

echoes across the horizons

Winter 2016-2017



A Publication of the School Sisters of St. Francis - U.S. Province

Upcoming Events

Christmas Vespers

7 p.m. | Saturday,
December 17, 2016;
2 p.m. | Sunday,
December 18, 2016
St. Francis Center for Renewal

Marian Hall Night at the Races Event

6 to 11 p.m. | Saturday,
February 4, 2017
Mount Assisi Convent

Mount Assisi Academy Preschool Tea & Fashion Show

11 a.m. | Saturday,
April 1, 2017
Mount Assisi Convent

2017 Spring Festival

12 to 5 p.m. | Sunday,
April 30, 2017
Mount Assisi Convent

Sixth Annual Star Struck Gala

6 to 11 p.m. | Saturday,
May 6, 2017
St. Francis Center for Renewal

Pittsburgh Jubilee Celebration

11 a.m. | Saturday,
June 17, 2017
Mount Assisi Convent

Bethlehem Jubilee Celebration

11 a.m. | Saturday,
August 12, 2017
Monocacy Manor

MAA Preschool & Marian Hall Golf Outing

11 a.m. | Saturday,
August 26, 2017
Pittsburgh North Golf Club

New Administration Elected for 2016-2021

A New Chapter

The sisters of the U.S. Province spent a busy and productive first week of August in Pittsburgh for the 2016 Provincial Chapter. In daily sessions filled with prayer, group discussion, presentations, information sharing and fellowship, the sisters developed action statements for the future and elected an enthusiastic new leadership team that will lead the congregation through 2021.

Sister Frances Marie Duncan was elected Provincial Minister, followed by **Sister Marian Sgriccia** as Vicar and **Sisters Barbara Brown, Kathleen Kudlac** and

Virginelle Makos as Councilors. Sister Kathy also will serve as Provincial Secretary.

During the closing ritual, Mass and celebratory dinner on August 6, the community expressed its gratitude to **Sisters Bernadine Marie Stemnock, Jeanne Marie Ulica, Regina Ann Rokosny, Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster** and **Patricia Ann Mahoney** for their service since 2011.

Through song and prayer, the sisters also praised God for the energy and willingness of the new administration.

As the outgoing administration looks on at right, the School Sisters of St. Francis 2016-2021 leadership team is installed during a special Mass on August 6 at Mount Assisi Convent. Pictured from left: Sisters M. Virginelle Makos, Kathleen Kudlac, Barbara Brown, Marian Sgriccia, Frances Marie Duncan, Bernadine Marie Stemnock, Jeanne Marie Ulica, Regina Ann Rokosny, Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster and Patricia Ann Mahoney.



The Good Fight

South African Mission Weathers Challenges to Change -- and Save -- Children's Lives

As the children at St. John's Mission in Barberton, South Africa finish another school year in December, **Sister Anece Salay** reflects on the successes and challenges at the mission, where the School Sisters of St. Francis care for critically-ill and often abandoned children with HIV or full-blown AIDS.

It is the time of year when the sisters work hard to prepare as many children as possible to spend the holidays with relatives or foster families. Most have been abandoned by their families or have health challenges that were not managed at home, including regular use of anti-retroviral medications.

"Our social workers have worked very hard to locate the families of 34 of our children," Sister Anece says. "In reality, some families cannot afford them or sadly find it more convenient to leave the children with us."

Sister Anece has ministered in South Africa since 1989 and was there when St. John's Care Center opened in 1997. Sister Anece is the mission administrator, and **Sister Denise Olshausky** is director of the care center. The program also is staffed by three sisters from the Region of India, one sister from the Slovak Republic and a small team of lay employees. **Sisters Lorita Kristufek** and **Virginia Rose Carroll** also each spent a month at the mission in 2016, teaching religion and music to the children.

St. John's can accept up to 50 children from birth to age 18, depending on their needs. Most recently they took in a critically-ill 16-year-old girl who had been the primary caregiver of her younger siblings. Due to her circumstances, she was not eating properly or taking her medication and now needs to be on special care.

