

# Mission

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## Senior Coordinators explore gifts of aging

Mary Lou Lacey, ssj

About two months after they attended a workshop in Dallas, Pennsylvania, Sisters Mary M. Shea and Winifred Roulier, Retirement Coordinator for St. Joseph Residence, and GAFC Coordinator, respectively, were still bubbling with enthusiasm about what they had learned. The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Elder Religious and Diocesan Priests Workshop at Misericordia College affirmed their perspectives about their work, and offered extensions of their present practices.

Standing out among excellent presenters, Jane Marie Thibault, writer and gerontologist, was exceptional. "If there had been nothing else besides this speaker, the week would have been worth it," says Winnie. "She is able to look at getting older from a creative point of view, such as noting that human body chemistry is set for 120 years!" Winnie recalled. "We need to re-vision aging and see it as a gift of radical freedom, a time to grow in intimacy with God



**Golden Jubilarians** Sisters Mary Lou Brennan, Ann Lynch, Claudette Samson, Maryanne Guertin, Margaret McDevitt, Mary Marrin, Eileen Joseph Christopher, Mary K. Dutko, and Arlene Kalin, (Standing) Joan Hawkins, Peggy O'Neil, Kathleen Wallace, and Mary Corley (seated) celebrated at the Mont, September 18. Individual pictures are on the SSJ website, [ssjspringfield.org](http://ssjspringfield.org)

**Photo by Wendy Hammerle**

and neighbor, so we can leave a legacy of meaning."

Jan cited the example of Hezekiah in the Old Testament who, recovering from a severe illness, used his second chance to found a "Lyre Choir" in his old age.

Elders need a Christian point of view about aging, recognizing the part suffering plays in our lives. "Sisters really do this," Winnie stated. "They live out these principles as they share gifts, simplify their life style and appreciate the quieter aspects of nature."

"Jane Marie spoke about what she calls redemptive or dedicated suffering," Mary noted. "Jane has a model of a prayer experience in which from three to ten people gather together weekly. Each person mentions some experience of suffering, any type, small or large. Then the group chooses one person for whom they wish to dedicate their suffering," she said.

"A transformation occurs," continued Winnie, "and often 'complainers' look beyond themselves as they focus on the suffering of others. This is more than 'offer it up.' Energy is created. Some of it is sent forth to others, but some energy remains with the participants." There are parallels here with the vine and the branches, or with "string theory."

Other concerns addressed at the conference included falling, medications, Alzheimer's disease, and humor. Jesuit John Siberski, a geriatric psychologist, suggested that Alzheimer's patients are the closest we can get to God, as they have given everything to God, and each is a living Suscipe. Anne Bryan Smollin, CSJ Albany, author of three books on humor, suggests, "Live well; love much; laugh often."

Participants were invited to create a practical application of what they had learned during the week. Mary and Winnie chose to plan a 120<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party. Stay tuned.

# Letters -- Letters -- Letters -- Letters

Dear Sisters,

Many thanks for the gifts, cards, and especially the donations to the Community on the occasion of my anniversary.

Sr. Beverly Rochford

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

We, the Golden Jubilarians of 2006, would like to thank you, our Sisters, Associates, and friends for your prayers, support, good wishes and numerous donations. We are sure the donations made in our names will touch and enrich the lives of many. You have made visible to us the marvels God has wrought through our vocation. Being a member of this Community is indeed part of the hundredfold promised by our God. Your



*Golden Jublarian, Mary Corley, ssj, visits with her sister Associate Teresa Giardina and friends.*

## In Memoriam

**Please remember the following in prayer:**

- Sr. Helen Benard*
- Millicent Breen, sister of Sr. Julia Frances Killelea*
- Cecelia Provost, sister of Sr. Janet Provost*
- Daniel Franchini, nephew of Sr. Cathy Homrok*
- Frank Franchini, brother-in-law of Sr. Cathy Homrok,*
- Irene H. Durkee, sister of Sr. Mary Harvey*
- Mary Clancy, sister of Sisters Veronica and Gertrude Brown*
- Thomas Miller, brother-in-law of Sr. Maureen Martin*

presence and participation meant a great deal to us. This day will remain in our hearts for a very long time as we give thanks to God for all the blessings we received before, during and after the celebration. We were all on top of the mountain Sunday and together we can say, "It is good for us to be here." God's blessings on all of you.

