



School Sisters
of Notre Dame

Trust & Dare

2019-2020



Transforming the world through education

**SISTERS SERVE IN TRADITIONAL SCHOOLS,
NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS, HOSPITALS,
PRISONS, NURSING HOMES, PARISHES AND AGENCIES
ADDRESSING SOCIAL ISSUES**

Helping women move
from homelessness
to stability

Enabling children to
gain independence and
live productive lives

Empowering women for 73 years
through the UN Commission on
the Status of Women

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Trust & Dare

Trust & Dare is a publication for family, friends and supporters of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the Atlantic-Midwest Province, Central Pacific Province and the Province of Africa. It is coordinated by SSND Collaborative Communications.

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Cover: Grateful graduate Michelle Haigley shows her affection for Sister Cathy Feeley at the SSND Educational Center Closing Ceremony June 2019.

Dear Friends,



As School Sisters of Notre Dame, *we proclaim the good news, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.* Serving in 30 countries, School Sisters of Notre Dame work to transform the world through education, with the belief that education extends beyond the classroom. We began as educators and continue as educators.

This issue of *Trust & Dare* focuses on innovative, non-traditional methods of education and ministry. School Sisters of Notre Dame work in a variety of ministries - helping individuals and communities that are marginalized by serving in traditional schools, non-traditional education environments, hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, parishes and agencies addressing social issues.

Education, social justice and advocacy issues are vital to the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

In this issue you will learn about:

- **Theresa Living Center**, helping women and single-parent families move from homelessness to stability and self-sufficiency for more than 32 years.
- **Corazón a Corazón**, providing educational assistance to the underserved, especially women and children, through summer camp, after-school opportunities and English as a Second Language programs.
- **Orthopedic Training Centre**, enabling children to gain independent and productive lives.
- **Liturgical Fabric Arts**, combining worship and art while educating and encouraging a deep encounter with the Divine.
- **Solar Power** being used by School Sisters of Notre Dame, reflecting the congregation's commitment to responsible stewardship of the Earth and our care for all creation as a gift from God.
- **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN-CSW)**, empowering women for 73 years.

In addition, you'll meet those who are "Inspired by SSND," learn more from our development directors about how your support enables our sisters to serve in so many ways, and see our sisters across the Atlantic-Midwest Province, Central Pacific Province and the Province of Africa.

Thank you for all you do to support the School Sisters of Notre Dame and our work to *transform the world through education.* Your prayers, love, financial support and time allow us to touch lives all over the world and proclaim the good news.

Yours in friendship,

Sister Debra Sciano, SSND

Debra Marie Sciano, SSND
Provincial Leader, Central Pacific Province

“We educate, advocate, and act in collaboration with others for the dignity and the care of all creation.”

~ Directional Statement of the 24th General Chapter of the School Sisters of Notre Dame



Sisters Alice Zachmann, Mara Frundt, and Helen Jones (left to right) join a community member as they prepare to participate in the Global Climate Strike Rally, which brought 500 people to St. Peter, Minnesota.



Sister Judy Schaum (left), Atlantic-Midwest Province, greets Lucy Edidiong (right), a novice from the Province of Africa, at the Generalate in Rome during a Heritage Pilgrimage.



Mother Theresa's bedroom in Germany (Bavaria) looks just as it did when she was alive, thanks to the Sisters who faithfully preserve it.

For two centuries, the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) have answered the call to service, responding to the most urgent needs of the times, not only in North America, but also around the world. They are professors, teachers, administrators and counselors; they are librarians and spiritual directors; they are nurses, facilitators, artists and therapists; they are justice and peace promoters, pastoral ministers, volunteers and women of prayer. Regardless of how they serve, the sisters educate in all that they do, bringing a spirit of hope to their realities.

Unifying and serving God's people for a better tomorrow

Internationally, the SSND continue to support the formation of new members in a deeply divided, intercultural and global society that is increasingly influenced by technology – a reality that demands innovative responses to creating community and tending to the needs of a broken people and compromised Earth.

