

Jottings

The AIC / MHA Alumnae Newsletter
Fall 2017



“Every day is a blessing, and I hope I can share those blessings with as many people as I can.” By Aimee Cruz

In February 2017 Aimee Cruz returned to the hill for a visit. Prior to her trip she said: “I haven’t been back to MHA since I graduated in 1995. It will be such an emotional trip for me since I never thought I would make it back.” After visiting with Aimee, I asked if she would share some of her story. Her response: “Having the opportunity to write something for Jottings will be one of the many ways that I have been looking to share my story and my experiences.”

Aimee has had serious medical problems through the years, including three liver transplants, having a daughter after the first transplant, and various complications with each transplant, causing near-death experiences. Here are some of her reflections on life.

During the time that I was sick and waiting for a transplant in February 2016, I would always daydream about going camping and being back in the ocean and close to my family in Puerto Rico. I also learned to appreciate a lot of the things that we take for granted.

We are surrounded by beauty, wonder, and amazing things every day. I cherish every second I’m given, blessed with life on this planet. I hope and pray we can all open our eyes, our hearts, and our minds to the beauty, love, and goodness in ourselves and all around.

This past year I’ve learned so much. We all work in unison with one another, like the trees that I saw hugging each other, pushing each other into the sky to reach the top to obtain that little bit of sunlight to grow, to thrive, to survive.

I have always been surrounded by a “tribe” of strong women who have taught me to push, fight, succeed, respect and be respected, but also to love, be

compassionate, be humble, do what’s right and do it fairly.

I thank God every day for the gift of my life, for the challenges in my lifetime, and for the people I have met along the way. I am blessed with a sister who was a warrior when I could not be, a daughter that was by my side in my greatest time of need.



Left to right: Sister Paulette Seng, Sister Jean Marie Ballard, Sister Jane Ann Breen, Aimee Cruz, Sister Mary Philip Berger

What a year! So many ups and downs, an emotional, physical, and medical roller coaster ride! After my transplant, complications, and recuperation time, I was finally able to make it home to Puerto Rico to spend time with family and to be touched every day with kindness. It’s quite emotional to think that a year ago we did not know what would happen with my medical situation.

Realizing the blessings that followed, I was determined to go to those places that I had always put on the back burner, “next year I’ll do it.” But with all the life-changing challenges and experiences, I didn’t know if there would be a next year. I don’t know if there will be a tomorrow, so the next chance I get, I’m gonna do it.

Then comes a new year (2017) with more memories to make, more people to meet and share beautiful moments, more challenges to overcome, and more life to celebrate!

I needed to go back to the place where I felt peace, where I felt at home, where I learned to be a strong, independent, and passionate woman, to the place where I had made friendships that have lasted so many years and will continue a lifetime. Some of my best memories come from MHA and the educators and

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Highlights of the biggest and best Academy reunion ever!



The class of 1982 was proud to have the largest attendance (14) of an anniversary class. Several are not in the photo.

Billed to be the “biggest and best Academy reunion ever,” the 2017 summer reunion went beyond all expectations, according to alums. More than 200 alums and their guests, from all across the U.S. and as far away as Hawaii, Ireland, and El Salvador, gathered for the weekend to renew friendships, have fun, and celebrate with the Sisters of St. Benedict their 150th anniversary.

The cookout, drawing a large crowd by Madonna Lake on Saturday, was a big hit, with alums enjoying the beautiful weather and scenery and the casual mixing and reminiscing with other classes and former faculty members. Based on comments from the group, the Saturday cookout will most likely become a regular event for future reunions.

Alums most appreciated “the wonderful turnout, great togetherness, laughing and sharing memories no matter the age, visiting with classmates, proctors, and teachers, and making new Academy friends.”

Random comments on the 2017 summer reunion:

“As I read the spring issue of Jottings promoting the 2017 reunion, it dawned on me that I graduated 30 years ago, and I realized it was time to go back and thank those that had set me on the right path. For me that was Sister Jane Ann Breen in particular. She was the one who got through to me and taught me that one can only succeed if she’s willing to make the effort. So I did not want to wait another 30 years before I say ‘thank you.’ And thanks to all in the class of 1987 who attended and for the opportunity to catch up and wish everyone health and happiness in the next chapter of our lives. And I thank the sisters for hosting the event and for their services and charity endeavors in the community. I am so proud to be an Academy Alumna.”

