



Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill
Volume 25, Number 1

Celebration

Sisters Mary Joseph and Mary Gertrude McElbinny stand at the threshold of Saint Michael Church, Greenville, Pennsylvania. The doors of Saint Michael Church were designated Holy Doors for the Jubilee Year of Mercy by Bishop Lawrence Persico of the Diocese of Erie. Passing through the doors is a symbolic profession of faith that Jesus Christ will strengthen our faith in Him in order to live the new life He has given us. In the spirit and charism of Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill stand ready to respond to Pope Francis' appeal to "Open wide the doors to Christ," through their compassionate and caring service to the People of God.



The Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill is an international, apostolic community of women religious, baptized in Christ, and vowed to continue the mission of His Church. In the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Elizabeth Seton, the congregation conceives its purpose to be an active ministry on behalf of the Kingdom. ✝ This service is: informed by Gospel values, responsive to the needs of a changing world, guided by the prudent use of available resources, respectful of human dignity, protective of human rights, devoted especially to the poor and oppressed, rooted in faith, animated by prayer, supported by the common life, and performed in humility, simplicity and charity.



Sister Colette Hanlon, Sister Susan Jenny, Sister Barbara Einloth
Sister Catherine Meinert (Provincial Superior), Sister Mary Norbert Long

Dear Friends,



Easter and Pentecost blessings to each of you—the feasts mark such a special time of year! Jesus has risen; the spirit descends! Regardless of when we celebrate, the fifty days of the Easter Season bring us the beauty of God’s gift of renewal of His creation!

As a community, we ask you to rejoice with us as we welcomed a talented and dedicated woman who began her journey with us as a postulant, the first step toward becoming a Sister of Charity, on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 2016.

In this issue of *Celebration* we wish to share with you an exciting new collaborative ministry for women at risk, one that combines community living and life skill development. This is the second new ministry that we have been able to initiate in the past three years. The first new ministry is the Elizabeth Seton Memory Care Center housed in a wing on the first floor of Caritas Christi, our motherhouse. We also are pleased to announce new possibilities for enhancing and expanding the intergenerational ministries offered through our Seton Center in Pittsburgh. It is due to your constant willingness to partner with us that we are able to serve those who are vulnerable among us. We thank you!

Also in this issue we added the heartwarming stories of two of our long-time friends and benefactors, one from Arizona and one from New England. We hope you enjoy their memories.

In February, our new provincial leadership team was elected, and it includes the five of us: Sister Catherine Meinert, Sister Mary Norbert Long, Sister Susan Jenny, Sister Barbara Einloth and Sister Colette Hanlon. We look forward to our installation day on May 22 and ask you to pray with and for us as we undertake the responsibilities assigned to us. Please know that your support and friendship sustain us as we undertake our leadership ministry. We are very grateful the many ways you support and care about all of the sisters.

As we rejoice in this beautiful time of year, we request your continuing assistance. We are able to serve the poor and vulnerable due to your generosity.

We ask God’s blessing upon each of you. Please do not hesitate to share your concerns with us or to let us know if and when you need additional prayers. We do pray and thank God for each of you daily. You are such great blessings to us.

In return, may God bless you!

Sister Catherine Meinert, S.C.
Provincial Superior
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McElhinny Sisters

REFLECTING GOD'S PRESENCE THROUGH LIVES OF SERVICE

by Jane Strittmatter,
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Sisters Mary Joseph and Mary Gertrude enjoy an afternoon stroll with Tippy in their new neighborhood, "The Colony" at St. Paul's near Greenville, Pennsylvania.

The new-fallen snow topping an icy glaze didn't stop the McElhinny sisters on the morning of January 4, 2016. It was the feast day of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. That morning started like every other day, with

Sister Mary Joseph taking Tippy, their 13 year-old pet dog, for his morning outing before she and Sister Mary Gertrude attended the 7:00 a.m. Mass. There was much to do that Monday. Sister Mary Gertrude wanted to visit with and take Holy Communion to Helen and Anna, two widowed shut-ins, who waited expectantly for her by the windows of their Greenville, Pennsylvania homes. The sisters had also planned a mid-morning prayer service to celebrate the feast day with the participants of "Michael's Mantle," the Parish Care and Concern group founded by Sister Mary Gertrude. The work of these volunteer ministers of mercy is marked with the legacy of Elizabeth Ann Seton. With Father David Foradori, Deacon Frank Luciani, and Sisters Mary Gertrude and Mary Joseph, they serve neighbors in need, day in and day out.

They say charity begins at home and so it did for the McElhinny sisters. Sisters Mary Gertrude and Mary Joseph learned the virtues of charity and compassion through a family life built on faith in God and service to one another. Two maternal aunts were Sisters of Charity—Sisters Miriam Joseph and Mary Peter Murphy. The family had its roots in the Lincoln Place neighborhood of Pittsburgh, and the children were taught by Sisters of Charity at Saint Mary Magdalene School. Their mother became blind at the

age of 32 from a tumor on her optic nerve and was never able to see three of her ten children. She was in her early 40s when she was accompanied by Sister Miriam Joseph, Sister Mary Peter, and Mother Mary Joseph Havey to Temple University, Philadelphia, for surgery. "She almost died one night," recalled Sister Mary Joseph. "Sister Miriam Joseph went out on the street and begged for blood for her. It was rough, but she came home."