Join us in Transforming the World Through Education

SSND rely on donations from foundations, donors and partnerships with associates and lay collaborators

to sustain the SSND mission and ministries. Gifts enable our sisters and colleagues to continue to respond to urgent needs, locally and globally. SSND must raise enough money each year to:

- Strengthen the SSND Educational Ministries to deliver quality educational services to the most vulnerable among us. Our programs orient lay staff and leaders to SSND mission, ministry, heritage and spirituality.
- Strengthen the SSND Global Network to support the integration of social justice and the care of creation into its ministries.
- Support current and future sisters' ways of life. Through retreats, renewal programs, prayer resources and support to our congregational novitiate, the vibrancy and impact of the sisters will continue.
- Care for our aging sisters. In 2019, it is projected that religious past age 70 will outnumber those under 70 by nearly four to one. Support enables senior sisters to receive quality care, giving back to them after their years of giving.

To discuss how your support can make a difference, please contact the Development Office for your province.

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Our Mission

is to proclaim the good news as School Sisters of Notre Dame, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.

You Are Sent
Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

Moving from homelessness to stability and self-sufficiency *Theresa Living Center*



Sisters Paulissa Jirik, Mary Gen Olin, Judy Bakula, Rita Jirik and Jane Thibault (left to right) celebrate at a Theresa Living Center 'graduation.'

For Marie, not having a home or job was bad enough, but a diagnosis of cancer was the final straw. She was sent to Theresa Living Center, which provided Marie with housing. Once she secured housing, Marie was able to get treatment and find temporary work. Then she was able to find a permanent job. “I eventually got a permanent job as a towing company dispatcher – and within a year, I had enough money to move into my own apartment,” said Marie. “I’ve still got my job, and I’ve even purchased a car! Having the Theresa Living Center’s support and help with housing gave me a chance to create a stable life.”

Marie is just one of hundreds of success stories from Theresa Living Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. Theresa Living Center provides transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and support services to women and children who are striving to move from homelessness to self-sufficiency. This is achieved through two programs – *Theresa Living Center – Residential* and *Theresa Living Center – Caroline Family Services*.

Theresa Living Center provides transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and support services to women and single-parent families who are striving to move from homelessness to self-sufficiency.

Theresa Living Center - Residential provides housing on the east side of St. Paul for 16 women who are single, pregnant or parenting a child, including case management services to help them determine the resources they need to achieve self-sufficiency – such as rental assistance, transportation, counseling and medical care, job training and employment opportunities, and access to information and referrals. Each woman has her own room with all other living facilities shared. Participants may stay in the program up to two years.

Creating success stories since 1988

Theresa Living Center - Caroline Family Services

provides case management services and rental assistance to 30 single-parent families and their children living in their own apartments in Ramsey County, including St. Paul. The families usually consist of two or more children (of any age), and program services are provided for up to two years.

Program goals include:

- providing a safe, nurturing environment for participants
- collaborating with existing agencies to address specific needs of homeless single women and their children
- providing individualized guidance to participants in planning their life goals, and ongoing evaluation of their progress in achieving them
- strengthening participants' basic home management and living skills, including budgeting and financial planning
- helping and encouraging participants in their search for affordable, permanent housing.

To achieve these goals, each family sets personal goals, including defining what success will look like for their family. Program participants meet with case managers on a bi-weekly basis to ensure families stay focused on their goals, improve their living situation and work toward self-sufficiency; this monitoring assures not only the parent's success, but also the children's success in school attendance and achievement.

"Providing a place to live is not enough when a woman is homeless," said Sister Rita Jirik. "Providing ongoing support, encouragement, challenge, and hope is key."

Working with the whole family is critical to breaking the bonds of homelessness and poverty. Wendy, a mother of two teenagers shared, "We were homeless for a long time – we moved all over the place, and my two teenagers had to change schools a lot. Caroline Family Services helped us move into an apartment, and I got a job to pay my part of the rent. The best part of all is that my kids were able to settle into one school and now they've got college scholarships! I can't tell you what this means to me – to know they're on a track to success. I'm so proud of them!"

For more information on Theresa Living Center go to <http://www.theresalivingcenter.org/>

The Theresa Living Center was founded by the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) more than 32 years ago to provide housing for single women who found themselves homeless or in an abusive situation. At the time, this residential program served 12 women: expectant mothers, women with one child, or women without a child.

Quickly, SSND identified a need to help single-parent families find affordable housing and Caroline Family Services was founded. Initially, 24 homeless, single-parent families were assisted with housing and access to the resources and services needed to stabilize their living situation and become self-sufficient.

