

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 42, Issue 7

July 2024

Moving Day

It takes time and lots of energy to move. I recently completed my move from 5055 Eastwind Lane to the Community Living Center. (Make changes in your address book, please.)

While it was only a 3-4 mile move, it took two and a half months to complete. I moved from a 5-room apartment to a one-room living space. Downsizing was the word I kept in mind each time I packed. I recalled the time when Rebecca Hower came to help Sr. Joyce Lowrey move to the CLC. She would ask Sr. Joyce, "Do you *need* it? Or do you *want* it? And *why*?" Rebecca would gently prod Joyce to hold on to some things but to let her memory hold on to the others as she packed them to give away. I recall doing much of the same during my experience with what to do with cherished items.

I don't believe one is fully settled in new surroundings for at least a

year. I keep changing things around in my new dwelling space. I am reminded of the passage in Luke's Gospel, the contemporary text that says, "Don't load yourselves up with equipment. Keep it simple; *you* are the equipment. And no luxury inns—get a modest place and be content there until you leave. If you are not welcomed, leave town. Don't make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and move on." (The Message, Luke 9:3)

For those of us who are moving, have just recently moved, or will be moving, may these words give us something to reflect on. And for those of us who haven't moved in a long time, take some time to reflect on what you might need to let go of as you journey forward.

Peace,



Sister Mary



Charism/Mission Directional Statement

Conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence, we commit to live more fully the Gospel message; to further develop wholesome relationships among and beyond ourselves; to move beyond our comfort zones; to live the charism so that others may experience the love of God at this moment in our history.

Governance/Leadership Directional Statement

Conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence and believing that governance is an expression of our mission, we commit to exploring and creating a governance model which may include Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées. We commit to sharing responsibility, and communicating with trust, compassion, and acceptance.



SSJ Associates present
SSJ Community Picnic

Saturday, August 3
11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Admin. Building and Patio

Hamburgers, hot dogs, beverages, and desserts will be provided.

Please bring a dish to share

Last name:

A - H Cold Salad

I - P Hot Dish

Q - Z Finger foods,

[Click here to RSVP by July 17](#)
or call 814-836-4040

MISSION: POSSIBLE!

Many Hands Make Light Work

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

I often hear the proverb expression, "many hands make light work," but it just recently resonated with me. I began to reflect on what it really means to me.

I immediately thought of all those who have helped with Associate activities and given of their time and talent. I counted at least 39 pairs of hands belonging to Associates and Agrégées who



are members of various committees or who voluntarily send birthday cards to Associates. Then there are the administrative staff members who are there when I need a helping hand. My thoughts did not end there. I also was reminded of our Sisters, Associates, Agrégées, CLC staff, and all those employees who carry out the work of our

sponsored ministries: Saint Mary's Home, St. Patrick's Haven, St. James Haven, Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, and the Sisters of St. Joseph Mission and Ministries Foundation. And I can't forget the students who help with outreach by sending "thinking of you" cards to Associates.

I couldn't begin to count the hundreds of pairs of hands at work every day reaching out to the dear neighbor without distinction and making the **SSJ Mission Possible!**

Thank you.

Wisdom Circles

The Charism Committee collated your responses from the Wisdom Circles that gathered in April and early May. These groups discussed ideas and action plans for Living the Charism Chapter Directional Statement.

Four themes were identified:

- 1) BE a Charism Carrier,
- 2) Presence, Inclusivity, Build Relationships
- 3) BE Observant and respond to the needs of the "dear neighbor."
- 4) Break down barriers and build acceptance.



Conscious of the Holy Spirit's presence I will:

- ✓ Show up – be present – to support events, endeavors, and ministries as far as you are able.
- ✓ Build relationships by taking the time and opportunity to stop and greet one another.
- ✓ Be friendly, hospitable, and kind – eventually it makes a difference!
- ✓ Listen to learn, not to be right. Be present to someone who has different perspectives/ ideologies than your own.
- ✓ Be a loving presence to someone new ("Tell me more about yourself").
- ✓ Inclusiveness – love without distinction—no more "we-them."
- ✓ Life is totally about relationships—it's who you are for someone and how you treat them not what you do.

