

Mercy Northeast is a bimonthly publication for Sisters of Mercy, Companions in Mercy and Mercy Associates of the Northeast Community. Send comments to: [cvanaken@mercyne.org](mailto:cvanaken@mercyne.org).

The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas  
 Albany ■ Connecticut ■ New Hampshire ■ Portland ■ Providence ■ Vermont

## ¡No mas! No more!



Sister Lindora Cabral leaves her cross of remembrance at the gate



Sister Jacqueline Moreau



Photo: Stephanie Heiland (ICO)

During the solemn procession, from left, Bishop Thomas Gumbleton; Father Roy Bourgeois, leader of the SOA demonstrations since 1990; Father Jon Sobrino, recipient of the 2008 Pax Christi Award

## School of the Americas Watch 2008

The Northeast Community contingent was well represented November 21-23 at the SOA Watch at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia, with 16 sisters, associates, students and friends. Northeast participants joined 90 other members of the Mercy family from all over the country and the Philippines.

Many gathered at the Pax Christi venue on Friday evening to applaud Father Jon Sobrino, SJ, as he accepted the 2008 Pax Christi Book Award for *No Salvation Outside the Poor*. Sister Kathleen Pritty, as a board member of Pax Christi USA, participated in the presentation. Jon's life was spared in November 1989 because he was away when the other members of his Jesuit community were murdered by SOA graduates. Jon was also a close personal friend and advisor of Oscar Romero, Archbishop of El Salvador, also murdered by graduates of the SOA.



"The poor are even excluded from existence," said Sobrino, a Spaniard by birth, who has lived in El Salvador for more than half a century. The global food crisis is "a failure of humanity," he said, noting that some sports teams have budgets larger than those of poor nations. Jon's words were not easy on his mostly white, middle- and upper-class Americans, yet he received thunderous applause from the audience.

Three newcomers to the SOA Watch were Northeast Life and Ministry Administrators Sisters Mary Etta Higgins, Jane Somerville and Maureen Wallace. Jane said that she was moved to see so many young college students and disabled people taking part. "They definitely gave me hope to believe that we are all responsible to work for peace and justice in our world." She was "moved to tears" when she saw young parents there teaching their children that "justice is a way of life." Jane would encourage others to go to the SOA Watch, but says that she would "be happier if the SOA closed." **By Sister Kathleen Pritty**

## Standing on water

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's words – *Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink!* – are becoming prophetic. The lack of usable, affordable water is a looming problem. Water supply systems are being sold to corporations to balance the budgets of small cities in western Massachusetts; municipal water is being stretched to satisfy the need of corporate water bottling plants; plastic water bottles are being discarded at an alarming rate in local landfills.

A Critical Concern of the Fourth Institute Chapter is to “reverence Earth and work more effectively toward the sustainability of life and toward universal recognition of the fundamental right to water.”

Participants at the Northeast justice gathering last October agreed to develop a corporate stand about our use of water to reflect our Chapter imperative – water as a universal human right.

Deliberations identified five areas:

- Water as a human right (Who owns the water and/or water rights?)
- Water supply (impact/scarcity/contaminated supplies)
- Privatization of water and control of our common water supply
- Health effects of contaminated water
- Plastic bottles (non-biodegradable/toxicity of plastic bottles made from polyethylene terephthalate [PET]/carbon footprint/transportation/recycle aluminum containers for water as personal alternatives).

If you feel passionate about the response to this critical need, contact Sister Kathleen Pritty at (518) 437-3018, or [kpritty@mercyne.org](mailto:kpritty@mercyne.org). You will be added to the list of those who can access the workspace that has been set up on SharePoint.

You will find related information on SharePoint and in our *Mercy Northeast* newsletter in the coming months. The plan is to have the statement for the corporate stand ready to share with the Community by Earth Day, April 22, 2009. **By Sister Kathleen Pritty**

## Leadership Team Message

For all the worries about war, the economy, the environment, the treatment of our brothers and sisters who are poor as well as those who come to our shores seeking a better life, the hope for something new and something better is swirling around this January afternoon. The swearing in of this new President is an historic moment and one which offers renewed hope to a country depressed by reality. Whether or not you voted for Barack Obama, you can almost not resist being overwhelmed with the feeling of new possibility this new year. May God bless this new year with peace and a renewed commitment to mercy and compassion for us, for our country, for our world.