"The founding of Theresa Living Center was a direct response to the beatification of Blessed Theresa in 1985," said Sister Rita. "A group of SSNDs living in the Twin Cities thought the best way to honor our Foundress was to help women and children who are homeless. They asked Sister Marilyn Orchard and me to do the ground work while meeting with us monthly to encourage and provide suggestions and support. This group effort made the founding of TLC (Theresa Living Center) and CFS (Caroline Family Services) possible."

The founding of Theresa Living Center was a direct response to the beatification of Blessed Theresa in 1985.

Today, the Theresa Living Center is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and still maintains close ties with the SSNDs who continue to support the work financially and as volunteer work, including serving on the board of directors. The SSND vision of transforming lives through transitional services continues to guide programs.

The Theresa Living Center was named after Blessed Mother Theresa Gerhardinger, founder of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Caroline Family Services was named in honor of Mother Caroline Friess, who came to America in 1847, and founded SSND in North America.

Opening doors to the future



While the immigration issue continues to grow around the world, sponsored ministries in the Atlantic-Midwest Province continue to welcome newcomers to the United States with open arms and education. Corazón a Corazón (Spanish for “heart to heart”) in Blue Island, Illinois, and Caroline House in Bridgeport, Connecticut, offer local classes in English as a Second Language (ESL). Both ministries also provide programs for children so parents can learn without distraction and children experience a new language when their young minds are most ready to absorb it. The School Sisters of Notre Dame Educational Center in Queens, New York, which serves only women, also offers ESL lessons and prepares students to take the state high school equivalency exam.

Educating members of society who are marginalized has been the mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame since the congregation was founded in 1833 in Bavaria. Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger focused on the education of girls and the poor, first in her own country, and later around the world, as communities of immigrants asked for teachers to be sent to their new locations. The tradition of going where they are most needed is still strong among the School Sisters of Notre Dame today.

Corazón a Corazón is located in a Catholic Charities building in a South Side Chicago neighborhood where many immigrants and refugees make their homes. It provides one-on-one ESL training to adults and after-school and summer programs for elementary school students. “Our ministry puts the needs of each learner first. Many tutors supplement their lessons with vocabulary and scenarios specific to each learner’s needs,” explains Mayra Pimentel, volunteer and intern coordinator. “Goals differ for our learners. Some wish to be able to communicate with neighbors and join activities offered within the community. They may also want to work toward communicating with their children’s teachers and doctors; others work toward job promotions. One common goal among our learners is to provide a better life for their family.”

Sister Miriam Patrick Cummings is Corazón a Corazón’s executive director, and two other School Sisters of Notre Dame currently volunteer as ESL teachers. Sister Lupita Cordero, who is legally blind, brings her guide dog, Kimble, to each session. She teaches from memory and was recently awarded the Spotlight on Achievement award from the Illinois Secretary of State for her outstanding service. Sister Lucy Giacchetti, who also received this award a few years ago, has been volunteering at Corazón for many years. All help instill in the staff and volunteers the mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame to make Christ visible through



Sister Linda Stilling, who teaches at Notre Dame of Maryland University, recently took a group of her students to Carolina House for a volunteer experience.



Graduates of the SSND Educational Center gather in front of the Wall of Fame, where they will soon be featured.

“To date, nearly 2,000 women have achieved high school diplomas and/or gained proficiency in English.”

their very being. “In this time of fear and uncertainty for many of our learners, Corazón provides a place of welcome and hope,” Mayra says. “It is a place where they feel safe and cared about.”

Like Corazón, Caroline House offers fluidity in the education it offers. “Each year we are prepared to create a program based on the needs of our students in the preschool and adult learning programs,” says director Lucy Freeman. “For example, this year our potential graduates (Level 2) wanted to continue their education at Caroline House. In September, we will start to offer a Level 3 class for those students.”

Sisters Kate Whalen and Lorraine Quinn are currently among the volunteers and staff working with Caroline House in helping students meet their goals. “The goals of our students vary,” Lucy says. “Some come to us unable to even have a basic conversation in English, while some are preparing for the citizenship exam. The main goal is understanding and confidently speaking English, affording them the opportunity to advocate for themselves and their families, especially their children.”

Advocating for women whose opportunities for education have been limited by circumstances is the mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Educational Center. All of the Center’s classes are free, and registration is open throughout the year. Based on placement testing, the staff and students

set educational goals and schedules. Computer skills are also integrated into the curriculum. Workshops that offer a holistic approach to life are offered throughout the year.

