

Magazine of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia



one with

our Retired Sisters at *Saint Joseph* Villa

INSIDE

Saint Joseph Villa Embraces Cultural Change in Senior Care

Lawrence Biscontini—Former Student, Friend and Valued Villa Patron





Welcome to *One With*, the magazine of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia. I would like to share with you one of our well-loved community prayers:

Father, we are called as Sisters of Saint Joseph to surrender, to stand open and powerless before You, completely dependent upon Jesus, whose spirit liberates us to a radical sense of mission, through the rhythm of contemplation and courageous action, to be a healing presence in any and all situations, and to this we say, Amen.

In living our mission of unity, we strive to be a healing presence in any and all situations. A listening ear, a compassionate response, even an understanding nod have the potential to connect us in healing ways to others.

In this edition of *One With*, come and see some of the ways that we strive to be a healing presence. Saint Joseph Villa, our retirement and health care facility for sisters and lay residents, has wholeheartedly embraced Culture Change, which is a distinct departure from medical-centered care to person-directed care. This type of care focuses on residents' choices in their daily preferences and needs, thus creating a more home-like environment. Hopefully, the quality of life will be enhanced for those who live and work in such an atmosphere, creating healing and wholeness for all. Also featured is one of our many Villa benefactors who assists us in making this dream a reality.

As you peer more deeply into the featured stories of individual Sisters, notice how they strive to be a healing presence to those who are experiencing family stress or discord, and those in crisis situations. Vicariously feel the support and healing love that is offered to dying persons on hospice as well as to their families in need of comfort.

As we begin this new year of 2014, many thanks to you, our devoted benefactors, for your prayers and your support of us and our mission. May our God, who makes all things new, offer you new life, new hope, healing and joy. Our deep appreciation and prayers are with you.

With prayerful gratitude,

Sister Anne Myers

Sister Anne Myers, SSJ
Congregational President



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On the cover....

The cover design depicts Saint Joseph Villa, retirement home and nursing home in Flourtown, Pennsylvania. Appearing from left, Charles Teresa Cunningham SSJ, Ruth Eisenhower SSJ, Lawrence Biscontini, Loretta Dolores Scribbick SSJ and Agnes Leona Arnold SSJ.

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Photo of Saint Joseph Villa lobby mosaic by Julia Henke

An exciting transformation is underway at Saint Joseph Villa as it embraces the *culture change* movement happening in senior living facilities throughout the nation. The goal is to transform the culture of aging based on the philosophy of person-directed care and service.

The culture change movement transforms nursing home and assisted living care from the traditional institutional model to a more home-like community based model. The model honors values and wishes of nursing home residents and those working directly with them. The focus shifts to give residents more control over their daily lives. While residents have had individualized care plans for many years, systems of care are often set up to maximize efficiency, not to address the unique needs and desires of each resident. Take, for example, residents' rising times and bathing schedules. The person-directed model gives the residents greater control over their daily lives. They decide when they want to be in their room, what time to get up, when to eat, bathe, sleep or participate in activities.

“For such a transformation to occur, we need an all-encompassing process of both education to enlighten our minds and formation to enlarge our hearts and a process that will involve everyone,” says **Sister Dorothy Aprich SSJ**, Executive Director of the Villa.

Assisting the Villa is Action Pact, an organization considered leaders in this movement of transformation. Over the next two years, Action Pact will help facilitate the culture change process at the Villa. Collaboration with a Steering Team is part of that process. The Steering Team commissions various action teams to focus on specific issues for the purpose of enhancing the quality of life for all who live and work at the Villa. “This process involves cultivating the leadership qualities in every person and empowering our staff to be leaders in their area of responsibility,” said Dorothy. “When staff members feel empowered in this way, they have a greater sense of ownership and a deeper sense of commitment.”

Sister Betty McVeigh SSJ, Social Worker Assistant, is a member of the Steering Team. “The Steering Team consists of approximately 24 members of the Villa community. The Team includes administrators, sister-residents, and staff representatives from various departments including housekeeping, CNAs, maintenance, nursing, dining services, activities and social services,” said Betty. “The Steering Team is appropriately named as we are truly on a journey through

culture change to a heightened meaning of being a *home* for our residents. Although culture change in nursing homes and assisted living homes is a national trend, the focus here at the Villa is a unique one. The Villa community embraces not only Sisters of Saint Joseph who live in a retirement/assisted living setting and who experience community life on the 4th through 7th floors, but it also includes both lay men and women, as well as Sisters on our two skilled care floors (2nd & 3rd). We are Mission driven as we become more and more resident-directed.”

Betty believes the involvement of Action Pact is critical to the successful shift to person-directed care. “Action Pact, the organization hired to assist us in the process of growth, is a very positive aspect of our journey,” said Betty. “The facilitators, especially Megan Hanna, have raised our awareness of important components of *home*, taught us the skills involved in culture change, allowed time for reflection, created group experiences, offered support, and have helped us to stay on target. The three Rs of culture change which we are moving through are: Renewing the Spirit, Reframing the Organization, and Renovating into Home.”

Villa resident and Steering Team member **Sister Marie St. Leger SSJ** is honored to serve on the team. “Everyone on the Steering Team is committed to the Villa and to transforming it to a more home-like atmosphere,” says Marie. “One action team has to do with daily pleasures—things that you enjoy at home such as sleeping late, having a late breakfast, or fixing a snack when you wish. These things can be part of daily living at the Villa. It has been exciting to learn what amazing things can be done. Food service is already changing. Menus are provided daily for our meal selections and the food is served on each floor. Fewer people are taking trays in their rooms.

