Hallahan High School Celebrates Sr. Ida Marie!

If you’re on Facebook, you might want to check out the page for Hallahan High School in Philadelphia. Sr. Ida Marie Nicklas made the news on several occasions this past month. On March 6 Hallahan posted an announcement that Sr. Ida had been named Alumna of the Month. A 1945 graduate of Hallahan, Ida entered the congregation a year later. The announcement went on to list her accomplishments in various ministries over the years, including having been inducted into the Hall of Fame at both Allentown Central Catholic and Hallahan. She has been ministering in various capacities at her alma mater since 1978. The Unsung Hero Award was created in her honor in 2016 and is presented each year to a senior student athlete. When Ida turned 90 this year, the school store was dedicated in her name. And speaking of 90th birthdays, several posts on March 15 showed Sr. Ida Marie—a lei of flowers around her neck—being celebrated by Hallahan students and faculty with a large birthday cake. Happy birthday, Sr. Ida, and many blessings!

Click the link or copy and post the link into your web browser to see a video of Sr. Ida Marie acknowledging her birthday celebration!
http://bit.ly/2nY0XvW
On March 23, Dr. Rosalie Mirenda and her husband, Tony Mirenda, joined the sisters at Our Lady of Angels Convent for an afternoon liturgy and dinner in recognition of Dr. Mirenda’s upcoming retirement from Neumann University. Also present were members of Neumann’s board, former and present faculty members, sisters who were former students of Dr. Mirenda, and several members of former congregational leadership teams.

During the liturgy in Our Lady of Angels Convent Chapel, Sr. Mary Kathryn Dougherty invited the Mirendas to join her in the sanctuary for a special presentation. On behalf of the congregation, Sr. Kathy announced that, in honor of Dr. Mirenda, the congregation would be making a donation to Neumann University’s Forward with Faith Fund, a fund established by the Mirendas. Dr. Mirenda also addressed the congregation after which the sisters sang our traditional “Blessing of St. Francis,” thanking Rosalie for her many years of service to Neumann University. You can watch her presentation by clicking here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AU3lBKneFaM.

Following the liturgy, guests moved to the dining room for a celebratory dinner featuring salmon and prime rib—and specially made cocktail Manhattans for Rosalie and Tony. For the dessert portion of the meal, everyone was invited upstairs to the Blessing Room where they could more easily mingle,

(continued on page 3)

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**Community News**

*is published for the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia*

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**2017 Community News Deadlines**

May 5, Jul. 7, Aug. 4, Sept. 15, Nov. 3

**Mission Statement**

We, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, choose to live the Gospel in the prophetic spirit of Francis of Assisi and our foundress, Mother Francis Bachmann. With Jesus Christ as Brother, we live as sister with one another, with the entire human family, and with all creation. Calling ourselves and one another to continuous conversion of heart we commit ourselves to a life of contemplation, poverty and humility.

As vowed women of the Church, we respond with diverse gifts in a spirit of collaboration and mutual service to the needs of others, especially the economically poor, the marginal, and the oppressed. Seeking to participate in the Spirit’s action in the world, we direct our personal and corporate resources to the promotion of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Filled with trust in the goodness of God, we move forward.
OLA Celebrates Rosalie Mirenda’s Years of Service

(continued from page 2)

socialize, and enjoy the delicious and beautifully decorated cakes.

We were pleased to be able to share this evening with the Mirendas—the first of what will probably be many celebrations over the coming months. We are grateful for Dr. Mirenda’s 44 years of service to the Neumann community—beginning in 1973 when she served as part of the nursing faculty and later moved on to become head of the nursing department, vice president of academic affairs, and eventually president. During those 44 years, she has seen many changes in the Neumann community, including a name change; expansion from a woman’s college to a coed institution; expansion of undergrad programs; initiation of graduate programs; opening of the Child Development Center; and expansion of the campus, including dorms and, in 2009, the Mirenda Center. But perhaps the change that has the greatest personal significance for Dr. Mirenda is, in her words, “expanding Neumann’s image and identity as a Catholic Franciscan university.” For all, we say a heartfelt “Thank You!”

Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

Former congregational ministers Srs. Esther Anderson and Lynn Patrice Lavin present the Offertory gifts.

Sr. Kathy Dougherty presented a gift to Neumann University’s Forward with Faith Fund in honor of Dr. Rosalie Mirenda.

Dr. Rosalie Mirenda and guests wait to enjoy the special dinner.

Dr. Rosalie Mirenda and Sr. Julia Keegan recall some of their experiences in Neumann University’s nursing program.
I’ve worked at Assisi House since 2002 and have had many beautiful relationships with the sisters. Sr. Evelyn Cahill moved in around 2006/2007 and we instantly had a connection. We shared the same birthday and had the same interests. As a full time nurse there, I became family to her. She only had two sisters that she talked to here and there and that was it. Even though I have a huge family, she became like another grandmother to me. She loved celebrating our birthday together in July!