Mamma and Pop (as the children lovingly referred to their parents) longed for a farm, and the children prayed with them each night to find one. In 1945, on the feast of Saint Joseph, they found a property in Mercer County, while they were on a hunting trip. "Pop ran through the grass to look at the house," explained Sister Mary Joseph. "He said, 'I think this is it! It has a good foundation and a good roof.'" Willow Run Farm, located near Hartstown and about 10 miles from Greenville, became the McElhinny homestead. Sister Mary Joseph was 15 and Sister Mary Gertrude was 16 when the family moved there. The girls lovingly cared for their mother and her younger children, even taking years off from school to do so. The boys helped their father with farm and family responsibilities, becoming expert carpenters.

Sister Mary Joseph knew at the age of five that she wanted to become a sister. She entered the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in 1950 from Saint Philip Parish, Linesville. She wrote home to her family that she was having such a good time—cleaning, and cleaning, and cleaning. "That's what you did when you entered," laughed Sister Mary Joseph. "The big college dining room, after every meal! Sister Deborah Kelly was in charge. Sister Miriam Fideles took us down there and turned us loose. We cleaned and set it up for breakfast." Although she was the elder sister, Sister Mary Gertrude had remained at home to help her parents. But when she read Sister Mary Joseph's letters, she thought that it sounded as if her sister was having a lot of fun. Sister Mary Gertrude decided to enter in 1951.

Like most Sisters of Charity, Sister Mary Gertrude's first ministry was teaching. She taught in schools of the Pittsburgh, Greensburg, and Altoona-Johnstown Dioceses, and served as principal at Our Lady of Mercy in Johnstown and Saint Bruno in Greensburg. It was in 1978, that Sister Mary Gertrude accepted a teaching position at Saint Michael School in Greenville. Her mother had died the year before, and with a teaching ministry close to Hartstown,



Sister Mary Gertrude, Father David Foradori, pastor of Saint Michael Church, and Sister Mary Gertrude celebrate Easter 2016. Saint Michael is a parish of 1300 families located in the Diocese of Erie.



The McElhinny family made their home at Willow Run Farm, Hartstown, Pennsylvania. Sister Mary Gertrude returned to the family homestead when she accepted ministry in Mercer County in 1978. Sister Mary Joseph joined her there in 2002. The home remained in the family when the sisters moved in 2015.



This photo was taken in New York in August 1951, one month before Sister Mary Gertrude entered the Sisters of Charity. Sister Mary Gertrude is on the far right.



Sisters Mary Joseph and Mary Gertrude visit with their mother at the homestead.

Anna Breitenbach looks forward to serving Sister Mary Gertrude coffee and a treat when she comes to visit. Anna is one of the many homebound parishioners that Sister visits on a regular basis.



she could live at her family homestead and look after her father. She taught until 1991, when she began to serve in parish ministry for Saint Michael Church and its mission church, Saint Margaret in nearby Jamestown.

At the onset of her parish ministry, Sister Mary Gertrude's main responsibility was to organize spiritual fellowship opportunities and amusements, such as bowling and dancing, for a seniors group, "The Young of Heart." These activities help to alleviate loneliness, which is characteristic of many older persons. When she became aware of the tremendous needs of the elderly, Sister Mary Gertrude realized that much more needed to be

done. She established the first Parish Care and Concern model for both the Diocese of Erie and the United States, naming it "Michael's Mantle." Under her leadership, 220 parishioners volunteered the very first year. Parishioners have remained committed to using their gifts to perform works of mercy and Michael's Mantle thrives to this day. Volunteers visit and pray for the sick and homebound, comfort the mourning, serve at food pantries, distribute clothing donations, correspond with college students away from home, and engage local college students at nearby Thiel College. Others serve as Eucharistic ministers who make regular visits to the hospital and nursing homes. A large number of parishioners volunteer to provide food for funeral luncheons and serve the luncheons. Sister Mary Gertrude is especially committed to the parish ministry to the grieving. She helps to plan the funeral liturgies and, along with Deacon Frank Luciani, she coordinates training opportunities for members of a parish bereavement group who help families deal with the death of a loved one.

Sister Mary Joseph likewise has an impressive ministry background in both Catholic education and service to senior citizens. She taught in elementary schools of the Pittsburgh Diocese before serving as principal of Our Lady of Perpetual

Help School in Scottsdale, Arizona. There she met Bil Keane, illustrator of *Family Circus*, a famous comic strip of the 60s and 70s. He presented her with a special personal keepsake from her time in Arizona—a framed, shellacked poster with his original sketches depicting Sister Mary Joseph performing her school responsibilities. When she returned to Pennsylvania, Sister Mary Joseph was the principal of Resurrection School in Pittsburgh. She then served as consultant for all elementary schools administered by the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill before devoting her service to senior citizens. From 1987 to 1997, Sister Mary Joseph was a consultant for the Adult Day Care Services, Friendly Visitors Program, and Ombudsman Services managed by the Sisters of Charity in Greensburg, and later served as the Executive Director of the Elizabeth Seton Senior Center, Pittsburgh, from 1988 to 2002. In 2002, Sister Mary Joseph moved to Hartstown to live at the homestead with Sister Mary Gertrude and give support to her parish ministry at Saint Michael Church and Saint Margaret Mission.

Life at the Hartstown homestead was fulfilling for the McElhinny sisters. They enjoyed a garden, fresh air, and were happy to hang clothes outdoors on

the clothesline. Sister Mary Joseph erected a greenhouse that was a gift for her 50 Year Jubilee as a Sister of Charity. Sister Mary Gertrude held Bible classes in a large room of the house. The sisters also enjoyed proximity to their home parish, and maintained friendships with parishioners of Saint Philip parish, including the Herrmann family, who frequently drove Sister Mary Joseph to church in Linesville.

