

Seek. Pray. Share.

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1 FALL 2011



INSIDE

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The gift of volunteers

Sisters who volunteer

The unique partnership
of Women of the Rule

For EAC members,
the sisters matter

Volunteers share themselves



Have you ever sent a “care package” to someone? Or did you ever receive one? Whether you’re on the giving or receiving end, it feels good.

This issue of *Seek. Pray. Share.* looks at different ways that people are involved with the Sisters of St. Benedict by volunteering their time, talents, and treasure. I think volunteering is a kind of care package. It’s a joy for both the giver and the receiver, and it says somebody cares.

We are truly blessed to have so many people become part of our community life by sharing their skills, experience, and expertise with us — sometimes skills, experience, and expertise that we ourselves don’t have.

On a practical level, volunteers truly play a critical role in helping us manage the amount of work that regularly needs to be done at the monastery. And consider a special event like the Summer Social. We couldn’t accomplish it without the caring help of faithful volunteers. The knowledgeable advice of the Executive Advisory Council continually enriches our community. The generosity and dedication of the Women of the Rule keep special projects alive.

What wonderful gifts these individuals provide our community! But they share a gift even greater than their time, skills, knowledge, or funds. They also share themselves.

They interact with our sisters. They join us for prayer, Mass, and meals. We get to know them, and they get to know us more than just from a distance. We invite them, in a sense, into our community family. I think one of the charisms of Benedictine life is the family environment that we have. And our family boundaries extend out to include those beyond the monastery who are connected with us in different ways.

Over time, friendships — often long-term friendships — are formed. And that’s a gift that goes in both directions. Eventually we’re both giving and receiving. Sometimes, our volunteers are giving and our community is receiving. At other times, our sisters are doing the giving — providing spiritual support and guidance, for example — and our friends are receiving.

Maybe that’s the key to volunteering. When it truly is volunteering, when it’s done for the right motive, it’s no longer just an activity. It becomes a relationship. Both parties receive something unique and special, and they are shaped and changed by the experience.

It really is humbling for me to think of all the people who come to the monastery to spend time with us, to work side by side with us, to freely give of themselves. It might be easier at times for them to not bother and just say, “Let somebody else do that.” But they don’t.

We are grateful not only for what they do but for who they are. We thank God for our volunteers!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau OSB". The script is cursive and elegant.

Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau, OSB
Prioress



Seek.Pray.Share.

Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana

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Cover: Del Steinhart, a weekly volunteer in the monastery archives, examines some historical artifacts, with Sister Mary Philip Berger, volunteer director (left), and Sister Mary Dominic Frederick, archivist.

Above: Sister Traci Stutz takes teens to places where they volunteer. Sister Patricia Ann McGuire works at a Habitat for Humanity site.



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Mission: We, the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana, are monastic women seeking God through the Benedictine tradition of community life, prayer, hospitality, and service to others. By our life and work, we commit ourselves to be a presence of peace as we join our sisters and brothers in the common search for God.



The gift of volunteers

by Karen Katafiasz

Some are seniors in high school, and some are seniors in AARP. Some are sisters' family members, and some never spoke to a sister until they arrived at the monastery. Some come from southern Illinois, some from right around the corner — and a few don't even leave their home.

And they're all volunteers who have been a special gift for the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand.

A diversity of volunteers

About 210 people are on the volunteer list that's kept by Sister Mary Philip Berger, volunteer director. She assumed the job in August 2010, after two years of assisting Sister Dolores Folz, who became the first volunteer director in August 2008. Before that, Sister Dolores said, each area or department handled its own volunteers. She estimates there were about 40 to 50 volunteers when she took the position.

As director, Sister Mary Philip matches up volunteers with the right departments and job assignments and makes sure that those staying overnight have accommodations and meals. Once they're here, she checks that "things are going well." She also plans an annual "thank you" brunch; 43 volunteers attended the one last May.

Making up the volunteer roster are individuals who work once a week in the same department, several who regularly assist with yard work, some who come in to fill sisters' spots at switchboard and in the gift shop when there are community meetings, celebrations, and funerals, small area school groups looking for volunteer experiences, and those who help out for big activities, like the yard sale and — the biggest of all — the every-five-years Summer Social.

Then there are those who travel a distance for a multi-day visit. Dee and Darrel Younkin have driven from Mount Vernon, Illinois, three times since they met Sisters Mary Philip and Mary Dominic Frederick at last November's Christkindlmarkt, where they sold their handmade Old World Santa Claus figures.

Since 2009, southern Illinois has become a rich source of youth volunteers for the community. Young people and adult leaders from different parish youth groups — 20 to 30 or more in one visit — have traveled two or three times from Marion, Carterville, Dahlgren, Herrin, McLeansboro, Millstadt, Piopolis, and Gallatin County.

Volunteers from southern Illinois do some painting in the monastery courtyard. From left are Donna Evitts, from Carterville Holy Spirit Parish, Tom Kadela, youth minister at Marion St. Joseph Parish, and Mariah Philipps, from the Gallatin County parish cluster.

What they do

Volunteers can be found in the monastery from the northeast corner of its lowest level, in Archives, to four floors above in the southwest offices of Communications, at For Heaven's Sake and Kordes Hall, in Mission Advancement and the bakery, in rooms set aside for senior sisters' activities, hair care, and quilting, and throughout the grounds.

The list of all they do constitutes quite a résumé: baking and packaging cookies, cleaning, clerical duties, computer work, gardening, gift shop sales, hair care, housekeeping, painting, pricing and selling yard sale items, quilting, refinishing furniture, scanning archival photos, staffing booths for area events and the Summer Social, switchboard operation, translating, yard work, and generally helping out wherever there's a need.

How they started

It begins with a connection to the Sisters of St. Benedict. Some volunteers are family members who offer to help out. Some have been taught by a sister. For Vic Begle, it's both. His wife is Sister Mary Judith Fleig's sister. And Sister Mary Carmen Spayd was his bookkeeping and homeroom teacher at St. Ferdinand High School. Over five years ago, he began helping her and Sister Mary Carmel Spayd with flower gardening (tilling, planting, cleaning up), raking, and other outdoor work. One winter, he painted the crypt, the area below the church.

Decades back, Del Steinhart was a journalism student of Sister Mary Dominic at St. Ferdinand High. Circumstances led to their meeting again after 40 years. Now, once a week, Del helps her in her role as monastery archivist by scanning photos from 60 albums to convert them into digital files.

There are, of course, other ways that volunteers were first connected to the sisters. When she was in junior high, Anna Bittner, now a sophomore at Marian University in Indianapolis, attended the girls' summer camp run by the Vocations Office. She liked it so much, she's returned as a camp counselor for five years. "Working with the sisters is a great experience, teaching the kids is fun, and I learn a lot," she said.

The women who are making quilts for the Summer Social's wildly popular quilt booth include small groups and individuals from Ferdinand, Ireland, St. Philip, Red Brush, Huntingburg, Holy Rosary and Resurrection parishes in Evansville, and a few other communities. Several are sisters' relatives, and some are from parishes where the sisters have served. Some of the women heard about the quilting from others and have, in turn, recruited more quilters.

Youth minister Tom Kadela practically launched a southern Illinois youth volunteer program at the monastery when he first

Want to be a volunteer?

Research has shown that volunteering improves health, strengthens the immune system, lowers stress and depression, and increases general life satisfaction. Our volunteers say it's also great for the soul!

