Sisters Academy Helps Young Girls Overcome Obstacles

Sister Carol Henry, RSM, just wanted to help people who were poor in Asbury Park, New Jersey, to become self-sufficient.

As the executive director of Mercy Center in Asbury Park, she witnessed the lack of food, clothing, shelter and education for people in need, especially women and children.

So, twenty-one years ago, with the help of grants, donors and volunteers, she started Sisters Academy in Asbury Park, an educational haven for young local girls, mostly African American, Haitian and Latino.

Sixty girls in grades five through eight attend the school. The school day is 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., eleven months a year. (The school only closes for the month of August.) Tuition costs $1,000 or less per child depending on the family’s ability to pay. Sisters Academy is not a tuition-driven or a stand-alone school, but part of Mercy Center, a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Mercy.

“Often the girls enter the school working at below grade school level,” says principal Sister Mary Louise Miller, RSM. “We have a one to seven ratio of teachers to students. Their first two years here they are playing catch-up, by seventh grade they are working on grade level, and by eighth grade they are above grade level.” The school employs five full-time teachers, including a Sister of Mercy who teaches religion, a principal, social worker and assistant. Twenty professional men and women volunteer their time to teach, too.

The girls learn the typical subjects, but also Latin, boat building, lacrosse, basketball, gardening, golf, life skills, and fencing. One of their students was a junior Olympiad in fencing; another was the captain of her high school team.

“Our graduates are successful,” says Sister Carol. “One hundred percent graduate high school, ninety percent have some form of higher education, and ten percent have their master’s degrees. This place opens doors for these girls to become bright, prepared women. These girls flourish in the face of adversity.”

Principal Sister Mary Louise Miller, RSM, (center) reviews the school’s handbook with students Abirah Napoleon, Smiralda St. Vilus, and Isabel Nava (left to right).
A Message From the President

Dear Friend,

Early days of spring and the days of Lent converge as we move through the changing seasons to the glorious days of Easter. As Sisters of Mercy, we work to echo the gentle changes of the seasons in our workplaces, helping change the lives of those we serve.

Inspired by the example of our founder, Catherine McAuley, and impelled by the teachings of Jesus, as Sisters of Mercy we continue to work to transform and improve the lives of women and girls in extraordinary ways.

Featured in this edition of Mercy Mosaic are three Sisters of Mercy who work to address the needs of women, including young women, in areas where they have been underserved. Those who know the history of the Sisters of Mercy, going back to Catherine’s house in Dublin, know that addressing the needs of poor, uneducated and homeless women was foremost among her concerns.

As the days and weeks signal the change in the cycle of the year, may your hearts join ours as we bring change to the lives of women in the forms of education, shelter and emergency help.

In this issue of Mercy Mosaic we also feature our Jubilarians. Please join us in congratulating our sisters who are celebrating milestone anniversaries this year. We hope that you might recognize or remember a few of the sisters who cheered, counseled or encouraged you in the past. You will also find the names of our recently deceased sisters who labored many years in God’s vineyard, and who now reap their eternal reward in heaven. You may find the names of sisters you knew, and smile at your remembrance of them.

As always, thank you for your generous support of our works of mercy.

As we celebrate this beautiful season of resurrection, may it be a time of great joy, peace and hope for each one of you!

In Mercy,

Sister Patricia Vetrano, RSM
President
Mid-Atlantic Community

Sisters Academy
Continued from front page

Prayer Time

God our Creator, help us share this life as ministers of the gospel;

through our ministry of education,
through our ministry of health care,
through our ministry of pastoral care,
through our ministry of social work,
through our ministry of providing shelter,
through our ministry of prayer
and patient suffering,
may we lead others to You.

This we ask through Christ our Lord.
Amen

from Morning and Evening Prayer
of the Sisters of Mercy
Celebrate the Jubilarians

We offer heartfelt congratulations to the wonderful women who celebrate their jubilees as Sisters of Mercy this year! We admire and appreciate their lives of dedication, love and service following in the footsteps of Catherine McAuley. May the grace of God continue to bless their lives!

Rejoice and be glad!

80 Years
Sister Rita Mary Hamel
Sister Mary de Porres McAllen
Sister Mary De Pazzi Socha

75 Years
Sister Mildred Marie Donohue
Sister M. Dorothea Gillen
Sister M. Regis Reardon
Sister Margaret Mary Smith

70 Years
Sister Marian Cumiskey
Sister Charlotte Emmons
Sister M. Nora Kelley
Sister Mary Pauline Kuntne
Sister Rose Mary Malague
Sister Sarah McCulloch
Sister Mary Grace Monroe
Sister Mary Petrina Peters
Sister Mary McAuley Ronan
Sister Mary Natalie Ruane

60 Years
Sister Ruth Ann Balas
Sister Mary Elise Bier
Sister Joan Carter
Sister Ellen Glavey
Sister Marianne Kelly
Sister Rita Marie Minogue
Sister Mary Miguel Ortiz
Sister Frances Jean Picone
Sister Jeannine Toppin

50 Years
Sister Mary Cleary
Sister Beth Dempsey

We Remember...

