

Alive

WITH THE CALL OF THE GOSPEL

Sisters Present
A Global Water Forum

Caring Response
to COVID-19

Sisters Step Up
for Missions

2020–2021
Annual Report



Prayer of Soaking It In

By Sister Jane Elyse Russell

A painted pillar sets a theme—
“*Möge Friede auf Erden sein,*”
“Let peace prevail on earth”
(and six other versions
I can’t reproduce).

First retreat evening,
a time for exploring the grounds.
For going to ground
in this place, this time.

Again I am pulled into peace
by the beauty of soft sun on green,
by caresses of summer’s
animate song. I sit
with the squirrels, learn
to discern the songs
of six or eight birds,
watch the waning light strike gold in the heart
of this and that patch of grass.

Hours back, I had tasks
that wrinkled my brow. For now,
I consent to put them on hold,
let eyelids flag with the sinking sun,
and believe in my birthright
as child of God,
child of earth,
given a ticket to joy.

ALIVE | Fall 2021
VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1
ALIVE is published
by the School Sisters of St. Francis
an international congregation of
Franciscan women religious
headquartered in
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
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FRONT COVER
Sister Monica Jose Chirayeth of our St. Francis
Province (North India) visits with a young
patient she treated in Bangalore. She is
completing her final year of studies at
St. John's Medical College, Bangalore.
Your generous support enables our sisters, like
Sister Monica Jose, to share the
light of the gospel through their ministries
with those in need around the world.

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From Our Leadership

When we think about Mothers Alexia and Alfons, our congregation's foundresses, several characteristics come to mind. We often talk about their "shameless trust in God" and their attentiveness to the needs they saw around them. Both traits explain why, while maintaining the congregation's commitment to education, they built Sacred Heart Sanitarium and St. Mary's Hill to address the suffering of patients with neurological and mental health issues.

When we consider two more obstacles they faced—an archbishop who wanted to turn their congregation into a diocesan community and a fire that destroyed the first Milwaukee motherhouse—another characteristic jumps out: resilience.

Our sisters today inspire us with that same resilience. So many have persevered and adapted through challenges, hardships, and obstacles to carry out our core mission of entering into the lives and needs of people, especially those who are poor.

Several of their stories are part of this issue, and we can also highlight Sister Sylvia Leonardi (above), who has long served in Kenosha, Wisconsin, with children whose families sometimes struggle financially, psychologically, or interpersonally. From St. Mark's Parish, she moved with the children to St. Joseph Academy, when several Catholic schools merged a decade ago.

When she noticed that the children needed more help to focus and build good relationships, she shifted her ministry to teaching meditation to all the children on the lower campus. Her work has made a difference for the children's interactions in their classrooms. Also a campus minister, she is a person to whom younger teachers go for advice, and many seek her compassionate listening. A colleague remarked that "she is always available for whatever is needed and whoever needs a listening ear."

Sister Sylvia's resilience is mirrored in the work of many sisters who have established long-term relationships with communities, allowing them to adapt their work to meet the needs that emerge.

We are blessed today by sisters who, through their resilience, are witnesses of God's love in the world; and by you, our donors, whose continued generosity supports our mission. We thank you!

Sisters Mary, Tresa Abraham, Barbara, and Lucy

International Leadership Team
School Sisters of St. Francis



Sharing Global Perspectives to Care for the Earth

Inaugural forum includes sisters from every province and region

Since 2018, one of the focuses of the School Sisters of St. Francis' ministries has been to "join in the struggle for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in collaboration with others and the local Church."

In response to this call, the provincial, regional, and international leadership teams recently held the first in a series of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation forums, giving sisters and associates from around the world an opportunity to "think globally and act locally" about the topic of water.

"Through the forums, we will engage a widening circle of sisters and associates in learning about the suffering of people across the globe and in taking action to address the causes of suffering," said Sister Mary Diez, president of our international congregation. To encourage participation from all our sisters and associates, the forums are being recorded in English, Spanish, and German.

