



## NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Michael O'Loughlin  
Director of Marketing & Communications  
School Sisters of St. Francis  
414-385-5236  
[moloughlin@sssf.org](mailto:moloughlin@sssf.org)

### **SCHOOL SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS HONORED WITH NATIONAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD** *Sisters' mission advancement office recognized for creativity and generosity during COVID-19*

Milwaukee, Wis., January 18, 2022 – The School Sisters of St. Francis, an international community of Catholic sisters who unite with others to build a just and peaceful world, have been recognized as the recipients of the inaugural Catholic Stewardship Award, presented by The Nonprofit Alliance Catholic Development Council.

The award will be presented in Milwaukee on February 24, during the Faith & Fundraising Conference being co-presented by The Nonprofit Alliance and the Association of Lutheran Development Executives.

Abby Graf, the council's vice president for programs and community engagement, cited the innovation of the sisters' mission advancement office in developing the "Sister Water Beer Garden in a Box" fundraisers in announcing the award.

"When the pandemic upended your traditional summer beer gardens event, the sisters re-invented the concept in a safe and socially distanced format that still retained the fun – and fundraising success – of the original event," Graf wrote. "Then, in the hallmark fashion of Catholic fundraising, the School Sisters of St. Francis shared your successful idea with other communities of women religious in the Milwaukee area and beyond so that others who were facing the same pandemic-related challenges could follow your recipe for success.

"Your creative approach to a new challenge, and your generosity in sharing the idea with the broader faith fundraising community, is a very bright spot in the pandemic era," Graf continued. "We are delighted to recognize the School Sisters of St. Francis."

MORE

“It is a great honor to receive this inaugural Catholic Stewardship Award recognition,” said Pam Mueller, director of the sister’s International Office of Mission Advancement. “The needs of those with whom our sisters minister around the world became even more urgent during the pandemic, so we needed to find new, creative ways to support our missions. We pivoted to a drive-thru, touch-free beer garden concept that our many generous donors embraced enthusiastically.”

“Once the pandemic hit and events started to shut down, I knew our normal event needed to be changed,” said Kelly Nowakowski, the mission advancement office’s event coordinator. “Watching the morning news, I saw that local restaurants were offering a curbside pickup option and thought that was something that we could do to adapt our Sister Water Beer Garden.”

The “Sister Water Beer Garden in a Box” fundraisers in 2020 and 2021 attracted nearly 1,000 patrons and raised more than \$40,000 in support of much-needed clean water and earth-friendly initiatives at our sisters’ missions around the world including new wells and storage reservoirs, solar energy installations, and bio-gas fuel for cooking and heating.

“This award is a testament to our sisters and associates who assisted us before, during, and after the events,” Mueller said. “Their prayers supported the many staff, family members, and friends of the community who devoted countless hours to ensuring the success of these initiatives. We are tremendously grateful for their hard work, creativity, and dedication to our mission, and are delighted that they are sharing in this recognition.”

“Our congregation is very proud of our mission advancement team and the creativity they have shown in sustaining our missions in unprecedented times,” said Sister Mary Diez, president of the international congregation. “We are so pleased that the Catholic Development Council has chosen to recognize our community’s work with this award.”

### **About The School Sisters of St. Francis**

The School Sisters of St. Francis are an international community of Catholic sisters who unite with others to build a just and peaceful world. Founded in 1874, their mission is thriving throughout the United States, Europe, Latin America, India, and Tanzania, addressing needs in education, holistic wellness and healing, pastoral ministry, spiritual growth, social justice, and the arts. For more information about the School Sisters of St. Francis, please visit [www.sssf.org](http://www.sssf.org).

###