“The door of future success opens when a woman has a high school diploma in her hand,” says executive director Sister Cathy Feeney. “To date, nearly 2,000 women have achieved high school diplomas and/or gained proficiency in English. They have gone on to college or vocational training programs, become United States citizens and improved their career opportunities.”

A strong community network has contributed greatly to the success of these graduates.

“Assistance is given with job placement and future educational options,” explains Sister Cathy. “Students are networked with local resources and agencies in order to support and sustain their educational success. Professionals from a variety of backgrounds are invited to speak on issues that affect the women, such as how to interview for a job, obtaining citizenship and financial planning. From the time a woman registers, individual guidance is offered.”

By giving these underserved persons a place to feel welcomed, safe and empowered, each of these ministries is walking in the footsteps of Blessed Theresa by continuing her mission to transform lives through education.



The children’s classroom at Corazón.



Sister Lupita Cordero does not let her blindness keep her from teaching.

Helping the physically challenged reach their full potential

School Sisters of Notre Dame were first invited to minister in the African countries of Sierra Leone, Ghana, The Gambia, Nigeria and Kenya in 1970. Their presence and work there today is still “very necessary,” according to Sister Rosanne Rustemeyer, Development Director for the Province of Africa.

The call to help others reach their full potential led SSND to the Orthopedic Training Centre (OTC), a nonprofit located in Nsawam, Ghana, in 1974. Founded by the Divine Word Missionaries in 1961, the OTC is a source of hope and healing in West Africa, providing rehabilitation services that have helped more than 100,000

“We open our doors each day to physically challenged children and adults, doing everything we can to help them reach the fullness of their potential, thereby enhancing their self-worth and preparing them to take their rightful place in society.”

~ Sister Elizabeth Newman



Sister Elizabeth Newman poses with OTC children and founder Brother Tarcisius.

physically challenged children and adults to gain independence and lead productive lives. In 2018 alone, more than 7,250 individuals received services at the OTC.

Sister Elizabeth Newman became the director of the OTC in 2014; she started working there in 1975. “We open our doors each day to physically challenged children and adults, doing everything we can to help them reach the fullness of their potential, thereby enhancing their self-worth and preparing them to take their rightful place in society,” she said. Originally from New Orleans, Sister Elizabeth has spent more than 30 years in Ghana, leaving to serve on the former Dallas Provincial Council from 1989-2002, including as Provincial Leader from 1993-2002.

At the time the OTC was founded, polio was endemic in Ghana and many patients were crawling on the ground. Polio has now been eradicated throughout the country. The Centre currently helps children impacted

by club foot, cerebral palsy and other birth abnormalities, and adults facing disabilities due to illness or injury. What began as an orthopedic clinic and workshop to diagnose, manufacture and fit orthopedic appliances now includes a children’s home for those needing to adjust to their new orthopedic appliances and the Prosthetics and Orthopedic Training College. In addition, a mobile orthopedic unit tours the country on a regular basis providing support to those unable to visit the Centre. Orthopedic repairs are also provided.

Patients are allowed to attend school while at the children’s home. Sister Elis Viebeck, originally from Germany, has served in Ghana for many years, and most recently at the OTC. She works with the children individually, teaching lessons and helping them with homework. “Education continues to be a strong value at the Centre because we believe that only through a good, well-rounded education can children be prepared to take their rightful place in society,” said Sister Elizabeth. The training college opened its doors in 2013, and through an agreement with the Biomedical Engineering Department at the University of Kumasi, offers educational sessions that combine both theoretical and practical learning.

2018 saw great progress in the OTC’s newest program, the Cerebral Palsy Clinic and Day Care Centre. Sister Elizabeth and her staff have been committed to this program since learning that the number of children



Sister Elizabeth Newman helping a child at the Orthopedic Training Centre in Nsawam, Ghana.



Sister Elis Viebeck, originally from Germany, has been in Ghana for many years and a staff member at the OTC for the past few years.

born with cerebral palsy in Ghana is two and one-half times greater than the number of children born with cerebral palsy in the developed world. During their home visits, the staff have also witnessed an increased number of children with cerebral palsy who often are left unattended while parents work.