In June 2014, Tom and Charlotte Herrmann welcomed into their home a sixteen year-old boy, John Mast, who had been shunned by his Amish family. Tom requested that John attend church with the family even though John felt bitter because of his dealings with the Amish church. John became friends with Sister Mary Joseph during their weekly trip to Mass each Saturday. When John chose to be baptized in the Catholic Faith in March of 2015, he asked Sister Mary Joseph to be

Sister Mary Joseph is a great support to Deacon Frank Luciani and Sister Mary Gertrude in their parish ministry work. Deacon Frank says "The McElhinny sisters exemplify the virtues of charity and mercy in our parish. They inspire parishioners to be the same. Sister Mary Gertrude provides educational opportunities so that volunteers will be able to serve others with excellence."



This September 10, 1953, clipping from the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* tells of a unique situation that Sister Mary Gertrude dealt with in her first experience as a teacher—two sets of twins with identical first and last names in a class of 74 students!



Sister Mary Joseph used her gifts to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens of the Dioceses of Greensburg and Pittsburgh from 1987 to 2002. This photo was taken in 1996 when she was the Executive Director of the Senior Program at Seton Center, Pittsburgh.

Sister Mary Joseph is the subject of this excerpt from a cartoon poster presented to her by artist Bil Keane, creator of *Family Circus* comic strip. The children of this famous cartoonist were students at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School, Scottsdale, Arizona. The treasured memento was signed by students, parents, and teachers of the school.



John Mast shares his joy in being received into full communion of the Catholic Church with Sisters Mary Gertrude and Mary Joseph. Sister Mary Joseph was John's sponsor for Baptism and Confirmation.



his sponsor. Sister Mary Joseph also served as his Confirmation sponsor in May 2015. When he petitioned Bishop Lawrence Persico for the sacrament of Confirmation, John wrote: "I have known Sister Mary Joseph for a short time but in that time, she has become a friend as well as someone who set an example through her life's commitment to the Catholic Faith. She has spent a lifetime teaching and guiding young people to the open arms of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am very blessed to know Sister Mary Joseph."

After two harsh winters, Sisters Mary Gertrude and Mary Joseph decided that it was time to move from their homestead to be closer to Saint Michael Church. During the summer of 2015, they packed their belongings, their memories, and Tippy, and moved to a small home located in an independent living area for seniors called The Colony, part of St. Paul's Continuing Care Community, Greenville. St. Paul's is non-denominational senior citizen facility that provides a nurturing environment for adults in every phase of senior life including independent living, assisted living, and specialized nursing facilities. The sisters were quick to become acquainted with residents, volunteers, staff, and administrators in every sector of the St. Paul's Community. Everyone at St. Paul's welcomes visits from the sisters who are quick to offer prayer, comfort, and laughter to each person they encounter.

Sister Mary Gertrude and Sister Mary Joseph ended the feast day of Elizabeth Ann Seton on January 4 with a visit to the new Jones Serenity Circle, a secured neighborhood for individuals with dementia in the St. Paul's

Community. Like Helen and Anna, whom Sister Gertrude visited earlier that morning, the faces of the residents of Serenity Circle beamed as the sisters entered their building. The sisters gave loving attention to the residents and praised the caregivers for their devoted labor of love.

Compelled by the love of Christ, the McElhinny sisters have infused the charisma of the Sisters of Charity in parishes and neighborhoods of Mercer County, their home-place. And the legacy of Elizabeth Ann Seton has been passed on to many volunteers, friends, and neighbors who model the sisters' lives of compassion and care, guiding people to the open arms of Jesus Christ. Every day is like the feast of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton wherever Sister Mary Gertrude and Sister Mary Joseph make their home. Like Elizabeth, all that they do arises from their desire to reflect God's presence to the world.



Patti Arensberg, Life Enrichment Specialist at Serenity Place, welcomes an afternoon visit from the McElhinny sisters.

Tippy has enjoyed meeting new neighbors at The Colony at St. Paul's. He and Sister Mary Joseph often visit with neighbor Judy Crothers. Judy and Tippy have become good friends.



SHU Sisters

EMPOWERING OTHERS TO BE AGENTS OF EXCELLENCE

by Sister Susan Jenny

One's an artist, one's a scientist, and the two of them are Sisters of Charity currently serving at Seton Hill University. Their paths to both the community and ministry are different, yet evidence many similarities.



Sister Susan Yochum is currently the acting provost of Seton Hill University. A dedicated educator, she continues to teach one class each semester. Sister Susan sported a hard hat during the early construction phase of the new JoAnne Woodward Boyle Health Sciences Center at Seton Hill University. "I really earned my hard hat during the construction of that building!"



Sister Susan Marie Yochum first met the Sisters when, as a high school student, she picked up a brochure for Seton Hill College.

Seeing a picture of a stable or barn on the booklet made her think that she and her horse could be happy in the bucolic country setting pictured there. So she applied, and thus began her studies and her journey with the Sisters of Charity. Sister Susan said that her chemistry teachers at Seton Hill had a profound influence on her; each was very different, yet each touched her in personal and professional ways. Sisters Mary Leon Bettwy, Miriam Grace Solomon, and Mary Ann Winters guided her through



her studies and ultimately to the community. During her five years of teaching high school, Sister Susan earned a master's degree in chemistry from Duquesne University and in 1985 returned to Seton Hill to teach chemistry in the footsteps of her mentors. After six years on the faculty, Sister Susan returned to graduate school to earn a Ph.D.

