

From Our Associates

Dear Circle of Friends,



It is a humbling thing to be entrusted with this role of Associate Coordinator. The people who have previously led this program have crafted a wondrous gift for our world. My formal commitment to BVM Association happened in 2016. Much has changed in those eight years.

This last year has brought about some exciting things with the associate relationship. We certainly have spent the time “doing something new.”

Last fall, we held a transformational visioning summit with associates from most of our geographic and demographic communities. While there, a list of “we believe statements” were drafted and later shared with associates and then the BVM congregation.

Another outgrowth from the visioning summit was the creation of the Associate Steering Committee. The current committee members include Associates Dan Abben, Marybeth Coleman, Laura Field, Pat Maddux, Maureen McGrain, Grace Mendez, Michele Miller, Eileen O’Shea, Lori Ritz, Kathy Weishaar, and Suzie Wright as well as BVMs Elizabeth Avalos, Pat Bombard, and Joellen McCarthy.

The committee has met nearly monthly and held its first in-person meeting at Mount Carmel Bluffs on Oct. 12–13. We appreciate BVM Katie Anders and Associates Paula Schmidt and Karen Kane-Herber’s willingness to join us for this important event. We seek your prayers as we continue the work which will take place during this group’s future meetings.

The committee plans to continue seeking the insights and wisdom of the BVM congregation in drafting the future of the associate relationship such as was done during the Associate Conversation held in September. Much appreciation is due to Eileen and BVMs Mary Ann Zollmann and Elizabeth Avalos for planning that conversation and the series of conversations to come.

Keep an eye out for invitations to dream and share together both on Zoom and in-person, where possible. There will be many opportunities for volunteering and participation in the coming months.

I look forward to seeing the associate relationship grow with you.

—Suzie

Welcome New Associate:



Linda Heying

Linda Heying, the newest BVM associate, lives in Oak Park, Ill., but is a native Iowan. Her first contact with BVMs happened while attending Loras College in Dubuque but soon became a family-connection when she married into the Manternach family. As the years went on, her connection was strengthened through her close friendship with BVM Katie Anders. Linda is a self-employed marriage and family therapist and is the mother of four adult children. Linda’s companions on the journey of discernment included BVMs LaDonna Manternach, Mary McCauley, Mary Ann Zollmann, Associates Eileen O’Shea, and Marybeth Coleman and discerner Jennifer Stork.

In her application for association Linda states, “Freedom

is the value that I have tried to live out and I encourage my children, clients, and friends to do the same. Freedom is central for me to enable me to live out the other three. It is the inner work of freedom that I can extend myself in love/charity—to participate in education and to live into justice.”

In her letter of affirmation, companion and BVM Mary Ann states, “As Linda lives and ministers from the truth of who she is, she is doing so from the very soul of our core values. Linda exudes the BVM mission of being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in God’s steadfast love (BVM *Constitutions* 10).”

Linda’s commitment ceremony will be Oct. 26 at 10:30 a.m. in the Mary Frances Clarke Chapel. All are welcome to attend in person, via Channel 994, or by using this video link: portal.stretchinternet.com/bvmsisters



Commitment Ceremony

Associate Cat Smith (seated center front) is surrounded by her discernment companions, local associates, relatives, BVM and Clarke prayer partners, as well as supportive members of the Clarke University faculty and staff. Cat is holding her certificate proclaiming her association and a picture of her mother (d).

A Rustic Retreat

During the week of Sept. 16, just in time for the harvest moon, BVM associate K Kriesel went on a spiritual retreat at the Christine Center. This Franciscan center outside of Eau Claire, Wis., has rustic cabins, an art studio, meditation space, and hiking trails. The full moon coincided with the feast of St. Hildegard of Bingen, who was celebrated at the center throughout the week.

The Christine Center was founded in 1980 in Willard, Wis., by Sr. Virginia Barta, OSF and has grown substantially to over 251 acres. Each cabin is named after a saint, such as St. Francis, an angel, such as Uriel, or a virtue, such as Hope. Handmade shrines, such as the Tree of Life shrine pictured here, are scattered

across the hiking trails. At each shared, vegetarian meal, a bell is rung (K got to ring it twice!) to call everyone to eat together. Guests are welcome to purchase items from a modest bookstore and to borrow books from the library.

Each evening, K lit a bonfire in the pit beside the main building. They brought fragrant herbs to toss onto the fire, and on the second evening seven retreatants joined K, so each one received a handful of herbs to burn. One of the retreatants had come all the way from London! She was scared of coyotes, so everyone howled at the moon and sang songs about the moon so we could scare off any critters that might have traipsed close by!