Real neighborhoods are emerging. It’s wonderful!”

“This is a unique time in our history, both in our congregation and in our nation. As more and more of us enter our retirement years, various kinds of supportive services are needed to enhance our quality of life,” said Dorothy. Today is an ideal time to make such a transition. The Congregation has approximately 835 members, of whom the median age is 74 years. Over the

next 20 years, the Villa will be home to more sisters. “Our experience of living our mission through prayer, community life, and ministry has changed greatly over the years. Our sisters coming to live at the Villa today have very different expectations, needs and desires than in the past. Our goal is to create an environment of home/community in which our residents want to live and, by having the supportive services they need, will continue to live life to the full.”



Pictured at top: from left, Dorothy Apprich SSJ chats with Marie St. Leger SSJ in the Villa Lobby.

Pictured at Bottom: Betty McVeigh SSJ meets with Villa Residents.

Photos by Julia Henke

Lawrence Biscontini

Former Student

Friend

Valued Villa Patron

by Carole Pollock SSJ and Cecilia Rupell

Today, in classrooms throughout the world students are learning lessons that will prepare them for the future. Most students will progress from one level to the next with little thought to the lessons learned or the people who taught them along the way. Lawrence Biscontini is not most people. Educated by the Sisters of Saint Joseph from grades one through eight at Saint Mary School in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, Lawrence has never forgotten the sisters who taught him. More than 40 years later Lawrence holds the sisters in his heart and demonstrates his love and gratitude with his time, talent and treasure.

Lawrence considers his raising to be a shared undertaking. "Being raised

results from a fusion of experiences," said Lawrence. "To be sure, Mom raised me and created the character I have today. I spent a minimum of 1,665 yearly hours with my SSJ friends, Monday through Friday. Ignoring their contribution would be a gross error and a complete lack of gratitude." His SSJ friends include Saint Joseph Villa residents **Sisters Agnes Leona Arnold, Charles Teresa Cunningham, Ruth Eisenhauer and Loretta Dolores Scribbick**, as well as **Sisters Mary Elizabeth Guyer, Helen Steinmetz, Barbara Worley** and the late **Sister Genevieve Marie Beirne**.

To say he enjoyed the sisters' company would be an understatement. "When kids played during lunch and recess, I often assisted the sisters in their

offices, homerooms or even in the convent," says Lawrence. "We came to know Lawrence so well because he stayed after school until his mother came to pick him up; sometimes he came over to the convent to wait for her," said Charles Teresa. "He got to know us, and we got to know him. He became interested in magic and his father sent him for lessons. He used to entertain us with his magic tricks. Sometimes his father would bring him over to the convent in the evening to show us the new tricks and moves he had learned."

"I thoroughly enjoyed working with him," says Ruth. "He was a very enthusiastic and gifted student and even as a young person he was always so thoughtful, generous and



Sister Elizabeth Ferguson SSJ thanks Lawrence Biscontini for his presentation titled "The Internal Trilog: Brain, Body and Breath" to Villa residents.

Photo by Cecilia Rupell

vivacious.” Agnes Leona recalls young Lawrence as “a lovable, generous, down-to-earth boy. I remember one time in particular when Lawrence was having difficulty with a math problem,” said Agnes Leona. “I can still see him standing at the blackboard unable to come up with the correct solution. I said, ‘Lawrence, THINK!’ He stayed with the problem and worked out the answer! He never forgot that advice and he has mentioned my ‘suggestion’ (THINK)* to me on many occasions.”

Lawrence was unique in many ways. Agnes says, “Lawrence was the only student who did not want an eighth-grade graduation party. He wanted to treat the sisters to a vacation at his family home in Puerto Rico!” Sisters Agnes Leona, Charles Teresa, Ruth, Helen Steinmetz and Barbara Worley were among those who made the trip to Puerto Rico for that occasion and have returned many times throughout the years. “The trip,” Lawrence said, “was my father’s graduation present in honor of getting straight As.” The vacation was everything young Lawrence could wish for. “I remember horseback riding on the beach, singing, praying, card playing, quirkiness, laughter and meditation.”

Lawrence’s kindness and generosity extend beyond the sisters who taught him. He is a patron of Saint Joseph Villa. An accomplished professional in the fitness industry and the author of numerous exercise books and DVDs, Lawrence donates a portion of sales generated from his website findlawrence.com to Saint Joseph Villa. Ruth says, “He has always been extremely generous to the Congregation and especially to the Villa. When he comes to visit here at the Villa, he conducts an assembly for all the sisters and his presentation includes exercises, meaningful spiritual thoughts

and ideas. He has a way of engaging people and making everyone in the room feel at home with him.”

Marian Beems, Convent Administrator, has witnessed his goodness as well. “Lawrence saw our need to keep our Sisters active and actively involved in all aspects of life,” said Marian. “The Villa sisters love Lawrence’s visits and always find them inspiring and enjoyable. Lawrence remains connected with the Villa sisters throughout the year by his most generous donations of wellness classes and fitness equipment. With numerous weekly exercise programs such as Movement to Music or Fit for Life, the sisters use the exercise bands, leg and arm weights and dumbbells all donated by Lawrence.”

