

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).

## Sister Eugena Poulin honored posthumously

During a recent ceremony at Salve Regina University in Newport, RI, François Gauthier, Consul General of France in Boston, presented the prestigious *Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques* medal posthumously to Sister Eugena Poulin who died August 28, 2008. The citation stated that the Government of France recognized Sister Eugena for her work in advancing French culture. The medal and citation will be permanently displayed at Salve Regina University.



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**A new external web site will be launched in late May or early June for the Northeast Community. Stay tuned.**

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

## Northeast Sponsor Council gathers with sponsor councils across the Institute



Judith Carey, RSM

The 15 members of the Northeast Sponsor Council gathered in Parsippany, New Jersey, from April 2-4, with other Sponsor Council members from across the Institute for the first conference for Mercy Sponsor Councils.

The idea for this event originated when three Directors of Sponsorship – Sisters Lorraine LaVigne (Northeast), Margaret Taylor (Mid-Atlantic), and Georgine Scarpino (NyPPaW), and Associate Director for Sponsorship Nancy Parent Bancroft (Northeast) – decided to gather their respective Sponsor Council members to share, reflect, educate and collaborate during this two-day meeting. They also invited Sponsor Council members from the West Midwest and South Central Communities to attend the conference.

Participants from the Northeast Community included Sister Lorraine LaVigne, Nancy Bancroft, other Sponsor Council members, and leadership representatives, Sisters Eileen Dooling, Maureen McElroy and Michele Aronica.



Two Northeast Community participants at first Institute-wide Mercy Sponsorship Council conference, from left, Sue Jenkinson, Sponsor Council member; Sister Maureen McElroy (CLT)

Sister Judith Carey (Northeast), vice-president for mission integration at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford, Connecticut, served as the facilitator and as a presenter. She shared her knowledge and expertise about the role of governance in mission integration. "It is critical

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## Sponsors Council

Continued from page 1

that the Sisters of Mercy, through their Sponsor Council, ensure that their living mission and core values permeate each ministry that they sponsor," said Judith.

Other presenters included Sister Mary Trainer, Ph. D., (Mid-Atlantic), director of Cranaleith Spiritual Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Martha Conroy, director of sponsorship education and ministry formation, Catholic Health East; Sister Corinne Raven (West Midwest), director of Network for Mercy Education; and Marguerite Stapleton, former vice-president for mission effectiveness, St. Mary's Health System, Lewiston, Maine.

Sister Pat McDermott (ILT) explained the affirmation of sponsorship at the 2005 Institute Chapter, and Sister Linda Werthman (ILT) discussed some of the future challenges that affect sponsorship, such as the current economic reality and decline in the number of vocations.

"Sponsored ministries are like grown children," says Cynthia Murray Beliveau, member of the Northeast's Sponsor Council and mother of four. Paraphrasing Khalil Gibran, the writer of *The Prophet*, Cynthia says, "The sisters gave the ministries their roots, now it is time for the sisters to give the ministries their wings and to open up a whole new world of working with Sponsor Councils who will help ensure their mission." **By Debbi Della Porta, Director of Communications (Mid-Atlantic)**

## Leadership Team Message

*It takes labor, hard, hard labor to bring to birth something new.*  
— A Psalm for Midwives, Miriam Therese Winter

The Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Northeast Community was birthed on July 1, 2006 – an exciting moment for all of us. Since that time we have worked with our staff, partners and members to create an infrastructure that will sustain this new Community into the future. We are now in that inquisitive "toddler stage" that explores everything. In our April meetings we shared some of our projects and challenges, namely, retirement, properties, sponsorship and finances.

As we prepare for Assembly 2010, with the theme of *Reclaiming Catherine's Passion*, we ask ourselves where would Catherine lead us if she were with us today? As we address the economic challenges we face in light of the downturn in our present world economy, where would she counsel us to cut back? What would she say about our ministries, many of which are fragile? Would she begin new ministries around our Critical Concerns? The Easter season readings from the Acts of the Apostles reveal to us the simple but strong faith of the early Christians who were implementing the way of life that Jesus taught them. Their example strengthens us in the continued development and evolution of the Northeast Community.

Community life, as you know, is one of our planning issues. We have established a new committee focusing on holistic living to address that issue. We are still struggling to find a suitable name for this group. Those who responded to our SharePoint request for committee members are: Sisters Joanne Bibeau, Ann Duhaime, Mary Hartnett, Fran Lynch, Margaret Mathis, Pat Oliver, Ginny Sposito, Janice Turner, Sue Wieczynski and liaisons, Ellen Kurtz, Maureen McElroy and Kathleen Turley. The purpose of this committee is to propose ways that will enable and empower all of us to live holistically through the transitions of life.

