

REFLECTIONS
&
Connections

NOVEMBER 2014

Warmed with whispered gratitude

Anticipating Advent light

We welcome November night.

STORIES OF MISSION
& MINISTRY



CSA

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

CSA Associate *Kelly Estle*

BY CAROL BRAUN, DIRECTOR OF ASSOCIATE RELATIONSHIP

*K*elly Estle has been an associate of CSA since 2004. “Sister Anne Matisek was my dearest friend and sponsor. She inspired me to be the best I can be. She continues to be my inspiration as I work with homeless veterans as the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Coordinator in Mobile, Alabama,” said Kelly.

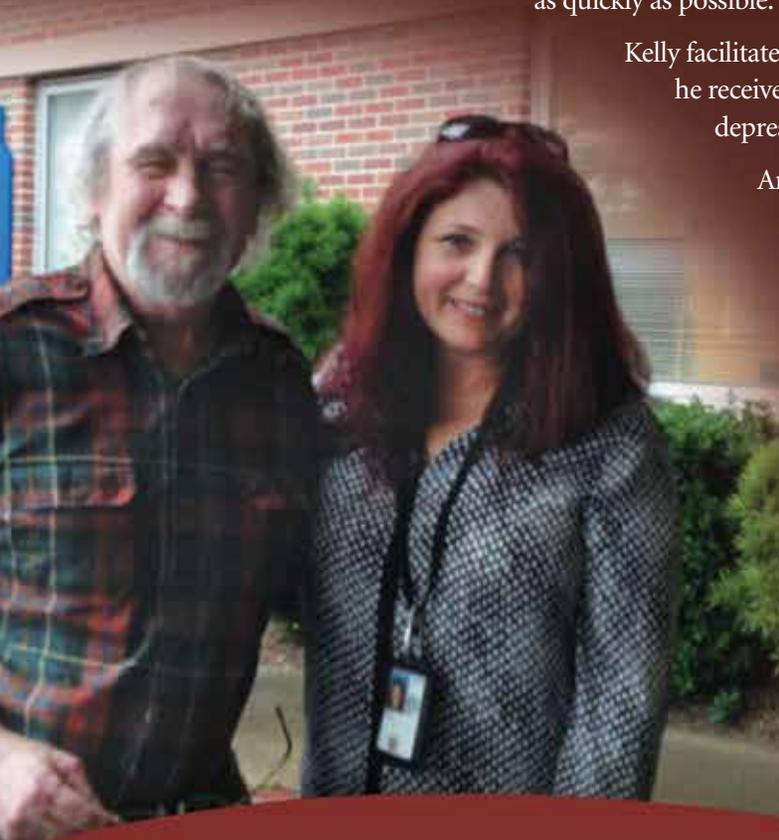
Recently Kelly met Joe, a Vietnam army veteran who came upon desperate circumstances and ended up in the streets. She didn’t let him out of her sight for three solid days as she did all she could to assist him as quickly as possible.

Kelly facilitated his admission into the VA Hospital in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he received help for his addiction and PTSD. “She saved my life. I was pretty depressed,” Joe said. “Thanks to Kelly I’m still here, high and dry.”

Among the key findings included in the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s *2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report* is the estimate that 57,849 veterans were homeless on a single night in 2013. Many don’t want to be found, but others just don’t know the help that is available to them according to Kelly.

Kelly has helped over 1,000 veterans in the past five years and has initiated several programs for the homeless in Mobile. She stated that she will do whatever it takes to help our veterans, even if it means tracking them down on the street.

Kelly commented that her job and the mission of associates of CSA are very connected on a daily basis. “I feel that it is through my work that I live my commitment to CSA. Through my work I help those who are in need and less fortunate, which involves going above and beyond the call of duty.”



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Sister *Mary Dennis*

BY TERRY LETVINCHUCK, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

One day at mass, a little girl asked her father who were all the women dressed in black? He said, “Those are ladies who spend their lives helping God take care of his people.” In that moment the young lady decided she wanted to do the same, and she never changed her mind.

For 54 years Sister Mary Dennis was a dedicated teacher and administrator in eleven schools. Sometimes she felt unprepared for where she was asked to go. When she was sent to be co-principal at Sacred Heart High School in Yonkers, New York, even though she had never worked in a high school before, she went. When she was sent to open a school in Des Plaines, Illinois, a very daunting task, she went.