In her introductory remarks about the first topic and panel, Sister Deborah Fumagalli, a member of the organizing committee, said the theme of the July forum was chosen because "water is an essential element for all forms of life." She asked the participants—a sister from each province and region—to share "their situations in



Severe drought is having a major impact in North America.

relationship to the issues of water as a resource of preciousness and scarcity."

The sisters on the panel were able to share vivid descriptions about how water, or the lack of water, has impacted the parts of the world in which they minister.

Sister Sherlit Vallachirakkaran of the Assisi Province discussed how extreme rainfall and relentless flooding in South India have caused severe damage. "The monsoons have become more erratic and more unpredictable," Sister Sherlit said. "Floods have affected hundreds of villages; disrupted road, water, and air transport; and damaged thousands of homes." Several sisters personally experienced the heart-wrenching impact of these catastrophes, with sisters' own family members being separated and sent to different relief camps, not knowing where their loved ones were.

Alverno College professor Sister Judeen Schulte noted that drought has been a major concern in many parts of the United States throughout this century. She underscored drought's impact on rivers and lakes, and showed how the absence of water can be as much of a challenge as too much water from monsoons and flooding. She also shared details about the work of our sisters' C.A.R.E. (Creating Actions to Reverence the



Climate change has heightened the danger of storms like Hurricane Ida.



"Water cannot be managed like an unlimited resource" in Central America, Sister Lucia said.

Earth) Committee to raise awareness within the community and beyond.

Sister Lucia Ramirez noted that Central America has abundant water resources, but the challenge lies in its distribution and the need for better management. "There is consensus that current water use and management practices in Central America are neither economically nor environmentally sustainable," she said, citing examples from Guatemala and Nicaragua. "Water cannot be managed as an unlimited resource."

Change is needed

Sister Anupama Chinginiyadan from St. Francis Province said that India is experiencing water stress due, in large part, to the destruction of forests and the exploitation of groundwater. She noted that nearly half of India's villages have no protected source of drinking water.

"Recharging groundwater through rainfall has not been proportionate to its speed of exploitation," she warned. "The quantity and duration of rainfall has been significantly reduced due to a deteriorating ecology." Sister Anupama did offer some hopeful news about research and policies that are being adopted to preserve and protect water on the subcontinent.

The final presenter, Sister Brigitte Walter, said that even though the sisters living in Erlenbad, Germany, have the advantage of a local freshwater spring, they can see the damage that long periods of unusual heat and drought are having on the nearby Black Forest.

"Water is becoming scarcer. The times of careless handling of water and water sources are over," Sister Brigitte emphasized. "This is not only a challenge for politicians and the economy. Each and every individual is asked to help keep our environment healthy."

At the conclusion of the hour-long program, Sister Barbara Kraemer of the International Leadership Team asked sisters and associates to consider which issues related to water are of the greatest personal importance and to reflect on the actions that our community is taking.

Sister Mary Diez said, "The hope is that sisters across the congregation will view and respond to the forums, and be energized by hearing what is happening in areas outside their own."

We invite your prayers as our congregation continues to explore and respond to issues related to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.



Provincial leader Sister Ann Celine Alapattukunnel (left) and other sisters of Assisi Province deliver food kits to villagers in the Allahalli area.

Sisters Stay Mission Focused in Challenging Times

Despite dangers, sisters adapt to care for those in need

It's impossible to fully comprehend the deadly, devastating toll that the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic has taken on all aspects of our lives. More than 210 million people have contracted the virus to date, with more than 4 million deaths worldwide. Both of those numbers continue to rise precipitously more than 20 months after the virus was first recognized.

The economic impact has also been staggering. According to the April World Economic Outlook Report presented by the International Monetary Fund, the global economy contracted by 3.5 percent last year. Recovery will take years, and developing countries will certainly lose and lag the most.

