Franciscan Federation honors Sister Michelle L’Allier

Later this month, Sister Michelle L’Allier will be honored at the annual Franciscan Federation conference. Sister Michelle's role in coordinating the Federation’s Franciscan Mentors program at the national level, as well as her work with the Franciscan Life Center and the Engaging Franciscan Spirituality program, make her a perfect candidate for this honor. Congratulations, Sister Michelle!

As the eldest of six children, Michelle has understood community all her life. In college, Franciscan friars introduced her to Saint Francis and inspired her to join the Franciscan family. First as a Secular Franciscan and then as a religious, it has been her mission to make the wisdom of our Franciscan tradition accessible for newcomers to Franciscan values. In her words, “Part of the beauty of the Franciscan way of life is its explicit expression of unity within our diverse human family.”

“It is especially for her initiative and leadership in accompaniment and formation of lay and religious individuals and groups in learning and integrating Franciscan values that we Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls nominated her as a prophet in our challenging times,” said Sister Carol Schmit, community minister.
In the spirit of Saint Francis, I offer to each of you, our readers, Peace and All Good.

This is the time of year I especially pay attention to windows of opportunity. That flock of migrating cranes. Time spent with a dying sister. The growth in the garden that faces south.

Though it will be June when you read this, my mind is still on spring. We were well on our way and then, to our surprise, another April blizzard presented itself. Once the snow melted (again), spring truly arrived, bursting with opportunity. Looking back to my childhood, one of the earliest signs of spring was salad made from dandelion greens. You have to cut them before the yellow blossom appears. Wash them at least three times to get all of last year’s grasses out. Heat the simple dressing of vinegar and sugar. Don’t forget the bacon bits and hard cooked eggs.

My mother pointed out the connection. Easter often occurs in the same window of time, when the dandelions are tender and almost sweet and the colored eggs are plentiful. I look forward to this time each spring. It carries with it the very resurrection story.

Our generous Creator gives us many daily opportunities to notice how the Divine enters into our lives. Fifty, 60 and 75 years ago Sisters Ange, Julien, Joanne, Pat, Susan, Jeanne, Callista, Siena, Therese, Theodora and Therese accepted the call to enter the Franciscan community. Their choice and faithfulness to the call give us reason to celebrate. See their reflections on the following pages. What a loss that would have been had they not said yes to the call to be Franciscan decades ago.

Even the deaths of Sisters Bernarda and Jeanette came at the appointed time, causing both grieving and celebration. God fills our lives with times for gratitude, even if it is just as simple as that first dandelion salad of spring.

Thank you, dear friends, for your love, your support, your prayers. Enjoy the issue!

Sister Carol Schmit
Community Minister

Recipe: Dandelion Greens Salad

Dressing
(sufficient for a 2-quart bowl of greens)

3 slices bacon, fried and chopped
3 tablespoons vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar
salt and pepper to taste
Sister Therese Furnstahl

I am grateful to God and to my Franciscan Community, which allows me to live a consecrated life and observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in poverty, chastity and obedience after the Rule of Saint Francis and the constitutions of the Franciscan Sisters. Therefore, the world is our cloister where every person is our brother and sister in Christ.

75 Years

Sister Theodora Higgins

I believe that joining the Catholic Church and this Franciscan Community was a gift from the Heavenly Father. I have been happy over these 75 years as a Franciscan Sister and have never wanted any other life but this. I give thanks to God and the Blessed Mother for the gift of community. I know in my heart that this is where I belong.

75 Years

Sister Therese Lenz

Living the Gospel in today’s world is a blessing and a challenge. There are so many challenges. I feel called to deep prayer and sacrifice, loving and living the Gospel as Francis taught for our community, our nation, our world.

75 Years
Sister Pat Imdieke

As I look back over these 60 years, I’m most grateful for the experience of the Spirit of God at work in my life. For me, God reveals Him/Herself to us moment by moment. By listening to God today, we discover what God wants for us tomorrow. All of it is GIFT to be lived fully, to be cherished and to be given away.

Sister Joanne Heim

Gospel living is the basis of Franciscan spirituality, to take on the Spirit of Jesus in this life. In this way of living, I celebrate the faithful presence of Jesus in all people and all of creation. I am humbled and challenged each day to hear and to respond to love more intentionally.

Sister Julien Dirkes

As I celebrate 60 years as a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, I find reading the Gospel of the day, then reflecting on it through prayer, calls me to live those Gospel values in service to others with compassion and love.

