

SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS | DUBUQUE, IOWA | SUMMER 2016

Footprints



Footprints

Published quarterly, Footprints reflects the mission, spirit, and values of the Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, Iowa.

Mount St. Francis
3390 Windsor Avenue
Dubuque, Iowa 52001
Phone: 563.583.9786
Fax: 563.583.3250
Web site: www.osfdbq.org

Editor:
Jessi Russo

Proofreaders:
Sisters Veronica Bagenstos, Ella Groetken, Susan Ivis and Margaret Wick.

Communication Advisory Board:
Sisters Carol Hoverman, Eileen Miller, Maureen Smith, Michelle Balek, Mary Jane Koenigs, and Mary Lechtenberg

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Photo by Sister Phyllis Manternach,
OSF

Footprints

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m Leadership

If you recall, the winter issue of Footprints focused on the Corporal Works of Mercy. It seems they are shared with others in a concrete and deliberate way. Do you recall learning the SPIRITUAL Works of Mercy? They focus on “the spirit” side of our mission.

Pope Francis said, "The works of mercy are not merely a devotion. They are how Christians concretely carry out 'the spirit of mercy.'" While speaking to a crowded audience, he asked who remembered the works of mercy. Only a few among the thousands raised a hand. As a result, the Pope responded: "We must continue to teach the faithful these things, which are so important."

You will see in this issue “how our Christian faith, indeed, is not only knowledge to be committed to memory, but also truth to live in love.” (Pope Francis)

Spiritual works of mercy are often a response to times of sadness, suffering, sickness, or struggle where persons look for a word or gesture of consolation or compassion. When we are the one who is sad or struggling, we often would rather not admit it. What if we all filled in this blank of the 1st step in the AA program: "I am powerless over _____." To share this with another, and to allow another to share this with us would be "living the truth in love."

The examples in this issue have something in common: a response of LISTENING and of being PRESENT to those who are searching. It is God's mercy which assists us in becoming this presence.

After reading the living examples on the following pages, you may wish to select ONE spiritual work of mercy each week to bring compassion to someone's life. This is our call as Disciples: to create a more merciful world.

May God bless our efforts!



Our Mission

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

Focus 2014 - 2020:

In our personal, communal and public life, we commit to ongoing conversion as we: deepen our relationship with Mother Earth and Sister Water | stand with persons who are poor | make peace and practice nonviolence.

This is who we are; this is what the global community can expect of us.

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vice president



– Sister Mary Lechtenberg, OSF

Spiritual Direction in the Desert

By Jessi Russo

While some may seek solace on the banks of a river or in the grandeur of mountains, for Sister Liz Cummins solace is in the desert.

"What speaks to me in the desert is its vastness and openness – this spaciousness and quiet," said Sister Liz. "The desert is a fierce landscape and pulls one to live authentically and intentionally. The desert has no pretense about it."

Living in Phoenix, Arizona, Sister Liz has plenty of opportunities in the desert – a landscape she says that has shaped her ministry as a Spiritual Director where she helps "counsel the doubtful."

According to Sister Liz, "people seek spiritual direction for a variety of questions and concerns: 'Where is God in my life?' 'I want to learn to pray.' 'I've had this experience – what does it mean? 'My beliefs are changing and I don't understand what is happening.' I believe that beneath all these experiences is the desire to make a space for God in their lives – to learn to recognize the presence of God in what is happening and to participate fully in this adventure."

Working in private practice, Sister Liz rents an office space from a Congregation of Benedictine Sisters at Our Lady of Guadalupe Monastery where she visits with up to 30 individuals in a month.

"Spiritual Direction is about creating a space of hospitality and reverence to receive their experiences and concerns – when a person comes to me and shares whatever is going on in her life, we sit and look at it," she said. "Together we begin the work of 'gazing at the experiences' – listening, noticing and recognizing patterns and feelings – the work of discerning the presence and movement of God in those experiences – discerning from the heart."

As a Spiritual Director, Sister Liz also helps guide individuals to choose prayer practices and rituals that are a response to the presence of God in their experiences.

"I ask them what they already do and encourage them to develop a pattern with the practice," expressed Sister Liz.

Whether it be silence and solitude, the prayer of quiet, Lectio Divina, Eucharist, or time in nature, Sister Liz uses the clues in what each person shares with her to encourage a prayer practice that might work best for the person. She also encourages time between sessions to give the directee enough space and time to do the inner work needed.

"When we give our experiences time and space and reverent attention, they begin to reveal their wisdom and guidance and direction," noted Sister Liz.

As directees find peace and a sense of wholeness in their lives, Sister Liz finds grace.

"It is really a graced reality to experience, witness and be part of a person's journey of opening themselves to a deeper relationship with God. I find it deepens my faith and belief in the presence, compassion and mercy of God." ■



Sister Liz Cummins listens to a directee in her office in Phoenix. Contributed photo.

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY: COUNSELING THE DOUBTFUL



Sister Ruth Schock (right) works with a student at Briar Cliff University. Photo provided by Briar Cliff University.

"Traditional aged college students struggle with such developmental issues as separating from their parents; choosing a meaningful career; and developing meaningful adult relationships; all while trying to figure out who they are, what they believe in, and why they believe what they do. I currently teach in the teacher preparation program at Briar Cliff

University. In this ministry, I have the opportunity to 'counsel the doubtful' as I teach and supervise our future teachers as they prepare for their chosen profession.

Juggling the high expectations of our department while meeting the demands of their course schedules, work schedules, and athletic or music schedules is challenging for our students. They often doubt themselves and fear that they will be a failure in the eyes of their parents, their friends, and their university instructors. Their doubts become more pronounced as they prepare to get up in front of a room full of elementary or secondary students to teach for the first time!

Since I teach the first two courses our students take in their education major and supervise their first field experiences, I have the opportunity to 'counsel' them when their fears and doubts are often the strongest. The relief and joy they feel when they find out that I can affirm their decision to become a teacher is evident when they learn to analyze their strengths and identify an area to focus upon in their next course and field experience. It is inspiring to me to see them grow from self-conscious, insecure, 19-year-old students to becoming the confident, professional, adult educators we are proud to recommend for a teaching license."

