

● Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

# journeys

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website!  
[ssjerie.org](http://ssjerie.org)



*Margarita Dangel, Sisters of St. Joseph  
Neighborhood Network Site Director, with  
neighbors Darnell Stallworth (l) and Dan Serafin.*

# good neighbors

## *SSJ Neighborhood Network*

*by Stephanie Hall*



When Margarita Dangel, site director of the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network east (SSJNN), went to Durga Dangel's home, it was to get a permission slip signed so that Durga's children could participate in an after-school program. What that visit led to exemplifies the mission of the SSJ Neighborhood Network.

Dangal, a Bhutanese refugee, spoke little English. Margarita told her about the SSJNN's ESL (English as a Second Language) program and how it could help her in communicating with teachers, doctors and others. What Margarita didn't know was that Durga's 7-year old daughter had been diagnosed with leukemia and learning English was the solution Durga needed to help her daughter. She soon began instruction with Sister Rosemary O'Brien. A fortunate coincidence? Margarita believes it was God who brought them together.

Established in 2014 as an expansion of the SSJ Neighborhood Network in Erie's Little Italy area, SSJNN east focuses on an area referred to as the Eastside Multicultural Community (EMC), home to approximately 6,000 residents, including many immigrants from 21 different countries who speak 14 different languages.

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“The heart of our program is meeting people in their own environment.”

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### **A Vision and a Plan**

Once thriving with shops, businesses and activity, the neighborhood is now known for decreasing property values, high unemployment and disabilities, and an increasing number of single mothers and families living in poverty. The SSJNN vision is that this ethnically-diverse neighborhood once again becomes an inviting, safe community with

successful businesses, social activities, ethnic enterprises, access to transportation, a variety of housing options and an asset to the City of Erie.

Getting right to work, Margarita and Colleen Burbules, program director, went door-to-door to meet neighbors and assess needs. Surveys and visioning sessions were also conducted and the information gathered was used to develop the Eastside Multicultural Community Revitalization Plan. Just like the framework used for revitalizing the historic Little Italy neighborhood, the plan is in alignment with the Pennsylvania Elm Street program (see box pg. 11) which focuses on five areas: safe, clean and green; neighbors and economy; design; image and identity; and sustainable organization. Housing and social

and educational programs were added as additional concerns for the EMC area.

## Relationships and Partnerships

Success of the both SSJNN locations is the result of relationship-building and working with others. "For us, the SSJ idea of 'unity' means responding to the needs of our neighbor on a daily basis," said Heather Caspar, Executive Director, "using our own physical proximity and emotional attentiveness to strengthen and lift them up." "The heart of our program is meeting people in their own environment," Margarita explains. "There you start building relationships, you see what they need and then you can show

"What they have done for this area is tenfold of what others have tried to do."



Sister Phyllis Hilbert, SSJ (above) heads to the garden with kids at the SSJNN west. At right, Margarita Dangel teams up with SSJNN east neighbors Dan Serafin and Adem Husejnovic. Bottom right: cooking class at SSJNN west.

them that they matter. Everything else will flow from there."

Dan Serafin, owner of Serafin's Market, the oldest grocery store in Erie, has become one of Margarita's most loyal and supportive partners.

"I love the SSJ Neighborhood Network," Serafin said. "What they have done for this area is tenfold of what others have tried to do." He praised Margarita's ability to get people involved and told of one woman who was passing out fliers in the neighborhood. When he asked why she was out on such a cold evening, she replied, "because Margarita asked me."

Involvement and caring were the two words Serafin repeated as he spoke about the SSJNN. "They are fine tuning things," he said, "and bringing things together in a way that I haven't seen."

Margarita reciprocates with her appreciation of Serafin and a core group of neighborhood association members. "Without them, we couldn't do it," she said. She refers to Serafin's market as the busiest place on the



*Durga Dangel,  
an ESL student  
at the SSJNN  
east, with her  
daughter.*

# "We use each other to gain strength."

east side. "It's where people gather and it's a great way to get the word out."

"We use each other to gain strength," said Serafin, who placed a bench with the SSJNN logo painted on it outside the laundromat he owns.