State of the Heart Prayer



A presentation by Sr. Ricarda Vincent

Sisters, Associates, Agrégées are invited!

September 14, 2024
9:00 a.m. to 12 noon
CLC Gathering Room
 Coffee and donuts provided.
 More information coming in the August Interim.

Save the dates!

August 3, 2024
 Associate Picnic
August 25, 2024
 Fellowship Sunday
September 8, 2024
 Liturgy and Associate Welcoming
September 14, 2024
 State of the Heart

The USA Agrégées

by SSJ Agrégée Cindy Polesnak, SSJ representative to the USA Agrégées

In 2021, what started as a ZOOM meeting of Brentwood and Springfield Agrégées soon led to a regular gathering of all SSJ Agrégées in the United States. We share the state of our hearts, engage in conversation of our shared experiences of being called to become Agrégées, and we discuss a variety of relevant topics. Each subsequent meeting included more Agrégées, and eventually, 47 Agrégées from five groups were meeting: Concordia, Boston, Erie, Brentwood, and Springfield. An additional 14 women who are in the process of becoming Agrégées in Carondelet, MO also participate. We have a core team that includes a representative from each congregation and Sister Phyllis Esposito, CSJ, Brentwood, NY, as facilitator. We are the USA Agrégées.

At each quarterly gathering, we have the opportunity for meaningful sharing and deepening connections. Each meeting begins with prayer, then in small groups, we share state of the heart and conversation around various topics and

questions. We then move into order of the house and then close with prayer.

In 2022, we gathered in conjunction with the Federation Event in St. Louis (32 Agrégées met in person in St. Louis with another 31 on ZOOM.) It was an energizing gathering and the excitement and movement of the Spirit was evident. We shared our Agrégée or congregational mission statements looking for the commonalities and differences. The sharing was powerful, and you could feel the oneness in the group.

As we continue to meet, we consider questions that challenge and invite us to stretch beyond our comfort zones in living the SSJ charism. *What unifies us? What are our differences? How do we gather as Agrégées in our congregations? How have I experienced active and inclusive love in my vocation? How do we to live out the paschal mystery? What will our future look like as the number of canonically vowed Sisters decreases?*

During our March gathering, each congregational group was asked to meet and discuss the

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Agrégées pictured, seated left-right: Arlene Chaney, Jeanne Ryan, Deb Seng, Charlene Kellerman and Judi Janke. Standing (l-r): Betsy Wiest, Cindy Polesnak, Tammy Van Buren, and Sr. Susan Herzing, SSJ, Agrégée Director. Not pictured: Teresa Cieslikowski and Michelle Tortorelli.

What's the difference?

Sisters*

- Open to single, Catholic women
- Permanent, canonical vows of poverty, chastity and obedience
- 6 - 9 year formation process
- Lives in community with SSJs
- Finances governed by vow of poverty.

*While we no longer offer a novice formation program in Erie, if a woman is interested in becoming a Sister of St. Joseph, we connect her with another SSJ congregation.



SISTERS OF
ST. JOSEPH
OF NORTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA

Agrégées

- Open to Catholic women
- Permanent, non-canonical vow of fidelity;
- Usually a 3-year formation process;
- Continue with independent living arrangements;
- Participate on committees and attend various meetings;
- Personal responsibility for finances, health care, retirement, funeral expenses and indebtedness.

Associates

- Open to Christian men and women
- Annual, renewable commitment
- 1 year formation process
- Continue with independent living arrangements;
- Participate on committees and attend various meetings;
- Personal responsibility for finances, health care, retirement, funeral expenses and indebtedness

Associates' News and Happenings

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Associate Director

Prayers

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Daniel Zmijewski, son of **A. Audrey McLaughlin**, who died on May 26. May Eternal Light Shine Upon Him O Lord! May he rest in peace. Please remember Audrey and family at this most difficult time. Also remember **A. Linda Daugherty**, **A. Mary Schmidt's** husband who is ill, Associate candidate, **Michael Short**. and all the Sisters, Associates and Agrégées and their family members who are dealing with health issues.