In preparation for the celebration of the feast of Pentecost, we ponder the words of Ted Loder —

*Lord, send the gift of your Spirit to fill this place,  
... myself and the world.*

*Touch me with truth that burns like fire.*

*With beauty that moves like the wind;*

*And set me free, Lord*

*Free to try new ways of living; free to forgive myself and others;*

*Free to love and laugh and sing; free to lay aside my burden of security;*

*Free to join the battle for justice and peace; free to see and listen  
and wonder again;*

*Free to give, to receive, to rejoice as a child of your Spirit.*

In Mercy,

Ellen, Eileen, Marie, Maureen, Michele and Kathleen

## Contemplative Morning sessions begin discussion for 2010 Assembly

In preparation for the 2010 Assembly, Contemplative Mornings were held throughout the Northeast Community between February 21 and March 7. The theme was Reclaiming Catherine's Passion: Our Relationship with Church.

The mornings began with quiet time for recalling personal reflection done in advance of the meeting. Participants had the opportunity to engage in discussion about what it means to be Mercy in the Church, and each table developed a single statement that reflected the discussion.

The table statements from all the Contemplative Morning sessions were compiled by the Assembly facilitators and given to a dialogue group for further analysis. The group met April 18 in Windham to probe more deeply the Community's responses, and consider actions that need further attention by the Assembly. The following sisters made up the group: Sisters Nancy Audette, Mary Boisselle, Margaret Carey, Dot Cormier, Pat Flynn, Lilyan Fraher, Fran Lynch, and Kathleen Pritty. Sister Janice Turner, a member of the Assembly steering committee, was the facilitator.

Materials produced by the dialogue group will be forwarded to the Assembly planning committee, which will send out the report with a further question for consideration. **By Sister Anne Vaccarest**



Enjoying a break at the February 21 Contemplative Morning in Windham, NH, are, from left, Sisters Barbara Nelson, Mary Ellen Foley, Chris Kavanagh, Pat Farley, Kathy McInnis, and Mary Whelan

*Announcing...*

**Dr. Jane Gerety, RSM, will become the seventh president of Salve Regina University, Newport, Rhode Island, on July 1, 2009.**

## Robin Cabral is new Community director of development



On April 6, 2009, Robin Cabral became the Northeast Community's first director of development. Robin is responsible for

planning, designing, and implementing a comprehensive fundraising program in support of the Community's vision, mission and goals.

For six years before becoming the director of development, Robin was responsible for development and marketing for the Schwartz Center for Children in New Bedford, Massachusetts. While there, she planned, designed and implemented the Center's development efforts and completed a \$4.5 million capital campaign to build a new facility in Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

Robin plans to develop a "culture of philanthropy" for the Community, and says, "I am very excited about the possibility of creating a cohesive and holistic development approach to fundraising for the Northeast Community."

Robin prides herself in maintaining a healthy lifestyle by eating right, running, and lifting weights. She can also be found cruising the back roads of southeastern Massachusetts on her Harley-Davidson.

Robin's office is in Cumberland and she can be reached at [rcabral@mercyne.org](mailto:rcabral@mercyne.org) or (401) 333-6333, Ext. 16.

## Mercy Housing and Shelter Corp. programs help persons in need

Eric Hodge commands a two-seat shoe-shine stand in the gleaming marble and glass lobby of Hartford's City Place, a bustling 38-floor high rise in the heart of Connecticut's capital city. On any morning, he greets many of the professionals – lawyers and restaurateurs among them – by first name as they cross his corner on their way to and from their offices.

The 55-year-old grandson of a shoe-shine master, Eric takes pride in his work. A former amateur Golden Glove New England champ, he has weathered a few strokes, addiction, unemployment and homelessness. But he got through with help from Mercy Housing Shelter Corp., which gave him a room at St. Elizabeth House where he lived for almost two years while working with recovery specialists toward his independence. Now he has a job, his own place to live, and peace of mind. He is so grateful for his recovery that last Christmas he gave Mercy Housing and Shelter a check for more than \$500 to be used to help others. That's a lot of shines at \$5 for shoes and \$7 for boots. "To keep it, you've got to give it away," he says.