Partnerships are vital to the success as well. Working with the Benedictine Sisters and Erie Arts and Culture, poetry is being painted on some EMC neighborhood doorsteps. "It's a different way of spreading art and beauty and starting conversations," Dangel said. Three bike racks, created by Designs in Iron, have been placed in the neighborhood, as well. Local business owners met and agreed to create a network of business owners.

Various organizations and university students helped remove more than 15 tons of illegally dumped items and 70 tires from vacant properties. And, to address the neighborhood concern for a lack of outdoor lighting, the SSJNN was able to get a street light added behind the school. A "Light Up EMC", campaign funded by a grant and implemented with help from the neighborhood associations, is providing dust-to-dawn

**Continued on page 11**



## SSJNN east and west

### A seamless network of services

Some programs offered through the SSJNN\*:

#### East

- Multicultural folk art program
- Basketball skills and drills sessions
- Seeds of Hope garden donated by the City Mission
- Gannon University is providing home insulation supplies
- United Way book swap
- Bicycle ownership/repair program
- Career programs

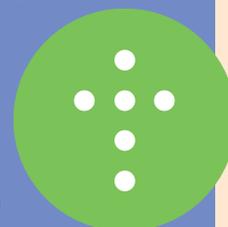
#### West

- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Art/sewing classes
- Monday night soup kitchen
- Facade improvements
- Sidewalk and curb replacement
- Security cameras installed in neighborhood
- Farmer's market
- Bible story time
- Housing, rental unit rehab
- National Night Out

#### Both locations

- Community gardening
- Walk-in assistance
- Neighborhood clean-up events

\* July 2015 – June 2016



# restoring hope

## *a new home for St. Patrick's Haven*

*Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers,  
that you do unto me. Matthew 25:31-46*

When Sister Mary Fromknecht was a pastoral minister at Saint Patrick Parish in the 1980s, she saw a number of homeless men in the neighborhood. As a Sister of St. Joseph, she had to respond. In 1984, she and a parishioner established St. Patrick's Haven for men as an outreach of Saint Patrick Parish. The Haven's first location was a home in downtown Erie which was considered uninhabitable. But it was offered for free and they gladly accepted it. Many Sisters, SSJ Associates and parishioners, through their donations and hard work, made it temporarily livable. But by May 1985, it was scheduled for demolition and the Haven had to close. Then, a year later, HANDS (Housing and Neighborhood Development Service) offered the use of a building for the Haven with a rent-to-own agreement. The Haven has been in that location ever since. But that was 30 years ago and the passage of time has dictated that, once again, a new home is needed.

On September 15, ground was broken for that new home, just a short distance from the Haven's present location. Erie Mayor Joseph Sinnott and local businessman Rick Griffith, who generously donated the land, joined Sr. Mary to officially "break ground". Progress is underway and fundraising continues. The new facility is expected to be complete by the beginning of summer 2017. 



- In a recent 12 month period, St. Patrick's Haven provided 6,426 nights of shelter to 98\* men, age 18 to 79. Approximately 40% were veterans.
  - Unlike other shelters, St. Patrick's Haven will accept men who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol as long as there is no trouble and no alcohol or other substances are brought into the shelter.
  - On weekends, dinner is supplied and served by area churches.
  - St. Patrick's Haven averages 19 guests each night; 21 can presently be accommodated. The new location will accommodate 24.
- \*(each is counted once, regardless of the number of nights he stays.)

**For more information about restoring hope to St. Patrick's Haven, visit [www.stpatrickshaven.org](http://www.stpatrickshaven.org)**

# spirits on fire!

## A Formation Program for Lay Leaders

*Pictured below: L to R, Sister Phyllis DiFuccia; Heather Caspar, the new Executive Director of the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network; Sheila Mack, Community Living Center (CLC) Food Service Director; Clarice Sidun, CLC Resident Care Coordinator.*



Three members of our staff spent a week at the Hospitality Center of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in Latham, New York for an “immersion event” that begins a year-long formation program to assist them in continuing the Sisters of St. Joseph mission, charism and values into the future. Heather Caspar, the Executive Director of the SSJ Neighborhood Network; Sheila Mack, Director of Food Service for the Congregation; and Clarice Sidun, Resident Care Coordinator for the Congregation were selected because “their ministry makes them a vital part of the charism and mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph,” said Sister Mary Herrmann, Leadership.

