

Lending a Helping Hand

Each year, the Congregation of St. Joseph partners with and supports ministries and other non-profit organizations and service initiatives that make a real difference to so many in our community. This past year, the needs were even greater due to pandemic-related issues such as job loss, income and food insecurity, health crises, and others. Here are just a few of the organizations and initiatives we supported this past year in the Chicago area:



Just Roots Chicago - St. James Farm

Just Roots Chicago is an organization that works to empower communities to develop access to local, sustainably grown food. The Congregation was pleased to support their recent partnership with Saint James Catholic Church on Wabash Avenue in Chicago to build an 18,000 sq. ft. community farm. The Saint James Community Farm is strengthening sustainable food production in the Bronzeville neighborhood by empowering community members to grow their own food, engage in dynamic, hands on educational programming, and build community in the process.

For information on how to donate, visit justrootschicago.org/saint-james-community-farm



River Clean Up

In May, sisters and associates in LaGrange Park worked together to help clean up along Salt Creek during the annual Conservation Foundation River Sweep. Salt Creek is a waterway that flows into the Des Plaines River. From left are

Sisters Frankie Dutil, Pat Bergen and Jackie Schmitz, Associates Edie Emmenegger and Linda Fox, Sister Kathy Sherman, and Associate Sue Biskup.

St. Mary Food Collection

Sisters Rosemary LaFlaur (left) and Marlene Schemmel (right), supervise the food delivery collection from pupils at St. Mary's School in Riverside, to the Food Pantry at St Barbara Parish in Brookfield. The Pantry was founded in 1980 by the St. Barbara Pastoral Care office, specifically Sister Margaret Halligan, CSJ, to answer a growing need for services in our area. Approximately 121 families depend on the food pantry each week. This annual collection event has been happening for 25 years.



For information on how to donate, visit hgaparish.org/en/community-outreach/food-pantry

Life at *Joseph House*

Sisters Pat Borchardt and Ann Terese Reznicek writing thank you notes to service day volunteers.



During our National Catholic Sisters Week hunger campaign in March, Sisters Carol Crepeau and Jackie Schmitz made and delivered soup to the Franciscan Outreach Center in Chicago which serves those experiencing homelessness.



In April, Bishop Robert Casey, who is also a CSJ Associate, officiated Easter Mass for our sisters in LaGrange Park. From left are Sisters Frankie Dutil, Kathy Brazda, Marianne Race, Carol Crepeau, Mary Jo Curtsinger and Pat Bergen, Bishop Casey, and Sisters Kathy Sherman and Terry Middendorf.



Sister Mary Schaefer pulls a winner from the hopper during this year's annual give-away drawing as Sister Kathy Brazda looks on.



Dorothy Wilkinson, Director of Health and Wellness, with treats during a Mardi Gras celebration.



Sister Mary Southard is all smiles as she plants her annual Spring garden.

Sisters Volunteer at U.S. Mexico Border

This spring, a group of our sisters headed south to serve our dear neighbors at an intake facility at the U.S./Mexico border. For two weeks, Sisters Rita Ann Teichman, Mary Pung, Marianne Race, Jackie Schmitz and Mary Jo Curtsinger volunteered at Catholic Charities Humanitarian Respite Center in McAllen, Texas, where thousands of refugees pass through each year.

While there, our sisters duties included organizing and finding clothing for incoming families in the “Ropa (clothing) Room,” distributing toiletries, baby formula and medicines at the “Hygiene Bar/Pharmacy,” and other work that addressed the essential needs of arriving refugees.

“We saw families with many beautiful children and an amazing number of pregnant women,” said Sister Rita Ann. “Imagine walking the distances they did while pregnant! Sometimes we helped simply by holding babies or occupying toddlers for their mothers while they took showers, visited the Ropa room, or just to give them a break.”

The refugees stay at the center approximately 2-3 days while waiting for their sponsors to be contacted. Once they are and a bus or plane ticket has been purchased, they are on their way to the next leg of their journey.

“This ministry was both heart-breaking and heart-warming,” said Sister Marianne. “We were honored to be able to offer care, respite and simple comforts to these incredible, brave people.”



From left, Sisters Rita Ann Teichman, Mary Pung, Marianne Race, Jackie Schmitz and Mary Jo Curtsinger.



Sisters Mary Pung and Rita Ann Teichman sort clothing in the Ropa (clothing) Room.

To learn more, visit [CatholicCharitiesrgv.org/RespiteCenter](https://www.CatholicCharitiesrgv.org/RespiteCenter)



Sisters Marianne Race prepares baby formula in the Hygiene Bar/Pharmacy.



A Honduran child's artwork from the Respite Center. On the right, two figures point to their hearts and to the USA.