Sister Mary Kay Neff knew the sisters who had taught her at Bishop Guilfoyle High School in Altoona, but didn't think much about religious life until she met another Sister of Charity while she was studying art at Penn State University.



Sister Mary Janice Grindle reminded her again of the Sisters, and shortly before graduating with her degree in fine arts, she applied to enter the community. After her novitiate, she worked with the public relations office at Seton Hill, preparing materials that used her skills as a graphic designer. From that experience, she went on to complete her MFA from Rochester Institute of Technology and to her current position in the art program at the university.

At Seton Hill University, both sisters currently serve expanding student populations, as interest in both the sciences and the arts grow. Sister Susan attributes the growth to a shift in priorities since 2008, when the US financial picture changed dramatically. While students are

still grounded in liberal arts at SHU, they now look more pragmatically at careers. Health sciences and technology are appealing to today's young adults. Thus the growth in both sisters' areas of teaching. And because of this growth, the campus—hilltop and in town—boast two new state-of-the-art facilities.

Sister Mary Kay remembers days when the art department studios were located in the basement level of several buildings on campus. Now she teaches in a spacious, light-filled contemporary structure located at the foot of the hill in the city of Greensburg. "One of our strengths is that, from the outset, our graphic design



Above: Sister Mary Kay Neff admires an art student's work in progress at the new Visual Arts Center.

program embraced the use of technology. That allows our students' creative expression to utilize the latest tools and prepares them to meet the demands of today's marketplace." In addition, Sister Mary Kay believes that positioning the arts programs—visual, musical, theater and dance—in town helps create an engagement with the community that was never as vital when both performing and visual programs stayed hidden on the hilltop. "The arts need to be experienced, to be seen," and that's what happens when passers-by watch the students' creative processes on display through the glass facade of the Visual Arts Center.

Sister Susan is currently serving as the acting provost of the university, but she still keeps her mind and heart engaged in her passion for students by teaching a class each semester. "Truthfully, I've had a significant amount of administrative experience, serving as chair of the division of natural and health sciences for eighteen years. I am grateful for that formative experience to now work with the entire faculty and our academic programs." Under her guidance, another building was just opened. The Joanne Woodyard Boyle Health Sciences Center now houses programs that engage nearly one-third

of Seton Hill students. Said Sister Susan, "I really earned my hard hat during the construction of that building!" As the division chair when the structure was envisioned, she became the contact person and faculty liaison with the architects, contractors, construction workers and all the teams who worked on the structure. Its exterior beauty is matched by laboratories fully equipped for students who will prepare for their careers in the health sciences well into the future.

"What is your passion now?" To this question, Sister Mary Kay replied on two levels. She is the faculty coordinator of the Seton Arts Program which brings student "scholars" into an experience with children whose schools or communities do not offer them much exposure to the arts or the creative process. SHU students studying the arts—visual, theatrical, and musical—are guided by Sister Mary Kay to provide an integrated program in several underserved communities. "Art majors looking toward a career in art therapy are especially interested in gaining experience in a community-based art program with these children. A real bond grows between the young collegians and their students. They have the opportunity to use

Below: Sister Susan Yochum and Sister Victoria Marie Gribshaw present information about Seton Hill University to guests who visited Caritas Christi for the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Canonization of Elizabeth Ann Seton in September 2015.



Sister Susan was the faculty liaison with the architects, contractors, and construction teams who worked on the new JoAnne Woodyard Boyle Health Sciences Center.



Sister Susan takes time to go over her agenda for the day with Pam Merlino, her administrative assistant.





Above: The new Visual Arts Center of Seton Hill University is located on the corner of Otterbein Street and College Avenue in downtown Greensburg. Photo courtesy of designLAB architects—Jonathan Hillyer, photographer.

Below: Carol Johnson, Sister Kathleen McGrady, Glenn Johnson, and Sister Mary Kay Neff stand in recognition of applause from the parents and students who participated in the 2015 Seton Arts Service Corps Summer Camp. Carol and Glenn Johnson are benefactors of Seton Arts.

creative approaches to engage the creativity of the children.” She notes that this is naturally part of the tradition of the Sisters of Charity to serve where there are unmet needs, as well as to teach the fine arts.

For herself as a practicing designer and artist, Sister Mary Kay’s interest in alternative process photography keeps her pushing the boundaries of her highly skilled use of her camera. She is currently working to publish an e-book on the topic. And her photography continues to take awards in exhibits. “It helps me be a better teacher when I keep myself active as a practitioner of what I teach.”

Sister Susan’s passion is continuing in the footsteps of her mentors. “They stressed quality and rigor. These were both academic and personal disciplines. Right now, I want

to serve the students and the institution—whether as faculty member or administrator—with the kind of influence I believe the Sisters had on me.” She encourages experimentation, and seeks to empower her students and her colleagues to become agents of excellence. She spontaneously quotes Saint Elizabeth Seton as she speaks about the mission of the Sisters and of the university that bears their name. “I wish to fit our students for the world in which they are destined to live.”

Both of these sisters continue the legacy of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. The college/university was one of the earliest ministries of the community, and it continues today strong and vital, alive with the Setonian spirit and mission.



Above: Seton Arts Scholar Savannah Burch enjoys the creativity and enthusiasm of students attending Seton Arts at Sister Thea Bowman Academy, Wilkinsburg, PA.