This integrated formation program includes opportunities to engage in a transformative process of growing into and leading from the CSSJ charism. Building on the call to mission, the program integrates the CSSJ story, core values and spirituality, and fosters deep, personal internalization.

“Spirits on Fire! Is a response to the growing need for lay persons to lead from the mission and charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph,” said Phyllis DiFuccia, SSJ, a member of the Spirits on Fire! team. “Fundamental to this is recognizing one’s own call to mission-infused leadership. Spirits on Fire! is an intentional process of passing this on and helping others become conscious of what it means.”

“As someone brand new to the SSJ charism, the experience was invaluable (as well as truly enjoyable) for leading the Neighborhood Network,” says Caspar. “On the very first day, Sister Dolores Clerico said something which resonated strongly with me: ‘You can’t think outside of the box unless you know what is in the box!’”

“The experience enabled me to tap into the charism that I possess, thus empowering me to carry on the mission by example,” said Mack. “I found myself surrounded by a community of people from all walks of life who emulate what it means to live a Christian life. This to me, in essence, is the mission of SSJ: bringing everyone together in unity, neighbor to neighbor, no distinction. In a time when the country is so divided, I believe it is imperative we come together as one.”

The program also includes opportunities for input, participative processes, reflections, communal prayer and time to be together with colleagues from across the country.

“I found particularly helpful the connections I made with SSJ ministry

partners from across the country. The networking across diverse ministry types and the planned, ongoing cohort work will benefit me for years to come," said Caspar.

"It was wonderful to meet and share views with people from all across the country. We discovered that although we have very different backgrounds and positions, we are all working together toward the same mission," shared Sidun. "We took time to learn about ourselves, discuss leadership styles and mission infused leadership. My favorite quote from the discussions was "self-knowledge is the essence of being a true leader".

The program continues with on-line modules and in-person gatherings and concludes in October, 2017. 

## S.O.S!! CSJ? SSJ? CSSJ? I'm confused!

Some Sisters of St. Joseph use the letters SSJ after their names, some use CSJ, and sometimes I see CSSJ. What's the difference? It is confusing. SSJ is an acronym for Sisters of St. Joseph while CSJ means Congregation of St. Joseph. They refer to the same thing – a woman who is a member of a Sisters of St. Joseph Congregation. We're not really sure why some of the congregations, early in their history, chose to use SSJ, while others chose CSJ. They both refer to women who belong to congregations that share a common origin in 1650 France. CSSJ (double S in the middle) is the inclusive acronym that is used when referring to both SSJs and CSJs together.

**A program of the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph, Spirits on Fire! was developed by CSSJ leaders, including Sister Phyllis DiFuccia of Erie. Sister Phyllis' experience includes leadership roles in education, for our congregation, and as Vice President of Mission at Saint Vincent Health Center. She currently serves in that capacity at Saint Joseph Academy in Cleveland. She has worked as an organization development consultant. She served on a research team which explored the earliest origins of the congregation. She has a M.S. in Organization Development, as well as M.A. and B.A. degrees.**



## 50 years of the U.S. Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph



***A reflection by former Federation President, Leonie Shanley, SSJ Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania***

As I think about my experience of the Federation, it dawns on me that it was in the early days of the Federation that the founding sisters and leadership who found their roots in the Carondelet Community of the Sisters of St. Joseph were living to see their dreams take on a reality.

In 1969, Federation leadership looked for an opportunity to be meaningful to all the Sisters of St. Joseph in the U.S. The answer, upon reflection, was to create a team of Sisters of St. Joseph to research the original inspiration of Fr. Médaille so it could be articulated for the modern world.

The team went to work in LePuy and neighboring areas of France. They researched the archives of communities around LePuy and the Primitive Constitutions. The Federation requested they bring back a statement articulating their results. This statement, which made clear the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph, is known as the Consensus Statement.

The Federation has grown each year from its conception. The opportunity I had to be its President in the 1970s reflected the initial reason for its purpose. Each year, the Federation grows so that, today, we see a strong meaningful resource for all Sisters of St. Joseph.

