

Mercy Works

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Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Northeast Community • Committed to Compassionate Service



With the Northeast Community a reality for almost nine months, we are

increasingly aware of the vibrant ministries that are alive and well among us.

This issue focuses on our works among immigrants. Immigration has been a topic of relevance for the Sisters of Mercy throughout our history. Catherine McAuley founded the Community in Dublin, Ireland, and her sisters went to many other countries, including the United States. These early sisters knew they would never return home and ministered among immigrants in their new lands.

Today, dislocation of populations is a worldwide phenomenon. People are being forced to leave homelands in search of safety and opportunities for themselves and their families. Because immigration is a critical concern, all Sisters of Mercy and their associates and companions are called to make a commitment to address the issue.

We are proud to share with you what our sisters, associates and companions in the Northeast are doing among today's immigrant populations. We believe their ministries are appropriate to the twenty-first century and are true to our history and the wishes of our foundress. Thank you for your faithfulness to the Sisters of Mercy and especially for your support of our ministries.

**Ellen Kurtz, RSM, President
Mercy Northeast Community**

Patricia Pora, RSM, takes lead in creating Hispanic ministry in Maine

Sister Patricia Pora's interest in issues affecting immigrants and refugees began as a child. Until she was 16, she lived in South America. When she arrived in the U.S. to finish high school, she experienced firsthand what it feels like not to understand the culture. Little did she know the profound impact this time would have on her life.

As a Sister of Mercy, she returned to South America to assist the Regional Community of Merion, Pennsylvania minister among women, children and families in Peru. She returned to Maine in December of 2001 to care for an ailing parent. While Patricia was home, a pregnant Hispanic woman came to her looking for prenatal care. Word spread quickly that there was a sister who spoke Spanish and was a good resource for all kinds of questions.

Patricia initially saw her outreach to Hispanic people as a spare-time ministry, but her perception changed quickly. She was overwhelmed by the volume of calls and the variety of questions asked by this underserved but vital part of Maine's workforce. Each year, people from Mexico and Central America make up close to 96 percent (6,000-10,000) of Maine's temporary foreign work force. They fill positions that are unattractive to many residents because they are temporary, pay poorly and do not come with benefits.

Patricia approached the Diocese of Portland, which was willing to partner with the Sisters of Mercy to better serve Maine's Spanish-speaking Catholics. As a result of grants that Patricia wrote, the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy stepped forward in 2005 with the funding to launch this

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- **Maine's Hispanic population is growing because many find they can stay year round working several unfilled jobs that still pay more than jobs in their country of origin.**
- **Approximately two-thirds of the workforce labeled as temporary foreign workers support themselves and others back home.**



John Connors of LULAC presents Sister Patricia Pora with a letter of commendation as part of its 2006 Cesar Chavez Remembrance

Patricia Pora, RSM takes lead

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program for three years.

Today, Patricia travels the state working with volunteers and serving the varied needs of Hispanic people in Portland, Lewiston/Auburn and Cherryfield in coastal Northern Maine. Highlights of the Hispanic ministry include connecting people to appropriate social and legal services, translating documents, organizing Spanish prayer groups for women and youth, and participating in informational sessions about the needs of minority populations.

Patricia's passion and dedication to the Hispanic population has attracted the attention of state officials and the Maine Citizens Council of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).

For all this program's successes, however, the funds that launched it will be exhausted this year. The Sisters of Mercy – Northeast Community and the Diocese of Portland are committed to seeing this ministry grow. Because of its financial situation, the Diocese is limited to giving in-kind support such as office space and computers. Donations from the Mercy family will be critical to ensure that this ministry has a future with promise.



Sister Patricia Pora sorts yarn with members of a women's group that is part of the Hispanic ministry she helped found with the Sisters of Mercy and the Diocese of Portland

Immigrants find hope and compassion at McAuley House

Located in the Elmwood section of Providence, Rhode Island, McAuley House provides services to 200-300 people a day, about half of whom are immigrants coming from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti and Liberia.

Many of the immigrants who pass through the doors of McAuley House deal with the pain of prejudice and live in fear of the unknown every day. "Prejudice has always been, but it's very different today," said social worker, Sister Joan Rokicki. "These people are not only dealing with poverty, they've been raped, tortured, and have lived under the violence of war-ridden countries. They work at some of the lowest-paying jobs and yet an apartment in the city costs about \$700 a month."

Through word of mouth they learn McAuley House is a place where they can receive a continental breakfast or share lunch with others at cloth-covered tables complete with centerpiece and place settings. What is more important, they discover that when they visit McAuley House, they are treated with love, respect and dignity.

In the true spirit of Catherine McAuley, whose Sisters of Mercy came to the United States to help immigrant families establish themselves in new cities, the staff and volunteers at McAuley House talk to their guests as individuals to find out what their needs are, then try to meet them.

