

interim

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Volume 42, Issue 6

June 2024

LCWR Leadership HUB

Last week Sr. Carol and I attended the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) Hub meeting in St. Louis for three days. This collaborative Leadership Hub was all about governance. We heard things similar to what is in our Chapter statement on governance. What a wonderful coincidence as many materials from this workshop will guide us as we begin to shape our model of governance.

With many other congregations facing similar challenges within their leadership structures, we will all be

exploring the next steps to be taken. The material from the Hub meeting will all be available on the LCWR website under the Collaborative Leadership Hub within the next two to three weeks. As we move forward, this will be a valuable resource for us.

Let us all pray that the Spirit will lead us in the direction that helps us "move forward into a future filled with hope."

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.

Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées An Afternoon Social in the Park

June 12, 2024 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Three Sisters Park, 430 West 19th Street,
(behind the SSJNN)

Light refreshments, tents, tables and chairs will be provided. There is parking on both sides of the street with a few handicap spaces behind the SSJNN.



Meet the staff of the SSJNN and learn about their work and projects. Tents, tables and chairs will be available. If you'd like, donations of the following items are greatly appreciated: laundry soap (med.), Walmart and Dollar Tree gift cards, gallon-size drinks for the soup kitchen, juice boxes and individual Gatorade bottles. Thank you in advance for your kindness and generosity.

Rebel Nun Gets World Premiere at 2024 Tribeca Festival

Rebel Nun a documentary about Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ, author of *Dead Man Walking* gets world premiere at the 2024 Tribeca Festival in June.

Rebel Nun follows the story of Catholic nun and leading death penalty abolitionist Sister Helen Prejean, whose story was first captured in the 1995 film *Dead Man Walking*.



Now, almost 30 years later, through unprecedented access and a vast library of over six decades of archival footage,

(Continued on page 3)

MISSION: POSSIBLE!

A Visit to the SSJNN

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Mission Integration Coordinator

I recently met with **Jenn Kennedy** of the SSJ Neighborhood Network and **Associate Nancy Brown** to review plans for the upcoming "Afternoon Social in the Park" event. The event will take place on June 12 at Three Sisters' Park, behind the SSJNN. The park was dedicated in honor of **Sisters Mary Herman, Phyllis Hilbert, and Carol Wilcox.**

It was the idea of **Heather Caspar, Executive Director**, and Jenn Kennedy, to invite Sisters, Associates and Agrégées to visit the SSJNN to meet the staff and to learn about the programs and services they provide.

Jenn shared information about programs and efforts to

refurbish the neighborhood through a façade grant. They also received a grant to erect four new lamp posts in the Three Sisters Park. I was impressed with all that is happening.

As I thought about it, I realized, once again, how blessed our SSJ community is with the wonderful staff at the SSJNN that is dedicated to carrying out the SSJ mission. They work hard each day to continue our ministry of reaching out to our dear neighbors without distinction.

On behalf of the Sisters, Associates and Agrégées, I want to thank **Heather Caspar**, and the entire staff of the SSJNN: **Sister Phyllis Hilbert, Kyle**

Blackmer, Colleen Burbules, Susannah Faulkner, Connor Herron, Jennifer Kennedy, Cathy McGinnis, Patrice Swick, and Matthew Yelkovich. A big thank you goes out to **A. Gretchen Durney** and **A. Joanne Sprickman**, both of whom retired this past month after being a part of the SSJNN staff for several years.

I am reminded also of all the volunteers and the former staff members whose dedication and contributions helped make the SSJNN what it has become today.

It is through the combined efforts of all these people and the dedication to meeting the needs of the era and area that makes the **SSJ Mission Possible!**

Follow-up to May 11, 2024 Community Day

The Governance Committee is so grateful for the wonderful comments and suggestions you provided through the evaluations of the May 11th Community Day. We took your suggestions seriously and we want you to know that we heard you and that many of them will be addressed as we continue to move forward. Also, we want to let you know that we are currently preparing a video for future small group meetings.

We are most grateful for your openness and participation throughout our time together. Thank you for staying with us as this all continues to evolve. Since we are doing this together, we are confident that the Spirit is with us.