Sr. Evelyn watched me get married in 2009. When I was on my honeymoon, I brought back a rosary for her. She made sure I got it back after her death. She loved celebrating when I had my first son in 2012 and my next son in 2013. She loved them like they were her grandchildren and they loved her.

When she was dying last year, I took the boys to see her one last time. They said their goodbyes and we were at peace knowing she was going to a better place. The sisters asked me to carry the cross at the funeral since she would not have any family there. I, of course agreed. After the viewing, they wheeled her casket out of chapel and I kissed her head. I was the last person to touch her before they closed the casket.

A couple weeks after the funeral, my son told me that I had “baby Evie” in my belly. I told him, “No, Evie is in heaven.” He said, “She’s in heaven but you have one in your belly.” Sure enough, to everyone’s surprise, I found out I was pregnant three days after he said that! A few months after that, I found out it was a girl! Since the boys had called this baby “baby Evie” all along, we decided to name her after our friend “Evie in heaven.” I had always joked with Sr. Evelyn and said if I had a girl, I’d name her Evelyn!

Michelle Molineux

Michelle Molineux with her husband and children.
The Breakthrough Programme was devised in 2016 in response to the high suicide rates of young males, 18-25 years olds, in West Dublin, Ireland. The program works on a one-to-one basis and runs for a period of ten weeks during which clients are encouraged to mind their own physical and psychological development. The program uses psychotherapy, psycho-education, physical education, and nutritional advice to address mild to moderate mental health issues such as anxiety, anger management, addiction, and depression.

The Breakthrough Programme is currently funded by the Coca-Cola Thank You Fund and we are currently looking to secure further investors from both public and private sector funding streams. We are about to commence its second phase with 10-12 male participants aging from 18-30 years old. The selected candidates receive the program free of charge.

Beacon of Light Counselling Centre continues to develop and update its infrastructures to improve its efficiency for and with clients.

- 2016/2017 clinical audits are carried out quarterly by the clinical coordinator.
- A new operations manual has been drafted as well as a new counsellor’s handbook and a new strategic plan. These are being worked on by subcommittees and will be completed soon.
- New vision and mission statements have been drafted.
- New board members have joined us.
- Our website has been updated.
- A new manager has been appointed as well as a clinical coordinator and office coordinator.
- The breakthrough programme has been designed.
- We are now compliant with current governance codes.
- We now have online monitored social media platforms.

Sr. Patricia Kidd began this great work at Beacon of Light and I continue to oversee the updates and ongoing focus and function of the centre.

_Carmel Earls, OSF_
Recognizing Our Gifts
Sharing the Accomplishments of The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia

Editor’s Note: Although the Sisters of St. Francis are committed to “a life of contemplation, poverty, and humility,” they also “respond with diverse gifts.” This column will call attention to these gifts which may provide information and encouragement to you in your ministry and fill you with a sense of pride for those you call “Sister.”

Congratulations to Sr. Grace Andrew Jeffery! Grace was among a group of catechists being honored for their years of service in the Diocese of Wilmington. During the ceremony, John Collins, a national speaker for W.H. Sadlier Publishers, commended the catechists. “It’s not all about facts and memorizing,” he explained. “It’s about getting to the heart and then the action of living our faith.” For Grace Andrew, that “getting to the heart” and the “action of living faith” is what has made her 35 years as a catechist so successful!

Sr. Domnica LoBianco shares a very warm relationship with the people of St. Laurence Parish.

When Sr. Domnica LoBianco renewed her yearly membership in the Franciscan Federation’s Region 2, she added a note to the region’s Outreach Ministry Drawing form, saying simply, “I want to win.” Such faith is not to be undone! Dominica recently received a letter from Sr. Wilma Kramer, treasurer for Region 2, a check for $150, and a letter that began, “Dominica, you must have said your prayers to the great saints.” Dominica explained that the money will be used for diapers, wipes, and other necessities. “Thank you, Franciscan Federation, Region 2,” Dominica said, “for supplementing our Hispanic ministry and assisting our new immigrants in caring for their families.”

Everyone at Immaculate Conception School in Towson, Maryland, knows the significance of the Gold Apple—an award given annually “to an individual who shows a strong dedication and commitment to the school. Sr. Dolora Taylor is the most recent recipient of the award. An article published by the Baltimore Sun and carried by several of their local affiliates gives credence to Dolora’s worthiness as a recipient. And the Golden Apple is not the only recognition rendered to Dolora this year. In January a refurbished pew from the parish church was dedicated to Sr. Dolora in recognition of her 20 years of service. The pew (now a bench) has a place of honor in the school’s main hallway. Principal Madeline Meaney described Dolora as the school’s “heart and history”—a fitting acknowledgement in light of Dolora’s 20 years of service as the school’s administrative assistant. Click on the link to access the newspaper article. There are some great photos.


