Sisters of Saint Francis
1001 14th Street Northwest | Rochester, Minnesota | 55901
507-282-7441 | www.rochesterfranciscan.org

interchange

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Celebrations!

Summer has always been a time for celebrations, such as graduations, weddings, family reunions, and the 4th of July. The Rochester Franciscans wish to share some of their recent celebrations: a century of life, the gift of Cojourning, and for the Sisters residing at Assisi Heights, gathering together again for meals.

Sharing happy news is always a blessing. Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Kathy Gatliff, Editor
Director, Communications and PR

Celebrating 100 Years!

by Sister Bernadette Novack

Sister Lauren Weinandt entered the Sisters of Saint Francis, Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes, professing vows in 1956. Not only has she spent 65 years as a professed Rochester Franciscan Sister, but she was also, and still is, a loyal, happy, conscientious employee serving at Saint Marys Hospital (now known as Mayo Clinic Hospital Saint Marys Campus).

You've probably heard the saying" All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." Well, that is not the case for Sister Lauren! She is not dull. In fact, Sister Lauren has participated in many events over the years which have kept her bright and shining. The following are a few examples.

In years prior, Sister Lauren was a HAM Radio Operator, and she reached out to people with disabilities. Sister helped them to become HAM Radio Operators and encouraged them to broaden their experiences. They were not held back from exploring the world due to their physical limitations. During the early 1960s, Sister Lauren helped our Congregation make radio contact with our Sisters in Bogota, Peru, and Guatemala. She made HAM radio contacts all over the world.

Did you know that Sister Lauren was an avid Stamp Collector? She exhibited many of her stamp collections in the Twin Cities and Chicago. She received many trophies, including coming in 3rd place at a national show in Chicago.

When the "Sisters Crossing Gift Shop" first opened, some of the Sisters, and a few retired employees, worked the evening shift from 5:00-8:00 PM. Sister Lauren was one of the two volunteers that worked the Monday evening gift shop hours. After closing the shop, they had to stay and count the money from the day's sales. At one point, she also caught a shoplifter in the act of stealing! That did not dissuade Sister Lauren. In fact, she not only sold items, but she made items to sell! She sewed "Crayon Aprons" for children and door stops featuring turkeys and the Minnesota State Bird, the Loon.

Sister Lauren's many sales began when she conducted rummage sales at Saint John's Catholic Church and sent the proceeds to our Sisters in South America. As Saint Marys Hospital was expanding, Sister Lauren's fundraising sales became funds for the hospital. They started out as bazaars, then festivals, and finally furniture sales. The total income from the various "Sister Sales" have raised over a million dollars, donated to the Poverello Fund! This fund aids hospital patients who apply for financial assistance.

Sister Lauren's enthusiasm convinced some members of the Saint Marys Convent household to join her in baking cookies, bread, and candies. For the last festival, Sister Lauren and I each took a week of vacation to make and bake 140 fresh apple pies. Sister Generose and Sister Lucas always made the pickles, jams, and jellies. Other Sisters made gift items. Some of our family members also donated items for the sales. We had fun preparing and making items and we also enjoyed helping on the days of the sale.

When the Administration Office hosted a special party, Sister Lauren would write a poem for the occasion. Sister's "Ode to the Helicopter" is framed and hangs, not only on her office wall but also in each of the Mayo Clinic Helicopter pad locations.

With the above representing just a few of her experiences and contributions this past century, not to mention her rich prayer life, Sister Lauren is a shining example of what it means to serve others. As she celebrates 100 years of life, I want all to know that it has been my privilege to know and live in community with Sister Lauren.

Sister Lauren entering the Congregation…

As a Ham Radio Operator (standing, on the right)…

With the Saint Marys Convent Sisters Christmas, 2019 (seated, center front)

A Cojourner's Story

by Jean Rynda, Cojourner

Before I became a Cojourner with the Sisters of St. Francis, my main questions were: what is Cojourning, and would I fit in? I'm glad I looked into it further and started the journey.

I found out that Cojourners are lay associates – they are women and men with different backgrounds and interests, but shared values. I was attracted by the welcoming, positive community of Sisters and Cojourners, and the opportunity for spiritual growth and mission.

Years ago, I saw an ad for the Sisters of St. Francis in a local magazine; I loved it and I cut it out (still have it). It has a photo of two Sisters in full habit, helping a mother duck and her ducklings cross a busy street in Rochester. Under the photo, the caption reads: "The Original Animal Rights Activists," and at the bottom it says, "Get to know the Sisters of St. Francis."

St. Francis has been my favorite saint since I was a child. He epitomized kindness to animals and reverence for life. He helped the sick and downtrodden and also encouraged his followers to be joyful in everyday life. Very inspiring!

