Welcome to the new NewsNotes!

Dear Sisters, Associates, and Colleagues,

I’m pleased to share our re-designed newsletter with you. And while the appearance of NewsNotes may be a little different moving forward, it will still be your key source of important news and information about the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart congregation. All the familiar content will be here, but you’ll now see fresh topics sprinkled in from time to time. We will also be featuring longer stories about your fellow Sisters in action. This means some months, like this one, may be a longer newsletter.

In this issue, we’ll remember the beautiful Mass of Installation and luncheon for our new president and leadership council. And you’ll see the awe-inspiring impact of pantries in our communities. Journey to Alaska alongside Sister Diane and Sister Bridget, to read about the dedication of the new St. Marguerite d’Youville Caregiver Food Pantry created by our determined Associates. Then travel to Queens, NY and find out how Venezuelan families are benefitting from the generous benefactors of Marguerite’s Pantry at Our Lady of Fatima Parish. Finally, you’ll enjoy an essay from Sister Donna Lord about that precious connection between nature and prayer.

Most importantly, this newsletter is a reflection of all of you and your good work. So please feel free to share your stories, content ideas, and photos with me. You can reach me at adavies@greynun.org. I look forward to hearing how we can continue to improve NewsNotes in the future to better serve you!

Blessings,

Amanda Davies
Director of Communications
Four Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart received the mantle of leadership for the congregation on July 1, 2023. Sister Denise Roche will serve as President, while Sisters Barbara Schiavoni, Nancy Kaczmarek, and Eileen White serve as members of the Leadership Council. Grey Nuns gathered at the beautiful Knowlton Mansion for the Mass of Installation and luncheon, presided over by Rev. Charlie Noone.

Our co-workers joined the Grey Nuns at this festive occasion, giving us an opportunity to thank them for the work they do on behalf of the Grey Nun mission to be for others. Mrs. Debbie Adams and Sr. Rita Margraff coordinated all the arrangements for the Eucharistic celebration and luncheon. As you can see from the photos, the venue was quite lovely and included strikingly beautiful centerpieces from the Yellow Daffodil, a wonderful flower shop that employs people with special needs.

We heard a reading from a familiar segment of the Grey Nun Constitutions that reminded us of the purpose of our Grey Nun lives: uniting our diverse personal gifts “to witness radically to the gospel and to extend the reign of God.”

From Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, we heard, “May you be able to understand with all the believers the width, the length, the height and the depth in a word, may you know the love of Christ which surpasses all understanding.” The gospel narrative was extraordinarily powerful, because Father Charlie did not read it. He told it to us from memory – John 13: 3-15 -- the washing of the feet of the disciples. We felt like some of the early converts to Jesus listening to the apostle telling what happened at that last supper and what it meant.

Sister Eileen Spanier delivered a beautiful reflection on the readings and on the significance of this occasion. She invited us to consider significant moments --- in the life of Paul, in the life of the apostles, in our life as Grey Nuns, and particularly today, in the life of our new leaders. Her reflection is available here.

Sister Jean Liston, one of our former presidents, led us in the ritual of blessing and giving thanks to the previous leadership group, and she then blessed and missioned our newly elected leaders. The Grey Nuns pledged loving support and prayer and renewed our commitment “to share the mission and charism of St Marguerite with others called by the Spirit.” We sang, “Be A Blessing to The World” and rejoiced at this significant moment in our 102-year history.

Our elected leaders are joined by Co-Executive Directors, Debbie Adams and Marianne Kitzmiller, to form the new Grey Nun Leadership Team.
GNSH Associates were pleased to welcome our Kodiak Associates to the July Zoom meeting. Colleen, Marylynn, Brian, and Fru shared their stories about becoming Associates and gave updates on current happenings in Kodiak. The GNSH legacy in Kodiak is flourishing through the leadership of our Associates!

In addition to the hospital food pantry (See Kodiak article, page 4), Associates have initiated an interfaith book discussion group on “The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage” by Joan Chittister, OSB. The Kodiak Associates are taking up the call to prophetic action through advocacy on gun control and other issues.