Cases like these wrench Sister Anece's heart. The mission's role will be to



The children at St. John Mission come from varied circumstances but all have one thing in common – their lives have been ravaged by South Africa's AIDS pandemic. At left, Sister Anece Salay assembles a toy received by one of the children during a birthday celebration.

help the young girl to get healthy with proper nutrition, regular medication and spiritual enrichment and, hopefully, return her to her family. All too often, children like her return to the mission in just a few short weeks because their daily care has diminished again at home.

In addition to navigating through cultural challenges and government

inefficiency, the mission often is charged with helping children who have turned 18 find a place in the adult world. To this end, job training and socialization are key components of the mission's work.

In the past two years, the program has successfully placed three older children with relatives when they turned 18, and helped four younger children be placed with families. Another teenage boy, a gifted artist, is preparing to return to his one-time foster family. It is these small successes that keep the good work going.

Donations to support the challenging work at St. John Mission can be directed to the School Sisters of St. Francis (Mount Assisi Convent, 934 Forest Avenue, Pittsburgh PA 15202) but must be earmarked for "South African Mission."

The Difference a Dress

When **Sister Elaine Hromulak** completed her term as provincial minister in 2011, she began a new ministry position at Catholic Cemeteries Association. But she also wanted a new personal project to which she could direct her passions. That's when she learned about *Little Dresses for Africa* (LDfA).

LDfA was founded in 2008 to provide relief to vulnerable children throughout Africa and beyond. Volunteers worldwide craft dresses out of pillowcases or other simple patterns. The donated dresses are delivered to needy areas by mission teams and mail for distribution to orphanages, churches and schools.

The widespread AIDS pandemic is especially challenging for young girls in Africa, who often serve as primary caregivers of their younger siblings. LDfA aims to plant a seed of hope among these little girls by giving each the simplest of things that most take for granted – a new, clean dress. As the project's motto states, "We're not just sending dresses; we're sending hope!"

With a dress pattern in hand and a hefty supply of fabric from **Sister Mercedes Benko**, Sister Elaine began to sew. Soon **Sisters Ruth Zacharias** and **Irene Novak** got involved as well. Before long, alumnae from Texas who come to Pittsburgh each spring to assist with the sisters' Spring Festival, caught the sewing bug too.

More than five years later, the labor of love culminates each April when all the year's finished dresses are gathered at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh and prepared for shipment to Africa and other areas. Sister Elaine estimates that her sewing group has finished nearly 300 dresses.

In the past, dresses have been directed to St. John Mission in Barberton, South Africa, where our sisters care



In April 2016, Sister Elaine (center) and Texas alumnae and associates (from left) Armandina Garcia, Janie Delgado, Teresita Pena Cuellar and Mary Helen Cerna display a new supply of dresses. Many of these made their way to an orphanage in Peru this past summer (below), where caregivers help little girls try on their new treasures.



for children of all ages afflicted with HIV and full-blown AIDS. They've also reached India and the Czech and Slovak Republics. Just this past summer, Sister Elaine provided 75 dresses to the Diocese of Pittsburgh for the diocesan mission in Chimboti, Peru. There the dresses were distributed to little girls – most under age 5 – in the Chimboti orphanage. The missionaries reserved a partial supply of dresses to give to the children

as Christmas presents.

"Even in the cooler winter months, the children wear the dresses over other clothing because it makes them feel special," says **Sister Lillian Bockheim**, a Dominican sister from Grand Rapids, Mich., who has ministered in the Chimboti mission for nearly 50 years.

Sister Elaine and the Texas alumnae were especially heartened recently

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Sister M. Aurelia Cerny, OSF | July 18, 1934 - February 12, 2016

Sister M. Aurelia (Mary) **Cerny** died on February 12, 2016, at St. Clare Hospital in Denville, N.J. She was 81 and in her 62nd year of religious life.

Sister was born in New York City on July 18, 1934, as one of three children of **John** and **Ann Julia Cerny**. She was taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph in elementary school before graduating from Pope Pius XII Diocesan High School in Clifton, N.J. During those formative years, her father instilled in her great self-confidence that she carried throughout life, enabling her to accomplish what others thought impossible.

As a member of SS. Cyril & Methodius Church in Clifton, N.J., Mary joined the choir conducted by one of our sisters, **Sister Mary Therese Sedlock**. This was her first contact with the School Sisters of St. Francis, who taught in the parish grade school. After graduating from high school in 1951, Mary spent time with our sisters, which inspired her to enter religious life.

