



# interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 43, Issue 8

August 2025

## 2025 Milestone SSJ Anniversaries

**375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
of the Founding of  
the Sisters of  
St. Joseph

**165<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**  
of the Sisters  
of St. Joseph  
of Northwestern  
Pennsylvania

## 2025 Ministry Milestones

**Saint Vincent  
Hospital**  
150 Years

**Gannon University**  
100 Years

**SSJ Neighborhood  
Network**  
25 Years

**Sisters of  
St. Joseph  
Mission & Ministries  
Foundation**  
10 Years

## Celebrate, Embrace, Ignite

Dear Neighbor,

I just returned from the Federation Event where we celebrated the 375th Anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph. It was an exciting weekend packed with wonderful presenters, great socials, and a magnificent play to highlight just a few things. The opening presentation was wonderful. The back-and-forth information that was shared by Ryan Murphy and Dr. Ann McElaney-Johnson was well done and inspiring. Sister Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, is a gifted speaker who drew me into her message from her first words. While much of what she presented I had heard before, that morning I heard it again for the first time. It was clear, crisp, energizing and refreshing. I felt as if I was with the first six sisters as they divided the

city and set out on a mission. There was a deep sense of pride as I listened to our story ... and our call today. The one-person play "Communion" by Matthew LaBanca was excellent. During the play, I recalled reading about his story in our local paper. It evoked in me many emotions: sensitivity to the issue, compassion, sadness and disappointment, and a deeper understanding of the complexities of life, to name a few.

As I returned home, my thoughts turned to deep gratitude and pride for a richer sense of who we are as Sisters of St. Joseph and all who partner with us.

Well done, Federation!

  
Sister Mary

*Sisters, Associates, Agrégées, and Guests*

**Associate Welcoming  
Sunday September 7, 2025  
9:00 a.m. Liturgy at the CLC**

*Followed by a reception  
and Continental Breakfast*

Please join us as we welcome  
our newest SSJ Associates

**Barbara Olon  
Robert Olon  
Rev. Ken Thompson**

[Please click here to RSVP](#) by August 25, 2025  
or call 814-836-4040



**MISSION:  
POSSIBLE!**

## Celebrate, Embrace, Ignite!

*SSJ Federation Event*



Sr. Susan setting the environment for the CLC Watch Party



### CLC Watch Party

Sisters, Agrégées, and Associates and friends gathered at the CLC to participate in the Federation Event.



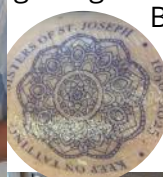
### Getting Tats!

Temporary tattoos featuring a lace design and the phrase "Keep on Tatting" were a huge



hit at the CLC and in Kansas City. Agrégée Betsy Wiest (above) ran the tattoo parlor at the CLC. Here she is tatting IT Director Vickie Pangratz. Sr. Mary Drexler (left) getting her tat in Kansas City.

Below, Charlene Kellerman, S. Marianne Stuckert and S. Nancy Fischer showing off their tats!



### The Kansas City Crew!

Front (l-r): S. Nancy Fischer, Agr. Charleen Kellerman, S. Mary Drexler, S. Carol Morehouse, S. Marianne Stuckert, Agr. Deb Seng. Back (l-r): Cathy Fresch (SSJMMF), Almi Clerkin (SSJMMF), Associate/Exec. Asst. Cass Shimek, Associates Richard and Pat Marshall, Associate/Communications Dir. Stephanie Hall.



### Lovely in Lace

A total coincidence, several of us showed up for the banquet wearing lace in honor of our early Sisters.

### Thank you

Thank you to everyone who attended the Federation Event, either in Kansas City, or virtually at the CLC Watch Party. It was an inspiring gathering as together we celebrated the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph 375 years ago in France. It was truly a community "sharing of gifts" that made it all possible. In the spirit of the Event, may we continue to Celebrate, Embrace and Ignite the Charism in our world today.

[Click here](https://ssjerie.org/photo-gallery) or go to [ssjerie.org/photo-gallery](https://ssjerie.org/photo-gallery) to view the full gallery of photos from the event!





## The Ground is Broken!

### *Women Religious Archives Collaborative*



On Tuesday, July 22, the Women Religious Archives Collaborative broke ground for a state-of-the-art 30,000+ square foot repository in Cleveland, Ohio. This facility will

be home to the archives of up to 80 congregations of Catholic Sisters from throughout the U.S., including the archives of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

The Heritage Center will open in 2027. Pictured above left: Sr. Rosemary O'Brien (left) with Sr. Susan Durkin, OSU, Executive Director of the *Women Religious Archive Collaborative*.