--*Sister Ruth Shock*

"I have received wonderful spiritual direction from a member of our pastoral care staff. She gave me a directed retreat that has lifted and helped me through some unhealed issues and I've felt as if a load was lifted from me. I'm so happy, grateful, and healed. Through regular spiritual direction I continue to share my experiences and feelings and to better follow the Spirit's nudges and leading, and transform former troubled relationships to become now filled with good will. What a gift this spiritual work of mercy is. It has changed my life!"

--*Sister Ruth Elsbernd*



Sisters Sarah Kohles (left) and Juliet Mousseau

Sister Sarah Kohles Collaborates on Book Project

Sister Sarah Kohles, OSF, and Sister Juliet Mousseau, RSCJ, of the Society of the Sacred Heart Sisters, have teamed up to work on a collaborative book project on religious life.

Sisters Sarah and Juliet have invited 14 women religious under the age of 50 from 14 different communities to be part of the project, which is being funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The sisters will write about the essential elements of religious life—particularly the vows—from their experiences and from reflection on contemporary scholarship.

"The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation has been very generous to women religious, and I am grateful for their interest in the project," said Sister Sarah. "There are quality resources on religious life (and on the vows in particular) readily available; however, these resources are largely written from a Vatican II perspective and emphasize the differences in how religious life was lived before and after Vatican II."

Sister Sarah noted that younger women religious have wanted material about religious life and what that means today.

"Juliet, who is the initiator of the book project, and I think we finally realized that it is up to us to write such a book ourselves."

Sisters Sarah and Juliet expect the book to be available in the summer of 2017.

"We hope that in our sharing, prayer, and writing together that we might offer a gift to share with religious life," reflected Sister Sarah. *Footprints* 5



Sister Dorothy Heiderscheit with clinical staff member Sister Elaine Dombi, SSJ from Philadelphia, at the Southdown Institute in Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada.
Photo by Sister Pat Farrell.

Healing Wounded Hearts

By Jessi Russo

When Sister Dorothy Heiderscheit examines how her ministry as the CEO of the Southdown Institute fulfills the spiritual works of mercy, she can see each of them.

"All aspects of the Works of Mercy enter my life here at Southdown every day," said Sister Dorothy.

The Southdown Institute, which is in Holland Landing, Ontario, Canada, has a unique mission in that it, "provides comprehensive and holistic mental health services to church ministers" from all across the globe, said the organization's website. The institute offers clergy and vowed religious both residential and outpatient psychological treatment.

"When the resident comes into the program, it is goal-focused, goal-oriented, and pretty intense for 14 weeks," said Sister Dorothy. "When they return home, we journey with them for 18 months following their residency here to help sustain the growth that they have made while they were here and to consolidate that growth. We really believe in the vision that we have of healthy leaders for a healthy Church."

During the 14 week program at the Institute, the staff works with individuals to help build self-confidence, support and strengthen self-esteem,

and assure the individual of his/her value and worthiness, said Sister Dorothy. "We also offer education in skills for communication and managing conflict, teaching the cycle of change to highlight how new behavior patterns are formed, clarifying the importance of boundaries in personal living and naming coping skills for depression, cognitive loss, or anxiety," she said.

And while it's not obvious said Sister Dorothy, the Spiritual Work of Mercy of "admonishing the sinner" is critical to the patients and staff at the Southdown Institute.

"Assisting persons who have made poor and destructive choices in life to see how these behaviors have hurt and destroyed relationships is essential and merciful," she noted.

Though helping individuals work through their pain and learn new behaviors can be challenging, Sister Dorothy is grateful for the opportunity.

"No day passes for me that I am not overwhelmed with the grace that flows through this ministry," she reflected. "The opportunity to heal wounded hearts, to open doors, to free people, and to say that God is good, God forgives all, and that God is tender is an awesome ministry in which to participate." ■

Comfort in Conversation

By Jessi Russo

As a volunteer at Stonehill Franciscan Services, Sister Rosemary Vaske has witnessed the discomfort of individuals in the care center.

"Some residents are in excruciating pain and I wonder how I can assist them. I can't say, 'I know what it's like,' because how can I know? All I can do at times is listen to their story."

Sister Rosemary spends 20 hours at Stonehill each week visiting residents and helping with the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. She seeks to "comfort the sorrowful" in her ministry whenever she can. Recently she met a woman who had fallen and injured her back. "I could tell she was in extreme pain. I sat down next to her and tried to offer comfort," remembered Sister Rosemary. "I could not take the pain away, which I wished I could do, but I could let her know that I cared. I could be a friend. I looked into her eyes as I told her that God was right there when she fell and injured herself and God is here with her right now letting her know of God's love for her!"

Sister Janet May has encountered the emotional pain of students in her ministry as Director of Campus Ministry at Briar Cliff University.

"There are times when a parent has called me and asked if I would go to the residence hall to tell a son or daughter of the death of another parent, sibling, or grandparent," said Sister Janet. "They did not want to tell their young adult this news over the telephone, but wanted to make sure that someone was 'with' the person receiving painful news."

Whenever Sister Janet has to deliver such news to a student, she walks to the residence hall and says a prayer for the words she needs to give the student comfort at that time.

"Being a caring, compassionate presence is what the student needs most and I normally end our sharing with a prayer for their loved one and a hug before inviting them to call home to get further details," said Sister Janet.

She makes sure each student knows about the people and resources available on campus to assist them and that she is available if they'd like to prepare a ritual of remembering.

Sister Janet extends her "ministry of presence" to listening and supporting students through other



Sister Janet May (center) with students at Briar Cliff University.
Contributed photo.

challenging experiences they may face.

"I am so aware that we are called to be the caring presence of Christ to others in these vulnerable times in other's lives and it is a very humbling experience for me," she said. "These are special 'sacred moments' of the Spirit's presence and power."

Sister Carol Ann Berte also seeks to be a caring presence to her fellow sisters at the Motherhouse in Dubuque by accompanying them to medical appointments.