Srs. Deanna Bartolomei and Norleen Buttimer were at the center of a celebration that acknowledged 119 years—the length of time that our sisters have ministered in the Diocese of Charleston, South Carolina. In March Bishop Robert Guglielmone, knowing that both Deanna and Noreen would be leaving, not only their current ministry at Neighborhood House but would actually be moving on from the Charleston Diocese, held a reception in the Diocesan Pastoral Center in recognition of the 119 years of service rendered to the diocese by the Sisters of St. Francis. Srs. (continued on page 7)
Marie Colette Gerry and Ruth Bernadette O’Connor represented the congregation at the celebration and Sr. Marilyn Sands, who had served in the diocese some years ago, was also present for the occasion. In addition to Deanna’s and Noreen’s years of service (42 and 38 respectively), many of our sisters ministered in the Diocese of Charleston in education, parish ministry, and various areas of social services.

Last year Sr. Corda Marie Bergbauer was surprised to learn that the newly established English Honor Society at the Catholic High School of Baltimore was named in her honor. This year she was once again invited to attend the installation of new members and to address the students. In her presentation, Corda stressed the value and importance of a liberal arts education. After congratulating the newly inducted members and reminding them that the motto of the society is “Duty goes with honor,” she referred to a recent experience—the search for a new president of Neumann University. She said, “A Search Committee received 65 applications and in six months whittled them down to three applications. Two weeks ago on separate days each candidate met with different sections of our university family. I attended all three gatherings where the candidates spoke briefly and then answered questions.”

“Why am I telling you this?” she continued. “Two of the candidates praised Neumann for being a liberal arts university—among other programs. In summary, they remarked that English, Literature, and English Arts are vital in today’s world. They develop intellectual capacities such as reason and judgment for life as opposed to other skills.”

Thank you, Sr. Corda, for reminding us of the value of a liberal arts education and of its value in helping us to develop as human beings!

Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

(l-r) Bishop Robert Guglielmone, Srs. Noreen Buttimer, Deanna Bartolomei, Marilyn Sands, Colette Gerry, Ruth Bernadette O’Connor, Rev. Dennis B. Willey

Sr. Corda Marie Bergbauer and newly inducted members of the Sister Corda Marie Bergbauer English Honor Society.
Hello again to one and all! It’s been awhile since I’ve been able to put fingers to keyboard but don’t think for one moment that means that things have not been hopping here at Assisi House. Our days and our sisters here move at such a pace that it is really hard to catch up and catch your breath. The end of 2016 went out with much ado as we enjoyed the Christmas season with all of its frivolity and its sacred-ness combined. We sang songs, exchanged gifts, and trimmed our trees all the while giving thanks for all of our blessings—not the least being the birth of the dear Christ Child.

Along with the rest of the world, we also celebrated the birth of a new year, replete with camaraderie, good cheer, and a spot or two of champagne. How else can you cheer someone on New Year’s Eve? It was a nice thought to be able to slow down and look forward to the winter months ahead gathered around the fireplaces and enjoying our cozy rooms but that idea didn’t last long. You know the old saying, “We have places to go and things to do.” So we took the opportunity to gather any unwanted items that the sisters had collected over the past year to send down to Anna’s Place in Chester. The small gifts were used as bingo prizes and were most welcomed by the sisters who minister there. One of our monthly trips was to the local Barnes and Noble book store to browse, buy, and ultimately enjoy, a cappuccino at their coffee house. All of these things were squeezed in, of course, between our daily scheduled and unscheduled activities.

The month of February seemed like winter was confused and kept doing a dance with spring. I know Mother Nature was also top-sy-turvy because we had crocuses blooming and daffodils sprouting high weeks before their time. The sisters did enjoy the milder weather, though, with many walks outside to breathe in the fresh air. February also brought our St. Valentine’s Day party which was a nice way for all to come together and celebrate in a flurry of pink and red. During that same week, our order’s congregational council came to Assisi House for three days to visit with the sisters. That one-on-one time with the council members was very precious to our sisters and gave them the chance to visit and to share.

Onto the month of March which had most of us here betting on whether spring would really bloom or old man winter would reappear in all of his glory. The dawn of March also brought with it Ash Wednesday and, of course, the beginning of the Lenten season. Now the middle of March is al-

(continued on page 9)
ways taken up with thoughts of St. Patrick’s Day and all of the many celebrations. Our parties started early this year as Sr. Linda DeCero came to Assisi House on March 9 with a group of Neumann students to celebrate “National Catholic Sisters Week.” This is her second year with us for this and it is a great time for the sisters and students to come together and enjoy each other’s company. This year Sr. Linda also brought along an Irish entertainer which was a big hit—a perfect precursor to our own St. Patrick’s Day fun planned for the following week.

As usual the sisters and staff here at Assisi House thank you for all of your prayers and support and we wish you and yours a joyous and glorious Easter.

Mary Stover

A full house of sisters and guests enjoyed the “Irish” entertainment at the National Catholic Sister Week social. It seems that this event has now become an annual event much to the delight of everyone involved.