Left: Sister Mary Kay works with Summer Arts Camp students.

Hyeon lights a candle to begin the prayer service for her reception into the postulancy of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill.



Sisters of Charity receive new postulant



In a simple but warm celebration, Hyeon Nyeon Lee was formally received into the postulancy of the Sisters of Charity on March 19, 2016.



As she presents a cross to Hyeon, Sister Catherine Meinert says, “As you continue your journey of faith with and among us, receive this cross, the sign of our life in Jesus Christ. We welcome you as a postulant in our congregation”

Sisters gathered in the Caritas Christi chapel to pray with and for Hyeon, whose journey from Korea has extended for nearly two years. That evening, she received a small cross and was presented with two books: the Constitutions and the Spirituality document which express the rule and spirit of the community. The celebration continued at a reception where warm hugs and personal greetings, gifts and refreshments extended the festivities.

Previous to her formal entrance into community, Hyeon had completed an affiliation period of directed prayer and study with



Sister Catherine Meinert, Provincial Superior of the Sisters of Charity United States Province, and new postulant, Hyeon Lee.

the Sisters, learning about the life of the community for ten months in Korea and another three in the United States. As an affiliate, Hyeon maintained her own lifestyle and commitments as she explored her vocational call. In Korea she taught university students and volunteered at a shelter for abused women and runaway girls. At the same time, she joined with sisters in the Korean Province for prayer, retreats, celebrations and experiences of community life. After arriving in the United States in December, she lived with the sisters in community and ministered at the

motherhouse, primarily working with the elders to assist them and to hear their stories about religious life and ministry. This time confirmed her desire to move toward full membership in the community.

A postulant makes a commitment to live in a Sisters of Charity local community, allowing her to engage in active ministry and to experience the daily life of a Sister of Charity. She is introduced to some of the basic elements of religious life through prayer and study, but primarily she imbibes the spirit of the community through her interaction with the sisters themselves. This first step toward full membership in the congregation typically lasts one year.

Prior to coming to the Sisters of Charity, Hyeon studied in Korea, in France, and in the United States, receiving both a B.A. and an M.A. in French. She also holds an M.A. in psychology from Ball State University in Indiana, and a Ph.D. in psychology from Brandeis University. After finishing her studies, she returned to Duksung Women's University in Seoul, South Korea, where she was on the faculty of the psychology department.

Her faith journey has been a rich experience for Hyeon, who is especially grateful for her experience at a parish in Boston while she was studying there. She became very engaged with the choir and with a prayer group to which she belonged, and celebrated the sacrament of Confirmation within that parish faith community. From that time on, she has been on a quest for where God's plans were leading. At this point, Hyeon senses that a life of prayer and service with the Sisters of Charity will provide the context for her life's journey.



Mary House opens possibilities

by Sister Barbara Einloth

“Collaboration,” “systemic change” and “serving vulnerable populations” have found their way into our vocabulary as we Sisters of Charity consider and carry out our mission “to serve the person of Jesus Christ” wherever we encounter Him in other persons. An illustration may make those “heady” words concrete and personal.



Sisters Jean Augustine and Annette Frey have joyfully taken on a new ministry for women at risk in Connellsville, Pennsylvania, called Mary House.

Mary House opened in February, in the former St. Mary (Nativity) Convent in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. It is a residence for women who are homeless, of limited means, and who need transitional housing with assistance to become independent. Five women of various ages and backgrounds quickly joined Sister Annette Frey and Sister Jean Augustine to begin this experiment in housing-in-community. The sisters certainly have experience in the benefits and challenges of living with others, sharing the work but also sharing lives, giving and receiving support in the day-to-day, and pooling resources so the available money goes farther. They hope to share that experience—and other expertise—with the women of Mary House so that, as each woman develops specific goals and objectives over a two year period, these will enable her to become independent and equipped to make it on her own.

Clearly communal living requires collaboration. But Mary House is also the result of several years of collaboration with the



It took a planning phase of two and one half years before Sisters Annette and Jean were able to welcome women in need of transitional housing to Mary House.

Saint Vincent de Paul Society, Uniontown Conference. It was Roy Sarver and Jim Schucolsky who approached our province with the concept: invite women living on the edge to gather with a few sisters and, together, gain the skills and set aside the money to then move on to another sustainable living situation. Through two and a half years of meetings, project design, legal and leasing work, insurance securing, and clarification of expectations and procedures, the collaboration has become a reality. Each organization makes contributions and assures that we continue to work together with the residents toward a goal of independence.

Joining with partners extends and strengthens ministry outreach. Serving persons in vulnerable populations with dignity and respect translates into action the familiar words of Jesus, "Whatever you did to them, you did to Me." And working to address the causes of poverty and homelessness so that a long-term improvement is

possible, one woman at a time, is "systemic change" in process. Contemporary "catch words" take on new meaning in the long Vincentian-Setonian tradition of working with those in need to bring new light and life to their experience.



Above: Sister Jean prepares a meal for the women who live at Mary House. Residents will share responsibilities in this safe community living environment. The goal is to help the residents to learn skills and take advantage of support services in order for them to be able to live independently.

Below: Sister Annette opens a "Door of Mercy" at Mary House.



Serving persons in vulnerable populations with dignity and respect translates into action the familiar words of Jesus, "Whatever you did to them, you did to Me." And working to address the causes of poverty and homelessness so that a long-term improvement is possible, one woman at a time, is "systemic change" in process.