Our sisters have suffered these effects along with the rest of our global family. And like many valiant caregivers and first responders in all

countries, our sisters have altered their mission focus to respond to the needs of the times.

In the United States, sisters are among those who have cared for our retired sisters, offering physical care and spiritual companionship for the sick and the dying during the isolation caused by the pandemic. In Peru, Sister Paula Girón expanded her ministry beyond the dispensing of medicines to the distribution of food.

This spring, as the pandemic's effects seemed to ease in the United States and parts of Europe, India saw a dramatic spike in cases. Since the beginning of the pandemic in India, poverty has increased and livelihoods have been threatened. Sister Jyoti Porathur, headmistress of St. Francis Convent School in Bhopal, noted that "we were in utter confusion, wondering how we would be able to help our people meet their basic needs."

“At first we were scared of the virus,” Sister Jyoti admitted. “But after we realized the pathetic condition of the people who were struggling without having their daily bread, we gained strength and courage from the Lord.

“It was heartbreaking to see the number of people walking hundreds of miles without food and water to return to their native villages when they lost their jobs due to the lockdown,” Sister Jyoti continued. “We collaborated with other religious communities and packed food for 450 people each day. We also helped the Marian Missionary Brothers to survey the people’s needs and distributed food kits to more than 200 families in a day.”

At one point, four villages near the city of Kanjikode were declared a “containment zone.” People were not allowed to go outside because



Sister Lucy Arackal helps pack bags of wheat for villagers near Bhopal, India.

85 percent of the villagers were infected. In response, the sisters from Assisi English Medium Higher Secondary School distributed vegetable kits to the villagers, and the school’s staff and alumni association distributed mobile phones to financially disadvantaged students who lost parents to the virus.

“Many of our people are jobless,” said Sister Archana Akkarapattiekka, the principal of St. Francis Convent Higher Secondary School in Raisen. The situation had become so desperate that our sisters sacrificed their salaries to help meet payroll expenses for the lay staff. The sisters distributed food and medicine, clothes, sanitary items, and stationery to needy children from the school and surrounding area, Sister Archana said.

COVID-19 affected the villagers near Assisi Convent and Assisi Formation House in Kanjikode with a special vengeance. The convent community contributed their pocket money to purchase vegetables, which they distributed to the villagers, and food kits were also given to the very poor in the Allahalli village area. Along with the many physical and financial needs, there was a growing need for spiritual support, especially for those who lost loved ones.

“One of my staff, Mrs. Afshan Anjum, was infected very badly,” Sister Archana said. “When she died, we lost a noble soul and a great asset to our school. She left behind her three daughters as well as students who relied on her constant support. I increased my contact with the students and provided extra counseling to help them cope through this dark time.”

COVID-19 was also a personal emergency for our sisters when they became infected. As with our sisters in the United States who tested positive for the virus, several Indian sisters became ill.

“It was a critical time for the entire province,” Sister Jyoti said. “When our provincial leader,

Sister Jenova, became critically ill, even our doctors gave up hope. We prayed to Jesus to spare her life and thankfully she recovered. We now know the truth of Luke 17: 'What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.'

Sister Alphy Thaikadan, a medical doctor, has been treating COVID-19 patients steadily from the start of the pandemic.

"We found that by making adjustments to our time schedule, and keeping our personal needs to a minimum, we were able to provide adequate service to the sick," Sister Alphy said. "One day an 82-year-old patient was pronounced dead. The nurse in charge handed me the patient's file, so I could certify her death, but I felt I should examine her myself. As I approached the patient, I noticed some movement as the patient struggled to pull out the intravenous cannula. God was with me! We immediately attended to the patient, and I was able to save her life. If I had not examined her personally, she would have died unattended."

In July, for the second consecutive year, the sisters and associates of the United States were forced to hold their Provincial Assembly via Zoom videoconferencing. (A report of the assembly is

Continued on page 9

Sister Alphy Thaikadan, M.D., saying farewell to children who have recovered from COVID-19.