Sister Mary Pung provides a much needed break for this infant's parents.

Jubilee

2021

The following sisters from the founding community of LaGrange Park are celebrating Jubilee this year. Jubilee is the anniversary of a sisters' entrance into religious life. Congratulations to all our sisters who are celebrating from around the Congregation this year!



Sister Patricia Borchardt, CSJ
(formerly Sister Thomasine)

70 Years



Sister Therese Middendorf, CSJ
(formerly Sister Therese Marie)

60 Years



Sister Barbara Lord, CSJ
(formerly Sister Jerome)

70 Years



Sister Mary Lou Pleitner, CSJ
(formerly Sister Christine Marie)

60 Years



Sister Marybeth
McDermott, CSJ

70 Years

To view sister biographies, visit our
Jubilarians page at CSJoseph.org

IN MEMORIAM † WE REMEMBER, WE CELEBRATE, WE BELIEVE



Sister Thomas Eileen
Coha, CSJ

Entered into eternal
life on April 16,
2021, after 68 years
of religious life.



Sister Marie Frances
Basile, CSJ
(formerly Sister
Francetta)

Entered into eternal
life on March 8,
2021, after 67 years
of religious life.



Sister Leyla Cerda-
Sanchez, CSJ

Entered into eternal
life on September 14,
2020, after 24 years
of religious life.

Legacy of Caring

Dear Friends,

As part of our Congregation of St. Joseph family you are an integral part of our efforts to bring the message of God's love to the world in ways that inspire action on behalf of others.

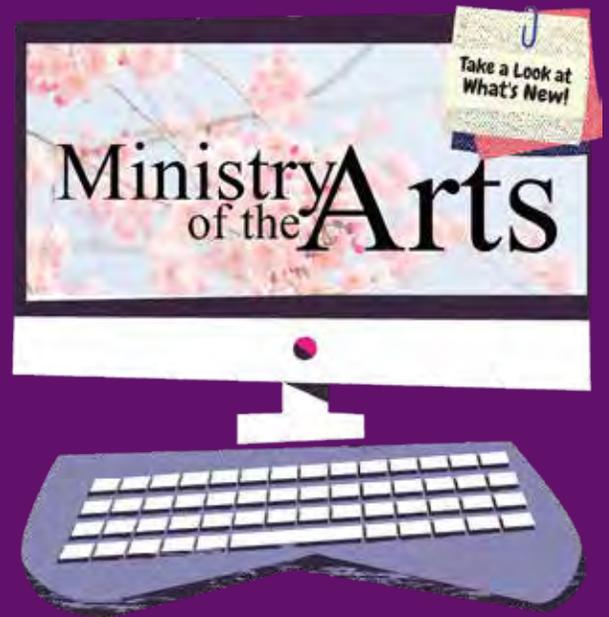
In a year unlike any other in recent times, your support has enabled us to take risks to broaden our lives, expand our ministries and partnerships, and live out our promises in an active and inclusive way. This includes our commitment to care for our sisters and at the same time, more fully respond to the emerging needs of our neighbors and our world. New initiatives, ministries, and partnerships, new uses for some of our buildings and land, along with new ways and places for our sisters to live in community are all a part of our efforts today. They reflect our vibrancy, compassion and commitment to staying attentive to the needs of a world in desperate need of our care.

We celebrate the generosity by which you and others in our communities across the country have embraced us and have continued to support our mission, ministries, lives and needs. Thank you for helping bring God's message of unifying love to our communities. We pray for you in gratitude.

Ways You Can Help

- > Use the enclosed envelope or make a gift online at CSJoseph.org
- > 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, Pat Milenius at pmilenius@csjoseph.org or 216.252.0440



Ministry of the Arts (MOTA)
invites you to check out our
NEW Website!

MinistryoftheArts.org

The power of the arts to heal, beautify, and transform consciousness is needed in our world now more than ever.

We are thrilled to be able to share our artistic gifts - **visual arts, poetry and music** - with you through our NEW digital Ministry of the Arts!

Visit our NEW website at
MinistryoftheArts.org
to browse and request digital art,
music, blessings and more!

For inquiries or more information, email
MOTA@CSJOSEPH.ORG

Follow and like us on Facebook
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Ministry of the Arts

TEACH

Recently, TEACH (Teaching English to Advance Change) received a grant from the Cook County Department of Public Health to serve as a conduit to provide COVID-19 information to Chicago's immigrant communities. TEACH was approached because of its deep roots in the communities they have served, first via bus and later via community-based sites.

Rather than handing out information that people might not take or read, the TEACH staff decided to put together a "COVID kit" consisting of a digital thermometer, three adult masks, one child's mask, hand sanitizer and wipes, disinfecting wipes, and information about COVID including prevention, myths and where to get tested. All materials were in English, Spanish and Polish, the key communities served by TEACH.