- Gratefully,
- Mary Louise Brennan, ssj
- Eileen Joseph Christopher, ssj
- Mary Corley, ssj
- Mary K. Dutko, ssj
- Mary of Fatima Goonan, ssj
- Maryanne Guertin, ssj
- Joan Hawkins, ssj
- Arlene Kalin, ssj
- Ann Lynch, ssj
- Mary Marrin, ssj
- Margaret McDevitt, ssj
- Margaret O'Neil, ssj
- Claudette Samson, ssj
- Kathleen Wallace, ssj

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Dear Sisters and Associates,

Our sincere thanks to so many of you for your many expressions of sympathy, prayers, Masses, and donations to the Community in remembrance of our sister, Mary (Brown) Clancy.

Her death was sudden and her loss will be felt deeply.

Gratefully,

- Sr. Veronica Brown
- Sr. Gertrude Brown

Mission is published by the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield as a source of communication within the Congregation. Readers are encouraged to submit articles which should be typed and sent to Mont Marie, Holyoke, MA 01040. E-mail [acl@ssjspringfield.com](mailto:acl@ssjspringfield.com)

**Ann Lynch, SSJ, editor**

**Communications Committee:** Sisters Angela Deady, Mary E. Harvey, Mary Lou Lacey, Ann Lynch, Elizabeth Matuszek, Paula Misitano, Patricia James Sweeney and Jeanne O'Shea.

# Class becomes vehicle for broadening lives

Mary E. Harvey, ssj

Last February in a winter scant of snow, I read this excerpt from a student's entry in a Learning Log in a humanities class. The individual vs. society as seen in such concepts as alienation, dissent, oppression and freedom comprises the overarching theme of this literature, history, and philosophy course. Another student once suggested a subtitle for the course, "Diversity in Ideas, Peoples, and Cultures."

In her log the student wrote, "Class to me is becoming a place where I can express myself freely and not be criticized. There are so few places like that for me anymore. I try so hard not to be, but I am a statistic. I am a dropout, teenage mother, divorcee, and a single mother... But there is nothing typical about my situation. There are many people, men and women, in the same category. They all have similar stories, but the difference, the outcome, the ending, the finale."

Statistics are not abstractions nor are categorizing and labeling. Very concretely, they affect adversely persons who feel, think, struggle, hope, and seek for acceptance and for fulfillment. All want to belong and to be valued, intrinsic needs. However, those termed "different" may be set apart on the margins of society. Yet each and every person is unique. All of us are made in the image and the likeness of God. (Baltimore Catechism) Each is a repository of gifts. There is oneness in the design of God's creation. Unity is at the heart of Christ's mission and ours - that all may be one.

The student continued, "I only wish when I get my degree I will be a statistic of a better class. I know that in my first Learning Log I said I was undecided about my major. Now I have decided that I somehow want to help cancer patients, whether it be working with Make-a Wish or Hospice. What I really want to do is to be behind the scenes, like planning fundraisers or benefits and galas for raising money for finding cures. All I have to do is to talk with my advisor and to see what classes I have to take. However, I finally have a major,

and now I know toward what I am working."

Autumn and its bright foliage are here again, born from wintered and summered days. A new semester has begun. Students establish or further the quest of educational and professional goals. May their dreams come true bringing personal reward and benefit to others. I think especially of the one who wrote so poignantly that February.

In all seasons we journey with others, especially the poor and the marginalized. "We will join with others in prayer and in action to effect change in those ecclesial and civic systems that hinder the journey toward the day when all may be one." (From Chapter Commitments 2005-2111 - Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield)

## More Letters -- Letters

Dear Sisters and Associates,

My family and I wish to extend a sincere thank you for your prayerful support while my sister Ceal was hospitalized and for your continued prayers since her death.

The outpouring of compassionate sympathy and the presence of so many of you at her wake and funeral was so comforting to all of us.

Thank you, each and all, so much, for your loving presence, your support and your generous donations in memory of Ceal.