Mississippi Sisters Make a Local Impact

In early 2021, four U.S. Province sisters in the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, were awarded \$1,000 to provide relief to the poor and marginalized suffering immensely as a consequence of the pandemic. The sisters responded to an invitation from Catholic Extension, a fundraising organization that helps under-resourced dioceses, to distribute money to people they minister to and whose lives were further strained by COVID-19.

Sister Margaret Sue Broker helped fund school expenses for families at Sacred Heart School, Southaven, where she teaches. Sister Rose Hacker helped students at Holy Family School, Holly Springs, purchase school supplies and uniforms, as well as food plants for Sister Margaret Sue's teaching garden. Sisters Julene Stromberg and Ramona Schmidtknecht purchased supplies for Garden Café's free hot meal program in Holly Springs, where they volunteer. "We are so grateful that we can offer assistance in these very difficult situations," Sister Ramona said.

Continued from page 8

Sisters Stay Mission Focused in Challenging Times

available on the community's website, www.sssf.org.) The same was true in our other provinces and region.

"As the pandemic worsened, we could not conduct many of the programs we had planned for our province," Sister Jyoti said. "Instead, we held webinar meetings for our superiors, treasurers, formation directors, principals, and retreatants. We also managed to conduct our Provincial Chapter via Zoom and conducted online classes for those in formation."

"The COVID-19 virus ushered in unprecedented times for our education ministry," Sister Archana said. "Millions of students had to shift into temporary homeschooling situations, and schools had to change their mode of teaching to online classes, a really challenging task for our teachers."

The children of laborers attending St. Mary Upper Primary School in Pullissery had little access to remote learning opportunities. Thanks to the kindness of donors, these vulnerable students received materials for online learning. Assisi Province provided mobile phones and stationery items, while teachers and benefactors sponsored cell phones and provided special academic support for the students.

As was expressed by our sisters in the Fall 2020 issue of *Alive*, "one of the hardest sacrifices

for our sisters was to forgo reception of the Eucharist as well as our profession and jubilee celebrations," Sister Jyoti said. "Our attempts at prayer seemed awkward, but the sisters took solace in the words of Max Lucado: 'Since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.'"

"We know that it was the valuable prayers and sacrifices from all our friends, co-workers and benefactors that added to the speedy recovery of our sisters," Sister Jyoti said.

Sister Alphy added, "We drew our strength from Psalm 91: 'The Lord is my refuge and fortress, my God in whom, I trust,' and from the words of Luke's Gospel, 'Nothing is impossible with God.'"

"I personally thank all those who reached out to support us and pray for us," said Sister Archana. "In all our decision making and charitable outreach, our community stood with us. I have no doubt that it was their prayers, personal sacrifices, and encouragement that helped to sustain us during these difficult times."

We invite you to prayerfully consider making a tax-deductible donation today to help our sisters continue to bring care and comfort to people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Use the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.sssf.org.



Extending Hands of Care in Juárez

Cross-border sharing program now in its second decade

Casa Alexia is a joint ministry of our global congregation's United States Province and Latin American Region. It provides a hopeful presence to women, men, and children living in poverty in the El Paso, Texas-Juárez, Mexico, border region.

In response to rampant hunger in Juárez's poorest, most abandoned neighborhood, our sisters launched an initiative known as the "Across the Border Sharing Program." Donors in El Paso provided Sister Carol Jean Ory and Sister Josefina Lopez with funds to purchase rice, dried beans, sugar, cooking oil, and laundry detergent, which were then delivered each month to families in need across the border.

The program that began by serving 31 families has now grown to more than triple that number, Sister Carol Jean said, thanks to funding from our International Office of Mission Advancement through initiatives like the annual Joseph Bowls Supper fundraiser.

"We've been in Juárez for 12 years, going to a very poor section of our parish," she said. "Right now, we're serving 100 families with a bag of groceries once a month."

