

Mercy Works

Volume 4 • Number 1

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



Perhaps you read about it in *The Boston Globe* or the *New Hampshire Union Leader*: our Sisters of Mercy in New

Hampshire marked a milestone anniversary in 2008. I believe the celebration's motto, *150 Years: An Unfinished History*, is more than just a slogan. It represents the optimism and action I see throughout the Northeast Community.

With the 2006 merging of Sisters of Mercy in the Northeast, we set the stage for this "new history," and by merging our administrative operations, we are able to use our human and financial resources more efficiently.

The future of Mercy also depends on expansion and new initiatives. In this issue, we spotlight our Mercy Associates, an ever-growing group of remarkable lay women and men. We also hope you will enjoy reading about our Northeast Community Ecology Ministry which began two years ago.

Meanwhile, thanks to the generosity of people like you, our ministries continue to thrive with innovation and grow with demand for their services. We were truly gratified to receive your generous financial support during the holiday season. Your gifts will continue to make a difference by supporting our ministries and our retired sisters. On behalf of the entire Community, I thank you.

Ellen Kurtz, RSM, President
Mercy Northeast Community

Associates expand the heart of Mercy

At St. Joseph College in West Hartford, Connecticut, five women recently took part in a commitment ceremony to become Mercy Associates. These women have joined 391 other lay women and men from across the Northeast Community who have a serious commitment to ministry and a spiritual life, and have embraced this calling by entering into a more formal relationship with the Sisters of Mercy as Mercy Associates.

Associates come from all walks of life, work in a variety of professions and represent many faith traditions. While maintaining an independent lifestyle, they carry out Catherine McAuley's mission of compassionate service in their jobs and volunteer work, as well as through their everyday actions.

The new associates from Connecticut are no exception: Gerry Corry is a realtor, who works in a soup kitchen and is a companion to those who have health issues; Peggy Ann Rose is a leader in Kairos prison ministry in the Danbury Federal Women's Facility, and works at an elder care facility; Barbara Shaffer-Bengston is an ordained United Church of Christ Congregational minister and serves as hospice chaplain; Mary Ellen Williamson is also a leader in the Kairos prison ministry and leads prayer in a variety of settings, including a nursing home.

"To meet these five women is to catch a glimpse of Catherine in action," says Kathy Swift, associate co-director. "Whether in their official ministry or in the exchange with the stranger, all exude Mercy.

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Mercy Associates Marykate and Peter Rowan celebrate their new covenant with Peter's aunt, Sister Rose Rowan, center, of Vermont. Marykate says that as an associate, "I'll put more 'action' into my faith."

Supporting Mercy despite these uncertain times

Every year the Sisters of Mercy gratefully receive bequests from people who have shared the vision of bringing Mercy to the world. It might surprise you to learn that some of these donors had never made a gift to us before.

Of course, a gift of any amount made at any time makes a difference. Every year, the collective generosity of our donors allows the Sisters of Mercy to extend compassionate service to a world in need. Planned gifts such as bequests offer a way to add your legacy to ours by making a contribution without tapping into current income.

The simplest way to leave a legacy is to make a bequest to the Sisters of Mercy - Northeast Community in your will. Your attorney can add a codicil to your will, stating your charitable intentions. You may choose to give outright a specific sum, or specify that a percentage of your estate pass to the Sisters of Mercy. A percentage designation allows your charitable giving goals to adjust with your changing life circumstances.

There are many options for giving through your estate that do not affect your current income, such as gifts of property or an assignment of life insurance policies, IRAs or other qualified retirement plans. In most instances, planned gifts to charity offer desirable tax consequences, and your estate attorney, tax advisor or financial planner can best advise you on the tax implications and legal matters that affect your situation. If you would like additional information on planned giving or the Mercy Northeast Legacy Society, please contact Trish Sweeney at 802-863-6835 Ext. 136 or tsweeney@mercyne.org.

Save the Date

A Celebration of Mercy, Thursday, May 28, Bank of America, 100 Westminster Street, Providence, RI

Contact Doreen Tucker
(401) 333-6333 Ext. 15.

Associates expand the heart... *Continued from page 1*



Mercy Associates Chrissy and Jason Moore with son Joshua. Each works for education and social justice in the Burlington, Vermont area.