The next Associates Zoom meeting will take place September 9, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (no meeting in August). For more information, contact Angel Conicelli at beingcelestial@yahoo.com.

Philadelphia Associates are planning to meet in person at Lafayette Redeemer in September; stay tuned for more information.

Riding to Benefit Roswell Park Cancer Center

Sister Donna Lord rides regularly with the Big Wheels Bicycle Club. Once a year, they do a benefit for Roswell Park Cancer Center. This year the ride started at 7 am and travelled for 34 miles through beautiful countryside. Donna and her older sister Pat asked friends and relatives to support their ride by contributing to Roswell Park.

Art Exhibition to Benefit Asylee Women Enterprise (AWE)

An art exhibition and sale of Sister Bridget Connor’s artwork will be held on September 9th at St. Joseph University Church in Buffalo, to benefit the Asylee Women Enterprise (AWE). AWE supports asylum seekers, survivors of human trafficking, and other forced migrants, as they rebuild their lives in Maryland with dignity and hope.

For more information on AWE, visit their website here. You can see more of Sister Bridget’s beautiful artwork on our website. Click here to view a selection of her pieces for the show.

Let’s Celebrate

Wishing the following Sisters and staff a very happy birthday:

**August**
- Anne Kane (07)
- Debbie Adams (08)
- Sister Kathleen Hannan (14)
- Sister Barbara Harrington (21)
- Evelina McGuigan (27)

**September**
- Sister Patricia Connolly (02)
- Diane Petrillo (09)
- Sister Dolores Beatty (15) (FD)
- Sister Dolores Ann O’Dowd (15) (FD)
- Sister Jane O’Connor (17)
- Sister Denise Roche (17)
- Sister Julia Christine Lanigan (22)
- Sister Joan McElwain (27)
- Sister Rita Margraff (29)
In Saint Marguerite’s Name
A FOOD PANTRY DEDICATION IN KODIAK, ALASKA

BY SISTER DIANE BARDOL

"The Grey Nun spirit lives on in new and deeply beautiful ways. It is yet again the very real experience of the Paschal Mystery. May we always live in recognition, gratitude, and awe of this mystery."

It’s about 5:30 a.m. on June 13. Dwight Leonetti dropped us off at the Philadelphia Airport, where Sister Bridget and I will start the boarding process for our 7 a.m. flight to Kodiak with layovers in Seattle and Anchorage. Waiting in Anchorage is enjoyable because we always meet people we know, either coming from or going to Kodiak. This time was no exception! Our wait time was filled with catch-up-conversations with several long time Kodiak friends. Finally, landing in Kodiak after sixteen and half hours of travel, GN Associates Fru Finn and Colleen Helligso were there waiting for us as were multiple other friends -- including the mountains, still with their winter blanket of snow. It was a lovely sunny evening, the first they said in ten days! Two days later, we’re back to Kodiak weather as usual.

What prompted our trip to Kodiak was the dedication of the St. Marguerite d’Youville Caregiver Food Pantry. Fru read about a caregiver food pantry in a Providence Hospital in Oregon and recognized the need for one in Kodiak. Immediately, Fru became a woman with a burning mission. It was “so St. Marguerite” and so needed. She began making things happen and after almost a year of moving and shaking, the pantry was ready. GN Associates stocked the shelves, but the users will keep them replenished as they are able and thus it is caretakers caring for caretakers. How wonderful!

The dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony took place the morning of June 16. Present were Karl Hertz, Hospital CEO, Pat Branson, Mayor of Kodiak, many of the hospital staff and friends, and the GN Associates. Afterwards, Sister Bridget and I met with our Associates over lunch at Fru’s. Later that afternoon, Hospital Chaplain, Deacon Innocent, graciously offered to give us a tour of their new Elderhouse located just outside on the hill behind the hospital. This is replacing the extended care unit that Sister Jo Patti added to the hospital in the 1970’s.