The grocery packages have expanded over time, now including items like canned vegetables, evaporated milk, oatmeal, sardines, and peanut butter. While these supplies may seem very basic, they make an enormous difference to those who receive them.

"For many families, getting a can of milk, a pound of rice, a pound of beans once a month is



Casa Alexia's grocery packages make a life-saving difference.

very important to them," Sister Carol Jean said. "Most of the people are factory workers. They work long hours—12-hour shifts. They get very minimal pay and they really need that help."

The food program exemplifies what it is to be the Body of Christ, Sister Carol Jean said. "It bridges the two countries and provides an image of what true Church is all about: Those who are better off extend a hand to those who are poorer."

"What we see in Juárez is the difference that can be made when people extend their hands and their hearts in solidarity with these suffering people," Sister Carol Jean observed. "In the name of those families and those children, we thank you for your help and bless you for your continuing support."

To support our sisters' heroic work with those in great need on the border, please make a donation today using the enclosed envelope or online at www.sssf.org.



Sisters and Friends Get Movin' 4 Missions

Innovative step challenge fundraiser yields monumental results

This spring, our community's Mission Advancement Office was looking for a fun, new way for people to join together as partners in mission even when we had to be apart because of the pandemic's challenges. The result was Movin' 4 Missions, a month-long step challenge that allowed donors to support our ministries around the world from their own neighborhood...or without even having to leave their homes!

Participants in the fundraiser were encouraged to ask family, friends, and co-workers to cheer them on to reach their step goal, form a team, and support them as a sponsor. Steppers were asked to walk between 125,000 and 200,000 steps during the month of May. Every step taken was a step closer to raising money for our retired sisters, social justice ministries, education, and other funded ministries.

Movin' 4 Missions participants could join in on the fun wherever they live. Over 120 sisters, associates, staff, donors, and other friends of the community were excited to help our missions, and enjoyed the feeling of being included.

Word about the event spread quickly through emails, social media posts, and YouTube videos. As participants registered and engaged with more than 300 donors, photos and video clips went viral, helping the Mission Advancement Office to promote the event.

"It was fun to create Facebook posts to encourage people to donate," said Sister Kathy Chuston, the congregation's special appeals administrator. "It was really an invitation to use our own creativity to spread the word about our missions and their needs."

Sister Margaret Sue Broker walked 18 miles in one day at Sacred Heart School in Southaven, Mississippi.

Together, sisters and other steppers traveled nearly 11,000 miles during the challenge—enough steps to walk from Milwaukee to our missions in Bangalore, India, and beyond! Sisters in their 70s and 80s were eager to reach and surpass their step goals, with Sister Margaret Sue Broker, 81, walking over 18 miles in one day at her school in Mississippi!

Other sisters set more modest goals but got just as much enjoyment. "I had fun walking in the St. Joseph Center garden, and even met a new family of baby bunnies," said 87-year-old Sister Mary Beth Minkel, who was a member of Sister Kathy's "Chicago Sassy Steppers" team.

"I enjoyed being part of a team with my family," said stepper Amanda Stephans. "Even though we are not all in the same city, we all could support the sisters' important work together."



“Being pregnant, I wanted to get a head start on getting in my steps before the baby came,” Amanda continued. “Knowing I was having a baby girl and the commitment the sisters have in creating opportunities to form educated and strong women, it was even more important for me to participate.”

“This new event gave our donors a chance to really make a difference,” said Kelly Nowakowski, the event coordinator. “We were told by donors that this event gave them an opportunity to participate and made them feel more connected to the cause.”

“It has been a joy, an honor, and a responsibility to help the order financially,” said faithful donor Mary Pautz. “I especially love the sisters’ music ministry, their work on the El Paso border, and the Sisters Program South project on Milwaukee’s south side for women victimized by human trafficking and prostitution.”