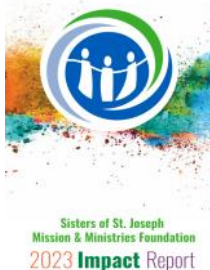
Wisdom Circles

The Governance and Charism committees have chosen to give the small groups that were formed a new name. As of May 11, these groups will be called our *Wisdom Circles*. The purpose of Wisdom Circles is to promote the values of inclusivity, collaboration, shared wisdom, and to develop a wider base of ownership for their efforts. Using the Wisdom Circles, we can tap the wisdom of Sisters, Associates, and Agrégées in any number of ways to bring back vital input into the lived reality of our Chapter mandates. Currently we have eight Wisdom Circles. If others would like to sign up, contact Sisters Clare Marie or Phyllis D. to form a new Circle as members or as prayer partners.



Transforming Grace

Sr. Mary Drexler (Leadership), **Deb Seng** (Justice), and **Stephanie Hall** (Communications) attended the Transforming Grace gathering in Pgh. recently. They are working on a plan to infuse the important learnings of Transforming Grace into many of our initiatives. See insert with this Interim. (Pictured: *Stephanie Hall* (2nd from right) participated on a panel at the gathering with (from left) *Mary Catherine Redmond, PBVM, Mary Parks, CSJ, and Annmarie Sanders, IHM, LCWR Communications Director.*



The Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation is excited to share a link to our Impact Report: [2023 Donor Impact Report](#). Once you are on the Foundation website, please click on *2023 Donor Impact Report* (blue bar). Each page of this report reflects the love and work of the Sisters, made possible by your gifts, prayers, and support. The Sisters and the Foundation are grateful for your loyalty. Other information relating to the Foundation and our wonderful SSJ Congregation can be found by clicking the News tab at the top of each page. We look forward to you visiting www.ssjmmf.org. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ssjmmf/>



Rebel Nun (Continued from page 1)

filmmaker Dominic **Sivyer** takes a look at the life and work of Sister Helen as she continues to be an inspirational force for justice.

We'll be watching for info of how/where we can view the film.

YOU ARE INVITED!

06.07.24

STYLES & SMILES
HAIR SALON
GRAND OPENING

THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH
COMMUNITY LIVING CENTER
2:00 TO 3:00 PM

Brief Presentation at 2:15 PM
~ 5031 West Ridge Road ~

Spirits on Fire – Cohort 7

On May 6, **Stephanie Hall**, SSJ Director of Communications, **Cindi Olesky**, SSJ Director of Finance, and **Patrice Swick**, SSJNN Neighborhood Engagement Specialist, arrived at the Carmelite Retreat Center near Chicago to attend Spirits on Fire, a formation experience for CSSJ lay leaders. Spirits on Fire is designed to form lay leaders who can advance the CSSJ mission and values into the future.

Spirits on Fire is a year-long transformative process of growing into and leading from the CSSJ mission. Participants reflect on their own call and their response; assume responsibility for the organization's mission, and realize that formation is an ongoing process that is never finished. By the end of the program, participants will be able to recognize the charism in oneself; articulate it; act out of it, lead out of it; recognize and name its presence and absence; and see it and call it forth in others. **Sr. Phyllis DiFuccia** and **Agrégée Betsy Wiest** are on



Pictured (l-r) Patrice Swick, Cindi Olesky, Stephanie Hall, Sr. Phyllis DiFuccia, Betsy Wiest.

the Spirits on Fire team.

"It was a great experience," Stephanie said. "Even being here as long as I have, it was a renewal, a re-energizing — the flame was re-ignited. It was a great group of like-minded people all sharing a passion for the SSJ mission."

"It was an enlightening experience," said Cindi. "I met fellow colleagues from varying backgrounds and ministries, all with the same mission. And to think it all started with six courageous and compassionate women."

"Spirits on Fire was an incredible opportunity to see the scope of impact the Sisters have had, and continue to have, through their various ministries," said Patrice. "It was also an invitation to discover how the charism has been drawing me to where I am and the work I do with SSJNN! Thank you for your prayers, support, and this formational experience!"

Spirits on Fire continues to kindle that flame of God's love in the hearts of SSJ lay leaders across the country to allow them to better serve the dear neighbor.

Associates' News and Happenings

Sr. Ann Marie Cappello, SSJ, Associate Director

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers all the Sisters, Associates and Agrégées and their family members who are currently dealing with health issues.

Contact Information

It is especially important to

notify us if you have any changes to your address or phone number. I am still having problems contacting some associates whose phone numbers are different from what we have in the directory.

Help Appreciated!

Associates, Sisters and Agrégées, if you are interested

in helping with the August picnic, please let me know. We can use your help. You can contact me at 814-823-1182 or s.amcappello@ssjerie.org.