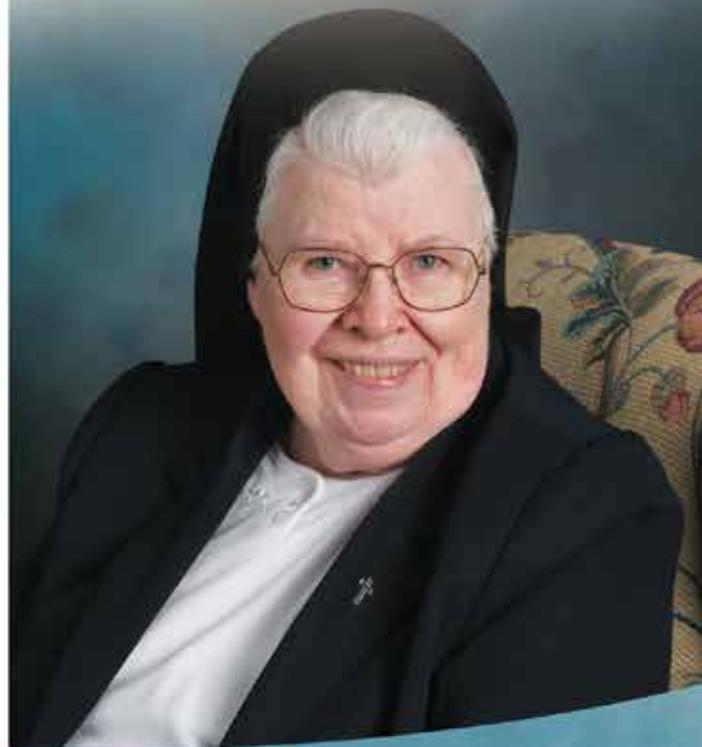
“I knew that at whatever school we worked, we, the Sisters of St. Agnes, building the faith of the children we taught was the best gift we could give them, along with a good education...if they're faith-filled, they can deal with life.”

To anyone who speaks with Sister Mary Dennis and hears the stories of her life of service, her overflowing gratitude, humility, obedience, and compassion are obvious.

“If I could check anything with the Lord it would be how well I tried to help people know Him. He certainly made himself present in my life! If you succeed with that, it doesn't matter much how the rest goes.”

CSA is currently in the middle of the Care of the Senior Sisters appeal. The sisters lived humbly, served selflessly and expected nothing in return. It is now our turn to take care of these wonderful women who have impacted so many lives. Won't you please help?

Sister Mary Dennis with her father, Dennis McMahon, on the day of her profession.



Sister Mary Dennis today, retired and happily residing at Nazareth Court and Center.

CORE /El Centro

a Story of “Unfolding Dreams”

BY VALERIE GRACZYK,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS



Sister Pat Bogenschuetz is shown with vegetables grown in the roof top garden of CORE/EL Centro where clients learn to grow and harvest food, compost, and care for the environment.

*A*t CSA's annual meeting in 2000, the sisters were challenged to identify an “unmet need” to which the congregation could make a timely and practical response. Sister Madeline Gianforte had just completed her master's degree in holistic healing. Her dream was to create a holistic healing center. Fourteen years later the “unfolding dream” she held of serving the needs of the poor is thriving.

Through Sister Madeline's entrepreneurial spirit, together with Jayne Ader (Co-Executive Director until July 1, 2014) and many other individuals, CORE/El Centro was created. Today it is a well established natural healing center located on Milwaukee's near south side. The population is made up of Milwaukee's Latino community of young working poor and first generation immigrants. Healing processes such as acupuncture, massage,

energy work, holistic exercise, Yoga, nutrition education, children's activities, and leadership development are provided, with fees payable on a sliding scale.

“Because of CSA's financial support and belief in what we are doing thousands of lives have been transformed,” shared Sister Madeline, Executive Director. “Fortunately I was blessed with Sister Pat Bogenschuetz joining our staff. Her enthusiasm and shared belief of furthering the CSA mission has been a terrific asset. In her role of Development Director she has brought her gifts of networking and community building to CORE/EL Centro.”