For general volunteer information, contact Sister Mary Philip Berger, volunteer director, at mpberger@thedome.org or 812-367-1411, ext. 3021.

The Summer Social on July 7, 2012, will need "lots and lots" of volunteers to staff the more than 35 booths and to help set up before and clean up after, says Sister Michelle Sinkhorn. She chairs the Social Coordinating Committee that's organizing the once-every-five-years event. If you're interested in helping, send an e-mail to social@thedome.org.

Sister Dolorita Libs coordinates the quilters who are creating their handmade masterpieces for the Summer Social. More than 30 quilts have been completed or are in progress. Her goal is "45-plus." A number of sisters are also working on the quilts, including Sisters Leona Schlachter, Anna Mae Schepers, Laura Marie Schmitt, and Karen Durliat. If you'd like to quilt, either at the monastery or at home, contact Sister Dolorita at dolorita@thedome.org or 812-367-1411, ext. 3413.



Working on one of many quilts for the 2012 Summer Social are Sister Dolorita Libs, Shirley Remke, and Elfrieda Hedinger. (Not visible at left is Sister Leona Schlachter.)

brought his youth group from Marion's St. Joseph Parish in 2009 and invited other area churches. (He had heard about the monastery from a parishioner with a sister in Boonville.) The next year, Catholic Youth United from McLeansboro and the St. James Youth Group from Millstadt traveled to Ferdinand together for their own visit. Those two groups returned last June, and the Marion group made their second trip later this past summer, bringing along teens from the Carterville and Gallatin County parish clusters.

Continued

Why they volunteer

Some volunteers talked about living out their own convictions. Vic Begle believes we'll be judged on the question: "Is the world a little better because I was here?" We need to use "the talents that God gives us," he said. "We have an obligation to serve." Del Steinhart has a similar view. "It is our responsibility as Christians to help others."

Mariah Philipps, from the Gallatin County, Illinois, parish cluster, was nearly 16 when she spent several August days with 26 others on her first mission trip to the monastery. She said she was learning from her experiences "that I need to help others in life." Helping the sisters was "awesome, really cool," and the sisters were "really nice — and energetic."

Bernice Schipp fills in at the gift shop and stuffs envelopes for Mission Advancement. "It makes me feel good," she said. "I consider working for the sisters a little bit of a payback." She was taught by sisters at the Ferdinand grade school and St. Ferdinand High. "They made just a pittance, so I feel I'm helping out for what they were shorted on years ago."

In addition to feeling they're contributing something, volunteers talk about finding satisfaction in the work itself. Vic enjoys being outdoors and working with flowers. Bernice is pleased that she learned a new skill — running the gift shop cash register — and likes dealing with customers, many of whom come off the interstate and have lots of questions about the sisters and the monastery. Del has "enjoyed preserving some of the history of the monastery."

The Ferdinand trio of Shirley Remke, Elfrieda Hedinger, and Marie Gessner have been sharing their quilting talents at the monastery for more than five years. They, like most quilting groups, work in the quilting room, where there may be four quilts in progress at the same time. (Some quilters work instead from their home or parish.) Elfrieda, who is Sister Beata Mehling's sister, finds quilting "relaxing." When she's quilting, she said, "I don't have to worry about anything." And she enjoys the chance to get out of the house and "talk to different people." Shirley not only went to the Academy, but also worked in the St. Benedict College library and then the Academy library for 35 years. She said, "It's nice to come back. I know so many of the sisters."

Sisters are volunteers too

"It feels like such a sacred time. It's holy territory." That's what Sister Mary Lee Hillenbrand experiences as a volunteer at the Lange-Fuhs Cancer Center in Jasper. She provides pastoral care every Monday for patients and staff at the facility that's part of Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center.

Sister Mary Lee is one of many sisters who volunteer in various capacities to help others. There's no definitive list of sister volunteers, but a survey of community members covering July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010, provided these facts.

Of the 146 sisters who responded, 35 (23.9%) said they work with a marginalized population as a volunteer. Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau, prioress, explained that the question focused on the marginalized because a goal in the community's Strategic Plan is "Enhance, develop, and pursue ministries to persons who are marginalized." (A total of 47 sisters said they work with a marginalized population in their paid ministry.)

Among the marginalized groups that sisters serve through volunteering are the poor, immigrants, Hispanics, special needs students, the homeless, the mentally ill, the elderly, the infirm, the disabled, the imprisoned, and women religious from Third World countries.

Other survey questions showed that 49 sisters (33.5% of

respondents) volunteer by serving on a board or committee for an entity outside the Ferdinand Benedictine community. These include a range of committees and boards for towns, cities, civic groups, parishes, schools, dioceses, and hospitals. Of the total, 24 sisters were in a leadership position and 11 served on a national or international committee or board.

Sister Mary Lee also volunteers at the Ferdinand library, where she reads to 2 to 4 year olds during "story time." She likes the job because "I love children and enjoy their sense of imagination." But it's her work at the cancer center that touches her most deeply. The patients are usually getting chemotherapy, waiting for the doctor to see them, or waiting for the results of their blood tests to determine if they can get treatment without danger to their immune system.

"I try to encourage them to tell their own story, to tell me about their journey. Then I listen to what they have to say — as Benedict says, with the ear of your heart. If they desire, I pray with them. I assure them, if they would like for me to do this, that we will remember them in our prayers at the monastery."

"They're so vulnerable, and I feel that. That vulnerability is a very sacred place. I feel very blessed because it feels to me like a time of holy communion." She added, "There have been

Volunteer Vic Begle enjoys spending time outdoors each week helping Sisters Mary Carmel and Mary Carmen Spayd with gardening and other work on the monastery grounds.

It's a relationship

In her "From the Prioress" column in this issue, Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau writes that "volunteering, when it's done for the right motive, [is] no longer just an activity. It becomes a relationship. Both parties receive something unique and special, and they are shaped and changed by the experience."

From a practical perspective, the Sisters of St. Benedict benefit greatly from the work being done. "Volunteers truly play a critical role in helping us manage the amount of work... at the monastery," Sister Kristine Anne said. But the benefits for the sisters go even deeper. Over time, Sister Kristine Anne noted, long-term friendships are formed. "What I find most rewarding," Sister Dolores said, "is the quality of the people



prayers that they've said with me that touched me so deeply that I feel my life has changed."

Sister Traci Stutz has been in many volunteer situations as associate director for youth ministry in the Louisville Archdiocese. She takes teens to places "where they can find their niche and awaken to the service opportunities available." They've served at, among others, a food distribution center, a men's homeless center, a soup kitchen, and Habitat for Humanity. She wants them to learn "we're supposed to help the poor and others in need...that this is a priority of the Church and what we're about." In discussions and journaling, they often tell her the experiences have changed their lives.

Sister Traci herself volunteers at Kosair Children's Hospital in Louisville, where she's recently become a "baby rocker." She works with "one-pound preemies," children there for injuries or treatments, the multiply handicapped, and babies who "have to detox" from crack and fetal alcohol syndrome. She's an extension of the nurse or the family when they can't be there. Watching the babies, holding them, rocking them, she provides "attention, stimulation, and basically love."

In past years, Sister Teresa Gunter has served as a volunteer firefighter. (She's currently a youth minister at St. Anthony Parish in Evansville, a community without a volunteer squad.)

When she helped people during a fire, medical call, or accident, she said, "I had the opportunity to pray with them, comfort them, and explain what's happening." It was "a time of grace for me."

