

# Perspectives



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*"We cannot keep ourselves shut up in parishes, in our communities, when so many people are waiting for the Gospel ... It is not enough simply to open the door in welcome, but we must go out through that door and meet the people!"*

— Pope Francis, July 27, 2013, in the sermon of a Mass in Rio de Janeiro

Pope Francis shared three ideas with last summer's World Youth Day participants: "Go, do not be afraid, and serve." He said, "If you follow these three ideas, you will experience that the one who evangelizes is evangelized, the one who transmits the joy of faith receives more joy." He then encouraged the youth to return to their homes and "do not be afraid to be generous with Christ, to bear witness to his Gospel."

In this issue of *Perspectives* we introduce you to sisters and their partners in ministry: people inspired by the FSPA mission and values who have also heard the words "Go, do not be afraid, and serve." And with the Franciscan spirit, they have.

To Peru: where a participant in a FSPA-sponsored ministry experience now helps children—a ministry he attributes to FSPA influence (pg. 3).

To Kenya: where, with their FSPA-affiliated hearts, they have constructed five houses and helped provide food for 45 children in an orphanage (pg. 4).

To Wisconsin: where Sister Diane has shared her time and talents to advance literacy (cover story, pg. 6).

To Zimbabwe: where an affiliate, inspired by Sister Laurette, has met the children whose basic needs are fulfilled with the assistance of the FSPA Goodwill Project (pg. 7).

Francis reminded the World Youth Day participants, "Do not be afraid! When we go to proclaim Christ, it is he himself who goes before us and guides us. When he sent his disciples on mission, he promised: 'I am with you always' (Mt 28:20). And this is also true for us! Jesus never leaves anyone alone! He always accompanies us."

Go, do not be afraid, and serve.



*"As a child-headed family we would like to express our gratitude to the Franciscan Sisters for the support they gave us after the death of our parents. We send this present to remind you of the transformation you brought into our life."*

— Goodwill Project beneficiary (story on page 7)

***Perspectives* represents the spirit and values shared by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.**

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*Cover photo: Sister Diane Boehm was recently recognized as Wisconsin's Tutor of the Year (see story on page 6).*

# Peru

## 'Go, do not be afraid, and serve' with GATE

In 2006, Donald Vincent Padrnos was fresh from his first year as a student at Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wis. He was 19 years old, enrolled in the undergraduate studio arts program with somewhat vague visions of digital animation for his future.

But what Donald could firmly feel—in his heart—was love for the Spanish language. He was also enrolled in that undergrad program, thus balancing a double major.

Then GATE, Global Awareness Through Experience, tipped the scales. A sponsored ministry of FSPA, the program introduces people to culture, politics, economy and religion in Mexico, Central and South America and Eastern Europe. Donald's GATE trip that summer, as a Viterbo student, took him to Mexico where "a wildfire of ideas" sparked and spread within him. "The experience was nothing short of amazing." A visit to a daycare—his favorite recollection—was foretelling. "The people we met and the places we visited were all inspiring to the language and culture we were learning," he reflects, "but that wasn't all we got." He left Mexico with new friends, new memories and "a new shape for life." Not the end of a service trip, Donald says, but the beginning of servant leadership. "It opened our eyes and doors to so much more we could do within this world."

GATE's threshold practically materialized before the eyes of the Viterbo faculty who greeted students upon their return. "We could easily spot the students who had gone on a GATE trip and those who had not," says Maribel Bird, Ph.D., Viterbo



*GATE led Viterbo student Donald Padrnos to Mexico and to this daycare center where he made instant connections with the children.*

Photo courtesy of Donald Padrnos

associate professor and World Languages and Cultures chair. The students, she says, could "give names and faces to the history, cultures and issues discussed in the classroom. Franciscan values and servant leadership skills," she says, "were attained by observing community leaders using resources in the best and most efficient manner for the betterment of the people they served." Among them is Marie Des Jarlais, FSPA, director of the GATE program. "She was such a great host and guide to resources there," recalls Donald. "It wouldn't have been the same without her."

Looking back through the portals to GATE, Donald ventures to say that if he'd not gone through them he'd most

likely be "still trying to figure out what I want and need to do in life ... never have left Wisconsin and Minnesota ... wouldn't be volunteering my years in the Peace Corps and loving it." He perhaps wouldn't have pursued the path to an education in psychology; "The only way I felt like I could continue my hunger for cultural and diverse competence." He may not have achieved a master's degree in child, adolescent and family psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology (Illinois) to work as an autism behavior therapist, in youth development and with special needs adults. And today, Donald may not be a youth development special education volunteer in the small pueblo of Ascope in Peru's La Libertad region.

GATE, he says, "will forever be a part of me and the mold that is shaping my life; my life of service to others." ■

While Donald remembers and reveres Sister Marie Des Jarlais' presence in Mexico, she recalls him as well as other Viterbo students who returned home from a GATE journey that "forever changed their lives." She says it's not a tourism experience, not a "what can I get from these people in a foreign country" trip. It's learning through "authentic relationships. We come as equals knowing that we provide a forum to talk about their reality, their challenges, their blessings, and we in return receive more from them than we give. It's this face-to-face contact," says Sister Marie, "that makes all the difference."



*Donald with the Adulto Mayor group in a yoga class—part of a program that promotes healthy lifestyles for adults—on Peru's Puerto Morin Beach.*

Photo by Esperanza Carranza (Donald's host mother in Peru)



# Kenya

## 'Go, do not be afraid, and serve' in Kenya

**O**n the inaugural trip of his papacy, Pope Francis traveled to Brazil. He went there with conviction. To the millions of young people gathered there, he gave this call to action: "Go, do not be afraid, and serve."