Another longtime donor—a former member of the reception class of 1954—paid the registration fees for 22 of her former classmates and also pledged a generous donation in recognition of their efforts. “The enthusiasm of the steppers was contagious,” she said. “They did a terrific job and I am so proud of them.”

Sister Nedine Ferris, a retired educator and administrator, couldn’t believe how much support she received. “One thing that touched me deeply was when we put the announcement on Facebook and so many of my former students supported me financially,” she said.

Pam Mueller, Mission Advancement director, said the “virtual” step challenge attracted many first-time donors. “Many of the supporters had never donated to our community before. Because of this special invitation, they chose to give a gift or asked others to support their steps.”

The high level of engagement enabled the event to surpass the initial \$30,000 goal within the first 10 days. By the end of the month, that had more than doubled, raising more than \$64,000 in donations.

“Of course, we measured our success not just in dollars, but by the fact that we had worldwide participation,” Pam said. “Our sisters’ participation and involvement were just as important.”

Kelly said that Movin’ 4 Missions showed the power of strong partnerships. She was humbled by the enthusiastic support of steppers and donors—and happy to know that they cannot wait for this event to happen again!

If you’d like to receive an update when our Mission Advancement Office is holding its next event, please email missionadvancement@sssf.org. We’ll be happy to keep you in the loop!



Expectant mom Amanda Stephans and her dog Kona found their stride while Movin’ 4 Missions.

Renovation and Transformation

Chapel Garden Apartments will honor our sisters' legacy of care

February marked the start of renovation work to transform much of the historic St. Joseph Center international motherhouse into affordable housing units for the Milwaukee community.

This new housing development, named Chapel Garden Apartments, will provide 59 apartments for seniors, 62 years and older. In addition, the freestanding former St. Jude building will be converted into four three-bedroom townhomes for families with children.

The sisters have modeled the Chapel Garden initiative on the Maria Linden independent senior and assisted living rental apartments that were built in 2013 and located to the north of the motherhouse. The success of that affordable housing ministry at Maria Linden convinced the International Leadership Team that they were onto something. The sisters received even more encouragement from a 2017 housing study conducted with the help of Alverno College student researchers, which pointed to a citywide shortage of high-quality and inexpensive housing for seniors of limited means.

Renovation work is expected to last until July 2022. Michele Carlson, St. Joseph Center's

executive director, is serving as project manager. "Right now, we are hollowing out the old building by removing interior walls, doorways, and plumbing fixtures," Michele said. "In the next phase, we will be installing the structures and utility lines into the building 'shell' to create the new apartment units."