Mary wrote to the provincial in Pittsburgh, Pa., to express her desire to enter our community, and her pastor added that, as a member of the parish, she had shown love for God and willingness to serve His people. She was accepted at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh in January 1953. In August, she was received into novitiate and given the name Sister Aurelia. She professed first vows in 1954 and began teaching at St. Patrick School in Canonsburg, Pa.; St. Anthony School in Clymer, Pa.; and SS. Cyril & Methodius School in Clifton, N.J. She also attended summer classes at Mount Mercy College.

After final vows in 1959, Sister Aurelia taught English, religion,



science, math, French and political science at St. Francis Academy in Bethlehem, Pa., St. Ann School in Emmaus, Pa., and Blessed Virgin Mary School in Northampton, Pa. She earned a bachelor's degree from Duquesne University and a master's degree from Seton Hall University. She later served as principal in West Lawn and Emmaus in Pennsylvania and in New Milford, Closter, Demarest and Denville in New Jersey. She spent the last few years volunteering and caring for her family members while living in Parsippany, N.J.

Sister Aurelia lived her ministry with energy, vision and determination. In later years, life took a different direction as her body was weakened by suffering. She resonantly recovered from open heart surgery in 2014 and, a few weeks before her death, was diagnosed with colon cancer. Sister died peacefully with **Sisters Mary Xavier Bomberger**, **Georgette Dublino** and family members at her side. She is buried at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa.

Sister Aurelia is remembered for her personable presence, positive attitude and ongoing tenacity towards ministry despite her medical issues. "She taught me determination, perseverance, dedication, to take the road less travelled, believe in myself and the gifts God gave me, and to think outside the box," one sister recalled.

She was peacefully resigned to the cross of suffering that God asked her to endure, perhaps drawing strength from one of her favorite sayings: "God is in charge." May she rest in peace.

Continued: The Difference a Dress Makes

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when they received photos of little girls from Chimboti wearing dresses they'd made. "You just can't imagine how happy we feel to see these beautiful little girls wearing the dresses we made for them," says alum and associate **Armandina Garcia**, whose mother died earlier this month. "The dresses I made were made with love not only from me, but from my mother who helped me pin the back of the dresses when she was visiting me."

Each dress takes about two to three



Because most of the recipients live in very warm climates, the dresses are created in lightweight, colorful fabrics and trimmed with elastic and sometimes bows and simple ornamentation.

hours to complete. Sister Mercedes died in 2014, but Sister Elaine and her team are still exhausting her bountiful supply of fabric. They do, however, have to constantly restock their supply of bias tape, lace and trimmings. Over the coming months they will focus on sewing dresses for the smallest children who are in the most need.

To donate or to get involved in Sister Elaine's sewing group, contact her at **412-761-6004**. To learn more about the international project, visit www.littledressesforafrica.org.



Our 2016 Jubilarians gathered before cutting the cake at the Bethlehem celebration in August. From left: Sisters Marietta Bankos, Joyce Burkhart, Geraldine Ann Kasper, Bernadine Marie Stemnock, Regina Ann Rokosny, Nancy Celaschi, Virginia Rose Carroll and Lois Jean DiFalco.

Our 2016 Jubilarians

Our Lady of Angels Chapel at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh was filled to the brim in June – both with spirit and with people – for the Sisters’ 2016 Jubilee Celebration. More than 250 family members, friends, clergy and sisters joined in the day, celebrating the 50th, 60th and 70th anniversaries of profession for eight of our sisters.

Sisters Marietta Bankos, Joyce Burkhart, Lois Jean DiFalco, Geraldine Ann Kasper, Regina Ann Rokosny, Bernadine Marie Stemnock, Virginia Rose Carroll and Nancy Celaschi renewed their vows and celebrated their collective 470 years in religious life.

Late **Sisters Corrine Ficery, Doloretta Zugell** and **Stephen Urbin** were remembered posthumously.

Later in the summer, Sister Virginia Rose, who hails from San Antonio, Texas, and entered the community through our former novitiate there, had a celebration with her family, friends and alumnae of the former St. Francis Academy in San Antonio. Sister Nancy, who was ministering in Rome, also celebrated in the home of our General Administration.