What's Happening in your Corner of the World?

It was great to have a phone conversation with **A. Marvin Ridgeway** who called from Florida. It has been a while since I had heard from him. Looking forward to seeing him when he visits Erie next month. Also good to hear from **A. Marti Michael** and that she is still making her beautiful greeting cards.

Many Thanks!

... to Jenn Kennedy, **A. Nancy Fetzner Brown**, and the entire staff of the SSJNN for the hard work and the gracious hospitality they extended to the Sisters, Associates and Agrégées who attended the afternoon social in the park. It was an enjoyable experience, and we learned a lot about the work that is being done by this energetic and dedicated staff. We are truly blessed to have them reaching out to the dear neighbor without distinction and making the SSJ Mission Possible in their corner of the world.

I would like to acknowledge all those who lent a helping hand with all the Associate activities this year. The Associate Advisory Committee: **Sisters Mary Drexler and Linda Fusco and Associates Edith Benson, Margaret Chrymko, Nancy Donnelly, Carol Dorr, John Fuhrman, and Kris Huber**; the Outreach Committee: **Associates Edith Benson, Valerie Carlson, Nancy Donnelly, Carol Dorr, Cynthia Gruzca, Stephanie Hall, Kris Huber, Maggie Link, and Suzy Newman**; the Program Committee: **Associates Margaret Chrymko, Carol Dorr, Suzy Newman, Jane Zawacki, and Agrégée Charlene Kellerman**; SSJ administrative staff members: **Carleen Onuschak**, who keeps the checkbook balanced and does our monthly report, **Vickie Pangratz**, who helps with technology, **A. Stephanie Hall**, our communications director, and **A. Cass Shimek**, who comes to my rescue frequently. In addition to committee work, **Associates Jodi Andres, Kathy Davis, Rebecca Flynn, Patty Franzaglia, Alice Fuhrman, Rose Jones, Marti Michael,**

Anna Turco, and Gratia Wittmann have been faithfully sending birthday cards to Associates for several years. In addition, three high school students send "thinking of you" and special occasion cards during the year. As I mentioned in the Mission Possible column this month, **"Many Hands Make Light Work."**

Meadville Associates

On Monday June 12, **A. Nancy Donnelly, my sister, Rita Cappello**, and I went to Meadville to have lunch with the Associates in that area. I have not seen many of them for quite some time, so it was good to reconnect. Those attending were Associates **Gerald Derby, Jo Anne Elwell, Kay Hotchkiss, Ruth Mercier, Joan McCain, Rosemary Oehmler, Chris Partin, Shirley Byers, Debra Hamilton, Jennifer King, Marlene Lyda, Linda McQueen, Dan Partin, Ann Semler, and Lorna Waddell**, were unable to attend. We were also joined by other Associates **Charlotte and Hal Sheldon** (Charlotte is Ruth Mercier's sister) and **Carl Hotchkiss**, husband of **Associate Kay Hotchkiss**.



Left to right: Chris Partin, Rosemary Oehmler, Kay Hotchkiss, Joan McCain, Hal Sheldon, Charlotte Sheldon, Nancy Donnelly, Joanne Elwell, Jerry Derby and Ruth Mercier.

10th Annual Garage Sale

Benefits Hekima Place, a non-profit girls' orphanage and co-education school in Kenya, Africa

3309 Asbury Road

June 28, 29,30

July 4, 5, 6, 7

9 a.m.—5 p.m.

Thousands of items available in all price ranges. Smiling shoppers and helpers are greatly appreciated.

Agrégées Arlene Chaney and Jeanne Marie Ryan



get to know the Agrégées

Cindy Polesnak



**Became Associate 1998
Companion: Sr. Sally Villa
Became Agrégée 2016
Mentor: Sr. Rosemary O' Brien**

"At a Community Day around 20 years ago, we were asked to dream big. I expressed being called to something more ... deeper," recalled Cindy Polesnak, one of the "original dreamers" of the Agrégée vocation in Erie.

