

REFLECTIONS

&  
*Connections*

AUGUST 2013



STORIES OF MISSION  
& MINISTRY



**CSA**

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

# Commitment to Children and Their

# Faith Journey



A native of Muelle de los Bueyes, Nicaragua, Sister Francis knew from the first time she met CSA members she wanted to become a sister. “My father is a permanent ordained Deacon; he had a lot of influence on me,” shared Sister Francis. “I attended a three-day retreat with a group of young people and that confirmed my vocation to religious life.”

Sister Francis is the principal of St. Rose of Lima high school and elementary school located in Rosita, Nicaragua. The school has an enrollment of 660 children and youth. “One of the biggest challenges I face is leading and guiding young people in their spiritual lives. So many things are competing with this goal - the issues of drugs, technology, pornography, gangs, and lack of respect for life,” continued Sister Francis.

“I enjoy music, leading the adult and youth choirs in our parish, and playing the guitar,” said Sister Francis. “I carry a dream in my heart - it is for the children of Nicaragua that they can see their teachers active in their faith and follow them.”

Sister Francis Sánchez Méndez

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# CSA Associate Visits

## Nicaragua

**M**y daughter, Emily, and I traveled to Nicaragua to visit the ministry of CANTERA in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua. My goal was to gather information on the ministry so that I could write effective grant applications in support of CANTERA. CANTERA is a non-profit organization founded by Sister Anabel Torres, CSA. It serves the people of the most impoverished areas surrounding Managua. CANTERA means cornerstone. Through popular education, CANTERA works to promote gender equality, ecology of the earth, increased literacy, and health care. This is done through the methodology of training rural leaders called promoters, who then in turn train other leaders in the community, who then train neighbors.

Sister Anabel Torres, founder of CANTERA, met us at the airport and drove us to her home. Sister Colette Hartman, another CSA member, was waiting to continue researching the grant proposal we had started earlier this year in Wisconsin. The grant application is focused on providing funding for two areas. One is a new truck to be used for transporting farmers, seeds and produce to and from market in some of the most remote areas of Managua, as well as to carry construction equipment for well building to provide clean water to the rural areas. The second aspect of the grant was to provide funding for an improved stage at the area referred to as The Ranch in the very poor area of Managua known as Ciudad Sandino. The Ranch holds two pre-school classes which start at age three. It also offers afternoon and weekend courses in art, music, and computers for teen-age youth and young adults. Classes include karate and Latin dancing. The stage area is used for graduation ceremonies from pre-school as well as Latin dancing and karate belt advancement tournaments.

Nicaragua is the one of the poorest countries in Latin America, second only to Haiti. Yet CANTERA accomplishes so much through their wide and varied ministries. CANTERA has a bee-keeping industry, an experimental farm, alternative

medicine clinics, and several youth-oriented ministries. Sustainable agriculture practices are taught at the education center and are evident in the drip irrigation and crop rotation on organic family farms in the area.

CANTERA has made a remarkable impact in education, agriculture and healthcare. It amazes me what a small handful of sisters has accomplished. They are truly the hands and feet of Christ in this area of the world.



Ruth is a CSA associate and a Registered Occupational Therapist. She lives in Portage, Wisconsin.



Angie and her deceased husband Aaron with their children.

(L to R) Brody, Rhett, and Emma all participate in the Grief Relief Program.

# Grief Relief - The *Healing* Journey

A natural part of the human experience, grieving is a process and journey that helps to heal the pain and emptiness of the death of a loved one. Still, it is a difficult topic of conversation, and many find themselves struggling to cope with myriad emotions, longing to share their grief, but not knowing how.

Sister Joyann Repp is the bereavement coordinator for Agnesian HealthCare *Grief Relief*, a peer support program in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The program serves children, ages four to 17, who have

experienced the death of a loved one, as well as their parents or caregivers.

“When our hearts break into a million pieces, we can put it back together, but there will always be a hole where our loved one once was,” shared Angie, whose husband died three years ago from brain cancer, and whose three children participate in the program. “Children carry this with them for the rest of their lives, but they can learn to share it and walk through the different stages with support.

“Sister Joyann, staff members Staci Salzman and Dawn Rehrauer, and many volunteers work as a team to support us and have been such a blessing for our family,” she added. “Here, with other children who are also grieving, they can just be who they are. They don’t feel judged or embarrassed about their feelings. They learn to grieve and grow.”

Dawn, a newly-widowed mother and co-worker, came to Sister Joyann several years ago seeking bereavement services for her daughter. Realizing that there were no bereavement programs for children in the area, Sister Joyann invited Dawn and other members of the community to help create a program specific to the needs of children. Volunteers were recruited and trained, and a little more than a year later, *Grief Relief* became a reality.

“It is a privilege to be able to walk with people on this difficult journey,” offered Sister Joyann, who works with a dedicated team of staff and volunteers to provide bereavement services. “All of us wear masks, especially when we are grieving – we don’t want others to see what we’re really feeling. When the children learn to take off that mask, they are finally able to grieve and heal. “There is no timeline for grieving,” she added. “Each



( L to R ) Dawn Rehrauer, Sister Joyann Repp, and Staci Salzman of Grief Relief

person deals with it in his or her own way, and there are different milestones for everyone. Most people are uncomfortable talking about grief and don’t know how to react to someone who has lost a loved one. But, if we don’t acknowledge the pain of death, we can’t begin the journey to healing.”

