Highlight of the Green Fair

St. Francis Music Center’s Percussion Ensemble and URock bands were the opening acts for performer Levi Pelzer, a local country music artist and former employee much loved by the Franciscan Sisters. Levi was very excited to be part of the Music Center’s 40th anniversary celebration. His performance, sponsored by the Five Wings Arts Council and Spectrum Printing, was the highlight of the Green Fair Folk Festival.

Thank you, Tractor Supply!

Pat Tedford, a longtime volunteer for the Franciscan Sisters, was the lucky winner of the rustic rocker donated by Team 1548 at Tractor Supply, Little Falls. For several years, the employees at Tractor Supply have donated a cool item for the Bingo game at the annual Green Fair Folk Festival. As fairgoers peruse the exhibits and vendor booths, they can have their Bingo cards stamped. Once the cards are filled, they can be dropped off at the information booth for a chance to win the prize donated by the employees at Tractor Supply.

Pictured: Chris Mayer (left) from Tractor Supply and Pat Tedford, the lucky prizewinner.
I heard the story of a little boy who asked his mother if he could have a zipper put in his stomach. The surprised mother of course asked, “Why would you want to do that?” (You guessed it. He was being prepared to receive his first Eucharist!) “If I am going to receive Jesus in my heart, I want to see what he looks like.”

Call it faulty theology, but he wasn’t all that far off. Even Pope Francis in his beautiful teaching, Rejoice and Be Glad, says that the key experience of holiness today in our troubled world is “…a solid grounding in the God who loves and sustains us.” Solid grounding—that could be in my belly, I guess?

If you choose to read this edition of Our Journey from the front or the back, you will end in the middle with the presentation of activities in our St. Francis Health and Wellness Center over its 40 years. There is something for everyone in this popular ministry housed in our former high school building. The heated pool and hot tub followed closely by therapeutic massage and brain integration are my favorites. The staff knows a lot about the human body, both inside and out, and each is there to help keep our body, mind and spirit working as the amazing, complicated instruments they are.

The annual meeting of the Leadership Council of Women Religious (LCWR) was in Scottsdale, Ariz., in August. This year’s theme: “Imagining Leadership in a Global Community.” As grace would have it, this theme ties in intricately with the continuation of our study of racism. Over the past months, our conversation circles have dealt with the Native American experience especially here in Minnesota, in preparation for the Community Gathering of sisters and associates in October. The theme we chose: “Conversion through Conversation: Mitakuyæ Oyasin—we are all related.”

This common Lakota expression describes the reality of our interconnectedness with all of creation. Similar to the phrase Mitakuyæ Oyasin is our familiar Christian amen or the Spanish asi sea, may it be so. They each address the oneness, not only of the human family but of every element of the cosmos. We come closer to experiencing that oneness by sitting down with each other in courageous conversation.

Daily we have opportunities to give thanks to the Christ who grounds our lives. You, our readers and supporters, become part of what we are and what we do. Whether we minister in Mexico or among our own sisters right here in central Minnesota, each encounter we have brings with it the challenge of seeing in that person and bringing to each person the Christ. Bless that little boy who believed he could have Jesus in his belly. He was not too far from a solid theological path.

Peace and all good,

Sister Carol Schmit
Community Minister/President
This is the last in a series on the Beatitudes, responding to the question: How do Franciscans live the Beatitudes?

When I sat down with Sister Audrey Jean Loher, I learned that her favorite Beatitude is Blessed are the Peacemakers, with the understanding that “If we want peace, we must work for justice.” She lived this Beatitude through years of service in Peru and Venezuela and in the States with several peace and justice organizations. In 1992 she joined Witness for Peace (WFP) in Guatemala. The purpose of WFP in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala, was to stand with Tzutujil Indians to prevent their being killed by the military who wanted to take over the Tzutujil’s town on Lake Atitlan. When women saw the military coming, they rang church bells and all came out to fight. The military was less likely to shoot if North Americans were present to publicize any violence.

As we know, Jesus was a dynamic, active, forward-moving person. Scripture translations don’t always get his words right. Author John Dear says the “Blessed are” of the Beatitudes would more accurately read “Arise and walk forth!” In his book, The Beatitudes of Peace, Dear writes (p. 147) there is nothing passive about the Beatitudes. The disciples are “commanded to get up, get moving, get with it, and carry on his mission of peace, justice, and non-violence.” Sister Audrey Jean Loher does just that.

