

2020 Edition

Serving the Dear Neighbor

NEWS FROM THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH



1515 WEST OGDEN AVENUE
LA GRANGE PARK, IL



Together in Spirit

Greetings from the La Grange Park Center! During these challenging days we find ourselves in, many of you have called, emailed, or written us to ask, "How are the sisters doing?" We thank you for your care and concern! Our sisters in La Grange Park and all around our Congregation are sheltering in place, practicing social distancing, staying active and doing whatever they can to help the community. That includes praying for all our friends, neighbors and supporters - like YOU!

Although the center is still currently closed to visitors, sisters have found creative ways to stay connected to one another, continue in their ministries and prayer, and support their *dear neighbors*. Here are just a few examples of what our sisters, associates and staff have been up to these past few months!



Sisters celebrated St. Joseph Day on March 19 with mass (sitting safely apart) and a special lunch afterward. Above are Sisters Mary Lou Sterling (left) and Thomas Eileen Coha.

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Scrapbook

Quarantine 2020



Sister Mary Jo Curtsinger delivered cookies baked by sisters to a local firehouse.

Sisters Janet Bolger (left) and Marlene Schemmel get some exercise and fresh air walking together (at a safe distance).



Sisters Kathy Sherman and Pat Bergen, and Novice Sarah Simmons made P&J's which they delivered to a local soup kitchen.



Sisters enjoy the outdoors while playing a game of bags. From left are Sisters Pat Borchardt, Pat Willems, Kathleen Lucas and Marlene Schemmel.



Sister Frankie Dutil made zucchini bread along with her house mate Sister Ann Letourneau to give to other sisters and friends in the area.



Sisters Jeanne Oursler, Mary Southard, Kathleen Lucas, along with Pat Borchardt and Ann Letourneau (not pictured) sewed masks for our kitchen, housekeeping and nursing staffs to wear.

Jubilee 2020

Jubilee is the anniversary of a sister's entrance into religious life. Congratulations to all our sisters who are celebrating this year!



Sister Mary Lou Sterling, CSJ
(Sister Ursula)
70 Years

To view biographies, visit us at
CSJoseph.org
and click on "Connect With Us"

In Memoriam

Sister Alice Vincent, CSJ
(Sister Pierre)

Entered into eternal life on January 3, 2020, after 68 years of religious life.



We Remember
and Celebrate

Community Builders for Peace

In May, students from the third class of Community Builders for Peace completed their community-based projects, and submitted presentations summarizing and reflecting on the results and their experience.

Originally launched in June, 2016, Community Builders for Peace is a year-long program in which high school students, along with their young adult mentors, conceive of, develop and implement programs into their school, parish or community that are designed to meet specific needs and promote peaceful engagement.



^ Students plant and garden to beautify their community.

This year, students from Nazareth Academy in La Grange Park, a member of our Mission Network, wanted their project to unite teens and young children in building environmental awareness and increasing mental health and well-being through play and planting. They held monthly workshops at their school where they taught kids and teens where their food comes from and how to plant, while also playing games and having fun!

The students also volunteered during the year by gardening and planting around town, and by helping out during food drives at the Quinn Center.

Of the experience, one student said, "I had no idea that we could accomplish so much with so little by a community with the same goal." Another said, "I used to be shy, now I'm a public leader!"



^ Sister Leyla Cerda (center) with students at the Quinn Center Thanksgiving food drive.

Also participating this year were students from Wheeling Central Catholic High School in Wheeling, W.Va., and Maria Reina Academy in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Please join us in praying for these remarkable students, that this experience of partnership and activism will remain with them and influence their futures. ●

Many centuries ago, our sisters took a leap of faith to work in their city to serve the needs of their neighbors. With your help we continue in this spirit today, loving and serving the needs of the *dear neighbor* in many cities and areas of the world.

Sometimes love calls each of us to trust and respond to those around us without knowing exactly how it will work out. This is especially true now, in these days of pandemic and the challenges that go along with it, and in the continuing crises of humanity and climate that exist. Our sisters and associates are taking risks and giving voice to systemic injustice, leading with compassion and networking with others to bring about life-giving change in our communities and world. Together, with you, we

stand with and for the oppressed and marginalized, and encourage each other to act with great kindness and love. We do this with faith in God and trust in the goodwill of friends like you. Your donations and prayer-filled support help us bring help and hope to each and every one of our *dear neighbors* who seek our compassion, our love and our service.

We extend our love and gratitude to you and wish you good health and hearts filled with hope. •



Ways You Can Help

- Use the enclosed envelope or make a gift online at CSJoseph.org/make-a-gift
 - Make monthly gifts and become a member of our Circle of Friends
 - Make a legacy gift through your will or estate and join our Heritage Society

For more information, contact **Karen Herman DeMuro** at khermandemuro@csjoseph.org or **708.482.5037**

Vocations Update

We are pleased to announce that novices Jennifer Berridge and Sarah Simmons will both profess first vows with the Congregation of St. Joseph this summer. Jennifer, who is from Cleveland, will profess in July at our center in Wheeling, W.Va. Sarah, who is from Kalamazoo, Mich, will profess in August at our center in La Grange Park, Ill. Jennifer was mentored by Sister Christine Riley and Sarah by Sister Marie Benzing. Both completed their year-long novitiate last May.

Please keep Jennifer and Sarah in your prayers as they move forward on their journey to becoming Sisters of St. Joseph! •

To learn more, visit CSJoseph.org/as-a-sister



< Jennifer Berridge



Sarah Simmons >

Ministry Update

TEACH

During the past several months, TEACH (Tutoring English to Advance Change), part of the Congregation's Mission Network, was faced with the challenge of how to continue their ministry while social distancing. TEACH provides one-on-one tutoring and mentoring to Chicago's large immigrant population with limited English literacy.