Top to bottom photos:
The view from the Elderhouse
Snowy mountains at the airport
Ribbon-cutting for the new pantry!
I think it’s important to note that Chaplain Innocent is a deacon in the Orthodox Church of America, which was established in 1792 when the first Russian fur traders arrived in Kodiak with their monks and settled on Kodiak Island. This September, Deacon Innocent will be going to his new assignment in Oregon to serve in a parish where his son is pastor. He did a masterful job showing how the charisms of the Grey Nuns and the Sisters of Providence complement each other and, therefore, how fitting to be living and honoring both.

While the dedication of the food pantry was the event that brought us to Kodiak, our event planners, Fru and Associates, made sure our time there was non-stop in the best possible ways! So there was tea with GN Associate Carole, lunch with former school parent Judy Pletnikoff, dinner with the Freed-Schmitt family, dinner for 15 hosted by the McFarland’s, an evening alum reception at St. Mary’s School followed by a tour, and - the day before leaving - a reception after the Saturday evening liturgy.

As I said, Alaska airports are always exciting places. When we were going through security in Kodiak, I asked if Mac was working. “Yes he is. Do you want me to let him know you’re here?” “Absolutely!” Out comes Mac, one of our former students who is now a grandfather. Then as our boarding pass is being scanned, we hear, “Hey Sisters!” Of course it is David, another former student! They are everywhere.

A word about the school. As many know, this June 2023 was the last year for our beloved St. Mary’s School, after 69 wonderful years. The enrollment had been dwindling in spite of valiant efforts by faithful alums and parents to increase it. What a blessing though, that these faithful friends knew how to listen to the Spirit to bring something new to birth! Starting this fall the school will continue to be a happy, safe and welcoming home to The Rock, a K-8th grade online home school group.

It will also be home for the Kodiak Area Native Association (KANA) and the Sun’aq Tribe day care and preschool. The day care, preschool, and kindergarten will be open to coordinating efforts to offer children the best possible placement. Cooperation for the common good at its finest!

The Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart have a long and fruitful history in Kodiak. We came in 1944 to put the hospital back together, and had to leave in 1978.

We opened St. Mary’s School in 1954 and had to leave in 2007. We started Hispanic ministries in 2000 and had to leave in 2009.

Though we had to physically leave our Kodiak ministries, the Grey Nun spirit lives on in new and deeply beautiful ways. It is yet again the very real experience of the Paschal Mystery. May we always live in recognition, gratitude, and awe of this mystery.
Committee Updates

Spiritual Animation Committee

BY SISTER EILEEN SPANIER, GNSH

We have been tossing around a number of ideas for the academic year ahead and we are getting excited! Dust off your calendar and jot the following dates for our Advent Days with Sister Marie Michele, RSM:

Wednesdays, November 29,
December 6, 13, & 20
from 10:30-11:30 AM at Lafayette Redeemer RCR

The Committee would like to focus our general gatherings in 2023-2024 on the “Four Metaphors: Ground of Grey Nun Spirituality” presented by Lowell M. Glendon, S.S. in 1993. We hope to hold our first meeting in the RCR on September 13th (10:30-11:30), the Vigil of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Everyone received a copy of the text of Lowell’s talks and we would like to use these presentations as a springboard for our conversations. We hope you can easily locate your copy of the Four Metaphors so that you can reread the Introduction (pages 1-16) and The Cross (pages 46-56) before September 13th.

Please let one of the committee members know if you are unable to locate your copy of the Metaphors. I believe there are a few extra copies around, but I am sure one of your “neighbors” would be willing to share their copy with you.

Don’t forget to let us know if you have any recommendations for our “spiritual reading”. We are always looking for something new OR even a “classic” that has touched you recently.

Enjoy the rest of these summer days. May you be refreshed and renewed!

Spiritual Animation Committee
Sisters Mary Elizabeth Looby, Mary Mulligan, Jane O’Connor, and Eileen Spanier, Chair

Book Recommendation:
“Two Old Women”
by Velma Wallis

Have you read any good legends lately?