**The U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph is a union of all the Sisters of St. Joseph of the United States who claim a common origin in the foundation at Le Puy, France in 1650. This includes 4,465 sisters, 2,919 associates and 26 agrégées of 16 Congregations throughout the United States. Together, we strive to embody a vision of all people united in one earth community of love and unity. We do this through collaborative programs, interaction, prayer and ministry.**

# laudato si . . . laudato DO!

Caring for the environment is not new for the Sisters of St. Joseph. We have always felt a connection with the planet, a gift created by God that we get to enjoy, albeit temporarily, while we are here. The planet will long outlive us if we care for it and leave it in good condition for the generations that follow. God has entrusted it to us.

And so, when Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*, was released to the world in June 2015, it came as a welcome reminder, and perhaps a necessary spark, to reignite us in our desire to care for the world around

us. After *Laudato Si* was released, we held a series of discussion sessions, open to the public, to really dissect the document and fully grasp its directives.

## Supporting the Pope's Mandate

Our community gathering in April, the month of Earth Day, was education focused, teaching us what "carbon footprint" means and how we can reduce ours. The day energized and motivated us.

Several months earlier, we began a process to guide us in discerning where God was calling us next, and how we would respond. The process culminated in May when we identified priority areas on which to focus our energies. One of those areas was care for the environment.

That priority, combined with the renewed emphasis *Laudato Si* brought, is directing us to follow God's call and set us on a course of planning and action. An environment committee, chaired by SSJ agrégée Deb Seng, was



formed to develop a 3-5 year plan with goals and objectives to ensure we keep focused and, ultimately, make a difference.

"The fact that we have a Pope who is so in tune with the importance of a sustainable earth for future generations, and who wrote an encyclical on it as a challenge to the world, is reason enough for all of us to examine how we are doing our part, what we are doing, and how we can do it better" said Seng.

"I don't think there has ever been such anticipation or talk about an encyclical -- before it was even published."

# practical suggestions and things to think about . . .



## Change Your Lightbulbs

Switch all of the lights in your house to compact fluorescent bulbs. One bulb can reduce up to 1,300 pounds of carbon dioxide pollution during its lifetime. And if every house in the U.S. switched its bulbs, we could reduce the electricity spent on lighting by one half.

Source: [Mashable.com](http://Mashable.com)

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“Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it.” ~ Pope Francis

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## Making Plans, Setting Goals

The committee established an overall goal: as a community, we would reduce our carbon footprint in our buildings and individually as sisters, agrégées, associates, and employees.

Some initiatives in the plan include ongoing education in the form of monthly articles on relevant topics in the congregation's internal newsletter. Meetings with department heads, including food service and maintenance, have been conducted to determine what is currently being done and what additional actions can be taken. Plans are to do

the same with the housekeeping department and administrative staff. Monthly house meetings for the sisters will incorporate the topic on a regular basis to keep the goal a priority.

Another initiative is to seek partnerships. There are a lot of green groups and initiatives in Erie. Collaborating is a way to increase impact, without duplicating efforts. “We have joined efforts with the Benedictine Sisters of Erie who are very proactive in their environmental efforts,” Seng explained. “And we hope to see the three congregations of women religious in Erie come together and develop a plan.”

Recently, the committee met with Guy McUmbert, the Northwest Branch Director of the Green Building Alliance and formerly with the Pennsylvania Environmental Protection Agency. McUmbert works to expand GBA's presence in Erie and surrounding counties by planning and promoting events that increase awareness of green building principles, practices, techniques, and implementation methods. The first task will be to conduct energy audits to determine the carbon footprint of our congregational buildings.

Deb drew some inspiration from a visit to the retreat center of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary in Villa Maria, PA. She was struck with an immediate sense of their care and concern for the environment. “It was so evident, she said. “You could see it right away -- from the pictures on the wall to the programs they offer, it was just so apparent. That's what we want to do here.”

In the words of Pope Francis, “The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all.” 



### Unplug Your Gadgets

Completely powering off your gadgets is good for your devices and the planet. What's even better is unplugging your chargers when they're not in use. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, adopting these practices can save you \$100 each year on your energy bill.



### Adjust Your Curtains and Thermostat

Keeping your house two degrees warmer in the summer and two degrees cooler in the winter, saves money. Turning off your thermostat while you're not home can save 15% on your energy bill. In the winter, keep curtains open during the day to let sunlight in and closed at night to keep in warmth. During the summer, close them during the day and open them at night to moderate the temperature.

