



# Heart

---

Spring 2014    A Journal of the Society of the Sacred Heart, United States – Canada

---

# ...to Heart

## Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking this time to read about the Religious of the Sacred Heart, our life and mission in Canada, the United States and beyond. We are grateful for the

many ways you support us and our mission – through your prayers, participation, friendship, sharing of resources.

Together with you, we are the family of the Sacred Heart, the large international community that St. Madeleine Sophie envisioned more than 200 years ago when she first began the Society of the Sacred Heart. She wrote:

*When we are twenty-four religious, to replace one another every hour on the prie-dieu in order to maintain perpetual adoration, that would be a great deal, but too little ...*

*If we had young pupils whom we could form to the spirit of adoration and reparation, that would be different! I saw hundreds, thousands of adorers before a kind of imaginary monstrance lifted up over the Church around the world.*

*“That’s it,” I said to myself, “we must vow ourselves to the education of young people; we must lay solid foundations of lively faith. ... We will bring up numbers of adorers from all nations to the very ends of the earth.”*

This issue of *Heart* focuses our attention on our Sacred Heart community today – RSCJ, associates and co-workers. Our vocation as educators calls us to “*create community among ourselves and with others. It asks of us generous commitment, ongoing formation and a broad critical vision of the world enlightened by faith.*” We share this call with each of you who are part of our Sacred Heart family.

While we are not, for the most part, living in a time of bloody revolution as St. Madeleine Sophie was, we certainly live in times filled with complexity, conflict, injustice, and an environmental crisis that is potentially as devastating as war.

These too are times of great opportunity, great hope in the person of Pope Francis, a time of seemingly more conscious compassion and commitment among our young people, a time of immense possibilities for creating a world deeply rooted in Gospel values.

All Religious of the Sacred Heart and Associates recently received a new document that was the fruit of a meeting of our sisters around the world who work with our newer members. This booklet contained a call and a challenge to recommit ourselves continually so that we may grow in living our life and mission more fully in these changing times and contexts. I would like to extend this call and invitation to you who are part of our Sacred Heart family, our growing Sacred Heart community:

*Jesus is calling us to be women (and men) of the Heart, giving us once again the possibility of listening once more to God’s dream for humanity, which moves us to make each action of our lives brim over with love. In community we wish to give each other mutual support in the certainty that the dream can be fulfilled.*

I hope this issue of *Heart* nourishes your spirit and gives you hope. Count on our prayer for you and we count on your prayer for the Religious of the Sacred Heart, our mission and our co-workers. ✚



With much love,

*Barbara Dawson RSCJ*

Barbara Dawson, RSCJ  
Provincial

## Heart Lines

- 4 **Shrines take the cake!**
- 4 **Cor Unum 65: A gathering of the youngest members of the province**
- 5 **Suzanne Cooke, RSCJ, named Head of the Conference of Sacred Heart Education**
- 5 **In Memoriam**
- 6 **RSCJ gather in Brazil**  
By Maria Cimperman, RSCJ
- 7 **Donna Dolan, RSCJ, named director of novices**
- 8 **Bringing people together for mission**  
By Shirley Miller, RSCJ
- 9 **The Stuart Center: Justice in the hands of the human community**  
By Imma De Stefanis, RSCJ

## Features

- 10 **Community as a central value and daily challenge**  
By Therese Fink Meyerhoff
- 13 **Community serves as international house of studies**  
By Muriel Cameron, RSCJ
- 15 **Building community in a Sacred Heart school**  
By Lynne Lieux, RSCJ

## Departments

- 18 **Our part in the broader community**  
By Sisters Rosemary Bearss, Maureen Chicoine, Betsy Hartson, and Betty Renard
- 22 **Before you go...**

# Heart

*Heart* is published two times a year to highlight the mission and ministries of the Society of the Sacred Heart, United States – Canada, for a wide circle of friends. The covers, photographs of hearts in nature, symbolic of Christ's presence at the heart of the universe, bear witness to the contemplative dimension of the Society's "wholly contemplative, wholly apostolic" mission: To discover and reveal God's love through the service of education.



© bigbrownyez, Flickr

The Society of the Sacred Heart was founded by Saint Madeleine Sophie Barat in post-revolutionary France and brought to the United States by Saint Philippine Duchesne in 1818 and to Canada in 1842. For more information about the mission and ministries of the United States–Canada Province, please visit [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org).

**United States–Canada Provincial Team:**  
Barbara Dawson, RSCJ, Provincial  
Meg Causey, RSCJ  
Anne-Marie Conn, RSCJ  
Sheila Hammond, RSCJ  
Diana Wall, RSCJ

**Editor:** Therese Fink Meyerhoff

**Designer:** Peggy Nehmen

**Copy Editor:** Frances Gimber, RSCJ

Please send address changes for *Heart* to [editor@rscj.org](mailto:editor@rscj.org) or to *Heart* editor at the address below. Article proposals are welcome.