The admiration between Lawrence and the sisters is mutual. Agnes Leona says, “I have shared with Lawrence my love of a prayer-life and he has shared his great love for the Blessed Sacrament and for recognizing the presence of God in the beauty of nature. Lawrence is a gentle, calm, loving person who thinks more of others than of himself. As a result, you feel a calmness in his presence. The grace of God, the Holy Spirit who is within him, comes forth when you are with him—it shines through his eyes. When you meet Lawrence you know you are meeting a unique and gifted person—someone very special who loves the Sisters of Saint Joseph—and you do not forget him!”

Charles Teresa considers Lawrence to be among the best of people. “Lawrence’s kindness and goodness to us have truly been out of this world,” she said. She has witnessed Lawrence’s goodness that goes beyond the sisters. “That kind of selflessness extends not only to us, but to many others as

well,” says Charles Teresa. “For example, in Puerto Rico where Lawrence took us on vacation several times, we observed that he was very generous to the people of the parish. He spent much of his early childhood in Puerto Rico and loved the people and the parish community. He was always eager to help: paint the rectory, help the priest, teach the sisters English—just anything he could do to help. It is in Lawrence to be that way. You do not meet many people like that. He is just so generous! It has been just wonderful to have him as a friend and to stay in communication with him all these years. God bless him!”

Lawrence feels strongly about the Sisters of Saint Joseph. “NOT giving back to the sisters for all of the love, dedication, and discipline that they have given me would be a true abomination of their eight years of dedication to me,” said Lawrence. He wants people to remember the sisters. “I find that we often forget the chronologically enriched women who dedicate their entire lives to us asking NOTHING in return, even vowing to possess nothing in return. That I should have a single comfort in my life that a sister who has taught me does NOT possess should be, I fear, the gravest sin of all. I would be NOTHING if not for my character, and the character I possess is what Mom and the sisters formed it to be. The Sisters taught me all those years ago to be mindful of my thoughts, for they become my words, and mindful of my words, for those become my actions, and mindful of my actions, for by my actions shall I leave love behind when I’m gone and be judged.”

The relationship has transformed Lawrence throughout the years as he has grown from boy to man. “In one way, my interaction with the sisters

* Sister Agnes Leona’s “THINK” advice became both chapter title (think!) and subject of his first book, *The One-percent Factor*. It also became his first exposure to the “mind” half of what would become his lifelong career of “mind-body” fitness.

has not evolved at all in the fact that I met them as a student, and remain a student,” said Lawrence. “Whereas they first taught me lessons about books, they now teach me lessons about life. Whereas our relationship first defined me as student, now the definition consists of *friend, confidant, inspiration, and cause*. They are my friends, and in them I can confide anything.” For him it is important to remember the sisters. “I want their retiring days to be filled with a total feeling of love for how appreciative we are for those qualities like discipline we received all of those years ago. Comments like ‘recovering Catholic’ and ‘I escaped the nuns’ frustrate and even anger me because I see what kind of society exists now compared to the days of parochial school education and I’m amazed that some want to forget the days of sisters. That sort of attitude only hones my message more: I will not let the Sisters of Saint Joseph be forgotten. Consequently, I will do all within my power through my public profession and website to contribute in whatever way I can to the overall quality of life of my SSJ friends, for which the Villa stands. We all have to have a cause, a message, a belief, and the Sisters of Saint Joseph are mine. Furthermore, the fact that the Villa welcomes those who are not Catholic underlines my belief in supporting this organization that makes the world a better place.

Forty years after teaching Lawrence, Ruth remains inspired by the man he has become. “You won’t find many in this world like Lawrence, who does the things he does for other people. He does not do *just* for the community. No matter where he has been, he always seems to find people in need and he reaches out to them,” says Ruth. “He definitely has been a strong influence in my life.

Photo Top: Pictured from left, Elizabeth Ferguson SSJ, Lawrence Biscontini and Marian Beems discuss needs of the Physical Therapy Department.

Photo Bottom: Sister Regina Immaculata Monaghan SSJ receives a Lawrence Biscontini autographed book “Meals & Musings”. Half of the proceeds generated on his website findlawrence.com go directly to Saint Joseph Villa—where four of his former teachers live.

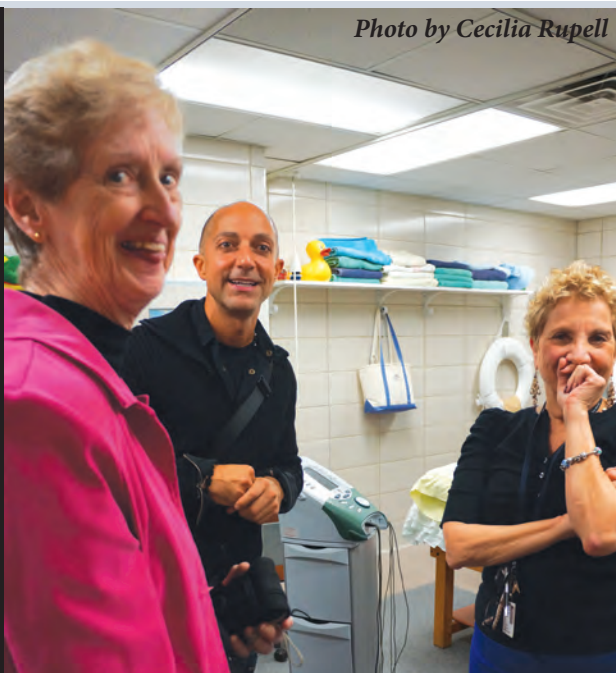


Photo by Cecilia Rupell



Photo by Pat Marnien SSJ

He is so full of positive energy, so thoughtful and talented and he opens his arms and shares with others. Because of knowing Lawrence and witnessing his generosity, I have tried to reach out more to people and share what I can in my own way. We are so very grateful to him for his generosity and presence in our lives and pray that God will bless him in all that he does. He’s truly taught us that, more important than the years in your life, is the life in your years.”