The main goals of the home visits are to make the OTC known in the community and to locate persons who are in need, who have not come for help. Sister Esther Alaam often volunteers for the visits. She is a nurse who works at the nearby Notre Dame Clinic and Maternity Centre and is completing her education to become a midwife. A native Ghanaian, Sister Esther was instrumental in creating the OTC Community Outreach Program, which provides home visits to patients throughout Ghana.

“The Centre is really giving life to many who society thinks are misfortunate,” explained Sister Esther. “The Centre makes them feel human and loved by God, caring for these kids as normal or



Sister Esther Alaam, a native Ghanaian and community nurse, gathers with some children on her home visits through the OTC.

[like] any other person in society. No one is discriminated against. Each child is given equal opportunity in terms of schooling and learning.”

The presence of SSND through the years has contributed to a growing community with new vocations. “The work of the early missionaries will fall to the hands of very capable Ghanaians like Sister Esther to further develop and carry on the mission in Nsawam,” said Sister Rosanne. “Sister Elizabeth’s creativity and ingenuity have been at the heart of the work and ministry.”

When Sister Elizabeth was approaching her 75th birthday last year, her staff prepared a surprise party. She noted that one of the highlights for her was the unveiling of a framed photo of her holding a young boy. The photo included the words that contain her dream for the OTC: “It is important to create an environment where children can flourish, a good and safe place where no child is sent away because of money.”



Sister Elizabeth Newman helping a child at the Orthopedic Training Centre in Nsawam, Ghana.

For more information about the OTC, visit otcghana.org.

Faces

of School Sisters
of Notre Dame in
prayer, ministry
and community



In September 2019, sisters, staff and associates gathered for celebrations of gratitude and farewell to 145 years of SSND presence at Chatawa, Mississippi. Sister Gemma Marie Dittle places a printed flower on the remembrance tree, sharing her fondest moments at St. Mary of the Pines.



Sister Joyce Nyakwama receives Sister Millicent Achieng Oduor as a full member of the Congregation May 25, 2019, at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Ukwala, Kenya. Archbishop Philip Anyolo was the main celebrant.



Sisters Lucy Etim, Mary Mayi Ojo Abuh and Etini at Notre Dame High School in Urua, Nigeria.

Sisters Edna Chepkoech, Joy Abado (partially hidden), Millicent Oduor, her mother, Beatrice Chepn'geno, Sarah Jepkorir (left to right), dance as they make their way to Millicent's final vows May 25, 2019, at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Ukwala, Kenya.





Sister Maria Iannuccillo (right), a member of the Atlantic-Midwest Provincial Council, was thrilled that Sister Stephanie Spandl (left) could join her in Wilton for Jubilee. Both Sisters are celebrating their 25th Jubilee this year.



Students from Sisters Academy of Baltimore, a middle school for girls co-sponsored by the Atlantic-Midwest province, came to Villa Assumpta in July 2019 to interview Sisters and do a report about their lives. Sister Clara Beall is shown here sharing her story.



Sisters at Notre Dame Convent in Waterdown, Ontario, Canada, held a special ritual for Sisters and staff the day deceased Sisters' remains were moved to Gate of Heaven cemetery. Sisters and staff expressed how Sisters touched their lives. Sister Janet Disbrowe hangs a butterfly remembrance on a tree during the ceremony.



Sister Alice Zachmann (second row, second from left) was recognized by the National Women's History Project and the National Women's History Alliance. This year's theme was 'Visionary Women: Champions of Peace and Nonviolence.'



Sister Maria I. Gomez's Perpetual Profession took place during Mass on Saturday, May 11, 2019, at St. Rita Catholic Church in Dallas.

Liturgical Fabric Arts

Design and Consultation for Liturgical Art

Making church vestments and altar linens has been a ministry of the School Sisters of Notre Dame since 1898. The Liturgical Fabric Arts ministry is located at Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis. The goal of Liturgical Fabric Arts is to create environments that encourage a deep encounter with the Divine. Original fabric creations are created to enhance the interior or exterior of churches and other places of worship. The creations breathe new life into the liturgical setting.

A staff of six sisters design and sew vestments, banners and altar linens in a spirit of prayer for the recipients of their handiwork. “Each item is created with beauty and simplicity to enhance the worship of God who is the source of all beauty,” said Sister Josephine Niemann.