Society of the Sacred Heart  
4120 Forest Park Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63108  
314-652-1500  
Fax: 314-534-6800



The STL250 cake installed at the Shrine of St. Philippine.

## Shrines take the cake

The City of St. Louis is celebrating its 250<sup>th</sup> birthday this year, and 250 huge birthday cakes are on exhibit throughout the area, including at the Shrine of St. Philippine Duchesne and the Shrine of St. Ferdinand. Known fondly as “Florissant” within the Society, the Shrine of St. Ferdinand is the location of Philippine’s second foundation.

In public voting to select STL250’s “Cakeway to the West,” the Shrine of St. Philippine finished in the top fifty. The STL250 organization refers to the Cakeway to the West as “one part public art exhibit, one part scavenger hunt and one part history lesson” because each four-foot birthday cake was decorated by a local artist and includes a social media application that will share facts about each location. People will be encouraged to visit all of 250 cakes in order to check in and qualify for a sweepstakes.

## Cor Unum 65

### A gathering of the youngest members of the Province

When forty-seven Religious of the Sacred Heart gathered in St. Louis last November, there was great excitement in the air. Calling themselves “*Cor Unum 65*,” the group spanned thirty years in age, all under 65. Members from four provinces in addition to the United States–Canada reflected the internationality of the Society. The challenge for the weekend was to come together to become a band of sisters who will walk together into the future with fierce commitment to one another and to the ongoing development of the Society in the United States and Canada and beyond. Most of the RSCJ present that weekend believe they accomplished that goal.

The hosting team of Sisters Lisa Buscher, Mary Kay Hunyady, Margo Morris and Diana Wall created a process consisting of prayer, learning about group processes, and deep engagement in connecting with one another. Important topics were “Why did you become an RSCJ?” “What is happening in our community and ministry that makes it important to be here?” “When have you experienced *Cor Unum*?” It was a time of sharing and reconciliation, setting the stage for another meeting in May and for a stronger future for the province. ✦



Diane Roche, RSCJ, shares her passion for ministry at the *Cor Unum 65* gathering in November.

## Suzanne Cooke named Head of the Conference of Sacred Heart Education

**I**n anticipation of the creation of the Conference of Sacred Heart Education in the United States and Canada, the leadership team of the United States–Canada Province has asked Suzanne Cooke, RSCJ, to become the first head of the conference. Sister Cooke, currently serving as headmistress of Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart in Miami, has generously agreed to lead the Conference when it is launched in August 2015.



Suzanne Cooke, RSCJ, has been devoted to Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart in Miami for sixteen years.

The Conference of Sacred Heart Education is being created as part of the Society of the Sacred Heart's commitment to the future of Sacred Heart education in Canada and the United States. Over the last several years, the leaders of this province and the leaders of the twenty-four Sacred Heart schools in the United States and Canada have worked together to create a new structure and a new relation-based paradigm to ensure the vitality of the Society's mission in the schools. The Conference will serve as a forum for genuine conversation regarding the evolving mission of Sacred Heart education. It will be integrated with the Network of Sacred Heart Schools.

As head of conference, Sister Cooke's primary responsibility will be to sustain the relationship between the Society of the Sacred Heart and each school through ongoing communications and education. In collaboration with a group of provincial team-appointed advisors, Sister Cooke will have responsibilities in the area of governance, education to mission and accountability for mission. The head of conference's role is essentially one of giving direction, guidance and support to the Schools of the Sacred Heart on behalf of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

Sister Cooke has served as headmistress of Carrollton School of the Sacred Heart since 1998.

"We are grateful for her decision and thank the Carrollton community for preparing her to serve the entire Network with vision and energy for the future," said Provincial Barbara Dawson, RSCJ. "I can think of no one better suited to lead the Conference during its vital first years."

The creation of the Conference of Sacred Heart Education marks an exciting new chapter for Sacred Heart education in the United States and Canada, a new chapter in the 200-year old story of making God's love visible through the service of education. ❖

### *In Memoriam*

*May they find light and peace  
in God's presence.*

**Judy Cagney, RSCJ**  
November 3, 2013

**Maureen Cronin, RSCJ**  
November 10, 2013

**Rosemary (Ronnie) Dewey, RSCJ**  
November 13, 2013

**Margaret Mary Hone, RSCJ**  
November 24, 2013

**Evelyn Kane, RSCJ**  
December 2, 2013

**Harriet Padberg, RSCJ**  
January 2, 2014

**Mary McMabon, RSCJ**  
January 15, 2014

**Claire Kondolf, RSCJ**  
January 18, 2014

**Concepción Camacho, RSCJ**  
February 3, 2014  
*Superior General, Society of the  
Sacred Heart, 1970-1982*

*Profiles are available on  
our website, [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org)*