With a smile, compassionate listening, or a genuine offer of hospitality, like Catherine, they perceive the needs of the time and seek to address them."

The Mercy Associate program, begun in the 1980s, continues to grow steadily. In the past year, 19 women and men completed the eight-month orientation period and became new associates. Northeast Community Associate directors expect at least 25 people to join in the coming year, expanding the heart of Mercy and its outreach to the world at large.



Mercy Northeast plans a corporate stand on water

"We are challenged to bring forth a newly emerging ecological dimension of the charism of Mercy." Mercy Northeast Ecology Ministry

On Earth Day, April 22, 2009, a committee of Community members will present a statement to the Sisters of Mercy Northeast Community about the use of water. The statement will reflect an Institute-wide imperative – water as a universal human right. Members of the Northeast are being called to take personal and collective responsibility for safeguarding the world's water, especially fresh water, and ensuring its equitable distribution. The statement, which will determine the personal and public actions of the Community, will be based on the following commonly held beliefs:

- Water is a human right and a public trust.
- All people have the right to high-quality potable water.
- Water is a sacred gift not to be commodified.
- Plastic water bottles are a hazard to human health and the health of Earth.
- Fresh water is a shared legacy and a collective responsibility.

Northeast initiatives take a stand on Earth

Nearly a year before former Vice President Al Gore introduced *An Inconvenient Truth*, the 2006 landmark film on global warming, over 4,000 Sisters of Mercy from across the Americas met to identify their Critical Concerns, an Institute-wide list of issues that determine the direction and action of local and global Mercy ministry (for more on the Critical Concerns, see page 4). Earth was identified as a top priority. The resulting charter from the Fourth Institute Chapter of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas included the following statement: "We are impelled to.... reverence Earth and work more effectively toward the sustainability of life and toward universal recognition of the fundamental right to water."

When the six areas of the Mercy Northeast Community united a year later, the first Community-wide initiative was the launching of the Mercy Northeast Ecology Project. The project began with two sites, one in Connecticut and one in Rhode Island, that offer unique programs that incorporate Mercy hospitality with ecology, spirituality and hands-on experience. The project has now expanded to become the

Mercy Northeast Ecology Ministry, extending throughout the Northeast with exciting new programs, as well as through study and action on issues such as land preservation and the human right to water.

Public resources established in 2006

New Dawn Earth Center, set on 270 ecologically abundant acres in Cumberland, Rhode Island, aims to raise awareness of the interconnectedness of all life, explore more sustainable ways of living, and help children and adults connect with nature and thus nurture their spirit. New Dawn's programs attract a diverse audience, from inner city students delighting in pond programs to residents at nearby Mount St. Rita Health Centre enjoying hands-on work in raised planting beds, while local adults and families participate in

full moon hikes, ecospirituality sessions and nature walks. For more information, please visit www.newdawnearthcenter.org

Mercy Center at Madison, Ecology Department also provides public workshops and events to help the community learn about local environmental concerns and nurture a spiritual connection with nature. The Ecology Department is part of Mercy Center at Madison, Connecticut, a conference and retreat center for human development. Mercy Center is blessed with 33 acres of breathtaking ocean-front property resplendent with shrubs, flowers and over 45 different species of trees. A selection of past programs includes A Walk in Mindfulness, Holiday Herbal Gifts and Goodies, and The Blessing Way. For more information, please visit www.mercybythesea.org.