(continued from page 8)
JUSTICE & PEACE EFFORTS

Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Statement of Support for our Immigrant and Refugee Brothers and Sisters

As Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, a group of 425 Catholic women religious who have a corporate stand on immigration, we write to urge our president and members of congress to consider the words from Matthew 25: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me….as long as you did it for the least among you, you did it for me.” We urge you to rethink the recent executive order and DHS memos calling for massive deportation of immigrant people. We join with others who believe this order directly contradicts our principles as a nation, the values of diverse faiths, and the values that we hold as Sisters of St. Francis.

Throughout its history, our nation has always welcomed immigrants and has been a refuge to people fleeing violence and oppression in their home countries. Anti-immigrant and anti-refugee executive orders are inhumane and do not respect the rights and dignity of those coming to our borders seeking asylum or who have lived here as aspiring citizens, contributing to our society in many ways.

Since 1855 our sisters have taken the words of Jesus to heart and acted upon them in whatever way we could. Our Commitment Statement declares, “We are willing to take the necessary risks to be a healing, compassionate presence in our violent world, especially with women, children, and those who have no voice.” A number of our sisters are immigrants themselves. Some sisters have served in countries beyond our borders and some minister with immigrant communities in this country. We have a six-year friendship with a Muslim community not far from our motherhouse in Pennsylvania that has been a blessing. In welcoming the stranger as our faith challenges us to do, we have been enriched by other cultures and religions.

Fear and suspicion are common whenever we deal with the unknown. Pope Francis lays before us the suspicions we as a nation might have toward immigrants and refugees when he says: “…migration gives rise to suspicion and hostility… prior to any knowledge of the migrants’ lives or their stories of persecution and destitution. In such cases, suspicion and prejudice conflict with the biblical commandment of welcoming with respect and solidarity the stranger in need.” (Pope Francis, Message for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, September 3, 2014).

Desiring to be a compassionate people, we try to place ourselves in the shoes of migrants. Pope Francis tells us, “[migrants] trust that they will encounter acceptance, solidarity, and help, that they will meet people who will sympathize with the distress and tragedy experienced by others, recognize the values and resources the latter have to offer, and are open to sharing humanly and materially with the needy and disadvantaged.” Pope Francis, Message for the 2013 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, October 12, 2012.

May their hope and their trust be met with open hearts and may we as a nation move beyond our fears and suspicions. Like our forefathers and foremothers, may we respond with openness and love. We, the Sisters of St. Francis, hold in prayer those who come to our borders and stand in solidarity with them. We also pray for our government leaders—that they act with wisdom and compassion toward refugees and immigrants in accord with our country’s Constitution and deeply held values of “liberty and justice for all.”

Kate O’Donnell, OSF
As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his car phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife’s voice urgently warning him, “Herman, I just heard on the news that there’s a car going the wrong way on Interstate 280. Please be careful!”

“Heck,” said Herman, “It’s not just one car. It’s hundreds of them!”

**Being a Defensive Driver**  
*(excerpts from an article in Business Insider)*

It’s not easy to be a good driver. We’re constantly trying to figure out if our skills are up to snuff. But it’s even harder to be a good defensive driver.

You all know what defensive driving is. It’s based on the notion that the roadways are inherently dangerous places and you, as the mindful driver, must be vigilant about threats so that you can avoid trouble.

It used to be easier to embrace defensive driving. We had fewer technological distractions in cars and vehicles were less isolating. You could feel the road, the engine, the brakes. The physics to which you were exposed—operating a shell of metal and glass, carrying a tankful of highly explosive and flammable substance for fuel, hurtling down a freeway at 60 mph—were in your face. Advancements in the automobile—from noise to airbags—have made it easier to tune out.

But defensive driving hasn’t gone away. Here are some good ways to get better at it.

**Use your Eyes.**  
Driving is visual. In fact, it’s one of the most visually demanding activities in which a person can engage. You have, (in every modern car) three mirrors. Use them obsessively. As you drive, your central focus should be on the road ahead of you but you should also constantly scan your mirrors.

**Don’t Tailgate.**  
A big problem in every day driving is tailgating. On a highway you want a lot of distance between you and the car in front of you. At highway speeds you will need space to execute maneuvers to avoid an accident or to engage the antilock brakes in your car to prevent rear-ending the vehicle ahead of you. So how much space? At least a semitruck length which is about three car lengths. In stop-and-go traffic where rear-ending is common, it’s good to keep at least a couple of car lengths between you and the other person. It’s better to have a big margin for error than a little one.

**Be Smooth.**  
Legendary race car driver, Jackie Stewart, was smoothness obsessive. His advice? Put a bowl of water on your dashboard. You should be able to drive around without spilling a drop. (Remember the precupholder era when you had to learn to drive in a way that wouldn’t lead to spills?) You do this by finessing and caressing your ride. You don’t punch it. You don’t slam on the brakes. You accelerate and decelerate in a smooth linear fashion, and keep your eyes on the road ahead to plan your decisions. You remain ever aware of how hard your engine is running and what the road beneath your tires feels like. Minimize steering inputs and keep both hands on the wheel. You float the car.