Non-Academic Lessons Learned from...

Sister Francis

...obedience
and patience.

Sister Agnes Leona

...the value
of thinking as
a profession.

Sister Ruth Eisenhauer
...how to
pray the rosary
correctly.

Sister Charles Teresa Cunningham

...that everything
we do, who we are, and who
we become, in some way reflects
our home training and from where
we've come.

and

what narcolepsy is, and that, if you're ever telling a joke that you find particularly funny, or find yourself in the middle of a particularly intense card game, and the other person with narcolepsy just closes her eyes and falls asleep mid-sentence, not to take it personally!

Sister Thomas Dorothy Kean
...that, when
someone believes
in you, you some-
times start to believe
in yourself.

Sister Mary Elizabeth Guyer

...the value of
laughter and taking
life less seriously, for the
reason that angels can fly
is because they take
themselves so lightly.

Sister Genevieve Marie Beirne

...that a true
confession means holding
back nothing, that laying down
your head anywhere on the planet
shouldn't be done without kneeling
to say your prayers first (including
making a cross on your pillow and the
ubiquitous "JMJ"), and that dancing
the Irish jig isn't as hard as some
people make it out to be.

Sister Helen Steinmetz

...that, above
the clouds on any
given day, regardless
of the apparent weather,
the sun shines brightly
as God's love remains
steadfast.

Sister Loretta Dolores Scribbick

...poetry,
rhyming, the value of
music, and how to write,
how to appreciate the
lyrics to music
(including Perry Como),
how to get a poem
published, and how to
sing with my soul.

Photo courtesy of Lawrence Biscontini



Lawrence Biscontini

A Healing Presence

Helping the Dear Neighbor Recover Emotionally from Disaster

Sister Sharon White SSJ

Bad things happen to good people every day. Media outlets report stories of bombings, shootings, bank robberies or workplace accidents where lives are lost and others irrevocably changed. We see images of the events, of law enforcement and emergency medical professionals at the scene. Unseen, are the mental health professionals who rush into the chaos to help survivors and those traumatized by the events. Sister Sharon White SSJ is among them.

Sharon serves as a consultant for Crisis Care Network (CCN), a company that specializes in helping businesses care for their employees in the immediate aftermath of workplace tragedies. CCN keeps Sharon busy dispatching her to counsel employees of banks, retail centers, manufacturing companies, hospitals, construction sites, and insurance companies, in the aftermath of robberies and other acts of violence, serious or fatal industrial accidents, large-scale natural and man-made disasters.

For more than 15 years, Sharon has helped people deal with the repercussions of high-profile events including the Boston Marathon Bombing, the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut and Hurricane Sandy. She also has helped those impacted by deaths or injuries in the workplace, the trauma of bank robberies and the loss of employment. Sudden and unexpected events may overwhelm a person. For many, recovery takes time. "We are not robots. We are human beings," says Sharon. "We cannot just click our fingers and get over the trauma."

"The consultant's role is to help individual employees and the organization stabilize, return to functioning, and begin healing," says Judy Beahan, LMSW Director, Clinical and Network Operations at CCN. "We operate from a belief in the natural resilience and ability of individuals to recover and grow through adversity, and also recognize the incredible value of being with, listening to, supporting and caring about people in those frightening, painful, and overwhelming moments after a tragic event. It is often said that it takes a special person to run towards a frightening and painful situation, from which others would much prefer to run away. Consultants who provide Critical Incident Response services in the workplace are those special people and Sharon White is certainly among the best."

Crisis counseling is much different from the counseling Sharon performs as a family and marriage therapist in private practice at Peaceful Partners in Gibbsboro, New Jersey. Sharon's work with CCN is short-term lasting several hours or multiple days. Following the Boston Marathon bombing of April 2013, Sharon met with employees of a company located in the midst of the bombing zone. She listened as they recounted their experiences as race participants, spectators who witnessed the horrific injuries of the bombing and those who were in proximity to the bombers. In Newtown, CT, Sharon met with those personally impacted.



Sister Sharon White SSJ

“I sit with the traumatized and I listen. I hear a wide range of feelings, emotions and rationale as they struggle to make sense of the senseless. It is important for me to be with them where they are, nonjudgmentally allowing them to feel what they feel, to be what they may be, not trying to change who they are or what they feel at that point.” Sharon’s clients do not know that she is a Sister of Saint Joseph nor do they know her credentials. They know only that she represents an insurance company. “I do not introduce religion into the conversation. “I do, however, meet people where they are. For example, following the Boston Marathon I had a conversation with a woman who repeatedly said, ‘Where is God in this? Oh, Jesus. Oh, Jesus.’ I took her hands in mine and said, ‘Let’s pray to Jesus together.’ We prayed and afterward she smiled, hugged me and said ‘Thank you. That is just what I needed.’ ”

Sharon believes her success as a crisis consultant comes from the Divine. “I just bring what I have in me—the God in me to the God in them—without saying those words,” said Sharon. “That is what helps me to be a healing presence. It is also important to validate where they are, because if you do not, they cannot move onto the next step. It is important that they do not get stuck in the pain.” Sharon explains, “I tell them, ‘When I have the common cold I do not go to the doctor. But, if I get stuck in the cold then I go to the doctor.’ ” Should they feel stuck in the pain, Sharon gives them self-help strategies and information on resources they can use for help.

