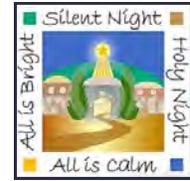
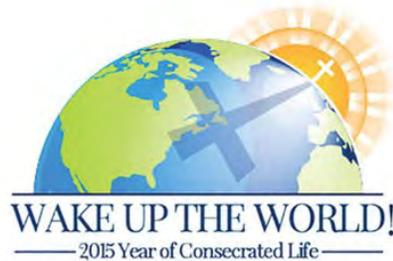




# Missionary Franciscan Sisters USA Circle Newsletter



Winter Edition 2014



Sunday, November 30<sup>th</sup> marked the beginning of the Year of Consecrated Life. In her Testament St. Clare wrote: *“Among the other gifts that we have received and continue to receive from our magnanimous God and for which we must express the deepest thanks, there is our vocation.”*

In the following excerpt from his letter of November 21<sup>st</sup>, Pope Francis poses several thought provoking questions for us to consider.

“Dear Brothers and Sisters in consecrated life ...The Year of Consecrated Life challenges us to examine our fidelity to the mission entrusted to us. Are our ministries, our works and our presence consonant with what the Spirit asked of our founders and foundresses? Are they suitable for carrying out today, in society and the Church, those same ministries and works? Do we have the same passion for our people, are we close to them to the point of sharing in their joys and sorrows, thus truly understanding their needs and helping to respond to them? “The same generosity and self-sacrifice which guided your founders” – Saint John Paul II once said – “must now inspire you, their spiritual children, to keep alive the charisms which, by the power of the same Spirit who awakened them, are constantly being enriched and adapted, while losing none of their unique character. It is up to you to place those charisms at the service of the Church and to work for the coming of Christ’s Kingdom in its fullness”.[1] (From the Vatican, 21 November 2014, Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

As we ponder the words of Pope Francis, we pray that this year will be filled with blessings for consecrated women and men throughout the world and that our Gospel way of life may keep the charism of Francis, Clare and Elizabeth Hayes alive.

## *A Time for Many Changes at the Italian Home*

~ *Sr. Margaret Therese Yennock*

Mr. Chris Small, who was Executive Director of the Italian Home for Children, retired from the home in May 2014. For 35 years Chris and I worked together and during that time I was in my "comfort zone." When we put our heads together, many new positions opened up for me. I am the keeper of the Archives and the "go-to" person for former clients seeking information about their residency at the Italian Home. A client request form needs to be filled out and notarized. When I receive this form I can then send the individual his/her requested information.



When the Home was founded it was a Catholic institution. Twenty-five years ago it became "Christian," as we invited members from the Pentecostal, Baptist, and non-denominational churches who came for Bible classes and Sunday services. Now that we have a new CEO, Imari Jeffries, our chapel is becoming ecumenical and will be a prayer space honoring all religions.

Because of Imari Jeffries's interest in the history of the Italian Home, the walls of the conference room and the hallway of the administration building display so many pictures which feature our Franciscan sisters. It's a joy to walk through the corridor or to sit in the conference room and have Sr. Joan of Arc, Sr. Leopold, Sr. Ida Marie, Sr. Janet Roddy, and many, many more sisters smiling at us.



Sr. Leopold

I am very proud to say that the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception have been part of the Home for 95 years!



Srs. Maura, Carmel, Terentia, Donna and Pauline

~ Stay tuned, folks, there are more changes on the way!



## *Where in the World is Merrimack Valley?*

*~ Sr. Suzanne Fondini*

Where in the world is the Merrimack Valley? What's it like?  
Who are its people? And why am I here?

The Merrimack Valley is about 35 miles northeast of Newton, Massachusetts. In fact, from where I am in Methuen, I only need to take a few steps and I can cross the border into the beautiful state of New Hampshire!

Methuen is an urban area. It once was very industrial with several mills and factories that gave work to the new immigrants. While the mills have closed, it has remained home to many immigrants from various countries of the world. Thus, our school, St. Monica Elementary School, is situated in the midst of the hustle and bustle of life, activity and joy!

St. Monica School was built in 1958, staffed by the Notre Dame de Namur Sisters. As with all of our communities, transition occurred for the Sisters throughout the years, and so Fr. Patrick, then Pastor, sought me out and of course my response to follow God's call came with a resounding YES. I just love the Merrimack Valley!

Our school community is like a mini United Nations. We have families from Lebanon, Africa, the Dominican Republic, Asia and the United States. All blend together to make one happy school!

Throughout my years here I have been able to share our Franciscan Charism and story with our people. We gather together in the school yard, faculty, students and parents, every morning and begin the day with the "Peace Prayer of St. Francis". Even our Kindergarten students echo the words of peace, hope, light and joy! Our goal is to be a leaven in this urban area - where these values are lived and experienced on our grounds.