We are grateful to all who participated in the November member meetings in person and by phone. We heard many concerns and questions, and we thank you for your ongoing support and input into all the challenges confronting us as we become one Community. On SharePoint, you will find some questions which arose repeatedly in the different areas, and an effort to answer those questions. Let us know if you feel your question has not been adequately addressed.

On December 14, 2008, the Sisters of Mercy celebrated the completion of their sesquicentennial year, 150 years of service and commitment in New Hampshire. Sister Dympna Smith emceed the event. She recalled the “stairs” the sisters had climbed for all those 150 years, paraphrasing the words of Langston Hughes “for us, life ain’t been no crystal stair. It had tacks in it. And splinters...” Still, she challenged her sisters to continue to climb the stairs of our day. Sister Deirdre Mullan spoke and invited everyone to a broad world view. Her stories of deep listening touched the hearts of her audience. Because of the ice storm, New Hampshire was without power and so the planned dinner became a cold but delicious luncheon. The “can do” spirit of the Sisters of Mercy cannot be underestimated.

January will find the Community Leadership Team (CLT) in Miami, Florida for the first ILC meeting of 2009. This will be the last meeting of the ILC before the Caribbean, Central and South Central America (CCASA) election, so please keep our CCASA sisters in your prayer.

The economy continues to decline at the time of this writing. While the CLT reviews budgets and places projects and purchases on hold, many in the Community have asked what they can do. The primary concern, of course, is meeting the basic needs of those with whom we work and minister. Simple soup suppers, Christmas giving trees, adopting a family, volunteering at soup kitchens, and other creative endeavors are emerging anew around the Community. In the words of Clarissa Pinkola-Estés, “We were made for these times.” The new year brings new possibilities. Let us not lose heart or hope or fail to bring that hope to others.

Ellen, Marie, Maureen, Kathleen, Eileen & Michele

# Jubilee and Commitment in the Northeast Community

## PORTLAND, MAINE —

On August 4, 2007, more than 330 people attended the Jubilee in Portland, Maine, to mark the 50th, 60th, and 70th anniversaries of nine Sisters of Mercy. Bishop Joseph Gerry, OSB, was the liturgical president. After mass, many attended a reception at the Italian Heritage Center where a PowerPoint collage of past and present photos of each of the nine jubilarians was shown.

## BURLINGTON, VERMONT —

A spirit of excitement was palpable in Sacred Heart Chapel at Mount St. Mary's convent in Burlington at the gathering to welcome seven new associates to the circle of Mercy on October 19, 2008. Eight months of preparation and discernment for these women and men culminated in the Rite of Covenant ritual, led by Sister Jacqueline Marie Kieslich of the Community Leadership Team.

The new associates included Carol Boisvert, Harold Douglas, Monica Morano-Aurigemina, Marykate Rowan, Peter Rowan, Thyleen Tenney, and Sara Willihnganz. Each new associate brings a dedication to active participation in liturgy and prayer. They serve in various ministries such as Joseph's House, Dismas House, Mater Christi School, St. Joseph School and Parish, St. Michael's College, and the catechetical ministries of the Burlington parishes. They are committed to mercy in their associations with the people they meet each day and are eager to join in the celebration of community.

When asked why she requested to become a Mercy Associate,



New associates Peter and Marykate Rowan with Peter's aunt, Sister Rose Rowan, center

Marykate Rowan stated, "I'm joining Mercy Associates with my husband, Peter, and I feel that a partnership in Mercy Association will bring an even stronger bond to our marriage. Peter's aunt, Sister Rose Rowan, has been an incredible role-model and inspiration."

New Associate Sara Willihnganz wants to "cultivate the humility of a servant leader as Catherine did."

Each associate keeps us attentive to Catherine McAuley's gift of Mercy. **By Associate Co-directors Debby Patterson and Sister Ruth Ravey**

## CONNECTICUT —

Sunlight shone through the stained glass windows at St. Joseph College's Chapel on October 19, during the Associate Commitment Ceremony in Connecticut. Equally brilliant was the light of Mercy that illuminated the five new Mercy Associates.

Naomi Astyk, Geraldine Corry, Peggy-Ann Rose, Barbara Shaffer-Bengston, and Mary Ellen Williamson had discerned about their Mercy vocation for a year.