Constantine Bitsas, Executive Director of TEACH, said they had enough supplies to make 1,500 kits, but not enough staff or time to do it. "Putting all of those

kits together was more than our staff could handle," he said. "But as always, the sisters were willing to jump in to help!" He said a group of four dedicated sisters (see below) spent many hours putting together 1,000 kits, which we then distributed to food banks, libraries and Spanish-speaking churches. "We could have never reached so many people without their assistance."

Sister Jeanne Oursler said her first thought was one of gratitude. "So many people were involved in making these emergency items available to those who need them. See what can happen when we work together!"

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



Clockwise from left are Sisters Jeanne Oursler, Laurina Kahne, Kathleen Lucas, and Therese Marczyk.

Taller de José

Like many non-profit organizations over the past year, Taller de José has had to continually adapt to find safe and effective ways to serve their constituents. For Taller, this is Chicago's Latinx immigrant community who have been hit hard by the pandemic. Thanks to funding from the Congregation of St. Joseph, Taller de José was able to respond to the immediate financial needs of this community by providing over \$100,000 (and counting) in direct financial assistance. This support has helped over 90 households prevent evictions and utility shut-off's when they struggled to find work in the midst of stay-at-home orders and other restrictions.

Taller de José also partnered with local health clinics and other community organizations to help clients navigate the often complex system for vaccine appointment eligibility and registration. Staff made hundreds of calls to register eligible clients and provide information and support to those who had

questions or concerns. Taller de José Compañera Brenda Rodriguez shared how these one-on-one conversations were especially crucial to ensure more equitable access to the vaccines. "I had a client who was hesitant about getting the vaccine," she said, "but when I was able to share my own experience and why I decided to get vaccinated, I could see she was more at ease. I made sure she had all the information she needed to make an appointment with her local clinic."



Mission Advancement Coordinator Melissa Salinas showing her vaccination card - part of her education and outreach efforts.

Taller de José was also thrilled to host their first virtual Builder's Day fundraiser this spring, which was attended by over 200 supporters! In the midst of this challenging year, it was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate and honor the hard work of staff and the resiliency of the communities they serve. Anna Mayer, Executive Director of Taller, said, "It was

such a joy to celebrate with everyone, even virtually, because our work this year was only possible because of the support of so many donors and partners!"

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



Nazareth Academy



On April 22nd, sisters gathered outside with students and faculty from neighboring Nazareth Academy to observe Earth Day. The sun came out for the after school event that included a prayer service and the installation of 17 new trees on campus.

The Nazareth Academy Environmental Club worked together with the Congregation of St. Joseph and Sister Pat Bergen (small photo above, center), representatives from the Chicago Regional Tree Initiative, The Morton Arboretum, and student and faculty volunteers to plan the event.

“We are most grateful to the Chicago Regional Tree Initiative and The Morton Arboretum for partnering with us to make this wonderful event happen for the students and the campus,” said Sister Pat Bergen. “What a beautiful way to honor our Earth and God’s creation, and support our beloved Academy and students.”

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

The Well Spirituality Center

The past year of the pandemic brought unexpected gifts to The Well. Former participants who moved out of state were able to reconnect thanks to virtual programs and retreats, and new friends from around the globe have been taking part in and enriching an expansive community. Zoom programming has proven to have benefits as well, from allowing small breakout rooms where people can share, to making it easy for presenters to include powerpoint presentations, videos, and recorded or live music.

As warmer weather emerges and more and more people are vaccinated, The Well is also dipping its toes back into the waters of in-person programming with masked, outdoor nature outings. The first one took place at Wolf Road Prairie on May 10th, and was literally a breath of fresh air as participants were delighted to be together to learn about and appreciate the wonders of the Midwestern prairie.



The next in-person outdoor retreats will take place on June 15th at the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie in Wilmington, and on July 17th at the Salt Creek Nature Preserve.

“While all of our programming except outdoor experiences remains virtual at this point, we are very much looking forward to transitioning back to more in-person retreats and programs, and to welcoming people back into the center,” said Bridget Spurduto, The Well’s Executive Director. “We are not sure what the Fall will look like yet, but we imagine going forward into a hybrid model of both virtual and in-person programs. Be sure to check our website for updates as the year unfolds.”

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



1515 West Ogden Avenue
LaGrange Park, IL 60526

Spotlight Photo



Sisters in LaGrange Park welcomed Spring by planting flower pots. From left are Sisters Mary Schaefer and Julie Cannon, staff member Janet Owens, and Sisters Michele Elfering and Ann Terese Reznicek.

 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