## Cor Unum in Brazil

By Maria Cimperman, RSCJ



While parts of the northern United States were being deluged with winter weather, Juliet Mousseau, RSCJ, and I left our respective communities in St. Louis and Chicago (yes, winter wonderlands!) to spend a month in Brazil with some of our sisters in Latin America. Every three years the Latin American provinces gather some sisters in formation for a month long *encuentro* (encounter) with one another across provinces. This year Juliet and I from the United States–Canada Province were invited to join fourteen others in Latin America. We came from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and the US and met in a retreat center on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro from December 15 to January 15.

The *encuentro* was utter gift! We “encountered” one another through stories, dynamics and shared prayer, all in Spanish. We also shared about life in our provinces. As each shared her ministry passions, what gift it was to hear from Yuli [Yulitza Bermúdez] from Venezuela about medical school based on a community health model of education, from Luz [Zoila Paredes] about teaching primary school in a very remote and economically poor region of Peru, from María Luisa [Moreno] about ministry among marginalized youth and women’s groups in Mexico, from Yenny [Yanina Candia] in Argentina about ministry with youth and service education – and so much more! Our shared mission of discovering and revealing God’s love was evident, particularly where the wounded heart of humanity was so visible. We learned much about our various provinces and home countries, often through creative ways that included food and dance amid information and analysis!

The smiles reflect the joy of the *encuentro* for these Religious of the Sacred Heart gathered in Brazil.

Speakers also engaged us on many topics. For example, theologian Leonardo Boff engaged us on eco-theology (interesting to note here that Pope Francis is writing a document on the environment and asked Boff for



Yenny Candia, RSCJ (Argentina), Jessie Muñoz, RSCJ (Chile), and Juliet Mousseau, RSCJ (United States) wait for the train at the famed Christ the Redeemer statue at Corcovado Mountain.

his eco-theology writings); Mercedes Lopes, MJC, spoke of feminist theology and images of God; sociologist Ivo Lesbaupin shared political and socio-economic dimensions of Latin America; Nancy Durand, RSCJ, from Peru and formerly on our General Council, spoke of human development along the life spectrum; and Elizabeth Amarante, RSCJ, shared her

experience of more than thirty years among the indigenous people of the Amazon, engaging us on what it means to have the “heart of an educator.”

We celebrated Christmas and the New Year amid the gracious, loving hospitality of our elder sisters living in Rio de Janeiro. Time in Rio also included touristy fun, from visiting Christ the Redeemer monument at the peak of Corcovado Mountain, to walking and swimming at Copacabana beach. Food, fun and laughter were present in great measure! Our time together ended with a silent, directed retreat, an *encuentro* with the One who brought us all to the Sacred Heart in the first place.

Among the many deep impressions of this time, perhaps the two most lasting are our *cor unum* and *convivir*. That we are one heart and one mind in the heart of Jesus Christ was abundantly clear from the moment we met. Everything flowed from this as we shared, played, prayed and envisioned the world God is inviting. All are included and all are essential. Second, I was deeply moved when Sister Amarante shared with us that for the Myky people in the Amazon the word “*vivir*” – to live – does not exist. There is only “*convivir*,” to live together. This is our call, too.

To live together with one heart in the Heart of Christ, including all, is an urgent need and cry in our globalized world. This is as true in the United States and Canada as it is in Brazil. What a gift and challenge Sophie Barat and our internationality offer us, each and all in the Sacred Heart family!

*Maria Cimperman, RSCJ, teaches theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.*

## Donna Dolan, RSCJ, named director of novices



The provincial leadership team has appointed Donna Dolan, RSCJ, director of novices for the United States–Canada Province for the next two years. This is an important role in the life of the province as it will be her

responsibility to introduce the novice to the apostolic life of the Society, help her explore and understand her call and, ultimately, prepare her for her first religious commitment.

Sister Dolan reflected, “As I move into formation ministry and look back on my years in light of the rush of time, the comings and goings, the joys and sorrows, and the enriching communities and ministries in which I have been involved, Fr. Daniel O’Leary (*The Tablet*) provides me with a good image. He writes that beneath the noisy traffic of the day-to-day there is a silence. In that silence deep within the soul’s music we are meant to catch the rhythm of grace. That image speaks to me.

“In our lives as Religious of the Sacred Heart, no matter what our age, we try to ‘catch the rhythm of grace’ by deepening our relationship with God,” she continued. “The most important thing we can offer women who join us is to help them develop a deep relationship with God that is influenced by and connected to our Sacred Heart spirituality and to help them develop strong spiritual practices to sustain their lives as RSCJ.”

