



# The Wheel - Joined in a Circle of Care

Newsletter of the Marian Woods Community

Summer Issue, 2020

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## Widening Circles

### One Student's Generosity Touches Many

*Although Covid-19 has separated us, it has at the same time brought us together through the blessings of generosity, care for one other and gratitude. In our continuing feature, Widening Circles, we celebrate the broad reach of one student's hard work and generous spirit, for which we are very grateful.*

Andy Haggerty is a freshman at Strake Jesuit High School in Houston. As part of the curriculum, each

student performs community service.

Andy's mom, a pediatrician, knows of Marian Woods through a relative of one of our employees. She suggested to Andy that he make protective masks and face shields for the residents of Marian Woods, an idea that sparked Andy's creative spirit.

A few weeks later, the first colorful

shipment of protective equipment arrived along with three large bags of Hersey Kisses. A second wonderful shipment came a few weeks later.

In the meantime, we learned of a group of Catholic Sisters who, without protection, are caring for very sick low-income folks in the Bronx. We were able to share our good fortune with them. The circle ever widens.



*Andy Haggerty assembles protective masks and shields, which he donated to Marian Woods.*

## During Pandemic, Sisters Form Phone Outreach Ministry

In April, as the pandemic was raging in New York, a group of Sisters at Marian Woods were wondering what they could do to help the many who were suffering and without emotional support. Because of orders to stay inside, the Sisters came up with an idea to start a phone ministry, where they could reach out to those in need of conversation and prayer.

Marian Woods resident, Sr. Mary Landon, FSP, who worked at Sacred Heart Parish in Hartsdale, NY and is in touch with the scripture group, reached out to the church's pastor, Fr. Moon with this idea. He soon provided a list of parishioners that could benefit from this outreach, and so began the phone ministry.

Sr. Connie Gaynor, FSP coordinated with 12 Sisters at Marian Woods, who were interested in participating. The phone ministry, which continues is a success. Sr. Connie says, "Everyone that we've reached out to has welcomed the conversation and prayer. It has been very meaningful for myself and my fellow Sisters to be able to help at this time."



*The Phone Ministry. 1 - r, Srs. Catherine Burns, OP; Justine Marcucci, FSP; Elizabeth McCarthy, RSM; Patricia Lardner, OP; Christine Hennessy, RSM; Teresa Kane, RSM; Connie Gaynor, FSP; Sheila Kelly, RSM*

## A Greeting from Sr. Aileen Donovan, OP



Dear Friends,

Greetings of peace in these extraordinary times. In her poem *Blessing in the Chaos* Jan Richardson writes:

To all that is chaotic in you  
Let there come silence  
Let there be  
a calming of the clamoring  
a stilling of the voices that

have laid their claim on you...

I greet you with these words that speak to the heart of what many of us are experiencing at this time. How can we bring quiet and silence to the clamoring voices within and around us? As I prayed with this poem this week, I found myself more open to unexpected moments of beauty. The lush green of the trees, the colors of the flowers, a vegetable garden growing in leaps and bounds, the flashes of lightning and pelting rain that gave way to a glorious double rainbow and finally the gift of watching that beautiful orange ball, our moon, slowly rise above the trees to light the night sky - blessings.

We need these blessings. I know I do, to gain balance and calm when the suffering around us threatens to crush our spirit or worse, drive us into blind denial. Marian Woods Sisters are very grateful to be spared the virus thus far. The state-mandated lockdown has been very limiting and difficult for both

residents and staff who have taken on extra responsibility and submit to weekly Covid testing.

The Sisters pray each day for all who work on the front lines, for all who are sick and for those who have been tragically lost. Some who will read these lines are suffering the great personal loss of a loved one. As we try to stretch ourselves to discover the blessings and meet the challenges of these times, we ask ourselves:

- With this global pandemic upon us, can we use our discomforts to join with the suffering throughout the world and feel with them the pain, that when shared, breaks the heart open to greater compassion? Can we recognize in that suffering that we really are brothers and sisters?

- Can we find the courage to look deep within our own hearts to search out the cobwebbed corners that veil prejudice? Can we open ourselves to listen to those who bear the scars of prejudice and perhaps stand non-violently in their cause?

These are some of our questions at this time.

I close with the final words of the poem that opened this greeting:

Let there be an opening into the quiet that lies beneath the chaos where you find the peace you did not think possible and see what shimmers within the storm.