FSPA affiliate Barb Lawless did so—going for three weeks in January, self-assuredly, to aid those in need in five villages near St. Gabriel Catholic Church and the Gaichanjiru Hospital in Kenya. With the nonprofit organization Helping Hands, Barb was making her third service trip to Africa (with her husband Gary, making his sixth) from her home in Woodruff, Wis., to get her hands dirty. They went to build houses and repair homes, schools, a small bush hospital and the church there. And, graciously, at night, after the work was done for the day, Barb sometimes reflected via email—taking us to Kenya, with certitude, to give witness to her ministry.

### January 10

*Barb writes her first message after traveling more than 18 hours by plane, and waiting over three hours for visas:*

Greetings from sunny, warm Kenya. I think it was last September that the Nairobi airport was nearly destroyed by fire. Father Edwin and two local men came in a school bus to collect us, explaining that someone watches people leave the airport and, if easily robbed, sends out an alert and description. Father Edwin hired three policemen with M16 rifles to ride with us and a car with two more armed policemen to follow. We arrived safely at the hotel around 12:30 a.m., didn't get to bed until 2 a.m., and were up four and a half hours later for our first day of work.

### January 11

*On Sunday, Barb describes a very busy Friday and Saturday at Gaichanjiru Hospital:*

We got many rooms painted, night stands scraped and painted, beds welded, scraped and painted and three rooms tiled. We will leave for church (a three-hour service) at about 9 a.m. There will be lots of singing and dancing. The church ladies will have lunch for us, maybe goat. After lunch, we will do home visits.

### January 16

*Visits to a school, an orphanage and a rice mill were, describes Barb, full of emotion:*

What a day we had today. One of the classrooms we visited had 25 children with learning disabilities. Then a class of 55 four to five year olds with only one teacher. There are no books. Posters and instructional aides are written or painted on large rice bags. We read and acted out stories. Before too long, all the kids were copying us. Then we got on the bus to visit Little Angels Centre for Orphans and Destitute Children. There are two dorms, one for girls and one for boys. The bunk beds have no mattresses, just thin blankets over the springs. In the food storage room we found only half a bag of corn; we were told that was all they had left to feed 45 children and the couple who run the place. We were all close to tears as we



*"On our first trip to Kenya 10 years ago we helped build St. Gabriel Church and donated money for a stained-glass window [above] in honor of FSPA who have been a huge influence in my life. We also contributed to a pew in memory of Audrey Gray, FSPA, who took me under her wing. Without her love, I wouldn't be who I am today."*



*From left, Barb Lawless visited a classroom for special needs children, ages four to 15, then another of 55 young children and one teacher in the Maasai village's new school. She joins in on the construction of a new home in which this mother and her child will live.*

boarded our bus. Next, we visited a very large mill in a valley of rice fields. A deal was struck and we were able to purchase about 200 pounds of rice. At another facility we bought large bags of beans and lentils, then drove back to the orphanage and gave them what we bought.

I'm just exhausted. Tonight when you go to bed be so grateful for all you have—especially that your belly is always full and you have a good place to lay your head.



*Gary and Barb Lawless pose with Barb's first icon which now hangs in St. Gabriel Church.*

### January 21

*Barb describes a bit of the local political climate, plus houses built and another school visited:*

Yesterday, in the town of Thika, two miles from where we are staying, all the stores were closed and streets blocked. I guess the people were demonstrating against taxes placed on them.

We were not in danger.

Work goes well. We've built four mud and pole houses and, in an area where there are lots of termites (that eat the poles in the mud houses), another of zinc. It's the dry season so everything is covered in dust, including us. The crops don't look very good either.

This morning we drove quite a few miles up the mountain to a remote school of about 600 students and only 17 teachers. We were immediately surrounded by at least 400 kids jumping, waving their arms and singing. Everyone has to shake your hand and mine became numb. Quite a few children had never seen a white person so were very shy at first. They also wanted to touch our hair as it's so different from theirs. Before we left, we were all shaking hands and sharing high fives.

### January 24

*This is Barb's last message sent before they had to leave their work behind:*

Today we spent the morning revisiting all our projects. Some things at the houses the residents



*In another classroom full of students Barb and the other volunteers got to work, helping them with a craft-making project.*

Photos for this article courtesy of Barb Lawless

*How Barb, Gary and 13 other volunteers, in 13 days, served more than 2,000 people in Kenya:*

*Constructed five houses (five of mud and one of zinc).*

*Built four community toilet pits.*

*Reinforced and painted 20 hospital beds, bedside tables and benches.*

*Laid ceramic tile in five patient wards.*

*Painted six patient rooms.*

*Tiled and painted hospital board room.*

*Donated 40 heavy-duty patient blankets.*

*Donated 16 water tanks (from 265 to 525-gallon capacities) and 60 20-liter jerry gas cans.*

*Painted interior/exterior of St. Gabriel Church.*

*Provided 60 mattresses to families in need.*

*Gave out 100 blankets.*

*Donated 15 benches and funds to purchase materials and supplies to Maasai school.*

*Donated a two-month supply of food and 42 mattresses to the Little Angels Orphanage.*

*Donated Sacred Heart of Jesus statue for hospital entrance.*

will finish, like the mudding. It's too far to haul water and they need rain to make it.