The Liturgical Fabric Arts ministry combines worship and art through contemporary, custom-made liturgical banners and vestments, altar cloths and other linens and furniture to adorn

houses of worship of all faith communities. The ministry also provides education through workshops on sacred art and environment through banners for congregations, deaneries and dioceses, enabling participants to create an environment of beauty appropriate for worship. In addition, Liturgical Fabric Arts offers consultation and design of furnishings and structural enhancements to bring out the beauty of the architectural elements already present. “Conveying a sense of the sacred through quality design is our utmost concern,” said Sister Josephine.

For more information about Liturgical Fabric Arts please visit <https://www.liturgicalfabricarts.com/>

Making church vestments and altar linens has been a ministry of School Sisters of Notre Dame in St. Louis since 1898.



Sister Josephine Niemann works on a project in the Liturgical Fabric Arts studio at Sancta Maria in Ripa in St. Louis.

Sister Josephine has had two pieces in an exhibit about Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* at Good Shepherd Gallery in St. Louis. Her two pieces were a quilt with the theme of climate change and a nylon banner with a creation theme. “For this quilt, I used scraps in a technique called strip piecing,” said Sister Josephine. “After I completed it, I realized the tones of the quilt and the fabrics used reminded me of global warming, so I stitched a short phrase in the corner.”

The phrase: ‘We have before us dry desert or rain refreshed fauna. We can ignore the existence of global warming or choose life for future children of Earth’ made the quilt a perfect fit for the gallery’s show.

“We wanted to reach out to sisters around the St. Louis area who we knew held *Laudato Si’*, close to their hearts and who created beautiful works that could tell the story about the past, present and future of our Common Home if we do not do something to change it,” says Sister Glynis Mary McManamon, a Sister of the Good Shepherd who runs the gallery.

Sister Josephine’s other piece, a banner focusing on creation, was made from nylon with mosquito netting and features people, animals, the sun, moon and stars. The birds on the banner represent the Holy Spirit.

Increasing our solar footprint in the Atlantic-Midwest Province

The School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest Province show their commitment to ecological responsibility by establishing solar power at their Villa Notre Dame complex in Wilton, Connecticut. On December 17, 2018, they turned on their two solar arrays – a 122 kW ground-mounted system (Solar Garden) and a 37 kW roof-mounted system (on top of Lourdes Healthcare Center) – for the first time.

“Our SSND Directional Statement calls our congregation to discern and address urgent and critical global needs and to respond boldly in unsuspected ways,” says Sister Charmaine Krohe, Provincial Leader of the Atlantic-Midwest Province, which includes the Wilton facility. “In light of the report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which states that the crisis of global warming is already manifest in the rise of global heatwaves, fires, droughts and floods, our province’s decision to decrease its dependence on fossil fuel energy is timely and a visible sign of our effort to address a critical global concern of the day. The implementation of these solar projects is one of many ways in which we are acting on our commitment to environmental stewardship.”

Together, the two solar power systems are expected to generate approximately 200,000 kWh/year, or 25% of the facility’s electrical load.

This project is the final component of a comprehensive energy project for the property that encompasses the Sisters’ efforts to increase energy efficiency, reduce operational costs and generate renewable energy. MHR Development partnered with the province to evaluate all of the facility’s energy and water resource demands, as well as occupant comfort needs, to craft a master sustainability plan.

Together, the two solar power systems are expected to generate approximately 200,000 kWh/year, or 25% of the facility’s electrical load. Moreover, the solar installations will generate approximately \$20,600 per year in renewable energy credits that will help underwrite the systems’ cost. It is estimated that the project will offset 510 tons of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere annually, and that there will be a net reduction of 400,000 kWh in grid power used annually.



Sister Marjorie Klein speaks at the solar garden thank you event. The solar garden was created in partnership with Dwight Jelle and Best Power International. It is located on SSND property and was built with assistance from an Xcel Energy grant.

School Sisters of Notre Dame achieve 100% renewable energy with construction of community solar garden

With the July commissioning of the community solar garden, developed by Innovative Power Systems (IPS) on Our Lady of Good Counsel (OLGC) property, the Mankato, Minnesota, campus will purchase 100% of their electricity from renewable sources. The six acre, 1.3 megawatt system at OLGC has Blue Earth County and the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) as the major subscribers to the garden. In addition, SSND also subscribe to two additional community solar gardens located in the county, which enable them to reach 100% renewable energy. A 40KW rooftop solar system was installed at OLGC in 2015, and the electricity it generates is utilized in the sisters’ healthcare facility. It took eight years to reach the goal of 100%. This encourages sisters to continue exploring other ways to live more sustainably.