**Respect the Speed Limit.**  
Routinely exceeding the speed limit is another aggressive driving habit. Drivers weave in and out of traffic running 20-30 miles over the limit. They pass in all lanes—not just the far left passing lane. Please don’t do this. If you want to get to your destination safely and on time, stay close to the posted limit. By the way, driving too slowly is just (continued on page 12)
Employee Tea Party: A Tasty Tea Party

In recent years the sisters at Our Lady of Angels Convent have hosted an annual tea party for our employees—and this year was no exception. When employees arrived at the ABC Room, they found several long tables set up in the main corridor—each displaying an array of homemade baked goods of all kinds—scones, Irish bread, cookies, and more. Inside the ABC Room, tables were artfully set with beautiful china and the music of harp and flute provided a relaxing background. Staff and students from Neumann University were on hand to assist the sisters with serving tea and making sure that each guest had what he or she needed. Before the close of the tea party, Sr. Jean Ustasiewski announced there would be a drawing for door prizes and quite a number of employees were among the lucky winners.

Many thanks for all who put so much effort and love into making this celebration such an relaxing and enjoyable occasion!

Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

Employees Roseanne Bittner, Donna White, and Karen McEvoy enjoyed trying out the assorted baked goods.

Facts from $$Finance (continued from page 11)

as dangerous. Strive to achieve a steady cruising speed on the highway. Your fuel economy will be better, you’ll inflict less wear on your brakes and tires, and you’ll be less likely to be responsible for a crash.

Forget about Your Phone and Other Devices.
Distracted driving isn’t defensive driving. It’s offensive driving. Whatever is happening on that tiny screen must be more important than what’s happening in reality with all those other people on the road, right? Wrong! You can’t do anything you’re supposed to behind the wheel when you’re looking at a phone or other device. It’s tempting to fiddle with the radio, favorite music channel, DVD player, right temperature control, etc. But this becomes far more to deal with when you’re behind the wheel. Do what you can before starting out or at a complete stop—but not while driving.

Don’t be Seduced by New Safety Technology.
Driver-assist features are a hallmark of modern cars. From adaptive cruise control and making use of radars and sensors, to lane-keep assist, collision alerts, and blind spot warnings, these technologies have extended a legacy of safety which started with seat belts and moved through airbags and into anti-lock brakes. They’re useful. But they’re no substitute for remaining attentive. Don’t let them take the place of careful driving!

Gentle Reminders:
Car Inspections – If you need a car inspection and/or emission test for the car you’re driving, you may make an appointment up to three months prior to the expiration date on the registration.

Recalls – There are some more recalls coming out on certain makes and years of cars. Please tend to these as soon as you can. Once completed, send a copy of the completed recall invoice to the finance office.

Karen Pourby, OSF
Fun Is The Name of The Game

What is Franciscan Night and why are the Sisters of St. Francis holding such an event? Two very good questions! As to the first question—what is Franciscan Night—the answer is simple. Franciscan Night is an event held at Our Lady of Angels Convent to which donors, their families and friends, family and friends of the sisters, the sisters themselves, and other interested people come to enjoy an evening of games, food and drinks, music, and a ticket raffle.

The why of it is as simple an answer—to raise funds for the sisters’ retirement.

While these answers may be simple, the reasons go deeper. It is well known within the community that the retirement fund requires additional funding. Presently our foundation uses direct mail, online solicitations, grants, and special events such as Franciscan Night to accomplish this goal.

Equally important is the fact that since the event will be held at the motherhouse, people will be able to come to the home of the congregation—to mingle with the sisters, to see some of the motherhouse, and to get to know the sisters on a more personal level.

Franciscan Night, though it is an event where games are played, is not a gambling night. There will be no money winnings such as in a real casino. There will be a few prizes for those who win the most chips by the end of the evening. Sisters who attended last year expressed how much they enjoyed themselves and thought attendees had a great time as well.

The foundation is looking forward to our 2nd Annual Franciscan Night on Saturday, May 6. For more information about this year’s event, contact Sr. Debbie Krist at (610) 558-7713 or by email at dkrist@osfphila.org.

Sharon Tracy

Wilmington Parade: Celebration of Green and Cold!

Once again our sisters joined the Catechism Kids brigade in Wilmington’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade—some on foot, others in buses. The morning began at the Elks Lodge on Weldin Road in Wilmington where we selected green derbies, flashing green necklaces, and other Irish ornaments before boarding the buses which took us to Fourth and King Streets. After only a short wait, the parade began and we were on our way. It was a bitter cold day—probably one of the coldest of the winter because of the wind chill factor. Some of our members did brave the elements to march from 4th to 14th and King Street! We were greeted along the way by the spectators—many of them with small children who definitely enjoyed the handfuls of candy that some of our marchers tossed to them.