Sharon’s life experiences and education have well prepared her for crisis counseling. Her personal trauma of losing her sister, who was a wife and mother of 11 children ages 3 to 19, in a car accident enhances her understanding of the traumatized. Each ministry as a Sister of Saint Joseph led to another, ultimately calling her to today’s mission as a mental health professional. Ministries as an educator, religious education director and pastoral minister and volunteer for the Red Cross are among them. Sharon is a Doctor of Ministry and holds a Master of Arts degree in Theology: Pastoral Ministry and Spirituality, as well as a Master’s degree in Clinical Social Work.

Recently a patient gifted Sharon with a piece of artwork featuring a quote that expressed her gratitude for Sharon. The quote from poet Maya Angelo is:

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Sharon’s love for the dear neighbor and her healing presence have continued to have an invaluable impact upon the lives of hundreds of people in need.

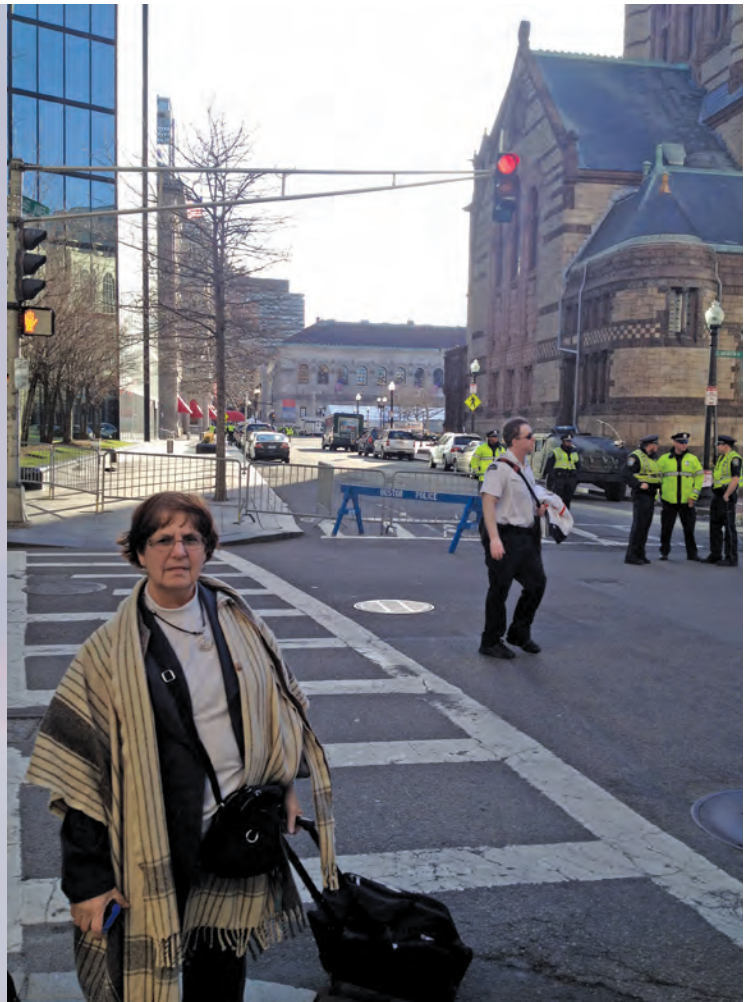
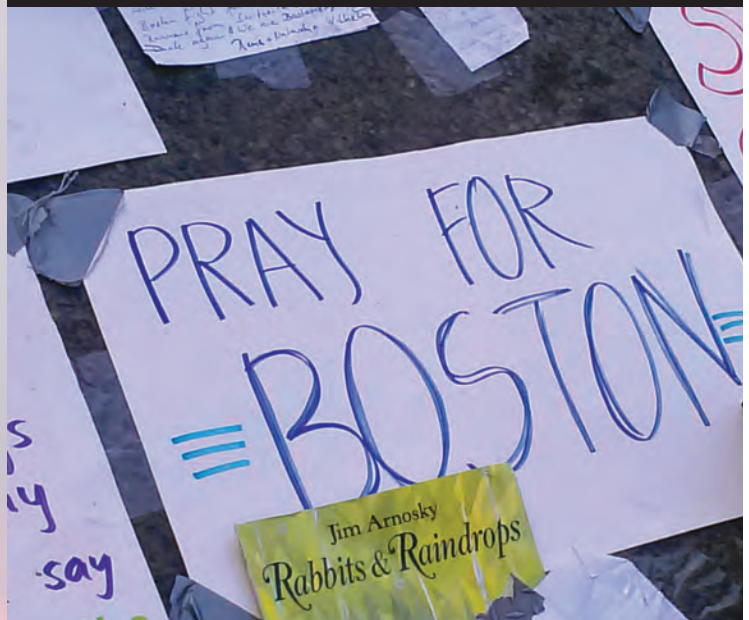
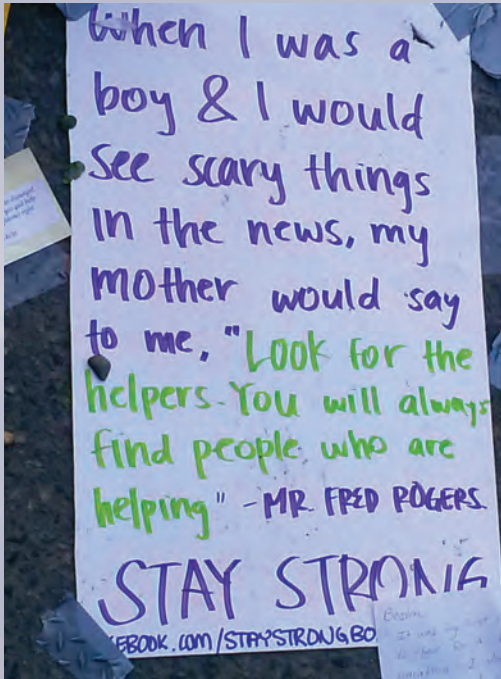