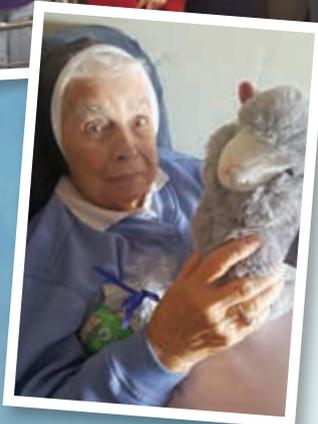
IPS’ Chief Development Officer Eric Pasi says, “Over the course of 25 years, subscribers to the 1.3 megawatt solar garden should see savings in excess of \$8,000,000. We’re making a real difference both economically and environmentally.”

“Our choice to collaborate on projects such as this one enables us to dialogue and work with others in our local area who are also seeking the systemic change needed to address the ecological crises of this time,” said Sister Marjorie Klein, former provincial councilor. “Being a part of this solar project reflects our commitment to responsible stewardship of our Earth and our care for all creation as gifts from God. We are grateful for this opportunity to work together with others to shape a better world for generations to come.”

Inspired by SSND



From left to right:
Dee Walsh, Sister
Kathy Jaeger, Nancy
Longo, Leah Benzing,
Ellen Van Daniker,
Mary Pat Moulder
and Mary Helfrich.



Sister Theodore
Baccala loved the
sheep she found in
her Easter basket.

“The group was inspired by the generosity and spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.”

Friends of the Sisters

Earlier this year, Mary Helfrich created a Facebook group called “Friends of the Sisters at 6401.” It takes its name from one of the residences in the Atlantic-Midwest Province, Villa Assumpta, which is located at 6401 N. Charles Street. “The group was inspired by the generosity and spirit of the School Sisters of Notre Dame,” says Mary, who graduated from the Institute of Notre Dame (IND), the Baltimore girls high school founded by Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline in 1847.

“Throughout my life, I have always had a close connection to former teachers and friends of my family. Two of my closest relationships were with Sister Marie Charles Grauer and Sister Hilda “Hildie” Marie Sunderland (who worked at IND). Although Sister Hildie didn’t visit Villa Assumpta often, she always cared for her ‘Sisters.’ She would take her own money and buy treats for the Sisters at holiday time and ask her ‘helpers’ to deliver them. After Sister Hildie’s untimely death in March, I felt the need to be able to continue her legacy of care and concern and asked a few others to help.”

The response was swift. “The group was formed in April and within two weeks it provided Easter baskets, flowers and treats for each of the 82 Sisters at the Villa in celebration of Easter,” Mary says proudly. “The group is currently providing five dozen cupcakes and volunteering at the monthly birthday celebration and providing prizes and volunteering at Thursday Bingo or bowling.” There are currently 218 members

on the Facebook page, although only about 40 of them are actively volunteering.

New members are always welcome. The last planning meeting for future events was in September, when the group brainstormed about some holiday-themed surprises for the Sisters. “Our group is grateful to the women who have given their lives to educate, care for and, most importantly, pray for us. Giving back to Sisters is our way of showing that gratitude.”

Faith, fidelity and humor

Bozena Cloutier is living what she calls “a wonderful life” full of faith, love, family and adventure. Her adventure began early. Born in Poland in the early 1930s, she and her family became refugees during World War II, eventually finding asylum in England. Fifty years ago, she moved to the United States, became a citizen and raised her family.

In the mid-90s, Bozena sought spiritual direction and connected with Mother Georgianne Segner, Provincial Leader for the former Dallas Province and also General Superior. Bozena remembers Mother Georgianne as a “wise lady with her feet firmly planted” who suggested she become a School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) Associate, which she continues to be today.

“Becoming an Associate deepened my spiritual life and commitment to action,” said Bozena. She founded a grief support ministry. “I encourage women to take action, to help,” she said. “As limited as my actions may be, it’s important to take some action.”

“I was fortunate to have a good education,” said Bozena. “Like the sisters, I encourage education, especially for women. I always encourage women to learn and take the next step forward.”

“When I get disheartened by what is happening in the world, I look at the sisters who are feeding the hungry, teaching immigrants, housing the homeless and I am deeply touched and motivated,” said Bozena.