The celebration continued in August in Bethlehem, Pa., when friends and family filled Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel at Monocacy Manor for a Liturgy followed by dinner.

Congratulations to our 2016 Jubilarians. May God be at their side as they continue in their calling. We look forward to 2017, when seven sisters will celebrate milestones in religious life during celebrations planned for Pittsburgh in June and Bethlehem in August.



Sister Marietta Bankos
70 Years



Sister Joyce Burkhart
60 Years



Sister Lois Jean DiFalco
60 Years



Sister Geraldine Ann Kasper
60 Years



Sister Regina Ann Rokosny
60 Years



Sister Bernadine Marie Stemnock
60 Years



Sister Virginia Rose Carroll
50 Years



Sister Nancy Celaschi
50 Years

Where We Are

The sisters of the United States Province minister in three states and on three continents. Also, two sisters from the Region of India serve with us here in the U.S.

PA
64 Sisters

NJ
7 Sisters

Texas
4 Sisters

Rome
2 Sisters

Africa
2 Sisters

Sister M. Angeline Frantz, OSF | March 3, 1932 - June 10, 2016

Sister M. Angeline (Anna Mildred) **Frantz** was born in Charleroi, Pa. on March 3, 1932 as one of eight children of **Paul** and **Mary Frantz**. Her father worked in street car maintenance, and her mother was a devoted housewife.

In her youth, Anna was a member of SS. Cyril and Methodius Parish in Charleroi. She was quiet, calm and gentle and brought those qualities with her to the congregation. "Her gentleness was one of her outstanding virtues, and it is for this that she will always be remembered," a fellow sister recalled.

Anna entered Mount Assisi Convent as a candidate while attending Mount Assisi Academy and continued as a postulant in 1949 at the tender age of 17. She was received into the novitiate in 1950 and professed first vows in 1951 at age 19. In 1951, Sister Angeline began teaching the primary grades in McKees Rocks, Pa.; Tarentum, Pa., and North Side Pittsburgh, Pa., before professing final vows in 1956.

Sister earned a bachelor's degree from Carlow University in 1966 and a master's degree from Duquesne University in 1972. Throughout this time, she continued in her quiet, calm manner of teaching primary grades, CCD in parishes, and preparing young boys to be altar servers while serving as sacristan in several parishes. She went on to teach in the Pennsylvania towns of Ellsworth, Erie, Russellton, Canonsburg, Perryopolis and Barnesboro. In 1983 she returned to Mount Assisi Convent to minister at Marian



Hall Personal Care Home. She ministered to the residents for 17 years, including five as assistant administrator. Sister requested and received a leave of absence from 1978 to 1981 to return to Charleroi and care for her mother in her elder years -- a way for her to give back for all she received during her formative years.

Sister Angeline took ongoing faith formation to heart, participating in meetings, workshops and conferences to keep abreast of developments in the life of the Church. She maintained her quiet, calm and peaceful demeanor in everything she did and was very dedicated to her responsibilities. Sister remained active in community service until her retirement in 2011, when her ministry became one of prayer.

In her later years, Sister Angeline resided in Antonia Hall at Marian Hall and participated in the life of the community as her health permitted. She maintained her pleasant disposition and beautiful smile through her joys and physical sufferings. She is remembered as being steadfast in prayer, a true follower of St. Francis and having a strong sense of gratitude. She also enjoyed laughter and humor.

Sister Angeline died peacefully with a smile on her face in Vincentian Home on June 10, 2016, at age 84 and in her 65th year of religious life. As gently as she lived, she left this earth to join her parents and siblings who were waiting for her in heaven. May she rest in peace.

Answering Her Calling

This summer, our sisters welcomed **Sister Gracy Kundukulam** as the newest member of the U.S. Province. After much discernment, Sister Gracy made a formal request to transfer from the Region of India to the U.S. Province.

It may seem that Sister Gracy is already a member of the U.S. Province, as she has served here for a total of 12 years. Just as the sisters have embraced her as one of their own, she too has come to feel at home here. "I feel very accepted here. I felt it when I came here," she says. "And now I want to be an active member."

