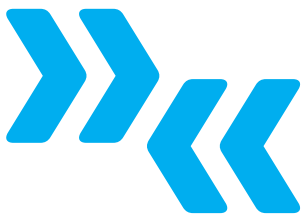


CROSSROADS



SUMMER 2021



Emerging

THE ROLE OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME
IN NEW ORLEANS



A LETTER FROM THE TOLEDO TEAM

Brighter Sunny Days

Dear Family and Friends,

As we approach summer, we look forward to brighter sunny days and the warm weather that it brings. Our hearts are also warmed by your generous donations from the beginning of this year. We are grateful. Because of your support, you are with us in continuing our mission of serving those most in need.

In this publication, we share with you our sisters who work in New Orleans. Our mission in New Orleans began after the devastating Hurricane Katrina. You will learn about their ministries in NOLA and the impact these sisters have made in the communities they serve. These sisters follow the example of our foundress, Sister Maria Aloysia Wohlbring, who began our congregation by lovingly caring for children who were poor or disadvantaged.

You will also meet someone who has valued the influence of the Sisters of Notre Dame not only on herself but her family. We have additional stories to share in these pages to keep you updated on the Toledo region.

We promise you our prayers asking our good and provident God to send you many blessings.

We also remember the prayer intentions that you have shared with us and assure you of our continued prayers.

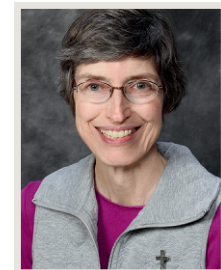
Sincerely,

The Mission Advancement Team
Sisters of Notre Dame, Toledo

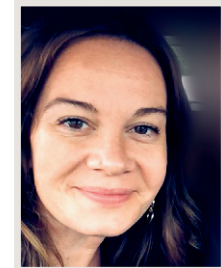
THE TOLEDO TEAM



SR. MARY CAROL GREGORY, SND
Advancement Team Advisor



SR. SALLY MARIE BOHNETT, SND
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Coordinator

EDUCATION | TRAINING | SUPPORT | SERVICE | HOUSING

Emerging

THE ROLES OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME IN NEW ORLEANS SINCE 2007

Live Oaks canopied the streets capturing humidity like mist. Palm trees cast shifting shadows. Distant jazz music wound around magnolia trees in this city of flamboyance, home of Mardi Gras. Streetcars and horse-drawn carriages carried townspeople and tourists. Such was the scene before Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in August 2005. For weeks 80% of the city was underwater. 90% of the people evacuated, leaving only the elderly and poor who were unable to leave. Fewer than 20% of the residents returned to reclaim their homes. FEMA trailers were parked everywhere. Walls marked the 15-foot height of water on destroyed homes. Blight touched everything.

Eighteen months later, Sister Anne Mary Molyet, provincial superior in Toledo, Ohio, at the time, read in the newspaper the dire need for qualified teachers in New Orleans, as families who had left Louisiana were beginning to return. Having flown to Louisiana to meet the Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Sister Anne Mary called for volunteers. Three passionate pioneers took up the call: Sister Margaret Mary Faist, Sister Linda Marie White, and Sister Mary Bonita Sniegowski. It was their daunting task to reopen St. Leo the Great Elementary School in August 2007 with 168 of the original 300 pupils. After weeks of sorting and cleaning, the sisters greeted the students on the first day of school with the books and supplies they left behind in 2005.



Sr. M. Nancy Vance with students from Holy Ghost School expressing gratitude to donors.

The most important task facing the teachers was sensitivity to the children after the trauma they had experienced. Encouraging the children to express their feelings in words and pictures, one student wrote, "In Katrina my brother and cousin got left behind. They were asleep and my cousin put out his arm and felt water. My brother and cousin broke out the window. They jumped from roof to roof. My cousin was very scared. My brother was brave. He helped people get out of the trees. The water went down. They were still alive."