### January 29

*Leaving the work behind in Kenya, Barb brings the strong spirit of the people there:*

We got home about 6 p.m. last night. Great to be here but exhausted. Our trip started with a seven-hour drive to Nairobi, two hours of which were on a very bad, bumpy dirt road. The airport was under a terror alert which meant security was heightened to the max.

Every one of those 13 days I saw people I hadn't seen since I was there eight years ago. They remembered me, called my name, hugged me and told me how much they missed me. I was overwhelmed.

Now you know why we go. ■



# Wisconsin

## My Perspective: Wisconsin Celebration of Literacy honors long-time tutor

“Sister Diane has had a heart for teaching and literacy across her lifespan,” writes Cheryl Sutter of Wisconsin’s Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley. “Her time, talents and treasure are all lasting gifts to our collective work of advancing literacy in Wisconsin.”

These words were shared in a nomination form submitted to Wisconsin Literacy’s *Celebration of Literacy* event. The form served as nomination of Diane Boehm, FSPA, for Wisconsin’s Tutor of the Year—an award she received at a ceremony in April.

Sister Diane, once on staff with Wisconsin’s Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley, has served in a volunteer capacity for five years. The organization helps adults and their families, 75 percent at or below poverty level, develop the literacy skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency and function effectively in their roles as citizens, workers and family members. She meets with students weekly, tailoring her instruction to make learning both timely and relevant. She has stepped up when tutors were in short supply (accepting, at times, groups of students learning at different levels) and when funding has been tight (initiating FSPA ministry grant funds for educational materials).

*Perspectives* talked with Sister Diane about her volunteer ministry and being honored as tutor of the year.



So many people dream about culinary professions. With Sister Diane’s help, chef Tracy Nguyn is doing just that—achieving her dream.

*Perspectives:* What motivates you to serve Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley?

Sister Diane: I strongly believe in the mission and the work of this non-profit organization. Being connected as an instructor in the past and as a volunteer tutor at present, I’ve seen how Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley has helped adults in three Wisconsin counties achieve literacy skills that have helped them to improve their lives as family members,



With animation and authenticity, Sister Diane Boehm teaches adult students and gives witness to the honor she’s been given.

workers and citizens. I love to teach and work with adults who need a helping hand in gaining their literacy skills. Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley is a perfect fit for me!

*Perspectives:* Is there a typical day in the life—your life—as a literacy volunteer?

Sister Diane: My students and I have scheduled times we meet for tutoring. I teach my small group of four adults (one Hispanic man, one Hmong man and two Hmong women) in the Family Literacy Program on Monday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon. The three Vietnamese adults I teach in the One-to-One Tutoring Program meet individually on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. If the students or I can’t make it on certain days, we are flexible and reschedule.

*Perspectives:* How did you react when you learned that you had been named Wisconsin’s Tutor of the Year?

Sister Diane: At first I felt surprised and honored. Then, I felt a sense of gratitude especially to: my dear parents who instilled in me the importance of education in one’s life; FSPA who gave me many educational opportunities and supported my ministry; the Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley staff for its professionalism, dedication, caring spirit and helpfulness to its tutors and students; and my wonderful adult students who have worked hard to move toward their literacy goals or have achieved them so they can improve their lives.

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Sister Diane Boehm professed first vows with FSPA in 1960. She has ministered in the field of education throughout Wisconsin, including serving Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley since 2001.

# Zimbabwe

## Spirit of Ministry: Sister inspires affiliate to action

by Mary Agnes Thompson, affiliate

**O**pen my eyes, Lord. Help me to see your face. Open my ears, Lord. Help me to bear your voice. Open my heart, Lord. Help me to love. Torn from a Mass leaflet and stashed in my purse, those words became a mantra of reflection and challenge for me last summer on the long flight to Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. Four of us, including Father Harry Koelker, approached the airport at a time we knew was perhaps risky, the eve of election in this dictatorial nation. During the previous election a number of people were killed.

Such was the reality Laurette Sprosty, FSPA, who now lives in the United States, faced for decades as she maintained deep devotion to her mission work there. Then as now, mostly due to malaria, HIV and AIDS, life expectancy is said to be in the thirties. Thousands of children are orphaned in this starving nation. Was I ready to see the suffering?

Never will I forget the day over a decade ago that I met Sister Laurette—and began my learning journey of mission. After spending the night at Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Hiawatha, Iowa, for a much needed retreat, I looked out the window toward the woodland and became delightfully intrigued by this woman in robe and slippers standing beside a wild, native mulberry tree. The look on

her face appeared to me to be one of devotional elation for the Creator's gifts, as if she had never seen or tasted anything so wonderful! Our connection was made.

Not long after, I was able to take Sister Laurette's mission story back to my parish at that time, St. Ludmila in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. With the support of my prayer group and Father Harry, we formed an enthusiastic committee to raise funds for her work. Not only did we hold an annual appeal, but soon a large number of parishioners were gathering each year to host the Czech Kolach Bake for Zimbabwe! We were on our way as a parish united with FSPA and bringing our mission forward in service of Gospel love! Our eyes were opened.

Finally landing in Harare, with the jitters somewhat gone, I was able to begin opening my eyes, ears and heart to the FSPA Goodwill Project. Long-term

volunteer coordinators Cyril and Virginia had gone the extra mile for our visit and, in their own way, taught us the truth of mission, dignity and devotion to life.

I found myself swaying with joy as the brightly dressed women and children danced and sang songs of gratitude in their native tongue. My heart quivered in finally meeting the children whose



Father Harry Koelker greets the children, some of whom are now able to receive an education through project funding.