“To all my AIC/MHA sisters, friends, and family, I cannot express how much last weekend meant to me and how thankful I am to have been a part of it.”

“This year’s reunion was the best one yet for me. Each time I return to campus the years melt away and the memories are front and center.”

“LOVED the cookout and hope it becomes a yearly tradition. Our class of ’72 had so much fun – a bond never to be broken no matter how many years ago we were at AIC.”

“Thanks to the sisters for hosting the weekend and the cookout, and thanks to the Board who put a lot of time and effort into our reunion.”

“I smiled all the way home to Michigan, remembering the girls we were 30 years ago, and the beautiful and strong women we’ve become today.

“Such a beautiful and blessed weekend! Thank you all who worked so hard to get us there! And to the sisters... we love you and you are forever in our hearts!”

“The beauty here has only grown through the years, or maybe I just appreciate it more! So happy I made it for the reunion.”

“At MHA I learned that an intelligent and empowered woman is a force to be reckoned with. I am eternally grateful.”

“It had been 35 years since I last saw all of you, and it was so good for my heart and soul to reconnect.”

As we cherish these memories, we look forward to the next reunion when we will create more memories.



Cruz *continued from page 1*

young women that I called family for two years. To think it was only two years, but those two years impacted and changed my life forever.

Yes, I have had many struggles in my life, but if I had not gone through those struggles, I would never have known how much strength I have within me, the strength we all have within us, the fight and the drive to make us who we are today. I am grateful for and honored to have had people in my life who have given me such blessings.

And, yes, every day is a blessing.

Alumnae Reunion: June 23-24, 2018

To all alums, we challenge you to set a new attendance record (over 200) at the 2018 summer reunion. Make plans with classmates and other Academy friends to spend the weekend on the hill.

Walk down memory lane, literally, as you browse through the renovated areas in the quadrangle, including the courtyard and the former “trip hall, sophomore hall, math hall.” Visit the new alumnae gathering room located in the “old Assembly,” once used for Glee Club, music concerts, plays, classes, home rooms, movies, and more.

Saturday, June 23: Gather in the Monastery Event Hall (former MHA gym) and Madonna Lake area between 1 and 7 p.m. Visit with Academy friends, classmates, faculty members, and sisters. There is no limit to the fun and excitement generated when Academy alums come together. And because of popular demand, we will again have a cookout by the lake between 5 and 6:30 on Saturday evening. There will be no charge for the cookout.

Sunday, June 24: Event Hall opens at 8 a.m.

8:15 to 10 a.m. – **all alums** sign in, register and pay (if not done earlier), and pick up dinner tickets; continental breakfast during this time.

10:30 – Mass in monastery church

12 noon (after alums return from Mass) – dinner, followed by a brief meeting, and more fun and visiting

Make lodging reservations early. Check area hotels and B&B places in Ferdinand, Jasper, Dale, Huntingburg, French Lick, West Baden, Evansville, Corydon, all within an hour’s drive, and in Owensboro and Louisville, Kentucky, 1 to 1 ½ hours.



Our very own “Golden Girls.” Congratulations to the class of 1967! Seated at far left in front row is Sister Michelle Mohr, their freshman proctor and music teacher.

Registration: send in the form below or register online at thedome.org/get-involved/academy-alumnae, and click on “Register Now” button. Online registration available by November 1.

Registration deadline is June 8!

Register early and qualify for the “early bird special.” If you register and pay the \$25 alumnae registration fee by May 1, you have a chance to win a prize. The first three names drawn will win one of the following: a one or two-night stay in the new Benedictine Hospitality Center, OR 20 tickets for raffle items, OR reimbursement of registration fee (\$25).

Another incentive to register early: the first 100 to register will receive a souvenir key chain made from Madonna Hall bricks by Tina Dalton ‘82 and her mother.

Alumnae Reunion Registration Form June 23-24, 2018

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Grad year _____ Phone _____

E-mail address _____

Please check:

- I will attend the free cookout on Saturday.
- I will be bring _____ guests to the free cookout.
- I will be at the Sunday dinner.
- I will bring _____ guests for dinner.

Alumnae registration — \$25

Adult guest at dinner on Sunday— \$12

Children under 12 at dinner on Sunday— \$6

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Register and pay by May 1 to qualify for a prize!