Ask the Animals

by Mary Frederick, Ph.D.

Mary Frederick is known to Seton Hill alumnae as a beloved physical education teacher. She spent her retirement years living in New England. Mary presently resides at Elizabeth Seton Memory Care Center where she pulled up her earlier memories and wrote this essay.



Above: Mary and her "hearing dog," Sheba.

Below: Sister Mary Norbert Long visits with Mary in her bedroom at the Elizabeth Seton Memory Care Center.

"But now ask the animals to teach you and the birds of the air to tell you or the reptiles on earth to instruct you and the fish of the sea to inform you. Which of these does not know that the hand of God has done this? In his hand is the soul of every living being and the breath of all mankind." Job 12: 7 – 10

What a beautiful tribute to the hand of God's creation. I especially would like to write this article to honor dogs. They perform so beautifully with their keen sense of vision to assist in police work, and their sense of smell to find victims in war zones, and in the aftermath of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes.



After seven years of teaching at Seton Hill University, I was granted a sabbatical leave. I was granted a year to join six Sisters of Charity in Gangjin, Jeollanam do, South Korea, as a physical education teacher during the 1965-1966 school year. When I arrived, I found no fields to teach field hockey, soccer, or basketball. The ground in front

of the high school was full of ruts and holes and needed immediate attention.

The Sisters came to my aid. They hired about 25 men to go to the seashore and carry sand on their backs—about five miles as the crow flies. They carried the sand on their backs with a thing called a ji-ge. To carry this contraption, the men had to put each arm over their shoulder and carry the sand to the field where it was dumped on the future fields. Now, the sand had to be leveled so big tree stumps were dragged with ropes around each section of the field.

Next, I was hoping for a construction roller, but there wasn't any such thing in existence. Believe it or not, I was awakened one Saturday morning with singing. I looked out the window and found about 100 girls singing a Korean song, stamping their feet to the ground

and packing the sand with their feet. They stayed until late afternoon, still singing a stamping song. I had a beautiful soccer field! Now, I was ready to start teaching.



In the middle of a cold January, I developed a very serious ear infection. Without any doctors or medicine, I went to bed. I remember I was looking at the ceiling above me—it was spinning like a top! Later I learned it was a middle ear infection complicated by vertigo. Over these many past years, now at the age of 87—even with a hearing aid—I struggle to hear sounds.

It was when I went back to my teaching positions at Seton Hill, that I learned about “hearing dogs.” Deafness is an invisible handicap, different from a noticeable handicap such as blindness. But special dogs can be trained to assist those with severe hearing loss.

All sorts of dogs can become hearing dogs. Some are even found in dog shelters. These [dogs] have often been abandoned by their owners. The basic requirements for “hearing ear dogs” are for the dog to have a people-oriented personality, intelligence, curiosity, and a high sensitivity to sounds. These dogs come in all sizes and shapes.

It helps to be acquainted with the breed. I was acquainted with the German Shepherd breed. The dogs are trained to respond to sounds—alarm clocks, door knocks, telephone rings, smoke alarms, and any other sounds that may occur. Some dogs are even trained to respond to babies cries. When they hear the sound, they immediately go to the sound and get the attention of their owners.

When I applied for a hearing dog and training with the dog, I went to Tully Mountain Facility in Massachusetts for two weeks to get acquainted with and bond with



Mary enjoyed her days at Seton Hill as a physical education instructor.

the dog. Sheba not only helped me with my hearing problems, but naturally added security and companionship in my daily living.

Like “Seeing Eye” dogs, she wore an orange collar and was permitted in all public facilities with me. God has certainly given some dogs the beautiful gift of helping individuals with their hearing and seeing problems. In thanksgiving, I taught all my dogs to pray.

“Sheba, it’s time to pray.” She would come to the chair and put her front paws on the chair. “Now, Sheba, put your head down. Glory be to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.”

Then Sheba received her earned treat. I often pray in thanksgiving for the gifts God has given to those with disabilities. Their wonderful pets are able to help them in their hearing or seeing problems. Read for yourself the Book of Job, “Ask the animals and they will teach you what the hand of God has given them.”

Good News about Seton Center

by Julia Trimarchi Cuccaro, Esq.
Director of Development for the Sisters of Charity

The Seton Center is pleased to announce that it has been selected to participate in the American Institute of Architects 1+ Pro Bono Program. The program connects nonprofit organizations with interested architects who assist the nonprofit with pro bono architect and design services.

After going through a selection and interview process with several interested architectural firms, the Seton Center has partnered with Inscape Publico in Washington, DC, headed by architect Gregory Kearley. Together the two organizations have begun a site inventory of the building and lot at the Seton Center in Brookline, located in the south hills of Pittsburgh. Additionally, they have conducted an envisioning gathering for future programming with all stakeholders, including parents, students, faculty, care givers, board members and community leaders. At the envisioning gathering, Sister Barbara Ann Boss, SC, the Executive Director of the Seton Center stated “We gather today to begin considering how to improve our programs



Sister Barbara Ann Boss visits the playground at Seton Child Care Center. Space on the property was used very creatively to make a safe haven for the children to enjoy playtime outdoors.



and facilities for future generations. The two go hand in hand.”