Grateful Blessings to All,

*Sister Aileen*

## Creativity Flourishes at Marian Woods

Led by Sr. Christi Ferrera, RSM, a group of Marian Woods Sisters has been meeting to make and share art for over five years. During this time, the Sisters have studied and emulated the work of many great artists such as, Claude Monet, Georgia O'Keefe and Pablo Picasso.

Sr. Christi, who is described by her students as "a great coach, encourager and teacher," strives to create a judgment-free, supportive environment, where she says, "Sisters most importantly can laugh, feel encouraged, and more secure with each painting." She has also encouraged Sisters to explore different media such as clay, digital photography, mural and paint.

Previous subjects have been the Cuomo Bridge, Rosie the Riveter and most recently, the *Jungle Series*, oil on canvas paintings of animals found in the jungle.



*Paintings from the Jungle Series*

The playful and imaginative works created by Sisters during the pandemic lockdown, provided a much-needed fun, comforting and creative outlet.

## Spotlight on Sisters

### Sr. Justine Marcucci, FSP

Sr. Justine Marcucci speaks of her many years in service to God's people with joy and a quiet countenance. After answering the call to religious life, she entered the convent of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Peekskill, NY in 1941.



*Sr. Justine during an audience with Pope John Paul II*

Sr. Justine continued her education receiving a Bachelor's degree in History from Ladycliff College and a Master's in Theology from St. Bonaventure University. Extensive coursework in Spiritual Direction and Canon Law helped lay the foundation for a long and diverse career which would span many

decades and touch countless lives.

After teaching first grade in Catholic grammar schools in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, Sr. Justine was named school principal and convent superior at St. Matthew's in Hastings, NY.

In 1968, she was elected by the Sisters of her community to go to Rome for a General Chapter after which, Sr. Justine was elected to serve as assistant to the Superior General, requiring her to live in Rome. "This was during the time of the Second Vatican Council, and my work required me to travel to convents in Cameroon, Chile, Cyprus, France, India, Italy, Luxembourg and Switzerland," says Sr. Justine. She adds, "It was a time of great change and adjustment, and it was my job to discuss these changes with our Sisters in these places."

Upon returning to the US, in 1975, Sr. Justine was asked to take on the role of vicar for religious in the Archdiocese of Newark and then assistant provincial. It was during this time that she became involved with her community in petitioning Rome to form a new religious congregation, which after its approval became the Franciscan Sisters of Peace.

As a new challenge waited in Americus, GA, Sr. Justine and two Sisters were called to St. Mary's Parish where they worked with migrants. They also opened a kindergarten for African American children

to prepare them for first grade in the public school. Sr. Justine adds, "We provided good, basic instruction for these children, helping to prepare them for the future." During this time, the Sisters also assisted with parish management, religious education, and ministry to parishes in the outlying areas where they helped implement in-home religious programs.

Serving the senior religious for the next ten years as convent administrator at Sacred Heart Convent in Yonkers, NY would be Sr. Justine's next challenge, which she embraced fully, also assisting with the parish's Rite of Christian Initiation (RCIA) program, a program for adults wishing to become Catholic. "My time spent here was a joy," she says.



*At St. Martin's Community Center during her work at St. Mary's Parish*

Finally, at the Franciscan Congregation Center in Haverstraw, NY, Sr. Justine lent her many years of experience and generosity of spirit to her service in the RCIA and hospitality ministries.

Sr. Justine has served in a volunteer capacity for many causes which remain close to her heart such as Habitat for Humanity, Literacy Volunteers of America and Council for Child Abuse.

In 2011, Sr. Justine became a resident of Marian Woods retirement convent, where she enjoys crocheting intricately-detailed baby clothes and blankets which she donates to the Marian Woods gift shop.

Sr. Justine, who turned 98 in March, also participates in the Pen Pals ministry and many other Sister-led volunteer efforts. She adds, "I've had a very full life, and have loved being a Sister. I've had the opportunity to meet so many people. Mostly, I've loved serving our senior religious as well as teaching the first grade. Now, I wait to meet God, and all His angels and saints."