St. Elizabeth House, a transitional living facility, is one of six programs run by Mercy Housing and Shelter Corp. (MHSC), in its goal toward ending homelessness. MHSC serves more than 8,000 men, women and children each year in the greater Hartford and Middletown communities with the most basic and yet most essential services in life – food and housing.

For the past 25 years, MHSC has touched the lives of 250,000 people

like Eric Hodge, providing transitional housing; access to permanent, supportive housing; meals; support services; intensive case management; vocational aid; education; and advocacy. MHSC serves single men and women, families, and mentally ill persons out of facilities, in Hartford, West Hartford and Middletown, and in apartments in Hartford, Middlesex and Tolland counties.

The nonprofit corporation was founded in 1983 by the Sisters of Mercy in Connecticut, after Sister Bridget Kenny expressed concern that residents of low-income units in St. Elizabeth House on Main Street in Hartford would become homeless. With the lack of affordable units in the area and the fact that many residents needed support services, the prospects of their finding other decent, appropriate, affordable places were grim.

Vowing to seek out, initiate, advocate and support housing and shelter services as part of its ministry, the sisters founded Mercy Housing and Shelter Corp. in August 1983, and appointed its first director in November. Four years later, the corporation hired its first full-time executive director. Today, Sister Patricia McKeon serves as executive director, a position she's held for the past decade, overseeing 100 staff in five locations.

St. Elizabeth House offers four services: the Friendship Center, a day shelter offering the community meals (about 225 a day), medical care (50 to 100 people a week), clothing, showers, toiletries, use of a phone and referrals.; Jump Start, offering transitional living clients



basic computer skills, resume writing, job training and job placement; a 48-bed transitional living program offering clients up to two years of housing, food, clothing and medical care while they work with counselors to live on their own; and a 10-bed mental health community respite services program offering short-term housing to people with mental illness discharged from facilities – with nowhere to go – while suitable housing is found.

MHSC also runs Shepherd Home, a 70-bed transitional living program in Middletown; The Residence, 12 permanent apartments (in the wing of another facility) in West Hartford for men and women with psychiatric disabilities; Mercy House, a nine-room home in Hartford for adults with HIV/AIDS and other disabilities; Catherine's Place, short-term housing in Hartford for eight homeless women; and the Supportive Housing program, which places single adults and families in apartments.

MHSC has placed 3,321 homeless persons in permanent housing, including 228 in 2008.

MHSC gets funding from state and federal governments, corporations, family foundations, individuals and other nonprofit agencies.

**By Suzan Bibisi, McAuley Housing and Shelter Corp.**

## Students recognized for environmental efforts **Justice concerns**

The eighth grades students at St. Teresa of Avila School in Albany, New York, have done it again.

The Science Club at St. Teresa's is one of six first-place winners for the middle school portion of the Lexus Eco Challenge Finale.

In the fall of 2008, the St. Teresa's Science Club was recognized for its recycling campaign (land), which had far-reaching effects in the school, parish and city of Albany communities. The prize for that endeavor was \$10,000. St. Teresa's was also recognized for the second challenge: water. The prize for that challenge was also \$10,000.

The final task for the Science Club was to create a PowerPoint presentation on land, water, or air/climate. The club chose to build on the success of the land portion of the study. The team was awarded \$30,000 for this portion of the challenge.

The City of Albany Common Council recognized the work of the students on February 2, 2009, with a resolution congratulating the Gators Going Green for winning the Lexus Eco Challenge and their efforts in creating a recycling program for their school and parish communities.

Attending the presentation were Sister Patricia Houlihan, principal; Laura Salewski, science club advisor; and parents of the students.

**By Eileen Keegan, Northeast Communications Office**



St. Teresa of Avila Science Club – Gators Going Green

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## Students mark 100 days; Esther marks 100 years



Kindergarteners at the Maria College Campus School in Albany, New York, celebrate their 100th day of school with McAuley resident Esther Mae Smith, who is celebrating the 100th year since her birth.

**Corporate Stand** — It's one thing to make a corporate stand, but how do we communicate it to the public? Someone suggested having bumper stickers printed with "Sisters of Mercy . . ." The person who comes up with the best bumper sticker phrase will be rewarded with two "Sisters of Mercy Saving the Earth One Bag at a Time" cloth shopping bags. Send your bumper sticker suggestions to Sister Kathleen Pritty at [kpritty@mercyne.org](mailto:kpritty@mercyne.org) or fax 518-437-3030.