Naomi Astyk is a spiritual director, trained at Mercy Center, Madison. She is the mother of three and grandmother to



six grandchildren, (seven in January).

Geraldine (Gerry) Corry is a realtor professionally and also a licensed nurse. Gerry presents the face of Jesus and the heart of Mercy in the business world, helping all who need housing to find something appropriate. One of her ministries is walking with people who have health issues.



Finding a sense of belonging at a Mercy gathering, Peggy Ann Rose started her Mercy journey there. A leader in Kairos prison ministry in the Danbury Federal Women's Facility, Peggy also works at the Wesley Village, part of the Methodist Homes.



Barbara Shaffer-Bengston is an ordained UCC Congregational minister and serves as chaplain with Vitas Innovative Hospice care.



Mary Ellen Williamson, like Catherine, blends prayer and action, especially social action, as she works with Peggy Ann Rose as a leader in the Kairos prison ministry. Mary Ellen leads prayer in a variety of settings, including a nursing home.



The light of God and Catherine continues to shine forth as these women serve as beacons of Mercy in a sometimes dark world.

**By Associate Co-director Kathy Swift**

## Natalie McDonough, RSM, honored for her ministry of hospitality

Sister Natalie McDonough received the Sister Eileen Van Ackeren Award from St. Anthony Hospitals in Denver, Colorado, in recognition of her “distinguished actions and quiet compassion” as coordinator of hospitality for the Yaffe House. The award is named for Sister Eileen Van Ackeren, OSF, who was the last woman religious to serve as administrator for St. Anthony Hospitals. It was established to honor an internal associate who has contributed to the St. Anthony community in a significant way.

Natalie has been involved in Yaffe House, first as resident manager, then as coordinator of hospitality, since it opened in 1996. Yaffe House is a hospitality house for families and friends of critically ill and injured patients who are being treated at St. Anthony Central and who live more than 50 miles away. It is three blocks from the hospital and offers private sleeping rooms, a full kitchen, and laundry and office facilities, all for a \$20 key deposit. It offers a comforting and safe space for people in the midst of crisis. Sister Natalie and the staff of Yaffe House have offered a ministry of hospitality to over 8,000 guests from all 50 states and 45 foreign countries.

St. Anthony Hospital, founded 125 years ago by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, is now part of Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI). Because it is a trauma center, most of the patients the guests came to be with are dealing with sudden



Sister Natalie McDonough Photo: Marcia Ward

illness or injury. Family members stay an average of six weeks. Thanks to the proceeds from a golf tournament held by the doctors, there is now a medical library and a computer. Families can set up a web page – a Care Page – with pictures and updates and send e-mails to patients. Since the house is set up for wireless communication, many people come with laptop computers and can continue to do business even though they have had to leave their work suddenly.

The house is quiet and restful, says Natalie, and is an easy walk from the hospital. It has a beautiful view of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Since the hospital is moving about six miles west of the present location, Yaffe

House will be building a new facility on the hospital site. It will have 14 rooms – double the space of the present house. The larger house is needed, says Natalie, because there is always a waiting list. In the space of a month, they might get 20 or 30 referrals and will not be able to meet at least 15 of them. The Yaffe House staff will welcome the added space, but they will lose their view, Natalie says.

As guests prepare to leave, they can write a few lines about their stay. Some often-repeated words are, “warmth,” “safe-haven,” “godsend.” It isn’t unusual for families to come back to visit the house and the hospital. There is a “wall of fame” in the intensive care unit where photos of the former patients who return to visit are displayed.

Natalie sees the ministry at Yaffe House as one of true Mercy hospitality. “Every day is different,” she says. “It never gets routine.”

Sister Natalie McDonough is a native of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She taught Spanish and history in New Hampshire high schools before going west. After receiving her degree in religious education from Seattle University, she ministered in parishes in New Mexico and southern Colorado. She has been at Yaffe House in Denver since 1996. **By Sister Anne Vaccarest**

## Reflecting on the SOA Watch



Jennifer Kyle, clinical case manager, Maine Special Education/Mental Health Collaborative, Portland, Maine

*Leonisia Rodriguez, 27 years, El Mozote.* The moment I am handed the small white cross inscribed with these few details of a woman killed by a graduate of the School of the Americas, I have no idea how profoundly the SOA vigil is about to impact me. Right away I am struck by the fact that Leonisia was just about my age when she and hundreds of her fellow villagers in El Salvador were tortured and massacred.