Cindy remained passionate as the process unfolded, clearly called to desiring something with a permanent commitment, accountability, and personal responsibility.

Her connection with the SSJs began in 1980 at Villa Maria College. In 26 years with the SSJs, she has ministered in many ways: committee work, spiritual enrichment, That's A Wrap, and volunteering with St. Patrick's Haven, the Thanksgiving Dinners, the SSJ Neighborhood Network and in Marycrest.

She spent 20 years at Sarah Reed Children Center as a mental health counselor and coordinator of outpatient services. Currently, she ministers at the CLC as a receptionist. Cindy enjoys photography, nature, bird watching, gardening, reading, jumble puzzles, cooking, baking, canvas painting, and Pittsburgh sports. She also enjoys being present to children from India in her neighborhood.

Sr. Carol Morehouse, SSJ Named Serra Club Religious of the Year

Congratulations to Sr. Carol Morehouse who was recognized as this year's Serra Club Religious of the Year. The honor was presented at the Serra Club's annual event held in early June. William Hilbert Jr., was honored as Outstanding Layperson of the Year, Deacon Jerome Peterson was honored as Deacon of the Year, and Father Nicholas Rouch was honored as Priest of the Year. Congratulations to all!



Honorees pictured (from left to right): Sister Carol Morehouse, SSJ; Father Nicholas Rouch; William M. Hilbert Jr.; Deacon Jerome Peterson and 2024-2025 Serra Club of Erie President Mike Elia pose for a photo prior to dinner at Gannon University Yehl Alumni Ballroom.

Photo/Melanie Sisinni



We've added a Transforming Grace video playlist to our YouTube channel. The playlist includes all the videos used in the prayer/reflection guides. The videos are worth watching either as part of the prayer/reflections or just on their own. [Click here to access the playlist.](#)

Living Laudate Deum

Did you know that according to the Environmental Protection Agency the average American family uses 300 gallons of water a day? That means on any given day, Americans use enough water to fill 1,163 Empire State Buildings.



Here are a few suggestions to reduce your water usage:

Minimize Water Consumption

- Turn off water while brushing your teeth.
- Shorten your shower by a minute or two.
- Wash your fruits and veggies in a pan of water instead of running water from the tap.
- While you wait for hot water, collect the running water and use it to water plants.

USA Agréees

(Continued from page 3)

following question and come up with a feasible action in response. *How can we do something to increase inclusivity in our SSJ community?*

Responses we talked about included *sharing our gifts and desire to become more inclusive, step up and make ourselves included in the family of Joseph, explore an Agrégée column in Interim, and last, use more inclusive language, i.e., "Family of Joseph."*

For our action, we chose to deepen our inclusion in the "Family of Joseph" by pursuing committee and volunteer opportunities and exploring a column in Interim. Additionally, we will participate in an Agrégée retreat that is being planned by the newly formed USA Agrégée retreat team.

The USA Agrégée meetings are challenging, life giving, and full of energy. It's good to be with others who understand and share the same call and movement of the Spirit.

Mark Your Calendar

Erie Gives Day
Tuesday, August 13
12:00 midnight—12:00 midnight

Our 2024 Goal is \$50,000 from 350 Donors!

You can give online, by phone, in person, or by mail. Gifts of stock or IRA donations can also be made by mail.

[Ways to Give | Erie Gives](#)



All Erie Gives Day (EGD) donations to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania are administered by the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation according to the donor's wishes. If you would like to designate your gift to any of the following, please add your choice/s to the "in honor/in memory" space provided on the EGD donor page OR call/email Carol Hermann - 814.836.4198 or carol.hermann@ssjerie.org with your donor designation:

- ◆ **Sisters' Care and Retirement**
- ◆ **Grow for the Future (SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation)**
- ◆ **Thanksgiving 2024**

SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation
2023 Erie Gives Day
by the numbers—\$39,688.98
 \$37,678.21 raised
 (61% increase from 2022)
 \$2,010.77 (prorated match)
 309 donors
 (112 new donors in 2023;
 ranked in top 20 of all
 EGD nonprofits!)