"They have a need to share their medical situation, and so for me to be with them and listen to their story is all I can offer," said Carol Ann.

Sister Bernice Schuetz also likes to be a compassionate presence to sisters she lives with at Clare House.

"I've been blessed with a good life, good health, and a listening ear, and it is my joy to live with these beautiful women," she reflected.

For **Sister Lois Erpelding** listening is an important part of her ministry as a pastoral minister in Waseca, Minnesota. At Sacred Heart Parish, Sister Lois assists with RCIA (Christian Initiation process), trains liturgical ministers, serves on the adult faith committee and social concerns committee, and assists with the homebound ministry of the parish.

"Pastoral ministry allows sacred space and time to hear the yearnings of parishioners, hospital patients, family members and staff," said Sister Lois. "The Spirit inspires visits to include prayer, listening and hearing deep longings, and at times laughter. A visit to 'Mr. Sunshine' on a gloomy day breaks through a space of depression to focus on the now."

In return, said Sister Lois, God comforts our sorrows.

"Our God of Mercy walks with us." ■



When asked how she had given or received the Spiritual Works of Mercy in her ministry, Sister Marcine Kellner recalled an experience she had in “forgiving injuries,” while teaching years ago.

In the two-week class of 10 young women in Nebraska, Sister Marcine’s ring was of particular interest to them.

“They asked how to get a ring like mine and also what it meant,” said Sister Marcine. She explained to the class that her ring meant she was a Catholic Sister.

This bit of information caused one young woman from the class to remember a negative experience she had with a sister in Nebraska.

“The young woman took guitar lessons from a sister a couple of times a week. When the notes were wrong, she was slapped with a ruler across her fingers,” stated Sister Marcine. “For the first three days of the class I taught, this woman complained about how mean the sister had been to her.”

But on the fourth day of the class, Sister Marcine thought it was time to help this young woman heal.

“I said to her in front of the whole class, ‘I, too, have had a Catholic education for grade school, high school, and college. I never experienced what you did. I am sorry you did. I ask for your forgiveness in the name of that sister.’”

The young woman stayed silent. As the days went on, she did not speak another word about what happened.

However, on the last day of the class, a gift bag of homemade jellies was placed on Sister Marcine’s desk.

“THEY ASKED HOW TO GET A RING LIKE MINE AND WHAT IT MEANT.”

SISTER MARCINE KELLNER

The Freedom of Forgiveness

by Jessi Russo

When Sister Marcine asked why she was receiving a gift, the young woman spoke up.

“I have never had anyone give or ask for forgiveness before. This has done so much for me. Thank you,” recalled Sister Marcine of what the young woman told her.

“I was surprised as to what that meant for her. So I knew forgiveness had happened.” ■

SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY: BEARING WRONGS PATIENTLY

Spiritual Carts

“Waking up with the sun shining and the birds singing is a perfect start to any day. Oh, wait a minute—someone or something stops me short: a mess greets me, someone tells me I’m keeping them waiting, my hard work has been credited to someone else, someone puts me down when they disagree, or my plans are interrupted once again. My first response is defense; then I recall Carl McDolman’s two little words: ‘Saint Maker.’ My defensive feelings soften and feelings of peace take over. ‘Saint Makers’ are people or situations that challenge others to growth. I sometimes wonder who sees me as their ‘saint maker.’

Baldwin of Forde states, ‘Patience is like a spiritual cart in which we carry all our burdens with greater ease.’ I always found red wagons or wheelbarrows helpful in gardening or doing outside work, so why not use a spiritual cart in my daily life, especially when challenging situations arise.”

--Sister Lila Hellman

Sisters Continue Long-standing Education Ministry

By Jessi Russo

In no way do I imply that the sisters who I taught were ignorant," said Sister Edith Halbach of how her ministry teaching the visiting Vietnamese Sisters Scripture fulfills the spiritual work of mercy "to instruct the ignorant." "They are very intellectual sisters and they were not acquainted with these readings but with lots of eagerness learned the words and meaning of Scripture."

Sister Edith has been happily teaching the sisters Scripture using the missalet from Chapel since they first arrived in September of 2014. "With all their enthusiasm and love they learned so much and are happy to have my weekly class to learn more. God bless them!"

In Michigan, Sister Margaret Hanson is spending several hours a week teaching a young woman who grew up in an abusive family and never received formal education.

"At the age of 26, and the mother of a 5-month-old, she is learning the very basic skills of math, grammar, geography, etc. and is striving to reach the goal of a GED so she can be gainfully employed and make sure her son gets an education," said Sister Margaret. "It is such a joy to see how eagerly she pursues her studies and at the same time sad to realize all that her past deprived her."

In Dubuque, Sisters Rita Green and Sister Kenneth Hemann tutor/mentor students at Holy Ghost School. "Every Tuesday afternoon from October to the end of April, we work with elementary school children," said Sister Rita. "We each teach a student in the after-school 'Boost Program,' which was started by Sister Dorothy Schwendinger. We help the students with their homework and other work that the teacher gives us. It's a very wonderful program."

These sisters are helping to carry on the tradition of the congregation's roots in "instructing the ignorant," said Sister Margaret Wick. "Since the congregation's beginning days of teaching German immigrants, the ministry of education has been a hallmark of the Dubuque Franciscans." Sister Margaret recalled a book by Penny Lemoux titled, "The Cry of the Poor." Penny was a journalist writing about her experience in Latin America in the 1960's and 70's and "said that the most important act of justice was to teach people to read, because if they could not read they could not vote and would never experience freedom from oppression."

In those years ministries for sisters expanded beyond the classroom to more 'front line' experiences, said Sister Margaret. "Sisters remaining in classrooms were sometimes perceived as not quite grasping the new social justice movement," she said. "But when I read Ms. Lernoux's quote I shared it over the years with sisters I encountered who were teaching primary grades and thanked them for their significant ministry of social justice – teaching reading. Education at all levels changes lives."

Sister Margaret encourages those reading this to reach out and connect with their teachers.