A special thanks to Sister Dot Cormier for finding the video *FLOW*. Those who saw it were moved *with* compassion and *to* action. If you have not seen it, get a copy from your LAMA or justice committee.

**Lobby for Immigration** — Memorial Day recess for the U.S. Congress is fast approaching. For the third year, Sisters of Mercy, associates, Mercy Volunteers, students and co-ministers will visit and call their local congressional delegations to lobby for comprehensive immigration reform. This year, in the DREAM Act, we have legislation that goes to the heart of Mercy – education for young students. We are also encouraged that President Obama is determined to address our broken immigration system. Our colleagues in D.C. tell us that we need to speak out now; the anti-immigrant voices are strong and well organized.

Copies of the DVD *Your Voice Counts*, put out by NETWORK, is available to everyone. If you would like a 20-minute crash course on lobbying, please let me know and I'll send a DVD to you.

**By Sister Kathleen Pritty**

## Mercy goes beyond borders and expectations

The mouthwatering aroma of global cuisine filled the air. Brightly colored posters plastered the walls. Students and faculty alike flooded into the gym. The Mercy Day of Service had begun.

At Mercy High School in Middletown, Connecticut, during physical education and religion classes on March 4, Mercy girls participated in the first ever day of service. The organization Mercy Beyond Borders focused on raising both money and awareness about Sudan.

The freshmen, sophomore, and junior classes researched the political and cultural aspects of the situation and presented projects on a variety of topics, ranging from Sudanese traditions and food to the genocide in Darfur. These projects were displayed in the “old” gym throughout the day for everyone to observe.

Senior Ryann Kinney gave a moving speech about her recent trip to Nairobi, Kenya, this past January with the College of Holy Cross. She described a four-year-old girl who hadn’t spoken since she had been raped weeks before; an isolated village that was 30 miles away from water; the runaway war brides who defied their parents’ wishes and would never see their families again.

“The poverty in New York is nothing compared to the poverty in Africa,” she remarked.

As part of the service, girls were encouraged to donate money for Mercy Beyond Borders, a non-profit organization founded in 2008 by Sister of Mercy Marilyn Lacey (West Midwest) and two of



her colleagues. The foundation raises money for St. Bakhita’s secondary school in Narus, Sudan, which gives children educational opportunities that they would not have had otherwise.

Mercy’s initial goal was \$2,500, with \$500 from each class, including faculty. In typical Mercy fashion, however, \$10,200 was collected. This is the equivalent of providing tuition, lodging, and food for 50 students, as well as 95 hygiene products, 27 boxes of classroom supplies, 30 bikes, 40 bed nets, and 35 goats!

Campus minister Ms. Derbacher commented on the time and effort

that Mercy girls dedicated toward researching the situation in Sudan. “If you give money without education it means nothing. The efforts behind our Mercy Day of Service gave a deeper meaning to the entire process.”

She went on to say, “Mercy rules! I am so proud of everyone at Mercy for the contributions they made to St. Bakhita’s school. It went far beyond my expectations. It just shows the spirit and dedication of every single person in this building. We are truly a Mercy family.” **By Mercy High students Julia Kannam (2011) and Julia Kelly (2011)**

### Marilyn Lacey, RSM, publishes new book

#### ***This Flowing Toward Me: A Story of God Arriving in Strangers***

What began in 1979 as a response to a random bulletin board posting would ultimately change Sister Marilyn Lacey’s life — and the lives of countless refugees. In vivid prose, Marilyn narrates her 25-year spiritual journey of work with those displaced by conflict and disaster. Timely and engaging, *This Flowing Toward Me* offers fresh, personal insights into the world of refugees and international immigrants. More importantly, it stirs our hearts to remember the Gospel mandate to welcome the stranger.

*Marilyn’s book can be purchased through the bookstore at Mercy Center, Burlingame, California; Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Pacific time; 650-373-4511*

## Sister centenarians grace St. Rita Health Centre in Cumberland, RI

**Sister Raymond Patton** will celebrate 101 years of life on June 22, 2009. Eighty-one of those years have been spent as a Sister of Mercy.

In 1926, she entered the community and taught in Rhode Island Catholic parish schools in Pawtucket, Providence, Cranston, and West Warwick, as well as at St. Mary Academy - Bay View in Riverside, Rhode Island. Sisters who have lived with Sister Raymond over the years have happy memories and recall her as "a delight to live with."