Sisters Mary George and Margaret Carolyn Kissel regularly coordinate sending boxes of items to people in need. Recently parents, students, and friends of The Reading Carrel — which the sisters operate for children with serious reading problems — collected donated kitchenware, shoes, clothing, and toys for families in Joplin, Missouri, whose homes were destroyed by the May tornado. The sisters packed and shipped 68 cartons. For Christmas, they hope to send "We Care" boxes to those serving in the military, a project they've done many times before.

For all the sisters who volunteer — too many to mention here — volunteering is an expression of their lifelong "commitment to serve the Church and the people of God," said Sister Kristine Anne. That commitment is lived out foremost in the sisters' ministries, of course, as well as in volunteering. And it shows up in small, quiet ways as well, like a visit to a nursing home or attending a funeral, she added. "It's really about caring — caring for people and striving to help them in meaningful ways."



An experience that will go a long way

By Evan Daunhauer

Editor's note: Evan was a volunteer intern in the Communications Department this past summer. We appreciated his contributions and enjoyed having him as part of our staff. We invited him to write about his volunteer experience. (In the photo, Sister Helen Maurer reads a story he wrote about her.)

Currently I attend Purdue University, majoring in communication with a concentration in advertising. Working for the monastery was a good experience in many ways. Everyone I met was extremely welcoming and encouraging. Admittedly, before I came for my first day, I didn't know what to expect. The only previous contact I had with the Sisters of St. Benedict is 10:30 Mass on Sunday.

As I expected, I found that all the sisters here are helpful, generous, and easy to work with. What I learned is that the sisters all have their own background, and all of them have different personalities. This is what I think makes this community unique. They are their own person, but they share the same strong faith which bonds them together.

As far as gaining work experience, this opportunity was more than worthwhile. I wrote for the sisters' web site and for their magazine, *Seek. Pray. Share.*, and I was included in the Communications meeting every Wednesday morning.

This internship taught me a lot about writing and how an effective work environment is structured. I am grateful I was given this opportunity to gain some necessary knowledge for life after graduation.

who volunteer. We have met some of the most wonderful people."

Speaking specifically of the young people and their group leaders who've come from southern Illinois, she added, "Their youth, energy, and goodness are a real gift to us." This past July, five sisters headed west to do what friends do — return the visit. Sisters Mary Philip, Dolores, Mary Carmel, Mary Carmen, and Mary Dominic went to the homes and parishes of some of the youth group volunteers for what Sister Mary Philip called a "very rewarding" experience.

Volunteers say again and again how much they gain by just being at the monastery and spending time with the sisters. Connie Lanaghan, from Millstadt, said, "You can feel the presence of God in this community. It is welcoming, nourishing, nurturing." For her, volunteering at the monastery "has been a life-changing experience."

On Tuesdays, when Del Steinhart comes to the monastery to work in the archives, he joins the sisters for Morning Prayer and Mass. And then, for the rest of the day, he said, "I forget my problems, and the feeling of serenity, peacefulness, and calmness enter my being. I have met some of the most gracious ladies here at the monastery," he added. "St. Benedict would be proud of these nuns who are constantly practicing his directive of hospitality."

Tena Karcher, from McLeansboro, spoke of "the peace, joy, and love that radiate from each sister we speak to or pass in the hall or on the grounds.... Each time we come to volunteer, our relationships with the sisters deepen, and it feels like home to us.... A lot of our youth have a prayer partner [among the sisters], and those relationships are very precious."

For those in Tom Kadela's volunteer groups, it too feels like home. They're in their eighth year of doing mission trips, and the monastery is the first place they came twice. "There was a sense of coming home. It's familiar, and we felt so welcome." He noted that "We want to make it one of the cornerstones for our program," visiting Ferdinand twice in every four-year cycle.

He gave a list of reasons why. "The sisters spoil us horribly," he said with a smile. "Their concept of hospitality is really lived. This is such a beautiful, peaceful, joyful place, with a tradition and a heritage. And it's important for kids to see religious life," he said, adding, "they're seeing the sisters as humans, as fun people."

Tom and his volunteers have experienced the monastery as "a great environment [in which] to pray and work hard." That's a truth the Sisters of St. Benedict live out every day. And they're sharing that reality with a growing number of volunteers again and again.



Learn more about the volunteer program, as well as the Oblates and alumnae activities, by visiting thedome.org/get-involved.



EAC members: sisters' community 'has to be sustained'

by Greg Eckert

Nancy Habig reflected on the questions about why she wanted to be connected to the Sisters of St. Benedict, why she wanted to be a member of the community's Executive Advisory Council (EAC), why do the sisters matter.

It didn't take long for her to answer, nor for the other members of the EAC gathered in the monastery's St. Gertrude Hall in Ferdinand, Indiana.

"I cannot imagine my personal life and the local community without the sisters," said Nancy. "Can you imagine what it would be like without them? This place of peace, quiet, and calm would not be here."

A major concern of the group was that the religious community's presence in Ferdinand since 1867 be sustained.

"You see something alive here, it's not just words," said Pat Koch, sweeping out her arms, pointing to the far reaches of the sacred monastery grounds. "We must keep the tradition and the ritual. It's powerful. You're one of the few that have it."

"Sustaining the community matters to me because you're on the right road. We're here because it has to be sustained."

EAC members marvel at the mystique of the monastery, the church, and the surrounding grounds. Often referred to as the "Castle on the Hill," they speak of it reverently, but are quick to point out that its aura, as always, emanates from the sisters who live there, work there, and pray there.

"This is a very special place," said Nancy. "All of us who have been fortunate enough to work with the sisters know how special 'the hill' is. It's beautiful, amazing, peaceful. The church is an architectural treasure. But what we feel when we come here is because of the sisters."

Indeed, the monastery's magic extends far beyond its stunning appearance. It's the positive, reassuring feeling one gets from the connection with the sisters. After all, they still do house calls, they will sit with you, and they will pray with you at a moment's notice, even if it's a call from half-way across the U.S. And they

Pat Koch, director of values at Holiday World and Splashin' Safari, poses with guests at the Santa Claus, Indiana, theme park. She poses for thousands of photos like this each year for park visitors.



Nancy Habig of
Jasper, Indiana

are all about helping everybody else. They thrive on going into area communities and assisting all kinds of people. Essentially, it's their life's calling to do God's work, to help others live better lives, and what can be more important than that?

The EAC provides advice and guidance to the Ferdinand Benedictines' Monastic Council, which functions as a corporation board for the religious community. The EAC has been credited with helping the community with master planning, marketing strategy, motivating them to focus on the big issues and to take action.

One EAC member remarked, "What touches me more than anything is knowing that the sisters are praying for ME."

Reflecting on his connection with the sisters, EAC member Carl Cook said, "It's inspirational and comforting to me. Their dedication to monastic life. The walking and working as Christ, following him in the purest form. There is no equivalent to it. And you don't have to be Catholic to experience this.

"I find it reassuring that people still live in monasteries. I like that Benedictine life is still around after 1,500 years, that it's still alive in the U.S., and that it's not all in Europe.

"It's important to keep what is here alive for future generations."

Jerry Fuhs is heartened by the sisters' stability.

"The monastery and the sisters are a constant in an ever-changing world," he said. "Most people don't like change, but the monastery provides a sense of continuity. It's unique, and people look at this place fondly, no matter their faith tradition.

"The community is a beacon of hope to society. We face challenges every day. But when we come here, it is OK.