It is such joy to share the love of creation St. Francis had for all God's creatures. So, for the Feast of St. Francis the children bring their pets to school and we celebrate the "Blessing of the Animals". We have had with us, a Russian tortoise, Boo the Bulldog, and Phoebe the Schnauzer. In fact, even our public servants, like the police dogs, are blessed for their service of protection to the Methuen Community and the Merrimack Valley. It is a sight to behold for sure! A true zoo of all kinds!

This story would not be complete without sharing a word or two about the ordinary, extraordinary faculty. They truly are the great heroes of the Merrimack Valley. It is through their dedication, love of children and hard work that our students are so successful. Showing up each morning is like coming to a sorority group - there is genuine care for one another as they respect, enjoy and carry each other and me through the easy and difficult days of the school year.

So, am I happy I said my resounding YES! You bet I am! For a whole world of people, places and joy has been opened up and given to me.

## *Josephine Quinlan Receives the Gartland Award ~ Sr. Bernadette Quinlin*

*"These men and women are being honored today, not because they sought fame or recognition... but because they have become true witnesses of the 'Gospel of Joy' and have served others... because... it is the 'right thing to do'."*

*Bishop Gregory J. Hartmayer, OFM Conv*

Every year since 2000, the Diocese of Savannah has recognized long-standing service to the Catholic Church in south Georgia by conferring the Bishop Francis X. Gartland Service Award on honorees nominated by their pastors. In this way, the Diocese expresses its gratitude to those who serve within it.

Fr. Jerry Ragan, pastor of St. Mary on the Hill Parish, Augusta, GA., recently visited Tenaflly. During his visit he presented Sr. Josephine Quinlan with the Gartland Award from the Diocese of Savannah. She is one of the two people from her former parish to receive the award. She was honored for her many years of dedicated service to the homebound, bringing to them Our Lord in the Eucharist. Thank you Josephine for your wonderful years of service!



While in Tenaflly Fr. Jerry was so impressed by the hospitality and kindness he received during his visit. Meeting the Sisters, staff, nurses and caregivers of the Tenaflly Community really touched him.

*"Thank you to our Tenaflly Community and Josephine for so faithfully sharing our Franciscan Charism!"*

## *Celebrating Sister Anna O'Brien's Years of Service*

*~ Letter to the Parish from Anna's Pastor:*



Sadly for us Sister Anna O'Brien will be retiring from her work in our parish. After DECADES of dedicated service as a Pastoral Minister to our sick parishioners, a manager of our Food Pantry for the poor, a religion teacher for our public school children, an advocate for our people in nursing homes, a volunteer for many parish events, a lector, an Extraordinary Minister of the Eucharist, a member of the Parish Council, and many other unseen services to us, she will be taking a much needed rest. We thank her and wish her well.

Her vows as a Missionary Franciscan Sister have meant TOTAL and VISIBLE service to the Lord and His Church. What an example she has set for all of us! She has been the face of our parish for so many people who can no longer come here because of illness. She has prayed with them, done errands for them and brought them the Holy Eucharist for their sustenance. Wherever she could be of service to the parish, she has stepped up to the plate for years. We celebrate her service with much gratitude. Thank you, Sister Anna! ~ Msgr. Ronald T. Marino, Pastor

## *Scarves and Hats for the Homeless at the Shattuck Shelter*

*~ Sr. Margaret Henry.*



Our MFIC Mission Statement urges us to live a simple communal lifestyle of service and to create ever-widening circles of communion by ... embracing all people especially the marginalized.

Seeking to do just that, the community at Centre Street decided to use our needlework skills to make hats and scarves for the homeless at the Shattuck Shelter in Jamaica Plain, MA. This is a shelter operated by Pine Street Inn in partnership with Shattuck Hospital. The shelter caters to 120 homeless men and women, providing overnight shelter, food and other support. Healthcare is provided by the nearby Shattuck Hospital.

Our contact was Pat Daley, Assistant Head of Mount Alvernia High School, who volunteers at the shelter. As you can see from the picture, we were able to provide several sets of hats and scarves, in various colors to help keep our brothers and sisters on the street warm during these icy days of winter. The staff were delighted to be able to distribute them before Thanksgiving. Katherine Collins has also made many afghans for these folks. They really enjoy receiving something new that is made especially for them, as so often they wear used clothing that belonged to someone else. We will continue to contribute these items throughout the winter.