Always a quiet person, she was happiest when she was working with her tool kit. When she retired at Bay View, which had an assisted living facility at the time, she created articles to be sold in the Mercycraft gift shop. She used her talent as a woodcrafter to make dollhouses and birdhouses, as well as toys and wooden dolls in stylish dresses. Her specialty was a type of woodworking called "sloyd," begun in Sweden many years ago.

Earlier in her life, Sister Raymond suffered the loss of her younger sister, Sister Mary Norbertine. Another loss that she found particularly painful was the closing of the assisted living unit at Bay View and her move to Franklin Court, an assisted living facility in Bristol, Rhode Island. She was, however, one of the first to express her delight at the convenient accommodations she enjoyed there.

Sister presently resides at Mount St. Rita Health Centre in Cumberland. She often travels the corridors in her wheelchair, and cheerfully greets those who stop to speak with her. One of her favorite gestures is to kiss the hand extended to her to



Sister Raymond Patton

demonstrate her gratitude and love. Her smile, followed by "God bless you," expresses beautifully the essence of this gentle lady.

In 1927, an intrepid young lady of 17 traveled from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Mount St. Mary Convent in Fall River, Massachusetts, to enter the Sisters of Mercy. (The Fall River community amalgamated with Providence when the Union was formed in 1929.) She is now known as **Sister Constance Monahan**, and on March 5, 2009, she celebrated her 100th birthday. The Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese of Fall River were blessed with the presence of several sisters from Newfoundland who, over the years, assumed leadership roles as principals and superiors. In later years, Sister Constance enjoyed the opportunity to return to Newfoundland to visit her sister and brothers and their families.

For many years, Sister Constance taught in parish elementary schools in the Massachusetts cities of Fall River, New Bedford, and North Attleboro before becoming principal



Sister Constance Monahan

at St. Louis School, Fall River, and later, Holy Name School in New Bedford.

She is admired for her quiet self-assurance and helpfulness to all with whom she lived and worked, especially the younger sisters who needed an added word of encouragement or a little extra help as fledgling teachers. Her talents in music, crocheting and cooking are also well known.

Sister Constance now resides at Mount St. Rita. She enjoys greeting people along the corridors on her daily walks with her walker. She continues to dress with a colorful flair enhanced by a weekly appointment with the hairdresser. She has been a gift to all who have encountered her in her 83 years as a Sister of Mercy.

Mercy centenarians Sister Constance Monahan and Sister Raymond Patton are truly a joy to visit as they continue to live their lives in prayer and love. The presence of the Lord is etched in their hearts. The Northeast Community thanks God for them. **By Sisters Mary Costello and Mercy McAuliffe**

Photos: Celeste Duclos

## Gail Waring, RSM, selected for Community Leadership Award

Sister Gail Waring, vice president for mission services at St. Peter's Health Care Service in Albany, New York, is the New York State Public Health Association's choice for its 2009 Community Leadership Award. Gail was selected because of her accomplishments in expanding charity care and other health programs for the neediest in the community.

The annual Community Leadership Award gives the New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA) the opportunity to recognize an outstanding New Yorker who has demonstrated proven excellence in mobilizing the community toward the prevention of disease and promotion of public health.



"Sister Gail is a shining example of how one person makes a difference in a whole community's public health system," said Martha Pofit, executive director of the NYSPHA.

The award was presented at the NYSPHA's annual meeting on April 3 in Colonie, New York.

Gail was honored for her support of community-health planning at St. Peter's Health Services, along with the Neighborhood Based Alliance, the Healthy Capital District Initiative (HCDI) and other organizations. Her work has

resulted in the creation of numerous new or expanded health services including school-based dental programs, enrollment programs for public health insurance applicants, neighborhood-based addiction recovery services, pediatric care and dental services.

With the support of the leadership of St. Peter's Health Care Services, Gail has also protected vulnerable populations by developing St. Peter's Charity Care program which enables more than one thousand St. Peter's patients to receive free or subsidized health services each year.

Kevin Jobin-Davis, executive director the HCDI, said "Sister Gail's commitment to understanding and addressing the health needs of the most vulnerable populations in our community has improved thousands of lives and honors the legacy of Sister Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy."

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## Marylouise Fennell, RSM, speaks at Notre Dame

Sister Marylouise Fennell was a main speaker at "What We Hold in Trust," a seminar for Catholic college and university presidents and trustees sponsored by the University of Notre Dame, April 15-19.

Marylouise's topic was *Personal Faith and Effective Presidencies: What is the Connection?* Among the other speakers was Father Richard Mc Brien.

### MERCY

### *Northeast*

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