



Blessings

SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4

Transforming the World Through Education

FALL 2009

Foundations

By S. Kay O'Connell

October 24 is a very significant late fall date for us and for many others. We SSNDs celebrate the foundation of our Congregation on this date. In 2009, we're counting 176 years since Theresa Gerhardinger and two companions began religious life and opened a small school in the Bavarian town of Neunberg-vorm-Wald. The year was 1833.

In our anniversary celebrations each year, we're always keenly aware that, on October 24, 1945, the United Nations was born when 51 nations signed its Charter as founding members. Fragile beginnings both, but full of hope that the world would/could become a better place.

New Beginnings

The first beginning, Theresa's initiative, took place as Europe was trying to emerge from the Napoleonic Wars; she herself had seen war as a child when she watched, from across the Danube, the destruction of Regensburg. The second initiative, the UN, was born amid the utter devastation of World War II.

Theresa was an obscure young woman who was a fine teacher with the huge dream that society could be improved by educating women and girls in the Christian way of life. Many of the visionaries of the UN were famous leaders, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Winston Churchill among them, and later Eleanor Roosevelt; they planned a new world organization that would be able to unite nations and prevent further conflicts.

Blessed Theresa's fragile first foundation has spread and taken root in 32 countries where School Sisters have established missions that "help others to reach the fullness of their potential." In spite of internal and external

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Sisters Academy of Baltimore

A Co-Sponsored Ministry



S. Delia Dowling congratulates Kierra McCollum from Sisters Academy first graduating class in 2008.

By S. Carole Shinnick

Anthropologist Margaret Mead could have been thinking about the creation of Sisters Academy when she said: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." For it was a small group of thoughtful, committed sisters and lay people in 1999, confronted with the blighted neighborhoods of southwest Baltimore, who knew that education would transform the lives of the young girls living there.

Feasibility Study

An intensive feasibility study designed and directed by School Sister of Notre Dame Delia Dowling and conducted by Sister of Notre Dame de Namur Suzanne Hall validated the area's desperate need for education. Seeing the study's results, four religious communities committed to creating an exceptional, tuition-free

school for the young women. Each of the founding communities – the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of Bon Secours, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the School Sisters of Notre Dame – has deep roots in southwest Baltimore and brings unique gifts with strong traditions to the project.

"This is work that needs to be done."

Today, just five years after opening in 2004 as a middle school for girls, Sisters Academy has educated over one hundred youngsters and has sent its two graduating classes on to some of the best high schools in the city. The school defines itself succinctly and accurately – a learning community dedicated to excellence and leadership.

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S. Francisann Rapa

May 17, 1931 – September 04, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Joan Marie Casey

February 20, 1928 – August 22, 2009
Wilton, CT

S. Mary Margaret O'Leary

January 10, 1909 – August 1, 2009
Wilton, CT

S. Marie Therese Alaimo

August 9, 1928 – July 24, 2009
Wilton, CT

S. Mary Adele Luber

March 29, 1919 – June 29, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Helen Fish

May 13, 1933 – June 19, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Melmarie Gentry

June 8, 1924 – June 10, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Maryalma Reissner

May 15, 1915 – June 2, 2009
Wilton, CT

S. Mary Agnes Klug

March 23, 1909 – May 28, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Mary Joseph Staab

October 30, 1919 – April 28, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Janet Fitzgerald

October 26, 1915 – April 19, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Maria Goretti Palmisano

November 6, 1929 - March 13, 2009
Baltimore, MD

S. Marie Paulissa Mellenthin

March 29, 1924 – March 2, 2009
Chicago, IL

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Advancement, Carole Shinnick, Director of
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A Message from Sister Kathleen Cornell, SSND, Provincial Leader

Dear Friends,
I hope that you
enjoy reading this
issue of Blessings.

For School Sisters of

Notre Dame around the world, Foundation
Day, October 24, reminds us of our
beginnings as a congregation in 1833 when
Caroline Gerhardinger (who later took the
name of Mary Theresa of Jesus) believed
that society could be transformed through
education, particularly of young women.