"The sisters provide an example of what things should be and how people should behave."

Fuhs' wife, Carolyn, is among the many stirred by simply driving onto the property.

"The moment you start up the hill, you feel the peace," she said. "It's almost magical here. Everybody senses it. You want to be here."

Another married couple that are EAC members, Ken and Monica Sicard, tout the peacefulness and spirituality of the sisters. They talk about people seeking peace at the monastery, just taking walks, spending leisure time, and leaving feeling more peaceful because of it.

Speaking of her daughter when she was little, Monica said, "A little girl who used to be afraid of storms realized that with the sisters praying for her, she would be safe. The sisters' prayers are very important to us."

Said Ken, "The relationship with the sisters is an important part of my life. The sisters are vibrant and are attracting new members, and there is a great need to continue their ministries."

Dave Buehler has been involved with the sisters for 35 years, and vividly remembers when he was asked to be the co-chair of a fundraising activity and wasn't going to accept. He was asked to take a tour of the facility before deciding.

He was amazed at the parts in pristine shape, but was disbelieving of some other parts in a "deplorable situation."

"So my heart went out to them," he said.

Now, years later, he is encouraged by what the sisters are doing, but laments that they "do a lot of work but are not getting much credit for it."

"We have to get people on 'the hill' so they can experience it, that's the magic. Through the Spirituality Ministry programs, people can become better Christians, they can manage their life better. I'm excited that it's getting worked out. I just want to be here."

As with other EAC members, Dave's connection with the sisters "makes me feel good, that I'm doing something for the Church and the world."

As for the importance of the sisters continuing their mission, Pat Koch points to one of their seldom-noted, but powerful, assets.

"There is a great need for women in religion, for women bring a



Ken and Monica Sicard of Ferdinand, Indiana



The Carl and Marcy Cook family
of Bloomington, Indiana

completely different focus of spirituality from the male spirituality," she said.

"There are women in this world who really are dedicated to serving people. This monastery is such a wonderful place to carry on that tradition that's been here so long, and should not die. There is also a great need in the world for places of peace and quiet, and prayer.

"Above all, what impresses me about the sisters is their intelligence, their humility, their willingness to accept help and advice. Many of them are great business people. So when you do assist, whether financially, in prayer, or in whatever way, you feel it's being taken care of well. It's not just been given away. It's being used well."

Nancy Habig emphasizes, simply, that "they really help us to lead a better life."

"They have done so much for me and my family and for so many others that I know. They are a lot of fun, are very well educated, and do wonderful programming, but most of all they are so accepting of everyone. They make you feel so welcome here, and really live their commitment to hospitality. They just accept all kinds of people.

"And they have an historic treasure here they keep up. They do a wonderful job of pinching every penny they have. They don't waste anything. They get a lot out of their resources. They stretch everything to the max."

Nancy noted that many of the sisters are in social work, helping the homeless, or in parishes, or serving the underprivileged, "jobs that do not earn a lot of pay."

Cheryl Gettelfinger, an EAC member from Carmel, Indiana, along with her husband, Doug, said, "We joined the council because we wanted to help the sisters in any way we could. We find that the sisters give us more than we could ever give them.

"We've met some very nice people whom we will never forget, as well as many other members of the monastery who treat us like kings and queens. We believe in their mission and hope for a long relationship."

It all goes back to how the sisters have committed to living their lives. They live it in a way that they become a recognizable example to others.

"It's just different when the sisters do it," said Nancy. "They bring a different perspective."

"Young people are not getting fed today," concluded Pat Koch. "We must get them to care. When a young woman comes here, she wants community, a family. She will find it here. You have IT."

Jerry and Carolyn Fuhs of
French Lick, Indiana

Executive Advisory Council members

Earl and Tonya Borders, Newburgh, Indiana

Dean and Karen Bosler, Newburgh, Indiana

Dave and Brenda Buehler, Jasper, Indiana

Bill Bussing, Newburgh, Indiana

Carl and Marcy Cook, Bloomington, Indiana

Jerry and Carolyn Fuhs, French Lick,
Indiana

Doug and Cheryl Gettelfinger, Carmel,
Indiana

Nancy and Doug Habig, Jasper, Indiana

Alan and Dana Hoffman, Jasper, Indiana

Kenny and Judy Huber, Louisville, Kentucky

Pat Koch, Santa Claus, Indiana

Tom and Mary Ann McKenna, Carmel,
Indiana

Mike and Pam Schwenk, Jasper, Indiana

Ken and Monica Sicard, Ferdinand, Indiana

Gene and Mary Jo Tempel, Indianapolis,
Indiana

Steve and Sandy Titzer, Evansville, Indiana

Liz and Greg Wathen, Evansville, Indiana

Kathy Weyer, Ferdinand, Indiana

Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau

Sister Jane Will

Sister Jean Marie Ballard

Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz





Women of the Rule Philanthropy Circle 'receives more than we give'

by Greg Eckerle

A very redeeming feeling often washes over a charitable woman after joining the 60-member Women of the Rule, a most unique partner with the Sisters of St. Benedict.

She invariably realizes that this new connection to the sisters is very rewarding personally, and in her eyes it becomes even more valuable than the \$1,000 annual gift to become a Woman of the Rule.

The Women of the Rule believe in the power of God's love. They care deeply about people in need. And they are determined to make a difference in the world. All of which makes them a perfect complement to the sisters.

Of the women's monetary gifts, 99% supports the sisters' endeavors, with 80% of that amount going to grant recipients

Lucy Weaver, along with her two children, volunteers her time filling orders at the Community Food Bank in Jasper for two hours on Wednesday nights. The food bank, which primarily relies on donations of food and cash, filled over 10,000 food orders last year for low-income people in Dubois County. Manager Amanda Drew said Lucy is "so willing to give of herself for this service and many others; she brings a whole different energy level."

chosen by members and 20% allocated to a Women of the Rule Endowment.

So they have the satisfaction of knowing their money is going to people dearly in need of it, because the Women of the Rule determine which proposed projects are funded. And they get about as excited talking about the feeling they get in return.

Connie Nass, a past Indiana state auditor and former mayor of Huntingburg, said, "I thought I was giving, but it all came back to me.

"I've always had a special relationship with the sisters. It's a connection I value highly. I had eye transplant surgery in the mid-'90s, and the sisters always prayed for me, and called me. Joining the Women of the Rule is a way to show my appreciation."

She's also enjoyed her overnight stays at the monastery. "It's a special place for me. There's an inner peace for me from the hectic world while I'm there."

Connie notes that the money donated goes to some very worthwhile grants.

“This is truly an opportunity to help in a good way. The sisters give back to humanity for those that need it more.”

Last year, the philanthropy group's first grants included college tuition for three sisters working toward education degrees, development of a property master plan, a freezer for the monastery bakery, a new roof and guttering for a monastery in Peru, and a special donation for scholarships for centering prayer programs for cancer patients and their caregivers.

Ginny Begle, Industrial Medicine department director at Memorial Hospital in Jasper, said, “The sisters have always been so helpful to me, so it was absolutely a no-brainer to contribute. And you always get back more when you give.”

She talked about “the spiritual lift you get, the spiritual motivation” enjoyed after joining the Women of the Rule.

“This is truly an opportunity to help in a good way. The sisters give back to humanity for those that need it more. It's not for themselves. I feel blessed to be part of something that is giving to the greater good.

“The donations are going to such important and worthwhile projects. We are truly helping people.