Sister Susan Knutson

As I look back on these 60 years of living the gospel, I am grateful for all of the life experiences I have had. I see now how this journey unfolded and with each step all I needed to do was say yes. This journey of living the Gospel in today’s world will continue, and I will know not where it will lead, but I say yes and trust it will be with God’s love and mercy.
Sister Jeanne Lieser

God’s love is a constant presence in today’s world. I give thanks for the many ways I can be with and for others of all ages and from all walks of life. Each day brings new surprises.

Sister Callista Robinson

My commitment to gospel living in today’s world is grounded in prayer and asking for guidance from the Lord to seek what is right and just. Even though our country is wrecked with racism, violence and turmoil, I am living my life based on hope, as Saint Paul in the Letter from Romans 5:5, writes, “Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that been given to us.”

Sister Siena Wald

I value the simplicity of the Franciscan way of life. When reading the Gospel stories, I find more meaning in them than before. I pay attention to their content. They seem more practical and help me to respond to others with a more Christ like love.

Sister Ange Mayers

“May the Lord give you peace” was Francis’s greeting. In today’s world, there is need for peace and reconciliation in the workplace, in government, within the family, in the church, on the street. My commitment to Gospel living is in the name of peace.

My fervent pray for peace extends to everyone I meet, those in my daily life, to those with whom I share the “sign of peace” during Mass and to the world at large. “Peace be with you!”
Blessed are the poor in spirit . . .

Sister Jan Kilian

Our Journey, the publication you hold in your hands, shares the journeys of our Franciscan community as we work and live in joyful service in the spirit of Saints Francis and Clare, which is in the spirit of the Beatitudes. This issue of Our Journey contains part two of a focus on Matthew 5:1-12, where we find the Beatitudes. Christians are called “to live in a way that clearly runs counter to the way things are usually done in our world,” says Pope Francis in his pastoral letter The Call to Holiness in Today’s World. “The gospel invites us to peer into the depths of our heart to see where we find our security in life” is his interpretation of the first Beatitude: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Of this Beatitude, Sister Mary Obowa writes, “Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . poor am I in so very many ways!” However, Sister Mary signs her e-mails describing her home: “This is a place of Franciscan solitude, a place in nature to savor Beauty, attend to Goodness and discover Truth.” Sister Mary says she is “so rich out in the country by the water enjoying the bliss of heaven on earth. I watch the migration of birds and no government can stop them. We have room in our beautiful land for all kinds and numbers of creatures: two legged, four legged, winged and finned that swim, walk, hop, jump and fly.” Sister Mary finds the kingdom of God, not in wealth, but in the endless beauty of God’s creation. She spends her days in prayer and in recreating God’s beauty in her art, embroidery, quilting and teaching sewing to African immigrant women.

“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted” is the beatitude that speaks to Sister Noreen Bentfield, who serves as a parish volunteer. She visits people in their homes, in care centers, hospitals or hospices. She cares for people who grieve a multitude of losses due to aging, death of a spouse, death of friends, loss of health and even of home. Sister Noreen shares her heart and prayer with those who have had to let go of everything and who simply need someone to be with them as they bear such pain. Pope Francis says, “The world tries to avoid painful situations, but the person who sees and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life’s depths and finding authentic happiness.”

Holly Pelzer, transportation coordinator at St. Francis Convent, wrote a reflection on each of the eight Beatitudes! Her personal experience of the fourth Beatitude rings true. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. In a world of many opinions, we all want to be right in a situation. We hunger and thirst for what may seem to be right for us. I struggled with this one for a long time. I found out that different experiences make for different outcomes. And different outcomes make for different thoughts and opinions. I hunger and thirst for patience in times that I’d like to know the right answer,” said Holly.

Thank you, Sister Noreen, Holly and Sister Mary, for your insight into living the Beatitudes.
Ask Associate Mary Poser what she likes best about being the convent’s beautician and she’ll probably tell you it is the deep friendships she’s developed with many of the sisters. In fact, she can’t think of a single sister who hasn’t impacted her in some way, but two in particular came to mind as she considered her favorite words from Saint Francis—his final words: “I have done what is mine to do; may Christ teach you what is yours.”

Sister Donna Zetah was one of her first clients when Mary began working in the convent beauty shop, and they quickly became friends. Mary couldn’t help but notice how many phone calls Sister Donna received during her appointments. She soon learned the reason: Sister Donna was helping struggling families within the Hispanic community. They would call her with their needs and somehow she found the means to fill them.