Now, 176 years later, Mother Theresa's
dream continues to unfold, reflecting the
changing needs of society and the endless
creativity of God's Spirit. The article about
the group of young women from the

Academy
of the Holy
Angels and the College
of Notre
Dame of
Maryland
who
traveled
to New
Orleans
with sisters
and staff
illustrates
a way of
educating
that

focuses on
collaborative
relationships and the gift of learning from
those closest to the need. To help deepen
the learning, there is time for reflection and
prayer. The article about Sisters' Academy,
a co-sponsored educational ministry for
middle school girls in southwest Baltimore,
also demonstrates an innovative and
visionary approach to educating young
women to be leaders for the 21st Century.

So much of what School Sisters are able
to do in these ministries and others can
only proceed because of you, our treasured
donors and partners. Where we are, you are
there as well. Thank you for your faithful
and ongoing support.

I would like to introduce to you our
new Director of Mission Advancement,
Leslie Lopez. Leslie comes to us with



**S. Shannon Scallon, Rochelle Sims of
SisterHouse with Leslie Lopez in Chicago**

a background rich in education,
experience and personal gifts. She is a
graduate of the College of New Rochelle
and the University of Connecticut
School of Law. As an attorney, Leslie
specialized in international business and
real estate. In 1997, she began work with
the Diocese of Bridgeport as a regional
development director with the Stratford
Catholic Regional School System.

From 2002 to 2007 Leslie served as the
Director of Resource Development for
the Wellspring Foundation. For the past
two years, she has been a consultant to
non-profits particularly in the areas of
management and fund-raising. We are
very happy to welcome Leslie to service

in the Atlantic-
Midwest
Province.

I would also
like to offer a
special thanks
to Joy Nazarro,
Associate
Director
of Mission
Advancement,
for assuming
responsibilities
as the Interim
Director from
January until
July. It is not
easy to do two
jobs at once,

but Joy did both with professionalism
and grace. A special thanks to the entire
staff of Mission Advancement for they
have worked hard during this transition
time to continually serve you and the
province.

Let us pray for one another and strive
to live so that all God's peoples may one
day be united in peace and love. May
this beautiful time of autumn be a time
of grace and thanksgiving for you and
your family and friends.

Gratefully,

Kathleen Cornell SSND

Kathleen Cornell, SSND
Provincial Leader

SSND Builds

Students, Faculty, Sisters Volunteer in New Orleans



Volunteers from CND and Holy Angels install flooring

By S. Carole Shinnick

By the time Hurricane Katrina exited New Orleans on August 29, 2005 80% of the city was under water, sometimes as deep as 12 feet. Over 1,600 people were dead or missing, 25,000 were trapped in the infamous Superdome, and countless thousands had fled the city, many never to return. Katrina left an estimated \$81.5 billion in property damage in her wake and countless lives forever changed.

Although the images of those horrific days are burned into the nation's collective memory, four years later New Orleans has faded from the front pages, relegated to "old news." Perhaps many think that the city has been restored and that all is well. And in some cases that is true. But despite massive reconstruction and renewal, several neighborhoods today remain shuttered, rotting, unoccupied and untouched.

*Truly, this is
"education that
transforms."*

But not everyone has forgotten Katrina's harsh legacy. That is why sisters, staff and students from the Academy of the Holy Angels in Demarest, New Jersey and from the College of Notre Dame of Maryland traveled to New Orleans in the heat of mid-July 2009 to help rebuild homes. They volunteered

to work in one of the most devastated parts of the city, St. Bernard Parish, with the New Orleans based non-profit organization St. Bernard Project whose mission is: "Rebuilding the Lives of Katrina Survivors, Family by Family."

Volunteers

The 23 volunteers included seven students from the College of Notre Dame and ten from the Academy of the Holy Angels. School Sisters of Notre Dame Mary Fitzgerald, Maria Iannuccillo and Jane Moran, as well as Helene Murtha from the college and Carol Fay and Kate Chambers from the academy accompanied the young women. For a week, the participants worked daily on houses until late afternoon. They had several opportunities to interact with the people of the neighborhood, even people whose homes they were rebuilding. They met two School Sisters of Notre Dame from New Orleans, Ann Roddy and Elizabeth Willems, who shared their own experiences of surviving Katrina. Each evening they took time to reflect together on the day's experiences and to conclude with prayer. The week changed them. SSND Foundress Mother Theresa Gerhardinger most likely smiled on this community of learners whose education and formation did not involve desks and books but rather hammers and drills. Truly, this is "education that transforms."