*With a student from Cornelia Connelly Middle School during Pen Pal Day at Marian Woods*

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## Spotlight on Sisters

### Sr. Margaret Rogers, SHCJ



*Sr. Margaret seated, 2nd from left with Holy Child Sisters on mission in Ghana*

Sr. Margaret Rogers entered the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in 1946, a week after her 18th birthday. Margaret met the Sisters when she attended their school, St. Leonard's, in Philadelphia. Underlying her vocation was a strong desire to be a missionary, inspired when she watched a documentary on the life of Fr. Damien, who gave his life serving people suffering with leprosy and banished to Molokai.



*l - r, Sr. Margaret, Sr. Ann Schulte and Sr. Sheila McNiff at Holy Child School in Lagos, Nigeria*

Following her profession of vows in August of 1949, Sr. Margaret began her teaching ministry at St. Edward's Parish School in north Philadelphia. When the Archdiocese opened a new St. Maria Goretti High School for girls in South Philadelphia, Sr.

Margaret was one of the four SHCJ Sisters assigned to teach geometry and religion and was responsible for the school's bookstore. One day, the principal introduced her to a missionary from Africa who was visiting. This visit would bring her dream of such a life once again to the forefront of her thoughts.

Sr. Margaret did not have long to wait. After only one year at St. Maria Goretti, she was missioned to Nigeria. Sr. Jeanne Adams and Sr. Margaret set sail from Brooklyn harbor in September of 1968 on a cargo boat along with ten Protestant missionaries. The trip took one month, having stopped at several ports to leave off cargo.

Sr. Margaret taught first at Cornelia Connelly College, a five-year secondary school for girls offering a British-type education. After fourteen years she moved on to Holy Child Secondary School in Ikom for four years and then to St. Ann's Secondary School in Otukpo.

During her 22 years in Nigeria, Sr. Margaret witnessed the country's historic independence, which she described as a joyous time without incident. All too quickly things changed when a coup d'etat led to a civil war with a portion of the country declaring itself Biafra. Once the war was over, it was time for the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus to rebuild and reopen schools.

In 1978 Margaret returned to the US and settled at the Dalton Center for Mission and Peace, the newly-opened mission office of the American Province in Greenwich Village. The next year she was asked to help CODEL (Coordination in Development), an ecumenical consortium that funded grass roots development while they searched for a new Africa Coordinator. The CODEL members liked the way Sr. Margaret handled the work and offered her the job of Africa Coordinator. For the next ten years, Sr Margaret travelled to Africa three times a year working mostly with village people trying to solve their basic needs for water, agriculture help, community development and education. Her ten years with CODEL took her to twenty of Africa's countries and filled her with joyous memories. Sr. Margaret claims that during this time God indulged her childhood desire to work with those suffering with leprosy by letting her bring financial help to those doing this work.

Sr. Margaret was nominated to serve on the Provincial Council of her community in 1990, and did so for four years.

Throughout her time with CODEL and Province government, she continued with the work of Dalton Center raising funds for the Society's missions and for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. This gave her the chance to share the vision that we are all called to be missionaries.



*Assembling gift bags for the homeless*

In 2016 Dalton Center was closed and Sr. Margaret moved to Marian Woods, a retirement center for religious of different congregations. In 2019 she celebrated 70 years since first vows as a Sister of the Holy Child Jesus. She enjoys an active life participating in many of the activities offered at Marian Woods and volunteering where she can be helpful. She continues to work with the Society for the Propagation of the Faith of the Archdiocese of NY, living out God's mission each day, in every circumstance.

## Reflections on a Life-changing Experience in El Paso, TX



*l - r: Sr. Mary Lang, RSHM; Clare Horn and Sr. Mary Heyser, RSHM who spent two weeks at the US Southern border assisting asylum seekers*

Last year at this time, Clare Horn a Marian Woods' board member, Sr. Mary Heyser and Sr. Mary Lang, members of the Eastern Province of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, travelled to El Paso, TX to lend assistance and support to refugees at the US southern border. We recently spoke with Ms. Horn who recalls this life-changing experience.

The women's decision to volunteer came in response to a letter sent by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), which described the need for volunteers to lend humanitarian support to the large numbers of refugees being detained and released at our US borders.

Staying at the convent of the Sisters of Loretto in El Paso, the women were based out of the Hotel Soluna, one of the Hospitality Houses of Annunciation House, a volunteer organization in El Paso that offers hospitality to migrants, immigrants and refugees in the border region of El Paso.