Following the parade our buses returned us to the Elks Lodge where we spent the afternoon listening to Irish music, sharing a delicious lunch, renewing old acquaintances, and enjoying one another’s company.

Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

Srs. Kathy Dougherty and Margaret O’Brien enjoy dessert at the after-parade party.

Franciscan Volunteers Theresa Kennedy, Rachel Dunlap, and Mandee DeMarco at the after-party!
February 17, 2017
On Valentine’s Day, I headed over to the hall to set up for our second Life skills Training for the Mums/Uncles. Hannah came at 8:30 for the training. The mums/uncles love and really appreciate Hannah who motivates them to learn so that they can help their children. In the sessions she creates lots of teachable moments while she role plays and discusses with them. This time she started with modeling a game they could play with the children. We all got into a circle holding hands with one person in the middle. This person represented a child who needed to be protected from dangers outside of the circle. It was the role of all of the villagers to protect the child until the child learned how to deal with these dangers. There were lots of discussion after this. As we discussed this experience, it reminded us that as guardians we don’t always have all the answers in raising the children and it is okay to seek help from others.

February 24, 2017
We celebrated February birthdays this week. The one most excited about his birthday was Anthony. He was smiling from ear to ear. He was very happy to finally be 10. When he tried out for the Kenyan Youth Choir, he was told he was too young. He left very dejected but returned in a few minutes with his usual big eyes and big smile telling the person he was almost 10. She caved in and let him join the choir. No one can resist Anthony when he turns on his charm. Believe it or not, Winnie actually turned 13. I remember the day she arrived 12 years ago. She didn’t want to look at anyone and would not smile but in a couple of days the children in Cottage E, especially Bernard, won her over. She is still a little shy but she has a beautiful smile. Kevin is in a special school for the hearing impaired but he was home for a doctor’s appointment so he picked up his presents. Joyce is becoming a lovely young lady and she is growing so fast that I have a hard time getting the right size clothes for her. Clavin is celebrating his second Nyumbani birthday with us. He is always excited about the presents and is conscious of taking good care of what he gets.

March 4, 2017
Thursday morning I facilitated our Child Care and Protection Workshop for all of our staff. Our topic was Child Health and Nutrition. Wesonga and Sarah put together a very good PowerPoint presentation on this topic. There were lots of questions from the staff and Wesonga said that many staff asked for hard copies of the presentation. The talk was helpful for both children and adults.

March 11, 2017
On Tuesday we also had a Dental Clinic at Nyumbani for our Paul Miki students. Gordan, one of our Rotarians, is also a dentist and I was his dental assistant as he checked all of the teeth of the children in the Paul Miki class. All did well. Then on Wednesday afternoon we checked all the teeth of the children in Standards 1, 2, and 3. We finished Standards 4 to 8 plus Paul, Joseph, and James who were home from school this afternoon. Now I can put dental assistant as well as Audiology Program coordinator on my resume! Too bad I’m not seeking employment right now!

March 24, 2017
On Monday Wesonga and I took Mungai to the Nairobi Audiology Center for an appointment with Doctor Serah. Mungai needed to get his new CI programmed and Dr. Serah is the only audiologist who can do it. She works well with Mungai and no matter what question she asks, Mungai knows the answer. He thoroughly understands how his CI operates and what setting is best for him. She put in a new program and we need to go back in two weeks to see if any changes need to be made. They stopped manufacturing and repairing the CI Mungai has had for over 10 years so it was necessary to get him a new one. Tomi worked to see what she could do and was able to contact Doctor Yell in the U.S. who was able to get a CI donated for Mungai.

(continued on page 15)
Our sisters had a long history at St. Mary Parish in York, Pennsylvania. The sisters first began ministering at the parish in 1869, teaching the children of the German immigrants in the area. However, the connection actually goes back even a few years earlier when Bishop John Neumann—the same bishop who assisted Mother Francis with the founding of our congregation—purchased the land on which St. Mary’s Church was later built. In 1926 the parish completed a new convent for the sisters—a residence where they lived until the last sisters left the parish in 1998. The building was then used by Catholic Charities until 2012 and was later purchased by the pastor, Fr. Jonathan Sawicki.

Just recently the former convent became home to St. Mary’s Thrift Shop. The shop had formerly operated out of a smaller building on the parish property. Donations—whether in the form of materials, time, talent, and money—helped to blend the convent façade into areas where clients can browse and purchase needed clothing and supplies. For example clothing racks were donated by a local clothing retailer and a shoe rack was created by a high school student as part of a Girl Scout project.

Some of the customers who utilize the thrift shop are referred by Access-York, a domestic violence service which provides help to people dealing with domestic abuse. Access-York provides vouchers which their clients can use for clothing and needed household items.