Sister Mona Gunkel, RSM

After teaching for 17 years in Brooklyn and Long Island, Sister Mona studied art, and began creating beautiful watercolors. For eight years she taught art at Cleary School for the Deaf on Long Island, and studied woodworking and ceramics so she could offer these experiences to her students. In retirement Sister Mona worked with adult art students. She had a great sense of humor and love of travel. The watercolor of the windmill at the Sisters of Mercy Convent in Watermill, New York, will always be a reminder of Sister Mona.

May 8, 1929 – August 30, 2017
First Profession: March 27, 1951

Sister Mary Donald Cody, RSM

Sister Mary Donald entered the Sisters of Mercy on Mercy Day 1953 and received the name Donald after her brother, Donald Cody. She taught primary grades in the Metuchen and Trenton dioceses, and then in St. Paul School in Princeton, New Jersey, for over 30 years. Sister Mary Donald especially loved teaching first-graders, and after retiring she continued to tutor students. She enjoyed many wonderful retirement years at the St. Paul Convent before moving to McAuley Hall in Watchung, New Jersey.

December 16, 1933 – September 20, 2017
First Profession: August 17, 1956

Sister Aldina Alinovi, RSM

Sister Aldina cared for young orphans at Nazareth Home for Boys, followed by her work as assistant sacristan at St. Paul Church (now the Diocesan Cathedral), both in Massachusetts. It was while ministering in Christ the King Parish in Worcester and St. Aloysius Parish in Gilbertville, that she honed her skills as a cook, participating in food service workshops. She became director of food service at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse in Worcester, where she ministered for over 43 years. Guests there rarely left without freshly baked treats!

October 17, 1927 – October 17, 2017
First Profession: July 1, 1948

Sister Mary Margretta Driscoll, RSM

Gifted with a wonderful mind and artistic talent, Sister Margretta taught in grammar school for most of her ministerial life. She developed a wonderful rapport with students and their families. Always a gracious lady, Sister Margretta grew up in a close family with one sister who remained her greatest friend throughout her life. She will be remembered as a prayerful woman, a creative person, an avid reader, and a lover of all things pink.

August 31, 1931 – December 8, 2017
First Profession: March 19, 1955

Sister Frances Mary Carberry, RSM

Sister Frances taught religion and primary grades in the Worcester diocese at Blessed Sacrament, St. Paul and Our Lady Immaculate parishes, and Worcester Central Catholic School in Massachusetts. She then taught special needs children at Mercy Centre in Worcester and at Nazareth Home for Boys in Leicester, Massachusetts, where she served for 36 years. Her summers at that time were spent teaching in the Worcester Public Schools Head Start program. She died two months shy of her 100th birthday.

March 2, 1918 – January 3, 2018
First Profession: September 2, 1939

Sister M. Josita Walsh, RSM

Sister Josita was the aunt of Sister JoAnne Marie Walsh, RSM, also a member of the Mid-Atlantic Community, and the sister of Sister Mary Eymard Walsh, RSM, a member of the Brooklyn Regional Community who died in 1995. In her 74 years as a Sister of Mercy, Sister ministered for over 30 years as a teacher in the dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre, New York. She also served as a canonical attorney for 20 years in the tribunal of the Diocese of Brooklyn where she made many lasting friendships.

October 30, 1923 – January 15, 2018
First Profession: March 23, 1946

We Remember...
Sister Joan C. Doody, RSM
Sister Joan entered the Sisters of Mercy at age 17 with her twin sister, Janice Doody, RSM, who survives her. She ministered for 60 years teaching in the dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre, New York. Her longest tenure was at Our Lady of Mercy School in Hicksville, New York, affectionately known as “Little Mercy.” Here she was actively involved in the school and parish communities and was known for the many, many bus trips she arranged to shows and events. Sisters Joan and Janice loved to travel and enjoyed many wonderful and eventful trips. Sister Joan recently celebrated her 70th Jubilee with the Community and her large and loving family.

May 29, 1930 – January 20, 2018
First Profession: September 6, 1950

Sister Ann Heavey, RSM
Sister Ann ministered in child care, education and pastoral ministry in the Diocese of Brooklyn and, for a time, in the country of Panama. Sister Ann was a sweet, unassuming and gracious woman. Her quiet and gentle spirit touched the lives of many, particularly in her last ministry at St. Agatha’s Parish in Brooklyn, New York. Sister Ann was called home to God on the feast of St. Agatha.