With our love and deep gratitude,  
Sr. Janet Provost and family

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Dear Sisters and Associates,

With much gratitude, I thank you for your kindnesses, support, prayers, expressions of sympathy, and enrollments in the loss of my sister Irene. I appreciate those of the Leadership Team and others who attended the wake and the funeral Mass with several driving distances to Rutland and in Vermont. Thanks also to those who were present in spirit and in prayer. Truly, "the flowers of kindness never fade."

Gratefully,  
Sister Mary E. Harvey

## Team Talk

# Federation Event participants to share

Mary Ferguson, ssj

“Seized By Love,” over 1,100 CSSJ’s, Associates, and friends, gathered in Milwaukee July 8-12 for the 2006 Federation Event. Highlighted by four days of speakers, table conversation, panels, small group intentional gatherings, reflection, peace dances, and socializing, the days challenged the participants to deepen their perspectives, broaden their horizons, and truly be our charism in our troubled world.

After sharing pictures of our neighborhoods, local to universal, on Saturday evening, the tone of Sunday was set by theologian Elizabeth Johnson csj. Her topic, “Frontiers of Our Quest for the God of Our Charism” explored four areas of major concern today: the plight of the poor, the struggle of women, interfaith relationships, and relationship with our earth, in light of our charism.

Beth urged us to move from heart to head to hands in practical action for the neighbor. “God is not neutral” in the struggle of the world’s poor for justice. God chose enslaved

people as God’s own, seeing, hearing, knowing their pain, and acting to deliver them. (maxim 49)

Women’s quest is one for full human dignity. When God is viewed as Sophia, evil cannot prevail. As mother, mid-wife, with maternal passion and zeal, the world can be birthed to a new life where all are welcome. (maxim 73)

In a time when religion is frequently used as a justification for all sorts of actions, inter-faith dialogue and appreciation is all the more vital. “God is greater than any one faith tradition can hold.” (maxim 7)

“Having God’s glory before you involves immersing self in the world.” The earth is a sacred place for life in an evolving universe. (maxims 44, 16)

Our spirituality is ever evolving as we reflect on the scripture and the signs of our times. The CSSJ tradition of “striving for the more” calls us to delve more deeply as we respond more intentionally to each of these challenges.

“Is your faith part of the solution or part of the problem?” asked Alfredo Sfeir-Younis CTKZ, president of the Zambuling Institute for Human Transformation, as he began Tuesday’s challenging talk, “Living in a Global Neighborhood Without Global Being: Human Transformation Through Love and Compassion,” Alfredo proposes that it is impossible to create a global society without each of us first becoming a global person. This will require us to rethink our priorities, and to chose a critical path designed to bring about this global society.

Using the model of Joseph, Alfredo sees God’s choice of a carpenter as no accident, for a carpenter must see the entire picture, the finished product, and yet must be able to know the detailed characteristics of its parts. “It is the profession where UNION is the essence of the work that is to be done.” If we are to forge a global society, we must begin with



*Seated before the banners depicting the various CSSJ congregations are Sisters Vivian Pyne, Kathleen Imbruno, Jane Morrissey, Mary Behan, Natalie Cain and Margaret Walsh. Standing are Sisters Ann Lynch, Paula Kelleher, Mary Ferguson, Sheila Murphy, Associate Anne Sousa-Martens, Roberta Mulcahy and Mary T. Shea.*

## presentations

the parts, the first transformation being of ourselves.

This will require a major shift in values and beliefs, especially away from using economics as the basis of decision making. We must learn to think as a collective, and recognize this collective as having an identity of its own, greater than the sum of its parts. We cannot accomplish such a transformation on our own, but must realize that our transformation is totally interdependent on the transformation of others.

Why is this so difficult? Alfredo suggests two reasons: our inability to self-realize the values of the collective and the increased level of our inner and outer toxicity. The two most basic values of the collective are love and compassion, but we must take them beyond human values to States of Being, we must BE love and compassion (as we are called to BE the “community of the great love of God”).

Our culture of violence, insecurity, media saturation, etc. has made us indifferent, we feel nothing. We must find ways to diminish the toxicity and self-realize love and compassion, if we are to become global beings. “Compassion is the ability to become the other without losing our own identity. ...It is impossible to be compassionate in the abstract.”