Mary started assisting her, usually by driving her to the thrift shop to buy needed items. Once Sister Donna was seeking a rug for a family who was moving into a garage, but instead Mary helped her decorate the garage into a nice living space, complete with old carpeting from Mary’s house. “We were getting new carpet anyway,” she said.

Mary was inspired by Sister Donna’s commitment, strength and sense of humor, as well as her ability to stay joyful in spite of declining health. “You just do what is yours to do,” Sister Donna told her. Mary realized those words are both humble and encouraging. “I don’t have to fix it all! The pressure is off. I just do what is mine to do.”

In the same way, Mary finds encouragement in her friendship with her Sister Companion, Sister Therese Furnstahl. One of the ways she inspires Mary is through her work in the convent’s Peace Garden. Sister Therese felt it was important there be a place where anyone could come, pray and enjoy nature. There’s a “mailbox” in the garden as well, where visitors can place prayer requests.

“Sister Therese reads every prayer request,” Mary told me, “and she prays for all of them.” Some of them can be heartbreaking, and Sister Therese feels their pain deeply. “But she holds onto her joy,” Mary added, “because she is doing what is hers to do.”
Life beckons. My spouse Hank and I have moved several times in our years together. Sometimes of economic necessity, sometimes for family reasons, sometimes in response to a vocational tug. Life beckons—and by God’s loving design, the universe unfolds as it should.

When we moved to Little Falls in the summer of 2013, the tug was less about vocation and more about the sense that as we aged, our former country living circumstance would not remain practical. We wanted a home in a town, near some water, close to some of our children in the Twin Cities, with an orchestra and work for me to do. Imagine my surprise to discover after the decision was made and a home in Little Falls was purchased that among the ministries of the Franciscan Sisters is a music center. An award-winning music center—and with a robust string program!

It only took a couple email exchanges with Robyn Gray to quickly discern that it made most sense to explore teaching at St. Francis Music Center. The alternative was to set up a home studio just a few blocks away and teach in competition with one another. That did not feel right. And so my relationship with the music center and the Franciscan Sisters began. I was—and am—so impressed by the vision and commitment of the sisters to provide music education and performance opportunities for students in rural central Minnesota. Without the continued support of the sisters and so many faithful donors, many students would not have the opportunity.

And a string program?! How unique to find such a strong offering in our rural setting where there is none in the public schools. Or perhaps it is precisely because it is filling a void that the string program at St. Francis Music Center thrives. Who would have thought that in our community we would have 50-60 students in string lessons and an equal number participating in the various levels of our orchestra program? That degree of interest was surprising to me when I first moved to town—and now is humbling and gratifying.

I firmly believe that engaging in the practice of music opens our eyes and hearts to love. In the study of music, we become attuned to beauty and creativity, and I think that awareness makes us better citizens of our world. The unique thing about string instruments is that they come in tiny sizes so students do not have to wait until the 4th or 5th grade to begin. A precocious 4- or 5-year-old with interest and curiosity can make a start on a violin!

Currently, I am as busy as I want to be, teaching private lessons and directing the orchestra program. I count myself fortunate to be not merely employed but serving a vocation doing what I love most and do best. Life beckons.
In 1979, Sister Cecelia Schmitt established St. Francis Music Center on the second floor of the former St. Francis High School, a perfect venue with plenty of classroom space and equipment, including musical instruments to get started. Sister Cecelia and three teachers, Grant Wilcox, Gregory Theisen and Sister Marina Mueller, OSB, banded together to offer lessons in piano, strings, winds and dance. And it was just the beginning . . .

Over the past four decades, the growth and success of the Music Center has been nothing short of magical. A vast and rigorous curriculum, highly trained faculty, a variety of arts programming unmatched in any other rural area and too many students to count, are all reasons to celebrate.

Over time, the Music Center expanded and evolved to offer lessons in all band instruments, music theory, voice, dance of all kinds, pre-school music, theatre, composition, liturgical workshops, gymnastics, music therapy and the list goes on. Initial funding from Region 5 (now Five Wings Arts Council) and the National Endowment for the Arts set the stage for an award-winning school for music education and the performing arts right here in Little Falls.

Sister Cecelia Schmitt (center) with famous singer Marian Anderson and Laura Jane Musser in 1975. Laura Jane (1916-1986), a well-known philanthropist in Little Falls and champion for music and the arts, generously supported Sister Cecelia and the Music Center in its early years. In 1992, the Music Center began offering financial aid with help from the Laura Jane Musser Fund. Today, that funding remains the backbone of the financial aid program, allowing thousands of children the opportunity to take music lessons and benefit from the arts.