Franciscan Associate Bill Hecht responded to my request for his favorite Beatitude, saying, “I think of the Beatitudes as a whole. This poem is my lyric expression of that viewpoint, a summary of my deeply held belief in a holistic world view, which is given life in Franciscan values and the Beatitudes.”

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In the Garden of the Beatitudes

Like a fertile green space in an arid world, the Beatitudes offer an abundance of life-giving blessings; a catalog of golden rule choices, they encourage us to humbly walk the Gospel talk within the garden of the Beatitudes.

+++ Like good Gospel gardeners Francis and Clare, caring for holy ghost beings struggling in a world of sorrow, we are called to nurture a sustainable spiritual ecosystem of Franciscan values, that they may blossom and bloom midst God’s blessings within the garden of the Beatitudes.

+++ Like others before and others to come I, a Franciscan Associate in community with Franciscan Sisters . . . I have seen God: His mercy expressed in charitable thoughts, words, actions, a cornucopia of blessings overflowing in the long shadows of brother Francis and sister Clare within the garden of the Beatitudes.

— Associate Bill Hecht

Arise and walk forth

Sister Jan Kilian

This is the last in a series on the Beatitudes, responding to the question: How do Franciscans live the Beatitudes?
‘The people have touched our hearts’

Elizabeth Rydeen

In 2017, the Franciscan Sisters began a new mission in Ocampo, Coahuila, Mexico, to serve St. Catherine of Siena Parish. After ministering for two years, Sisters Aurora Tovar and Isabel Berrones both say they find their work among women of the parish the most meaningful. “The part of the ministry that leaves me with great satisfaction is appreciating and promoting the talents and development possibilities for women who serve their community through the ministries in the parish,” said Sister Isabel. With a goal toward preparing lay leaders, they offer formation to all the parish coordinators, along with a monthly workshop for parents of children in the catechetical program. Sister Isabel added, “I am deeply grateful to God for being in this ministry, for the people of this parish who have touched my heart and made a change in my life.”

For many, life in Ocampo is a challenge, and the parish is, indeed, a mission. “My heart is moved by the women with different disabilities. They encourage me and give me hope,” said Sister Aurora. “They are women with deep faith in God who, despite their vulnerability and illness, have a spirit of service. Their faces resemble that of God.”

Sister Aurora is living her dream to be a missionary, happy to share her life with the people in this vast remote area. “Here I have traveled the adventure of faith, always trusting in the presence of God in each activity and in my encounters with families with different adversities. There is God’s providence, bringing different surprises of his mercy.”
Sister Kay Watts finds retirement interesting and fruitful
Sister Elise Saggau

Sister Kay Watts was born in Hopkins, Minn. in 1934, the only daughter of Earl Watts and Emily Peaselee Watts. She grew up in Wayzata with her four brothers, Edward, Earl, Robert and Lawrence (two older and two younger). She attended Groveland Grade School in Wayzata and Deephaven High School, from which she graduated in 1952.

During her childhood, Kay, together with her brothers, played primarily with the neighborhood boys, baseball being one of their favorite games. Her father and mother also loved baseball, and would occasionally take Kay and her brother Larry to Minneapolis to attend a Twins game. Kay was very active in high school, playing saxophone in the band and singing in the chorus. After graduation, she worked for three years at Northwestern National Insurance Company, starting at the bottom as a messenger, then delivering mail, and finally becoming a filing clerk.

She began to feel called to religious life. She had known sisters at summer vacation school and particularly remembered them as having a good time at the Hopkin’s annual raspberry festival! She also had heard of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls through a Franciscan friar who had substituted for their pastor one weekend. After visiting a couple of communities, she decided she belonged in Little Falls.

Sister Kay received the habit in 1956 and made her final profession in 1961. After listening to Sister Carla Przybilla give a talk on dietetics, she decided she would like to enter that field. She attended the College of St. Catherine for a year of dietary training and later studied commercial cooking at St. Cloud Vocational School and dietary management at Auburn University in Alabama.