An Afternoon Social in the Park

Please see the invitation in this Interim.

Living Laudate Deum

Adopt a Sustainable Diet

Did you know that agriculture is responsible for approximately 24% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and meat production contributes significantly to this impact (UN Food and Agriculture Organization)?

You can be healthier and help the planet be healthier by promoting and practicing more sustainable eating in your daily life. Here's how:

- Eat plants instead of animals- a plant-based diet is more efficient than an animal-derived diet.
- Buy organic products- organic agriculture is less harmful to people and wildlife than conventional agriculture.
- Buy in bulk. Non-perishable foods can be purchased in bulk. It can save money and minimizes packaging.
- Buy local and don't waste. Local farmers' markets will soon be opening. Only buy as much perishable food as you will consume.

Save the dates! June 12, 2024

SSJNN Afternoon Social

August 3, 2024

Associate Picnic

August 25, 2024

Fellowship Sunday

September 8, 2024

Liturgy and Associate Welcoming

September 14, 2024

State of the Heart, a presentation by Sr. Ricarda Vincent



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.](#)

Where Hope Is: Stories of Benedictine Influence is a new interview-based theater production by playwright Jenn Bokoch Gillett. The play reflects a snapshot-in-time—1960s to the 1980s—of the influence of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie created from a dozen conversations culled from more than

60 interviews with St. Benedict Academy alumnae, Benedictine sisters, and others whose lives were shaped and are still being shaped by the sisters.

The story is one of spirituality, community, and steadfastness in facing questions of meaning, faith, and gospel accountability, that challenged thinking and instilled young women with a sense of their own worth and power. It's a story of prophetic voices and passionate commitment to those denied a place at any table. It's a women's story of ongoing potential for new generations seeking connection and meaning today.

The scenes that the actors will portray on stage will be combined with short, giant-screen, video clips of actual interviews in the creative telling this women's story.

*Jenn Bokoch Gillett is a documentary theater-maker residing in New York. Her mother and her aunt were SBA graduates, and she grew up hearing intriguing stories about their high school years—which is the connection, the motivation, and the inspiration behind this new work. Director Ashley Renee Thaxton-Stevenson and six actors will accompany her from New York to present **Where Hope Is**. They have been working on the play for over a year.*

10th Annual Garage Sale

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

3309 Asbury Road
June 21, 22, 23
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

LITTLE ITALY FARMERS MARKET

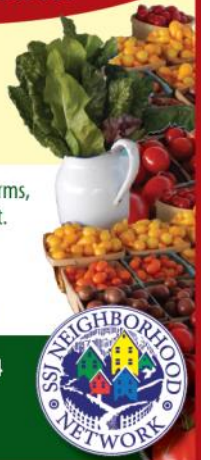
331 West 18th Street

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



get to know the SSJ Agrégées

by **Tammy Van Buren**

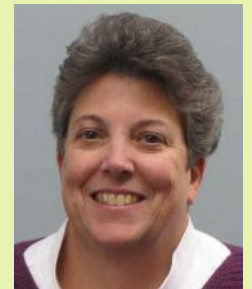
Over the next several months, we will introduce you to each Agrégée. We hope that you will get a new understanding of how each of us lives the mission and charism and why we embrace being part of the "Family of Joseph."

Agrégées are Catholic women who take a permanent vow of fidelity to God and the SSJ mission. We live and serve in a variety of ways: fighting cancer, supporting education, serving the homeless, honoring veterans, liturgical roles, and ministering to our Sisters and neighbors. We join the Sisters and Associates in our commitment to living the charism.

We said goodbye to two of our Agrégées who passed: Jeannie Costa and Cindy Brown. Both exemplified tremendous faith in God and a peacefulness in accepting God's will for their journeys. Cindy and Jeannie are loved, missed, and never forgotten.

If you're interested in becoming an Agrégée, we welcome you! On behalf of Arlene, Betsy, Charlene, Cindy, Deb, Jeanne, Michelle, Judi, and Teresa, I look forward to helping you get to know us - your SSJ Agrégées!

Welcomed as Associate - 2000
Companion: Sr. Mary Kay McNelis
Welcomed as Agrégées - 2016
Mentor: Sr. Claudia Dombrowski



Charlene Kellerman

Charlene was one of two "original dreamers" of the Agrégées vocation. During a Community Day in the early 2000s, she spoke of searching for "something more," and another way to live the charism. She never lost her enthusiasm or passion over the years and finally the vocation came to life.

