



Franciscan CONNECTIONS

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Sisters in Chicago Team Up to Reach Out

By Jessi Russo



Sisters Nila Meyerhofer (left) and Jan Hrubes with a client at the Franciscan Resource Center. Contributed photo.

For Sisters Jan Hrubes and Nila Meyerhofer, “feeding the hungry” comes to mind as they reflect on how their current ministry fulfills a Corporal Work of Mercy. Both Sisters Jan and Nila minister at the Franciscan Resource Center in Chicago.

“Franciscan Resource Center (FRC) is a non-profit center for persons seeking help in difficult situations, such as mental health, depression, domestic problems, hunger, medical aid, addictions, anger management, substance abuse, immigration, homelessness, clothing, and basic human needs, said Sister Jan. “The resource center refers persons with a call for an appointment to area agencies and follows up on each person’s needs. We do this so they know there is an element of trust from us, and that there is legitimate help for them to receive.”

Sisters Jan and Nila implemented the Franciscan Resource Center (at Sacred Heart Convent) in 2012 with the help of the Leadership Team and Melrose Park community members in Chicago. The idea was to provide outreach to the needs of the poor in the

neighborhood.

“Ultimately, what this ministry is all about is our way, as religious, to give our presence and preferred unsung labor as we put our gifts to use in the service of others, usually strangers,” reflected Sister Nila.

The Franciscan Resource Center’s clients are grateful to Sisters Jan and Nila.

“The Franciscan Resource Center made us comfortable to share our story without making us feel ashamed or less than,” wrote one client. “We didn’t know where to get help and you gave us names, phone numbers, locations and other valuable resources,” wrote another.

Each Saturday morning, Sisters Jan and Nila give bags of groceries to those who are in need. They are fed in return by those they minister to.

“Love, not reward, is our motive, for we have been privileged to see God’s love in the results, especially when people receive God’s blessings in many forms and they acknowledge receiving these gifts with gratitude to God,” said Sister Jan.

Sisters Volunteer at Hospitality Center at US Border

At Loretto Nazareth Hospitality Center in El Paso, Texas, immigrants released from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrive seeking temporary shelter. The former nursing home owned and operated by the Sisters of Loretto was converted to help the surge of refugee families arriving in El Paso. **Sisters Liz Donahue and Marian Klostermann** served there in October 2015 for five weeks as they helped to “clothe the naked.”



Sisters Marian Klostermann (right) and Liz Donahue sort clothes at Loretto Nazareth Hospitality Center in El Paso, Texas.

“Some nights Nazareth Hospitality Center housed up to 50 women and children from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and a few from Brazil and Bangladesh,” said Sister Marian.

The immigrants coming to Loretto Nazareth Hospitality, where **Sister Terri Rodela** ministers full-time through a ministry fund grant, were usually mothers with children. When first dropped off by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the immigrants were frightened and sad, said Sister Liz.

“We were among the first Americans they met that were non-governmental officials,” said Sister Liz. “We were able to greet them with a warm ‘bienvenido!’ [“welcome” in Spanish] to put them at ease.”

As volunteers, Sisters Liz and Marian assisted the immigrants by helping them obtain clean clothes--since many arrive with only what they’re wearing--a shower, and some food. They also helped to provide any medicine needed and gave toys to the children to help put them at ease.



Sisters Marian Klostermann, Terri Rodela, and Liz Donahue in El Paso, Texas.

“When possible we played with the children,” said Sister Marian.

All the services provided by Nazareth Loretto are by volunteers. Typically, refugees only stay one to three days and ultimately travel to their next destination with family or friends, said Sister Liz.

“We felt joy to be able to be a compassionate presence to the traumatized immigrants,” reflected Sister Marian. “They expressed themselves with hugs and ‘gracias’ as they left the shelter to join family somewhere in the United States. ■

Sister Provides Care to Patients and Families in Hospital Ministry

Sister Julie Manternach provides comfort to patients and their families as chaplain at St. John Medical Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Sister Julie Manternach stands outside of St. John Medical Center, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Through this ministry she is witness to the Corporal Work of Mercy of “Visiting the Sick.”

Sister Julie, who also has a background

in nursing, began ministering at St. John in 1975 as the director of the adult intensive care units. She also worked as a clinical specialist in open-heart surgery and as a member of the administrative staff before serving as chaplain as part of the pastoral care team. As of July 1, 2015, Sister Julie provides weekend coverage as the only chaplain on duty in the 500+ bed hospital.

“I find that having a nursing background helps

me incredibly with what I do,” said Sister Julie. “It gives me some credibility with patients and families that I wouldn’t have otherwise.”