“I was drawn to the mission statement of collaboration, mutuality and transformation that is at the heart of CORE/EL Centro's mission,” said

Sister Pat. "I always say I have the best job in the world! I get to see people's lives change for the better."

"The sisters are fabulous role models," commented Stephanie Calloway, Garden and Nutrition Coordinator and Children's Wellness Program Manager. "The energy here is so positive. We are encouraged to build our leadership skills. This is a nurturing culture and we are encouraged to take care of ourselves mentally, physically and spiritually. The garden and nutrition program is unique – we have a garden on the roof of our building where clients learn to grow and harvest food, compost, take care of the environment and cook nutritiously."

"The sisters walk their talk; they respect each person's abilities and talents as a person," smiled Ana Paula Soares, Director of Proyecto Salud/Project Health. "This program trains people from the Latino community to become Community Health Promoters."

Serving 60 clients in its first year of service, CORE/EL Centro has now grown to serving nearly 5,000 clients annually with over 32,500 service hours. It all began with "unfolding" a dream!



Sister Madeline Gianforte, Executive Director of CORE/EL Centro (second from right), participates in an exercise class with clients.

In Memoriam... Walking with God



**Sister Joan Wirz, baptized Josephine Anna
August 24, 2014**

Sister Joan was from Monroe, Wisconsin. She made her first profession on August 15, 1945. She graduated from St. Agnes School of Nursing in Fond du Lac and was a nurse for thirteen years. She continued her studies in hospital administration and was the administrator of St. Thomas Hospital in Colby, Kansas. After receiving her MBA in 1963, she became CEO of St. Agnes Hospital in Fond du Lac, a position she held until 1980. In 1981 to 1987 she served in administration at Nazareth Heights Infirmery, then spent six years as Special Assistant to the President of St. Agnes Hospital and Waupun Memorial Hospital. Sister Joan wrote in 1988 "I long to live simply, demand little, be able to give and do for others. And have time for solitude and quiet."



**Sister Anne Matisek, formerly known as Sister
Wilhelmine
August 30, 2014**

Sister Anne was from Atwood, Kansas. Her family included eight girls and two boys. She made her profession of vows on August 15, 1939. She received a B.S. in Education from Marian College of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and an M.A. in Education from Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska. She taught middle school for 18 years in Wisconsin, New York, and Kansas and spent 14 years in Wisconsin and New York teaching high school math. For nine years she served as principal in Colby, Kansas. In 1980 she went to Alabama and lived there until 2011 serving in pastoral ministry at Our Savior Parish and St. Thomas Parish in Chickasaw, Alabama.



**Sister Jeanette Thelen, formerly known as
Sister Francis Xavier
September 3, 2014**

Sister Jeanette was from West Allis, Wisconsin. She made her profession of vows on August 15, 1942. She received her BS in Nursing Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. She ministered as a nurse at St. Agnes and St. Clare Hospitals in Wisconsin and at St. Thomas and St. Anthony Hospitals in Kansas. Later she was a staff nurse at Nazareth Heights Infirmery and St. Agnes Convent. She loved music which led her to minister as organist for religious services in each of the hospitals where she was assigned.

For full obituaries go to www.csasisters.org. Memorials can be sent to the CSA Development Office or through the website.

Left to right in the photo: Mike Sanders, Monroe Clinic CEO, Sister Mary Noel Brown, Executive Leader of Sponsorship, Sister Jean Steffes, General Superior, Bill Oemichen, chairperson of Monroe Clinic Board of Directors.



Celebrating 75 Years

BY MARY NOEL BROWN, CSA

A soaring cross once towered over the former St. Clare Hospital (now Monroe Clinic) in Monroe, Wisconsin. Since the hospital's founding in 1939, it served as a beacon of hope and healing to people for miles around. This cross, relocated to inviting green space near the main entrance of the new Monroe Clinic Hospital, was recently rededicated during a 75th anniversary celebration of the hospital's beginnings.

"This cross," observed Sister Jean Steffes, general superior of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, "symbolizes the dedication of all the sisters, employees, and doctors who ministered at St. Clare Hospital and who laid the foundation for the outstanding care and excellent services that Monroe Clinic provides today. Now more visible to all who come

here, the cross is a sign that everyone – sponsors, the board, leadership, providers, employees, and volunteers – is called to continue Jesus' mission of love and healing today and to ensure the mission into the future."