Her first assignment was in the motherhouse kitchen, working under the direction of Sister Joel Bieniek. During ensuing years, she served the congregation in a wide variety of contexts—cooking, baking, keeping house and sometimes helping out with office work. Many of these years were spent in Little Falls as cook, food supervisor and baker (her baked goods earning great acclaim!). She spent eight years at the St. Cloud Children’s Home, where, in addition to food service, she also assisted in the office and at the switchboard, took care of the supply room and supervised the boys’ outdoor summer work projects.

Her longest assignment (14 years) was at the Franciscan Retreat House in Prior Lake, operated by the Conventual Franciscan friars. Here, as part of the team, she served as dietary manager, supervising meal service for a wide variety of retreat groups: lay women and men, priests, bishops, religious, families, persons with disabilities, married couples, divorced persons, young adults and recovering alcoholics. She enjoyed a wonderful experience of community with the friars and other staff members. When the friars decided to bring in a professional food service, her position there came to an end—much to her disappointment.

-Continued, Page 7
In 2008 she returned to Little Falls to take up a challenging position in the congregation’s finance department, paying bills and balancing all the sisters’ checking accounts. In 2010, though by that time officially retired, she joined Sisters Marie Theis, Karen Niedzielski and Lorraine Olmscheid at a house in south St. Cloud. She volunteered her services to Catholic Charities, helping primarily with clothing distribution. This job gave her a great sense of satisfaction, as she had always wanted to work with the poor.

By 2015, her health no longer permitted her to remain in St. Cloud. She moved to Clare Residence in Little Falls, where she resides today. With more leisure, Sister Kay now has the opportunity to indulge her preferred activities, putting to good use her penchant for baking. She occasionally fills the care center with tantalizing smells of fresh baked cookies, cakes and other confections. These are shared with all the residents and staff (and anyone else who happens by). At Easter 2019, she treated all the sisters at the motherhouse to baked macaroons, shaping them like birds’ nests and filling them with jelly beans.

One of Sister Kay’s chief enjoyments is being outdoors delighting in God’s beautiful creation. Last year, she took charge of the plants and flowers around the St. Joseph shrine on the east side of the convent. This year, she developed a new project—a flower garden on the outdoor walkway that borders the second floor. Here, she has arranged numerous pots containing colorful petunias, zinnias, marigolds, and four o’clocks. She is happy to give a guided tour of this wonder.

Sister Kay, despite her physical disabilities, has found her retirement years to be interesting and fruitful. Her “neat as a pin” room is creatively and attractively arranged. Her bed, by a clever arrangement of pillows, looks like an inviting sofa during the day. She feels at home and is happy to be a significant part of the motherhouse community.

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**Feast of Saint Francis**

**Transitus**
Thursday, October 3
7 p.m.

**Eucharist**
Friday, October 4
11 a.m.

**St. Francis Convent**
116 8th Avenue SE
Little Falls, MN

All are welcome!

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**Blessing of Animals**

Sunday, September 29, 12 p.m.
Washington Park, 113 NE 4th Street, Little Falls, MN
What stories does our land hold?

_Sister Carolyn Law_

Minnesota, Mississippi, Anoka, Bemidji, Chaska, Chisago, Cokato, Isanti, Kandiyohi, Mahtomedi, Mankato, Menahga, Mendota, Minnehaha, Onamia, Owatonna, Sauk, Shakopee, Wadena, Waseca, Watab, Winona and many more are familiar names to those of us from Minnesota. All have indigenous origins from the Dakota and Ojibwe languages. What other tales would the land and original peoples of Minnesota tell if we would stop and listen and honor this history of the place we also call home?

Little Falls, Minnesota, was once Dakota peoples’ land. By 1858 all of the state was ceded to the U.S. government and only a 150-mile strip of land was designated for the Dakota people to occupy. Starvation led to the so called “Great Sioux Uprising” in 1862.

Every corner of this land holds a history that is sorrowful and shameful. Every place was once homeland for other people, who did not leave willingly.

What can we do to heal the land and her people? How can our Franciscan spirituality help us? This is the question we sisters have posed for ourselves as we prepare for our October Community Gathering, which we are calling Mitakuye Oyasin—we are all related. (Mitakuye Oyasin being the Lakota words for all my relations).