In time the enrollment of St. Leo the Great School increased when the state offered scholarships to families in financial need. In 2007 the school had one classroom of each grade pre-kindergarten through grade six. One classroom of seventh graders was added, and in August 2021 there will be two seventh-grade classrooms. Every one of the 265 students is offered free breakfast and lunch.

In these early years after Katrina, other Sisters of Notre Dame from Toledo went to New Orleans to help; for example, Sister Magdalen Westrick worked at the Harry Thompson Center which provided showers, laundry, and communication for many homeless persons.



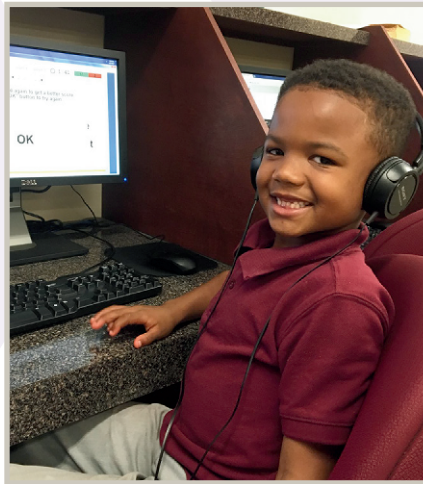
Sisters Margaret Mary Faist, Linda Marie White and M. Bonita Sniegowski in front of St. Leo the Great School.

Emerging

As the sisters became more familiar with New Orleans, they were aware that the city was suffering from more than the physical and psychological damage caused by Katrina. Adult literacy levels were alarmingly low. In 2009 Sister Bonita responded to that need and began her ministry at the St. Vincent de Paul Adult Learning Center, where persons receive support to prepare for the GED tests. Sister Bonita, now Director of the Center, reports that about 80 persons register yearly, most of them in their forties. Sister Mary Sartor joined Sister Bonita as a full-time staff member. They along with Sister Marsha Tierney, DC and ten volunteers, provide an enriching learning environment. One student reflected, "This is like a family; we can talk about anything. While learning we can share our hurts and challenges."

In 2010 five Sisters of Notre Dame, now including Sister Mary Ellen Schroeder, came to staff the newly re-built Mirabeau Family Learning Center (MFLC). This was an organization that provided education, training, support service and workforce housing to low- and moderate-income families. The sisters brought an innovative advancement in modern education to New Orleans—the BrainPower Program (BPP), a program that had been researched and prepared for implementation while Sister Mary Ellen was still in Ohio.

The BPP utilizes BrainSkills, a web-based cognitive development program based on the latest research in building the brain's capacity to learn, along with a personal Brain Trainer to provide one-on-one support. More than tutoring, it focuses on non-academic training procedures that quickly strengthen the brain's core mental abilities: attention, memory, logic and reasoning, auditory processing, visual processing, and processing speed.



Children learning the BrainSkills Program with Sr. M. Ellen Schroeder.



56 out of 60 students in the BrainSkills™ Program passed in 2011.



8 of 9

in the fourth grade and 12/12 students in the sixth grade passed the LEAP test after just three months of training.

In 2011 MFLC rebuilt its community center at the Filmore Parc Apartments. (Before pouring the concrete the sisters dropped religious medals in the foundation, at the request of the builders.) The only red building among the 41 apartments, this center became known as the "Little Red School House." But there is nothing little about it, as its computers and Promethean Smart Board attest. MFLC's after-school program provides social and educational experiences for school age children, with attendance between 15-25 daily. MFLC celebrated its tenth anniversary on May 4, 2021.

During their first year the sisters realized they needed to re-direct their efforts to work with other Catholic schools. It was at this time in the development of the program that the name "BrainPower" was born. They initiated the BPP at Holy Ghost School in the Central City of New Orleans and worked with St. Augustine Middle School and St. Mary's Academy Elementary. At last count, sisters have helped 300 students at MFLC and over 1300 in Catholic schools.