“I think the world of the sisters. They have become part of my life.”

Kelly Clauss, Memorial Hospital's director of business development, loves that the money going toward the Women of the Rule group perpetually supports the sisters and their ongoing efforts. “The members of Women of the Rule receive much more than we give,” she said. “It has been a true gift and blessing for me.”

Much of that blessing comes through a special spiritual bond that members form with the sisters. Together they find inspiration and wisdom in the written Rule of St. Benedict (thus the name Women of the Rule). The sisters offer exclusive spiritual programs to members several times a year.

The Rule, which the sisters follow, is a 1,500-year-old spiritual path for finding God in daily life. Women of the Rule seek to instill Benedictine values in their own lives.

“The more I learn about Benedictine spirituality, the greater my desire for more immersion into it,” said Kelly. “I began ‘spiritual companioning’ with Sister Kathy Huber three years ago. She introduced me to the Rule of St. Benedict, which provides such a rich framework out of which to live Christian life. It resonates very well with me.

“I enjoy observing and experiencing how the sisters genuinely live the Rule in their daily life. What special spiritual mentors they have been for me!

“My connection with the sisters has been one of the best gifts God has ever sent me. For the rest of my life, I will invite the sisters to be a part of my life. I have received blessings in abundance from them.”

The idea for Women of the Rule originated with Sister Barbara Catherine Schmitz and Darla Blazey in 2008, during their participation in Connect with Southern Indiana, a program sponsored by the University of Southern Indiana. As part of the



Women of the Rule members Darla Blazey, Carolyn Fuhs, and Sue Ellspermann discuss a project for the Sisters of St. Benedict.



Connie Nass, Women of the Rule member, cheerfully volunteers to help prepare cookies in the monastery bakery.



Ginny Begle joined the Women of the Rule because she "felt called to help people who help others, and people who need it."



Kelly Clauss says "it has been a true gift and blessing for me" to be a part of Women of the Rule.

leadership program, participants collaborated in developing project concepts to benefit communities. So Sister Barbara C. and Darla created Women of the Rule, which is dedicated to making a difference in the world by supporting the mission and ministries of the sisters.

"Sister Barbara C. and I researched women's philanthropy circles, and developed plans for a giving circle that would benefit the sisters and all the work they do in communities they serve," said Darla.

"It is meaningful for me to help a community of women who do so much for so many. I was taught by a number of Benedictine sisters. Now, by being a part of Women of the Rule, I learn more about the sisters, the Rule of St. Benedict, and how I can share their work with others and bring the Rule of St. Benedict into my life. They truly bring his Rule of hospitality to life today for me."

Through Darla's work in the area's tourism industry, she finds that many mistakenly think the sisters' work is limited to Ferdinand and nearby areas. "But their impact is worldwide," she said. "It has been rewarding to discover how many communities the sisters serve, and that even a small donation can greatly impact their work."

Lucy Weaver of Jasper, Indiana, joined the Women of the Rule "to remind women that when we bond together in prayer with God, nothing is impossible."

She prays with the sisters during Sunday Mass and their daily reciting of the Liturgy of the Hours at 7 a.m., 12 noon, and 5 p.m., reminding all that we are invited to keep an open conversation with God all through the day.

"It reminds us to take the time to pray anywhere, anytime, about anything," said Lucy.

"Nothing is too big or too small for God to handle. I also support the sisters' missions locally and around the globe. We are all connected as God's children, and it is our mission and hope to let Christ be known to all by prayer or deed."

Make a difference by joining Women of the Rule

A unique partnership with the
Sisters of St. Benedict
You help decide which
new ministries to fund!



NEWS from the Dome

Community welcomes new postulant

The simple ceremony on August 21 began before Morning Prayer, as Beth Fritsch stood in Cloister Hall at the doorway to the Blessed Virgin Room. With the Benedictine community gathered inside the room, Sister Kristine Anne Harpenau invited Beth to enter the monastery. She stepped into the room and received from the prioress a St. Benedict medal as a sign of her intention to seek God within this community, two Liturgy of the Hours books for her daily community prayer, and an apron as a symbol of work and service.

And so Beth was officially accepted into the postulancy, the first stage of incorporation into the religious community. Postulant Beth is a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, and is the daughter of the late Joseph Fritsch and Mary Arlene Fritsch. She has two older brothers and one younger sister.

She earned three degrees from Xavier University in Cincinnati: a bachelor of arts in theology, a master of education, and a master of business administration. For two-and-a-half years before entering the monastery, she was director of Moye Spiritual Life Center in Melbourne, Kentucky, a retreat ministry of the Sisters of Divine Providence. She

also held various corporate positions, including administrative and managerial posts, and has been an avid volunteer.

"After working in corporate America for many years," she said, "I left searching for more meaning and prayer in my life. I have always been drawn to the contemplative monastic life and have long been attracted to the Benedictine charism. I became a companion with the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 2009 and have been thrilled with my experience with this community. The hospitality I received as a visitor was outstanding and heartfelt. I am attracted to the vitality and the vibrancy, which I feel is very present in the community members. I look forward to getting to know the community more as I take the next step toward full membership."



Ferdinand sisters celebrate jubilees

On May 28, Sisters Charlene Ann Wheelless, Barbara Ann Offerman, Mary Rose Hasenour, Paulette Seng, Doris Marie Knebel, Mary Jane Kiesel, and Dolores Folz celebrated their 50th anniversary of profession at the monastery. They made their first profession of monastic vows in 1961 and their final profession in 1966.

Front: Sister Paulette Seng, Sister Doris Marie Knebel, and Sister Mary Rose Hasenour

Back: Sister Barbara Ann Offerman, Sister Mary Jane Kiesel, Sister Charlene Ann Wheelless, and Sister Dolores Folz



To learn more about these sisters, visit thedome.org for longer versions of these news stories.

Sisters' spirituality program to be presented at hospital conference

Wellness and prevention programs are the rage of the health care field, along with the usual incredible advances in medicine. But health care professionals will tell you a key ingredient is still missing — spirituality.

Which is why the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand are looking forward to being part of the 1st Annual Tri-State Conference on Integrative Medicine in Jasper, Indiana, on November 10.

The conference is billed as a day of learning, sharing, and understanding on how to improve the well-being of patients, their families, and community through integrative medicine.

It's being sponsored by Memorial Hospital and Health Care Center and Vincennes University Jasper Campus, in cooperation with Indiana University Health, Ascension Health, and the sisters.

Integrative medicine provides a variety of therapeutic tools for the patient, as well as their family, that complement conventional treatment and focus on the mind, body, and soul.

The sisters' Spirituality Ministry team developed the spirituality component of Memorial Hospital's program about three years ago, and have since delivered a variety of presentations for hospital executives, department directors, and staff personnel.

Two key partners of the sisters are Kelly Clauss, Memorial Hospital's director of business development, and Jim Birk, a board member of the Indiana University Simon Cancer Center.

"The spirituality segment sets Memorial Hospital's integrative medicine program apart from others, it makes us unique," said Kelly. "Many companies are putting more dollars into prevention and wellness, but the missing ingredient is spirituality. Based on my experience working with the sisters, I believe they are very well suited to offer spiritual formation. There is a real hunger for spirituality. People don't know how to do it.

"What the sisters take for granted strikes many others as so insightful and invigorating. This spiritual formation opportunity is a gift. It empowers people to get in touch with their innermost selves, and to discover what gives meaning and purpose to their lives."