My heart begins to break as I think about Leonisia and wonder what her life was like. Who did she love? What made her happy? What did she dream about? What could her future have been like? I can't help but contrast all of the hopes I have for my next 30 years with her future that was stolen by assassins, ones that were trained by my own country!

When the procession at the gates of Fort Benning begins, I start to hear the names of more victims of the SOA being read and see thousands of crosses bearing names of victims raised by those gathered. The magnitude of the

tragedy left in the wake of violence carried out by SOA graduates becomes visible and tangible. As we remember each victim by name, each person killed becomes real, present, and connected to me in a new way. Suddenly, I have a deeper understanding of what being one body in Christ means. My heart is overwhelmed by the devastating loss of so many lives and by the destruction of so many relationships and so much potential through violence. Each murder is not just a tragedy for that person's own family, community, or country, but for all of us.

As I place the cross I carried into one of the many large fences surrounding the SOA, I realize the importance of giving names and voices to each lost sister and brother. It is much easier to ignore or minimize violence when you are detached from the humanity of those who are victimized. I begin to wonder: *If we genuinely recognized our unity with all people, how could*

*our hearts not break for each individual killed? If we let our hearts break, how could we not be moved to action against violence against humans in any form, be it torture, murder, or denial of basic human rights? We would be just as outraged with injustices around the world as we are with those in our own communities. These things are happening all around us if we have the eyes to see it.*

Standing behind the Sisters of Mercy banner I realize the visible witness that the Mercy Community has to justice, not just here on this weekend in Georgia, but around the world on a daily basis. It causes me to ask myself: *What does it mean in my life to be a woman who stands for peace? How will I be committed to mercy and justice throughout the world?*

I am so thankful to the Sisters of Mercy for this opportunity and for the continuing challenge to live the Gospel of Jesus in the world today.

**By Jennifer Kyle**



Northeast Community presence at the SOA Watch, November 21-23, Fort Benning, Georgia

## Spring sessions of Mercy Circles focus on land preservation

Answering the invitation to submit topics for the Spring Mercy Circles, Sisters Carmela Garofalo, Mary Pendergast and Nancy Audette suggested land preservation. This topic was approved. Sisters in each of the six areas of the Northeast Community were contacted to work on the Mercy Circles gatherings.

The first planning meeting was held at Mercy Lodge, Cumberland, Rhode Island, October 4, 2008. Four of the six areas were represented. Presently, about 25 sisters and associates from all six areas are working together on plans for the Spring Mercy Circles. Anyone who would like to help can contact Nancy at [naudette@juno.com](mailto:naudette@juno.com).

The hope is that our focus on land will help all of us to –

- look at the land that has been entrusted to us;
- become more aware of and learn to appreciate all the species living here with us; and
- act out of that appreciation to work toward preserving those pieces of land which provide critical habitat for the future survival of certain species.

In preparation for the Spring Mercy Circles, we will publish materials in the *Mercy Northeast* newsletter and on SharePoint, and will provide other materials so that all can become familiar with the open land we hold in the Northeast. We invite you to do your own reading and research as well so that we will be ready for discussion and direction. We look forward to the Spring Mercy Circles and to discussing this extremely important issue with you.

**By Sister Nancy Audette**

### Reflection on Land

As Catherine and her companions responded to the needs of their time, we are invited to become aware and respond to the needs of our time. This series of reflections adapted from the document *Land Stewardship: A Guide for Faithful Study and Action* from the National Council of Churches Eco-Justice Programs is offered to enable each of us to become more conscious of our planet at risk. May they be helpful in your personal prayer or group reflection.

#### **Rooted in God's Word and Lands: A celebration of the Earth that nourishes us**

##### *The Good Earth*

From towering mountains to stark deserts to glorious forests and wide open fields, God's lands are an integral part of creation. Just as it was for the ancient Israelites, the land is more than real estate or mere dirt under our feet. While it includes the gifts of soil, air, and water for material sustenance, it is the foundation of human community – where we live, work, play, and find spiritual renewal. The lands we know and enjoy encompass both human-built communities and the wide open spaces of wilderness, which provide habitat and nourishment for God's other creatures.