All registrations due by June 8!

Pay when you register or when you check in on Sunday, June 24. Send to:

**Alumnae Association
802 E. 10th Street • Ferdinand, IN 47532**

News from the Hill

Two women take major steps in community membership



Sister Jane Ann Breen

Sister Jane Ann Breen made her perpetual monastic profession as a Sister of St. Benedict on July 8 in the monastery church. She entered the monastery in 1968 and was a member of the community until 2003. During part of that time, she taught at the Academy and served as principal. She re-entered the monastery in 2014.

Currently, she does tutoring, serves as tour guide, and assists in altar bread ministry, helping sort, package, and distribute communion hosts to parishes.



Sister Roxanne Cassandra Higgins (left) and Sister Louise Laroche, formation director.

At a simple ceremony on July 26, the sisters accepted Roxanne Higgins into the novitiate, the second stage of incorporation into the monastic community. Sister Roxanne Cassandra, the name she received at the ceremony, is from Kingston, Jamaica. In her novitiate year, she will focus on community life, prayer, work, and Benedictine spirituality as she discerns her call to vowed membership in the Ferdinand Benedictine community.

Sister alums celebrate anniversaries of their religious profession



From left: Sister Jane Will, Sister Betty Drewes, Sister Linda Bittner, and Sister Judy Dewig celebrated 50 years of monastic profession on August 5.

On August 5 Sisters Linda Bittner, Betty Drewes, Judy Dewig, and Jane Will observed their 50th anniversary as Benedictine sisters at the monastery in Ferdinand. Three of the celebrants are former Academy faculty members.

Sister Linda, a 1965 Academy graduate, was a teacher of English as a Second Language at MHA from 1994–2000 and National Honor Society moderator and Teen Challenge coordinator. She currently serves as an interventionist and teaching assistant at Ferdinand Elementary School.

Sister Betty served as religion department chairperson and teacher, director of admissions, school counselor, and dean of students between 1973 and 2000. Her current ministry is director of Kordes Center, co-director of Hospitality, program presenter, and spiritual director.

Sister Jane taught freshman religion at the Academy between 1978-1984. She currently serves as spiritual director, counselor, and director of programming for Spirituality Ministry at the monastery.

Sisters Jan Youart '54, Mary Agnes Sermersheim '56, and Mary Ann Schepers '56 will celebrate their 60th anniversary as Benedictine sisters on October 29.

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Update on renovations on the hill



"Wow! The academic building is so beautiful! That view is such a gift." Mel McMahon

And that view will be enhanced with a new landscape (in process), including a driveway along the building, parking area, pathways around the hillside, a new entrance to the Benedictine Hospitality Center through the "cement hall," and new steps up to the monastery church.

The East quadrangle evolution from 1886-2017

The sisters moved from their original convent near the parish church in Ferdinand to their new monastery on the hill (the quadrangle) in 1886. Since that time, the building has served a variety of purposes. The east quad was first an infirmary for the sisters. When St. Benedict Hall was completed in 1936, the sisters moved out of the quadrangle, and the east wing became known as "trip hall," with bedrooms for the Academy girls. In later years bunk beds were added to accommodate the increasing enrollment. Beginning in 1970, when all students lived in Madonna Hall, the east wing became



After their Academy Board meeting in September, board members had an opportunity to see some of the renovation of the east wing, a part of the Benedictine Hospitality Center. Amy Hermann Larson '93, Julie Uebelhor Buechler '76 (and faculty member), Allison Guide Duncan '92, and Elaine Fromme Robertson '80 check out the upper hallway where many of the new bedrooms are located. A touch of history adds to the décor of the hallway. The original red brick walls are now again visible. They had been covered over with plaster and wooden panels at various times through the building's 131- year history, before the renovation reclaimed their status.

classrooms, especially for "math hall." When the Academy closed, the area was used as rooms for monastery guests.

Soon the newly renovated east wing of the quadrangle will become the Benedictine Hospitality Center for participants in retreats and spiritual programs and other guests and visitors. Accommodations include modern bedrooms, meeting rooms, gathering spaces, dining room, and kitchenette.



Within the quadrangle is the courtyard, which is also receiving an "extreme makeover," from top to bottom. In addition to repairing and replacing the roof, the original attic windows from 1886 were replaced and the dormers were re-faced. New porches and walkways will provide a more accessible space for sisters and guests to enjoy the outdoors and the peaceful surroundings with beautiful yard and gardens that will eventually spring up.