"Those of us who have heard former students say many years later how they remember a classroom experience and how significant it has been for them, cherish those comments." ■



Sister Ann Marie Dunn

"Before retiring in 2011, I taught 14 years in our elementary schools in Iowa and Chicago. I also taught Vacation Bible School for many years, led bible study groups, initiated the Renew program in three parishes and the "Why Catholic" series based on the new catechism. For many years I was the Director of Religious Education for many parishes. But my greatest joy was being involved in the Rite of Christian Initiative of Adults process for 23 years. It was always a challenge and a great privilege to see how the Holy Spirit worked in their lives leading to their many questions about the church and then to a great enthusiasm and joy in becoming initiated into the church. Not only have I been involved in teaching for 52 years, my own faith formation has deepened, grown, and been strengthened."

--*Sister Ann Marie Dunn*

"I have been sponsoring a child through the Christian Foundation for Children now known as the Unbound Program for many years. My support provides clothes and books and other necessities so a child can go to school."

--*Sister Edna Ginder*

The Ministry of Prayer

By Jessi Russo

Morning prayer at Mount St. Francis concludes each day with the words, “We hold in loving memory our sisters...” with the reminder to pray for the sisters whose death anniversary is that day,” said Sister Mary Arnold.

Those prayers are then followed by naming others who are ill, hospitalized, and also intentions from the prayer board, which have been phoned in or sent from the congregation’s website, as well as sisters and employees with birthdays. Every day the community participates in this Spiritual Work of Mercy of “praying for the living and the dead.”

“It seems so ‘natural’ and such a simple thing to ‘pray for the living and the dead.’” reflected Sister Mary Arnold. “It is one thing that we who are considered ‘retired’ can do.”

Sister Maureen Smith agreed. “Each day as our community prays the Divine Office we add some prayers after the Psalms and Canticle,” she said. “This is how I see myself living out this work of mercy.”

Sister Maureen also noted that as sisters are in the process of dying, a sign up sheet is posted asking other sisters to “sit” with her.

“I generally sign up to spend an hour with them. It is a special time of reflection as I sit alone with the dying sister,” said Sister Maureen.

Sister Ruth Kleitch also shared she is helping those in her ministry live out this Spiritual Work



Sisters at Mass at Mount St. Francis.

of Mercy. Sister Ruth, who ministers part-time as an assisted living counselor for Systems Unlimited, a non-profit corporation serving people with disabilities, said that a man she helps care for lost his sister this year to cancer. “It was my privilege to take the gentleman to the funeral of his sister

and to talk with him about his sister’s death,” said Sister Ruth. “His head dropped and he sat quietly as we looked at a picture of his sister and said a prayer. As we stood at the coffin of his sister he was again very quiet as he looked at his sister and I talked to him and we again said a prayer.”

For Sister Lou Ann Killburg it’s important to remember one of the Sisters of St. Francis’ corporate stances in her daily prayers. “I pray daily for an end to the evil of human trafficking,” Sister Lou Ann said. “I pray for a conversion of heart for all who perpetuate this crime for money and for those who satisfy their sexual desires abusing others and I pray for all women and all youth whose bodies and souls are being destroyed by being bought and sold.”

Working together the community performs this important Work of Mercy every day.

“Even though ‘praying for the living and the dead’ is the last mentioned Spiritual Work of Mercy, it is by no means the least,” said Sister Mary Arnold. ■

“Mercy encourages us to look to the present, and to trust what is healthy and good beating in every heart.”

--Pope Francis

Midlothian Associates and Sisters Reflect on the Spiritual Works of Mercy

By Midlothian Associates and Sisters

We are a group in Midlothian, Illinois, consisting of Sisters Doris Recker and Laurinda Hefel, and Associates Carmela Longo, Chris Strilko, Debbie Pellegrini, Nancy McDonald, Patty Purdy, and Mary Grebincec, as well as all the wonderful participants who have just completed two years of the Franciscan Way of Life (FWL) program. In the last few months, this group reflected on the many things we have done in our Midlothian community. When viewed in its entirety, it reflects a beautiful picture of what we have accomplished during this Year of Mercy and in the charism of Sts. Francis and Clare.

We used the Spiritual Works of Mercy as our guide. It was an enlightening and challenging experience of what we have done collectively. Guided by these principles, it allowed us to see where we need to focus and grow. It was a fun exercise – one that will continue long after this Year of Mercy and our Franciscan Way of Life sessions.

Our sisters and FWL participants “instruct the ignorant” through our school, religious education and parish of the FWL. The group also participates and shares information on peace and non-violence. Debbie Pellegrini received a peace pole from her sister’s parish, in one of our sister dioceses. We are in the planning phase on where to plant our Peace Pole. We have chaired our parish peace and justice committee. We inform others through our monthly fair trade coffee sale.

We have many opportunities to “counsel the doubtful” through our pantry and our visits to hospitals, nursing homes and the homebound.

We believe we all “admonish the sinner” when we feel someone is contemplating doing



Chris Strilko, Sister Laurinda Hefel, Margie Lemon, Sister Doris Recker, Carol Maronne, and Debbie Pellegrini. Contributed photo.

something wrong or risky. We attempt to guide them to rethink their actions.

We “comforted the sorrowful” during our downtown Chicago homeless walk with sleeping bags. We talked to many who struggle every day with poor health, weather, homelessness, and hunger. On our way home, we reflected on the gifts they shared with us.

We all try to “bear wrongs patiently.” We need to be more patient with those who wrong us by practicing humility.

We need to “forgive offenses willingly” and one of the main reasons why it is hard to forgive is because it (again) requires humility. In our FWL session on joy, we learned about perfect joy. Just like Jesus, when we forgive we are required to become weak and vulnerable.

We are consistent with “praying for the living and the dead.” Many of us are on our prayer connections and attend daily Liturgy.

Our Midlothian Group understands that prayer and our Corporal and Spiritual works change lives. We imagine meeting a family member, friend, or stranger in heaven and finding out that our prayer, Corporal and Spiritual works during their life helped them get through a rough time. That’s Mercy. That’s the Franciscan Way. ■

Sisters Experience All-Ability Cycles

By Jessi Russo

"I don't think I'm going to be able to do it, it's been so long," said **Sister Verna Gaul** as she stepped outside with her walker to the bicycling event at Mount St. Francis on Friday, April 29. Waiting to show Sister Verna otherwise were **John and Celia Brunow** of All Ability Cycle from Jefferson, Iowa.