We are inspired by the 2018 resolution of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious:

_In the presence of constant and painful reminders of the deep roots of racism in our country, we the Leadership Conference of Women Religious pledge to go deeper into the critical work of creating communion, examining the root causes of injustice and our own complicity, and purging ourselves, our communities, and our country of the sin of racism and its destructive effects._

Racism is hard to talk about. It quickly divides us. Every day there are reports and accusations that flood our airways. We live in the land of “Minnesota nice” and that we are. Yet, Minnesota has great achievement gaps between whites and people of color. How can this be? We wrestle with this.

Saints Francis and Clare call us to conversion of heart and mind that leads to change. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in _Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love - A Pastoral Letter Against Racism_ states it this way: “What is needed, and what we are calling for, is a genuine conversion of heart, a conversion that will compel change, and the reform of our institutions and society.”

Saints Francis and Clare deeply held that all are brothers and sisters, having one Father in Heaven. Our Creator made us all in His image and likeness—and loves us equally. When we go deep into this truth, we find that indeed we are all related. Mitakuye Oyasin. So let us be united in heart and mind as we study, reflect and pray, and carry in our hearts the wounds of our lands, our Mother Earth and her people.
My heart burns with joy

Associate Verónica Rivadeneira

It is interesting to think about how Saint Francis of Assisi came into my life. The story of how this young man listened to Christ kneeling before the San Damiano Cross and ignited his burning heart to undertake the madness of rebuilding the church, in its temporal and geographical context, was a small movie in my mind. I was barely 12 years old.

I remember listening carefully every time that Sister Joan Gerads repeated this story in front of groups of neighbors in so many towns of Latin America when I was a member of the evangelizing community that she had founded to build Basic Church Communities. By the time I turned 22 in Venezuela, my voice joined hers in narrating this story of the call to a young 13th century Italian. Then it was my own call to promote community life in the neighborhoods with the desire to rebuild the church through relations between neighbors and their action for the common good.

In 1995, at the invitation of Sisters Joan Gerads, Bertha Gerads and Ramona Johnson, who were serving in Ecuador, I made my commitment as a Franciscan Associate, without fully understanding what that meant. But after my time as an itinerant missionary, I was moved by a desire to continue that flame in my life.

When I was 32 years old, I received another call to spend a few months in an immersion experience in Little Falls to learn more about the Franciscan Relationship. Sister Mary Zirbes was my wise and loving tutor. Since then I have assumed various responsibilities with the community of lay people who came into contact with our Franciscan community in Latin America.

I had married and given birth to my first daughter when I formalized my service in 2007 as co-minister of Associates in Latin America. Ten years later, my husband would give me one of the greatest surprises of my life. We went to Europe with our two girls and dedicated a time aside for just the two of us. We walked slowly and quietly through Assisi. I came to contemplate before the San Damiano Cross and, with my heart burning with joy, I tried to imagine Francis facing the passion of Jesus, listening to that initial invitation: “repair my church.”

With every visit and encounter with my Franciscan sisters and brothers, that same call resounds in my mind and heart. I wonder where are the ruins of the body of Christ and His church? I hear about dangers, divisions, enmities, obstacles and intolerance that we live within our families, neighborhoods, ecclesial parishes and countries. As in Francis’s time, it requires not only individual will but also strength. With his brothers he practiced poverty, minority, prayer and continual conversion. They formed the body. They were the community that went against the status quo of their time and, without the support of the powerful, they walked about helping the neediest and excluded. We also require the will and strength of a brother/sisterhood.

Their simple words and lifestyle, which I learned throughout my life from the Franciscan Sisters and our older brother Francis, will be the best bricks for reconstructing the body of Christ, now and always.
Elizabeth Rydeen

By the time St. Francis High School closed in 1977, the Franciscan Sisters were looking for ways to expand their ministries and explore a “totally new creative form of human and Christian education.” They established St. Francis Christian Development Center (SFCDC) and envisioned a multifaceted program that would provide faith formation and education opportunities primarily for adults.1

“The SFCDC recognized that the swimming pool and gymnasium were resources that could be fruitfully used for serving the people of the area. It established a health and recreation department, opening these facilities to the public with Sister Faye Marie Mazzola as director.”2 Soon it became known as St. Francis Health and Recreation Center and offered a variety of programs from “slim and trim” to women’s volleyball to open swim and recreation for retired men. In 1985 Sister Jean Winter introduced reflexology, acupressure and massage, and in 1991 the center partnered with St. Gabriel’s Hospital to co-sponsor a sports medicine service and recreational facility.