To place the good of all above the good of self arises from the divine within us. Alfredo sees this emergence of the global person for the global world as “the divine plan, our collective mission at this particular juncture of history. ...We need to read the Bible with a pair of clean eyes and, certainly, with a very clean heart.” This will require the emerging of a new energy field, dominated by feminine energy, bringing a new wisdom, emphasizing the universal nature of our existence. Alfredo’s words remind us once again that our charism is not ours alone, it grows in the hearts of many, but “we are to be the new carpenters” in its evolution.

As Veronica O’Reilly, Executive Director of the Canadian Federation, summarized in her



*At the public witness are Sisters Catherine Leary, Mary T. Shea, Roberta Mulcahy, and Jane Morrissey, (front row); Kathleen Imbruno, Mary Kate Birge, Paula Kelleher and Ann Lynch, (second row); Natalie Cain, Mary Quinn, Annette McDermott, Margaret Walsh and Sheila Murphy, back row).*

talk, “The State of Our Federation Heart and House as We Go Forth.” these days challenged us with “the fresh recognition that our destiny is the expansion of our souls ... that human co-creativity takes a responsible part in the ongoing act of creation.” Today’s challenges call for a “deep eucharistic spirituality...where we stand together in humility before the mystery of life’s journey, where we lean upon one another, accept the solidarity of human weakness and woundedness ... where we respect the value and dignity of each other, and where, by its very nature, ... we experience ‘structured dissent from the culture of narcissism.’”

Citing Timothy Radcliffe, Veronica concludes, “perhaps our most profound challenge is to purify how we speak of strangers, so that our language may be stretched open, and draw close to the wide-open spacious hospitality of the word of God. Then people will be able to catch a hint of the mystery of God whose center is nowhere, whose circumference is everywhere, and for whom no one is on the edge.” Again, we make the stranger the neighbor, without distinction.

It is hoped that with the coming of these presentations on DVD, we will gather together for more discussion and sharing on the many aspects of Event 2006, as well as our own carpentry work towards fulfilling our charism in these exceptional times.

# Elder Religious shares happy, fulfilling life:

Paula Misitano, ssj

When Anna Elizabeth Tyrrell graduated from St. Louis High School in Webster, her desire was to enter religious life, the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Springfield. However, her father, Richard, requested she wait, thinking this action might be a passing fancy and Anna might not persevere.

After two years of waiting, Anna received her parents' blessing and in 1926, just under 20 years of age, Anna Elizabeth Tyrrell, later known as Sr. Mary Richard, embarked on her spiritual journey as a postulant in the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Springfield.

How Richard and Mary Tyrrell must be smiling today as the oldest of their 15 children not only celebrates 80 years of Joyous Service but draws near to the venerable age of 100 years. Perseverance, indeed!

In attempting to get Sr. Mary Richard to talk about herself and these two wonderful milestones, her responses were always framed by her love of family and love of the SSJ community. She readily smiles when talking about her very happy childhood. "We girls all had dolls and carriages; all the children had bicycles and skates and we spent hours skating on the Duck Pond in Dudley. Swimming and boating were activities at the famous Webster lake, Lake Chargoggagoggmanchaug-gaggchaubunagungamaugg." (This Sister said without missing a syllable.)

Music played an important role in her early years. Piano lessons and dancing lessons provided much joy in the Tyrrell household. "My sister, Bernice, was a comedian," Sister Mary Richard related, "and would constantly have us laughing while we were supposed to be doing homework.

"My Aunt Kate was a great dancer and

taught me the waltz and fox trot. I later learned the polka." Although Sister is heading toward 100, her memory is alert and keen. She recalls days when there "were no autos, just horse-drawn carriages; when we went to the store and everything came home in a wagon; when my mother did the wash on a washboard as there were no machines." She recalled her six brothers who served in World War II, and shared a 1944 newspaper clipping that told of her youngest brother's graduation from St. Louis High School in Webster.



With tremendous pride, she read from the paper... "with his graduation, it will mark the first time in 31 years that a son or daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Tyrrell has not been a student at St. Louis School, either in the elementary or high school." Her family memories are sacred and her passion has led her to compile a magnificent family tree, beginning in 1807 in Meath,

Ireland, to the present day. (I was privileged to view this project, a true masterpiece and a product of love and great pride.) She has already entrusted two nephews, Bernard and Kevin, with continuing the tree when she is no longer able to do so.