Kevin Steuven (left) has been on the faculty for 20 years and is proud of his students, especially Isaac Olson, who’s been studying flute with Kevin for over seven years. Isaac is an amazing flutist with a bright future in music.

The St. Francis Percussion Ensemble, co-directed by John Tetrauld and Amanda Jansen, is a 7-member performing group that explores the versatility of the percussion family of instruments.
The Sister Justina Bieganek Scholarship was established in 2004 by her family. It continues today, along with several other merit awards for students with exceptional talent and dedication to music.

In spring 2019, the Music Center was selected as the Outstanding Arts Organization by the Five Wings Arts Council. This award celebrates the organizations and the people who work tirelessly, through the arts, to improve the lives of people in the five-county region. The Music Center exemplifies excellence in arts programming, access to the arts and organizational management.

In 2009, the Music Center won the 17th annual Sally Irvine Ordway (or “Sally”) Award in Education. The Sally Awards, established in 1992, honor individuals and institutions from across Minnesota that contribute artistic and cultural resources to make great communities. Robyn remarked, “The Music Center is a place for everyone with music in their soul. We all have places where we don’t feel welcome or don’t feel we belong.

Each week around 300 students of all ages come to St. Francis for music lessons. For youth, the value of spending one-on-one time with a caring adult is invaluable. The financial aid program, which helps over 100 students each quarter, makes music education available for all who wish to participate.

To address an increase in violence in the lives of rural youth, a summer music camp, URock Against Violence, was created in 2008 as a positive activity that promoted the Franciscan values and gave youth an opportunity to learn about playing in a band and performing before a live audience.

The Community Chorale welcomes all singers with a love for music. Paula Monahan says, “I am beyond grateful to all of you for making the chorale possible. It’s such a highlight of my life! Truly! Thank you for all you do to make it fun and special and meaningful!”

The Sister Justina Bieganek Scholarship was established in 2004 by her family. It continues today, along with several other merit awards for students with exceptional talent and dedication to music. Pictured: Sister Gert Brixius (executive director of ministries, 2001–2009), Glory Knudtson and Sister Justina.
A community music school was Sister Cecelia’s dream, but, since the beginning, sisters have been part of the teaching faculty and the support staff as well. They also sing in the choirs, play in the orchestra and, as life-long learners, take advantage of enrichment classes. Sister Carolyn Law is a prime example: “Music has been a part of my life since singing traditional folksongs in grade school and taking a few years of piano lessons. These days I especially enjoy participating in the multigenerational orchestra, sharing music with the youth as their talents develop. They are so respectful and dedicated to their music. My participation in the St. Francis Community Chorale brings another kind of delight. Joining my voice with 50 other adults and children making joyful music—a gift from God.”

In its first year, the Stroia ballet troupe performed the full-length ballet Giselle; the next year it made a five-performance tour of Mignon and the Coppelia Suite. In 1982 Carlos left the Music Center and established his own private dance studio.

The Music Center is keen to the needs of the community. When the school district asked for a feeder program for gymnastics, the Music Center responded. Today, gymnastics is one of the most popular programs.

**PERFORMING LIVE AT THIS YEAR’S**

**Green Fair Folk Festival**

Wednesday, August 7, 2019 4-8p.m.
Who’s welcome at the table?

Associate Rosanne Fischer

“A love that fails to empower can be a lethal trap for oppression and conformity. It is in the process of empowering . . . that the preconditions for a more lovable coexistence can be brought about.”

—Diarmuid O’Murchu

During the first week of May, Franciscan Sisters and Associates gathered to delve into the topic of “Conversion through Conversation: Our Call to Face Racism.” Our days focused on prayer, conversation and presentations, including a session in which Sister Callista Robinson shared her experiences as an African-American growing up in Chicago and joining the Little Falls Community.

Sister Callista’s mother, Rosina, was raised in the United Methodist Church but attended a Catholic school staffed by Holy Spirit Sisters from Techny, Ill. Her positive experience there led her to decide that if she had children one day she would raise them Catholic, which is what she did. Although Rosina and her husband were Methodist, a priest in Chicago baptized Callista and her three brothers and they attended Catholic schools. When Callista was a high school senior, she and two classmates received a visit from Sister Thomasine Schmolke, mother general of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. They were so touched by her humane, caring demeanor and her genuine interest and dialogue with them that they decided to join the Franciscan Community in Little Falls. Sister Callista has since become a national leader in the Catholic African-American community.