Most recently the sisters faced another crisis in the COVID-19 pandemic, which beamed a "spotlight on the economic, social and employment disparity that has existed in New Orleans for generations," said Sister Margaret Faist. At Saint Leo the Great School, half the students came Monday and Tuesday, and the other half on Thursday and Friday, while on-line learning was provided daily. Once again, responding to need, the staff spent the summer preparing for on-line learning. MFLC is also providing virtual learning in basic reading skills.

The ministry of the sisters in New Orleans continues, much to the surprise and gratitude of the citizens of New Orleans who realized that the sisters were not just volunteering for a few weeks. They were there to stay.

Our founding sister, Sister Maria Aloysia Wolbring, had a missionary spirit. Following her charism, the sisters carry the Good News and immerse themselves in the culture wherever they are sent. They seek out the poor and marginalized to lead them to their spiritual and human potential. Wherever one sister is sent, we are all there with our prayer and support—even a thousand miles away.

OneMinute

WITH KAREN JANKOWSKI

Tell our readers a little about yourself.

I was born and raised in Toledo, Ohio, spending my formative years on Toledo's East Side, the oldest of five children. Graduating from McAuley High School and Mary Manse College, Toledo, I always planned to become a teacher. I taught Social Studies at McAuley before starting my family with my husband, Jerry Jankowski. We raised our sons in Oak Openings Preserve Metropark where he was a ranger/manager. It was a unique and rewarding experience. I returned to teaching junior high at my parish and then began teaching Social Studies and Theology at Notre Dame Academy (NDA) in 1993. After retiring I continued to substitute teach at Notre Dame Academy and Lial Catholic School.

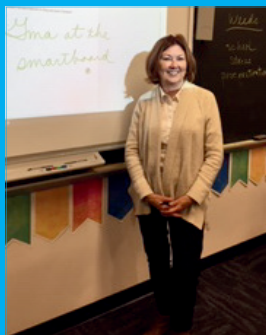
My leisure time is spent visiting with friends and family, hiking, reading and gardening. Favorite places to travel to are the American southwest and Canada's parks and natural areas.

How did you meet the Sisters of Notre Dame?

I met the Sisters of Notre Dame when our oldest son, Paul, enrolled at Lial Catholic School in Whitehouse, Ohio, for Readiness in 1977. When we first visited Lial, Sister Darlene Mary Siebeneck ran down the hall to open the door to let us in. I remember thinking how welcoming she was. Sister Vernon Bick's Bible stories came home to us in Nick's retelling and Sister Mary Ann Culpert guided Adam through math in primary for three years.

What's the best advice you've ever received?

The best advice as a teacher came from Sister Mary Carol Gregory who was the NDA principal at the time, "Model the Behavior." This was a guiding principle of what Sister expected of her teachers. We can't expect of our students what we weren't willing to model ourselves. It really stuck with me.



What's your favorite line from a movie?

"Where do those stairs go?"
"They go up."
Ghostbusters

What's something you've learned from a favorite saint/memorable person?

I think Sister Mary Delores Gatliff's optimism is memorable. I remember when times at NDA might not have been perfect, whether in a class or at a liturgy, but she always found the positive or the good in what happened.

How have the Sisters of Notre Dame impacted your life?

The sisters at Lial brought so many lessons to our children during their time there. We knew our children were safe and cared for and receiving an excellent education. The Readiness Christmas programs were simple but so charming – the parents loved them. Also, we made lifelong friends with other parents. Ministry was shared when I taught at NDA in Toledo from 1993-2011. Friendship, team teaching and support were experienced throughout those years. The sisters set a good example in faith and educating young women. I am also inspired by the sacrifice and dedication of women like Sister Margaret Mary Faist and Sister Bonita Sniegowski who serve at St. Leo's in New Orleans.

Three words that describe your ministry with the Sisters.

Inspiring, supportive, faith filled

What has been a particularly meaningful experience in your professional life?