All Ability Cycle sells and services bicycles and tricycles for individuals with special needs. "We believe everyone can ride. We call it inclusive cycle," reads the tagline on All Ability Cycle's Twitter page. Parked in the traffic circle at Mount St. Francis Center, John and Celia Brunow unloaded the bikes as a crowd of sisters gathered to look on. In his van was a single person recumbent tricycle; a platform tricycle, which could transport a wheelchair; an Opair tricycle, which can transport a wheelchair user; and a side-by-side tandem tricycle, which allows for two passengers seated next to one another.

Strapping on a blue helmet printed with flowers, **Sister Madonna Lang** pedaled off from the Virgin Mary statue at the front of the building to cruise around the parking lots of Mount St. Francis Center, which the Maintenance Department had closed off to traffic.

"I enjoyed it," said Sister Madonna of her ride, who hadn't been on a bike in nearly 40 years.

"I could've ridden a longer time on it," she said smiling.

John and Celia Brunow originally owned a bike shop in Vienna, Virginia. Due to the proximity to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center, both located in Bethesda, Maryland, near Washington, D.C., their shop received requests for adaptive bikes. After a move to Iowa, they opened All Ability Cycle in 2011.

"When we wanted to come back to Iowa and we looked at what other bike stores in the state were doing and no one was targeting the adaptive market," said John.

While in Dubuque April 29-30 for a fundraiser, All Ability Cycle stopped by Sunset Park Place Retirement Community to exhibit their bikes and let the residents test them. Brunow asked the staff at Sunset Park Place if they could suggest another retirement home where he could offer the bikes. The staff recommended Mount St. Francis Center.



Sister Jeanne Wickham with John Brunow from All Ability Cycle.

"It was my first visit to a convent," said John.

One after another, the sisters took turns on All Ability Cycles' bikes. The sounds of laughter and bicycle bells intermingled outside of the Franciscan motherhouse. Although the weather was cool, most sisters stayed after their ride to watch and cheer on the others, waving them off as they pedaled away.

Val Lucas, activities director for the Dubuque Franciscan Sisters, wasn't sure what kind of turnout there would be for the event due to the weather but was pleasantly surprised at the 31 sisters who participated.

"I think they looked out the windows and saw the fun the others were having," said Lucas, who helped coordinate the event. "To see those smiles—it was so joy-filled."

Sister Inez Turnmeyer also noted the happiness she saw in her fellow sisters while on the bikes.

"There is no age limit that anyone can enjoy something like that," she said. "It brought back a lot of memories and good feelings for everyone."

Sister Susan Seitz experienced some of those memories while on the bike.

"I remember how we used to have a car available to us growing up, but we always chose the bicycle instead," she said. "It was such a good experience riding a bike again. I surprised myself that I could do as well as I did when I was younger, and I didn't even mind the cold!"

To help combat the chilly temperatures, Mount St. Francis staff tucked blankets around **Sister Antonita Soppe** before she set off with John around the convent.

At 102 years of age, she was not only his oldest passenger of the day, but of all time. "How was your ride, Sister?" asked the staff when she returned. Her response captured the feelings of everyone at Mount St. Francis that afternoon.

"It was perfect," she replied. ■

Sister Kate Attends UISG Meeting in Rome

by Dan Russo for *The Witness*

Sister Cathy (Kate) Katoski was one of 870 attendees at the triennial meeting of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), a worldwide organization that provides a forum for leaders of Institutes of Catholic Women Religious, May 9-13.

The meeting that was held in Rome featured prayer, in-depth discussion of issues, and a private audience with Pope Francis and had a theme of "Weaving Global Solidarity for Life." Sisters from around the world were able to listen to talks in their own languages through the use of translators and technology. There were four major addresses: Sister Carol Zinn, SSJ (US) on the relationship between care of Earth and economic poverty; Sister Mary Sujita, SND (India) on the concept of solidarity as an expression of how women religious live when they are present to individuals and groups on the margins; Sister Grazia Loparco, FMA (Italy) on the 50-year history of the UISG, and Sister Miriam Ambrosio, IDP (Brazil) on the subject of our lives as witness to God's love in the world.

Sister Kate emailed updates to the congregation periodically during the meeting, reflecting on the content.

"Today's primary talk was "Solidarity for Life on the Periphery" by Sister Mary Sujita from India," wrote Sister Kate. "Mary was a delightful, passionate speaker, calling us, as Pope Francis has, to meet our God on the periphery. She pointed out that our world of dehumanizing poverty, conflicts, refugees and human trafficking challenge us all to be women of global solidarity."

The table discussions provided further insights to those who attended.

"At our table we 10 from different countries had good conversations about the periphery in our globe, in our local areas and even in our local houses," wrote Sister Kate. "Given so many retired in our congregations, we felt called to encourage all to meet God in all members, even the difficult person for each of us, the lonely and the isolated."

During the papal audience, which occurred at the Vatican May 12, Pope Francis took questions from the women religious on a range of topics, including whether he would "establish an official commission to study the question" of whether women could be admitted to the diaconate. The pontiff responded that, "it would be useful for the church to clarify this question," according to reports.

The sisters were generally pleased with the dialogue they had with the pope, including in the case of the question about women as deacons that generated the most media interest.

"The pope's answer regarding the possibility of women deacons was very well received by the religious women attending," said Sister Cathy. "He was very clear however that he was interested in the subject, but recognized that it may not be supported by the Scriptures as we know them."

For Sister Kate, the meeting was an enriching experience.

"It was a very moving experience to share with religious women around the world, often to hear of the poverty and violence that are a way of life for their people," she said. ■ *This article first appeared in The Witness.*



Sisters Carol Wagner, Kate Katoski, Faustina Hasford, and Marilyn Geiger at the UISG meeting in Rome. Contributed photo.