In another presentation, Debra Leigh, from St. Cloud State University, raised the question: “Who else needs to be in the conversation?” Both in our Franciscan community and the broader community: Who is not being welcomed to the table? Who is at the table, but their voice is not being heard? Are some voices dominating while others are being ignored?

Sister Callista shared a practice, learned from Notre Dame de Namur Sister Teresita Weind, which helped her deal with racism in our society: “We reflected on the prohibited and rejected parts of our lives.” Lament is necessary for our transformation into renewed life. Our community gathering opened with reflection on the Emmaus story in which Christ was revealed to those who were anguished and lamenting as they traveled along the road. We all suffer when members of our society are treated with indignity and discrimination, when the gifts they are endowed with are unrecognized or squelched. The travelers on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Christ until after they had entered into dialogue with him and invited him to dine with them. Christ was revealed through their acceptance and welcome of the stranger, and their lament was turned to joy. So we ponder: Is the stranger welcomed and invited in today? We pray for the awareness to recognize those who are not being heard, those suffering humiliation and discrimination. We pray for the grace of welcome, deep listening and inclusion of all.
‘A lot of women power’

Sister Elise Saggau

The fourth in a family of six children, Sister Paula Pohlmann grew up on a farm near Melrose, about 40 miles from Little Falls. Her elementary education took place in a one-room country school, where for eight years she had the same teacher—an excellent one, according to Sister Paula. She went on to study at St. Francis High School in Little Falls, joining the Franciscan Sisters in 1948. It seemed like a natural move, as she had three aunts who were members: Sisters Valeria, Agnes and Elizabeth Soenneker. After profession, she went on to nurses’ training at St. Francis School of Nursing in Breckenridge and later served for seven years as administrator at the hospital there. In 1976, she was elected community minister (general superior) of the Franciscan Sisters and moved to Little Falls.

When she came into the leadership position, there were 344 members in the congregation ranging in age from 22 to 88, the median age being 53. “A lot of women power!” Sister Paula exclaimed. The sisters were already a decade beyond their renewal chapter at which they had made significant changes in their way of life to accord with the Church’s own renewal efforts. However, these changes had created considerable dissension in the congregation. Some sisters felt that by adapting to a more contemporary model, the traditional image of religious life was being lost. They believed they were not being faithful to their original commitment. Some were also concerned that the sisterhood might split. Sister Paula addressed this fear head on: “If there are indications of an authentic call from the Lord to move in two directions, . . . we need to be open and supportive of that possibility.” She personally believed, however, that diversity was necessary in a large community and that the divisiveness would be healed.

To enable such healing, Sister Paula began working toward an all-community gathering called “Awareness ’79.” She hoped that, through prayer and reflection, all the sisters would be able to clarify and own their common values and accept a common vision for the future of the congregation. After a year of formal preparation, all the sisters participated in a 10-day gathering at which they discussed the fundamental values of their way of life. They came to see that there was more agreement than disagreement. They all took the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. The results helped them strengthen their relationships with one another and intensified their ability to appreciate diverse viewpoints and personality traits.

Sister Paula was also instrumental in overseeing the required writing of a new constitutional document for the congregation. She alleviated the sisters’ anxiety about this by saying: “The way we go about putting a Constitution together is more important than the resulting document. There is no magic in the written word of the Constitution. It is when people come together in solidarity and support of one another that the spirit of the Congregation comes alive.” In 1981, the document was submitted to Rome, only to be returned two years later with directives for further revisions. A final version was not actually approved until 1986. This work on constitutional revision coincided with an international effort to replace the 1927 Third Order Regular rule with one more suited to the times. In March 1982, Sister Paula was one of 190 general superiors from 30 countries who gathered for a conference in Rome at which a new Third Order rule was approved.

Sister Paula recounts that, when she was elected to leadership, her mother, Mary,
admonished her: “See that you don’t go broke now!” Sister Paula took this to heart. Realizing that the increasing costs of retirement were having a negative impact on the sisterhood’s ability to finance its various ministries, she began building a retirement fund and saw to it that the sisters were enrolled in Social Security. She also oversaw the establishment of a development department through which many constituents became enthusiastic partners in support of the sisters’ life and ministries.