## Action Against Hunger

The Action Against Hunger event was recently held in Gridley Park. The event was sponsored by NETWORK. Several speakers addressed how the upcoming legislative cuts are going to affect those who are already experiencing food insecurity. Jenn Kennedy from the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network (SSJNN) talked about the food and personal hygiene programs the SSJNN offers. She looks forward to the day when parents won't have to make the decision between a meal and a bar of soap to keep the kids clean.

*Pictured l-r: Agr. Betsy Wiest, S. Phyllis Hilbert, and Jenn Kennedy.*

## Associates' News and Happenings

### Prayers

Please remember in your prayers the repose of the soul of Scott Andres, brother of **A. Jodie Andres**, who passed away last week. May Eternal Light Shine Upon Him O Lord! May he rest in peace. Also



remember Jodie in your prayers at this most difficult time.

**A. Joy Sherred** called to share some good news with us! Her grandson, Dylan Wentz, for whom we have been praying, received good news – his cancer is in remission! They are very grateful for all your

prayers and ask that you continue to keep Dylan in prayer as his health continues to improve.

Please remember in prayer, all the Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées as well as any of their family members who are dealing with health issues.

### Looking Toward the Future

As the Spirit of God moves us into our future; the Associates, are beginning to examine their needs and how best to determine a structure and leadership for the Associates. To that end, Associates who expressed an interest in helping to shape this new direction will gather to begin a brainstorming process. Contact Nancy Donnelly

if you are interested in helping with this process over the next several months.

During this time of looking to the future, the Associates will continue to be involved in the following:

- Welcoming new Associates
- Quarterly Fellowship Sundays

- Advent/Lenten Mornings of Reflection
- That's a Wrap
- Community Days

*Discerning a future and leadership for the Associates is a process which will take time and prayer. Please remember this in your daily prayer.*

### "We Are One," the SSJ Family Summer Picnic

The SSJ Family Summer Picnic was a wonderful gathering of Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées. A highlight of the event was recognizing the Sister Jubilarians and those celebrating milestone anniversaries as Associates. The charism and spirit are truly alive as evidenced by these dedicated

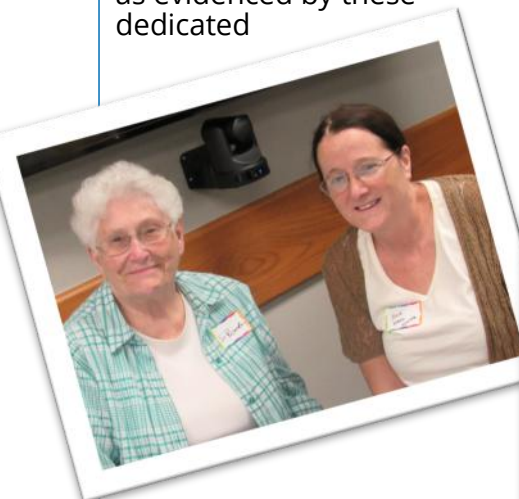
women and men.

Also recognized and celebrated were Sisters Susan Herzing and Ann Marie Cappello for their many years of leadership to the Agrégées and Associates. Their compassion, inspiration, and guidance will long be remembered. Our thanks and prayers accompany them as they begin a new chapter.

Special thanks to Carol Dorr and Jodie Andres, picnic co-chairs, and the committee for

planning and organizing the picnic. Thank you to everyone who brought a dish to share. There was plenty of food, good times, and reconnecting as we continue to live the SSJ story.

*Pictured below, l-r:  
S. Ricarda Vincent,  
Associates Julie Whan,  
Mary Lou Rathers, Mary Schmidt,  
Mary Ann Zarnick, and  
Alice Fuhrman.*



[Click here](http://ssjerie.org/photo-gallery) or go to [ssjerie.org/photo-gallery](http://ssjerie.org/photo-gallery) to view more photos.



## Listen

Living the synodal approach each day is a major step in the transformation of our Church and our world. One way to do this is to listen with empathy. By taking active steps to listen with an open mind, going beyond words, will assist you in being attentive to another person's feelings. When we encounter someone who is struggling, or who is different than we are, attentive listening is a way to bring empathy and God's presence. A few steps in this process include giving the person your undivided attention, not offering advice, making judgments, or shutting

*Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ*

down their feelings. Be aware of their tone and body language. Be comfortable with silence that allows the exchange to remain open and continue. When it's appropriate to express yourself, it might be helpful to paraphrase what you heard without offering solutions. Offer to share again when it is mutually convenient and the person wants you to. Listening brings an openness for God's grace to be present and respond.