"It was a very moving experience to share with religious women around the world, often to hear of the poverty and violence that are a way of life for their people," said Sister Kate.



Marsha Sampson, Rev. Stan Sampson, Sister Helen Huewe and Irene Ernest at Mount St. Francis.

Sisters Learn about Life in the Marshall Islands

by Dorothy Schwendinger, OSF

Nearly 100 Sisters and Associates gathered April 9, 2016, at Mount St. Francis to learn more about the peoples of the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The Chapter Circle, which focuses on the Franciscan mission to stand with people who are poor, felt that it was vital that the congregation learn more about the Marshallese people. After all, more than 20 Mount St. Francis Center employees call this island country their original homeland.

Ten years ago in the development of Crescent Community Health Center in Dubuque, Sister Helen Huewe met Rev. Stan Sampson, Pastor of Dubuque Paradise Church. She recently became reacquainted with him while at a meeting discussing the area Marshallese population's health needs. Also present at that meeting was Dr. Neil MacNaughton, a professor in the Department of Nursing at the University of Dubuque, and Irene Ernest, a Marshallese woman active in the Dubuque community. The three of them graciously agreed to serve on a panel to tell us about the life in the Marshall

Islands and what life was like for them here in the United States.

The Marshall Islands are located in the Western Pacific just north of the equator. Made up of 5 single islands and 29 atolls the islands came under a Trust Territory of the U.S. after World War II and eventually became an independent republic in 1979. The U.S. conducted nuclear testing on the Island of Bikini for many years and since precautions were not taken to sufficiently protect the nearby residents, radiation fallout left many of the people with serious health conditions. A covenant signed with the U.S. in 1986, granted the Marshallese the right to come to the U.S. and live and work here without the need of a "green card." They remain, however, citizens of the Republic of Marshall Islands.

Dr. Neil explained that he had served in the Peace Corp in Micro Indonesia where he learned so much about these warm and hospitable peoples. Since then he has traveled to the Marshall Islands with students and friends. *(continued on the next page)*



The handicrafts made by the Marshallese people, as Irene Ernest (center) shows sisters here, are carefully crafted at home from split and bleached coconut leaves and other natural plants and shells. Wall designs, elegant fans, headbands (made by weaving in flowers and Cowie shells), and jewelry incorporating turtle shells, bones, and Cat's Eyes graced the tables at MSF. Coils and plaiting skills handed down from mother to daughter keep these amazing skills alive and testify to the cultural and artistic aptitude of the people and their heritage.

Dr. Neil noted that because of the radiation the Marshall Islands are still a dangerous place to live. Additionally, rising salt water floods have left the arable land, previously used for agriculture, unproductive. With the climate changes their homeland is threatened to be washed away. There are few viable opportunities for education and employment. Thus large numbers of the Marshallese people have come to the U.S. looking for a better life. Over 400 Marshallese people live in Dubuque. Many suffer from the effects of exposure to radiation and show symptoms of tuberculosis, diabetes, cancer and other illnesses.

"I learned so much about another culture," said **Sister Mary Colleen Hoversten**, a resident of Clare House. "Such gifted people. The crafts they showed us were beautiful. Every day our care-givers at Clare House work so hard for our benefit and now I appreciate them that much more. But I was distressed to learn that though they pay for Social Security taxes, they are denied benefits. That is not right."

Kathy McDonnell, Director of Nursing at Mount St. Francis Center, also attended the meeting. She said it expanded her appreciation of all that the Marshallese people have suffered at our nation's hands yet she said she now knows they came from a most beautiful country and settle here in "such a humble and forgiving

way."

After the presentation those in attendance completed advocacy letters to Congress which pointed to the urgent need these permanent residents have for available and affordable health care. In particular legislators were asked to do all they can to open both Medicare and Medicaid to the Marshallese people. They pay taxes, work diligently, and enrich America in many ways. Since the U.S. bombing created so many hazards, justice demands that the U.S. meet its obligations to assist the Marshallese people.

The Marshallese people's hopes and dreams for equal access are strong and their decisions to focus on the benefits and opportunities of life in the U.S., rather than on some of the injustices they experience, testify to their Christian faith and magnanimous spirits. ■



Dr. Neil MacNaughton speaking at Mount St. Francis. The panelists explained to the sisters that Marshallese people are citizens of the Marshall Islands. If lawfully admitted to the United States, they have an I-94 giving them the right to freely come and return and to work in the U.S. Health care insurance is not available to them. They would have access to a broad range of benefits in the US if they become Lawful Permanent Residents or U.S Citizens which is a very complicated process. Photos by Jessi Russo.

Sisters, lay people fighting modern day slavery

by Rhonda Miska

While slavery may be something that many imagine happening in the past in distant lands, in truth, modern day slavery exists in the form of human trafficking: the selling of men, women, and children for commercial sex or forced labor. An estimated 30 million men, women, and children are trafficked in the world today, though women and girls are disproportionately affected. The US State Department estimates that 14,500 -17,500 people are trafficked into the US annually. Trafficking is a \$9.8 billion industry in this country.

At a 2014 meeting in England, Pope Francis called human trafficking – also known as trafficking in persons (TIP) – “an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity.” In 2012, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) committed to “collaborate to abolish human trafficking.” Through the Bakhita Initiative of U.S. Catholic Sisters United Against Human Trafficking, sisters across the country educate about trafficking, advocate for stronger laws, and assist survivors of trafficking.

Dubuque Sisters from several communities are working to raise awareness of human trafficking around the Archdiocese of Dubuque. The Coalition Against Human Trafficking in the Tri-State Area is “a collaborative, faith-based network that engages in education and advocacy in an effort to eradicate human trafficking. The Coalition collaborates with other area groups who are also working to spread awareness of this modern day slavery.”

Sister Lou Ann Kilburg, OSF said there are many misconceptions about trafficking, including that “it’s only in the big cities, or...in foreign countries, not the U.S.”

Sister Mary Lechtenberg, OSF agreed, saying



The Coalition Against Human Trafficking in the Tri-State Area includes sisters and lay people. The group meets in Dubuque once a month. Contributed photo.

that “even though people think certainly human trafficking is not in Iowa” there have been cases reported in various parts of the state, including Fredicksburg, Sioux City, Decorah, Dubuque, Des Moines, and Cedar Rapids.