Early in her term, the motherhouse campus chaplains (Franciscan friars from Hollidaysburg, Pa.) withdrew their services. It took until 1982 to secure another full-time chaplain, a position taken by diocesan priest, Father John Eccleston, who held this post for 20 years. In the face of the difficulties in engaging chaplains, Sister Paula reflected: “We can and should do more by way of ministering to ourselves. If the church would see fit to ordain women we wouldn’t be in a predicament like this.” When one of the sisters earned a master of divinity degree, Sister Paula wrote a daring letter to the bishop and priests of the St. Cloud Diocese: “[We] are pleased to inform you that we have our first candidate for Ordination. . . . We are very aware that the present church structures and policies make it impossible for her to be ordained. . . . We pray that the time will come soon when . . . the Church will officially recognize the gifts of women ministering within the Church. Thank you for your support of this movement.” The letter met with little response.

By 1978 it had become clear that there were significant inefficiencies in the way the congregation’s health care management structure was functioning. The sisters needed to evaluate how they were fulfilling their health care mission in the face of rapid developments in treatment, increasing financial demands, multiplying government regulations, and changes in health care delivery. With Sister Paula’s support, the congregation created a separate corporation to manage all its sponsored health care facilities. Called Franciscan Sisters Health Care, Inc., it was responsible for overseeing all the sisters’ hospitals and homes until 1993 when it joined a larger Catholic health corporation.

After two terms, Sister Paula moved to Berkeley, Calif., where for over 20 years, she engaged in healing ministry, primarily as a massage therapist. In 2008, she moved back to Minnesota, joining the sisters who operated Clare’s Well, a spirituality farm near Annandale. There she continued her massage work until 2015. She moved to the motherhouse in Little Falls in 2018, where she still offers massage therapy on a part-time basis.

PLANNED GIVING
Please let us know if you would like more information on remembering the Franciscan Sisters in your will and estate planning.

Contact: Sister Bernice Ebner
116 8th Avenue SE, Little Falls, Minnesota 56345
(320)632-0699 • bebner@fslf.org

We need your help!
We like to stay in touch with all our friends and donors. If you’ve replaced your landline with a cellular phone, please let us know so that we can update our records. Thank you!
Sister Lorraine Olmscheid, born in 1940, spent her earliest years on a farm near St. Martin, Minn. She was the youngest of ten children in this German-speaking family. When she was in seventh grade, she contracted the dread disease of polio. She spent three weeks in the St. Cloud Hospital, receiving the limited treatment that was then standard. Upon returning home, she was not able to walk. Her father put wheels on a chair to help her get around the house. With her mother’s encouragement, she learned to get out of bed by herself so that she would not be helpless when she was left alone at home. She was soon able to move about with a cane. By the time she was in high school, her family had moved to Melrose. Here she was able to walk six blocks to school every day. Her right leg, however, never fully recovered.

In 1959, Sister Lorraine joined the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls. After her novitiate, she was a cook at St. Otto’s Nursing Home. She later served at St. Andrew’s Convent in Elk River and then at Holy Spirit Convent in St. Cloud, becoming, over the years, a homemaker. Her kitchen was always open to any sister who needed to talk and relax after a hard day in the classroom. “I wanted the sisters to be glad to come home after a day of teaching school,” Sister Lorraine recalls.

One of her favorite positions was at St. Vincent volunteer house in David, Ky., operated by the Brothers of Charity. Here she succeeded in making the house a real home for the resident staff, who greatly appreciated her.

After a number of other assignments, she joined the staff of Sisters’ Care in St. Paul, through which she helped elderly and disabled persons in their homes, visiting with them and performing personal, household and health services. When Sisters’ Care closed in 2007, she continued on her own for several more years to serve elderly people in their homes. During that time, she lived with Sister Sylvia Opatz in an apartment in St. Paul. In spite of their physical handicaps, both were very independent, managing to access mobile services when they wanted to shop or travel to events around the Cities.

In 2012, Sister Lorraine retired to a local community of sisters in south St. Cloud. In 2019, she realized she needed more health support herself and moved to the sisters’ care center in Little Falls. She loves living there and speaks gratefully of the loving welcome she experienced upon her arrival. She is impressed with the great helpfulness of the staff, has the daily help she needs, and also has access to local health services, including a physician and a dentist. She has also learned that using a walker gives her more security than a cane. Now she experiences no worries about her care or her mobility. Sister Sylvia, who has a room nearby, continues to encourage Sister Lorraine to enjoy life every day.