With the passage of time, Sr. Mary Richard today finds herself the last of her 14 siblings. Her sister in community, Sr. Mary Bernice, died in 2004. However, with a sharp mind and engrained memories, Sr. Mary Richard knows they are not forgotten.

This passion and love of family extended itself to her religious family when she entered religious life in 1926. She taught in grammar and high schools in the Springfield and Worcester dioceses. Her school career led to duties as a Principal in Springfield and Holyoke. "I liked all the grades levels I taught. I love all the Sisters and I love community life. I never had a 'crying spell'. I worked hard all the time and always found something to do." Interspersed with her school ministry were Religious Education classes and choir direc-

## 'Keep working, find something to do'

tion.

It would seem that Sr. Mary Richard did not need to look for something to do as she was always looking for ways to help others. This philosophy continued when school ministry ended for her. Without any hesitation, she transferred her skills, doing clerical work in the Diocesan Schools Office and in 1989 she graciously used her domestic talents at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady of Hope Rectories.

Today, Sr. Mary Richard still has a passion for family and community. Her eyes twinkle and her smile broadens when she recalls her large family. Her memories of ministry are vivid and she takes pride in keeping in touch with former students through mail and by visits from some of them to her Mooreland Street home.

Her computer accomplishments have

been well noted. She finds comfort in daily spiritual reading and prayer. Bishop Leo O'Neil's book of poems, *The Living Fire*, is a favorite. She likes doing jigsaw puzzles and has a fine collection. In good health, she laments the fact that she must take *one* prescription pill for pressure, and boasts that she never takes aspirin. Her days find her vacuuming, dusting, washing the kitchen floor, and preparing a few meals. Her advice: "Keep on working; find something to do!"

Sister Mary Richard is celebrating eighty years in religious life and on October 22<sup>nd</sup> will attain 100 years of age. Her manner radiates serenity, joy and love of God. She finds delight in family memories and loves her Sisters in community.

And without question, Mary and Richard Tyrrell will be celebrating with their eldest child who certainly exhibits the "Grace of Perseverance."

## Vermont Sisters, Associates gather for picnic



**Sister Kay Fleming** readies some of the picnic items, (right)

**Picnic-goers Ann Perry and Ada Pezzetti** were among the first Vermont Associates. (left)



Several Vermont Sisters and Associates gathered for a picnic lunch and a brief meeting at Fontbonne Hall in Rutland on September 23. Sister Kathleen Fleming and Ada Pezzetti coordinated the planning of the event.

On October 21 there will be a "Sharing of the Word" with meditation on Scripture.

**Story and photos by Mary E. Harvey, ssj**



**Sister Gertrude Conway and Therese Harrington** visit.

## Yearly meeting outlines progress, projections

**Angela Deady, ssj**

The annual Business Meeting of the Congregation took place on Saturday, September 16, 2006 at Mont Marie. As we have all come to expect, the business meeting was well planned and well attended.

After opening the day with prayer, the morning session was given over to a discussion of our financial gains and losses during the 2006 fiscal year. Clare Lorenzatti, the Chief Financial Officer of the Community, distributed a detailed 2006 financial report and led those gathered through a comprehensive and clear explanation of the many aspects of our financial picture. The good news for the “state of our house” is that this past fiscal year found the Community with a surplus of funds. That surplus was due to capital gains and investment income.

When the discussion of the 2006 financial report concluded, Clare went on to explain the projected budget for fiscal 2007. She also discussed how low income tax credits would affect the cost of “Phase Two” of the development plan for Mont Marie. “Phase Two” involves the construction of a building that would be the assisted living segment of the plan.

The morning concluded with Sr. Mary

Quinn, President of the Community, addressing the issue of subsidized housing and fuel assistance. Ann MacGregor, Controller, explained a slight adjustment in healthcare insurance for some members of the Community and Sr. Roberta Mulcahy distributed information about a “Department of Peace” bill that will, hopefully, receive support.

And then it was time for lunch and socializing!

The work of the day resumed at 1p.m. with reports about the Health Care Center, the Child Care Center, and the Senior Residence.

Sr. Betsy Sullivan, Administrator of the Health Care Center, spoke of the spirit and mission of the Center. At present, the Center is at 99.2 percent occupancy. The residents include 29 Sisters of St. Joseph, two diocesan priests and one religious from another community. Health care licensing and certifications are up to date and all reviews continue to be outstanding.

