

# Out-of-the-way place brings peace

*Sister Elise Saggau with Sister Therese Furnstahl*

In 2004, Sister Mathias Gangl's sister and brother-in-law, Katherine (Kay) and Gerald Timm, moved into the Alverna Apartments. Looking for an outdoor place that they could take care of and visit regularly, they found a perfect spot in the pine grove that skirts the south end of the Motherhouse campus. Given the go-ahead, they cleared a space among the trees and planted shrubs and other plants that favor shade. The Peace Garden was born.

After Gerry died in 2006, Kay carried on alone for some time. Eventually, however, she needed assistance. Responding to an ad in *The Associate* magazine, Bev Gerads (Sister Joan Gerads' niece-in-law) came forward to help. In 2010, Bev took charge of the Peace Garden and soon got Sister Therese Furnstahl involved. Together they kept the project going. Once a year in the springtime, Sister Therese's Franciscan Life Group came in for an evening and gave the area a thorough clean-up, adding new plants and flowers.

Over time, a number of features appeared. The first was a wooden statue of Saint Francis. Unfortunately, the mice chewed it up and ruined it. Sister Therese's brother John then donated a more durable Francis statue. Later, with donated funds, the caretakers purchased a statue of Saint Clare with a fawn at her side. Then Keith Brown donated a statue of Jesus with the little children gathered around him. Bev's husband Al carved a Tau Cross and placed it at the entrance to the garden. Small angels and butterflies gradually appeared, donated by various visitors, and were scattered about the garden. A unique offering was a pitchfork stuck into the ground on top of which rests a decorative birdhouse. Carved by Bruce Stillmach and donated by two of Sister Therese's Tracey cousins, this house is a congenial habitat for nesting wrens. Bev's brother and sister-in-law donated a special bench, and



Sister Therese Furnstahl and gardeners Associate Bev Gerads and Kathy Pantzke at the entrance to the Peace Garden. "So many have found peace and comfort in this place," said Sister Therese.

Associates Cedar and Johanna Morrigan donated a Trinity cross and copper wind chimes. Eventually, Kathy and Jerry Pantzke and Mary Poser also began to help care for the Peace Garden regularly.

A surprising number of people visit this out-of-the-way place each year. More than 100 prayer requests are left annually in a special box provided for this purpose. Sister Therese faithfully collects and reads them all and places them for one year before the statue of Our Lady of Fatima in her room. She and Bev and the other volunteers make a point of remembering all these intentions in prayer each day. Over the years, the Peace Garden has captured the attention and devotion of many persons. In this beautiful place they discover a bit of the peace they seek.