Recycled in a good way: bringing skills and experiences to new ministry

by Sister Mary Emma Jochum '58 and Andrea Stevens, major gift officer in Mission Advancement

The evening started innocently enough. The sisters were attending Evening Prayer, and the girls in the back dorm (top floor of the Annex) thought it was the right time to have a little fun. Sister Mary Emma (Henrietta) Jochum '58, a freshman at the time, remembers fondly the ensuing pillow fight — laughing, squealing girls, and flying pillows.

Slowly, a hush began to fall over the room as they noticed an ominous figure looming in the doorway. The hush settled to silence as the girls' attention turned to a stern Sister Mary Carmel Spayd, dorm supervisor, quietly and calmly observing the fun they were having. She solemnly beckoned them all to come with her, where they received the appropriate lecture and their punishment.

They were to kneel silently in the aisle of the large study hall the next evening, holding their pillows out in front of them, while the other girls were preparing for bed. Sister Mary Emma laughs heartily about it now, but the girls learned not to make assumptions about when the sisters were or weren't watching.

Just a few years after the ill-fated pillow fight, Henrietta Jochum became one of those sisters. Since entering the monastery in 1957, Sister Mary Emma has spent much of the last 60 years teaching, guiding, and watching over her own students on their educational and spiritual journeys. Besides "Sister," her many titles have included teacher, principal, director of faith formation, and, according to many, "Saint." She humbly shrugs off that title, but it's clear from those who have worked with her that she is a living testament to God's love and the Benedictine values. "She's just a super sister," says one parishioner. "I think she's one of the finest educators I've ever seen," says another. "She has given us life," added yet another. For Sister Mary Emma, it is just a deeply-felt call to ministry.

Very often, sister has carried out her ministry by her presence as much as by her work, as she has overcome incredible adversity in her life. In October 1970, as a young school principal in Ft. Branch, Indiana, she was delivering test papers to the small town of Haubstadt, when she met

with another vehicle on a rain-slicked one-lane bridge. Her car skidded off the road and down a 27-foot ravine, crushing three of her vertebrae, damaging her spinal cord, and leaving her paralyzed. Miraculously still alive, she eventually regained movement on her left side, crediting her recovery to her faith. She still remembers the words which came to her early in her recovery, "The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear?"



Sister Mary Emma Jochum, "Sergeant Emma," worked at the Sisters of St. Benedict Dome Golf Classic on September 25 as part of her ministry with the Mission Advancement Office.

Like anyone would, she went through anger, depression, and frustration, but says that one day during prayer, she came to realize that "it's not what is lost, but what is left that counts. Instead of concentrating on what I couldn't do, I concentrated on what I could do. I just decided I was going to live each day knowing that there are many things I can do," she says.

Indeed, she has never seemed to allow her challenges to limit her. After her accident, she continued to teach and eventually became director of faith formation at various parishes in the Diocese of Evansville. In

1993, she began her longest assignment as director of faith formation at St. Paul Parish in Tell City in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. In her 24 years at St. Paul's, Sister Mary Emma walked hand in hand with countless parishioners on their faith journeys, and according to many of them, did it all with kindness, compassion, and the Benedictine spirit of hospitality, anytime of day or night. As she puts it, "I just think that Jesus didn't have banking hours, so I shouldn't either."

She retired from St. Paul Parish in July and returned to the monastery to live. Like many newly retired folks, she is adjusting to a new routine and a "slightly" different pace. But as many know, sisters never really retire. Not wanting to be away from young people, she volunteered to teach two religious education classes for St. Ferdinand parish. Like many seniors, she is also reinventing herself, transferring the skills and experience of a lifetime to a new venture.

In August, she joined the Mission Advancement Department at the request of the prioress, Sister Barbara

Continued

Lynn Schmitz. Sister Mary Emma admits she wasn't quite sure what to expect when she got there. "I always viewed Mission Advancement as a group who was helping us get word out about who we are and what our needs are, and tapping into wealth that we might find out there so that we can pay our bills," she says. Her perspective, however, has changed since working in the department.