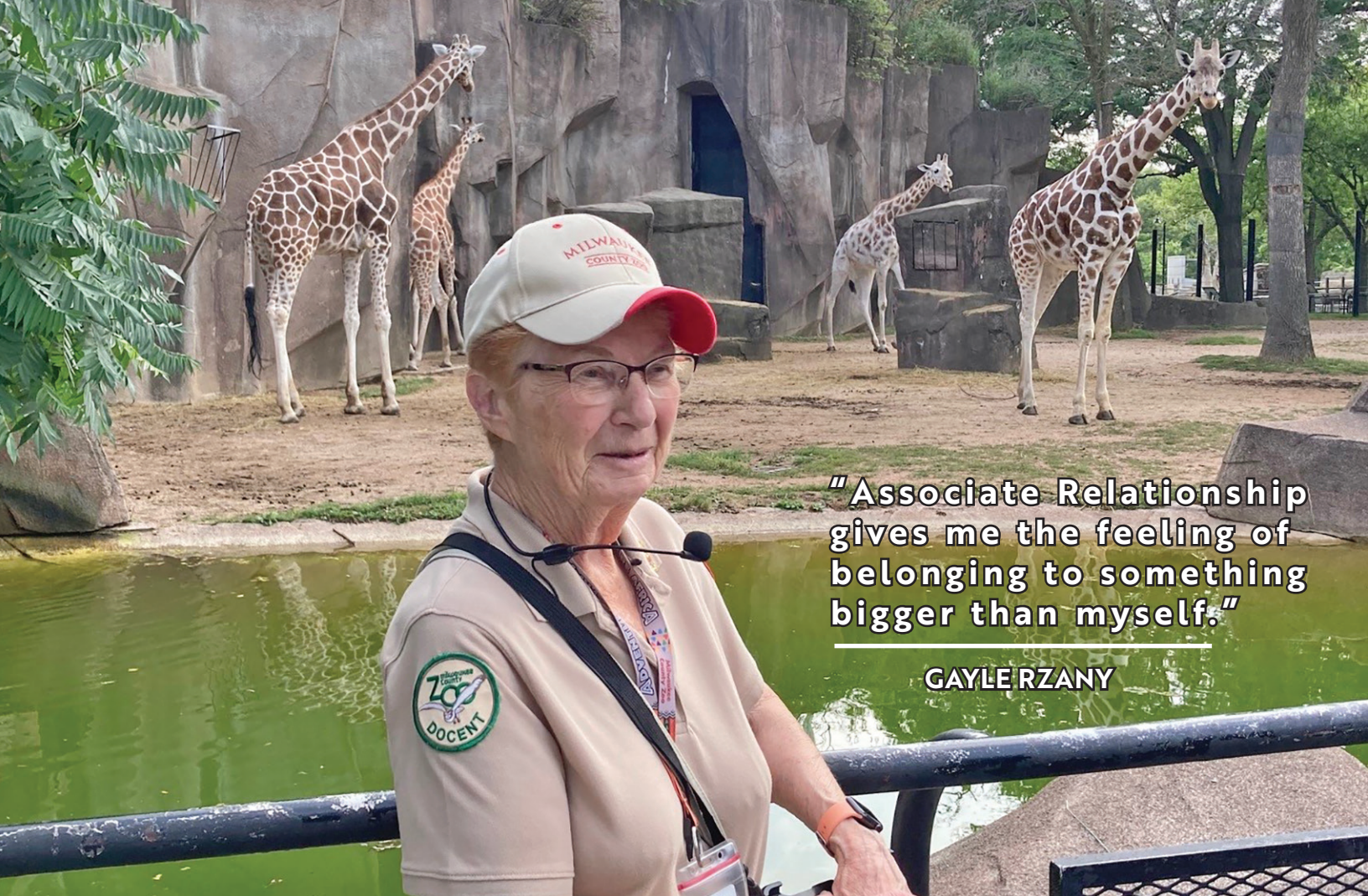
Michele Carlson, St. Joseph Center's executive director, with an antique lightbulb construction workers found within the walls of the St. Jude building.

Looking after the comfort and safety of the sisters who live in the building during construction is a top priority for Michele.

"Every week the workers progress to a new section of the motherhouse," she said. Michele provides sisters with weekly construction updates and signs to help them get where they want to go safely. "Communication has to be constant and consistent," she said.

The community's tradition of responding to the needs of the times is at the heart of this project.

"I am very excited that construction has begun on the Chapel Garden project," said Sister Mary Diez, our congregation's president. "We are so proud that what once was the home for many sisters will now join Maria Linden as a ministry of affordable housing. It honors the legacy of so many sisters who have seen the needs of the times as the will of God."



"Associate Relationship gives me the feeling of belonging to something bigger than myself."

GAYLE RZANY

Communing with Giraffes and All Creation

Associate brings Franciscan spirituality to the zoo

Gayle Rzany was in the middle of a food fight. Rhana the giraffe was on one side, reaching for a mouth-watering treat of romaine lettuce and crackers clenched in a human hand. Younger brother Baha was on the other side. He barreled in, knocked her out of the way and grabbed the snack for himself.

Rhana looked at Gayle for help. She obliged, orchestrating a maneuver to distract the bigger and younger Baha to another outstretched hand so Rhana could eat.