The Coalition encourages people to know the signs of trafficking. Persons who are trafficked may be accompanied by a controlling person or boss, may have lack of control over their schedule and travel documents, may not have an ability to leave their job, and may show signs of physical abuse like bruises. Presentation **Sister Sheila Dougherty, PBVM** recommended the acronym SOAR –“stop, observe, ask, respond” – as a tool for how to react if you suspect you encounter someone who has been trafficked.

Sister Lou Ann said trafficking is, “a huge and complicated problem – it takes health care, police, teachers, hospitals, social services, churches working together to really put an end to it.”

Sister Irene Lukefahr, BVM, agreed on the necessity of collaboration.

“Our own congregations have taken corporate stances on human trafficking. It’s such a big issue it’s going to take all of us,” she said.

Parishes or community groups interested in the Coalition’s educational presentations can contact **Franciscan Associate Lisa Schmidt** via email at schmidtl@osfdbq.org. ■

This article first appeared in The Witness.

Ministry Fund *by Sister Cathy Katoski, OSF*

Some years ago one of our benefactors wrote and suggested I write about the option of making donations to the Sisters of St. Francis as memorial gifts when friends and family have passed into eternal life. This seems to be the time to do so, in this issue of "Footprints" which focuses on the Spiritual Works of Mercy.

We've heard a lot about mercy during this past year declared by Pope Francis as a Year of Mercy. Even decades ago, in Pope John Paul's encyclical "Dives in misericordia, (Rich in Mercy)" issued November 30, 1980, he told us that "Jesus Christ taught that we not only receive and experience the mercy of God but that we are also called to practice mercy towards each other."

The seventh and last "spiritual work of mercy" is to pray for the living and the dead. In looking around the internet for reflections on praying for the living and the dead, I found this message by John on the web site SolemnChange.com. "Our private intercession for our neighbors and for the departed brings us little fame or admiration from others, but in the

Sisters, Associates Recognized for Ministries

Sisters Martha Ann Luedtke, Helen Huewe, Shirley Fineran, and Franciscan Associate Rose Quirk were all honored in the spring of 2016 for their various ministries.

Sister Martha Ann Luedtke was named an "Everyday Hero" at the American Red Cross of Northeast Iowa "Everyday Heroes" breakfast on Thursday, March 17. Sister Martha helps manage Alverno Apartments, a Dubuque residence for older adults and people with disabilities owned by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and originally sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis. Sister Martha Ann is the on-call person at Alverno and is available to help 24 hours per day, seven days per week. She often answers emergency calls from tenants experiencing medical emergencies, said Lori Stoltz, who nominated Sister Martha Ann.

Sister Helen Huewe was recognized on Tuesday, April 12, at a reception for volunteers of Opening Doors in Dubuque as one of two "Volunteers of the Year." "Since Opening Door's infancy, this woman has been a special friend and advocate of our organization, working silently behind the scenes raising money," said **Executive Director Michelle Brown** of Sister Helen. "A humble woman, who shuns the limelight; she is

end, when we stand before God, we will be able to give an account of our prayerful mercy to others, and so Jesus will in turn show us mercy."

Making a "memorial donation" to the Sisters of St. Francis or any favorite charity at the time that a friend or loved one dies is both a way to honor the deceased person, but also a way to make active your prayer. You can make a memorial donation in many ways – our donation envelope, on our website (www.osfdbq.org), or in a separate mailing of your choice. If you give us the appropriate information, we will notify the family of the deceased of your donation.

Whether it be the Corporal or the Spiritual Works of Mercy, this quote from Theresa of Avila says so well why these works are critical to our lived life:

"Christ has no body on earth now but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which this Christ is to bless all people." ■

Sisters, Associates Recognized for Ministries

always making good things happen for Opening Doors."

Sister Shirley Fineran was honored Tuesday, March 22, with the Marilyn Murphy Lifetime Achievement Award at the Women of Excellence recognition banquet in Sioux City, Iowa. Sister Shirley is an assistant professor of social work at Briar Cliff University. She is the founding member of several organizations, including the Food Bank of Siouxland, Siouxland Habitat for Humanity and Siouxland Unidad Latina. She serves on the board of the Boys and Girls Home, and continues to work with the Mary Treglia Community House. Her newest mission is establishing a halfway house for women who have been involved with human trafficking.

Franciscan Associate Rose Quirk was the recipient of the "Good Samaritan Adult Hero" award at the 11th Annual Heroes Among Us breakfast March 24, in Waterloo. The event, hosted by Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare, shines light on people who have gone above and beyond to help others. Rose has volunteered at the Catholic Worker House in Waterloo for 34 years. "I truly believe in the whole Catholic Worker philosophy. People open their doors to whoever is at the door. It is really that God provides, and I see that there. That is why I keep going back, I feel called to that place," said Rose. ■

In Remembrance

Sister Eunice Hittner December 19, 1919 - May 7, 2016



four sons completed this close-knit, religious family.

Eunice was received into the community on August 12, 1935, and

In Cornlea, Nebraska, **Eunice Ann** was born to William and Emma (Olk) Hittner on December 19, 1919. Another daughter and

was given the name Sister Mary Elsa and professed vows on August 10, 1937.

Sister ministered as a teacher in the Iowa cities of Bancroft, Ossian, Waterloo, and in Dubuque at Holy Trinity, Immaculate Conception Academy, and Mount St. Francis. She also taught at Nelson, British Columbia in Canada and in Vancouver, Washington, and at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., where she also earned her Ph.D.

Following this, she worked in various capacities in Oregon, including pastoral associate and parish visitor.

On July 4, 2000, Sister retired to Dubuque where she volunteered at Stonehill for 10 years. She moved to Holy Family Hall in 2010.

Sister is survived by her brothers Leon (Joan) Hittner; Glenn Hittner and her sister Leila McGraw, nieces and nephews and her Franciscan sisters with whom she shared 80 years of her life. ■

Sister Mary Lou Bigler July 3, 1925 - May 8, 2016



August 12, 1944, and was received on August 12, 1945, and was given the name Sister Mary Roman.