Over the years, the center has welcomed hundreds of people in our rural area who participated and benefited from nutrition education, exercise classes, personalized instruction, massage and the opportunity to socialize and develop supportive relationships.

In 2016 the center expanded, taking over the ground floor of St. Francis Center. A new name—St. Francis Health and Wellness—better reflects the mission of a more holistic approach to health and fitness, incorporating mind, body and spirit. Renovations, updated equipment and additional classes make St. Francis Health and Wellness a true community asset with potential to be the premier health and wellness facility in the area.

Wesley Waytashek, born and raised in Little Falls, became the manager earlier this year and has brought new life to the center. “I was drawn to the position because of my interest in community health. For as long as I can remember fitness and athletics have been a huge part of who I am, and St. Francis seemed like a great place to share my passion. From young to old, St. Francis has something for everyone. The best part of my job is helping members reach their health and wellness goals. The benefits of being healthy are priceless, and seeing the smiles on everyone’s face really drives the staff to be better every day.”

2 Saggau, Journey to New Frontiers, 315.
Every child should learn to swim, and there's no better place to take lessons than the heated pool at St. Francis.

Darlene Chirhart, Sue & Milt Wischmann and Donna Hegstrom are regulars on the pickle ball court. They play doubles a couple times a week and enjoy the friendly competition and opportunity to socialize and stay active.

In addition to walking 4-6 miles most days, Hank French comes to the center five times a week for circuit training.

Everyone agrees the pool, with its therapeutic temperature of 86 degrees, is the center’s biggest asset with daily access to swim laps or participate in pool workouts. Instructor Lauren Brady teaches several aqua fitness classes and offers personal training in the pool, designing programs for people with arthritis or joint issues.

Instructor Lauren Brady teaches several aqua fitness classes and offers personal training in the pool, designing programs for people with arthritis or joint issues.

Trainer Jay Grove leads an outdoor boot camp. He mixes up the exercises for a full-body workout and keeps the class interesting and the participants motivated. Standing: Amber Sobiech, Caitlin Skluzacek, Meg Petrovitz, Jill Tomala, Allison Hendrickson; kneeling: Jay Grove, Josh Schreder.
Aunt and niece celebrate together

Sister Joan Gerads

What a delightful surprise to find my niece, Joyce (Gerads) Applequist, at the St. Francis High School Gathering. I was even more delighted when we were both called to stand at the Mass to recognize our jubilees: Joyce for 50 years and me for 70 years. Fifteen members of Joyce’s class gathered to celebrate while Sister Rose Mae Rausch and I were the only ones present from the class of 1949.

St. Francis High School has had a deep and lasting influence in my family. When the Franciscan Sisters came to our little parish of St. Francis, my sister Bertha—always the trailblazer—was the first to accept the sisters’ invitation and come to Little Falls. I followed five years later and then my younger sister Veronica applied. She stayed on after graduating to teach. Later my brother Hubert sent his oldest daughter Jeanne to study at St. Francis, followed by Joyce shortly after.

The interest of the sisters in our formation and their love left a deep mark in our lives, as did the fun of the extracurricular activities among such a large number of girls, both boarders and day students.

As for the first generation of the Gerads graduates, Bertha became a Franciscan Sister and went on to study nursing. She worked in several of the hospitals of our Franciscan community and taught at St. Francis School of Nursing in Breckenridge. After all that, she was a missionary in Ecuador for many years. I joined the community in 1949 and became a nurse as well, working at St. Gabriel’s Hospital and teaching at the school of nursing. I also was assigned to the mission and served the poor in Ecuador for 48 years. I consider this my life’s work. Veronica was a member of the community, but left after a short time. She went on to marry Enrique Salazar, a Chilean, and has lived in Chile and the United States. She supports and walks with the sisters as a Franciscan Associate.

Listening to the chatting of the graduates, it makes me proud to realize how many are living and sharing their faith and consciousness to promote social justice and healthy living for all.