As St. John Chrysostom said:

*“Do not honor Jesus here in he Eucharist and then pass him by  
unclothed and frozen outside.”*



## *Update on Our Southern Associates*

~ *Sr. Nuala Mulleady*

Our Southern Associates, Nelda and Fe are well and very involved in their parish. Mary Tirrell has some health issues which prevent her from being as involved as she would like, although she does do some prison ministry. Prior to my going to St. Joseph's parish for the Mission Co-op Appeal Weekend, Nelda and Fe did a tremendous amount of work on displays, brochures and an ongoing video presentation on South Sudan. They also sold beads for Margo's project for the empowerment of women in Juba. I was so delighted and proud of them especially when I heard them engage the people and explain to them our ministry in Sudan and the meaning of the San Damiano Cross!! They truly mirror our charism. All I had to do was show up and speak at all the Masses. I came back enthused and enriched by the dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of the people.



Nelda



Mary



Fe and Donna

I do believe Pope Francis would be delighted with the involvement of the laity at St. Joseph's in Waycross.

## *~ Our Mission Continues through the Elizabeth Hayes Grant ~*

### *Improvements to Shekina in Piura ~ Sr. Maureen Coyle*

It was a pleasure to work with the committee of the Elizabeth Hayes Fund. Thanks to you we were able to have the first floor, stairs, second floor and the outside of the Shekina building painted. We also bought a new T.V. as our old one died on us. It gives great pleasure to our patients and relatives who come



with them to watch educational programs instead of what they are used to watching. Also, we use it to show the steps of "Sacred Dance" which we have been teaching this year on Mondays and



Wednesdays. We also use the T.V. to show films etc. to the Franciareli ( Amigos of Francis, Clare and Elizabeth Hayes) when we have a meeting. We also purchased plastic chairs. We bought smaller ones as we were thinking of the storage space. We use all the chairs when needed. Thanks for the help you have given to

us to supply these things and for the money for the paint and work of the Shekina. It is such a pleasure to have a clean and newly painted area where the poor can come to read the paper and meet socially.

## *Dewitt, NY: Bus Passes for Refugees*

~ *Beth Shafer – Director of Faith in Action at Holy Cross Church, DeWitt, NY*



**Refugee Students**

Alicia Socia has white hair, blue eyes and a wizened face, but she transmits energy like a loose electrical wire. Alicia is a former schoolmate of our own Sr. Rose Bill.

Alicia has a passion to help refugees become American citizens. Most of the people Alicia tutors do not speak English. Unlike her rapid-fire delivery to native English speakers, she slowly reads the one hundred questions and helps her students phonetically sound out the English-speaking answers to each of the questions. Refugees from many countries travel across the city every week to attend these classes. Depending on past education, intelligence and motivation, it can take many years for a refugee to learn to hear the questions and to give the proper response. Before the grant for bus passes, Alicia's

successful students attended classes for up to 3 years. Many had

to stop attending because they were not able to walk the distance to the new location on the south side of Syracuse. The "bus pass grant" changed the situation. To get the maximum use of the money allotted, she hands out bus passes only to the most dedicated and promising students. There are now 4 students who have applied to take the January citizenship exam in Buffalo. One of them would not have been able to come to the classes if it weren't for the bus passes. Others are using the passes, but are not ready yet to take the exam.

## *Human Development Program at St. Margaret's, Mattydale, NY*

~ *Sr. Lucy Flaherty*

The Human Development program at St. Margaret's received a \$1500.00 grant for three areas:

- 1- \$500.00 for bus passes.
- 2- \$500.00 for hygiene products
- 3- \$500.00 for vouchers for the local Salvation Army thrift store.

All of the areas were very successful, but the most successful was the vouchers for the thrift store. People were especially happy because on Wednesdays everything is half-price. Most of the folks used them for back-to-school clothes and some are using them now in preparation for Christmas.

The hygiene products are wonderful. It is difficult for folks to ask for toilet paper, soap, toothpaste etc. So when they see the sign of their availability, they smile and just say, "Please". We're giving some special things in the Christmas packages for children with the tag, 'for Mom'.

The bus passes are also a big hit especially at this time of the year when it is difficult to walk in Central New York.

Thank you from all the folks at St. Margaret's in Mattydale, New York.



## ***Massachusetts: Impact on Prison Ministry*** ~ Sr. Ann Marie Raftery

Given the nature of prison ministry, photos of our programs are not permitted. However, I want to make it loud and clear that the Elizabeth Hayes Grant is making a huge difference in the quality of programs being offered to the inmates at Norfolk and Pondville Prisons for two years now. This year, I am extending the "Countdown To Freedom" program to Norfolk Prison where many more inmates will be more adequately prepared for release and reintegration with family and community life. Additionally, I am also bolstering our Catholic library with DVD-based programs such as:

The Spirituality of the Twelve Steps for Everyone;  
Where is God in the Thick of Suffering;  
Living the Eucharist;  
Decision Point and Rediscovering Catholicism in English and Spanish.