After profession, Mary Lou taught

On December 26, 1926, **Mary Lou** was born to Louis and Amanda (Jauert) Bigler in Postville, Iowa.

She entered the convent on

for 30 years in Iowa schools – Riverside; Ashton; Cascade; Norway; Templeton; St. Mary's and Holy Trinity in Dubuque; Stacyville; Larchwood; Guttenberg; and Corpus Christi in Chicago. After this she worked in a half-way house in Joliet, and did pastoral care ministry in Lake Charles, Louisiana, Iowa Methodist Hospital and St. Pius Parish in Des Moines, and Allen Memorial Hospital in Waterloo. When the Dubuque Washington Opportunity Center was begun she walked the street of Jackson, Washington, Elm, and

White as she worked to discover and fill the needs of the neighborhood children. Her athletic ability and interest served her well as she organized baseball teams for the neighborhood children and found ways to transport them to games. Local businesses supported the project with equipment. Sister is survived by her sister-in-law Ethel Bigler, nieces and nephews, and her Franciscan sisters with whom she shared 70 years of her life. ■

Sister Anna Marie Manternach October 5, 1923 - May 9, 2016



the eighth child in the family.

She was received into the community on August 12, 1945, and was given the name Sister Mary Albert. From 1947 to the end of the school year in 1964, Sister taught in Dubuque, Webster City, and Portland, Oregon. Then a big

Anna Marie was born to John and Susan (Lahr) Manternach on October 5, 1923, in Cascade, Iowa. She was

decision for her came when the community asked for volunteers to begin a new life in Chillán, Chile. Anna Marie felt the call to missionary work. She was selected along with two other sisters. After a short time, the trio of Sisters was sent to Cuernavaca, Mexico, for intensive language training, then on to Chile.

In 1978, the Jesuit Provincial asked the Sisters if they would move to Arica, a town bordering Peru, to continue to minister. Sister Anna Marie stayed in Arica until 1990, the 25th anniversary of the congregation's ministry in Chile.

After returning to the United

States, Sister found her place in Marshalltown, Iowa, where she ministered to the immigrants, translating for them in the hospital, jail, police station, and the courts, eventually helping them to file for legal documentation.

She retired to Mount St. Francis in 1998 and in 2012 moved to Clare House.

Sister is survived by her brother Francis, her nephews and nieces, including **Sister Julie Manternach**, and her Franciscan sisters with whom she shared 70 years of her life. ■

Employee Appreciation

The annual Mount St. Francis Employee Appreciation and Recognition dinner was held Tuesday, March 8, at Shalom Retreat Center.

Special recognition was given to employees who completed 5, 10, 15, 25, 30, and 40 years of service.

Employees were treated to dinner and musical

entertainment by **Sister Marie Therese Kalb** and **Jim Brimeyer**.

In her closing remarks, **Sister Kathy Knipper** said, "There is 310 total years of service among all of you. We are grateful to you and hope you continue to add 5...10...years to your current years of service." ■

40 Years



Carol Ries

Not pictured: Nancy Droleszler.

25 Years



Kathy McDonnell

15 Years



Cathy Steines

Not pictured: Nancy Noonan, Irene Ehlers, Nicole Birkett, and Sheila Merz.

10 Years



Mary Jo Kaesbauer and Tammy Maas

Not pictured: Bridget Schlichtman.

5 Years



30 Years

Ginny O'Connell
(not pictured)

Front row left to right: Sister Roselyn Ulfers, Stephanie Hennessy, Mary Hingtgen and Colleen Venter. Back row left to right: Sister Marci Blum, Becky Mesch, Cynthia Winders, Sister Maureen Smith, and Wendy Jaeger. Not pictured: Ivan Cordoba, Hilda Bing, Jane Rogers, and Jimiko Joe.

Footprints



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Dubuque Franciscans Support Refugee Campaign with Area Sisters

The Dubuque Franciscans, along with 9 other communities of Midwest Catholic Sisters, placed billboards urging communities to welcome refugees in the Quad Cities, Des Moines, Dubuque, and Clinton, Iowa; Kieler and Madison, Wisconsin; and Omaha, Nebraska.

The billboards with the message, "I was a ~~stranger~~ refugee and you welcomed me" were placed in Iowa, Nebraska, and Wisconsin in June. The message, based on the words of Jesus, is

taken from the Gospel of Matthew. Sisters and Associates also sent postcards with the same image to federal, state, and local government officials nationwide. The postcards read, "As a person of faith, I am writing to ask you to speak out against fear-mongering and inflammatory rhetoric about refugees. I oppose any legislation that would block the resettlement of refugees of any nationality or religion in the United States of America."

The following 10 congregations of Catholic Sisters participated in this campaign: the Dominican Sisters, Sinsinawa, Wisconsin; Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, Iowa; Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, Iowa; Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, Iowa; Sisters of the Visitation, Dubuque, Iowa; Congregation of the Humility of Mary, Davenport, Iowa; Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa; Sisters of St. Benedict, Rock Island, Illinois; Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, La Crosse, Wisconsin; Sisters of Mercy, West Midwest Community, Omaha, Nebraska. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/catholicsisters.



Rest in Peace

Joan Gottsacker
Sister of Sister Edith Gottsacker

Colleen Rolfs
Sister-in-law of Sister Dorothy Rolfs

Donald Helle
Brother-in-law of Sister Julitta Deppe

Rosemary Fischer
Sister of Sister Carol Ann Berte

Betty Davis
Franciscan Associate

Ned Tranel
Brother of Sister Norita Tranel

Francis Erpelding
Brother-in-law of Sister Lila Hellman

Joan Schaefer
*Sister of Sisters Mona and Jolene Wingert
Sister-in-law of Sister Barbara Schaefer*

Charles Burkle
Father of Sister Marge Burkle

Ruth Rogers
Sister-in-law of Sister Susann Rogers

Doris Kuhle
Sister of Sister Carol Hilby

James Hosch
Brother of Sister Jane Hosch