Franciscan spirit lives on

On Sunday, July 21, the sixth annual St. Francis High School Gathering took place at St. Francis Convent in Little Falls. Over a 100 graduates, former students, faculty, staff and guests came together to celebrate Mass in Sacred Heart Chapel with Father Michael Kwatera, OSB, presiding. Sister Elise Saggau gave the homily. Everyone then enjoyed a simple lunch followed by an afternoon of visiting. The anniversary classes of 1949, 1959 and 1969 were specially recognized.

The goal of this annual gathering is to keep alive the relationships formed at SFHS and to nurture and promote the Franciscan spirit that was instilled during those special high school years.
Still available

*The Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, Minnesota, A Journey to New Frontiers* traces the events in the life of the Franciscan Community from 1950 – 2018. Many graduates remember author Sister Elise as either a classmate or former teacher. A number of alumnae were delighted to purchase the book during the recent SFHS gathering. Copies are available in the Franciscan Gift Shop or by calling Jan at 320-632-0604.

‘We are blest to do this’

*Sister Cordy Korkowski, director of Donor Relations*

When my father Al Korkowski was still alive and active, he would save solicitation envelopes from the Franciscan Sisters he received in the mail or through *Our Journey*. They were carefully stacked on a kitchen shelf to be used for donations. On my visits home, I would check out his stash from time to time.

Since 2013, when I began my work as director of Donor Relations, I have learned the importance of our donors who give regularly. These *continuous* donors become part of the fabric of our lives. We carve out our budgets knowing we can rely on this “predictable income” to strengthen our mission and carry out our work. Over the years, I’ve come to remember where they live and details about their families. They become friends and part of our Franciscan family.

Minnesota Public Radio has a special membership category called sustainers. I like the concept. Recently, I did a little checking with our monthly donors—our sustainers—to see what compels them to give regularly. One couple, who’s been giving monthly for 29 years, said, “We are blest to do this. The Franciscan Sisters are what’s right about the world.” Wow! What an endorsement.

Another, who’s been sending monthly donations since 1999, remarked, “I like to give monthly because I know it helps the sisters to do their planning. Instead of waiting to the end of the year, I prefer giving a small amount each month.” People donate in many ways and for many different reasons. Continuous, sustaining, regular, ongoing . . . whatever the term may be, we’re just grateful that so many generous gifts make their way to the Franciscan Sisters. We give thanks for each and every gift and for all our donors.
God’s love in action
Sister Jean Schwieeters

Each Monday morning Sister Bernice Rieland and I head for St. Cloud. Our destiny is Catholic Charities Emergency Services where food, clothing and financial assistance are provided for those in need. We spend approximately 5 hours sorting through items in huge bins that await our coming each Monday. We put together sets of sheets and pillowcases for king, queen, full and twin size beds. We also sort and fold towels, wash cloths, table cloths, napkins, etc. It is astonishing to see the amount that piles up from week to week and to realize the generosity of people who pass on what they no longer need or want, especially when the condition of these items is still very good.

On occasion when we finish with this sorting and still have time we go through other bags of donations and hang clothes or place items in specific bins. The employees and other volunteers at Catholic Charities are very friendly folk. Many volunteers have been coming for years to offer their services wherever needed.

Recently, we witnessed a very vulnerable homeless person seeking assistance for clothing. Upon seeing the need, several volunteers came to help in finding a set of clothes and shoes for the man. The gentleman’s deep gratitude and appreciation was obvious by the hugs and kisses he shared with those who assisted him in his dire need. It certainly was an experience of seeing God’s love in action.

Sisters Jean and Bernice at Catholic Charities in St. Cloud. Back in June, Emergency Services served 1,907 households and provided 151,942 pounds of food to people in need, “which is made possible by volunteers like Bernice and Jean, and donations of course,” said Angela Nelson, volunteer coordinator for Catholic Charities. “Their job is to go through the mountain of bags filled with donations and sort them. It is not a glamorous job and therefore truly takes a selfless person with a big heart to accomplish the task each week. While thanking them for everything they do and acknowledging how truly valuable they are, I was surprised when they responded (more than once) with the comment that ‘people are so generous with their donations,’ as if their good work is made possible by others. I shared with them a quote I recently stumbled upon and they agreed that we all have to give and receive sometimes. ‘Those who give should not remember, those who receive should never forget.’ It truly takes a village,” Angela said.