At St. John, Sister Julie provides emotional and spiritual support to patients and families. That support might come in the way of giving encouragement to a patient during the recovery process--or updating a family about procedure times and sitting with them while they wait for their loved ones to finish surgery.

“Being a chaplain is a wonderful opportunity for presence.”

Her faith has served her well at the hospital. Most patients and families welcome the opportunity to pray with her when asked. However, there are those that do decline.

“The ones who are difficult to deal with are the ones who come into this with no faith perspective. There’s no comfort you can give them. Their grief is enormous,” notes Sister Julie.

But despite its challenges, Sister Julie appreciates her moments with patients and families at St. John.

“To love what you’re doing and know that what you do makes a difference in the lives of those you serve--it doesn’t get any better than that.” ■

The Ministry Fund

By Sister Cathy (Kate) Katoski, OSF

As you’ve noticed this issue of *Connections* features ministries of mercy. It seemed a good time to report to you on our Ministry Fund which supports many ministries of mercy by our sisters.

The Ministry Fund was established on Foundress Day, December 3, 1987, from an anonymous donation of one million dollars, with the request that it be used to serve people who are poor. The fund has grown through donations from supporters making contributions through the Development Office (by checking the box “ministry among those who are poor”), congregational contributions, and earnings from investment of the fund.

Several types of grants are supported by the Ministry Fund.

- Salary Grants provide full/partial salaries for our Sisters who minister among people who are economically poor. In 2015 these grants went to 13 sisters serving in states of Iowa and Mississippi and the countries of Honduras and St. Lucia. The total of the salary grants for 2015 was \$394,162.

- Direct Assistance Grants support a project or ministry that benefits people who are economically poor. These endeavors have the direct support of and/or are endorsed by a Franciscan Sister, Franciscan Way of Life

graduate, or Associate. Fourteen of these direct assistance grants were awarded in 2015 to projects in Iowa, Illinois, Mississippi, and St. Lucia for a total amount of \$87,780.75

- We-Mapp Grants (We Minister Among People who are Poor): Provides for short-term experiences for sisters to live and minister among people in situations of economic poverty who are outside their cultural experience and comfort level. Those who receive this grant also invest some of their own resources. Nine sisters received We-Mapp Grants in 2015 for a total of \$4,235. These sisters had experiences among people in Ames, Iowa; El Paso, Texas; Okolona, Mississippi; Minneapolis; and the countries of El Salvador and Haiti.

- The Leadership Team can designate Ministry Funds for response to critical needs beyond the congregation. Four grants for international needs were given in 2015 for a total of \$17,124.22.

- Lastly, a portion of the Ministry Funds support long-term Franciscan Common Venture volunteers with stipends, room/board, insurance, and transportation. These grants totaled \$2,433.25 in 2015.

Ministry Fund grants awarded in 2015 totaled \$505,735.22. ■



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Sisters of St. Francis Dubuque, IA

3390 Windsor Avenue • Dubuque, IA
52001 • (563) 583-9786 • fax (563) 583-
3250 • www.osfdbq.org

Email: development@osfdbq.org
Editor: Jessi Russo

Director of Development:
Sr. Cathy Katoski, OSF

Mission Statement of the Dubuque Franciscans

*Rooted in the Gospel and in the spirit of Francis
and Clare, the Sisters of St. Francis live in
right relationship with all creation.*



Sisters of St. Francis
3390 Windsor Ave
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Sisters' Billboards Promote Care of the Earth

By Sister Carol Hoverman, OSF

The eyes of the nation focused on the Iowa Caucuses, which took place in the state on Feb. 1. To capture this interest, 12 congregations of Catholic Sisters of the Upper Mississippi River Valley, including the Dubuque Franciscans, placed more than 20 billboards in strategic locations throughout Iowa, southwest Wisconsin and western Illinois, reminding all who participate in the caucuses to call for an end to environmentally destructive policies and practices.

The billboards, posted in January and into February, carried the message "Standing with Pope Francis; Caring for our Common home." In his latest encyclical, "Laudato Si," Pope Francis urgently calls people all over the world to take action to protect the earth, our common home.

The Catholic Sisters for a Healthy Earth Committee (CSHE), which represents the communities of women religious sponsoring the campaign, initiated the plan for the billboards.

"Part of the reason for our billboard campaign was not only to encourage us to talk with our representatives and the candidates about



incorporating the environment into our policies, but also that we keep aware, keep moving and discovering all the riches in the encyclical, so we don't just buy a copy, read it once, put it on the shelf and forget it," said CSHE committee member, **Sister Michelle Balek, OSF.**

The billboards were placed in the Iowa cities of Bettendorf, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Davenport, Des Moines and West Des Moines, Dubuque and Sioux City, in the Tri-State areas of Rock Island and Moline, Illinois, and Kieler, Wisconsin. ■

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