All in all, it seems as though the former convent is still alive with the spirit of those early sisters at St. Mary’s—a spirit which embraced the early German immigrant children, looked to the needs of the current Spanish-speaking community, and now provides much needed help to victims of abuse. Mother Francis Bachmann must be delighted!

To read an article in the York paper, click on the following link.

Ann Marie Slavin, OSF

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This afternoon Susan Gold popped in for a visit with a group called Aids No More. She was welcomed warmly by many familiar faces. It is a group of Kenyan college students under the direction of a Kenyan doctor and Susan that is sponsored by the U.S. The students are being taught how to teach children a Human Sexuality Course that Susan created and taught about 10 years ago at Nyumbani, the Village, and Leatoto when she was here on a Fulbright Scholarship. It was wonderful to meet Susan again and her enthusiastic students.

Please pray for us as we pray for you.

Love and prayers to all,

Julie Mulvihill, OSF

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For years “bad” and “good” cholesterol have been the yin and yang of heart health—the two lipids around which so much advice revolves. Bad cholesterol (low-density lipoprotein, or LDL) deposits excess cholesterol in your arteries where it can build up into plaques, increasing the likelihood of heart disease and blood clots. Good cholesterol (high density lipoprotein, or HDL) carries surplus cholesterol back to your liver to be excreted.

To prevent heart disease, we’ve been told to keep LDL levels down and HDL levels up with 45 milligrams per/deciliter usually offered as a good target. Sounds pretty straightforward, right? But according to several recent studies, good cholesterol alone has little ability to lower heart disease risks and more is not necessarily better.

Here’s what you need to know about the current thinking as well as heart-healthy steps that are unlikely to change—even if understanding of cholesterol does:

- The first clue that the role of good cholesterol was more complicated than previously thought came when scientists tried to develop medications to raise HDL levels. Drugs such as niacin and cholesteryl ester protein inhibitors failed to reduce cardiac disease risks. These results surprised doctors.
- Lifestyle changes such as exercising more and quitting smoking drive HDL levels up and heart disease risk down. Increasing HDL levels “artificially” without behavioral changes doesn’t reduce risk at all. Some cardiac researchers feel that HDL alone is not the determining factor.

Forget the Numbers?

As researchers work to figure out what these findings mean in the quest to keep hearts healthy, your doctors may still use your HDL levels in conjunction with LDL and total cholesterol to prevent cardiovascular disease risk. Very low HDL levels can be a sign of trouble and the only meaningful way to raise them is through lifestyle changes. So pay attention to the numbers but the main focus is on making healthy choices.

In other words, whether your HDL is low, high, or somewhere in the middle, the prescription for a healthy heart will be the same.
- Don’t smoke.
- Drink only in moderation.
- Exercise regularly.
- Stay away from trans fats which are found in fried foods and baked goods made with partially hydrogenated oils.

Reference: Consumer Reports on Health, March 2017, p9

Anne Dorice DeFebbo, OSF

Cholesterol - What you Need to Know!
I recently had the opportunity to present at Alvernia University on the topic of Service and Solidarity in the Franciscan Tradition. This was part of a series of workshops that were mandated for students preparing for a Spring Break Immersion Trip. Service is different when viewed through the lens of the Franciscan tradition in that the foundation is not based on bringing aid or commodity to a person or group of persons. Rather, it is solidly grounded on the desire to be in relationship. Early on in my learning the Franciscan way, I was told that being Franciscan is about who one is as a person, not what one does—about who we are in relationship to each other, God, and the created world.

As we continue to unpack the fruits of our Franciscan Volunteer Program and discover the ongoing ways in which we are called to conversion, I am struck by this shift in understanding service. At the Catholic Volunteer Network National Conference last fall, I was engaged in a conversation with a program director of a very well known faith-based volunteer program. She shared her struggles in providing a holistic experience for her volunteers and wondered if they were lacking formative guidance—both in the area of gaining life skills and growing in their spiritual lives. The program that had once had great influence from the sponsoring religious congregation now experiences a waning relationship and struggles to keep the charismatic alive. This was a reminder to me of how crucial it is to provide experiences for our volunteers that foster healthy relationship building, balanced commitment to both ministry and community, self-care practices, and time and space for personal and spiritual development.

Last month I posted a link on OSFConnect to a National Catholic Reporter article entitled, “Faith-Based Volunteering Can Pave a Path to Vocations.” The article shares a Catholic Volunteer Network report stating that 37% of former volunteers surveyed “considered a vocation to ordained ministry or religious life” and 62% have “seriously considered” a call to a religious vocation. I believe the reasons for these percentages can be directly related to the relationship building with a religious congregation during one’s service year. The deeper beauty present here, however, is not the numbers but the reality that relationship building with a religious congregation brings everyone to a deeper commitment to listening to God’s call in one’s life. No matter what the person’s vocation may end up being, they are influenced positively by their experience of this relationship.