The sisters who were gathered in Pittsburgh for the 2016 Provincial Chapter surprised her by incorporating a welcoming ceremony into Provincial Chapter in August. Each of the sisters gathered in Our Lady of Angels Chapel at Mount Assisi Convent embraced Sister Gracy and warmly welcomed her to the community.

She will continue her ministry of service to the residents of Antonia Hall and remain at San Damiano. "I believe I received my vocation through the prayers of the older sisters," she says. "I want to help them any way I can."



Sister Gracy is now the youngest member of the United States Province, and is dedicated to caring for the eldest.



Sustainability ... Stewardship ... Education ... and a Heart for the Poor

The Monocacy Farm Project

Responding to the mandate from their 2011 General Chapter, the sisters of the United States Province have devoted much time and energy over the past three years to transforming seven acres of their property at Monocacy Manor in Bethlehem, Pa. In place of the open cornfield, an eight-foot deer fence now surrounds an organic production farm, community gardens, a small Community Supported Agriculture Farm Share, and demonstration gardens. The sustainable and holistic activities that go on there make up *Monocacy Farm Project*.

Why a project and not “just a farm?” Why would “School” Sisters be interested in organic farming? More than 14,500 families in the Lehigh Valley live below the federal poverty level, and more than 33,000 families in Lehigh and Northampton counties make less than \$25,000. Inadequate financial resources translate into day-to-day hardships, impacting food availability, health

FYI

The 2011 General Chapter encouraged our entire international congregation to alleviate poverty locally and to identify specific ways to care for the earth. Pope Francis’ 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* affirms this call to action.

and overall quality of life. Our charism calls us “to respond to the signs of the times and the needs of the church.” How could we *not* be interested?

CSP: The Heart of the Monocacy Farm Project

Launched in June 2016, the Community Service Program (CSP) provides weekly supplies of organic vegetables to area shelters, food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the growing season. Because our reach extends farther when we collaborate with others, we operate the CSP in partnership with community and faith-based organizations in Bethlehem and Allentown that provide meals and basic grocery supplies to low-income families and the homeless. This year, the program partnered

with seven area organizations to assist thousands of economically challenged families in the Lehigh Valley, and provide more than a half-million meals each year to those who otherwise would not eat.

The community has responded with overwhelming generosity. Grants for a new tractor, tilling implements, a walk-in refrigerator, and a well-water irrigation system made the start-up of the CSP possible. Ongoing operation and expansion of the program to serve greater numbers of the poor depends on foundation grants, donations from area churches and synagogues, and individual sponsors.

Chip In by Hand or Heart

It costs about \$125 to supply an individual with produce for one growing season, while \$500 covers the cost for an average size family. If you are interested in co-sponsoring the CSP, making a donation, learning more, touring the farm, or

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A Year of Milestone Moments

Sisters in the



Sisters Eve Blotic, Rosalia Giba and Marietta Bankos (at left) show off some of the items collected during the School Sisters of St. Francis' 2016 food drive at Mount Assisi Convent. The sisters collected food in March in honor of National Catholic Sisters Week. The food was delivered to the food bank at Prince of Peace Parish on Pittsburgh's South Side, where **Sister Cecilia Jacko** ministers.



Sister Jo Goolish (above) was among 20 featured artists at the Diocese of Pittsburgh's *Celebration of the Arts* in March. Held in conjunction with the Year of Consecrated Life, the event showcased the many ways that religious women and men influence the life and spirituality of the Church through the arts.

Our community's local ministers gathered for a meeting in Shade Gap, Pa., in March. The tiny town, which sits virtually halfway between Pittsburgh and Bethlehem, has only 97 residents at last census. But it does have a charming landmark known as St. Mary's Covered Bridge, constructed in 1889.



Of all the communities of religious women that took part in the City of Pittsburgh's St. Patrick's Day Parade in March, we were proud to have the most participants. Our group of 11 took the three-mile ride and hike through Downtown Pittsburgh on a beautiful sunny day and enjoyed seeing the tens of thousands of people who lined the streets. The sisters were able to share candy, prayer cards and *Meet a Sister, Be Inspired* rubber bracelets with the youngsters in the crowd.