Jim Birk demonstrates how he practices centering prayer every day — with palms upturned, signifying he is receptive and consenting to God's presence and action within him.

An Indianapolis physician told Jim he's "been waiting 35 years for this combination of medicine and spirituality."

"This combination is sorely needed," said Jim. "I remember the late Dr. Stephen Williams, the former head of the IU Simon Cancer Center, saying we simply must do more for cancer patients, something beyond the necessary medical treatment. He said it was the right thing to do."

The Ferdinand Benedictines' Sister Maria Tasto, spirituality ministry program director, has worked closely with Memorial Hospital's program, and will deliver a luncheon keynote address about the spirituality component at the November 10 conference. Her talk, to be given with Ron Mead, is entitled "Becoming Who We Are!"

"It's an opening to share the gifts we've been given as sisters, to teach through the Gospel values, to show others how to discover their gifts and live their lives in a more meaningful way," said Sister Maria. "It's true to who we are."

The conference's breakout sessions will also include detailed presentations on the sisters' Compassionate Healing program and the three programs developed for Memorial Hospital — Healing Presence, Healing Ministry, and Compassionate Care.



Compassionate Healing retreats at the Ferdinand monastery have already motivated trained volunteers to go to the hospital to administer these beneficial sessions to cancer patients.

The potential is good for the conference to draw a significant crowd. Indiana University Health is a system of 17 hospitals, plus supports 21 cancer programs, throughout Indiana. Ascension Health is the nation's largest Catholic health care system, providing care at more than 500 locations in 20 states, including 79 hospitals.

Memorial Hospital personnel who have been through the sisters' program speak highly of its benefits.

Marla Haas, a registered nurse, said, "Hearing the sisters' perspective on spirituality, how to deal with grief and what suffering is, definitely gives you ideas on how to deal with things. The sisters had a calming effect on me."

Ann Hostetter, RN, said, "The program helps cancer patients

"The spirituality segment sets Memorial Hospital apart. (It's) the missing ingredient."

become closer to God and their faith at a very stressful time, and provides hope and the ability to cope with whatever happens. The program helps me remember that this person is not just a body sitting in there during chemotherapy. They have talents and a life outside of the cancer center."

Memorial Hospital Patient Advocate Pat Evans sums it up, saying, "It's a match made in heaven. We will be proof of the program's effectiveness in integrating body, mind, and spirit. It reinforces the importance of that like nothing I've ever seen."

Sisters of St. Benedict Spirituality Ministry

Please join us for Benedictine spirituality!

October 15, 2011	Rest and Reflection Day
October 22, 2011	Art and Soul
November 5, 2011	Introduction to Centering Prayer
November 12, 2011	What Are My Images of God?
January 14, 2012	Monastic Lectio
February 11, 2012	Is Love All We Really Need?
February 20, 2012	Compassionate Healing
March 17, 2012	Forgiveness
April 28, 2012	Enneagram

Personal retreats, lodging for group retreats, and spiritual direction are available by contacting Kordes Center.

The Sisters of St. Benedict Spirituality Ministry holds retreats at Kordes Center, on the spacious, relaxing monastery grounds. It's an ideal place to pray, think, and reflect. Come experience a sincere hospitality and religious environment that's difficult to find elsewhere.

Sister Briana Craddock, OSB
Sister Maria Tasto, OSB
Sister Kathryn Huber, OSB
Sister Maria Tasto, OSB
Dana Hoffman
Sister Anita Louise Lowe, OSB, and
Sister Michelle Mohr, OSB
Sister Jane Becker, OSB
Sister Karlene Sensmeier, OSB



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Monastery has new energy-efficient windows, thanks to donors

For 75 years, the striking arch-top windows added beauty and elegance to the monastery dining room, St. Gertrude Hall, and the adjoining hallway. But recently, they also added outside air, which leaked into the rooms and reduced the efficiency of the heating and cooling system.

Thanks to an outpouring of generosity from our donors, the campaign to replace the windows was a resounding success. Because we received more donations than the estimated cost for replacement, we were also able to replace windows in other areas and do some needed repairs.

The 23 new windows are as beautiful as the originals, each 122 inches tall and 70 inches wide, with 22 panes of tinted glass that's 5/8 inch thick. They are insulated and tightly sealed, and now have new woodwork and trim. Commemorative plaques have recently been installed with the names of the donors who helped make the windows possible.

In memoriam

by Sister Paulette Seng



Sister Mary Sharon Hoehn

February 21, 1926 – April 2, 2011

Community members and other friends remember Sister Mary Sharon with a twinkle in her eyes and a beautiful smile — a beatific smile — warm, joyful, and serene, which, without doubt, flowed from a rich inner world she developed while living in a world of almost total silence. Her smile communicated

welcome, affection, gratitude, and joy.

For many years Sister Mary Sharon suffered from hearing loss, but never used that affliction as an excuse to be exempt from community life. Her presence at community prayer, meetings (transcribed on a computer screen), meals, and such, exemplified her faithfulness, determination, patience, and acceptance.

One day at lunch she asked, "Do you all hear this beautiful music?" No doubt a special blessing from God to compensate for her hearing loss.

Before her hearing loss became severe, Sister Mary Sharon ministered as teacher, religious education leader, clinical pastoral director, hospital chaplain, librarian, and secretary. Recognized for her keen intellect and warm heart, she served young people and adults for almost 50 years.

Sister Mary Matthew Baehl

July 18, 1929 – August 3, 2011

During her 54-year teaching ministry, Sister Mary Matthew served as teacher, principal, and religious education instructor. She impressed many young minds and hearts through her total dedication to education and excellence in teaching.

As a woman of gratitude, she lived her favorite prayer: "For all that has been, thanks, Lord; for all that will be, yes, Lord." She was especially grateful for, in her words, "God's gifts of life immortal, the Eucharist, and the Church given to us by Jesus."

Sister Mary Matthew endured much physical and emotional suffering. Yet, even during her darkest hours, she trusted in God's love and mercy. She considered her cancer treatments as a time of blessings — of acceptance and reconciliation.

A prayer attributed to Sister Mary Matthew shows her spiritual depth and longing: *"May I experience confidence and trust in you. May I come to know profoundly the peace which hope in you brings to life. May I trust that you are with me in darkness and that you sustain me during any struggle. May I hope always that you will take me to yourself in the embrace of eternal life."*



Complete obituaries and reflections for these sisters are posted at thedome.org.

Waninger's generosity lives on

Harold A. "Honk" Waninger (1928–2011) was a man of faith devoted to family and friends. He had a true love for life in all aspects. From his active University of Evansville college days, service in the Korean War, commitment to his work, and passion for his hobbies, Honk left the world a better place. For all who were touched by his life, none are more grateful than the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, Indiana.

Mr. Waninger was exemplary in his generosity to the sisters. He believed in the mission and ministries which our sisters hold dear. In addition to his outright gifts, Mr. Waninger realized the importance of perpetuating his lifetime support by becoming an active participant in the sisters' planned giving program. During his life, Mr. Waninger funded seven separate charitable gift annuity agreements. These annuities helped provide funds for the care of our senior sisters while it provided a life-income for Harold in his retirement.

But Mr. Waninger's generosity did not stop with his current gifts or his charitable gift annuities. He also made the ultimate gift by remembering the sisters in his will. The sisters will receive a percentage of Mr. Waninger's estate, which will also be used to support the mission.

The sisters honor and cherish the lifelong relationship we had with Mr. Waninger. He was a deeply spiritual man who gave of himself and truly touched the world with his goodness.