Photo top: Sharon White SSJ arrives in Boston to provide crisis counseling for employees of a company located in the middle of the bomb zone.

Photo Bottom: Signs at the bombing site.

Photos courtesy of Sharon White SSJ





“We all know Sharon to go above and beyond, as she is truly dedicated to helping employees recover after a workplace tragedy. She frequently drops everything to help and often does a lot in the background to make things go more smoothly. After the bombing at the Boston Marathon earlier this year, we were working around the clock to get enough trained consultants to Boston to help support the hundreds of businesses reaching out to us. Sharon quickly took care of her own housing and transportation and made herself ready to respond, doing such an amazing job. Businesses were requesting her specifically.”

—Julie Courtney, Response Coordinator

“Sharon has responded ceaselessly and without complaint—for both the brief and urgent, as well as for the extensive long haul. She has taken ONE HOUR cases for the next morning in the MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, Pennsylvania (even recently working hand-in-hand with a Spanish translator)—whenever needed. She was requested back many-a-time. She is constantly flexible, willing to help any and ALL people—at whatever cost to herself, and she pays no mind to it. She’s not interested in just the “big and the exciting” cases—she is equally concerned with the “lesser and the weak.” She gives herself equally to both the great and the small. And because of all that, she sure makes our job(s) easier! Sharon is constantly dependable—she is terrific to work with, both on the field for our customers, and in the response center at CCN. She’s a gem, she’s a firecracker, she’s always ready to go.”

—Lynae Page, Response Coordinator

“When I think of Sharon, I don’t know exactly how she does it, but—she JUST GOES, and for that we are deeply grateful.”

—Laura Tompkins, Assistant Manager

*Pictured Top: Sign placed at the bombing site
Pictured Middle: Family Meeting Area Designation
Pictured Bottom: Lunch time prayer service in Boston*

Photos courtesy of Sharon White SSJ

A Listening Ear for the Bereaved

Sister Maureen Erdlen SSJ

by Carole Pollock SSJ

Administrative Bereavement Coordinator, **Sister Maureen Erdlen SSJ** is passionate and enthusiastic about her ministry. Even as a high school student Maureen felt drawn to helping people in need. However, like most young women who entered the Sisters of Saint Joseph in 1968, her first assignment was as a teacher. She taught at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Catholic School in North Philadelphia and later at Queen of Peace in North Arlington, New Jersey. Teaching in North Philadelphia would prove significant in Maureen's life. She recalls, "The 70s were a challenging time in the urban community and it was an amazing experience for me to be with people who had little materially, lived with violence as a daily occurrence and, yet, welcomed us into their lives and homes. I truly think those years set the tone for my future work...North Philly literally changed my life."

In the summer of 1975 Maureen spent several weeks assisting **Sister Saint Ursula Egan SSJ**, the administrator of Catholic Home. Located at 70th & Woodland Avenues this facility was a residential program for emotionally disturbed adolescent girls. Although the experience was demanding, Maureen felt strongly drawn to the work. Two years later Maureen was missioned to Catholic Home, while also pursuing her degree in social work, with a focus on Planning and Development. "At Catholic Home I lived on the floor with 16 adolescent girls and it was overwhelming for me in many ways. It was really very challenging to be with these young people who came from very serious situations: abuse, fragmented families...some emotionally damaged for life. It was tough. You can't be in that environment and not be changed. Working alongside Saint Ursula was inspiring and she became a trusted mentor and lifelong friend."

At that time many changes were being implemented in the area of Social Work and some of the institutional programs for children were moving into more community-based programs. Maureen remembers, "While I was at Catholic Home, we opened a group home in Ardmore that we called Eugenie House for **Sister Eugenie Marie Lynn SSJ** who had been at Catholic Home for many years. I lived at the group home in Ardmore while studying at Bryn Mawr College in Philadelphia for my graduate degree: Master in Social Service and Master in Law and Social Policy. I was interested to see how law and social planning affected the programs we provide for children."

After working for a brief time with Catholic Social Services in the in-take department of family services, Maureen returned to Catholic Home and served as Administrator for the next 10 years.

Over the next eight years Maureen held a number of administrative positions with Catholic Social Services: Assistant Director for Senior Adult and Community Services, which included St. John's Hospice, Mercy Hospice and numerous community programs. "I always looked at my involvement with these programs as a way of empowering other people. Working with the Diocese was rewarding because the Administration put a lot of resources into serving the poor and their social service needs. I was very proud of that; we allocated much of what we had to the poor and those with special needs."