Sister M. Virginelle Makos was named Employee of the Month for May 2016 at Holy Family Manor in Bethlehem, Pa., where she ministered as an activity aide before her present ministry at St. Francis Center for Renewal.



Sister Marie Therese Sherwood attended the Episcopal ordination of **Bishop James F. Checchio**, fifth bishop of the diocese of Metuchen, N.J., in May. "I was proud to represent the School Sisters of St. Francis and our presence in this diocese, as well as the Catholic Community of St. Matthias," sister said.



In June, **Sister Frances Marie Duncan** was awarded a *Bene Merenti* Award for 20 years of dedicated service to St. Peter's



Our 2016 Spring Festival was made possible by this...

Festival Success Reflects

When the sun rose on that Sunday morning in April, it was as if even the sky was excited about the School Sisters of St. Francis 2016 Spring Festival that would bring hustle and bustle to Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh later that day.

The weather set a beautiful backdrop for a lovely day when hundreds of patrons and family members came to eat and play with the sisters. The single biggest fundraiser of the sisters' year proved a huge success with wonderful prizes, delicious food and baked goods, fellowship and friendship.

Prep in Jersey City, N.J. Sister served at the all-boys school for a total of 20 years, teaching science and math, as assistant chair of the Science Department, and as liaison to the Prep Parents' Association, the National Honor Society and the Adult Ministry Team. Principal **Jim DeAngelo** stated that like St. Francis, Sister preaches not so much by what she says, but by the way she lives her life of service. The Prep Parents Association also presented Sister with a plaque and flowers in gratitude for her service to their sons. Both honors were bittersweet as Sister Frances left the school recently to become provincial minister in our community.

Moments in Our Community

The Spotlight



possible by this dedicated team of sisters and volunteers.

Reflects Collaborative Spirit

Thanks to all who came and made the day a success financially and spiritually. So very many had a hand in making the festival a resounding success that we couldn't even fit all of them into the wonderful photo above, which was taken on Festival Eve as sisters and volunteers gathered for a pizza party and social.

Many festival patrons stopped by the *Selfie with a Sister* booth for some fun photos. Whether it was just a shining smile or a silly get-up they were wearing, all of our sisters and their visitors had a blast!

In June, **Sister Lorita Kristufek** spoke at the Pittsburgh Diocesan Summer Institute for Teachers and Catechists held at Cardinal Wuerl North Catholic High School in Cranberry, Pa. More than 150 educators participated in the week-long institute.



Sister Adelina Garcia accompanied 11 young adults from San Angelo, Texas, to Krakow, Poland, in July for World Youth Day.



Sister Roselyn Kuzma had a wonderful encounter with the Network Lobby for Catholic Social Justice when the *Nuns on the Bus* visited in Erie, Pa., in July. She took part in a two-hour group discussion about living wages, including the challenges facing families where both parents work multiple jobs and single-parent families in which children must be left home alone. "It was truly eye opening on mending gaps in our society," Sister Roselyn says.



Through the *On Mission for The Church Alive!* initiative, **Bishop David Zubik** of the Pittsburgh Diocese invites all Catholics to envision how parishes, schools and ministries can best respond to changing communities and remain vital centers of worship and service. **Sister Pat Marie Buranosky** is among the religious sisters and lay ecclesial ministers invited to facilitate individual parish meetings where draft models of future parishes are presented. "It's a grace-filled experience," Sister says of her work with seven Pittsburgh-area parishes. The initiative runs into 2018.



The 18th annual Golf Outing to benefit Marian Hall Home and Mount Assisi Academy Preschool was blessed with good weather and dedicated patrons in August. "There is just such a wonderful sense of community spirit every year," says **Sister Marian Sgriccia**, who co-chairs the event. "The people who come are so loyal and have a good time even before the golfing begins." The event raised more than \$13,600 for the two ministries.



Several sisters took on new external ministry positions late this year:



Sisters Anita Kuchera and **Barbara DeStefano** are pastoral associates for Liturgy & Evangelization at the Catholic Community of St. Matthias in Somerset, N.J.

Sister Carol Ann Papp is teaching art to students in Grades K-8 at Northside Catholic School in Pittsburgh.