Mike Sanders, president and CEO, noted, "For all of us who serve at Monroe Clinic, this cross is a timeless reminder of our call and responsibility to continue what the sisters began. We are honored to be entrusted with CSA's legacy. The congregation's passion for mission is our passion. We remain steadfast in our commitment to serve everyone with compassion, to foster healing, and to promote wellness as we work together to create healthy communities through God's healing spirit."

Paying Attention to Signs

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign:
The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and
will call him Immanuel. — Isaiah 7:14

BY SISTER SALLY ANN BRICKNER, OSF,
JUSTICE COORDINATOR

Signs abound in our world, though we may pay slight attention to our dependence on them. We adjust our wardrobes based on signs of the changing seasons. We take the detour when signs warn of bridge repairs ahead. We apologize when we see that a person is upset by something we said or did. Signs do have an important place in our lives.

During this summer's CSA Days at Marian University, Sisters and Associates saw colorful yard signs waving in the gentle breezes as they walked to and from their meals. The signs beckoned for attention to questions on the theme of the day. Sisters and Associates were invited to ponder and to converse about their responses.

"Who is with us at the table as we make our decisions?"

"How are we deepening and expanding intercultural relationships?"

"As we evolve into the future, how will we live more sustainably on Mother Earth?"

The yard signs were a simple tool presented by members of the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Committee to stimulate discussion. Committee members continue to reflect on the above questions as they engage in action planning. As they do so, they remain mindful of the most significant sign of God's unfathomable love – Immanuel, "God-with-us."



Sister Marise provides transportation and airfare funds for a young boy who is undergoing cancer treatment in Managua and his mother.

Missionary Zeal - Sister Marise

BY VALERIE GRACZYK,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

The road from Rosita, Nicaragua, to Bonanza where the airstrip is located is a two-hour ride in dry weather; however, if it rains it turns into a five-hour endurance test on the mud-filled rutted road. For Sister Marise it is just part of living for the past 20 years as a missionary in the second poorest country in Latin America.

In any given week she makes the bumpy ride three or four times picking up visiting medical teams from the United States or taking patients to be flown to Managua for cancer treatments. "To do the work I do I pray for strength every day," shared Sister Marise. "I take the time to let the Lord know my needs and I trust he will take care of the rest. I truly believe the Lord responds."

A typical Sunday afternoon at Casa Santa Inés in Rosita for Sister Marise involves answering the door at least five or six times. Through the screened door a person will be waiting. "Sister, do you have any food? We are without food today and my children are hungry." Or "Sister, my elderly mother needs adult diapers; can you help me?" Or "Sister, I have extra rice to share from a good crop; please use it for the elderly in the parish."

"To witness the grinding poverty every day is very difficult. It has taught me to live simply, to be present to others and to hear the cries of the poor," said Sister Marise.



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Ways to connect with CSA:

CSA web site:

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

What's Happening at the UN:

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

(in the front page of our web site)

Streams 'N Stirrings, Sister Jean:

(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)

Telling the Story:

Marian University Students

BY VALERIE GRACZYK,
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

“A good story creates curiosity and communicates with purpose.”

– Erick Pehle

With a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation the stories of women religious congregations across the nation will be recorded, shared, and archived. Marian University, sponsored by the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, has been selected as one of the recipients. Students studying Journalism, Communications, Women's Studies, and Campus Ministry will have the opportunity to participate this spring in interviewing and taping members of CSA.

“Our hope is for young women students not only to interview our members but to listen to the stories the sisters

have to share of their lives” shared Sister Edie, Vocation Director. This is an exciting opportunity for the students and our sisters to record a brief oral history of the sister's ministry.”

“It is our hope that our students will find a deeper knowledge of religious life,” continued Sister Marie Scott, Campus Ministry of Marian University. “Many students today have never had a sister as a teacher; it will be wonderful for them to spend time with one of our members and hear about the life she has led.”

Look for the interviews to be posted on CSA web site at a later date.



Sister Edie Crews, US Vocation Director/Promoter