Listening with depth brings hope. This Jubilee year, we are invited to be Pilgrims of Hope. As Arthur Ashe shared, "Start



where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can." This is the core message of the synod process as well. For the sake of our universal Church and our suffering world, the Synod invites us to be conduits of hope and love, to listen to each other with empathy, to share our compassion and to be people who build bridges through dialogue, understanding, and action. This is our collective call to the ongoing transformation in this time of uncertainty and to be seeds of growth and hope.

*by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator*

## Living Laudate Deum

"Being cool" can be both a description of character and of comfort with the air temperature. Here are some suggestions on how to be cool by maintaining cooler indoor temperatures in creation-friendly ways.

In the U.S., air conditioning (AC) is often used to moderate the indoor temperature, but there are less expensive, and more creation-friendly ways. In some countries, as a way to reduce electricity usage, you must obtain government approval before installing AC. Even without that kind of restriction, we can use less energy-intensive strategies to keep us cool.

- Trees can be effective sources of shade for homes. On a larger scale, community planting programs for trees and other vegetation can reduce the "heat island" effect found in many urban areas.
- Open windows at night and close them in the morning.
- Close window coverings, shades or blinds, during the day.
- Exterior window shades, awnings, and shutters reduce heating rooms.
- Insulate and check for air seal leaks around windows and doors. It is especially important when mechanical AC is used.

- Bake and wash clothes at night. Grill or use other outside cooking, and plan meals that require less cooking. When cooking indoors, use exhaust fans to control the cooking heat. Microwaves usually generate less heat. Some electric companies offer discounts for electric use at non-peak hours.
- Dry laundry outside. If indoor dryers are used, exhaust fans are essential.
- Use exhaust fans in bathrooms/showers and in windows.
- Ceiling fans should blow down during summer.
- Use lighting that produces less heat – LED bulbs

## New 2025 SSJ Directory — With Photos!

An online version of the new 2025 Directory will be available August 6 on the Community (login) of our website [ssjerie.org](http://ssjerie.org). Please review your information and submit any changes/updates with the Directory Change Form there. **Please submit any changes by August 20!** If we don't have your photo or you wish to submit a new photo, you can upload it with the change form, or email it to [prdir@ssjerie.org](mailto:prdir@ssjerie.org) (put DIRECTORY PHOTO in the subject line). If you don't have access to review the online directory and you want to verify your information, call 814-836-4040 and leave a message with the changes or ask for someone to return your call.

After all changes are made, an updated version will be available online and paper copies by request.





help the  
homeless  
challenge

Erie Gives Day 2025



There's no better way to grasp the daily struggles of the homeless than to spend a night sleeping on the street. Even that doesn't compare to the reality homeless men face, but it's a powerful act and a way to walk beside our dear neighbors who are unhoused. It says, *we see you, we care, and we're here.*

Our goal for Erie Gives Day on August 12 is to raise \$40,000 for St. Patrick's Haven. If we do, some of our board members will sleep outside as a show of solidarity with the men we serve.

For over 40 years, St. Patrick's Haven has provided shelter for men in need. In addition to a bed, we offer warmth, safety, hygiene, companionship, and hope. Thanks in large part to the compassion and support of our SSJ family and the broader community, we sheltered 202 men last year, including veterans, for a combined total of over 7,000 nights. Your generosity helps us to serve with dignity and love. Your care and commitment make it possible for us to be a true haven.

## SSJ Neighborhood Network



### 25 YEARS. ONE MISSION. ENDLESS IMPACT.

For 25 years, your support has driven transformative change, impacting over 12,000 neighbors!

Join us in revitalizing neighborhoods and empowering people.

Your generosity makes all the difference.



Celebrate and build legacy with us.

CONSIDER SSJ NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK  
ON ERIE GIVES DAY, TUESDAY, AUGUST 12TH



## Think of the Sisters of St. Joseph on Erie Gives Day!

For 165 years, the Sisters have led with quiet humility – shaping lives, strengthening families, and enriching our community, giving so much to so many.

**On Erie Gives Day, please support these remarkable women and their many ministries.**

**Foundation Goals for 2025:**  
**10% increase in donors (35)**  
**and dollars (\$55,000)**

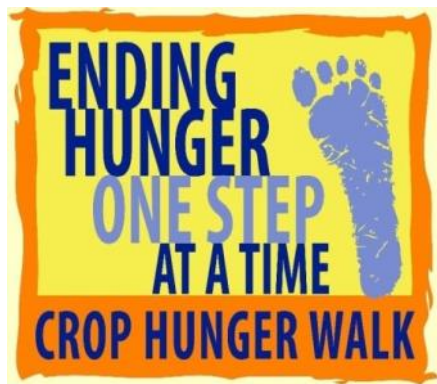
**Online Donations** – Tuesday, August 12  
24 hours (midnight to midnight)

**Gifts by Check** – by Tuesday, August 5 –  
contact [carol.hermann@ssjerie.org](mailto:carol.hermann@ssjerie.org) or 814/836-4198

**NEW for 2025:** The Erie Community Foundation will cover all credit card fees.



## Erie County Crop Walk 2025



This year is the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Erie County CROP Walk! CROP Hunger Walks are interfaith events that build community while raising funds to end hunger in our own community and around the world. Your participation impacts families in more than 35 countries. One in nine people worldwide lack access to clean water and a healthy diet. We walk to be in solidarity, bring awareness to these issues and raise the funds for permanent change. The Sisters of St. Joseph have participated in this effort since it began.