Like trees putting down roots in the soil, we are deeply embedded in the land – physically, culturally, and spiritually. Sharing the land with our neighbors and with other creatures gives us a sense of place and belonging within our communities and the whole of creation. Experiencing the solitude and beauty of wilderness reminds us of God's power and grace in our lives. We are called to be faithful caretakers and good tenants on God's lands. It is a role of privilege and responsibility, which requires us to work actively to safeguard the land, the bountiful gifts flowing from it, and the integrity of the ecosystems and communities that rely on it.

Genesis 1:9-13, Genesis 9:8-17

*Read and reflect on these passages with new eyes.*

**Reflection on Land, above, by Sister Carmela Garofalo  
Spring Mercy Circles — Definitions, page 8, by Sister Ann Welch**

## Spring Mercy Circles — Definitions

**HABITAT** — A habitat is an ecological or environmental area that is inhabited by a particular species. It is the natural environment in which organisms live, or the physical environment that surrounds a species population.

**WETLAND** — A wetland is an area of land consisting of soil that is saturated with moisture such as a swamp, marsh, or bog. Wetlands provide a safe and lush environment for many different species of fish, birds, insects, and plants.

**CONSERVATION** — Conservation is the act of preserving, guarding, or protecting. The goal of land conservation is to perpetually preserve sensitive natural areas, farmland, water sources or notable land areas.

**LAND TRUST** — A Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that works with land owners and the community to conserve land by acquiring conservation easement or stewarding the land. Land Trusts are community-based and deeply connected to local needs, so they are well equipped to identify land that offers critical natural habitat.

**CONSERVATION EASEMENT** — A conservation easement is a voluntary agreement that allows a landowner to limit the type or amount of development on the property while retaining private ownership of the land. The easement is signed by the land owner and the Land Trust who is the party receiving the easement. The Trust accepts the easement understanding that it must enforce the terms of the easement in perpetuity. After the easement is signed, it is recorded with the County Register of Deeds and applies to all future owners of the land.

**COSMOLOGY** — Cosmology is the study of the universe in its totality and, by extension, humanity's place in it.

**ECOLOGY** — 1. Ecology is the branch of biology dealing with the relations between living organisms and their environment.  
2. Ecology is the study of the detrimental effects of modern civilization on the environment with a view toward prevention and reversal through conservation.

## It pays to recycle

The science club members of St. Theresa of Avila School in Albany, New York, are familiar with the concept and value of recycling. It has been a focus of the science club for about a year. So, when science teacher Laura Salewski presented the club with a challenge to identify an environmental concern that affects the land, they thought that they were simply being good stewards of the environment. The challenge, however, actually came from a national contest, the Lexus Eco Challenge.



After choosing Waste Management and Recycling as their project, the students had to develop a plan of action, put the plan in motion and report their findings. All of these tasks were accomplished handily and the students turned in their results, expecting no more than satisfaction in the knowledge that they were “helping the environment.” It wasn’t until later that they discovered that there was a \$10,000 prize, and that they had been awarded the prize.

Principal Sister Patricia Houlihan explained that “the \$10,000 will be divided among everyone involved – \$700 for each student, \$1,000 for the teacher, and \$2000 for the school.”

Another benefit from the project has been that City of Albany officials, inspired by St. Teresa’s efforts, are considering hiring a specialist to build a plant for Albany.

There are three more parts to the Lexus Eco Challenge: water, air, and a topic to be announced. The students therefore have an opportunity to build on this experience and continue to be an inspiration to us all.

By Eileen Keegan, Communications Office



Holy Cross Hospital, Fort Lauderdale, Florida – The Legacy of Compassion Wall was dedicated on December 12, Foundation Day for the Sisters of Mercy. The wall is located near the hospital’s cafeteria and tells the stories of compassion exhibited by members of the Holy Cross family. New stories will be featured regularly. Pictured above, are four Sisters of Mercy who minister at the hospital; from left, Sisters Ann Driscoll (NyPPaW), Margaret Crowley (Northeast), Genevra Baer (NyPPaW), and Rita Levasseur (Northeast). Photo: Courtesy of Robert Mayer

## New chapel at Saint Mary Home dedicated in Hartford, CT

On Thursday, December 11, at Mercy Community Health in West Hartford, Connecticut, Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Associates were invited to *A Celebration of Mercy* prayer service to view the newly remodeled Archbishop John F. Whealon Chapel of Our Lady of Mercy. The prayer service provided Mercy Community Health's administrators with the opportunity to thank the sisters and associates for their prayerful, powerful support of the chapel project.