November 10, 1927 – February 5, 2018
First Profession: March 27, 1954

Sister Mary Ann Dirr, RSM
Initially a Franciscan sister who transferred to the Sisters of Mercy in 1981, Sister Mary Ann was talented, creative and prayerful, and had a great love for those who are poor. A high school teacher and college professor, she also served in prison ministry. In 1990, she founded Mercy Center which ministers to the needs of residents of the South Bronx in New York. Sister Mary Ann served as the executive director of Mercy Center for 13 years, then continued a close association with staff and neighbors. Suffering through frequent physical illnesses, Sister Mary Ann still accomplished great works of Mercy. Her life and spirit permeated Mercy Center and continues to do so today.

December 14, 1943 – February 1, 2018
First Profession: September 6, 1950

Sister M. Paula Richard, RSM
Sister Mary Paula served as an operating nurse, community coordinator and manager of Villa Catherine, a Mercy vacation home in Chaumont, New York. In 2017 she celebrated her 75th year as a Sister of Mercy. She spent a happy interval with the Sisters of St. Joseph near her family in Watertown, New York. After retirement, she relocated to St. Margaret Convent in Lake Placid, New York, and became a friendship volunteer for Mercy Care for the Adirondacks, a ministry serving the needs of elders. She spent her Lake Placid days in prayer and with wonderful memories and stories of her life as a Sister of Mercy, sharing with great delight her experiences as a nurse in British Guyana.

September 7, 1924 – February 16, 2018
First Profession: February 20, 1945

Sister Bernadette J. Wynne, RSM
During her life, Sister Bernadette (Bernie) ministered in education in the dioceses of Brooklyn and Rockville Centre in New York. She was an itinerant teacher of the deaf-blind before becoming the director of the National Training Team for the Helen Keller Institute. Sister Bernie’s resilience in the face of her terminal illness inspired many. Her spirit of trust in her God and love of neighbor will live on in all the lives she touched.

March 2, 1934 – February 21, 2018
First Profession: September 4, 1954
Sister Inspires High School Girls

Sister Patti Donlin, RSM, lives a life of love, compassion and service.

A Sister of Mercy for thirty-two years, she teaches theology at Gwynedd Mercy Academy, a Catholic girls high school outside of Philadelphia.

Sister Patti first met the Sisters of Mercy as a college student at Georgian Court University in New Jersey. She had no interest in becoming a sister, but her roommate did. So she would accompany her to meetings about vocations. At these gatherings, she learned that the Sisters of Mercy were real people full of fun, energy, and compassion.

“I noticed that the sisters always went above and beyond to help others,” says Sister Patti. “I, like them, wanted to give back to God. So I started to do service as a Eucharistic minister, but it wasn’t enough. I wanted to do more. I wanted to give my life to God.”

She told her parents, but they asked her to wait a year, so she could be sure about her vocation. After working a year as an actuary and discerning her vocation, she entered the Sisters of Mercy.

“As a sister she served as a campus minister for three years and has taught high school for over ten years. “I enjoy teaching because I get to share my relationship with God with my students. I also get to influence them,” says Sister Patti.

She teaches the students how to pray through Scripture, prayer and guided imagery. The girls also learned how she prays in the morning and the evening with her community. Together, as a class, they discussed what they were doing for Lent this year. Each student made a commitment and at the end of Lent will discuss how it changed their hearts.

“The Sisters of Mercy have empowered me to be more involved in my faith,” says student Grace Kelly. “They are some of the most brave, powerful women I have ever met.”

“The students have strengthened my faith,” says Sister Patti, “and they constantly challenge me to be better, to go deeper and to make a difference in the lives of others.”
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Two members choose to remain anonymous.

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Please join us…

19th Annual Evening of Mercy
Wednesday, May 16, 2018
The Yale Club
New York City

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Mid-Atlantic Sister Receives Papal Award

Mid-Atlantic Sister Maureen Crissy, RSM, recently received a Papal Honor for her dedication and exceptional service to the Church in Philadelphia.

She was awarded the Cross of Honor or Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice for dedicating her religious life to those most in need. For twenty-five years, Sister Maureen served as the program director of Women of Hope, a shelter providing transitional housing for women with mental illness, operated by Catholic Social Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. She also ministered as the principal at St. Denis School in Havertown, Pennsylvania, and St. Christopher School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

“Each person recognized by the Pope has performed some exceptional service for the Church or offered some form of outstanding Christian witness in a generous and sustained way,” says Archbishop Charles Chaput.

Sister Maureen Crissy received the honor from the Archbishop during a Vespers service at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul earlier this year.