It's all in a day's work at the Milwaukee County Zoo, where guests can feed some of the animals.

Gayle presides at the giraffe enclosure on Mondays, and she has never had a job she loved more. "When Rhana's eyes met mine, I felt such communication with her," she said. "I was delighted."

Gayle serves as a zoo docent, a ministry that dovetails with her Franciscan spirituality as an associate with the School Sisters of St. Francis. She has a lot of stories, many of which can make little kids and their parents erupt in laughter. A favorite one is about poop.

"Did you know that bats hang by their toes to sleep?," she asks a crowd, and most adults nod.

“When they have to defecate, they turn around and hang by their thumbs.” Parents translate for the kids, and nobody keeps a straight face. Similar hoots occur at the rhino and hippo exhibits. It’s all part of zoo life, and Gayle enjoys sharing what she learns.

Visitors often ask how she can, in good conscience, work at a zoo. She explains that zoos today are “a far cry from the old zoos, where we brought marshmallows to feed the bears that lived in cages and county workers managed the place. Today, animals have natural habitat and enrichment. They’re zoo bred. They aren’t captured in the wild, and the philosophy is no longer to have as many different species as possible, but to provide more space per animal. To be accredited, zoos have to adhere to standards.”

Zoos even have a role in species preservation, another area of keen interest for Gayle. “Some species, like the Guam Kingfisher, is extinct in the wild today. There are 162 left in captivity. Zoos are trying to bring them back.”

Franciscan Spirituality Fuels Ministry

Gayle says her ministry at the zoo led to her decision to become an associate. After years of friendship with many of the sisters—Gayle attended their high school and entered the convent herself for a time—she contacted them about Associate Relationship.

“It was volunteering at the zoo that finally brought me to it,” she said. “My care and concern for animals and all of creation is very Franciscan.”

Gayle says her commitment to Associate Relationship has energized and inspired her by helping her focus more clearly on conservation efforts. She now serves on the sisters’ C.A.R.E. Committee (Creating Actions to Reverence the Earth) and has become a member of the Alliance

for the Great Lakes. She also looks forward to the sisters’ “superb” Spirituality Conferences.

“Associate Relationship gives me the feeling of belonging to something bigger than myself,” Gayle said. “I’m not in it alone. Someone has my back, and I’ve got theirs. I’ve helped collect personal care items for a homeless shelter and supported the sisters’ outreach to sex-trafficked women. You celebrate each other’s achievements. It’s about mission and spirituality, but also about the people.”

The uniqueness of each species fascinates Gayle, but she’s also focused on care of the individual. That includes the common dining room of her residence, where large windows have resulted in bird collisions. “I am leading a push to get decals to reduce that problem. I feel called to make animals’ plight better.” Whether it is at the zoo, at home, or anywhere in between, Gayle champions the needs of the individual wherever she goes.

Associates join our sisters in living Franciscan values rooted in simplicity, prayer, and service to others. To learn how you can make a positive difference and enjoy the support and friendship that our associates experience, email associates@sssf.org.





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MISSIONS BENEFIT FROM SUMMER FUNDRAISERS

Our Sister Water Beer Garden in a Box fundraisers, held in July and August, were a tremendous success and our sisters, associates, staff, and volunteers had a great time serving more than 200 guests. Nearly \$10,000 in net profits were raised from these events, which will help our sisters care for the earth as they care for others at our missions around the world. Among those who will benefit:

- Sisters in remote rural areas of India can produce convenient, inexpensive energy for convents, schools, and clinics using clean-burning bio-gas generators.
- Sisters and those they serve will be able to harness solar energy to light and cool classrooms and living spaces.
- Families in Peru and students in India will be able to access clean water with our rain harvest and filtering systems.
- Sisters in our formation house in Tanzania, who otherwise would have to drink and bathe in water with dangerously high mineral content, can live safer and healthier lives.

Thank you to all our partners for your prayers and support—you helped make a forever difference!