Sister Patricia Ann Mahoney is pastoral associate at St. Regis Parish in Pittsburgh's Oakland area. She is working to learn more Spanish to help serve the Latino parishioners who come there from many countries.



Sister Jeanne Marie Ulica headed to Rome in September to begin her ministry as councilor in the General Administration.



Our sisters celebrating major anniversaries in religious life were among the many women and men religious throughout the diocese honored during the Diocese of Pittsburgh's Jubilee Mass in September. Our community was represented by (from left) Sisters Patricia Ann Mahoney, Regina Ann Rokosny (60th), Lorita Kristufek, Virginia Rose Carroll (50th), Elaine Hromulak, Marietta Bankos (70th), Lois Jean DiFalco (60th), Bernadine Marie Stemnock (60th), Joyce Burkhart (60th), Frances Marie Duncan, Karen Buco and Rosaria Shina (65th).



Brian Steenbeke and Abram Smith take part in a tactile activity on the first day of the *Almost 3* program year in September.

Preschool expands its reach

The unique *Almost 3* program rolled out by our Mount Assisi Academy Preschool (MAAP) last spring doubled its enrollment for the 2016-2017 school year. Youngsters who aren't quite old enough to attend 3-year-old classes have a happy alternative in the *Almost 3* program, which introduces socialization and basic learning concepts while easing the children into the classroom atmosphere. The class meets two afternoons per week.

Established in 1980, the preschool continues to offer its traditional kindergarten-readiness programs for 3- and 4-year-olds. MAAP is located on the campus of Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh and occupies classrooms used by the former Mount Assisi Academy girls high school. Many children and grandchildren of Mount Assisi graduates have attended the preschool, and some current students are second-generation preschool families. To learn more, visit www.mtassisipreschool.org or call 412-761-0381.

Monocacy Farm Project

Continued from Page 7 volunteering, we welcome you. Contact **Sister Bonnie Marie Kleinschuster** at bkleinschuster@schoolsistersosf.org or 484-821-3167 or **Bob Drake**, project manager, at bdrake@schoolsistersosf.org or 646-384-9857. Any contribution helps to advance the project and ensure successful delivery of much-needed services.

Mail tax-deductible donations to **School Sisters of St. Francis, 395 Bridle Path Road, Bethlehem PA 18017**. Make checks payable to *School Sisters of St. Francis* and note "Farm Project" on the memo line.

Community Gardening

Community garden plots provide a "get your hands in the dirt" experience for area residents as well as for income-challenged families. Ambitious do-it-yourself gardeners tackle 6x25' plots on which they grow their own produce and/or flowers. The suggested donation of \$100 per season helps to offset operating expenses.

In support of the sisters' mission, some gardeners join other sponsors donating toward extra plots provided for needy families.

Educational Programs

Education is critical to truly impacting poverty and leading society toward responsible environmental stewardship. *Monocacy Farm Project* works hand-in-hand with St. Francis Center for Renewal to provide ongoing programs on how health, spirituality and wellness are interrelated and lead to development of the total person.

Demonstration Gardens designed to model sustainable practices show what can be done in your own backyard and afford hands-on experience for children and adults. For example, our Pizza Garden provides a fun way for families to plant and harvest vegetables and herbs used in making a pizza. The culminating activity – you guessed it – making and enjoying your own pizza onsite.



Sign of the Times

A principal component of the School Sisters of St. Francis' charism is to respond to the needs of the times. More than 100 years ago, our sisters came to the United States primarily to provide education to Slovak immigrants. Times change, and our sisters continue to adapt to the changing needs of the people they serve. Responding to a request for more Spanish-language religious education opportunities in San Angelo, Texas, **Sister Adelina Garcia** is offering formation classes in Spanish at the Franciscan Resource Center in San Angelo, Texas, twice a month. The focus is on scripture. There was much energy, enthusiasm and excitement among the 15 participants during the first session in September. To learn more about the Franciscan Resource Center, visit www.frscsanangelo.org.

our gracious donors

Please note that this listing only includes donations received between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016.

It is with deep gratitude that we acknowledge and thank you, our generous donors, for your contributions. Only with your help are we able to continue our ministries. Therefore, you share with us in spreading the Gospel and building up God's Kingdom. Thank you for your support, and may God continue to bless you.