"While other similar agencies closed their doors, we recognized that our mission of unity, empowerment and addressing inequities in society was more relevant than ever," said Constantine Bitsas, TEACH's Executive Director. "So suspending services was not an option."

Bitsas said his staff rose to the challenge and found new ways of maintaining contact with students and connecting them with tutors. "We adapted to this new environment through technology and learned how to use Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, and other digital

tools," he said. "For other students, we used phone calls, texting, email and even snail mail to stay in contact. Whatever they were comfortable with." Once connected, tutors offered students virtual class time and office hours, and some even dropped assignments off to students to review later over the phone.

"We are doing all that we can to keep our students engaged and prevent them from becoming isolated," he said.

After learning about the need for masks for staff and students, sisters and associates made and donated over 70 masks to TEACH. "They even made them in different sizes so that there would be masks for everyone, from the smallest toddler on up," Bitsas said.



TEACH has found new ways to continue to support the immigrant community in this changing environment.

[Learn more at TeachEmpowers.org](https://www.teachempowers.org)

Taller de José

Another member of the Congregation's Mission Network that works with Chicago's immigrant population is Taller de José, or "Joseph's Workshop." Taller de José is a ministry of accompaniment that helps connect people to needed services, and services to people. Usually, staff members called "compañeros" or "compañeras" accompany clients to appointments to ensure they get the help they need. However over the past several months, they have had to find new ways to serve their clients.

"It has been challenging because we really value the connections we create when we meet people in person," said Taller de José Executive Director, Anna Mayer. "But we have adapted by doing accompaniment over the phone. Clients can call our offices and speak to staff who provide them referrals to resources, answer questions and assist with completing forms."

Mayer shared that the neighborhood where Taller de José is located, often referred to as "Little Village", has been one of the hardest hit in terms of positive tests for COVID. "Many individuals there work in essential jobs where they risk

exposure to the virus, and households in Little Village tend to be multigenerational or large families, so it is difficult for these workers to self-isolate," she said. "In addition, many are under-insured or uninsured, which often prevents or slows them from seeking needed healthcare. Figuring out ways to slow the spread in these communities is one of the big concerns."

Other concerns for the community are the economic impact due to loss of jobs, and the toll that stress and social distancing have on mental health. "Similar to when we were working in person, we find that sometimes the greatest comfort we can offer to clients is just the opportunity to talk with someone and share their concerns," said Mayer.

Taller de José encourages all to participate in the 2020 Census, which is so important to the allocation of future funds to communities.

[Learn more at TallerdeJose.org](https://www.tallerdejose.org)



Taller de José
Executive Director,
Anna Mayer



Nazareth Academy

Last December, Nazareth Academy Principal Therese Hawkins announced that 15 juniors and seniors were chosen for the second annual Young Community Changemakers program. They joined with other local high school students to explore the social challenges in our community, learn about philanthropy, review grant applications, conduct virtual site visits and, ultimately, award grants to local nonprofit organizations. Even when COVID disrupted their ability to meet in person, the program and students carried on, switching to Zoom meetings and interviews.

This past April, the students met via Zoom to share what they learned on their site visits and decide how to allocate \$15,000 in grant funding. After discussion, the students decided to award \$7500 to Alivio Medical Center and \$7500 to TEACH, another member of the Congregation's Mission Network (see story page 6).

Congratulations to these Nazareth students, whose interest in, and dedication to, serving the needs of our community exemplify the CSJ mission at work:

Carter Breslow	Caitlin McGarry	Adriana Pirrello
Mary Calabria	Marty McNamara	Maddie Ramaglia
Sarah Ereio	Daniel Metzger	Emily Sackley
Paula Martinez	Alex Milos	Emma Sarin
Dot McCarthy	ThienMy Nguyen	Matthew Winters

[Learn more at NazarethAcademy.org](http://NazarethAcademy.org)

The work, mission and ministries of the **Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph** can continue with your help.

Consider remembering the sisters in your legacy or planned giving. Contact Karen Herman DeMuro at khermandemuro@csjoseph.org for more information.

The Well

Although our La Grange Park Center is still closed to outside visitors, that hasn't stopped The Well Spirituality Center from continuing to serve its clients and the community. The Well has moved its array of programs and retreats online so that patrons can participate from the safety of their home.



The Well's Executive Director Bridget Sperduto said the goal is to provide clients and the community access to much needed programs and retreats to help boost mind, body and spirit, something that is especially important right now. "Our virtual summer retreats and programs enable us, like never

before, to connect with new people, fascinating ideas and expansive spirituality from all over the country and around the world," she said.

"Whether this is your first retreat or you are a regular retreatant, we invite anyone who is looking for a way to care for themselves to visit us online and check out all that we have to offer," she said. We look forward to hearing from you!"

[Learn more at CSJTheWell.org](http://CSJTheWell.org)



Sister Kathy Sherman's pet Cockatiel Bella dropped in to say hello to a prayer group gathered by The Well. The group has been meeting via Zoom daily for several months.



1515 West Ogden Avenue
La Grange Park, IL 60526

Spotlight Photo



Sister Jackie Schmitz with a “roo room,” which she and other sisters and associates sewed and sent to Australia after wild fires earlier this year left countless joeys (baby kangaroos) motherless and homeless.

 This newsletter is printed on recycled paper

What will you do
with your one *wild* &
precious life?
– Mary Oliver



Sisters of St. Joseph live their lives in service to God and others. If you have a heart for God, ministry, justice and Church, and want to make a real difference in our world, we invite you to learn more about us. We would love to talk to you!

Visit us at CSJoseph.org