Mary Agnes Thompson with a lioness

Photos courtesy of Mary Agnes Thompson

most basic needs were fulfilled by project support. This FSPA project is their lifeline.

The air of tension was felt as Virginia apologized that many did not come. After all, this was election day and stepping out could be risky. Wow. Deeply penetrating life lessons continued to fill each moment. I gently hugged a quiet young girl suffering from advanced AIDS. I listened as Cyril pointed out a fragile looking woman who had witnessed the death of each of her children and now has 12 grandchildren to feed, clothe and shelter. I was delighted to meet the young girl who became the sole caretaker of her baby brother after watching her mother

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Mary Agnes Thompson joined the FSPA affiliation program in 2008. She lives in North Liberty, Iowa, and participates in various activities both at St. Rose

Convent in La Crosse, Wis., and at Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center in Hiawatha, Iowa.



## 'Go, do not be afraid, and serve' as a Franciscan leader

**K**aren Timm was inspired to partake in a Franciscan leadership pilgrimage to Assisi; stirred to experience the Franciscan spirit infused in Assisi; and moved to embody the muse of Francis and Clare alive in Assisi.

She traveled to Italy in October of 2012, packing with her the call she had to the ministry of nursing over 25 years ago, her contribution to Catholic health care for more than half that time and her present devotion to FSPA-sponsored St. Anthony Hospital and Nursing Home in Carroll, Iowa, as its vice president of patient care services. And, no matter where Karen goes, she conveys the Franciscan compassion to serve.

### Mission and drive

"I have moved up through the ranks of nursing," says Karen, who began her career in 1986 as a night nurse, caring for the elderly residents of a nursing home. She went on to minister in many modalities that include frontier medicine (rural to urban, mostly rural) in Wyoming, and also in a university setting in Omaha, Neb. In 1996, she completed her Master of Science in Nursing.

Now, in her role at St. Anthony, Karen is moved by "the freedom to ensure that patient care is delivered with the added aspect of true spiritual care not always available in non-religious organizations." Such care, she says, "openly encompasses the mind, body and spirit," providing "the luxury to

include services that are mission driven, not strictly bottom-line driven. The FSPA sponsorship keeps us focused on that commitment."

### Prayer and effort

The tremendous presence of Francis and Clare in Assisi, says Karen, "delivered home the importance of our calling as leaders in a FSPA organization: their life and beliefs reinforced ... brought into today's world. Humility, forgiveness, self-discipline, hard work, obedience, contemplation and love of others are but a few characteristics that exemplify them; that should be characteristic of today's leadership" and are obligations that "require prayer and constant effort."

### Affirm and share

Experiencing renewal of these obligations—perhaps rediscovering gems in fellow pilgrims, in their authenticity, in their gifts of faith—was "reaffirming," says Karen. She refers to herself as a "cradle to grave Catholic," and says that

her husband Roger (who traveled with her) converted to Catholicism after they were married. And so it was, for the two of them, "a wonderful experience of sharing more deeply the history and traditions of faith."



*Karen Timm*

Photo courtesy of St. Anthony Hospital

### Risk and responsibility

Did Karen discern a presence most profound? Yes. For her, it was discovering the role the Catholic church played in sheltering the Jews during World War II in Assisi. "This brought the teachings of Francis and Clare into the twentieth century. There are risks and responsibilities required of our faith in today's world," asserts Karen, "not just stories of great belief from days gone by."

### Renew and lead

Unknowingly, says Karen, "When Francis and Clare gave up everything to be closer to God," they inspired so many "to live a better, faith-filled life." Knowingly, acknowledges Karen, she carried that conviction back to St. Anthony. "As a leader in a FSPA-sponsored organization, I have the obligation to provide these same opportunities to those who both provide and receive care." And in Assisi she was renewed to lead. Yet, as Francis and Clare did, she'll continue to conduct the spark—the spirit of servant leadership—effusively forward with quiet contemplation. "In life, it's not always evident when you might inspire others, but it is important to remember that your actions are messages to those around you," says Karen. ■



*San Damiano courtyard in Assisi, Italy*

Photo courtesy of Jean Moore, FSPA



## Sister Diane

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*Perspectives:* Do you have a favorite success story?

Sister Diane: At present, I am tutoring a Vietnamese father and his two daughters. In 2009, I started to tutor one daughter, in 2012, the second daughter came from Vietnam and I started tutoring her. And then in 2013, the father and mother came and I started tutoring the father. Both daughters are single mothers with full-time jobs. One daughter has received a promotion as manager of a nail salon. The other daughter, who worked at the same nail salon, had always wanted to be a restaurant cook. Recently, her dream came true; she began her full-time career as head chef at the Noodle Teahouse in Eau Claire, Wis. She is very happy! All three of these family members are outstanding students and a joy to work with.

*Perspectives:* This issue is all about telling the stories of service, specifically listening to Pope Francis' message, "Go, do not be afraid, and serve." What would you like to tell someone who is interested in volunteering?

Sister Diane: I would say, "Go for it!" I have learned so much through my ministry at Literacy Volunteers-Chippewa Valley. I know that I understand the needs of the poor better now. My adult students learn from me but I also learn from them. Working with people who are struggling has made me a more compassionate person and has deepened my desire to continue to



*Color and floor-to-ceiling bookcases and literacy greet all who enter IVCV's headquarters in Eau Claire. Sister Diane Boehm is proud to point out that many of the books on the shelves were donated by FSPA.*

share my talents with people who are living in some form of real poverty. ■

## Zimbabwe

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die. Placement had been a challenge as no living relative was found. Perhaps the most vibrant was the woman who made a story of her greatest gift—a few seeds from Laurette to plant for food.