Just prior to the prayer service, sisters and associates were welcomed to a celebratory supper in the Saint Mary Home Auditorium. The menu traced the history of the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in different parts of the world, representing Ireland and England circa 1831, North America and Newfoundland circa 1842, the Philippines and Caribbean circa 1900, and South America circa 1856. "There was such thought given to the planning of the food," marveled Sister Mary Etta Higgins, adding that it was as delicious as it was well strategized.

On December 12, Foundation Day for the Sisters of Mercy, Mercy Community Health marked the occasion by celebrating liturgy in the remodeled chapel.

The Most Reverend Henry J. Mansell, D.D., Archbishop of Hartford, presider, recognized both of the chapel's namesakes.

More than 100 people attended the liturgy, including Sisters of Mercy residing and serving at Saint Mary Home, members of the chapel remodeling committee and donors to the Chapel Campaign. Sister Eileen Dooling represented the



Archbishop Mansell greets Sister Irene Danaher, who resides at Saint Mary Home.

Community Leadership Team.

The chapel contains many new features that are intended to make the sacred space more universally accessible – new ramps and railings for people in wheelchairs; an altar that "floats," moving up or down in the event that the presider is in a wheelchair; and an open area in the front center section to make it possible for those using wheelchairs and walkers to find comfortable seating, excellent visibility and convenient access and egress.

The chapel also underwent a number of aesthetic changes. Beautifully painted in blues and yellows, the space is bright. Ceiling beams have been exposed, the Stations of the Cross have been cleaned and restored, and new stained glass windows are being installed. The new glass entry doors and the removal of the choir loft also contribute to the sense of openness. Along the north and south walls of the chapel, two quotations from Catherine McAuley are being painted: "We witness to Mercy when we reverence the dignity of each

person" and "As the years go by, the customary things depart and God arrives."

New pendant lighting will be installed soon. Within the sanctuary, the faux ceiling was removed and the tabernacle now resides in a more visible space. A new pulpit and bell ringer device were installed, and to the right of the altar, just below a new statue of the Holy Family, a state-of-the-art organ has found its home.

Outside the doors to the chapel, the archiepiscopal coat of arms of Archbishop John F. Whealon will be etched in granite on the floor. Directly across the hall, a prayer and wake room is nearing completion. It will offer residents and families a comforting, reflective place at times when they most need consolation. On the fourth floor, a quiet area is planned near a final stained glass window featuring the image of Catherine McAuley outside the House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Dublin, Ireland.

Special thanks were given to Bill Fiocchetta, president and CEO of Mercy Community Health, and the Chapel Renovation Committee leaders – Sister Maureen Reardon, senior vice president for mission and compliance, and Steve Surprenant, senior vice president and COO.

After the Mass of Blessing, congregants gathered in the auditorium for a luncheon of lobster and sliced tenderloin sandwiches presented by the Sodexo Senior Services team at Saint Mary Home.

**By Christine M. Looby, director of community relations, Mercy Community Health, West Hartford, Connecticut**

## New Hampshire area closes year-long celebration of 150th anniversary

**M**ore than 120 sisters, associates, and companions gathered in Windham on Sunday, December 14, 2008, for the festive event that brought to a close the year-long celebration of the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in New Hampshire. The entire Northeast Community Leadership Team was present for the occasion. The day's featured speaker was Sister Deirdre Mullan, director of Mercy Global Concern representing the Sisters of Mercy at the United Nations.

Sister Dympna Smith welcomed the group with a reflection on the call to Mercy. Catherine and Frances would tell us to be stewards of God's great mercy, she said. "Dispense God's mercy freely, immediately, luxuriously," she continued, "for the gift evaporates in storage. Used, it becomes the measure of oil and meal, never empty when constantly served to a world of people hungering to be wrapped in Mercy – accepted, loved, forgiven and cherished."

