



The Wheel - Joined in a Circle of Care

Newsletter of the Marian Woods Community

Summer/Fall 2022

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We Give Thanks and Remember

By Sr. Patricia Kenny

The long-awaited celebration of Marian Woods 20th Anniversary was a joyful day that paid tribute to this loving and blessed home for elder sisters of many congregations.

In a show of support that far-exceeded expectations, over 200 friends came to celebrate. Many others who could not attend sent their good wishes and gifts. Through their prayer, financial support and inspiration they joined in the “Circle of Care” that spans over 20 years, contributing significantly to the success of Marian Woods.

The festivities took place at Marian Woods, beginning with a Mass of gratitude celebrated by His Eminence Cardinal Timothy Dolan. Special guest Kacey Morabito Grean of WHUD emceed. A reception immediately followed.

It was also an opportunity to honor three gifted and generous people: Sr. Patricia Wolf whose vision of sisters’ future needs was providential, John E. Maloney whose leadership and financial expertise is essential and Louis DiNapoli whose generous efforts on behalf of the sisters are remarkable.

It all began when the Sisters of Mercy were obliged to leave Mount Mercy. They needed a place for their community offices and found it in Hartsdale

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Cardinal Timothy Dolan celebrates Mass in the Marian Woods' Chapel to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of Marian Woods.



The Cardinal with family members of honoree, Louis DiNapoli.

*A Greeting from Sr. Aileen Donovan
Executive Director*

Dear Friends,



As I look out of my office window, my spirit is fed by the generosity of the Creator's hand and of our sisters' hands in the garden. Despite the heat, the echinacea, gladiolas, dahlias, roses, and various other flowers abound in vibrant colors. Occasionally, I even get to bite into a luscious strawberry. We are blessed.

Marian Woods has two enclosed gardens teeming with life due to the loving care they receive. I am fortunate to view one from my office.

These are bittersweet days as I prepare to leave Marian Woods and begin a new position with my community at Sparkill. In her poem, *The Summer Day*, Mary Oliver concludes with the lines,

*Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

Eight years have flown by during which I have been graced by the lives of the extraordinary sisters and staff of the Marian Woods community. Could there have been a better way to spend this chapter of my life?



The 20th Anniversary Celebration of Marian Woods was a wonderful event. If you were not able to attend, the photo highlights in this issue will give a glimpse of the joyful day. As you read *The Wheel*, I hope you feel the richness of life at Marian Woods and enjoy learning more about the lives and work of

individual community members.

Throughout my time at Marian Woods, you have supported the community in so many ways and the sisters hold you in their daily prayer; a true circle of care and mutual blessing. We are ever grateful.

Above all, I want to say thank you. May you and your loved ones know abundant blessings in the days ahead.

Gratefully,

Sister Aileen

Sr. Aileen Donovan



Art is alive and well at Marian Woods. Turn to page 5 to see more!

In Memoriam

*Sr. Ellen Farrell, RSM
Sr. Francis Goguen, FSP
Sr. Charlotte Koch, FSP*

Widening Circles

*I live my life in widening circles that reach out across the world.
I may not complete this last one, but I give myself to it. Rilke*

Holy Child Students Make a Difference

By Mary James



Cristiana Sacchetti, center, is pictured with sisters clockwise, from left, Ellen Marie Robarge, Rose Andrew Egan, Georgiana Sanders, Catherine Burns, Theresa Maillet, and Rose Marie Broadbent.

In May, a graduating student from School of the Holy Child in Rye spent time with Marian Woods sisters. A final task for each senior in the graduating class is to design a senior independent project in an area of particular interest. Cristiana Sacchetti chose to spend three weeks as a volunteer learning and sharing experience with the sisters.

Cristiana shared meals and conversation, visited and assisted sisters one on one and participated in activities and trips. Cristiana said, "The sisters have lived the most and given the most! They have so much to teach my generation. During my time at Marian Woods they made me feel a part of their family and I feel as if they have become a part of mine as well. The experience was more rewarding than I ever expected."