Maureen next worked at Hospitality House in Philadelphia, a program for men who 'had experienced' the criminal justice system." Most of them were on parole, and I worked/managed/developed the drug and alcohol program. After doing administrative work for so long, I wanted something that would bring me back to direct service with people in need. We also served the women from Hannah House in Philadelphia, a home for women who were newly-released from prison. These women had overwhelming needs, not just in terms of social supports, but also in terms of life-skills.



Sister Maureen Erdlen SSJ

People who are in and out of prison have lost so much, specifically many relationships. It caused me to look at loss and grief and their impact on our lives. At the same time a friend of mine who was a pastor in a large parish in Philadelphia needed someone to facilitate a bereavement group. I willingly took on the challenge. That was a little over 10 years ago.”

Today, Maureen is certified in Thanatology, the study of death and dying. She is also Administrative Bereavement Coordinator at Penn Wissahickon Hospice. Hospice is a life-care for persons who have a prognosis of six months or less, if the disease runs its normal course, and have accepted that there is no longer curative treatment. Maureen explains, “At hospice we work as a team: nurse, social worker, chaplain, home health-aide, bereavement councilors and medical directors. We go into the home, or sometimes a nursing facility, to support the patient and the family. Our client is not just the patient; it is the patient and the family. We provide the physical care needed, help the family resolve issues, help them understand that dying is a ‘process’ and normalize the experience of dying as much as we can. Once I started this work...I just loved it. I really recognized that Hospice gives me such an opportunity to use my professional skills, my personal values, and my spirituality. Death comes to all of us...death is a part of life. Culturally we are a death-denying society. But, I will tell you, if there are any spiritual people, it is people who are facing the end of life. We are not protecting our loved one by not talking about death. The challenge for all of us on the team is to listen and not assume we know what the person is going through. Most clients are overwhelmed and not sure what to say, so hearing what they have to say is key. We help them look at what their fears and anxieties are and offer ways to help address those realities. We literally say: we are going to

be with you to the end and help you in whatever way we can. Because of that reassurance they get some confidence in us and that is so important. Death is such a terribly ‘out-of-control’ experience!”

When asked how she deals with such terrible grief and sorrow, Maureen responds, “I pray. That is one thing about my ministry...my ministry makes me pray, because I literally can’t do it on my own. I have to keep myself centered and focused. I am in the presence of another’s grief and it is a graced moment to recognize that is ‘their grief’ not my grief. Grief is something we don’t fix. We know a lot more about grief now than we did, and it begins long before the Hospice team gets their foot in the door. Grief is all encompassing: it affects us physically, cognitively, emotionally and spiritually. Grief is also cumulative and we don’t always pay attention to that. We have one loss and it touches into the other losses we have experienced. Another thing we talk a lot about in terms of grief anymore is ‘continuing bonds.’ We recognize that while the person is no longer physically present the relationship is still there and the bond is still there. We are different because of the people who have been part of our lives and that doesn’t go away. It is a leveling experience at the end of life and for me a wonderful part of my ministry. This is the one opportunity to help someone through that process and it is such a gift for us as professionals. Sometimes I am sitting at the bedside of someone who is dying and they might not even be conscious of me. I have this belief that there is something going on between them and God, as God gets ready to receive them. To be sitting with them at that moment is a great privilege and I might say, ‘you are ready.....I hope it is wonderful.’”

At Penn Wissahickon Hospice, Maureen is a member of two hospice teams, works in an in-patient unit

located at ‘the old Graduate Hospital’ in Philadelphia and also participates in staff education. A colleague, Reverend Art Gilbert, chaplain, with whom Maureen has worked for seven years, speaks highly of her dedication, love and skill. “Maureen has great listening skills and in our business this is one of the greatest things we need—to hear the patient. She is excellent at listening and honing in on what the patient really needs...it is a real strength of hers. Maureen is also a highly competent instructor. I have attended many seminars she has given. It is difficult to talk to people about loss; Maureen’s presentations are so well done and helpful to our staff.” This past June, Maureen was recognized by the University of Pennsylvania Health System and received Clinical Advancement—an award given in recognition of clinical leaders.

When you listen to Maureen’s story, it is clear that she is highly qualified, dedicated and committed to all those to whom she ministers. It is equally clear that she believes she has been called to this work and passionately loves what she does. “I think it has always made a difference that I am a Sister of Saint Joseph. At this point in my life I can’t separate being an SSJ from my work with hospice. Our spirituality of reconciliation has never been more needed in today’s world and this is especially true at the end of life. You can’t impose that on anybody but I think in those last hours or days that is what you are trying to bring...a moment of peace, support and reconciliation. Sometimes it is listening that does it, sometimes it is something I say and that is because God gives me the words. There are times I honestly just don’t know what to say...I can’t fix others’ pain, but I can be with them at this sacred moment on their journey. This ministry is a process...it is humbling...it is awesome...and I love it. It has allowed me to see how the hand of God has guided my life and it is amazing!”

Maureen Erdlen SSJ, MSS, LSW, CT



Photo courtesy of Maureen Erdlen SSJ

Father, we are called as Sisters of Saint Joseph to surrender, to stand open and powerless before You, completely dependent upon Jesus, whose spirit liberates us to a radical sense of mission, through the rhythm of contemplation and courageous action, to be a healing presence in any and all situations, and to this we say, Amen.

"I feel very lucky to have colleagues like Maureen."

"She is a steady but gentle voice of advocacy for the bereavement department."

"Students and participants uniformly evaluate her as both an excellent speaker and involved discussion leader."