Joan is able to provide assistance with purchasing a much-needed prescription, acquiring clothing, and filling out paperwork that enables them to find a job or an apartment. "They are a very spiritual, expressive, and loving group of people who have great faith," said Joan. New services at McAuley include an art class and bible study group led by volunteers, and an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.

Carmen Sebvino, originally from the Dominican Republic, has volunteered in the kitchen, served meals, and worked in the office at McAuley House for five years. "The people who come here are good people," she said. "Sometimes they can't speak English and can't say what they want to say. I listen to them then I tell Sister Joan what they said. I enjoy working here because the people need me."

Volunteers are always welcome to help in the kitchen or serve meals. However, McAuley House also needs people with specialized skills to help with projects including web design and special events. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please call Rev. Mary Margaret Earl, administrator at (401) 941-9013 Ext. 302.



From left, Rev. Mary Margaret Earl, administrator; Joan Rokicki, RSM, social worker; Carmen Sebvino, volunteer

Mercy Immigration ministry helps women and children

Sisters of Mercy in the New Hampshire Area, conscious of the needs of the growing immigrant population in the state, decided to explore ways to respond to those needs. They recognized that the most appropriate service they could give as educators would be to teach English as a second language and Citizenship classes.

Since March of 2006, several sisters and their friends have been providing educational services and child care twice weekly to approximately 26 women from Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Congo and Liberia.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) and Citizenship classes meet in the basement of the former St. George Church in Manchester. The children are cared for at the site while the mothers are in class.

Recently, Victoria, a student in the advanced English class, passed the exam necessary to become a certified nursing assistant. Victoria's success is a source of encouragement to the other women who are in the beginning stages of learning English. The women are hard working, industri-

ous, caring, and aware of the importance of education for themselves and their children. Victoria is seeking employment and is continuing her classes in the Citizenship program. She has been in the United States four years and will be eligible to apply for citizenship next spring.

In August 2006, a group of sisters and associates formed the New Hampshire Area Immigration Task Force was formed. At its first meeting, members agreed to support the new ministry to immigrants by finding creative ways to help with finances and by signing up more volunteers to help in the Manchester program.

The group agreed on other ways to be in solidarity with immigrants, including the following:

- Respond to action alerts from the Mercy Institute Justice Office, the Northeast Community Justice Office, and local New Hampshire groups such as NH American Friends Service Committee, NH Citizens' Action, and the NH Immigrants Rights Task Force.
- Endorse and attend local and national vigils and press conferences in support of refugees.
- Write letters to the congressional delegation and others in Washington in support of Immigration Reform.
- Educate others and themselves about on-going immigration issues.
- Continue to meet during the year.

Mercy WORKS

COMMITTED TO COMPASSIONATE SERVICE

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Sister Mary Barnea cares for the children while their mothers go to class

International Mercy Justice Conference

Immediately after the observance of National Migration Week, January 7-13, Sisters of Mercy and Mercy Associates met in St. Louis, Missouri for an International Mercy Justice meeting, January 13-19. Representatives from 11 countries were present, and presentations relating to the state of the "movement of peoples" were given for each country.

Speakers were Sister Deirdre Mullan, a Sister of Mercy from Ireland, who is the director of Mercy Global Concern at the United Nations; and Sister Marilyn Lacey, a Sister of Mercy from Burlingame, California, who has worked for 25 years in refugee camps in Asia, Africa and California.



Sister Rosario Maulas, who ministers in the Philippines, describes the plight of a Filipina woman and her struggle to survive and to support her family

Ornament Project a success

A joint effort by the Northeast Development Team created the first Community-wide Christmas Ornament Project for the Northeast. In November, two ornaments were mailed with a letter from Northeast Community President Ellen Kurtz.

"The Christmas ornament is a holiday tradition that is a vital part of our prayer ministry, and generates funding for our works and the care of our sisters," Ellen wrote. Ornaments with prayer requests decorated trees in the Northeast Areas during the Christmas holiday, and the intentions will be

remembered throughout 2007.

Thank you to all those who participated and made this project a success.



A Christmas tree in the New Hampshire Area

*This year's honoree will be
Donna C. Cupelo,
Verizon Regional President,
Massachusetts &
Rhode Island.*

A graphic poster for a "save the date" event. The text "please save the date!" is at the top in a mix of white and black fonts. Below it is a logo consisting of a cross with a square in the center. To the right of the logo is the text "THE GOVERNOR'S AWARD FOR SERVICE TO RHODE ISLAND" and "A Celebration of Mercy" in a script font. At the bottom, it says "May 4, 2007 • 5:30 pm Reception" and "hairspray 8:00 pm Performance at PPAC". On the left side of the bottom section, there is a partial image of a woman's face with styled hair.

please
save the date!
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A Celebration of Mercy
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