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Harvest Supper

November 9, 2019 4:30–7 PM - St. Francis Convent

Chicken, sausage, garden vegetables, coleslaw, breadsticks, homemade bars and beverages will be served.

Adults $10 • Children (5-12 years ) $5 • Children under 5 years - Free

Tickets available at the door or by calling (320) 632–2981 Monday - Saturday

Proceeds benefit St. Francis Music Center and St. Francis Health & Wellness Center.
Community celebrates all things green

Perfect weather and a tremendous crowd set the stage for a very successful Green Fair Folk Festival, the annual event sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters to promote sustainable living and care of Mother Earth and all of creation. We welcomed over 1,000 visitors and 67 exhibitors and vendors, including newcomers Nature Conservancy and Friends of Crane Meadows Wildlife Refuge.

The Green Fair is known for being family friendly, and this year children enjoyed the Tiny School of Art and Design, a mobile art studio, spectacular face painting, animal balloons and a Teddy Bear clinic. The sisters’ famous peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were once again a hit, along with tours of Sacred Heart Chapel and the campus grounds via horse-drawn wagon.
From all corners of the country

Pat Flicker and Sister Jan Kilian

How can it be? Franciscan Community Volunteers (FCV) alumni who never met before came home and recognized each other! That’s right. Young adults who were part of the FCV program some years ago crossed our threshold and were right at home with others from more recent years.

Young adults from all four corners of our country came back to the Welcoming House in St. Cloud and to the Motherhouse in Little Falls at the end of June to celebrate 10 years of the FCV program, founded in 2009 by Sister Clara Stang. Also present were the companions, both sisters and lay people, who supported the volunteers during their time in the program and often remain in touch. They celebrated 10 years during which 51 young adults volunteered 62,000 hours of service to people on the margins in the St. Cloud community.

Having shared and lived our three pillars (Meaningful Service, Intentional Community, Franciscan Spirituality) the old and new quickly bonded. Stories from the different years were shared and laughter ensued. Stories of love and compassion experienced at service sites, memories playing Rumikub and Mexican Train, and anecdotes of the staff, including, I’m reluctant to admit, many about me that made us all laugh!

The opportunity to connect and reconnect served as a mirror for each volunteer to recognize gifts in themselves and in each other. They revisited their Franciscan roots, reaffirming their commitment to the Franciscan way of life.

About 50 people gathered for the weekend, spending Saturday in a day of reflection using the model of The World Café, where people move from table to table responding to different questions: What gifts do I recognize in myself that have been strengthened through FCV? What gifts can I affirm in others at this table?” As Sister Lillian Kroll observed, “It sure takes guts to come to FCV.” Another question: what has been the impact of FCV (or of being connected to an individual volunteer) in my understanding of relationships? John-Caleb Vacheresse noted, “I came to FCV because I craved a real connection. Even though I had a decent job and my own place, I needed to find out who I really was.”

Throughout the day, the participants were invited to reflect by drawing and doodling on paper tablecloths. The results were profound.
At the end of the weekend, as the goodbyes were said to new and old friends, a commitment was made to gather more often. Stephanie Luna said it best, “This weekend renewed my spirit and my commitment to the Franciscan way of life. It was and is critical for me to do this more often.”

How blessed we are to have the FCV program. Sister Michelle L’Allier, part of the resident community that lives with the volunteers, notes: “FCV offers a graced opportunity for young adults to grow in their personal, spiritual and professional lives. The experience of community living strengthens relationship skills and forms friendships that can last a lifetime. How beautiful!”

Considering eight FCV alumni have become Franciscan Associates, the sisters have truly found a way to connect with young adults, extending the Franciscan values and spirit farther into the world.

Brothers Isaac (FCV 7 & 8) and John-Caleb (FCV 8 & 10) Vacheresse. Isaac is currently a college student and lives in Tennessee. John-Caleb has decided to stay in Minnesota and is working at JD Home Health Care in St. Cloud. Both are Franciscan Associates.