—Associate K Kriesel



A Tree of Life Shrine, found on a hiking trail at The Christine Center in Wisconsin.

From Dreams to Reality

If you dream it, it may become reality!

Many things changed all over the world with the pandemic. Fundación Nuevo Mundo School was not the exception. We stopped getting any help from selling books, lunches, etc., to the morning school children. That was our main income. We had to close the afternoon school for obvious reasons, plus the children did not have a way to connect to online classes. They did not have the right equipment at home.

We were crushed at the reality of our program, but there was no other way, since we had to let go of 40 people we had employed as teachers and administrators. We had been in our mission for 35 years. God's times are perfect, but, we did not know at the time how this was going to end.

We were recovering from

the pandemic, and we started visiting places to inaugurate a program for children who attend public schools, and where they do not receive the most advanced education.

During those two years, the children had not learned much. Our new mission was to bring the children up to grade level in their studies, plus offer English classes to the older children since here in Ecuador, if you know English, you have a better chance in life to get ahead.

It is going to be two years since we started the program. We started with 30 students, this year we have doubled the group. The children enjoy coming to our programs, but I think we enjoy them even more. Hopefully,



Children in Ecuador embrace the joy of learning and play at school.

when things get better in Ecuador, especially with security, we would be delighted if you visited us!

We would be looking forward to that day. Our greatest gratitude for all your support and friendship.

—Associate Sonya Rendón Blacio

Associates in Action



In mid-September, Associate Virginia Picuch (center) and friends attended a fundraiser for Mercy Housing Lakefront in Chicago. The group extend their thanks to the congregation for sponsoring a table at the event. From (l.) are: Jane Zimmerman, OP; Pat Cummings, SSND; Virginia Picuch; Joan Mary, OP; and Jean Keeley, OP. The OPs are all Adrian Dominicans.



During the first weekend of August, Associate K Kriesel (r.) attended the Outreach Conference in Washington, D.C. Outreach is an LGBTQ Catholic organization co-run by Fr. James Martin, S.J. Roughly 200 people attended the conference. While there, K connected with Fr. Chris Lawton, C.S.P.



What better way for Associate Teresa Tiffany to celebrate the Season of Creation than to spend a little time walking down Penny Lane in Liverpool, England, with her spouse, Phil?



Associates Norm Freund, Miriam Todoroff, Sarah Greer Bush, and Suzie Wright gather in St. Joseph Hall at Mount Carmel Bluffs during a recent celebration marking Miriam and Sarah's 25 years as BVM associates. Norm and Suzie shared tidbits of the lives of these two remarkable women.



BVMs Jackie Cramer (l.) and Mary Ellen Meckley were joined on the meal service line by Associate Norm Freund at a recent event honoring charter members of Dubuque's NAACP chapter which formed 35 years ago. BVM Theresa Caluori staffed a voter registration table but eluded the camera that evening. Associate Jeanie Harrington is among Dubuque's charter members and has maintained her membership for all 35 years. Kudos to all.

Voter Registration

A happy contingent of sisters and associates staffed a voter registration table at Clarke University, in Dubuque, Iowa, on National Voter Registration Day, Sept. 17.

They not only enabled young people to register to vote for the first time this November, but they also encouraged registered Dubuque County voters to sign a petition enabling Clarke University to become a satellite voting site so people can vote on campus. More than 20 new voters were registered and the site was successfully

declared a voting location for anyone in Dubuque County to vote early on Oct. 21 from 8:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Not to be left out, international students were welcomed to take stickers and to encourage the American students to participate in the voting process.

Associates and sisters have been staffing voter registration booths for other organizations, too, such as the Iowa League of Women Voters and the NAACP.

—Suzie Wright, Associate Coordinator



Associate Julie Cirks, Clarke vice president for enrollment management (l.), stopped by the voter registration booth to greet Lois Dolphin and Irene Lukefahr, eager to spread the word about their efforts to the campus community.



Associate Cat Smith, Clarke director of residence life (l.) and Theresa Caluori were the first team helping the students register.

Nuns on the Bus

The Nuns On The Bus campaign kicked off the first week of October. Since 1992, BVMs have participated, championing the importance of voting and sharing Catholic teachings. This year, associates and friends join in on the effort. Elizabeth Avalos traveled to Old St. Pat's in Chicago on Oct. 8–10 for a celebration and a blessing of this year's bus.

The Nuns on the Bus will journey across the country—stopping in 20 cities in three weeks. Along the way, bus riders will engage in town hall events, rallies, small group discussions, press conferences, and local social service/community organizations.

To follow the bus and read rider profiles, visit: nunsonthebus.org

Stay tuned for information about Elizabeth's experience!



Jean Gordon, 2014.



Photo: Network Lobby