Deeply moving and profoundly touching, Zimbabwe left a powerful mark. How does one respond to all this? Through FSPA, faith and St. Francis I am learning the call to serve is never ending, always growing, and yes, somewhat challenging. Truly, for that I am grateful. ■

## The Goodwill Project

The Goodwill Project provides food, medicine, school uniforms and school fees for 161 children being cared for by their grandmothers due to their parents' deaths from AIDS. The families sent heartwarming thank you letters and handmade gifts for the FSPA.

*To the Franciscan Sisters:  
We as children need love,  
but when our parents passed  
away that was deprived us  
[sic] until The Goodwill  
Project through you the*

*Franciscan Sisters managed to provide that for us.*

*Thank you Franciscan Sisters for your continued support.*

*—The Jakaja family*



Photo courtesy of The Goodwill Project



*Above, a gift of thanks from the Jakaja family. Left, Sister Laurette Sprosty with Mrs. Jakaja—one of Goodwill's beneficiaries. Sister Laurette helps Mrs. Jakaja, who has a terrible backache, to stand in her field where she digs the hard soil with a hoe.*



## Serving as Franciscans: taking bold risks yesterday, today and tomorrow

**S**t. Francis said “I have done what is mine to do ...” Pope Francis says “Go, do not be afraid, and serve.”

But, how do I know what is mine to do? What if I am afraid? Am I even called to serve?

*Perspectives*, together with the FSPA discernment blog, *Mapping the Mystery*, turns to the women who have made serving as Franciscans a career. These women reflect on their bold decisions, their fears and their courage. And, during the month of May, in the blog series titled *Serving as Franciscans*, *Mapping the Mystery* will share even more about these sisters and their calls to serve, including a look at their ministry photo galleries.

### Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA

“God, bring me back safely. But, if not, let it be for a greater good.” Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA, spoke those words every morning from 1993 to 1997 before she left her apartment and headed to Cabrini-Green.



*Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA*

Gangs, drugs and violence surrounded Cabrini-Green, the public housing development occupying nearly 70 acres of Chicago’s near North Side from 1942 to 2010. Built as part of the Chicago Housing Authority’s approach to urban renewal, Cabrini-Green quickly decayed

into a battlefield.

Sister Dorothy walked into this battlefield in 1993 ready to serve as GED instructor and parent/volunteer coordinator for two Head Start programs. “I was a white, middle-class, educated woman with a hope of building friendships and rapport with my black sisters and brothers, many of whom were poor and uneducated,” explains Sister

Dorothy. “You can’t let fear hold you back. If we’re going to be one with the people, we have to take risks.”

Of courage, Sister Dorothy says it’s “being true to your deepest call.” And of risking boldly, even when it’s scary, she says, “We need to take normal precautions and be ready, but we can’t be too safe when living the Gospel.” And about moving children to a windowless side of the basement to avoid gunfire, and holding out in a corner store until the sound of bullets subsides, she says “I have no regrets; it was an important part of my life that solidified my passion for equality, for justice.” She continues, “I hope I made a small difference.”

### Mildred Tigges, FSPA

“After Typhoon Karen hit the island, I thought we’d go home,” begins Mildred Tigges, FSPA. “I learned quickly that we were staying to rebuild.”

Sister Mildred had known she wanted to minister abroad. In fact, it’s part of the reason she chose FSPA; “I knew they were ministering in China.” So when Sister Rosa Liu fell ill and they needed to send a teacher to Guam, Sister Mildred did not hesitate. The year was 1962 and she was gone within a month



*Sister Dorothy Dunbar (right) has fond memories of the women of Cabrini-Green who she not only taught, but considered friends.*

Photo courtesy of Dorothy Dunbar, FSPA

of assignment.

“I was teaching junior high in the Sinajana village and I loved it,” says Sister Mildred. “I had 45 eighth grade boys in my classroom. This is where I wanted to be.” But eight weeks into the school year Typhoon Karen hit the village and destroyed 75 percent of the buildings—homes, schools and the convent.

“It was a Sunday and Father received a message during his sermon. He announced that we were in Condition 1 (typhoon is 75 miles away and fast approaching). Father asked the men and boys to help the sisters board the school’s windows.” With the school boarded and everyone in a safe location, the winds continued to blow; Typhoon

Karen was on the island.

“We were on the first floor of the convent, 13 sisters in a corner, when Sister Wilhelmine Brenner announced



*Mildred Tigges, FSPA*

'the school roof is gone.' I sprinkled holy water and the other sisters prayed," Sister Mildred recalls. By 4 p.m. the wind had subsided and the sisters emerged from the convent. "We were numb," Sister Mildred describes as the reaction to seeing not only the school roof gone, but the convent roof gone as well. "What were we going to do? No roofs and everything was soaked." That's when Sister Mildred thought the sisters would be sent home.

The sisters did not return home; they stayed to help rebuild the island. "I learned that you don't run away from a challenge; we were in this together." She recalls the strength of the island's residents,



*Sister Mildred Tigges assesses the damage left behind by Typhoon Karen.*

Photo courtesy of Sister Mildred Tigges

never complaining and always taking care of one another, sharing whatever they had.

Sister Mildred stayed on Guam until 1968. She rebuilt one more time after Typhoon Olive struck in 1963 and lived through several "smaller" typhoons during her ministry there. "I have great respect for the elements and learned to take everything in stride. Most importantly, I learned that when something severe happens, you stay and help."