In only 127 pages, Velma Wallis tells a beautiful, yet shocking story based on an Athabascan Indian legend that she learned from her mother in the upper Yukon River Valley in Alaska. “Two Old Women” is about “betrayal, friendship, community, and forgiveness.” (U. Le Guin).

It is a story of survival and independence. I don’t think you will be disappointed.

Contact Sr. Eileen Spanier if you would like to borrow her copy of this book.
mark twain (rightly or wrongly), is credited with saying "everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." in the late 1800's, that could have been a light-hearted comment. not so today!

science tells us that fossil fuels – coal, oil, and gas – are by far the largest contributors to global climate change, accounting for over 75 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions, this from a u.n. climate action report. since plastics are made from fossil fuel and our grey nun laudato si' commitment is to do our part in fighting their use and production, we can say we are doing something about the weather. it may seem like the proverbial "drop in the bucket", but it’s important to know two things:

1. that every drop counts, and
2. that we can’t do it all, but we must do what we can!

i hope we know that what we are doing as a congregation really matters. our studying and praying with the encyclical, consciously reducing our use of plastics, pushing our legislators to support the elimination of plastics, supporting clean energy efforts, opposing opening new oil wells and making it our mission to spread the word about the critical need for everyone to realize the connection between fossil fuel, plastics and the current global climate crisis is doing our part.

this is an issue that requires of us a strong motivation, one born from the realization that our responsibility within creation, and our duty towards nature and our creator, are an essential part of our faith. our next quarterly lsap meeting is september 18. more will be coming closer to that date.

finally, i’d like to share with you some congratulatory good news. last week, the catholic climate covenant recognized 13 u.s. organizations and individuals as “u.s. laudato si’ champions” (click here to find the complete list). among these champions and honorary mentions is neumann university in aston, pa. congratulations to our franciscan sisters and their university for truly embodying and living the spirit of laudato si’. below is a description of their commitment to sustainability.

honorable mention to neumann university in aston, pa. neumann university in pennsylvania has demonstrated collaborative efforts and commitment to sustainability. in july 2023, the neumann institute for franciscan studies and the sustainability advisory council joined forces to develop the laudato si’ year one action plan.

this plan serves as a comprehensive roadmap for the university’s ecological initiatives in the coming years. their efforts include sharing excess food with students and families to reduce food waste and responding to the cry of the poor, new strategies for recycling on campus, new modules of study and programs on ecological education; and three new initiatives on ecological spirituality that have all fostered a culture of responsibility and sustainability throughout the institution, and align with the principles outlined in laudato si’.
Marguerite’s Pantry in Queens, NY

Marguerite’s Pantry, a ministry initiated by Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Queens, NY, continues to thrive and to provide food and supplies to hundreds of families each month.

Sister Anne Marie Beirne, Grey Nun, says she is constantly amazed at how God’s providence spreads kindness and generosity at this East Elmhurst site. Recently, in response to an influx of Venezuelan families living in a nearby shelter, volunteers found a way to have sixty pairs of shoes donated to those families. Alex, one of the steady volunteers at Marguerite’s Pantry, told Sister Anne Marie that he was excited and nearly in tears to see grown-ups and children put on the shoes on the spot – gleefully replacing ‘worn to the pavement shoes’ in which they’d traveled the long journey from their homeland.

There are at least thirty families from Venezuela living in the shelter, and seven of them were also the beneficiaries of clothing donations from anonymous donors. Anne Marie says that whenever she is sure they will run out of needed supplies, or be unable to serve the last ten families in the line, another miracle occurs in the guise of a formerly unknown source of goodness and mercy – a volunteer who emerges to replace one who could never be replaced, or a company calls to ask if such and such an item could be useful to the Pantry this month, or a mystery donor provides the cash to make up the difference between what is available and what is needed.

Further information about Marguerite’s Pantry is available on the pantry’s Facebook page.

“...there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot.”