In 24 years as part of the SSJ community, Charlene has served/ministered in many different ways: Associate Co-Director, initiated the original That's a Wrap with Agrégées Cindy Polesnak, visitor/board member at St Patrick's Haven, volunteer at St Paul's Soup Kitchen, Thanksgiving Dinners, Spirit of Courage, and Guess That Tune. Her latest ministry, Evie's Tree, is a tribute to her grandmother. Handmade hats and mittens are crocheted and distributed through the SSJNN each December. "Evie's Tree has grown branches through donations from Associates, friends, and the SSJ Wheeling Congregation," says Charlene.

After several years of managing a local orthopedic office, Charlene is now working from home doing medical coding, billing, and auditing for UPMC Hamot. She enjoys crocheting, photography, reading, gardening, and evening fireside chats, especially with popcorn. "I'd love to share some time (and popcorn) with you!"

Opportunities for Spiritual Growth & Development

"We recognize that our formation involves the development of the total person for the sake of our mission. As a Congregation and as individuals we are responsible for continuing the process throughout our lives."
Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

Retreat Opportunities

The **2024 Conference Retreat** at the the SSJ Community Living Center is scheduled for **October 6-12**. Sister Mary Rowell, of the Canadian province of the Sisters of St. Joseph, will facilitate the conference/guided retreat. Many may remember her retreat with us in July 2022, "Hospitality of the Heart."

Villa Maria Education and Spirituality Center, a sponsored ministry of Sr. Ardath's community, the Sisters of the Humility of Mary, offers many experiences for weekend and weeklong retreats and programs:

- ◆ **Conference Retreat:** *Teilhard's Cosmic Images of God*. Sun., June 9-Thurs., June 13, 2024.
Presenter: Kathleen Duffy, SSJ, PhD.
- ◆ **Weeklong Individually Directed Retreat:** Sun., June 16 – Sun., June 23, 2024
Spiritual Directors:
Ardath Blake, HM
Sharon Cahill, HM
Donna Clark
Rosemary O'Brien, SSJ
Dave Roncolato

Weeklong Individually Directed Retreat: Sun., Sept. 8 – Sun. Sept. 15, 2024.

Spiritual Directors:

Ardath Blake, HM
Sharon Cahill, HM
Donna Clark
Fr. Mark Nowak
Rosemary O'Brien, SSJ
Roseanne Oberlietner, CSJ
Dave Roncolato

- ◆ **Weekend Individually Directed Retreats:** Fri., Oct. 4 to Sun., Oct. 6, 2024.

For further information, visit the website at vmesc.org or call 724-964-8886.

Notre Dame Retreat House Retreats. Canandaigua, NY

- ◆ "Courage, Wisdom, and Compassion: Lessons from Visionary Lives."
Presenter: Gilliam Ahlgren. June 23-28, 2024.
- ◆ "Praying with Pope Francis".
Presenter: Fr. Chuck Frederico, SJ.

Phone: 585-394-5700
nlynch@notredameretreat.org
www.notredameretreat.org

Listening With the Heart An Insider's Experience with the Synod



Sister Leticia Salazar, ODN, is one of just 11 individuals from the United States to serve on the U.S. Team for the Continental Phase of the Synod – and is one of the authors of the Continental Synthesis, representing the results of the Synod to the people of the United States and Canada.

A three-year process of listening and dialogue, the Synod on Synodality concludes this year, making this a

providential time to listen to Sister Leticia speak about her participation in this process, so important for the world church, and to understand and experience firsthand the synodal process.

This event is presented by the Center for Spiritual Development, a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, in partnership with the Holy Faith Sisters.



Sisters of
St. Joseph
OF ORANGE



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

**Saturday, June 15
9 AM - 4:30 PM
\$40 to attend on Zoom**



REGISTER NOW



Thank you, thank you, thank you! The SSJNN staff wishes to express how grateful we are to the Sisters,

Agrégées and Associates for your generosity and support of our sold-out 17th Annual "Guess that Tune" Gala! Not only were you our primary sponsor, you were also event volunteers, basket donors and attendees! We love you!

St. James Haven was excited to share an afternoon with Carleen Onuschak and Almi Clerkin representing the Sisters of St. Joseph and the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation as our sponsor for our Third Thursday "Drive Thru" Community Dinner. We served meatloaf, roasted potatoes, roasted carrots, fresh rolls and a sweet treat!!