One hundred refugees, arriving with just the clothes on their backs were received each day at the Hotel Soluna, as Ms. Horn and other volunteers welcomed and registered them, providing meals and a room for the night. The volunteers also distributed items donated by the people of El Paso, which included food, clothing, medication and personal supplies.

Sr. Mary Lang, who speaks Spanish, contacted the refugees' family members, who served as their sponsors in the US. Family sponsors were responsible for purchasing a bus or plane ticket for the next leg of the refugees' journey. The following day, Sr. Mary Heyser and other volunteers would drive the refugees to the bus terminal or airport, accompanying them to the ticket counters.

Ms. Horn recalls, "The people we saw were from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador—places of extreme violence. They were mostly in their 20s and 30s—mothers or fathers with one or more child, who because of situations so dire, had made the decision to leave their homeland for a better life."

She adds, "During the time we were with the refugees, we worked to plant a seed of hope and faith in them, which was so gratifying. Hopefully the refugees would leave with a good memory of this place, feeling God's love for them, having endured great hardship in getting to the States, and facing an uncertain future going forward."

Clare Horn is a licensed clinical social worker with extensive experience practicing in community, educational and nursing home settings. In addition, Ms. Horn has also worked in Thailand with Kampuchean (Cambodian) refugees.



## God, Hear Our Voices

At Marian Woods, Sisters pray daily for the needs of others. During this time of great suffering and uncertainty, special prayers continue to be offered for those affected by the pandemic, especially those who have died and the loved ones who mourn their loss. We pray for the health and safety of healthcare workers, and in the wake of George Floyd's death, for peaceful and just solutions to our social unrest. Sisters also pray the rosary each Monday and Thursday for our country and world.

## Marian Woods' Annual Fundraiser, *Opera to Broadway* Cancelled *Limited Raffle to be Held*

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Marian Woods' annual fundraiser, *Opera to Broadway*, has been cancelled. We will however, hold the Limited Raffle, which takes place each year at this event to benefit the Sisters of Marian Woods. The drawing will take place on September 17, 2020. At that time, five prizes totaling \$15,000 will be awarded. Only 250 tickets will be sold.

Since 2013, Marian Woods supporters have gathered with us for *Opera to Broadway*, a joyous evening of friends, music, fine food, and raffles to celebrate our resident Sisters. This generous support has helped us to fulfill our mission of providing a loving home to our Sisters.

If you would like to support the Sisters of Marian Woods through the purchase of a raffle ticket(s), please use the order form enclosed in this newsletter.

For those who generously contributed to *Opera to Broadway* through a sponsorship, journal ad or dinner reservation, we ask that you consider transferring this support to a donation to Marian Woods, which will help offset the many Covid-19 related expenses at our facility, such as weekly testing, the purchase of protective gear and cleaning supplies, and the hiring of additional dining room staff to ensure safety standards. Your donation to Marian Woods can also be designated on the enclosed form.

We are so grateful for the support you have given us in the past, and look forward to a time when we can again safely celebrate together.



*Sisters at a pre-pandemic gathering at Marian Woods*

### Limited Raffle Rules

- Complete the order form enclosed in this issue to reserve your ticket(s).
- Make your check payable to Marian Woods, Inc. (tickets are \$100 each).
- Mail the form to Marian Woods, along with your check in the enclosed, addressed envelope—once received, you will be mailed a numbered ticket.

### Please note:

- You must be 18 years of age to participate.
- Drawing will take place on September 17, 2020. Winners be notified by phone.
- Prize amounts are determined by the number of tickets sold.
- Winners are subject to withholding tax.

**For questions, contact Marian Woods Office of Development at 914 750-6046. Thank you for your support!**

*Our Summer Gardens*, in their second season, continue to thrive under the care of Sr. Patricia Kenny, RSM (l) and Sr. Mary Landon, FSP (r). The gardens have yielded an abundance of herbs and vegetables including basil, parsley, thyme, cucumbers, tomatoes and zucchini for all to enjoy at Marian Woods.



**Stay in Touch** We welcome your feedback. Please contact Carolyn Sedotti, Development Coordinator, Marian Woods, 152 Ridge Road, Hartsdale, NY. Email: [csedotti@marianwoods.org](mailto:csedotti@marianwoods.org) or call 914 750-6046.

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