# the right decision is not always the easy decision

## Closing Villa Maria Elementary after 125 years

*Our Constitutions state: We commit ourselves to constant response to the ever-changing needs of the world.* It is only through prayer, discernment, openness to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and faith that we are able to fulfill that commitment. Sometimes, it involves a process of letting go; we have been called to this many times in our history. We let go of sponsored institutions and ministry priorities of the past when we realized the needs no longer existed, or were being met by others.

God has called us once again into the process of letting go and opening ourselves for where we will be led next. In October, we announced that, after 125 years, Villa Maria Elementary school (VME) will close in June, 2017.

"It's not easy to discern the future of a long-time ministry that is ingrained in who we are, is part of our identity in the community and, most especially, still serves many families," said Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ Leadership.



Several things led to this decision including the results of an extensive pastoral planning process and review of Catholic education by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie. Although VME is not a diocesan school, it was included in the study. As an outcome of the process, the Diocese announced the establishment of the Erie Catholic School System (ECSS), a system of six Catholic elementary schools. This is a proactive response to ensure a sustainable future for Catholic education in Erie. The study revealed that current and future demographics can support six elementary

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**"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"** *Isaiah 43*

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schools. As a system, ECSS will foster collaboration and ensure consistency in everything from tuition to curriculum. Families will benefit from shared resources, something that will be increasingly challenging for stand-alone schools.

With the establishment of ECSS, and our desire to support the Diocesan plan for Catholic education, we believe the time is right to close VME, and that it's the right thing to do. The Erie Catholic School System will effectively fulfill the Gospel mandate of preaching and teaching God's Word.

For 125 years we committed ourselves and our resources to VME. Thousands of children have graced the halls of VME and gone on to succeed in life; we are blessed to have been a part of their earliest education and faith formation. Today, we are committed to making this year the best ever in the history of Villa Maria Elementary. We will go forward remembering and honoring all that VME has been for 125 years as we let go and allow the new to unfold. 



## Continued from page 4

LED lights for residents' front porches.

"We're not just dropping bulbs off," Margarita explained. "We are going to the homes, explaining, and installing them. This is another opportunity to get to know the neighbors."

A unique bicycle program, the first offering of the SSJNN east, entails the repair and distribution of donated bikes. Adults and youth have the opportunity to earn bikes and participate in maintenance and repair labs. Two hundred bikes were donated last year, 46 were repaired and distributed and 20 more were repaired with the owner. Volunteers help coordinate the program

ESL classes for 5 Bhutanese women, a middle school career speaker series for 250 students at Woodrow Wilson Middle School and an ongoing career education program that reaches 500 students at McKinley Elementary school are some of the educational initiatives Margarita and Colleen have implemented.

Nine middle and high school students produced "Stop the Violence: Have Courage!" during a video camp at Community Access TV in Erie. The project was sponsored by a grant from the City of God Foundation, and co-sponsored by House of Mercy, Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, Inner City Neighborhood Art House, Community Access Television and Mercyhurst University Service Learning and Campus Ministry (visit [www.ssjerie.org](http://www.ssjerie.org) to view the video).

The SSJNN model, fueled by a mission to provide leadership and advocacy for local residents and to partner with the broader community to develop opportunities for both personal growth and neighborhood revitalization, is making a difference in a large area of the city. "By now the work of the SSJNN in Erie's historic Little Italy is established and well-known," said Caspar. "With expansion to the east side of Erie, we now provide a seamless network of programs and services, right across the core of Erie, that meets the needs of a broad geographic area and empowers the residents to "take back their neighborhoods." 

Heather May Caspar joined the SSJNN in August 2016 as the new Executive Director, overseeing operations and programs at both SSJNN locations. Her education and experience well equip her for this role. After graduating from Grove City College, she worked in Christian ministries in Ohio and later in promotions and marketing, throughout the state of Texas. She returned to Pennsylvania in 1996 and adopted Erie as her hometown. A passionate ambassador for the city and region, she has given many hours as a community volunteer. She began working in community education, outreach and development with Stairways Behavioral Health in 2008, which started her nonprofit vocational focus. She earned a master's of public administration degree in organizational leadership from Gannon University and is a graduate of Leadership Erie. Heather and her husband, James, live in Erie with their 10-year-old son, Mick, and two dogs, Frank and Kitsu.