**S**ister Deirdre Mullan, in her inspiring presentation entitled "The Audacity to Hope," called those present to reflect not only on the past but also on the work of the present and the hope for the future. "A celebration time is a time to remember, a time to give thanks, and a time to hope – hope into the future," she said. Setting her reflection in the context of the Advent and Christmas seasons, Deirdre noted that "in many respects, it is the hour of Bethlehem in our lives as Mercy women today. It is the hour of Bethlehem in that new forms of life are emerging, but it is also the hour of Bethlehem in that fragility and frailty are being painfully felt all over the Mercy World." She urged her listeners not to lose hope. "The time is now and we are here," she said. In closing, she asked, "What is the challenge for us as we begin the next 150 years? In a world where there are many broken hearts we each need to respond to need wherever we encounter it."

After being inspired by the morning's speakers, the group enjoyed one another's company over a special luncheon.

**E**arlier in the year, the sisters and associates had decided that an appropriate action for the New Hampshire area to take in honor of the anniversary would be to create a 150th Anniversary Fund to give fuel assistance to persons or families in need. At the close of the day, Sister May Cronin, New Hampshire life and ministry administrator, announced that the total amount donated to the fund was \$6,875. That amount included a gift from the Northeast Community. May thanked all who had contributed for their overwhelming generosity.

At the close of the year of celebrations, Dympna voiced the sentiments of the New Hampshire area when she said, "May we and all Sisters of Mercy, with tender courage move forward into the future." **By Sister Anne Vaccarest**



**Sister Deirdre Mullan**



**Sister Dympna Smith**

## Mercy ministries celebrate the Christmas season in Maine

*The Christmas season is a joyous and busy time for the many Mercy ministries in the Portland area of the Northeast Community. A few of the highlights included the following:*

- The McAuley Residence building was rededicated in honor of its 20th year anniversary. As the only supportive transitional housing in the state for women with children or alone, the residence is a sponsored ministry that recently became a part of Mercy Hospital, another sponsored ministry of the Northeast Community.

As part of the festivities, Sister Miriam Therese Callnan, program manager for McAuley Residence, wrote *Catherine McAuley's House of Mercy*. She explains that the early outreach of the Sisters of Mercy on Baggot Street in Ireland is continued today at McAuley Residence. The vision of Catherine McAuley for Baggot Street was "...to build a center to prepare women with employable skills sufficient to support themselves and maintain a family." Since 1988, almost 100 women have found McAuley Residence to be, like Baggot Street, a place of compassion, safety and hope.

- Sister Patricia Pora, director of the Hispanic Ministry, partnered with Sacred Heart Church in Portland to host a Guadalupe Festival that even a



McAuley Residence Open House – from left, Sara Platt, former resident, retired teacher and sponsor for women in recovery; Maureen Wallace, Portland's life and ministry administrator; David Miley; Brenda Miley, associate and Mercy Hospital board member; Sister Ellen Turner, mission service specialist, Mercy Hospital; Sister Miriam Therese Callnan, program manager

major ice storm couldn't cancel. Postponed a few days, the festival was a welcome distraction since many who attended were, like the church, cold and without power.

The celebration began with the "living photograph" of the story of Guadalupe. Children played the part of Our Lady, Juan Diego, and the bishop, while several narrators read the story which included verses from the hymn *La Guadalupana*. After the narration, everyone enjoyed a meal of traditional dishes cooked and donated by Hispanic parishioners and restaurants. The children received gifts of hats and mittens knitted by a generous home-bound member of the church. The fiesta ended with the customary piñata, then everyone pitching in to clean up.

- Sister Kathleen Thornton's ministry of music education has touched the lives of many students in Maine. She began her ministry in 1967 as a music educator for as many as seven schools. She taught piano lessons after school to even more students. After 27 years, Sister Kathleen focused her teaching on after school piano lessons. She estimates that she has taught close to 2,000 students in a ministry that spans over three decades.

In the classroom or after school, her music ministry has always been dedicated to St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music. Her Christmas recital is an annual highlight enjoyed by students and parents alike. This year was no exception. Each student performed a well-practiced Christmas carol, followed by a sing-along of *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. The afternoon recital ended with hot chocolate and homemade cookies for all. **By Bridget Chase**



Sister Kathleen Thornton and her students leading the audience in a sing-along of *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*



# To Act in Harmony With All Creation

June 21-27, 2009

St. Joseph's College of Maine

On the shore of Lake Sebago

*Sponsored by the Mercy Northeast Ecology Ministry*

Mercy Sisters, Associates, Companions and partners in ministry are invited to a week of reflection designed to engage us in a deeper understanding and support for the implications of our Direction Statement and Critical Concerns which call us to "act in harmony and interdependence with all Creation" and to "reverence Earth and work more effectively toward the sustainability of life and toward universal recognition of the fundamental right to water."