In addition to Cristiana, six Holy Child students (pictured below), volunteered their time and greatly contributed to the success of our 20th Anniversary Celebration.



Student volunteers from School of the Holy Child in Rye, NY, l-r. Finley McCullough, Eugenia Rem, Lindsey Mulvoy, Lilly Semprevivo, Lila de Lasa, Cristiana Sacchetti, and Gracie Garcia.

From Pastoral Care

Reflections on Vulnerability

By S. Mary Dempsey



Give me the grace, O God, to trust that in and through my vulnerability:

-love is the most powerful stimulus to healing in my life and in the lives of others.

-open hands and hearts can take hold of the gifts that life's journey offers.

-the bruised reed and smoldering wick whisper to us of God's power.

-within my fears are the seeds of self-knowledge and growth.

-the inner freedom of another does not diminish my uniqueness of being.

-paradox and mystery contain truth and life.

-self-preservation aborts Your offer of self-transformation.

-You remain in our movement in and out of darkness and light.

-in weakness and in strength I am an ever-new birthing of God's love in this time and space.

-the territory of my heart is the holy ground in which Your presence dwells.

-Grace my wavering journey into the faithful promise of Your love for me. May I travel in risk, awe and laughter!

Marian Woods now accepts online donations. To make a secure contribution via our website, go to www.marianwoods.org, and click Donate.

Sister Spotlight

Sr. Christine Hennessy

By Carolyn Sedotti



Sr. Christine Hennessy

Marian Woods' resident Sr. Christine Hennessy is a social worker with Catholic Charities at Aisling Irish Community and Cultural Center (AICC) in Yonkers and a Prison Chaplain for the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas (ICPO). Sr. Christine lives her vocation as a Sister of Mercy, providing vital support and compassionate outreach to both communities.

The plight of Irish immigrants is one that is close to her heart—her parents, Delia and Daniel emigrated from Ireland to the United States, settling in Manhattan to raise Christine and her brother Patrick.

Christine entered religious life in 1961 and her ministry began at St. Cecilia's Parish in East Harlem where she taught for 10 years. During this time she received her Master's degree in Education from Fordham University. Later on she held the position of Novice Director for eight years coordinating formation programs for those entering religious life. Social work would become the focus of Sr. Christine's work, first at the Thorpe Family Residence, a shelter for homeless mothers and children and later, at Highbridge

Community Life Center in the Bronx and Angel Guardian Children and Family Services in Brooklyn. She would also receive her Master's

degree in Social Work from Fordham University.

Sr. Christine has been with AICC through Catholic Charities' Project Irish Outreach since 2002. The initiative, which was started in the early 1990's at St. Brendan's Parish in the Bronx by Sr. Edna McNicholas and Fr. Tom Flynn, was established to help the many Irish immigrants arriving to the Woodlawn and McLean areas of the Bronx and Yonkers under the Morrison Donnelly Visas. Eventually, the center relocated to its present location, 990 McLean Avenue, in Yonkers.

As a licensed social worker, Sr. Christine's work focuses on connecting immigrants, some of whom are undocumented, to services such as housing, food assistance, medical care, counseling and more. In addition, she leads a "Mothers and Tots" group which brings mothers of young children together for moral support and playtime with their children in a safe and supportive setting. The center also offers groups and outings for senior citizens and many Irish cultural activities such as Irish language classes and dancing. A beloved fixture in the community, Sr. Christine was honored several years ago to serve as one of the Grand Marshalls in the McLean Avenue St. Patrick's Day Parade. Sr. Christine says, "The Center is well-known and many people here rely on us for help when they need it. I feel so blessed and fortunate to be able to serve the people of this community in this way."