*Heather Caspar, the new Executive Director of the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network.*



## Elm Street Program

Inspired by the success of the Pennsylvania Main Street program in revitalizing downtowns and urban corridors, the Elm Street Program is an initiative to encourage neighborhood revitalization in older residential areas bordering central business districts.

Many urban neighborhoods have fallen into disrepair. Disinvestment, outmigration and aftershocks of urban renewal have left many of these history-rich communities battling for survival. In these "core communities," Pennsylvania has a major untapped asset, and with help from an Elm Street program, these historic, authentic and unique neighborhoods can once again thrive, supporting the downtowns and commercial districts that they surround.

<http://www.padowntown.org/programs-services/elm-street>

# Leadership message



As a carpenter, St. Joseph worked to join things together. Let us truly “be Joseph” every day. After all, unity starts with relationship. This season is a time of examining our way of being with one another, ourselves and with family and friends. We need to closely review our relationships with those we may not understand or those who live in the pain of abuse, addiction, and violence. We are asked to put aside our tendency to judge and criticize and instead seek the gifts of the season, that which brings peace and harmony. Seek the grace to be Christmas, to be grateful, to be civil to one another regardless of differences. This is a season of giving and receiving. Let our hearts be opened to more fully experience the true gift of Christmas -- unity, peace and love -- which only our God can bring.

With gratitude and blessings,  
Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ,  
on behalf of SSJ Leadership

## news

### Call for Unity and Reconciliation

Following the presidential election, Sisters of St. Joseph throughout the country reaffirmed our mission of living and working so that all may be one and called all Americans to come together in the spirit of unity and reconciliation and build relationships based on respect. It was a rancorous and divisive campaign marked by rhetoric of anger, hate and dis-trust which left our nation hurt, broken and conflicted. God creates newness out of brokenness and chaos, and we believe

in fostering unity that's not uniformity, and diversity that's not division. We are one human family, whatever our differences may be. We need to begin healing and move forward in the belief that reconciliation and trust are possible.

### Circle of Friends

We enjoyed another wonderful outdoor liturgy and picnic this past August at our 14th annual Circle of Friends celebration



### Foundation Elects New Officers and Board Members

The Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation elected new officers and two new board members. **Tina Mengine** was elected chairwoman, taking the reigns from **Bill Hilbert, Jr.** who served as the foundation's first chairman. **Rebecca Dudenhoeffer** was elected secretary/treasurer. The foundation welcomed new board members **James Bird** and **Ann Marie Renze**. Jim is president and CEO of Villa Maria Residential Services Inc., a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, in Hermitage, PA, and the founder of Advancement Resource Services, LLC. He brings years of executive leadership and advancement experience. Ann Marie is

a licensed CPA and chief financial officer at Scott Enterprises Inc., in Erie. Prior to that, she served as CFO for International Wholesale Tile Inc., in Florida.

## Gannon Update

Over the past two semesters, the Sisters of St. Joseph have worked with students from Gannon University's Dahlkemper School of Business. This fall, two classes worked together, focused on gaining a better understanding of the millennial generation and how the SSJ can connect with students. Professor **Celene Kalivoda's** Marketing Research class collected secondary data, 30



journal articles, which then facilitated the second phase of the project, focus group interviews conducted by **Professor Kurt Hersch's** Business Policy class. The focus groups allowed for discussions with Gannon students to discover millennial views on life, thoughts on volunteering and perceptions of the SSJs. The final phase was a survey conducted by the Marketing Research class to verify the results of the focus groups. The overall findings from the research project indicated:

1. Students want to volunteer with any organization, including religiously affiliated organizations.

2. Students do not have a lot of time to volunteer so short term opportunities should be offered.
3. Many students agree social media could be used as a medium to get students involved with volunteer opportunities.

### **Taralyn Ishman**

*Senior Marketing Major and Project Manager  
Gannon University*

## Welcome New SSJ Associates

The newest SSJ associates are: seated (l-r) Karl and Francine Ballard, Sheila Causgrove, Cindy Ferber, Sandra Filippi, Marjorie Fischer, Rose Graham, Mary Ann Larimer, Barb Noonan, Lew Nordin, Sr., Connie Pellerite, Mary Schmidt, Joanne Sprickman and Mary Yochim. For more information about SSJ Associates, call 814-836-4134 or visit [www.ssjerie.org](http://www.ssjerie.org).