Volunteers needed!

Have you got free time and want to get involved? We would LOVE to have you join us! We have priority needs in the following areas:

1. Garden help—Mondays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays.
2. A trained crossing guard on Mondays during the Farmer's Market (2-6 pm).

We, (of course), also have other needs (Farmers Market helpers, tutors, landscaping, bikes, bakers, cooks...) For more info please call Jenn Kennedy at 814-454-7814 x206.

ssj community
June Birthdays

- 4 A. Barbara Alward
- 5 A. Rita Lyle
- 7 A. Kirsten Beall
- 7 S. Lucille DeStefano
- 10 A. Peg McCravery
- 11 A. Don Swift
- 12 A. Barbara McGaughey
- 12 A. Betty Chess
- 14 A. Peggy Rusnak
- 14 A. Gratia Wittmann
- 15 A. Arlen Twerdok
- 17 A. Alice Fuhrman
- 18 A. Mary Wright
- 21 A. Cecelia Shatem
- 23 A. Marjorie Fischer
- 24 A. Tammie Mang
- 24 A. Maggie Link
- 26 A. Pam Kiehlmeier
- 27 S. Clare Marie Beichner



Who wouldn't want to hear this news: "A cure for cancer has been found!" The SSJ & As raise money for Relay for Life by selling Daffin's candy bars year-round and accepting donations toward our team's goal. Below are the ways you can help:

- CASH donations can be dropped at the CLC front desk Attn: SSJ&As Relay for Life Team
- CHECKS made payable to THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY and sent to:
Sisters of St. Joseph
Attn: Relay for Life Team
5031 West Ridge Road
Erie, PA 16506
- Luminaria in honor of a loved one who is battling cancer or in memory of a loved one has died. Please make a donation from your heart for luminaries. Bags can be decorated by Sisters at the CLC or you can do it yourself. Orders and payment are due by Monday, June 10, 2024.



St. Patrick's Haven Wish List

You can support St. Patrick's Haven by donating any of the following needed items on our wish list:



- Laundry Soap (pods, liquid, powder)
- Dishwasher Soap (pods, liquid, powder)
- Bathroom Cleaner
- Toilet Bowl Cleaner
- Latex Cleaning Gloves
- Kleenex
- Coffee (ground, regular)
- Sugar (bags or canisters)
- Creamer (powder, canisters)

Thank you for helping us defeat this cruel and ugly monster!
Sr. Mary Fromknecht (814) 440-4041 s.fromknecht@ssjerie.org
Agr.Tammy Van Buren (814) 397-4879 tvberie@yahoo.com

Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania

5031 West Ridge Road
Erie, PA 16506-1249

Phone: 814-836-4100

Fax: 814-836-4278

E-mail: publicrelations@ssjerie.org



WWW.
SSJERIE
.ORG



Being an Advocate

On May 7, I traveled to Harrisburg along with more than 100 other advocates, to ask for support for health care issues that can benefit all Pennsylvanians. I met with Rep. Pat Harkins and Senator Dan Laughlin. The four issues we addressed were:

1. Expand Access to Biomarker Testing
2. Establish a Paid Family and Medical Leave Program
3. Help Provide Medical Debt Relief
4. Protect Funding for Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program and Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Programs

I was very grateful to receive verbal support on all four asks

from both legislators. Often when we go to Harrisburg or Washington it takes years of asking before any action is taken.

I'd like to share our recent success on one of the asks. Biomarker testing can help patients get the right treatment at the right time. It is disease agnostic which means it is not limited to cancer applications. It is currently being used for cancer, autoimmune conditions, and research is underway for implications on heart disease, ALS, Alzheimer's, infectious diseases, respiratory illness, and many others. Currently, insurance coverage is not equal.

The Senate Bill 954 and House Bill 1754 would ensure

by Deb Seng, SSJ Social Justice Coordinator

that Pennsylvanians covered by state-regulated insurance plans, including Medicaid, have coverage for biomarker testing when medically appropriate.

On Friday, May 24. I got word that the biomarker testing bill is scheduled for a vote in the House Insurance Committee on June 3. We are hopeful that it will pass out of the House by the end of the week. If that happens, it will then go to the Senate for a vote. If it goes as expected, I will send out an Action Alert asking you to contact your Representative and your Senator, asking for their support. The more lawmakers that hear from us the better. Make your voice heard! If we work together, we can make a difference.