Sr. Eleanor Harrington, Director of Mont Marie Child Care Center, assured those gathered that the Child Care Center continues to flourish and to adjust to the needs of the surrounding communities. A third toddler room is now open and at present, 119 children are enrolled at Mont Marie.

Sr. Patty Murphy, Vice-President of the Community, spoke of the work necessary to maintain the exterior of the buildings while Sr. Denise Granger of the Leadership Team, was happy to announce that funding was in order to begin “Phase One” of the development plan. Phase One is the renovation of the conference center into a senior residence. That renovation is slated to begin soon and at no cost to the Community. However, in the interim, improvements continue to be made to St. Joseph’s Residence to ensure that our retired Sisters are as safe and comfortable as possible.

Sr. Mary Quinn ended the day by offering each of us a challenge, a task to keep in mind during the coming year. That challenge: to be able to name a way during the year that we have cared for ourselves, cared for others and cared for our earth.



**As part of the International Day of Prayer,** Mont employees Heather Deane, Jill Keough, Lorraine Golio, Associate Susan Lavoie, and Justice and Peace Coordinator, Roberta Mulcahy, ssj sign letters to ask for a Governmental Department of Peace.

**Photo by Wendy Hammerle**

# ICCR celebrates 35 years of faith, action

**Roberta Mulcahy, ssj**

The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility is celebrating over three decades of work by faith based and socially responsible investors. We congratulate the founders of this advocacy for justice group and we are proud to be affiliating members of this organization.

The original founders of ICCR came together in opposition to apartheid. They shared their vision, information, strategy and lessons on corporate activism and began actively using the influence of their investments together to press for change.

As the organization grew, the issues relating to corporate responsibility also grew. Today, ICCR is an international coalition of 275 Protestant, Catholic and Jewish institu-

## **Have you thought about ICE numbers?**

**Anne Carroll,ssj, sent the following:**  
The "ICE" Idea

A recent article from the *Toronto Star*, "the ICE idea," is catching on and it is a very simple, yet important method of contact for you or a loved one in case of an emergency. As cell phones are carried by the majority of the population, all you need to do is program the number of a contact person or persons and store the name as "ICE".

The idea was thought up by a paramedic who found that when they went to the scenes of accidents, there were always mobile phones with patients, but they didn't know which numbers to call. He therefore thought that it would be a good idea if there was a nationally recognized name to file "next of kin" under.

Following a disaster in London The East Anglican Ambulance Service has launched a national "In case of Emergency (ICE)" campaign. The idea is that you store the word "ICE" in your mobile phone address book, and with it enter the number of the person you would want to be contacted "In Case of Emergency."

In an emergency situation, Emergency Services personnel and hospital staff would

tional investors, including denominations, orders, pensions funds, healthcare corporations, colleges and asset management companies, with combined portfolios worth more than \$110 billion.

In the 2005-2006-proxy season, ICCR members filed 268 resolutions at 173 companies and held 200 dialogues with various corporations. Our SSJ involvement with this process resulted in dialogues with two corporations and resolutions filed with two others. The dialogues and resolutions will continue with the four corporations since both received favorable results.

We are grateful to ICCR for their inspiration and assistance, as we make socially responsible choices regarding our investments.

then be able to quickly contact your next of kin, by simply dialing the number programmed under "ICE." Please forward this. It won't take too many "forwards" before everybody will know about this. It really could save your life, or put a loved one's mind at rest. For more than one contact name simply enter **ICE1, ICE2, ICE3** etc. A great idea that will make a difference.



**During the summer** Sisters Maureen Charest, Ann Lynch, Cathy Coyne, Roberta Mulcahy and Connie Daub traveled to St. Catherine College in St. Paul to attend the eleventh Sisters of Earth Conference. While there they attended workshops and networked with women throughout the country.

# Educator explains accreditation process,

**Sr. Patricia James Sweeney**

As October arrives, school faculties begin to relax a bit realizing that the year seems to have gotten off to a good start. Classes are settling in and the weather is cooperating nicely. Then, at the next Faculty Meeting the new teachers are surprised to hear the groans from the "veterans" when the Principal begins, "You know we have to begin our preparation for next Spring's accreditation." For those not familiar with the term, the Principal mentions the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and the Commission on Independent Schools.