The Seton Center in Brookline operates the only intergenerational day care center in Pennsylvania, providing day care services to individuals from six weeks old to 97 years old. The center is situated on real estate that is owned by the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. From the 1940s until the late 1970s, it



Above: Architect Gregory Kearly of Inscape Publico, Washington DC

Left: Sister Barbara is proud to have a fantastic staff which includes her sister, Judy Gawlas, who is Coordinator of Senior Services at the Adult Day Services Center in Brookline.

was the site of the former Elizabeth Seton High School. In 1986, the sisters incorporated the Seton Center and opened a child care center, and eventually, a senior center, and an adult day care center in the school’s

Below: Sister Barb stops in a classroom for a late afternoon visit with a group of happy caregivers and children who are enjoying a healthy snack of organic carrots.



buildings. Today, Seton Center serves approximately 200 people daily, rain or shine, at three facilities: its flagship center in Brookline; a senior day services facility at the Monahan Center, adjacent to Caritas Christi in Greensburg; and a senior center in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Overbrook.

As Sister Barbara said in her inspiring address at the Citizens of the World Wellness Conference in Greensburg last May, “We feel our center in Brookline, that serves individuals of all ages, is the best way to build community in our complex world. The elderly and the very young have a lot to offer each other, and soon we hope to enhance and grow our intergenerational learning programs.”

In the last several years, as the Seton Center’s reputation for exceptional care and innovative programs has grown throughout our region, the center has had many requests to accommodate more people, particularly in adult day care. However, to do so, Sister Barb acknowledges that her team must re-think its programming offerings and take a careful look at the design of the Brookline facility.

“We can think of many improvements we’d like to have”, said Sister Barb, “but one of our main concerns is to preserve the historic character of the old school building. I attended Elizabeth Seton High School, and it’s a beautiful building that you couldn’t build today even if you wanted to. Luckily it’s very well built, so we can do a lot with it and still maintain its beauty.”

Sister Catherine Meinert, Provincial Superior of the Sisters of Charity, United States Province, recently stated, “The Seton Center has provided exceptional and caring service for decades. We are especially delighted that the Pennsylvania Keystone STARS Program, which is an initiative of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning, has recently awarded the Seton Center’s child care program a STAR 4, its highest level! The mission of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill has always been to help those in need. This is certainly true of



Sister Barb sits for an evening chat with a woman who waits for her caregiver to pick her up and take her home. Days are long at Seton Center but always happy.

the Seton Center and its ministries. I am pleased that the center is planning to upgrade the facility in Brookline, and we thank the staff and architects at Inscape Publico for their commitment to this project.”

To learn more about this project or to arrange a tour of the Seton Center, please contact Sister Barb directly at the Seton Center, 412-561-8400, or Julia Cuccaro at jcuccaro@scsh.org or 724-221-0716.

Thanks for the Memories!



In spite of wind, rain, snow, and even a brief power outage, the 8th Annual Sounds of Charity was a huge success. The memorable evening began with hors d’oeuvres, cocktails, and mood music provided by pianist Karen Martin. Couples took to the dance floor and kicked up their heels to the robust sound of the

Wally Gingers Orchestra. The Sisters of Charity enjoyed catching up with old friends and making many new friends.

Kudos to Sister Louise Grundish, Terri Murphy, Julia Trimarchi Cuccaro, and the entire committee who planned this spirited event.

With sincere gratitude, we thank our sponsors, donors to the basket raffle and silent auction, and our guests for their support of the Sounds of Charity, which has become one of Greensburg’s most popular social gatherings. Proceeds from the event benefit the mission and ministries of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. You make our Vision of Charity a reality. Thank you for helping us serve.





6.30.2015

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL MESSINGER, SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA

by Julia Trimarchi Cuccaro, Esq., Director of Development for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

This is the third in a series of Celebration interviews that applaud the remarkable accomplishments of some of our friends, contributors, partners, and volunteers. These are people who in some way demonstrate a great appreciation for their communities and the mission of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. This interview is with Paul R. Messinger of Scottsdale, Arizona, the founder and Chairman of the Board of Messinger Mortuaries, the largest independent mortuary business in central Arizona. Paul is also the author of a fascinating book that features a collection of historic photographs and articles about the history of Scottsdale that he wrote over the years for the Arizona Republic, entitled "The Reminiscences of Paul R. Messinger, Scottsdale Memories." Paul and his wife Cora are members of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Scottsdale. Many of our sisters have worked and taught at that parish for years. Last fall, I spoke with the Messingers at the church where we attended a meeting of the OLPH Men's Club and listened to Brian O'Donnell's talk on the history of the Saint Vincent DePaul Society in Arizona.

Q: Is there some ingredient in your background that caused you to become such a successful businessman and community supporter in Scottsdale, Arizona?

A: Well, my Dad helped me a lot. He was a successful lawyer and rancher here in Scottsdale. It wasn't a big town then, less than 1000 people. Now it's got 250,000 people. Growing up we had 50 head of cattle, and my mother owned 2000 laying hens. Dad's law firm is still in existence to this day. We all worked very hard and saved our money. I was in college at Arizona State in the late 1940s studying engineering, but my Dad felt I needed to do something more future-oriented. So he introduced me to several funeral directors. One was Bill Murphy. He was a Catholic funeral director in Phoenix. He helped me find a mortuary school in San Francisco, and then he got me a summer job in the Catholic mortuary in Mesa. Now, after all these years, Messinger Mortuaries is the largest, independent mortuary company in Arizona. We do about 2200 funerals a year, we have three cemeteries, and two crematories. We've been successful because my family taught me to live simply and to save. We've always plowed back most of our profits into the business.