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You Did It!

In early 2016, we appealed to our benefactors to help us make our Spring Festival the most successful ever by supporting our raffle ticket fundraiser, making cash donations, donating baked good and prizes, or spending time with us on the big day. With the overwhelming generosity of our families, friends, alumnae and benefactors, we raised more than \$54,000 for our ministries! We couldn't be more grateful that all of you helped us to reach our goal. We are truly blessed.

Below: Sister Barbara Ann Webster (center) hams it up with associates John and Ruth Gesselberty in the Selfie with a Sister booth at the 2016 Spring Festival.



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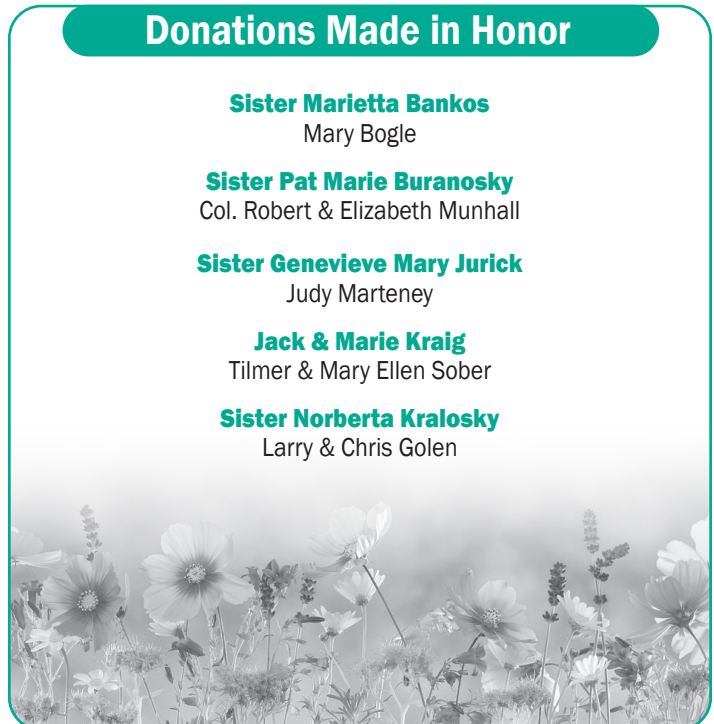
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Soup's On at Marian Hall!

The perennial Marian Hall Home soup sale at Mount Assisi Convent in Pittsburgh is back and better than ever with more soup varieties and an all-new menu of side dishes. The *Soups & Sides Sale* runs weekly through April 21, 2017. Each week, two soup varieties and one side dish are offered – each for \$5 per quart – with offerings repeating every six weeks.

Call **412-761-6004** to place your order by 12 p.m. each Thursday, and pick up your

order beginning at 1 p.m. on Friday. We highly recommend calling to verify the particular week of the cycle before placing your order. Proceeds benefit Marian Hall programs.

Due to holiday schedules, no sales will be conducted on November 25, 2016 (Thanksgiving), December 23, 2016 (Christmas), December 30, 2016 (New Year's) or April 14, 2017 (Easter).



Star Struck Gala Transports Patrons to New Orleans and, in 2017, India

St. Francis Center for Renewal's sixth annual Star Struck Gala & Silent Auction treated more than 200 guests to *A Taste of New Orleans* last spring with wonderful prizes and a giant silent auction.

Mullen Hall in Bethlehem, Pa., was transformed into the streets of New Orleans by night with ornate decorations in teal and purple hues. Patrons were treated to a flavorful meal of salmon, chicken, beef and sides, as well as delicious rum punch.

Sister Rene Parent, who was among the *Women of*

Strength award recipients, expressed humble gratitude in her acceptance speech. The event raised around \$30,000 for Renewal Center programs.

The 2017 Star Struck Gala will feature *The Splendor of India* on Saturday, May 6. A silent auction and the 2017 *Women of Strength* awards will highlight the evening.

Please visit www.stfrancisctr.org for more information about the 2017 Gala, as well as upcoming retreats and education programs.



Sisters Rene Parent and Marguerite Stewart enjoy the 2016 Gala.