With ICPO, an organization that maintains contact and provides support to Irish people imprisoned in over 30 countries and their families, Sr. Christine is a chaplain in New York, Connecticut and Pennsylvania. Her work involves keeping in touch with 12 prisoners, many of whom are serving life sentences. In pre-Covid days, Sr. Christine would visit in person, but now she maintains contact through phone calls and mail. Her work with prisoners includes providing emotional and

spiritual support and staying in contact with family members. In the past, Sr. Christine has even brought familiar foods to prisoners



Left, Sr. Christine with staff and volunteers at the Center.

when permitted.

Sr. Christine says "Being incarcerated can be a difficult and lonely time both for prisoners and their families. Through prayer and support, my hope is that prisoners will find comfort in knowing that Jesus has not forgotten them. My ministry is very rewarding and I feel Catherine McAuley's presence with me each day."

Submit a prayer request to the sisters at Marian Woods on our website at www.marianwoods.org.

Continued from page 2

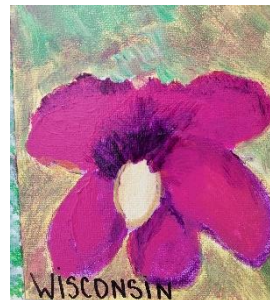
“Happy are the painters, for they shall not be lonely...”

Winston Churchill

Art at Marian Woods

Original art created by sisters can be seen on bulletin boards around our home throughout the year. Recently, sisters painted these beautiful renditions of state flowers for all to enjoy. Page 2 features a grouping in which paintings of all 50 states are displayed.

Marian Woods’ resident painters are: Sisters Mary Daniel Bauer, Catherine Burns, Connie Gaynor, Sheila Kelly, Mary Landon, Eileen Lindsay, Theresa Maillet, Kathy O’Hanlon, Theresa Young, Pat McDermott, Christi Ferrera (the group’s facilitator) and Rita Marie Minogue.



The original work by Sr. Theresa Young was inspired by the series, *NOVA Universe Revealed: Age of Stars*. Theresa writes, “Scientists say that in several trillion years or so, the stars will fade and there will be darkness. But then there’s this: In John 8:12, Christ declared, ‘I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

Wellness at Marian Woods

By Sr. Patricia McDermott

A room transformed. In the early days of Marian Woods, the present exercise room was a storage room for used exercise equipment that resident sisters brought with them when they came.

Eventually, the room was cleaned out and, in consultation with our physical therapist and a grant for \$3,000, a Nu-Step exercise machine was added along with pulleys and wall bars. Each year things were added as funding and donations allowed. Presently, along with the previous equipment including hand weights, Therabands and a step, the following have been added: An ergometer bike, a senior treadmill, and a Theraband wall unit which provides a state of the art workout.



Marian Woods Physical Therapist, Fran Furst works on strength training with resident, Sr. Justine Marcucci.

The room's capability includes what every out-patient facility would require for rehab and an ongoing exercise program.

The program. About 10 years ago, a wellness program began led by our physical therapist, Fran Furst. Fran is a licensed physical therapist with a Master's degree in Motor Learning. This program, funded by Medicaid, ran two or three times a week and included about 20 sisters. After five or six years, Medicaid stopped this program's funding.

Marian Woods' administrator, Sr. Aileen Donovan recognized some significant benefits that resulted from the program – a decrease in falls and a “boost in morale.” With Sr. Aileen's encouragement, efforts to continue the program were made through donations raised by sisters' “in-house” craft fair. This provided the budget and fee for the program hours. With the COVID-19 pandemic, the program stopped.

When the pandemic eased and visitors could be admitted, Fran approached Sr. Aileen for a start-up of the program for 6.5 hours a month on a one-day- a week basis.

The program design includes endurance training (walking or aerobics), strength training (3x/week), and balance and stretching (daily). The goal is to maintain a person's level of physical ability or even to get a person stronger. This flows from the awareness

that individuals lose function and endurance with aging without exercise. Tai Chi and Yoga can be incorporated for those inclined (even in their 80's).