Eye Opening Experience

Perhaps the words of one student Nicole Onderdonk of Holy Angels sum the experience up best. "This service trip to New Orleans opened my eyes to my own capabilities and the significant impact of a small group of enthusiastic caring individuals, no matter how devastating the situation may be. Learning to install laminate flooring and operate a power saw were extremely empowering experiences, but far less inspiring than the positive, upbeat attitudes and warm appreciation we received from the citizens of New Orleans. Their resilience...is something I will carry with me for my entire life."

Foundations

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difficulties, the UN continues to pursue its international mandate.

Theresa's Vision

Another result of Theresa's vision is that, since 1993, the world-wide SSND congregation has been associated with the UN as a Non-Governmental Organization. Our representative emphasized the education of the girl child in her work there, attending with several SSNDs from Asia the UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. Also that year, at the UN Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, whose major goal was the eradication of poverty, European SSNDs were present.

More recently, our representative has brought high school and college students from our institutions in Peru, Ghana, Germany, Baltimore, New Jersey, New York, and Missouri to the annual Conference on the Status of Women in New York.

Always, everywhere, the sisters try to foster in themselves and in those they educate that "oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent."

Wish List

Are you wondering what the SSNDs need and how to be creative with your charitable dollars? We invite you to browse our SSND Wish List at www.amsnd.org. If you see an item you want to fund, call us at (800) 993-7763. Wish list includes: flat screen TV w/ DVD, electric beds & chairlifts.

WOMEN & spirit
CATHOLIC SISTERS IN AMERICA

Women & Spirit: Catholic Sisters in America, a national travelling exhibit portraying the impact of women religious on the history and culture of the United States includes several significant references to the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The exhibit will be at the Smithsonian in Washington, DC from January 15 through April 25, 2010 and at the Immigration Museum at Ellis Island in New York Harbor from September 24, 2010 through January 22, 2011. For more information, please visit www.womenandspirit.org.

Sisters Academy of Baltimore

"Ministries like Sisters Academy could never happen without the treasured partnerships..."

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Energetic students at Sisters Academy

In the midst of vacant lots, burned-out houses and daily crime, the young women of Sisters Academy shine brightly. They learn to think critically, work collaboratively and play heartily. They are as at home with art and music as they are with geography and math. They develop a sense of service within a culture of the common good. They embody the best hopes for their communities.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame have contributed some of their finest educators to this endeavor. They bring backgrounds rich in education at all levels and experience in multiple settings. The SSND traditional ministry of education born

in the mid 1800s is alive, well and creatively expressed today, serving the young women of Baltimore in this first decade of a new century.

Ministries like Sisters Academy could never happen without the treasured partnerships of the other three sponsoring communities and the generosity of donors to the school and to the sisters' congregations. This is work that needs to be done. It is transforming the girls, their families and their city. Your ongoing support is helping to change lives in Baltimore.

For more information about Sisters Academy of Baltimore, please go to the school's website at www.sistersacademy.org.

Make a Difference

"The SSNDs have been such a blessing in my life. I truly give them the credit for where I am today...they blessed me with the ability to learn and a zest for knowledge, they didn't just fill me with facts."

Many of our donors, like Deborah Yates, see the importance of planning for tomorrow's needs today by including our sisters in their will. A bequest is a thoughtful way to achieve your charitable goals without making an outright gift today. Everyday bequest gifts are being used by SSND to transform lives through education and other ministries.

If you want to make a difference with a gift in your will or trust, we invite you to contact Joy Nazzaro, Associate Director of Mission Advancement, toll free at (800) 993-7763 or via e-mail jnazzaro@amssnd.org.



Deborah Yates
Quality Assurance Manager
Booz Allen Hamilton;
Volunteer Instructor
American Red Cross;
SSND Associate