Mercy WORKS

COMMITTED TO COMPASSIONATE SERVICE

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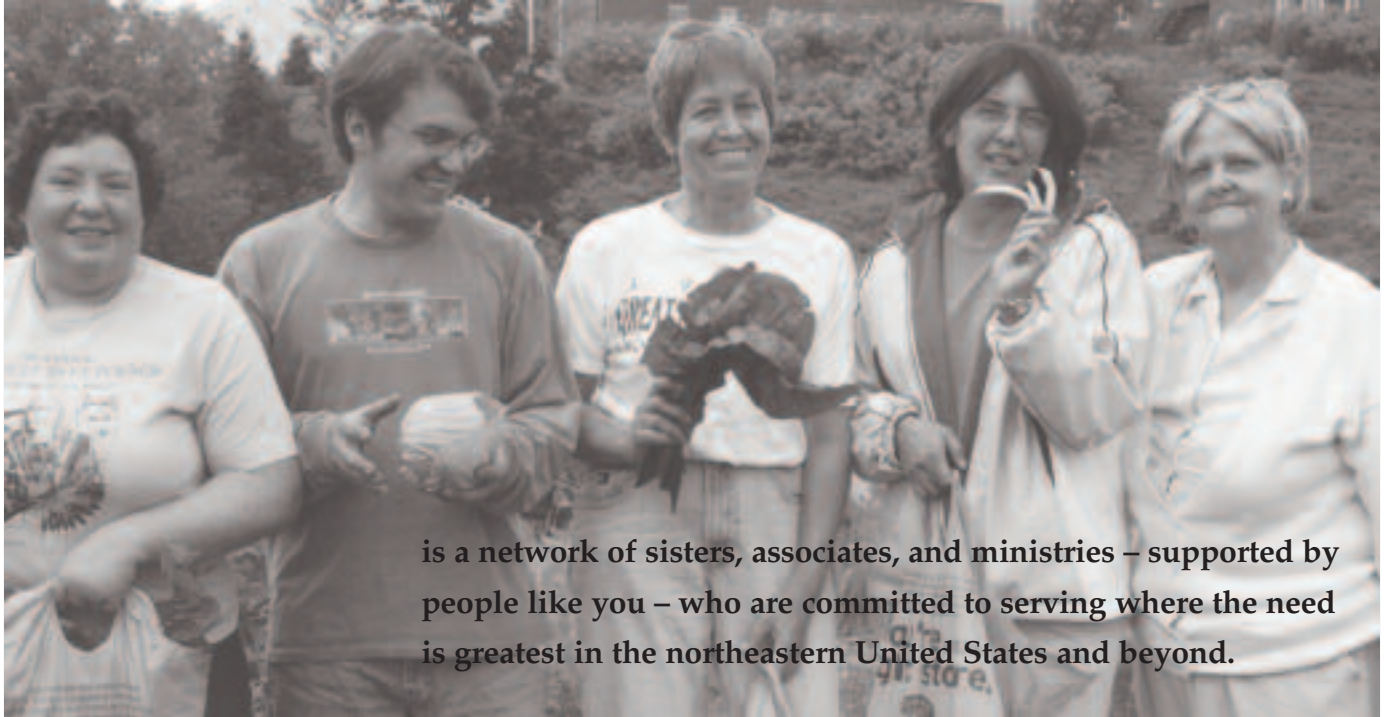
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Residents of Mount St. Rita Health Centre plant raised beds at New Dawn Earth Center in Cumberland, Rhode Island.

The Sisters of Mercy – Northeast Community



is a network of sisters, associates, and ministries – supported by people like you – who are committed to serving where the need is greatest in the northeastern United States and beyond.

Mercy is compassion inspired by the needs of the world

In 2005, the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, representing over 4,000 women, met to set their priorities for the coming years. They identified major issues, based on the needs of the times, which inform the direction of their service in your community and around the world.

The Critical Concerns of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

- ▶ **Earth** - We believe that all creation is God's gift and that we live on our home, Earth, with reverence and responsible care.
- ▶ **Immigration** - We recognize an urgent duty and challenge to stand in solidarity with immigrants, refugees and trafficked persons seeking fullness of life.
- ▶ **Peace** - Mercy promotes peace-making at all levels - in families, communities, businesses, nations, and among the countries and people of the world.
- ▶ **Poverty** - We engage in action for economic justice by ministry with and for persons who are poor as well as social analysis, advocacy and efforts to bring about systemic change.
- ▶ **Racism** - Racism contradicts the most fundamental beliefs and values of our faith that call us to love all persons and respect the human dignity of all.
- ▶ **Women** - We celebrate the gifts and contributions of women, advocate for women's rights, and work against gender discrimination in the church, the workplace and society.

Through our partnership with people like you, the Sisters of Mercy of the Northeast Community are able to address these concerns through their ministries in education, healthcare, social services and pastoral care. Because of your generosity, we continue to make a difference for countless individuals. Thank you.

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas –
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