He worked at Shell Oil Exploration, Ashland Oil Exploration and Production, and on the design of Interstate I-64.

Benefits, varieties of charitable gifts

The benefits of a charitable gift annuity include:

- Fixed payments to the annuitant(s) for life
- A charitable income tax deduction at the time of the gift for the gift value of the annuity
- Receiving a percent of each payment as a tax free distribution
- Avoiding any state or federal inheritance or estate tax at the time of death
- Making sure the Sisters of St. Benedict will continue to enjoy your support long after you have met your eternal reward

While some will provide a percentage of their estate to us, there are other ways to make sure your family and loved ones are protected and still help your favorite charitable organizations.

Following are the most popular ways of leaving a charitable bequest to the Sisters of St. Benedict.

Are you a member of the St. Hildegard Society?

Have you:

- included the Sisters of St. Benedict in your will or codicil to your will?
- named the Sisters of St. Benedict as a full, partial, or contingent beneficiary on your life insurance policy?
- thought about funding an irrevocable annuity that pays you and also benefits the sisters?

If so, then you qualify to be a member of the St. Hildegard Society.

As a member of the St. Hildegard Society:

- You are remembered in the daily prayers and work of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand, now, and into the future.
- You are invited to join us for Mass and dinner each year near the feast of St. Hildegard.

If you would like to be a member of the St. Hildegard Society, or would like more information, please contact Sister Barbara Lynn Schmitz, Director of Mission Advancement, at 1-888-649-1121, ext. 2648.



Residue: Residue refers to whatever is left after other bequests have been made. To leave such a bequest state, "The residue of my estate, including real and personal property, I give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Indiana."

Percentage: To leave a percentage of your estate state, "I give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Indiana, ___% of my estate."

Dollar Amount: To leave a specific dollar amount state, "I give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Indiana, \$_____."

Specific Property: To leave a particular piece of property state, "I give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters of St. Benedict, Ferdinand, Indiana, [description of property], located at [exact location]."



Current gift annuity rates can be found online at thedome.org.



Sister Donna Marie Herr moves a box of frozen food at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry.

Feeding the hungry with care and compassion

by Greg Eckerle

As coordinator of St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry and Office of Emergency Assistance in Evansville, Indiana, Sister Donna Marie Herr sees the poverty in visitors' faces way too often — from the ailing grandmother to the most innocent of children. And her heart goes out to them, day after day.

It's changed her attitude between her wants and her needs.

"I find I want a little simpler life when I think of what people don't have," she says. "I mean, I can go to the refrigerator any night and get a snack. A lot of people can't do that."

Like the 32,000 low-income people that jam the food pantry every year. They've lost their jobs, or they're disabled, they're trying desperately to provide for their family, they can't pay all their bills.

"Everyone has a right to food," says Sister Donna Marie. "We're just grateful that we can help."

Relying entirely on donations and grants, the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry buys about \$75,000 worth of food each year to hand out to needy families, and also accepts loads of donated food that

kind souls bring in. It is part of the city's seven-pantry Emergency Food Pantry System, and is by far the system's largest one, serving 72% of the total eligible households.

But even with all that, it's never enough. Sister Donna Marie's stories will warm your heart, or break your heart.

There's the woman who comes in every two months with a donation of \$15. She used to come to the pantry to get food, and now delights in giving something back.

"It's small, but to me it's a very big thing," says Sister Donna Marie.

There's the grandmother with her two grandchildren that proudly hand over the proceeds from their lemonade stand.

There's a grandmother that came with a grandchild who had said, "Isn't it about time to take some food to the pantry?"

Sister Donna Marie smiles. "Isn't it great the example they're setting? You give. You help out those in need. I'm just so in awe of the generosity of people."

“Isn’t it great the example they’re setting? You give. You help out those in need. I’m just so in awe of the generosity of people.”

And so wishful she could come up with a permanent solution for the people continually scrambling to find food.

She thinks of a woman who came whose teeth were rotting out.

“She told me her teeth hurt so badly. So I carried her groceries out to her car, and saw two children sitting inside. They just had the look of poverty on their faces. And the car, oh, it was falling apart. You can just see the hardship in their lives.”

Another woman, who worked for a dentist, got a speck of blood in her eye, developed hepatitis, couldn’t work anymore, lost her health insurance, all eventually contributing to a divorce. She sadly told a volunteer she never thought she’d be going to a food pantry.

The other side of the operation, the Office of Emergency Assistance, fields requests from people with a variety of urgent needs — maybe helping pay their rent, their water or electric bills, or they need furniture or appliances.

Sister Donna Marie says it’s very hard for some to come in, it’s a blow to their pride, they don’t want to admit they’re struggling.

But through it all, she keeps smiling and greeting people warmly with Benedictine hospitality. It’s noticed, by visitors and volunteers.

Sidney Brown, an African-American customer, says in a lowered voice, “There’s a lot of places around here where they treat you by your skin,” pointing to his arm. “But these people here don’t. They do a good job of helping everybody. They make it easy on us, they treat us right, with respect. Sister Donna Marie, she’s just nice.”

Brown, 71, hears a lot of people say how much the pantry helps them. “It’s a gift,” he says. And despite his situation, Brown keeps God in his life. “Yes, sir. Every day. Every time I get up, he woke me up this morning. A lot of people don’t have God in their life, that’s not a good thing.”

If Brown makes a little extra money, he even tries to help others. “It makes me feel good to help somebody else.”

That attitude is heartily shared by St. Vincent de Paul’s 90 volunteers, 65 of whom are scheduled regularly to work a half-day a week. Sister Donna Marie says, “It’s wonderful working with all these volunteers. They have a real care and a real respect for people that come here. They’re very dedicated, compassionate, and have generous hearts.”

The volunteers say much the same about Sister Donna Marie.

“She’s the greatest, believe me,” says Jeanette Beaven. “She treats people great. I just can’t say enough about her. I love her.”

Erma Pfeiffer and Terry Drone both remarked about how she’s “always smiling.”

“She helps with everything,” said Pfeiffer. “She’ll do dishes, she’ll stock food. She has to get all the volunteer workers together, I think that’s the hardest part.

“She’s easy to work with,” said Drone. “She’s got a very good personality and is always there to help.”

The volunteers bond by praying together twice a day. And it’s an appropriate prayer: “Lord Jesus, you who willed to become poor, give us a heart directed toward the poor; help us to recognize you in them — in their hunger, their loneliness, and their misfortune. Strengthen us, so that we may serve you in them, and may one day be united with you and them in your kingdom.”

Another of Sister Donna Marie’s favorite stories is the man who began shaking in the pantry’s waiting room, about to go into a diabetic lull. He asked for some orange juice, which she quickly supplied. Whenever he’s seen her since then, he smiles broadly and says, “Orange juice.”

“That really touches me,” she says. “It makes you feel humble. Here’s a man who doesn’t have anything materially, but has such a richness of attitude, and is so grateful for the smallest thing.”

As Sister Donna Marie often says, people may forget what you do for them, but they won’t forget how you make them feel.



Volunteer Jeanette Beaven, customer Sidney Brown, and coordinator Sister Donna Marie Herr at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry in Evansville, Indiana. Says Brown, “A lot of places treat you by your skin. But these people here don’t.”