Donating to the Franciscan Sisters:

Please, feel free to express any wishes you may have for your gift. However, be advised that in order to ensure that donors will be entitled to a federal income tax deduction, Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota, is required by Internal Revenue Service rulings to retain full authority over the assets granted to it and cannot accept gifts that are required by the donor to be paid, or to be used, only to further the work of a specific individual or that are required to be used in another country by FSLF or another foreign charity or religious institute.
We asked . . . and you responded

Sister Cordy Korkowski

“Blessed are those who love others when they are sick and unable to serve, as much as when they are healthy and of service to them.
—Franciscan Rule, Ch. VII, 23

The Franciscan Sisters are still rejoicing over the 2018 August Appeal that netted over $57,000 for our sisters in Angela Community, our memory care unit. Upgrading technology has been our biggest accomplishment. A new charting and communications system has brought our care facility into compliance with current regulations.

With generous funding, we were able to update technology throughout our campus so that sisters in Angela Community and all of Clare Residence can participate and enjoy chapel Masses and other programs in their own living spaces.

New lighting, in the form of light therapy, is helping sisters experience a better quality of life. New equipment provides large portraits of light, which slowly shift from energizing blue light in the morning to calming red light in the evening.” The C.A.R.E. (Continuous Ambient Relaxation Environment) Channel is 24-hour programming that displays nature videos, calming music and panoramas.

We are deeply grateful to all of our donors who provided generous funds to enhance care for our elderly sisters, especially those dealing with memory issues. Thank you, thank you!

Sisters Cordy Korkowski, Juanita Mauer and Louise McKigney with Knute Nelson staff Kelly Olson.
Memories of St. Francis High School

Eileen Niehaus

My appreciation and love of St. Francis High School is being realized more fully as I move on in life. My education there provided solid values that have served me well over the years. I would venture to say that, given some thought, this is true for all the graduates.

My parents appreciated a good education based on solid values and entrusted that responsibility to the sisters and staff at St. Francis High School. Such an education is so important for a successful life. No doubt, today’s parents across the world hope for such an opportunity for their children, knowing it is difficult to succeed without it. SFHS provided an education bathed in values of honesty, integrity, compassion and care. That mix provided the tools for the students to move on to the kind of work and activities that give a sense of satisfaction and energy for life-long learning and good citizenship. The school planted seeds in young hearts and minds, tenderly nurtured them with encouragement, and guided them with faith-filled awareness. “Frannies” learned how to grow in a garden filled with a variety of people and experiences.

Along with classes that kept students busy, there were, among other opportunities, operettas, picnics at Lindbergh Park and Christmas concerts. The students formed friendships that remain today, and there is a special relationship between all “Frannies.” Meeting a SFHS graduate will evoke a conversation about school—who knew whom or graduated when. Seeing a former teacher or staff person from those days demands time to catch up, to see how the garden is growing.

The SFHS faculty and staff honored the hopes for a good education entrusted to them by so many parents. They were solidly present to their students and sent young women off into the world well-prepared. They “touched the future” as those young women spread out to careers and families. Now, when I cross paths with SFHS alumnae, I can see them continuing to sow the seeds of value among their families and in their careers and activities. Thus these seeds continue to grow!

I look back in thanks, remember the events, and hope the teachers and staff feel the satisfaction of a job well done.

Eileen Niehaus, who graduated from St. Francis High School in 1965, was originally from Sauk Centre. Many know her as “Chuckie.” She is a niece of deceased Franciscan Sisters Inez, Venard and Helen Niehaus, and Mary Christine Wiener. Presently she lives in Maple Grove.

St. Francis High School
GATHERING

The Franciscan Sisters invite former students, staff and faculty to gather on Sunday, July 21, 2019, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. for Mass and lunch at St. Francis Convent, Little Falls, Minn.

This is a great opportunity to enjoy one another’s company, to share memories, and to nurture and promote the Franciscan spirit that was instilled during your high school years.

Please send your name, address, year of graduation and phone number, together with your registration fee, by July 1 to:

Mary Ellen Imdieke
3395 125 Ave. NE, Blaine, MN 55449-6572
763-785-0295 • sfhs.reunion@outlook.com

Registration fee: $20 per person. Checks payable to Franciscan Sisters. After July 1, $25.
Sister Bernarda Sanoski, 102 — On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15, 1916, Andrew and Mary Sanoski welcomed Cecilia Marie, the ninth of ten children, into their family in Minneota, Minn. The family later moved to Morrison County where Cecilia attended school near Flensburg until she enrolled at St. Francis High School, Little Falls, graduating in 1935.

Cecilia was accepted as a Franciscan Sister of Little Falls, Minnesota, on August 12, 1935 and given the name, Sister Mary Bernarda. She made final vows on August 12, 1940.