To be an accredited school means that the Association has determined that its established sixteen standards have been met. How this is determined is the challenge or as Shakespeare would say, "... ay, there's the rub." To reach the goal, the sixteenth: The Accreditation Process expects that the school has completed an inclusive selfstudy, following association guidelines; has responded to Commission recommendations and met all standards; has participated fully in the peer review process, hosted a visiting committee and has sent personnel to serve on such committees in other educational institutions. Actually, if one has never been through the process, it may not seem at all intimidating. In fact, to eager new educators, the Association's primary function of accreditation, school improvement, makes perfect sense. (Already, after four weeks in class, they may have seen many ways to improve the system.) This is a good attitude as the process begins.

However, those who have lived through one, two, three or more such experiences may be a bit less enthusiastic. Still, it is a credit to them and their administrators that in the Diocese of Springfield every High School and all but four Elementary Schools (and one of them is a candidate this year) are accredited and many of them reaccredited several times. The remote preparation can take eighteen to twenty four months while the actual visitation only Sunday to Wednesday. Usually, the administrator will appoint someone to chair the overall process, then committees will be formed among the faculty according to

courses offered and the personal interests of each teacher. The bulk of time in Department meetings will be devoted to examining the curriculum being taught while possibly rewriting it as teachers test its strengths and/or weaknesses.

Since they need to complete all the information demanded for the booklet to be presented to the Visitors, the amount of time tallying responses to surveys adds to the already overcrowded school days. The numerous meetings scheduled with parents and students for their input, although time-consuming, are nevertheless invaluable to give a complete picture of the school. Preparing for the accreditation visit gives the teachers, counselors, administrators, maintenance, office personnel, librarians and coaches an opportunity to voice any concerns they may have, as well as an avenue to bring about constructive change. That is, after all, what every person connected with a school desires. It is all about what will best assist our students to get the most out of their school experience while utilizing the talents of every member of the school community each of whom should be able to enjoy his/her daily environment.

Once the individual committees have finished their assignments and the material has been transcribed and sent to the Association, the tension lessens and life goes on. In fact, each one feels a real sense of self-worth as they have received praise from their colleagues about their programs and have grown in their appreciation of others' accomplishments. The parents and students have also voiced their gratitude and genuine love and pride in the school and the faculty which is something that is not often manifested during the regular school year.

Now that everyone (with the possible exception of the administrator) has been affirmed and calmed down, the Visiting Committee arrives. This group may number from five to 12 school personnel, depending upon the size of the school. Among them are men, women, lay and Religious whose schools belong to the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Ordinarily, they arrive

## advantages, as school year opens

on Sunday and they attend a welcoming dinner with the faculty and administration. They, too, have a Chairperson who is responsible for their final report. On Monday and Tuesday they make sure that the cafeteria, library, gymnasium, and cellar are checked; each classroom is visited; all personnel are interviewed; students are stopped in the halls and questioned; parents, trustees, members of the School Board come in at the close of the day to meet with them. It is an exhaustive and tiring schedule. Between activities they spend time in the room assigned to them for an office, checking their observations against the materials prepared and sent to them earlier from the school itself.

On Wednesday they usually finish up any visiting that was missed and work on their commendations and recommendations for improvements. At this time they must vote on each of the sixteen standards and decide whether the school should be accredited for the next ten years. They may also assign a time line for bringing some standards in line with the Association's regulations. Before leaving the school, ordinarily the Chair of their committee will speak briefly to teachers and students over the intercom. They are sure to mention how pleasant their visit was and comment in general terms about the things that impressed them. Following this, the Chair walks the administration through the list of recommendations and /or problems the Committee has unearthed. The official decision will come to the administrator many weeks later, but passing or failing the process

is certainly known by the time the Chairperson exits from the building.

For those school personnel who have yet to undergo this process, understand that this is a valuable exercise. Teachers work together and become a more cohesive unit. Students take even greater pride in their school. Everyone in the school community hears about the truly wonderful things that are going on in different areas and appreciates being an important part of the whole. The recommendations are implemented and parents are delighted to have their child or children attending this particular institution. In all, it is a win-win situation. Financially, it is a drain on the system since the school visited must foot the bill for housing and meals for the duration of the visit. However, it is money well spent to have the Community at large learn from objective evaluators just how superior the education being given to these children.