*Grief Relief* is part of the extensive bereavement services offered by Agnesian HealthCare, a CSA sponsored

ministry. Institutions sponsored by the congregation carry on the teaching and healing ministries of CSA, incorporating the Gospel values in their mission and services.

## *In Memoriam...* Walking with God



**Sister Annice Herman**  
July 12, 2013

A native of Ellis, Kansas, Sister Annice was educated at Marian College, De Paul University of Chicago, and St. Norbert College of De Pere. Her primary

ministry was teaching in elementary schools from 1940-1983. After her retirement she continued teaching by volunteering. Some of the places she lived and taught included: Two Rivers, WI; Munjor, KS; East Harlem and Yonkers, NY; Elmhurst, IL; New Mexico; and Indiana.

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.



Sister Rhea leading a meditation exercise.

## A *Ministry* of Transformation

She advocates for spiritual healing as essential for human health. She is a visionary and a leader. Since 1982 her ministry has brought spirituality into the healthcare arena for the nurses, doctors, and staff who serve the patient. For over 25,000 participants from eleven different states and eleven major health systems, Sister Rhea Emmer is a spiritual midwife.

A member of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, Sister Rhea has dedicated herself to transforming healthcare through a program created by the Catholic Health Association-Wisconsin under the leadership of Sister Rhea, D.Min., R.N. and Margaret Schlientz, Ph.D., R.N.

Originally designed for nurses, RISEN has expanded to all members of the health team. Its purpose is to increase the awareness of the power of the human spirit as a resource

for personal health and healing, clinical practice and organizational excellence. ProHealth Care, a health care organization located in Waukesha, Wisconsin, recently had their employees attend the RISEN program.

“RISEN profoundly changes your relationship with yourself,” shared Dr. Mike Wittaker, who is a pathologist at ProHealth Care. “Sister Rhea unlocks the transformation process better than anyone I have ever seen. You witness a change in everyone who has gone through the program. I myself have become less judgmental. She has given us the tools of seeing another person’s viewpoint through fresh eyes.”

“RISEN touches your humanity and the part of us which is whole,” shared Chris Shaw, a ProHealth Care nurse and mentor for others who are taking the program. “A story that I share is when a young nurse I worked with said,

‘I saw my charge nurse change in attitude and I wanted to see how that came about.’ This is the power of RISEN - to create a work environment where people can work together in a healthier way. We deal with constant crisis and stress in our daily work lives. We need to find ways to support one another to do our best work for the patient and ourselves.”

“When I first attended a RISEN session I was thinking of leaving the field of nursing, and the program reengaged me,” shared Beth Knoelke, Inpatient Hospital Coordinator for ProHealth Care. “Sister Rhea’s calming presence captivates audiences. She has a great sense of humor and she is what she teaches. She leads by example. It is a tremendous privilege to have an organization that invests in their workers, and provides this opportunity. In a high-tech world RISEN connects us to our humanity.”

“I have been through the RISEN program a number of times and each time I discover something new about myself,” commented Dean Hunter, Volunteer Chaplain and security personnel. “I listen better to others and hear what the person is saying without judgment. I have learned how important self-care is in order to take care of others. I have seen a change in the people I work with in how they treat the patient. I have become a better person at home and on the job because of RISEN.”

“People are hungry for inner growth,” said Sister Rhea. “They want their work to have meaning and to be an expression of who they are at their core. If we want quality holistic patient care, we need quality holistic colleague care.”

“As a Sister of St. Agnes, RISEN is a way for me to care for the caregivers who minister to those whose faith life and human dignity are threatened by illness, trauma and suffering. In the process I am enriched!”

## CSA Development Ministry Advisory Board – Supporting the Mission

Several times each year, a group of dedicated volunteers comes together as special partners in CSA’s mission. They bring their diverse talents, sincere appreciation for the work of the sisters, and a strong commitment to supporting the congregation. The members of the CSA Development Advisory Board serve an important role in building relationships, educating the public about the work of the sisters, and supporting the ministries of CSA.

“All you have to do is look at the legacy of CSA and its impact on the communities where the sisters serve to see the great gift God’s work has accomplished through the efforts of these outstanding women,” shared Dr. Matthew Doll of Wisconsin, who recently joined the board.

“The sisters bring a voice of justice and compassion to many communities,” noted Father Joe Juknialis, a parish priest in Wisconsin. “That voice offers different perspectives in the dialogue that shapes the lives of those whom the sisters serve.”

“Those who financially support the congregation give the gift of hope to others and become partners in CSA’s mission,” added Terry Letvinchuck, CSA Development Ministry Director. “The sisters live and work in some of the poorest communities in the nation and in Nicaragua, many times receiving little or no compensation or benefits. The generous gifts from those who support their mission keeps them in their ministries, healing, educating, and advocating for those who have no voice.”

For more information about CSA Development Ministry, visit the website at [www.csasisters.org](http://www.csasisters.org) and click on How to Help.

*The Development Ministry of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes exists to invite others to share in the mission of the CSA community and to cultivate resources which support their current and future initiatives, including the support of members as they engage in ministry at each stage of their lives.*





**CSA**

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes  
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### 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)

Streams 'N Stirrings, Sister Jean:

(in the front page of our web site)

Vocation E-Newsletter

(in the front page of our web site)



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

(in the front page of our web site)



[http://www.youtube.com/user/](http://www.youtube.com/user/TheCSAChannel1)

**TheCSAChannel1**

(in the front page of our web site)



## CSA STATEMENT OF MISSION

WE, THE SISTERS OF ST. AGNES, 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.