Q: That is an impressive record! How did you go about financing the business when you were starting out?

A: I went over to First Federal. We worked out a twenty-year financing term at 4.5%, but the lenders said I would have to build a house with the mortuary attached. So that's what we did. That was our first house over on Indian School Road. It's still there.

Q: Yes, I noticed it the first time I visited with the Sisters! It's lovely. I took refuge from the hot sun one afternoon when I was going across the big field across from the church. The porch was nice and shady! How large was the mortuary?

A: The house was 1200 square feet and the funeral home was 5500 square feet. We borrowed \$12,000 for the house and \$120,000 for the mortuary. We paid it all off in twenty years.

Q: What did you do after that?

A: We just grew and grew. You see, central Arizona has doubled in population every fifteen years since we started out. That's a lot of people who need services. I'm very proud of the ESOP plan we started twenty seven years ago. Now we have about 68 employees who own stock in the company, including our two sons. We've always been very charitable with our customers. I've always found a way to work with people if they can't afford a funeral.

Q: The land where you grew up? Is it part of what is now Our Lady of Perpetual Help?

A: It most certainly is. Dad sold that land to Father McGuire who was a great man. I've never known anyone like him.

Q: The entire parcel?

A: No, the south ten acres. It's a funny story if you have time to listen.

Q: I'd love to hear it.

A: Well, Dad wanted \$60,000 for the ten. Father said no. He already owned ten acres on Indian School, and he told my Dad he only paid \$3000 an acre for it. But Dad said, yes, but half of it is in the wash. Eventually, the Bishop and a few others got involved. In those days, the Bishop was in Tucson, and they worked it out at Dad's price. Years later, Father walked over and knocked on Dad's door and told him he owed Dad an apology. Dad was surprised. Turns out Father had sold 10,000 square feet for \$35,000!

Q: Incredible. You know, being from an area like Western Pennsylvania, where rural land values have remained relatively stagnant, Central Arizona is just amazing.

Tell me more about Father McGuire.

A: He was one of a kind. He came from a farming family, and in many ways, he ran the parish like a farm. He lived his Church during the day and irrigated at night. He allowed people from all faiths to come and worship. He was ahead of his time.

Q: Who would you name as being one of the most influential religious or spiritual person in your life?

A: Oh, I'd have to say Father McGuire. I think Cora would agree too. Cora converted to Catholicism in 1964, and I converted in 1989. We really admired him.

Q: I believe you served in the Arizona state legislature, didn't you?

A: Yes, I served three terms. I've also been Vice Mayor here and was on city council.

Q: Is there any work during those years you are particularly proud of?

A: Cora and I both worked hard on the Right to Work laws. And, I'd have to say the Ground Water Act of 1980. I was a co-signer on that bill.

Q: Yes, the lakes and dams are something to see when you fly into Phoenix. The growth here in Arizona is really impressive relative to the water supply.

A: You know all seven lakes you see are filled with surface water now. A lot of people don't know it, and it was part of that legislation.

Q: You have some famous politicians and judges from central Arizona, not the least of whom was the first woman on the United States Supreme Court, Sandra Day O'Connor. Did you ever work with her?

A: Yes, I had the privilege to work with her on several occasions. I was on the state mortuary board, and she had to have a hearing with us, and she wanted to have it on a Friday over in her part of the state, near Duncan, close to the New Mexico border. When we got there, the meeting room wasn't ready, so Sandra got on the phone. The Days were a prominent family you know—well respected. She called over to a local bar, and they let us in. But, we had to be done by 1:00 p.m., before the bar opened for customers. When she was confirmed by the U.S. Senate, I wrote her a letter of congratulations. I said you are probably the only person on the Court who ever conducted official business in a saloon!

Q: Only in the Wild West! As a man born and bred in the Sonoran Desert, could you tell me how this part of the world has affected your philosophy on life?

A: Well, it's the way we were raised. Growing up we worked hard. We got up at 4:30 in the morning to take care of the animals. We didn't do it for the money. It was our responsibility. And we loved it. We've loved our business. We've had a lot of fun in our lives. We've lived simply and never took a big salary. We aren't big spenders. We love to travel and have been all over the world. We never took a vacation just to sit around. We wanted to learn something. You know Cora's family left Oklahoma during the dustbowl and headed west. They stopped here. They picked cotton, and her babysitter was a red mule. Cora was five years old. Her parents would keep her on that mule all day. You know if you fall off a horse, it'll run, but if you fall off a mule, it'll stop. Then her parents would put her back on. That's how it was here. We met at Scottsdale High School and were married Thanksgiving Day 1950, and we've had a good life.



Cora and Paul Messinger

Photo courtesy of Julia Trimarchi Cuccaro, Esq.,

Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

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The earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone.

—Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

Upcoming Events

April-May 2016 SUMMER CASH RAFFLE TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE	May 6, 2016 2ND ANNUAL CITIZENS OF THE WORLD WELLNESS CONFERENCE	July 9, 2016 JUBILEE CELEBRATION	July-August 2016 BACK TO SCHOOL CASH RAFFLE TICKET AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE	September 17, 2016 WALK FOR PEACE SISTERS OF CHARITY COMPLEX
DePaul Center Greensburg	Caritas Christi Greensburg	Caritas Christi Greensburg	DePaul Center Greensburg	Caritas Christi Greensburg
8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	8:30 a.m.-3:45 p.m.		8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.	

For details about upcoming events, call 724-836-0406 or visit us online at www.scsh.org. Visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/scsh.us.