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-2

Thank you for your condolences on the passing of our Jerry, beloved husband, loving father, dependable and affectionate brother, devoted son, and friend to all. Your thoughtfulness was very much appreciated during this most difficult time.

Sincerely,
The White Family
My Tulip Tree
By Sister Donna Lord, GNSH

A new adventure! Eight years ago four Grey Nuns decided to create a new local community. When we enquired with the diocese, we learned that there was one convent available -- in Cheektowaga, an area of town we did not know well. We would move there and enjoy the joys and challenges of the common life, just as Sisters had done for many years in the past.

I always knew that when I took quiet prayer time in the morning, it helped me to go outside or look out the window and gaze upon a tree. It did not take me long to discover that in the large inner courtyard which was surrounded by all the church buildings, there was a very large, very full tree. I chose the bedroom that gave the best view of the tree. Mission accomplished!

But what kind of tree was it? It was the year 2015, and the season was late autumn. The leaves had all fallen from the tree. So I eagerly awaited the springtime, when the tree would come to life again. When spring did arrive and new leaves grew, there were several shapes: some shaped like a mitten, and some like a tulip. Thus the name - tulip tree, a variety of poplar! The mystery was solved.

But wait! As the leaves began to grow, at the base of many of the leaves, a blossom started to emerge. It was shaped like a cup. The petals were made of a gentle pink, a light rose, a soft yellow, and a soft green. The tulip blossom! What an awesome sight!

In a few months the time will come to move to Philadelphia, where most of our Sisters now live, and where all levels of care are available. There are good places to walk – like one nearby path that goes along a wide stream that travels for a long stretch among big old trees, meadows, and some lovely homes.

Here is the question. What majestic tree will soothe my soul and be a fitting encore to my tulip tree? Only time will tell.
NEW STAFF AT THE GREY NUNS

With the recent retirements of Maryellen Glackin and Chris Domzalski, please join us in welcoming our newest staff members to the Grey Nuns organization:

Amanda Davies, Director of Communications
Patricia Foy, Health Care Coordinator
Melissa Avraham, Director of Community Life

Dates to Remember

SEPTEMBER 2023
4 Labor Day holiday (offices closed)
6 Leadership Meeting
9 Associates Meeting, 10:30 AM-12:00 PM
13 Exaltation of the Cross, Holy Redeemer Lafayette
13 Spiritual Animation Meeting, 10:30-11:30 AM
18 Quarterly LSAP Meeting

Death Penalty

SCHEDULED EXECUTIONS FOR SEPTEMBER 2023

September 21
ANTHONY SANCHEZ (Oklahoma)

The Mercy in Action Project

Click here to find out how the questions asked in a restorative justice process align with principles of Catholic Social Teaching, a guide to living God’s vision of justice.

Catholics Mobilizing Network is a faith-based website for those who want to understand restorative justice and the death penalty.

Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart

NewsNotes is a publication of the Grey Nuns of the Sacred Heart. Congregational offices are closed on Fridays.

CONNECT WITH US:

WWW.GREYNUN.ORG
BY SISTER DIANE BARDOL

Because our needs are so great today, and because your care, God, is constant, we know that you are rebuilding a network of compassion around new visionaries who are answering your invitation.

You surprise us with the discovery of how much power each of us has to make a difference in our day:

— A difference in the way citizens meet, greet, respect, and protect the rights of each other.

— A difference in the breadth of our vision of what is possible in humanization, reconciliation, and equalization in our city.

— A difference in the way government, business, and labor can work together, for justice and social enrichment.

— A difference in our response to the needy, and a difference in our appreciation for those who give of themselves for the surviving and thriving of our sisters and brothers.

Help us to use this day to spark new hope and stir up our passion for new possibilities. Make compassion and the spirit of sacrifice to be the new mark of affluence of character. Strengthen us to face reality and to withstand the rigor of tough times in the anticipation of a bright side beyond the struggle. Inspire, empower, and sustain us until we reach the mountaintop, and see that future for which our hearts yearn.

This is our fervent and sincere prayer. Amen.