilize resources and to collaborate within the various administrative offices, a combined publication for the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes will replace **Blessings** and **Women of Spirit** beginning in November 2011.

**CSA Reflections and Connections: Stories of Mission and Ministry** will include inspiring stories of the work of the sisters and its impact on the lives of those whom they serve, as well as contributions from the areas of social justice, vocations, sponsored ministries, and associates.

Look for our new publication on a quarterly basis, and be sure to visit our website to learn more about the sisters' ministries and current events and initiatives.

## In Memoriam... walking with God



### Sister Helen Pape (Mary Hugo)

May 26, 2011

After 48 years as an elementary teacher in Illinois, New York, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, Sister Helen brought her gifts to adult ministry, serving parishes in Wisconsin and Illinois, teaching catechism, and visiting with the sick and elderly.



### Sister Roseann Simon (Ambrose)

July 6, 2011

Sister Roseann taught and administered in elementary schools for 43 years in Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, before working and volunteering at Marian University's library for nine years, sharing her experience as an educator with student teachers.



### Sister Rosilda Thiel (Alvera)

June 17, 2011

With a loving heart and willing spirit, Sister Rosilda served as a dietary director for hospitals and other institutions in Wisconsin and Kansas for more than 30 years, after which she spent 18 years in parish services in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin.



### Sister Mary Beth Funyak

August 20, 2011

Through her nursing ministry of more than 50 years, Sister Mary Beth served at hospitals in Wisconsin and Kansas, after which she worked in Mobile, Alabama, assisting the poor and homeless to obtain medicine and healthcare services.

## Help Us Plan for the Future!

As you consider your financial and estate planning, we hope that you will also consider a planned gift to CSA. Not only can you put your gifts to good use, but you can also save tax dollars through charitable deduction and the avoidance of capital gains taxes. In some cases, you can even increase your current income by reinvesting your assets through a Charitable Remainder Unitrust or annuity trust. Talk to your attorney or financial advisor today to see how you and CSA can benefit from estate planning.

**Planned Giving Seminar**  
**Monday, November 14, 2011**  
**5:30-7:00 p.m**  
**Founders Hall, 320 County Road K**  
**Fond du Lac, WI**

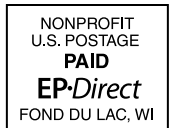
A light supper will be served, followed by a tour of the CSA Motherhouse. Register by November 7, by calling the CSA Development Ministry Office at 920-907-2319 or email to [development@csasisters.org](mailto:development@csasisters.org). The event is free.

*The Development Program of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes exists to invite others to share in the mission of the CSA community by cultivating resources which support their current and future initiatives and living expenses of the vowed members.*



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920.907.2319  
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*Peg Schneider, chaplain for the Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, Illinois, and long-time friend and supporter of CSA ministries*

## ***“We Need to Celebrate What They Have Given”***

“The Sisters of St. Agnes have a beautiful spirit of support of one another as they are called to serve in their various ministries,” shared Peg Schneider, hospital chaplain for the Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, Illinois, and long-time supporter of the congregation. “We need to celebrate in thanksgiving the great gifts of these women who have touched the lives of so many of God’s people throughout the world. Each woman’s life is a story of giving and dedication.”

For more than two decades, Peg has turned to Sister Rhea Emmer, CSA, for guidance and inspiration during her annual retreat. “Each year, I find that through her gifts of deep listening and wisdom, I am led to a place of trust that God is showing me the way to a new place in my life. She has helped me to open my heart to decisions that may be painful in my life, but helped me to know that God is always there with me on my journey.”

Support for the Sisters of St. Agnes helps them to continue in their ministries of education, healthcare, pastoral guidance, and social justice. “With many of them aging and the number of vocations declining, I believe that the Church and humanity need to celebrate the work that they have done and what they have given to everyone they serve.”