“Whether the sisters are engaged in ministry or helping a guest feel comfortable (with fresh blueberries from the garden) or warming a room with simple signs of beauty like flowers or fabrics or candles, it moves me and stirs me to prayer and service,” shared Bozena.



Sister Herman Marie Siebenmorgen praying at St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Mississippi

“I appreciate their faith, their fidelity and their humor! Whether it’s playing games at a Mardi Gras celebration or sharing a joke, the laughter is contagious. There is so much fun and joy.”

Bozena is moved by the sisters who continue to serve in prayer and presence as they age, “Their prayers and fidelity are helping and supporting us all.”

Becoming an effective communicator

The 24th General Chapter Directional Statement *Love Gives Everything* invites us to expand our understanding of interculturality and commitment to the development of skills for intercultural living in community and society. It challenges us to “risk innovative responses as educators in a rapidly changing world impacted by globalization and technology.”

In light of this, the SSND Postulancy in the Province of Africa organized a five-day inter-congregational workshop on “Effective Communication for Intercultural Living in Religious Community and Responsible Use of Social Media.”

Participants represented nine different religious communities of men and women. Our 10 African SSND postulants alone have the ability to speak 13 different national and tribal languages. During the workshop, participants were made aware that communication entails much more than language.

Sister Professor Agnes Lucy Lando, a Sister of Mary of Kakamega, invited participants to recognize how each person’s very being does, and must, communicate Jesus in our world. She focused on how technology is affecting religious life: the goodness and value of technology and the dangers of irresponsible use of mass media and technology.

Following the workshop SSND postulants shared their individual reflections:

“I was filled with curiosity to learn and understand what effective communication for intercultural living was calling me to as an individual. The message I personally



Using drums, tambourines and voices to communicate with the Lord during the “Effective Communication for Intercultural Living in Religious Community and Responsible Use of Social Media” workshop.

received in the workshop is that when I hear, I react, but when I listen, I communicate effectively.”
- Seember Beatrice Ortsgera

“Meaning is internal or personal and so I should value feedback from others. I learned that in order to ensure peaceful intercultural living, I need to be sensitive with the language and examples I give. I am challenged as I grow into becoming an effective communicator. I will deepen my spiritual growth and promote harmonious intercultural living in community and in ministry.” - Cecilia Mwende Muunda

“I learned that communication is a wide topic. I communicate each second, minute, hour and day of my existence. It is not only about speaking or talking, but also listening, my actions, habits and behaviors. Pausing for a moment to listen to the environment will bring the peace I desire.” - Sylvia Nyaboke Nyamira

Introducing postulants to an understanding of the diversity and depth of meaning that language and culture bring to the congregation begins to address the challenges arising from language and cultural differences in our community and world.

SSND celebrate 25 years working with United Nations

In February of 1947, the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) held its first meeting. Fifteen women representatives of UN member states met to begin focusing on the stated goal of “Empowering Women.”

In the 73 years since, the Commission has met almost every year. As an accredited Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the UN, SSND have had the privilege of participating in the CSW since 1994.

Initially, SSND were invited to attend, but starting in 2007, students and faculties in SSND schools around the world have also participated, including Japan, Brazil, Peru, Ghana, Hungary, Germany, Austria and the U.S.

In 2007, the theme of the Commission meeting was “the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child.” This particular focus led SSND to invite high school students for the first time.

All participants have enjoyed amazing opportunities to listen, meet other delegates from around the world, participate in the debates, attend workshops and assist in drafting a statement that reflects their priorities. In 2007, a student delegate from Ghana was chosen to present that statement at the Commission meeting.

Sister Beatriz Martinez-Garcia, School Sisters of Notre Dame NGO representative at the United Nations, says, “Each time when I read from our School Sisters of Notre Dame Directional Statement, ‘We educate, advocate, and act in collaboration with others for the dignity of life and the care of all creation’ it makes me think that the fundamental principle of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. It confirms that our presence and ministry at the UN is relevant because, ‘The Triune God impels us into the heart of the world to be women of peace, hope, and love.’” For more information on the Sustainable Development Goals, watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7D9fyg5CK4>

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During the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Sisters Eileen Reilly (center) and Sharon Kanis (right) joined students participating in a demonstration on International Women’s Day to promote education for women.



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