And for our Chapel at Norfolk, I am purchasing a chalice.

Gratitude is the memory of the heart! The Elizabeth Hayes Grant Fund is "paying it forward" and blessing many prisoners and their families as Jesus the Christ requires in Matthew 25.



## ***The Farm Worker Clinic, Valdosta, GA.*** ~ Fanny Julissa Clapp

**Clinic Coordinator**

The Farm Worker Clinic is very grateful for the recent donation that was given to us from the Elizabeth Hayes Grant. With your faithful contributions, you've demonstrated your deep commitment to the Lord. The projector screen and lap top are being used to do massive health education presentations in the field. So far we have been able to educate more than two hundred farm workers through power point presentations concerning hypertension, diabetes, nutrition and more. We target camps where farm workers live and bring the equipment which is then set up to do the presentations in Spanish. If there are non-Spanish speaking farmworkers then we use an interpreter to assist us. Your support has played a key role in our success of improving the health of our Farm Workers. Through the vitamins you donated malnutrition was slightly improved. The heaters kept our farm workers

warm through the cold weather. We distributed the heaters by selecting elderly people as well as families with children and single men who had no means to keep themselves warm.

There is no way to fully express our gratitude for your loyalty. We at the Farm Worker Clinic are inspired by the dedication and generosity of donors like you who answer the call to give and give again..

A very big thanks for your generosity!



## *Mental Health Project, Sondor, Peru ~ Sr. Ann Walsh*

Due to the funds received from the Elizabeth Hayes Grant we were able to sponsor a workshop on Mental Health from August 22 to the 25th in Sondor, Peru.

The Mental Health Team from John of God Clinic in Piura and also Lola, the health coordinator for the diocese, were the presenters.

The local people responsible for health in their communities participated. There were interviews with the psychologist and psychiatrist. The secondary school in Sondor also benefited from a visit. Mental health patients were visited in their homes. The team visited a lady who has suffered from mental health problems for the past 40 years. During this time her family has taken care of her with great love. The health team was able to assess her condition and prescribe medicine which has helped her improve immensely. Because of your assistance many lives have been touched.



## *Sonogram for Carmen Pampa Veterinary Department*

*~ Sr. Jean Morrissey*

Dear Sister Donna Driscoll and Members of the Elizabeth Hayes Grant Committee,

I am delighted to inform you that thanks to the Elizabeth Hayes Grant, we purchased and received the sonogram machine we requested for our Veterinary Department at the College in Carmen Pampa. This machine is very necessary for preparing our students to be successful in their post-graduate work. Not only are we proud that we can provide young Bolivian men and women with a rigorous academic program within the context of the Christian mission to serve, we also believe in the importance of technical training and hands-on experiences that arm them with the skills necessary to succeed once they graduate.

All of the students in the department were thrilled when they received the sonogram; they started using it immediately for their coursework....and for their animal modules. (Most recently students were able to confirm that one of the pigs is expecting!)



With the remaining funds we plan to buy accessories for the sonogram and some laboratory equipment that is desperately needed. On behalf of the UAC-CP Veterinary students, I sincerely thank you for facilitating the purchase of the sonogram machine.



## *A Letter from Donna*

*December 2014*

In late October, while on retreat, I decided that I would get up every morning to watch the sun rise over the ocean. Each day, while it was still dark, with only a small hint of color trying to break through the remaining night sky, I found my way to my usual spot to wait for what was to come. There were no two days alike, but each sunrise was amazing in the way it emerged. On Halloween, God showed His sense of humor with a bright orange sky.

As my eyes adjusted to the early morning darkness the one image that was very clear was the message coming from the lighthouse in the distance blinking over and over, one...four...three...one...four...three (I love you...I love you)... A recurring reminder, a constant presence, a comfort in the darkness.

It is extraordinary that God has chosen to begin and end the darkness of each day with such a spectacular display of color.

There is a wonderful silence at that time that even the creatures respect. The little birds and the usual noisy geese fly by so quietly that you can hear the beat of their wings. Immersed in nature, each day held a new surprise. As the sun arrives a beautiful red fox springs up the hill next to where I am sitting; a pod of whales was a delight on another day, a small songbird in a nearby bush loudly singing his praises and a beautiful rainbow on another.



This year, I looked a little differently at the star that led so many through the darkness to the Little King...the light that showed the way to where Love was born. The all pervading silence where the Angels could be heard. The animals, with whom we share the earth, bearing quiet witness to this most holy event.

God is all around us and He will show us His wonders. All we have to do is take the time to be there and He will surprise us with His presence.

To each one of you, best wishes for a very Happy Christmas!

Love,

Donna