When my dog Maisie and I started volunteering at Assisi Heights 5 years ago, I read about Cojourning on their website. I felt like I was returning to the inspiration of St. Francis. My Cojourner Covenant was in 2019 and the journey continues. It's been a great experience to be associated with the Sisters of St. Francis in Rochester, and I enjoy getting involved in activities that reflect the mission: to be a compassionate presence for peace, striving for justice and reverence for all creation.

Being Together Again

Sisters residing at Assisi Heights ***CELEBRATE*** the return to some of their normal 'pre-COVID' routines, including eating and mingling with each other. Sisters from all corridors are now able to gather together in the large dining room for the *first time* since the Spring of 2020! You can see the joy in their faces, and the gratitude as expressed in their comments below.

Sisters Claudia Laliberte, Joan Lewison, Marguerite Gaasch, and, Marita Johnson

Sisters Ruth Snyder, Bernadine Jax, Neal Logan, and, Rosemary Cordell

Sisters Clara Marie Schotzko, Alice Thraen, Pat Keefe, and Joan Hrabe.

Sisters Mary Goergen, Pat Himmer, Louise Romero, and Elizabeth Gillis

Sisters Rosemary Zemler, Elaine Frank, Lois Knipp, and Jutta Gleichauf

Sister Louise Romero:
"One of God's gifts is to be able to be together in the dining room [again]!"

Sister Elaine Frank:
"It was great to be back together in the dining room following over a year of having meal trays sent to the corridor where we reside. The first few days one could tell everyone was so excited because of the high noise level. In addition, it was great to see our employees who had worked "behind the scenes" for so long."

Sister Patricia Keefe:
"One plus during the lockdown by corridors was getting to share in-depth with a small group. Returning to the dining room has opened connections with more Sisters who have new stories to share!"

Sister Ruth Peterson:
"It was almost euphoric to be able to mix with others you haven't seen for months. The noise factor in the dining room was very high on our first day back together!"

Sister Joan Lewison:
It's great to eat together with a 'new' group of Sisters in the Community!

Sister Claudia Laliberte:
"After eating with the same Sisters living at Saint Marys for the past 15 years, [and then limited to our Corridors at Assisi Heights], it is a real joy to be with so many different Sisters to share a meal and to get to know them."

Sister Elizabeth Gillis:
"Every meal is special. It is great to see the "smiles" in the eyes and spirits of the wonderful staff. I love the options of having a picnic in the courtyard or eating in the dining room with different Sisters at each meal."

Sister Jutta Gleichauf:
"Eating in the dining room is, once again, a “come back to normal” situation. It is wonderful!"

Sister Mary Goergen:
"I enjoy seeing and eating with Sisters who live on other corridors. It is good to go through the line and make choices on foods and proportions again. And it is great to see the staff!"

Sister Rosemary Zemler:
"It was a somewhat strange feeling seeing all of our faces again and being able to be with everyone. There is a feeling of joy to not have the trays, but being able to make choices again. We give thanks to all who provided for us during the pandemic."

Sister Marguerite Gaasch:
"Absence makes the heart grow fonder. This old phrase describes our longing for meals in the dining room when we could not do so. Now, at last, here we are! So grateful! Praise God!"

Sister Ruth Snyder:
"I think we are all very grateful for the dedicated work of the kitchen staff in preparing and delivering trays to our corridors all of these months, but we are so happy to return to the dining room and be with Sisters from other floors to share a meal. It is also a blessing to be able to choose the kind and amount of food we prefer.

"To share our thanks, a group of Sisters went down to the kitchen at 3:30 pm on the afternoon of July 11th to thank the dietary staff for their ‘tray service’. We sang two parodies that I composed in a hurry. They were accompanied by “percussion instruments” supplied by 4th Clare. I think the kitchen staff was pleased!"

The Sisters 'paraded and serenaded' in the kitchen at Assisi Heights!

Surprised staff!

Maracas and few percussion instruments were used as an accompaniment!

Here are the two songs the Sisters sang:

To the tune of "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain" --
Verse 1:
They brought us our trays ea-ch day,
Oh, they brought us our trays ea-ch day.
Oh, they brought us our trays,
They brought us our trays, ea-ch day.

Verse 2: *They served us cheerfully, yes they did!*
Verse 3: *And we are so-o thankful, yes we are!*

To the tune of "You Are My Sunshine" --
Verse 1:
You are our sunshine, our only sunshine,
You made us happy when you came
You'll never know, dears, how deep our thanks are,
But please don't bring those trays again.

Verse 2:
You are our sunshine, our only sunshine,
When we were hungry, you brought our trays
You never missed, dears, a single day,
But we are glad to see the end!