Individual programs are crafted in consultation with Fran and the sisters who participate. Fran asks what is realistic and most important for each sister to achieve in terms of her “quality of life” issues. Functional limitations are explored and steps for improvement are planned and monitored for both effectiveness and safety. A positive perspective of realistically working toward beneficial results ensues. Overcoming limitations can open up the world again. In some cases, pain is decreased through appropriate exercise. However, Fran is careful to monitor existent pain and levels of pain a sister might experience. Also, vital signs are monitored as needed such as heart rate, oxygen levels, breathing and blood pressure.

At present, once an individual program has been set up, Fran meets monthly with each sister for a half hour to discuss progress, and challenges.

Exercise has the mental benefit of doing more for brain function and memory than working crosswords, word games, and math puzzles.

As Fran says, “It's never too late to start.” One of her absolute delights is our 100 year-old Sr. Justine exercising, lifting a one-pound weight above her shoulder and “smiling the whole time.” Added proof of the new research that maintains even 90-year olds can still improve their bodies; people have been under-exercised because they haven't been challenged.

The vision. We are grateful for Fran, the heart, skill and vision of this program. Her energy, availability, concern and passion to assist each sister reach her full potential is contagious. Her expert guidance is the gentle motivator to make a limitation possible to overcome. She is there to figure out a way if first efforts don't seem to work out. Most of all, Fran brings her love of her work, her joy in seeing improvement and her excitement to meet each sister and companion her to optimal wellness. Fran is not only our physical therapist but also a sister to us in our journey to wellness.

Exercise, anyone?



Sr. Theresa Maillet enjoys a workout on the Nu-Step

We Give Thanks and Remember

Continued from Page 1

on the property known then as Hart's Brook Preserve. The home was vacant and wanting tenants who needed what it had to offer. They called it Coolock House.

The surroundings were parkland, rocky and forested, but full of potential. The sisters needed a home for those who were aging. They weren't alone; the need faced sisters in many communities and the possibility of a place they could share was considered. A dream at first, it became a reality and they called it Marian Woods. From the dedication in 2000 to the 20th anniversary in 2022, over 200 sisters from various religious congregations have called Marian Woods home.

The sisters and their communities are awed and grateful for the outpouring of generous support for this event and in so many ways throughout the years.

The committee was led by Development Coordinator Carolyn Sedotti who did a wonderful job in planning of celebration. For a full recap of the event, go to our website at marianwoods.org/news-events/.



Above l-r, His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan with awardees and presenters: Marian Woods' Board Chair, Sr. Helen Wacker with honoree, Board Vice Chair and Treasurer, John E. Maloney; Executive Director, Sr. Aileen Donovan with honoree, Louis DiNapoli; below left, Sr. Patricia Vetrano with honoree, Sr. Patricia Wolf, Cardinal Dolan with Sr. Mary Elizabeth Dolan, Marian Woods' longest resident. Below, members of the 20th Anniversary Committee, l-r, Carolyn Sedotti, Stephanie Carpentieri, Sr. Aileen Donovan, and Sr. Lorraine LaRocca.



To read more about the sisters' outreach to our local community and beyond, go to our website at www.Marianwoods.org, and click Service to Others/Outreach



A Day at the Beach



L-r, Sisters Ellen Marie Robarge, Maggie Glynn, Margaret Rogers and Theresa Maillet with volunteer, Eugenia Rem at Island Beach in Greenwich, CT, August, 2022.



Stay in Touch- We welcome your feedback. Please contact Carolyn Sedotti, Office of Development
152 Ridge Road, Hartsdale, NY. Email: csedotti@marianwoods.org or call 914 750-6046.

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Committee Members:

Sr. Marlene Brownnett

Sr. Aileen Donovan

Mary James

Sr. Patricia Kenny

Sr. Lorraine LaRocca

Sr. Patricia McDermott

Carolyn Sedotti, Editing & Design

Lourdes Zuckerman

Photo Credits

Aishling Irish Community and Cultural Center

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Mary James

Carolyn Sedotti

Alan Zale, *Catholic NY*