Sister Bernarda obtained her RN at St. Francis School of Nursing, Breckenridge, in 1940. In 1942, she received a certificate in obstetrical nursing and, in 1945, her bachelor’s degree, both from Marquette University. She ministered as an OB nurse at St. Francis, Breckenridge and St. Gabriel’s, Little Falls.

Sister Bernarda was licensed as a hospital administrator in 1960 and served at St. Ansgar Hospital, Moorhead, for 18 years. During that time, she was active in the civic community, serving on the Clay County Advisory Council and as a trustee of the Minnesota Hospital Association. In 1978, she was named Woman of the Year by the Fargo/Moorhead Young Women’s Association.

After a brief sabbatical at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebr., she received a pastoral associate certificate from St. Margaret Health Center, Kansas City, Kans. She was elected to the Community Board of the Franciscan Sisters in 1980 and served for four years. During that time she was also a member of the founding Board of Directors of Franciscan Sisters Health Care, Inc.

Sister Bernarda then served in pastoral care at McKennan Hospital, Sioux Falls, S. Dak., Trinity Memorial Hospital, Cudahy, Wis., and St. Francis Medical Center, Breckenridge. She then did parish ministry in Swanville and Flensburg before retiring to the motherhouse in 2014.

Sister Bernarda was a people-person who loved both bedside nursing and administration, but found her niche in pastoral care. One of her favorite Scripture passages was from Ephesians, “We are God’s work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life.”

Sister Jeanette Quinn, 88 — Jeanette was born October 16, 1930, in Belle River, Minn., the second of three children of Leo and Lucy (Spieker) Quinn. The family moved to Osakis when Jeanette was in the third grade and that remained her hometown where she attended public school, graduating in 1948. She studied at St. Cloud Hospital School of Nursing for two years. On July 31, 1951, she was accepted as a Franciscan Sister and given the name Sister Mary de Montfort. She returned to her baptismal name in 1967.

She completed her nursing studies at St. Gabriel’s Hospital School of Nursing. Later, she earned a bachelor’s degree in Community Service from Bemidji State University, graduating summa cum laude.

Sister Jeanette ministered as a nurse at St. Gabriel’s Hospital, St. Cloud Children’s Home, St. Joseph Hospital, Dodgeville, Wis., St. Francis Convent Infirmary and Community Mercy Hospital, Onamia. She also served as a school nurse for St. Michael’s School in Sauk Centre. After retiring from nursing, Sister Jeanette did secretarial work for St. Gabriel’s Hospital Nursing Service and Radiology Departments. She completed her active ministry as secretary for the Development Office at St. Francis Convent.

Sister Jeanette loved music and played the French horn in her high school brass sextet and later in the Heartland Symphony Orchestra. She especially enjoyed singing and was a member of the Sisters’ Choir for many years.

She was awe struck by the beauties of nature and loved to walk the gravel roads to search for agates. She enjoyed writing poetry and was an avid reader of science fiction and biography. At her 60th jubilee, she summed her life by saying, “God has done wonders for me and holy is His Name.”
What a surprise when Sister Therese Lenz came across a letter from former student Amy Maurer. It was from 1972 when Amy was a fourth-grader at St. Mary's School in Little Falls. The letter, the second Amy wrote to Sister Therese about becoming a sister, begins, “I want to be a sister when I grow up. Because I feel that is what God put me on earth for.” Sister Therese, who taught at St. Mary’s from 1969-1972, said, “We didn’t necessarily talk about our vocation, we just lived our lives, hoping our students would appreciate our gospel way of life.”

Amy attended St. Mary’s through the 8th grade, then went on to public high school because, by then, St. Francis High School had closed. “I was influenced by the sisters and saw in them a good way to live my life. I have fond childhood memories of praying the rosary and participating in Mass, especially the weekly Unity Mass when all the grades were together.”

Though she didn’t enter the convent, Amy did not stray too far. After graduating from the College of St. Benedict’s with a degree in early childhood development and a teaching license for pre-kindergarten, she and her husband Tom settled in Little Falls and raised two daughters who also benefitted from the Catholic school experience, both in Little Falls and at St. Ben’s. Amy found herself back at St. Mary’s (now Mary of Lourdes), this time as pre-school teacher. “We’re a small school” she said, “where all the families know each other. When there’s a need, we rally behind that family with prayer, financial support.” As both an educator and former student, Amy knows the value of a Catholic education.