Limited tickets left!
Act fast!



Where Hope Is
 Stories of Benedictine Influence

Sunday,
June 30, 2024
2:30 p.m.
Hirt Auditorium
Blasco Memorial
Library
Tickets \$10
[Click here](#)
[for tickets.](#)



Volunteers needed!

SSJNN needs volunteers to help at our Bike Program. No experience is necessary – just willingness to help! Join us Tuesday/Thursday from 11a.m. – 2 p.m. or Wednesday from 1-4 p.m.

Contact Jenn at 814-454-7814 x206



LITTLE ITALY FARMERS MARKET

331 West 18th Street

EVERY MONDAY
3:00 - 6:00 PM
JUNE 24 - SEPT 23

Featuring produce from several local farms, including the SSJNN Urban Farm Project.

Little Italy Farmers Market doubles SNAP, WIC and FMNP Senior Vouchers!

For more info call: 814-454-7814
Online: www.SSJNN.org
Facebook or Twitter: @SSJNN






The SSJNN staff would like to thank the Sisters, Associates and Agrégées for joining us at our first annual Afternoon in the Park. Thank you, also, for the donations for our programs. An enjoyable time was had by all!

ssj community *July Birthdays*

- 3 S. André Feulner
- 4 Agr. Betsy Wiest
- 5 A. Cindy DeCoursey
- 6 S. Mary Ann White
- 10 A. Patrick Shaughnessy
- 11 S. Susan Herzing
- 11 S. Joseph Marie Fitzgerald
- 12 S. Marie Timmons
- 13 S. Jude Marie Talerico
- 14 A. Cindi Olesky
- 15 S. Barbara Ann Zakutney
- 15 Agr. Deb Seng
- 17 A. Stephanie Hall
- 18 A. Peggy Zeigler
- 18 S. Marie Stephen Kebort
- 19 A. Kathleen Mannino
- 19 S. Sally Villa
- 20 A. Marvin Ridgway
- 22 A. Ruth Mercier
- 22 Agr. Jeanne Marie Ryan
- 25 A. Christine Opron
- 27 A. Anne Swift
- 27 A. Joan McCain
- 27 A. Mary DeSanti
- 28 S. Mary Herrmann
- 28 A. Mary Schwenk-Roach
- 30 A. Clarice Sidun
- 30 S. Carmel Rojek

Huge Thanks!



We want to thank everyone who supported our Relay for Life team this past year. The event on Saturday, June 22, 2024, was moved in to the gym at Iroquois High School due to the extreme heat/humidity.

The total raised by all teams was more than \$128,000 with our SSJ&As team raising \$10,000 of that. Thanks again and God Bless!

Sr. Mary Fromknecht
and Agrégée Tammy Van Buren



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Connecting with God + Connecting with You

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Ghost Guns

I watch enough crime shows to hear the term ghost gun in reference to a weapon used during the commission of a crime, but was never sure exactly what it was. I went to the Cease Fire PA website (www.ceasefirepa.org) for more information. (Cease Fire PA is a wonderful resource if you are ever looking for information about gun violence in Pennsylvania.)

Ghost guns are mail-order, do-it-yourself firearm kits that do not have serial numbers. They can be purchased without a background check, and can sometimes be 3-D printed. These guns evade our present safety laws and become the weapon of choice for violent individuals. Felons who are



prohibited from purchasing traditional firearms are normally stopped at the point of sale by a background check. Since a background check is not required on these guns, felons have easy access. The numbers on ghost guns are staggering:

- 4,600% increase in the number of ghost guns

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

recovered by police in Philadelphia from 2018-2022.

- Ten times increase in ghost guns reported to ATF nationally from 2016-2022.

Thirteen states have made ghost guns subject to the same rules governing traditional guns. A federal regulation to treat ghost guns like real guns is tied up in court and has loopholes that manufacturers are abusing. A state law could fill the gap and add valuable state and local law enforcement capacity to ensure compliance. If a bill is introduced in the PA legislature, I will be sure to send out an alert for you to contact your legislator.