*These sisters' stories will continue in our May blog series, Serving as Franciscans. Subscribe*

*to the blog at [www.mappingthemystery.wordpress.com](http://www.mappingthemystery.wordpress.com). ■*

## Further your spirituality

### **Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Hiawatha, Iowa**

Healing energy awaits those who explore their interior life force in *Navigating Wholeness: The Chakra System and Sound Healing Retreat* (July 20 to 26). You are invited to explore and become more mindful of the intimate connection between your chakra system and sacred sound. Corrina Thomas, FSPA, and Ginny Helfrich will lead this sacred, week-long retreat. For more information or to register, contact Prairiewoods at 319-395-6700 or [www.prairiewoods.org](http://www.prairiewoods.org).

### **The Well Franciscan Spirituality Center, St. Paul, Minn.**

*If Animals Could Speak!* Francis of Assisi knew in the 13th century what scientists are researching today—the animal-human connection. Come June 17 for an evening of exploring the science and the spirituality of this connection to God. Please feel free to bring your pet with you (no registration fee). Visit [www.womanwell.org](http://www.womanwell.org) for more information.

For upcoming program and retreat opportunities at Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center, Arbor Vitae, Wis., and the Christine Center, Willard, Wis., visit [www.marywoodsc.org](http://www.marywoodsc.org) and [www.christinecenter.org](http://www.christinecenter.org). For La Crosse, Wis., programs and retreats, visit the Franciscan Spirituality Center website

at [www.fscenter.org](http://www.fscenter.org). To learn more about upcoming Global Awareness Through Experience programs, visit [www.GATE-Travel.org](http://www.GATE-Travel.org).

## Volunteer with FSPA

### **Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Hiawatha, Iowa**

From washing laundry to cutting vegetables, grounds keeping to praying, there are many ways in which volunteers help Prairiewoods grow. Some choose to serve once a month or once a week, while others give a little time each day while here on retreat. If you would like to join our much-appreciated rank of helpers, please contact Sister Marj English, OSF, at 319-395-6700, ext. 216, or [menglish@prairiewoods.org](mailto:menglish@prairiewoods.org).

### **The Well Franciscan Spirituality Center, St. Paul, Minn.**

The Well invites volunteers to become part of our center's "family," welcoming guests from the region to our weekday or weekend programs, answering phones, helping with mailings, assisting with hospitality tasks and helping keep our bedrooms "guest ready." We have flexible times that can fit into your schedule. Please contact Heather Walters at 651-739-7953 or email [heather@womanwell.org](mailto:heather@womanwell.org).



# In Memoriam

## Rejoice, you who are alive in Christ

**Donna (Rose Paul) Schwager, FSPA**  
Feb. 26, 1929-Oct. 11, 2013

Born on a farm near Andrew, Iowa, Sister Donna was an elementary teacher for 20 years in parochial schools in Montana, Washington and Wisconsin. She then ministered as a librarian for six years at Kuemper High School in Carroll, Iowa, and at the Viterbo College library until 1987. Sister Donna served as a receptionist and driver at St. Rose Convent until 1997. She continued to catalog books for schools, Villa St. Joseph and Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center. Sister Donna helped set up a library at Bondolfi College, in Zimbabwe, Africa, and went to Joplin, Mo., to help restore the library devastated by a tornado. She managed the media center at St. Rose Convent for many years.



She retired to St. Rose Convent in 2009.

**Agnes (Gonzaga) Schweiger, FSPA**  
Dec. 20, 1920-Nov. 11, 2013

Born on a wheat and cattle ranch near Colfax, Wash., Sister Agnes joined the Air Force and served as an air evacuation nurse. She served in the U.S. Army Air Force as a second lieutenant and later became a first lieutenant. For her service she received the Asiatic Pacific



Service Medal, the American Campaign Medal and World War II Victory Medal. Sister Agnes ministered as a RN and instructor for 26 years at St. Francis Hospital and School of Nursing, La Crosse. From 1983 to 2001, she worked at Holy Name Infirmary and Holy Names Care Center, Spokane, Wash.

Sister Agnes retired in 2002 in Spokane and moved to Villa St. Joseph in 2005.

**Josephine Mary (Mary Lourde) Weiler, FSPA**

May 18, 1922-Nov. 18, 2013

A native of Athens, Wis., Sister Josephine Mary taught elementary grades for 11 years and high school for a year before moving to the college level. From 1955 to 1971, she served as an instructor at Viterbo College. Sister Josephine Mary served as a teacher in schools in Wausau, Wis., and St. Paul, Minn., from 1971 to 1989. She also served as director of curriculum at Newman High in Wausau and as administrative assistant of Wausau Area Catholic Schools. In 1990, she moved to Loyal, Wis., as principal. From 1992 to 2008, Sister Josephine Mary tutored and worked with a Milwaukee area adult literacy program.



She volunteered at Villa St. Joseph in 2008 and retired to St. Rose Convent in 2010.

**Beatrice (Donna) Hytry, FSPA**  
July 12, 1923-Dec. 1, 2013

Sister Beatrice was born in Dancy, Wis., and grew up on a farm. She served as a primary teacher in parochial schools in Iowa and Wisconsin for 45 years. After leaving the classroom full time, she was a substitute teacher for several years and provided child care for

a year. Sister Beatrice taught summer school classes on three Indian reservations near Spokane, Wash., and at the atomic bomb center in Washington. From 1993 to 2000, Sister Beatrice ministered as a tutor in Durand, Wis., and at Cathedral and St. James schools in La Crosse.