"Mission Advancement is not just finding wealth out there, but developing relationships with people and inviting them to join the Sisters of St. Benedict in advancing the Kingdom of God. Sisters are serving the needs of people all over the world, and we need to get as many people as possible to join us if we're to make a difference in God's Kingdom." She has been impressed with the staff in Mission Advancement, noting that they often engage with the spiritual life of the sisters by attending Mass and prayer, making retreats, and studying the Rule of St. Benedict at staff meetings. "What really caught my eye is a quote on every desk in the department that reads, 'Don't pray for the gift. Pray for the giver.'" she says.

Executive Director of Mission Advancement Kerri Cokley echoes Sister Mary Emma's sentiments and is excited by what she brings to the team. "Mission Advancement is just what it says it is. The relationship between the sisters and our donors is a partnership to *advance the mission of the Sisters of St. Benedict*," Kerri says. "It's our responsibility to serve our donors and ensure that the partnership is a fulfilling one. Sister Mary Emma brings so much to the table in terms of connecting deeply with people and really feeling that call to ministry. I think she'll really help us to strengthen those relationships and help donors understand how important their role is in helping the sisters bring their unique ministry to the world."

In building relationships and serving donors, Sister Mary Emma is still very much journeying with others, just as she did for so many years in parish ministry, and she is energized by the possibilities. "I feel recycled – in a good way – learning how to support Mission Advancement," she says. Referencing the Benedictine motto "pray and work," she adds, "There is work to be done. Scripture says, 'The harvest is plenty but the laborers are few.'" It seems that the harvest will indeed be abundant if Sister Mary Emma has anything to say about it.

Academy alumnae are a vital part of advancing the sisters' mission. The sisters are deeply grateful for the special partnership with alumnae throughout the years: a bond that traces its roots back to the founding of the Academy in 1870. We invite you to continue to join the sisters in their mission and ministries. To learn more about the many ways you can help, please visit www.thedome.org and click on Get Involved and Ways to Give.

Madonna Hall Brick Souvenirs Available



You can now purchase online your Madonna Hall brick souvenir with memory label. Cost is \$25 plus shipping and handling. Go to <http://www.monasterygiftshop.org/madonna-hall-commemorative-brick.html> and order now, or if you're in the Ferdinand area, stop by Monastery Gift Shop and purchase one on the spot.

May they rest in peace

Alumnae: Marian Elizabeth (Forster) Schneider '39, Wilma (Walls) Adler '40, Imelda (Koressel) Frank '40, Sister Mary Alice Schnur '40, Mary Agnes (Busam) Gehlhausen '45, Mary Lou (Meyer) Helming '47, Rita (Becher) Gasser '49, Sheila (Sprickerhoff) Kane '53, Sandra (Burkhart) Ellison '56, Philly (Jones) Gogel '57, Dodie (Lents) Strange '59, Elaine (Renner) Potter '65, Vicky Mooney '74

Husband of: Joyce (Goffinet) Greenwood '61, Roselyn (Schepers) Brinkman '62, Maureen (Garvey) Shepherd '67

Mother of: Connie (Adler) Brady '64, Julia (Gehlhausen) Thomas '66, Karen (Gehlhausen) Summers '69, Sister Karen Durliat (faculty)

Brother of: Sister Victoria Pohl '48, Sister Phyllis Backer '49, Mary Jo (Backer) Uebelhor '51, Marge Backer '53, Millie (Uhl) Rueger '55, Marilyn (Pohl) Ankenbrand '57, Connie (Knies) Schroering '62, Margie (Etienne) Edwards '67, Katie Schwenk '67, Sister Dolores Folz (faculty)

Sister of: Sister Karen Durliat (faculty)

Daughter of: Doris (Mundy) Chism '54



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AIC/MHA Alumnae Association

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2018 Alumnae Reunion Weekend

“Meet on the Hill” on June 23-24!

More details on page 3.

Experience one of our programs or retreats at Benedictine Hospitality Center. Find rest and healing, renewal and peace for your body, mind, and spirit.

Check the web site for program details: thedome.org/events

Upcoming Events:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| November 18-19 | Ferdinand Christkindlmarkt |
| November 28-29 | The Hidden Identity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark |
| December 1-3 | Praying with Icons |
| March 2-4, 2018 | Honoring the Woman Within |
| March 17, 2018 | Understanding How the Church Uses Scripture for the Liturgies of Holy Week |