Benedictine spirituality for everyday living

by Karen Katafiasz

Benedictine spirituality is not just for Benedictines. St. Benedict may have written his Rule for those living in a monastery 1,500 years ago, but its spiritual wisdom is remarkably relevant for individuals outside a religious community today.

Where's a good place to start exploring how Benedict's Rule applies to everyday life? In an informal poll, 13 sisters suggested 21 books. Let's look at seven of them.

Last March, author Jane Tomaine gave four presentations at the monastery that were based on her 2005 book, *St. Benedict's Toolbox: The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living*. It was one of two books recommended most often. An Episcopal priest, Tomaine developed her book to use at her New Jersey parish. In it she writes, "you'll discover just how much of his Rule can increase the quality of our lives by giving us 'tools' that we can use to, in Benedict's words, 'open our eyes to the light that comes from God.'"

Sister Karen Joseph has recommended *St. Benedict's Toolbox* to individuals who see her for spiritual direction. "What I find most impressive is Jane's own love and zeal for the Rule and its application to the life of lay people. I think she's the type of person who lives it, and her enthusiasm for it is contagious."

A book mentioned as frequently was *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today*, by Sister Joan Chittister, OSB. "The Rule of Benedict is designed for ordinary people who live ordinary lives," she writes. Sister Gail Hamilton says this was the first book she read on Benedictine spirituality. "It helped bring the Rule to life for me." She used the 1991 *Wisdom* as "a discernment tool" with her sister companion. "It was an amazingly enlightening book and very practical for everyday life. It was very helpful for me to see how the Rule applies to everyone, in any walk of life."

Another of Sister Joan's books was listed by several sisters: *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*. Originally written in 1992,

it was updated in 2010 and given its new subtitle. Sister Ann Francis Hillenbrand observes that Sister Joan "does a great job breaking open the meaning of the Rule for us in the present day."

Anglican Esther de Waal has become known as an authority on the Rule's significance for lay people. Sisters suggested two of her books: *Living with Contradiction: An Introduction to Benedictine Spirituality*, published in 1998, and *A Life-Giving Way: A Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict*, 1995. The author explains that she follows the Rule of Benedict "to discover how to be human today, tomorrow, and for the rest of my life."

"I really like Esther de Waal," says Sister Barbara Catherine Schmitz. *Living with Contradiction*, she says, "invites us to the daily experience of conversion. You could sit down and read it in a couple hours, but it's also a book to be with. You can go deeper with it. It really calls us to that new life that we all desire."

Two books by Sister Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB, were on the recommended list: *Seven Sacred Pauses: Living Mindfully Through the Hours of the Day*, 2010, and *The Song of the Seed: A Monastic Way of Tending the Soul*, 1997. Both are inspirational approaches to Benedictine spirituality.

Seven Sacred Pauses "brings you to a greater mindfulness of the moment and God's presence in that moment," says Sister Betty Drewes. Sister Macrina invites readers to pause at the seven traditional sacred moments of the day. She uses Scripture, personal stories, quotes from spiritual teachers, and poetry to spark reflection. (Two of the poems she includes were written by the Ferdinand Benedictines' newest member, Postulant Beth Fritsch.) Sister Macrina "promotes awareness of the daily and of God being with us," Sister Betty says.

You can find a list of more recommended books on "The Sisters' Blog" at thedome.org.

Perspectives

Is there one thing that you think changed your life?



Stepping foot on the campus of Marian Heights Academy. I didn't realize that going to a high school would ever have the impact that MHA had on me. I've learned so much from the sisters and have friendships that will last my whole life. The most important thing I learned was to believe in myself. The sisters gave me the tools to question, reason, and make a decision. Others may influence my decision, but the final choice is mine.

— Tina Dalton, 1982 MHA alumna, employed at Fringe Hair and Nail Studio, Jasper



The students at Marian Day School. They were loving, accepting, and without guile. They taught me to always look deep inside a person to really see the beauty, not to judge "the book by its cover" but to get to know what lies within, that everyone has value, and that I have the gift to help

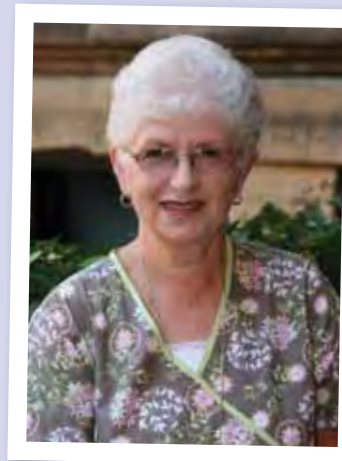
others discover their value. The students gave their very best, and by that example they elicited the best in me. I am a more caring and loving person because God graced me with them.

— Sister Jackie Kissel, pastoral associate at St. Anthony Catholic Church in Evansville, Indiana



The biggest and most noticeable changes have taken place at the time of my entrance in community, during my years of teaching, and now that I am working with the senior members of this community. Change also came about with each living situation and the sisters and people with whom I lived and worked. The example of others has helped me to become who I am. Other helps include living in the present moment, seeing Christ in each person, and faithfulness to community life and prayer.

— Sister Agnes Weinzapfel, activities director for Hildegard Health Center and senior sisters



Deciding to make working in long-term care my career. I applied for a job at a continuing care center, a career choice that ultimately brought me here, where a feeling of caring and love is demonstrated daily, by staff and sisters.

With my husband's recent illness, knowing how to care for a dependant adult has been extremely helpful. With progression of his illness, it became clear that a nursing home was where he would get the care he needed. He is cared for by the experts, caregivers who also made the decision to work in long-term care.

— Joyce Gehlhausen, director of nursing for Hildegard Health Center



Experience fall at For Heaven's Sake

Fall is a wonderful time to visit our gift shop. The air is cooler. The leaves around the monastery are becoming ablaze with color.

And it's our birthday! We'll be 15 on October 15! Celebrate with us. Check our web site for special events and offers.

You can make your home cozier this fall with our scented candles and lovely decorative pieces. Find inspiration in a good book and our sisters' music CDs. Select a beautiful rosary to mark October, the traditional month of the rosary.

And if you're thinking ahead to the holidays, you can find Christmas decorations and gifts in an unhurried atmosphere. And you'll want to take home our delectable cookies!

Step into fall in style at For Heaven's Sake!

SISTERS
OF ST. BENEDICT
FERDINAND, INDIANA
.....

Seek. Pray. Share.



Join us for Christkindlmarkt November 19–20! • forheavensake.org • 812-367-2500

Calendar of Events

2011

- October 1 Perpetual profession of Sister Jill Marie Reuber and Sister Kathleen Marie Cash
- October 14–16 Come & See Weekend
- October 16 Oblation Day for Oblates
- October 24–28 Visitation
- October 30 75th, 70th, and 60th Jubilees
- November 18–20 Christkindlmarkt celebration in Ferdinand
- November 20 Advent/Christmas Concert in the monastery church
- December 24 Christmas Eve services in the monastery church

2012

- January 6–8 Come & See Weekend
- March 16–18 Come & See Weekend
- July 7 Summer Social — Reserve the date!

Coming Soon!

New publication

"It's What We Do"

Be on the lookout in the coming weeks for a new special publication coming your way.

We sisters are constantly asked what we're up to.

This collection of stories will tell you.

From computer classrooms, to joyful musicals, to Louisiana housing projects, to the far reaches of Uganda, we touch thousands of people in a myriad of ways.

We hope you enjoy reading about what we do as much as we enjoy doing what we do.



For more stories about the sisters, visit thedome.org/news.