Sister Michelle L’Allier, Alison Swoboda (FCV5) and Kyle Lamb (FCV7). Alison grew up in Little Falls and is a physician assistant at the St. Cloud Veterans Hospital. She became a Franciscan Associate in 2019. Kyle is originally from Albany and recently accepted a position at Long-Prairie-Grey Eagle Secondary School as the music teacher for grades 7-12.

Stephanie Luna (FCV9). Luna is a Franciscan Associate.

Kiera Reynolds (FCV10), Sister Pat Forster and Stephanie Luna (FCV9). Kiera, originally from North Carolina, will be staying in Minnesota to pursue a master’s degree in social work at St. Cloud State University. Stephanie Luna returned to her home state of California and has just accepted a position with the MaryKnoll Missioners as a mission educator/promoter. Luna is a Franciscan Associate.

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 Sisters 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.
Sisters share the excitement of the Minnesota Twins

Sister Elise Saggau

On August 1, the sisters at the motherhouse enjoyed a special treat. They gathered in front of the large screen in St. Francis Hall at lunchtime to enjoy hot dogs and watch the Twins play the Marlins in an afternoon game in Miami. Many sisters follow the Twins enthusiastically, but perhaps none more so than Sister Maureen Kelly. When she was a young girl living at home in Minneapolis with her parents and younger sister, her father would often attend the local baseball games. The Minneapolis team, then called the Millers, had a fierce rivalry with the neighboring St. Paul Saints. Mr. Kelly, being a gregarious sort of man, made friends with some of the Millers players and, on a few occasions, invited them home for dinner after a game. Mrs. Kelly, a good cook, happily prepared a tasty meal for them, and the visitors entertained Maureen and her sister, Barbara. This is one of Sister Maureen’s fondest memories and, to this day, she is an ardent baseball fan.

Today, however, she supports a different team. The Millers were replaced by the Minnesota Twins in 1961, when, after 61 years in Washington, D.C., the Senators relocated to Minnesota and took a new name. The Minnesota Twins was the first major league baseball team to use a state in its name rather than a city.

An afternoon at the ball game was very entertaining for the sisters and added delight to an already beautiful summer day.


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In loving memory...

Associate Jeanne Page

Associate Jeanne Page died May 7, 2019, at the age of 68. She was a Franciscan Associate for 18 years, and said, “My Franciscan values are lived out by being of service to others, the needy, the poor and those often overlooked seniors who don’t have family. This fits my gifts.”

Associate Olie Pick

Associate Olie Pick, 82, passed away May 5, 2019. She was a Franciscan Associate for 12 years and once said, “I want to be a better person, to enrich my Franciscan spirituality, and live more like Saints Francis and Clare. The sisters and associates help me come closer to God and that helps me to help others.”

Associate Betty Kampa Miller

Another woman who announced the gospel to others by her words and very way of life was Associate Betty Kampa Miller. Betty died unexpectedly at the age of 84 on Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019. She became a Franciscan Associate in 2016.
First Franciscan Sisters Bean Bag Tournament — what fun!

Elizabeth Rydeen

The Franciscan Sisters are blessed to employ a number of millennials (those born during the years 1982-2004 or so) on the Little Falls campus. They bring enthusiasm and fresh ideas and are curious about religious life and how the sisters extend their values out into the world. Though the sisters have had a continuous presence on the south end of Little Falls for 128 years, we often find that younger generations do not know what the sisters are all about; they may even be living the Franciscan values and not know it. A committee was formed to brainstorm ways to engage a younger demographic, and the creative idea of hosting a bean bag tournament surfaced. Once Starry Eyed Brewery, Little Falls, agreed to provide the venue, the planning began.

Thirty-one teams registered and 10 sisters participated, their registration fee covered by a generous donation. With prize money available, the stakes were high and the level of talent and spirit of competition did not disappoint. The team “Cash Me Out” from St. Cloud took first place. A raffle added excitement and nearly $500 to the total proceeds of just over $1,700 after modest expenses. We are grateful to Hole Products, Inc., of Little Falls for covering $850 in prize money, to Steve Ehlen of Lily’s Wings, Burgers and Things for providing delicious food and many other businesses that contributed to the success of the event. Thank you!

The event exceeded our expectation and proved to be an innovative way to engage younger adults. It was a great opportunity for the sisters to share the Franciscan spirit and to promote their mission and ministries. It was a grand day.