I recently asked the volunteers to name some sisters who have influenced them throughout the first half of their year. I was surprised by some of the names they shared—names that I did not expect—sisters who went out of their comfort zone to get to know the volunteers and who have deeply impacted the volunteers’ experience. Please never doubt the role that you each play in the life of this program!

In addition to the relationship building that is happening, the volunteers—starting with orientation—are given a strong foundation in the Franciscan Tradition through workshops and retreats that they attend throughout the year. Just last month Sr. Diane Tomkinson spent a day with the volunteers as well as with the candidates to share information on the Franciscan Moral Vision. The day included input from Diane as well as quiet reflective time that moved into group sharing. Throughout the day we spoke of light and darkness and the beauty and gifts of God that exist in both places. This day also started with a major snow event that blanketed the grounds of the Glen by noon but which was mostly cleared and sunny by the end of the day. Even God was contributing to our sharing through the beauty of creation—moving from dark to light.

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During the National Religious Vocation Conference Convocation last November, Sherry Weddell gave the keynote address, “Discipleship: the Key to Vocations.” Weddell is the author of the book *Forming Intentional Disciples: the Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. She is also the cofounder and codirector of the Catherine of Siena Institute whose primary work is to promote charism discernment for lay Catholics.

The main point of Weddell’s presentation focused on the need for one to reach the level of intentional discipleship before one can discern and commit to a vocation. A strong personal relationship with God is essential to our faith development. She described the three basic stages of faith development as **Seeker** (one who has not yet committed to the call to follow Christ), **Disciple** (a life-long conversion process), and **Apostle** (one who has the experience of being missioned by Christ). She proposed that “even the most active Catholics sometimes experience little spiritual growth. Growth is important because people are ready for vocation discernment only after they have become intentional disciples.”

Recent statistics reveal to us the fact that less than half of American Catholics believe in a personal relationship with God even among those who are deeply committed to a life of ministry. Weddell emphasizes the need for faith development among the general Catholic population, especially among the young who are rapidly leaving the Church. Fewer than two-thirds of Millennials remain in the church today. The loss of the younger generation is being slowed by the influence of Pope Francis whose spirit of joy and all-embracing love is touching the hearts of those who have had little knowledge or experience of Catholicism. Weddell states: “Our future Catholic sisters, brothers, and priests are standing in

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those circles of doubters right now. They don’t know who they’ve been created to be because they haven’t lived the encounter out of which a vocation will emerge in their lives.”

All who are baptized receive the virtue of faith which may or may not blossom into the act of faith. It is this act of faith—the expression of choice made as a child or later as an adult—that provides the foundation for discipleship and the choice of a vocation within the life of the Catholic community. Therefore, “vocation is a fruit of discipleship.”

The journey of the spiritual life follows along the developmental steps identified by Doug Schaupp in his book, I Once was Lost. The steps are

- initial trust – the development of a positive, personal relationship with Christ,
- spiritual curiosity – a period of wondering what faith could mean personally,
- spiritual openness – a willingness to take the next step,
- spiritual seeking – a time of earnest searching for a way to participate in the life of the Church,
- intentional discipleship – a conscious commitment to being a disciple of Christ.

True discernment of a vocation occurs at the level of intentional discipleship. In most parishes, the parish and diocesan leaders estimate that only “about five percent of their active members are actually conscious disciples…In terms of vocations, that means about 95 percent of these folks are not yet ready to discern.”

Although Weddell was speaking to a large assembly of those involved in vocations to the consecrated life, she warned us about the error of misidentifying the call to discipleship as a call to religious life. Everyone is called to follow Christ as disciples and, eventually, as apostles. There are those who are living dynamic Christian lives who are not meant to become consecrated religious or priests. Their service to the Church community is vital for its ongoing life and growth as they live their vocations in married or in single life.

Pondering this sharing of Sherry Weddell awakened me to the needs of each of us to consciously grow in our faith and to participate in the expression of our Catholic identity as living and dynamic disciples for the Gospel. There is a great need for us to proclaim the truth that all baptized persons are called by God to live a life of faith, participating in the evangelical life of the Church and spreading the Good News of God’s deep love for each of us.

What does this awareness call us to do? How can we support the Church’s effort to evangelize and encourage the spiritual growth of its members? Here are some suggestions:

- Support and participate in the efforts of our parish churches to develop the faith of parishioners.
- Encourage faith sharing with parishioners, students, families, and even our own local communities.
- Become comfortable speaking about our own vocation story and how God drew you to respond to His call to your particular vocation.
- Become involved in parish faith formation groups.
- Form a prayer group in your parish or place of work. Short periods of just ten minutes could possibly fit into the work day, perhaps at lunch time.

As we ponder our own call to live as Christ’s disciples and apostles, we realize that this is a gift given to us to be shared with others. When we have the courage to reach out to others, to express our own faith, we awaken others to their personal call to follow Christ and strengthen their resolve to give their lives in response to that call.

Christopher Marie Wagner, OSF