I think it was the time spent with the NDA African American Club members. Sister LaReine-Marie Mosely, a co-teacher, introduced me to working with the African American Club. When she left NDA for another teaching position, I became the moderator. I have fond memories of working with the students in Gospel Choir, Step Club, the original Hip Hop Club, the City-Wide Afro Ball, Multicultural Assemblies and Cotillion.

ETERNAL REST

In Loving Memory

SISTER MARY HELAINE EHRMAN

May 17, 1944 - August 6, 2020
Religious Profession: August 18, 1964



"We have come to know and have believed the love that God has in our behalf."

This refrain from one of Sister Mary Helaine's musical compositions characterizes

Sister's life. Her confidence in God's love expressed itself in art and music and enabled her to serve in outreach despite many physical difficulties. On the feast of the Transfiguration, God called Sister to her heavenly home.

Music was her love. She learned many instruments and received degrees in music from Mary Manse College (Toledo) and Bowling Green State University. She was second violin in the Perrysburg Symphony Orchestra.

Sister conducted the orchestra at Notre Dame Academy Toledo, taught music lessons, and was organist for the local community and also for parishes in the diocese. When she could no longer do this, she made rosaries, crocheted hats for central city Catholic school children and collected stuffed animals for an after-school program. May Sister Mary Helaine now experience the freedom of the spirit lifting her to her loving God.

SISTER MARY DORETTA PETER

April 2, 1949 - January 10, 2021
Religious Profession: January 15, 1971



Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Luke 11:9)

Humble and reserved, attentive to others' needs, hard-working

and ever attuned to God's will, Sister Mary Doretta allowed God to direct her life. Led by God, Sister was able to lead others to God.

Sister earned a master's degree in special education and for over 25 years taught at Mary Immaculate School, Toledo, a school for children with learning differences.

Sister cared deeply for her students and willingly shared her knowledge by serving on the Autism Academy School Board for nine years. She is especially remembered as being prayerful and a great lover of the Eucharist as she prepared many young children for their first Communion.

On January 10, 2021, Sister Mary Doretta received the welcoming embrace of her Bridegroom into her eternal home. May she rest in peace.

SISTER DARLENE MARY SIEBENECK (SISTER MARY ROSALYN)

August 17, 1945 - January 31, 2021
Religious Profession: August 21, 1965



"Let the little children come to me for such is the Kingdom of heaven." (Mk 10:14-15)

Energetic, enthusiastic, joy filled, ever smiling, Sister Darlene Mary strove to make

God known and loved, especially to the many children she taught and the teachers she mentored. She aimed to lead each child to the fullness of his or her human and spiritual potential.

Sister's teaching career began in 1966 to primarily Kindergarten, first and second graders and those in preschool and readiness. When she moved to Florida in 2002, she became Early Learning Director at Guardian Catholic School. Sister's many local, state, and national awards attest to her commitment and effectiveness.

On January 31, 2021, Sister Darlene Mary surrendered herself into the loving arms of Jesus who so loved little children. There, with the little ones who preceded her in death, may she rest in peace.

By living in the presence of God in the spirit of faith we trust that one day we will be led to the fullness of joy when we shall see God face to face."

CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME, ARTICLE 52

REACHING OUT

“In fidelity to our charism we participate in the mission of Jesus Christ, witnessing God’s goodness and provident care to others.”

CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME, ARTICLE 3



A | B | C

During Catholic Sisters Week, March 8-14, 2021 the Sisters of Notre Dame joined the nationwide effort to END HUNGER. An overwhelming response from the community resulting in 25,557 pounds of food donated. We Stuffed the Truck!

D

Sr. Mary Nancy Vance volunteers to serve lunch to those in need at the Claver House in Toledo.

E | F

Sisters at Notre Dame Academy and Lisa Strugarek, SND Associate, bake cookies for the Claver House.

G

Sr. Mary Teresita Richards leads an outdoor rosary at St. Mary Catholic Church in Leipsic, Ohio.