From the context of a living but endangered Earth, itself evolving within a still expanding universe, we will explore our time in history in which we are challenged to bring forth a newly emerging ecological dimension of the charism of Mercy.

Through study, meditation, listening, journaling, time in the natural world, ritual and celebration, we will attune ourselves to the voices of Earth and explore ways to respond to what they are asking of Mercy in this Ecozoic age.

**Presenters/Facilitators**

*Miriam MacGillis, OP*, Genesis Farm founder and director  
*Chris Loughlin, OP*, Crystal Spring Center for Earth Literacy and Massachusetts Religious Lands Conservancy  
*Denise Turcotte, CSC*, New Dawn Earth Center director

**For further information and to register contact:**

New Dawn Earth Center  
75 Wrentham Road  
Cumberland, RI 02864  
(401) 333-1341 E-mail: [newdawn@mercyne.org](mailto:newdawn@mercyne.org)

**REGISTRATION FORM:**

**Advanced deposit of \$150 required by March 12, 2009**

Tuition & single room & board: \$390 \_\_\_\_\_ Tuition & double room & board: \$350 \_\_\_\_\_  
Commuter: \$250 \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Tel. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

## Justice conference held in Hartford, CT

The Collaborative Center for Justice sponsored a conference entitled *Moving Politics Beyond Selfishness and Division, Vote the Common Good*, September 20, 2008, at Saint Joseph College, West Hartford, Connecticut.

The presenters were Sister Sara Dwyer, ASC, education program coordinator of NETWORK, a national Catholic social justice lobby in Washington, D.C., and Doug Hall, PhD., acting managing director of Connecticut Voices for Children. The conference was well received by over 100 participants.

## Voter education, registration

During October 2008, Sisters Mary Alice Synkewecz, RSM, and Linda Pepe, CSJ, from the Collaborative Center for Justice addressed voter education and registration at several direct service agencies in Connecticut. Their presentations at convents and retirement facilities (RSM, CSJ, SND, SSND, and DHS) explained materials on the Platform for the Common Good and the November elections. They encouraged voters to be informed and to continue to hold elected officials accountable after November 4.

## Vocation ministers meet young women of peace and justice at SOA Watch

On the weekend of November 21-23, 2008, eleven Mercy vocation ministers gathered at the School of the Americas Watch, Fort Benning, Georgia. They came knowing that thousands of young women interested in justice and peace would also be there. As women of Mercy, the vocation ministers joined thousands to walk in solidarity with our sisters and brothers who have been marginalized or murdered by soldiers trained at the SOA. The vocation ministers were also there to invite the women at the site to look at who the Sisters of Mercy are today – women of justice, women of peace.

In the fall 2008 issue of *Horizon*, John Neafsey says that vocation today has a deep connection between personal calling and social conscience. He also says that young people today see a call to religious life as not only about “me” and my personal fulfillment, but about “us” and the common good, a deep sense of personal vocation and social responsibility.

Vocation ministers are keenly aware of the growing movement of today’s youth toward authenticity and action regarding issues of social justice and the need to work for the common good. Service, prayer and community are deep needs in the lives of young people. Vocation ministers view the presence of the Sisters of Mercy at the SOA Watch as a witness to the gift the sisters are to a wounded world – women of Mercy, justice and peace.

May many women answer a call to Mercy, an invitation to “Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.” *Micah 6:8*

**Sister Dale Jarvis, vocation minister, Northeast Community**

### MERCY

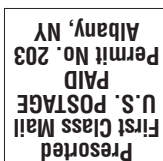
### Northeast

Anne Vaccaarest, RSM, Editorial Assistant  
Chloe Van Aken,  
Director of Communications  
310 South Manning Blvd.  
Albany, NY 12208-1770  
(518) 437-3015 • Fax (518) 437-3030

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Send comments to: [cvanaken@mercynone.org](mailto:cvanaken@mercynone.org).



Sisters of Mercy of the Americas –  
Northeast Community  
15 Highland View Road  
Cumberland, RI 02864-1124