So, if you are beginning the process, be confident, realizing how many prayers you can expect from every SSJ who has been through it - as teacher, administrator or member of a Visiting Committee.

Grateful thanks are due to the following people who contributed so quickly, efficiently and generously to this article : Sr. Andrea Ciszewski, Superintendent of Schools; Dr. Bonnie Moriarty, Sisters Grace Belforti, Margaret Crowley, Rita Rafferty, Lillian Reilly, Christine Swords, Diane Tetreault and Kathleen Wallace.



*Bishop Timothy McDonnell and Rev. Richard Sneizyk congratulate Sr. Margaret McNaughton.*  
**Photos by Mary Ferguson, ssj**

Friends gathered at St. Michael Cathedral, as Sister Margaret McNaughton was among those honored for service to their parish, with the Bishops Circle of Steward Award, September 27.



## Coordinator reports about Mont landscaping

Cathy Coyne, ssj

### Ground-cover

For a week in August the hillside adjacent to the large parking lot was brush cut, rototilled and spread with crown vetch seed. The change in the landscape was made due to the increased hazard of mowing this steep hill. The ground-cover of crown vetch will bring to an end the need for mowing.

We hired David and Mary Hoysic, who designed and built our Peace Garden Courtyard, to undertake this monumental job. Within a weeks time we were watering the hillside and waiting for it to grow. The Hoysics came back a month later to check on its development. They reported, "The vetch is up just where we thought it would be." By springtime we should see a green hillside and the following spring the green vetch will sprout pretty light pink flowers.

### Trees

The next landscape phase will be to prune all the trees on the mowed area of land as well as the cemetery hedges. We again have engaged Mary and David to carry out this plan because of their excellent landscape knowledge and because of their holistic viewpoint about caring for trees.

As we all know good pruning brings substantial rewards in the form of bigger, higher and well-shaped trees and hedges. Careful formative pruning of a young tree will contribute to its ultimate size and shape and

will often help to avoid the need for more drastic surgery later. David explained this as he carefully pruned back the two Paperbark Maples at our front entrance.

David and Mary will return in November to begin this pruning process and finish the trees and hedges next fall. Once completed the trees won't need pruning again for another three to five years.

### General Concern

My concern about the trees grew over the summer as I watched the leaves turning brown on some varieties and others losing their leaves in August. A quick call to David and Mary confirmed this was happening to trees all over the Northeast.

During the spring of 2002, many red maple trees were diagnosed with the fungal disease Anthracnose. Symptoms include brown or black spots on leaves and premature leaf droppage. These fungi spores are produced in the spring during cool, damp weather.

This past spring was unusually cool and damp. I called Dan Gillman at the UMass Extension Landscape Program and he explained about the maple fungus and the pear and crabapple fire blight. Both diseases are caused by the last three years wet springs.

He suggested cleaning up and disposing of fallen leaves to manage the diseases. He also said a professional pruning would help greatly with all the trees. This helpful information alleviated my concern. At present, we are busy cleaning up leaves, brushing off the spores and soon will be pruning our beautiful trees.

## Who wants to stand up for justice?

Roberta Mulcahy, ssj

Carol Zinn csj, one of our Federation Representatives at the UN, has sent us news about how we can join a global action concerned with eradicating Poverty. The UN Millennium Development Goal Campaign planned this activity ([www.millenniumcampaign.org](http://www.millenniumcampaign.org)) and it is in conjunction with October 16, World Food Day and October 17, which is International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

On the weekend of our CSSJ Founder's Day (October 15-16) people from all over the world will literally, STAND UP Against Poverty to strive to make it into the Guinness Book of world Records for the most people ever to

STAND UP Against Poverty. This activity further educates about the first of the eight Millennium Development Goals: "to halve extreme poverty and hunger by 2015."

The guidelines and requirements for this action are detailed on the website above. The Justice and Peace Office will be happy to coordinate the final count and send in the results of our SSJ/Associate involvement in this campaign.

Please let the J&P Office know if you would be willing to plan, count and complete the form for this event. Every "group," no matter how small or large, is important to this action for justice.