"Maureen is always willing to contribute to clinician education despite her busy days."

Sister Maureen Erdlen has made a great impact on many grieving people in our parish. She gives the people who attend her bereavement group the chance to tell their own stories and gently facilitates the conversations.

Coping with the death of a spouse, a son or a daughter...is a very difficult process. Maureen can't help them fill the vacuum, but she does assist them in dealing with it. Giving these people the outlet to express their feelings with others in the same situation has made a real difference in the healing process.

I worked with Maureen at Catholic Social Services and I always say that she helped me 'see the face of the poor.' She is a remarkable representative of the Sisters of Saint Joseph.

Monsignor Joseph P. Garvin
Pastor, St. Christopher Parish
Philadelphia

2013 Chance Drive Winners

**\$10,000
Grand Prize Winner**

**Bill and Robin Plante,
Washington, DC**

Seller—Ann Muriel SSJ

Thank you to everyone who purchased chances and supported the Sisters of Saint Joseph during this year's Chance Drive!

\$500 Winners

Donna Spatz, Orefield, PA
(Seller—Mary Kathryn Quinn SSJ)

Jack Miller, Elkins Park, PA
(Seller—Marie St. Leger SSJ)

Eva & Joe Bol, Orleans, VT
(Seller—Mary Fineran SSJ)

Kevin Conlin, Glenside, PA
(Seller—St. Genevive Convent, Flourtown, PA)

Fran & Jim Peterson, Caldwell, NJ
(Seller—Thérèse Ganly SSJ)

Jim Mangol
(Seller—Pauline S. Plefka SSJ)

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Sophia Pelechowicz, Maple Shade, NJ
(Seller—Christ Our Light Convent, Cherry Hill, NJ)

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(Seller—St. John Convent, Wallingford, PA)

Col. (Ret) R.J. Familetti, Cape May, NJ
(Seller—Star of the Sea Convent, Cape May, NJ)

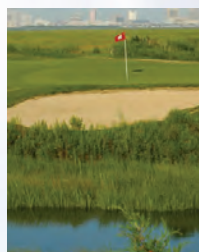
EVENTS

Celtic Golf
Distinctive Travel Experiences



Celtic Golf Raffle Drawing May 5, 2014

Win a golf trip to Ireland! Travel package includes airfare, car rental, hotel and golf fees (7 Days, 6 Nights, 4 Rounds of Golf). Raffle tickets are \$100 per chance. The winning ticket will be pulled at Saint Joseph Villa on Monday, May 5, 2014.



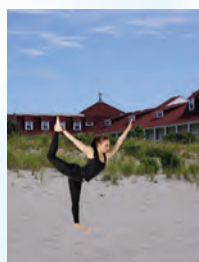
South Jersey Golf Tournament May 12, 2014, 8:30 AM Tee Off

The 10th Annual South Jersey Golf Tournament will take place at the Atlantic City Country Club. Sponsorship opportunities are available starting at \$200 Hole Sponsor. Price per golfer is \$150 or \$600 per foursome.



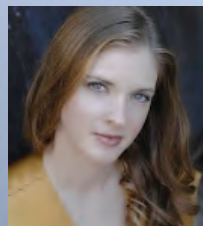
Artist Brother Mickey McGrath March 9, 2014, 2PM

Take a closer look at the art of Brother Mickey McGrath, and hear the stories behind his amazing works! Join us for his art presentation at Mount Saint Joseph Convent Chapel. Tickets \$25.



Women's Wellness Weekend June 6-8, 2014

Early Bird price of \$375 must be paid in full by April 25, 2014. After that date the price will increase to \$395. A non-refundable deposit of \$75 reserves your spot. Brochures with information on the weekend's activities will be available in March.



Soprano Maeve Höglund April 27, 2014, 2PM

Professional Soprano Maeve Höglund, will perform at Mount Saint Joseph Convent Chapel. Tickets \$25.

**Please contact the Sisters of Saint Joseph
Development Office for more information:**

1-800-482-6510 or development@ssjphila.org



Sisters of Saint Joseph of Philadelphia

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In Memoriam



Photo: Connie Murphy SSJ

To remember is to celebrate. We remember with love each of these women, our sisters and friends, who died during the past year. We celebrate their lives and the example that they offered to the Sisters of Saint Joseph, their families, their friends, the Church and the world.

These women embraced the call to "Let your life be a continuous act of love." (Maxims of the Little Institute). They lived lives of faithfulness and commitment while they were with us, and we depend upon them now to continue to pray on our behalf.

May they rest in the arms of the loving God they so faithfully served!

Sister Eileen Elizabeth Side
(formerly *Saint Albert*)
December 15, 2013

Sister Margaret Mary Culbert
(formerly *Silvanus*)
December 1, 2013

Sister Helen Clare Kline
(formerly *Mary Samuel*)
December 1, 2013

Sister Marie Jude Behling
November 30, 2013

Sister Doris R. Elgin
(formerly *Robert Michael*)
November 30, 2013

Sister John Bernardine Mattingly
November 13, 2013

Sister Rose Letitia McGonigal
November 7, 2013

Sister Mary Phillip Robinson
November 1, 2013

Sister Charlotte Sauers
(formerly *Charles Regina*)
October 24, 2013

Sister Mary Waldron
(formerly *Ann Gabriel*)
October 15, 2013

Sister Catherine D. Donohue
(formerly *Marie Josephine*)
October 6, 2013