*Seated (l-r): Mary Schmidt, Marjorie Fischer, Francine Ballard, Sandy Filippi, Cindy Ferber*

*Standing (l-r): Lewis Nordin, Concetta Pellerite, Mary Yochim, Sheila Causgrove, Rosmari Graham, Joanne Sprickman, Barbara Noonan, Karl Ballard*

## Update: Initiative for Immigration

Congratulations to **Ajla Glavasevic** who completed the Erie Marathon (26.2 miles) on September 11 and raised \$2,700 for the SSJ Initiative for Immigration fund to offset legal fees for immigrants. Ajla finished in a little more than 5 1/2 hours (yes, 5 1/2 hours of running!) Several members of the SSJ family joined Ajla's family to cheer her across the finish line. More congratulations -- Ajla was married in Austria on October 29.



## Thanksgiving Success!

Thanks to all who made our 28th annual Thanksgiving Dinner a success! On Sunday, January 15, we'll hold our Liturgy of Thanksgiving, followed by the distribution of funds to more than 30 area organizations that help the hungry and homeless throughout the year.



*Sister Clare Marie Beichner visits with guests at the Thanksgiving Dinner.*

# Sisters of St. Joseph Mission and Ministries Foundation a greater gift

*Whether they realize it or not, my parents taught me to give. Their earliest lessons were simple: “share with your sister,” or “put part of your allowance in the church collection basket.”* I remember trick or treating for UNICEF, licking Easter Seals,



saving dimes for the March of Dimes and holding backyard carnivals for Ronald McDonald Charities. While these were valuable lessons, UNICEF, Easter Seals and the March of Dimes were abstract concepts in my young brain. I could relate a little to Ronald McDonald, but only because I liked his hamburgers. It wasn't until I was earning my own money and making my own choices that I learned the joy of giving.

My first charitable gift, as an adult, was to one of the Sisters of St. Joseph ministries. I wasn't taught by the Sisters and I'm not related to any of them. But I saw their work in Erie, and I knew they would do something good with my gift, even if it was very small. I doubt the Sisters are aware of the gift they gave to me that day. They gave me the chance to be a part of something bigger than myself.

Over the years, I've come to know the Sisters personally and to know more about their work. Their commitment to God and the neighbor inspires me, and their tireless spirit challenges me to do more.

I've been a donor for more than 30 years, and I hope to be one for many more.

Thank you, Sisters, for giving me a greater gift than I could ever give to you.

—from an anonymous donor 

## why I give

Your gifts are precious to us — whether they're gifts of time, prayer or resources. And your reasons for giving are as individual as you are. If you'd like to share your story of connection with us, we'd love to hear it. Please write us a note or send an email to [development@ssjerie.org](mailto:development@ssjerie.org). Just hearing from you is a gift.

## the gift of time

You can change lives just by sharing your time and talents. And the Sisters of St. Joseph may have just the right opportunity for you. Whether you're interested in volunteering once or twice a year or once or twice a week, we'd welcome your service. If you'd like to learn more about volunteer opportunities with the Sisters of St. Joseph, call **814-836-4198**, visit [www.ssjerie.org](http://www.ssjerie.org), or send an email to [development@ssjerie.org](mailto:development@ssjerie.org).

# This Christmas, be Joseph

**Do something  
meaningful; expect  
nothing in return.**

Taking what we learned during this past Year of Mercy, and acting in the manner of Joseph, our Patron, our prayer this holy season is that each of us finds opportunities to “be Joseph” this Christmas. Humbly, tenderly and lovingly, act in the manner of Joseph simply because it’s the right thing to do and for no other reason.

*Merry Christmas*

*The Sisters of St. Joseph  
of Northwestern  
Pennsylvania*





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PENNSYLVANIA

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2017  
save the  
dates!

- January 15** Liturgy of Thanksgiving SSJ Chapel, Erie
- March 8-14** National Catholic Sisters Week
- March 19** St. Joseph Day
- April 29** Sisters of St Joseph Neighborhood Network Gala
- August 19** Circle of Friends
- September 14** Saint Mary's Follies



website [www.ssjerie.org](http://www.ssjerie.org)  
Check out our New Website!

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