She retired to St. Rose Convent in 2005. Sister Beatrice made her home at the Villa in 2007.



**Dorothy (Donita) Pieper, FSPA**  
Sept. 7, 1934-Dec. 5, 2013

Sister Dorothy and her twin brother, Donald, were born on an irrigation farm in Scottsbluff, Neb. Sister Dorothy taught in elementary schools in Mississippi, Wisconsin and Washington for 19 years. After leaving the classroom, she served as librarian for nine years in Lincoln, Ill., and at Cathedral School in La Crosse. For one year, Sister Dorothy worked as Director of Religious Education in Claxton, Ga. She was a receptionist at St. Rose Convent from 1993 to 2004,



Sister Dorothy served as sacristan and volunteer receptionist until she retired at St. Rose in 2008. She moved to Villa St. Joseph in 2010.

**Ardelle DeClerck, FSPA**  
Sept. 10, 1922-Dec. 7, 2013

Sister Ardelle was born in Superior, Wis., and was given the name Mary Evelyn Philomene at her baptism.

Sister Ardelle served in the nursing

field for 42 years as an operating room supervisor, emergency room supervisor, inhalation therapist and instructor, and director of respiratory services in hospitals in Wisconsin, Idaho, Iowa, New York and Minnesota. For several years, she was assistant director of Dove Health Care in Superior, Wis. In 1988, Sister Ardelle became pastoral assistant and parish housekeeper at St. Anthony's, Superior.



She moved to St. Rose Convent in 1998 and retired to Villa St. Joseph in 2008.

**Mary (Coronita) Rohlik, FSPA**  
**May 12, 1909-Dec. 9, 2013**

Sister Mary, a native of Seaforth, Minn., served as a primary teacher for 40 years in elementary schools in Iowa, Washington and Wisconsin. From 1975 to 1979, she lived and volunteered at the FSPA Western Province Home in Spokane, Wash. Before retiring, Sister Mary was a living companion for FSPA in several places in the western United States and volunteered as a tutor, religious education teacher, librarian or home care aide.



She retired to Villa St. Joseph in 1990.

**Jeanice Lohman, FSPA**  
**April 23, 1914-Dec. 24, 2013**

Sister Jeanice, born in West Point, Iowa, was baptized with the name Mary Clara Gertrude, but was known as Gertrude.

Sister Jeanice served for three years as an elementary teacher and for 11

years as a secondary teacher in parochial schools in Iowa, Montana and Wisconsin. From 1950 to 1964, she served as supervisor of elementary and secondary schools for the Diocese of La Crosse and the schools staffed by the FSPA. Sister Jeanice was elected as FSPA assistant to the Mother General, a position she held for six years, while continuing to be director of education for the congregation. For the next ten years Sister Jeanice was coordinator at St. Rose Convent. She then served at Viterbo College as housekeeping manager. In 1990, she moved back to St. Rose where she was tour guide, heritage curator, gift shop manager and part-time receptionist until her retirement in 1995.



She made the Villa her home in 2006.

**Marlene (Mary Gerald) Bauer, FSPA**  
**Dec. 13, 1938-Dec. 29, 2013**

Born in Lima, Wis., Sister Marlene chose elementary education as her ministry. She served in parochial schools in Wisconsin for 17 years. After leaving the classroom, she moved into parish ministry as a secretary at St. Joseph Church in Menomonie from 1983 to 1993.



Sister Marlene served as secretary at St. Rose Convent until she retired to Villa St. Joseph in 2005.

**Dorothy (Ann Patrick) Sweeney, FSPA**  
**Nov. 27, 1921-Feb. 24, 2014**

A native of Sutherland, Iowa, Sister Dorothy ministered in nursing for 14 years in Wisconsin at Sparta, Hillsboro, Villa St. Joseph and St. Francis Hospital, La Crosse. She also served in El Salvador for two years as a nurse. Sister Dorothy then worked as a nurse at St. Anthony Hospital in Carroll, Iowa. She was chaplain at St. Anthony from 1977 to 1990. Sister Dorothy returned to St. Rose Convent, providing pastoral care for the sisters for several years both before and after her retirement in 1998.



She made the Villa her home in 2005.

**Affiliates**

**Rose Montag Robacker**  
**Oct. 3, 1924-Dec. 10, 2013**

Born in West Bend, Iowa, Rose entered the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in 1945 and left the community in 1970. She became a prayer affiliate in 1986.



Rose taught at the elementary, high school and college levels. After retiring in 1982, she continued teaching in the elementary science program of the Pocono Mountains; she also trained tutors and taught inmates how to read and helped them achieve their GED.

Rose was preceded in death by her two husbands, Bill Smith and Bob Robacker. She is survived by a stepson and his wife and two grandsons. ■

FSPA website  
 Read the complete obituaries at  
[www.fspa.org/news](http://www.fspa.org/news)



# Addenda

## New FSPA Leadership Team elected, takes office July 1

The 119-member General Assembly of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration completed three days of meetings, March 13-15, at which they elected leaders for 2014 to 2018.

Sister Karen Lueck was elected president. Sister Karen has recently been ministering as incorporation co-minister in La Crosse, Wis. As president Sister Karen is the official representative of the congregation.

Sister Helen Elsbernd was chosen as vice-president. She currently resides in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As vice president Sister Helen will assist the president in governing, and assumes the duties of the president in the event of the president's absence.