Please join our SSJ team in the 2025 CROP Walk on **September 28 beginning 1:30p.m. at Presque Isle, Beach 1.**

Prayers and donation are valuable ways of supporting this effort. Your donations can be given to:

**Sister Millicent Zimmer**  
814-836-4184

**s.mzimmer@ssjerie.org**  
OR

**Sister Phyllis Hilbert**  
814-454-7814 ext. 203  
**ert@ssjnn.org**

We thank you for your continued support.

## Welcome New SSJ Employees!

**Savannah Allen**  
*Food Service*



**Colleen Gomolekoff**  
*LPN*



**Olivia Schweitzer**  
*Front Desk*



**Vivian Evans-Hughes**  
*Director of Nursing*



**Emma Revak**  
*Nurse Aide*



**Sonya Carr**  
*Nurse Aide*



## SSJ community August Birthdays

- 1 S. Ann Marie Joint
- 4 A. Rosemary Oehmler
- 5 S. Angela Marie Servidea
- 6 A. Sandy Filippi
- 9 S. Mary Rita Kuhn
- 9 A. Harold Sheldon
- 11 A. Anne Freitas
- 11 S. Ann Marie Cappello
- 13 S. Phyllis DiFuccia
- 15 A. Sheila Martin
- 18 A. Diana Mikula
- 20 A. Sue McCreary
- 22 A. Bonnie Short
- 23 A. Margaret Alloway
- 23 A. Carol Hoffman
- 24 S. Maria Assumpta Ruza
- 25 A. Margaret Chrymko
- 25 A. Julie Whan
- 26 A. Gretchen Gallagher Durney
- 28 S. Mary Fromknecht
- 29 Agr. Teresa Cieslikowski
- 29 A. Marilyn Mead
- 29 S. Mary DePaul Sabella
- 30 A. Maggie Shaughnessy
- 30 A. Cass Shimek
- 31 A. Judy Pratt
- 31 A. Barb Jones



**EVERY MONDAY**  
**June 30 — September 29**  
**3:00 - 6:00 p.m.**

Closed only for Labor Day holiday on September 1



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.ORG



## Reflection from the Federation Event

I was privileged to go to the SSJ Federation Event and 375th anniversary celebration in Kansas City. The three words on the logo were Celebrate, Embrace, and Ignite. It sounded like fun, but I had no idea how powerful those words would come to be. Yes, we were celebrating the founding of the SSJs, and celebrate we did. We got to experience how many others associated with the family of Joseph embrace the mission and live the charism. I have no doubt that the charism lives in each person I met, and each person lives out the charism with others.

They demonstrated "ignite" with videos of organizations living out the virtues of humility, fidelity, courage, vision, strength, and compassion. We were given an opportunity to donate and the money raised would be split among the six featured ministries and organizations. They announced

that more than \$6,000 was raised, not including donations from virtual attendees or those who gave online.

If that was not powerful enough, we then participated in the monarch butterfly project which started at Annunciation House in El Paso, TX and has passed through several SSJ communities.



Monarch butterflies are known for their journey of migration and have become the symbol of immigrant justice. We colored paper butterflies and wrote blessings for immigrants on them. Here in Erie, we will also be coloring butterflies and writing prayers. Our butterflies will be displayed at the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants Erie Field Office for



*by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator*

immigrants to see and know that we are supporting them. One other action that we were encouraged to take was to sign on to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. This treaty asks world leaders to prevent the proliferation of coal, oil and gas by stopping all new exploration and production, phasing out old methods, and fast tracking just transitions for industry workers. Go to: [laudatosimovement.org/ffnpt/](https://laudatosimovement.org/ffnpt/) if you are interested in signing.

I left Kansas City with renewed enthusiasm knowing that I am not alone in working for justice. The song, "Somewhere in the Future" by Kathy Sherman, CSJ, says: "here in the future, somewhere down the line, children will be asking what we did with our time."

So I ask you, what is within your capacity to be and do? Is it prayer, advocacy, accompaniment, service, or something else? We all are capable of doing something.