Three members were elected as mission councilors, which, with the president and vice-president, constitute the FSPA Leadership Team.

The newly elected mission councilors are Sister Julie Tydrich, Sister Karen Kappell and Sister Catherine Kaiser.

Considering the welfare of each sister and the corporate good of the congregation, the leadership of FSPA fosters the life and mission in the church and in the world. They promote the congregation's goals and provide for continual renewal so that the needs of contemporary society can be served.

The 2014 Election Assembly is the congregation's 23rd election assembly since 1910. The new team will take office July 1, 2014.



From left, Sister Karen Kappell, mission councilor; Sister Helen Elsbernd, vice president; Sister Julie Tydrich, mission councilor; Sister Karen Lueck, president; and Sister Catherine Kaiser, mission councilor  
Photo by Nina Shephard, FSPA

## Sister Marcella Steffes honored by Wisconsin State Assembly

Marcella Steffes, FSPA, accepted the Hometown Hero Award from the Wisconsin State Assembly in the state capitol in February. State Representative Jill Billings nominated Sister Marcella for the award, stating, "I decided to nominate Sister

Marcella to honor her dedication to music education and community enrichment."

Sister Marcella is a Suzuki cello and violin teacher at Viterbo University. Her work with the Suzuki Method has yielded great results, even a legacy. "The Suzuki school was not to make concert artists out of the stu-

dents, but to develop beautiful human beings," Sister Marcella explains. "His whole idea was to develop the child's personality and their respect for others," she says.

Watch Sister Marcella accept the award at [www.fspa.org/news](http://www.fspa.org/news).



Wisconsin State Representative Jill Billings, left, with Sister Marcella Steffes

Photo courtesy of Jill Billings

## Sister Julia Walsh published in America magazine

A recent issue of *America* magazine features Sister Julia Walsh's article *Changed, Not Ended*. She reflects upon just that: participating in a network for women religious under the age of 50 that "helps us to keep saying yes to our vocations"; believing that "Time of Diminishment" spotlights only declining congregations and narrows our ability to see what God is doing. "I am excited," she writes. "I trust that God is up to something amazingly good." A link to the full article is available at [www.fspa.org/news](http://www.fspa.org/news).

## FSPA efforts to eradicate modern slavery boosted by grant

The June Kjome Social Justice fund recently awarded a grant to the La Crosse, Wis.-based Task Force to Eradicate Modern Slavery. The task force is composed of FSPA, affiliates and La Crosse-area community members. Together, they're working to implement a training program to raise awareness of human trafficking.

Plans are now in place to create training, led by Frank Massollini, founder of PROMISE: Partnership to Rescue Our Minors from Sexual Exploitation, for key audiences in the La Crosse area.

## Hilton Foundation grants promote Catholic Sisters' stories

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation has awarded two grants to promote the sharing of stories about Catholic Sisters.

St. Catherine University, St. Paul, Minn., received a \$3.3 million grant to launch National Catholic Sisters Week as part

of Women's History Month 2014 to bring visibility to the contributions of women religious. The grant will also support a variety of activities over three years.

St. Catherine University inaugurated National Catholic Sisters Week in March with a variety of events on its St. Paul campus. During the week they introduced the Twin Cities Public Television National Productions team, who will be creating a documentary about women religious that will premiere during Women's History Month 2016.

The *National Catholic Reporter* was awarded a grant of \$2.3 million over three years that will allow the National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co. to embark on a groundbreaking project to give greater voice to countless Catholic sisters around the globe. With the use of the Hilton Foundation grant, *NCR* is building a network of editors and reporters not only to write about women religious, but to help them develop their own communication skills by working with them as columnists who report their own missions and challenges. ■



*This FSPA group photo was taken at an ice cream social held at Viterbo University to honor the FSPA during National Catholic Sisters Week.*

Photo courtesy of Viterbo University

## 2014 Jubilarians

### Diamond (75) 1939

Sisters Marie Leon LaCroix  
Alice McMullin

### Diamond (70) 1944

Sisters Mary Alice Foley  
Mariquita Luby  
Rosile Pernsteiner  
Lorraine Forster  
Lois Lobdell  
Helen Esther Lueck  
Florence Marie Veit

### Diamond (60) 1954

Sisters Cordelle Adams  
Malinda Gerke  
Marian Kluesner  
Dolores Lilla  
Betty Shakal  
Michon Desmond  
Rachel Kiefer  
Marie Kyle  
Karolyne Rohlik

### Golden (50) 1964

Sisters Mary Becker  
Genny Morrissey  
Karen Flottmeier

### Affiliate Silver (25) Jubilee

Sharon Chavolla  
Joseph Leuck  
Doreen Schutte  
John Tully  
Joan Gerhards  
Dennis Schutte  
Louise Strother



 *Franciscan Sisters*  
*of Perpetual Adoration*

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[youtube.com/franciscansisters](https://youtube.com/franciscansisters)

## FSPA premieres new video in 'Called' series

FSPA recently released the latest video in its "Called" series. The video features several FSPA who tell their stories and what they see as the future of vowed religious life. In this video we hear from FSPA who minister in the United States (Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Oregon and Wisconsin) and in Guam.

"I truly believe that this lifestyle is critical to the life of the church. There's always going to be a core of women and men who choose to give themselves completely to the mission of the church community," says Anita Beskar, FSPA, in her "Called" interview.

FSPA will release four more videos in this series in 2014. Watch them at [www.fspa.org/called](http://www.fspa.org/called). ■