The novitiate community will be located in Halifax, where Sister Dolan is currently living. This will allow Sister Dolan to continue her ministry of work in spirituality and spiritual direction. ❖

## Bringing people together for mission

By Shirley Miller, RSCJ

The purpose of the mission advancement office is to bring people together, to deepen the mission of the Society of the Sacred Heart, that is, to make known the love of the Heart of Jesus. The *Cor Unum Legacy Society* is intended to recognize in perpetuity those individuals who make a planned gift to the Society of the Sacred Heart or remember us in their wills. We are grateful to Mary Ann (Muffie) Bridge for sharing her reasons for joining the *Cor Unum Legacy Society*.

### Why I joined the *Cor Unum Legacy Society*

By Mary Ann (Muffie) Bridge, Villa Duchesne, 1951

The Society of the Sacred Heart is a story of relationships from 1800 to the present – a story of friendships, community and family. In my school days, the nuns were Mothers and the students were Children of the Sacred Heart – all part of the extended family of love centered in the Heart of Christ. There are so many RSCJ who have been important in my life; to paraphrase Will Rogers, “I never met an RSCJ I didn’t like.” Their thoughtfulness and loving natures made us feel like family.

When I was in fifth grade, Mother Ruth Stanley asked a question. I knew the answer and in my enthusiasm, I raised my hand and yelled, “Mommy, Mommy,” rather than Mother. Mother Stanley

blushed but I think she was flattered. When my mother died on May 30, 1969, I received the dearest letter from Mother Stanley. I still have the note. I never could part with it. How could I? She said, “Pray to your mother. She is closer to you now than she was

on earth.” She was convinced that only a thin veil separates time from eternity. What a beautiful thought.

One day Mother Hildegard Hellmuth was on crutches with a cast on her ankle. We found out that she had broken her ankle while roller skating! We thought, “What a hoot just to envision the nuns rolling around the grounds of Villa on skates and holding up those long skirts.”

Mother Clark taught fourth year Latin. She could name every stone on the Appian Way! There were only five of us in the class. We were studying Cicero – the Cataline orations. She had us put on a skit for Reverend Mother McCabe, Mother Scott and Mother Richard. I was Cicero, and we did it all in Latin. I can still remember, “*Quo usque tandem abutere Catilina, patientia nostra? Scio ubi fueris proxima nocte.*”

We were close to the nuns. I loved Mother Lucy Lamy who was a good friend of my mother’s. My dear friend Mary Ann (Sis) Flynn, RSCJ, and I went to see her shortly before she passed away. I read her the poem, *Safely Home*, and with her eyes closed, a beautiful smile appeared on her face.

A school of the Sacred Heart is so much more than a school. I received a wonderful education. Today I cannot keep myself from correcting the poor grammar used by some of our TV anchors! The building and campus at Villa were magnificent. We were surrounded by beauty – the place and the people. As anyone who has attended a Sacred Heart School can attest, traditions are so important. Every time I hear *Cœur de Jésus*, it warms my heart.

I am so grateful for what I received from the nuns that I joined the *Cor Unum Legacy Society* to help the Religious of the Sacred Heart continue the great mission of making known the love of the Heart of Christ, plan a future full of hope and care for the older sisters. ❖



Mary Ann (Muffie) Bridge

Sustainer Gifts

New! Recurring monthly gifts –  
visit [rscj.org](http://rscj.org) and click “Donate”



# The Stuart Center

## Justice in the hands of the human community

By Imma De Stefanis, RSCJ

Psychologists refer to the “psychological *sense* of community,” or the *experience* of community rather than its structure, formation, setting or other features. A “sense of community” is the feeling of belonging, of mutual significance, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through the resources of the group and their commitment to one another. This sense of community extends to the Christian concept of community with one significant caveat: it is incomplete. As Christians, if our sense of community is centered on *our* sense of belonging, that we matter to one another and that we take care of one another’s needs, then we are nothing more than a “club.” For us to be true to our call as Christians we must live and work in solidarity with one another as part of the community of *all* of humanity.

Solidarity is more than union; it is respecting the dignity and uniqueness of each person and standing together to fight the injustices that attempt to push some outside the human community. Solidarity is at the center of our charism (General Chapter 1988) and at the heart of our mission, in that we are called to reach out to the poor, those rejected by the world and those most in need.

The *Stuart Center for Mission, Educational Leadership and Technology* seeks to respond to educational and social justice needs through collaboration and initiatives. Each of the five offices of the Stuart Center reflects certain characteristics that contribute to the sense of Christian community: gathering, communication, leadership, connectedness and integrity.

◆ **Gathering.** The **Office of Conference Facilities** provides a space for groups to meet, plan and reflect. Educational, non-profit and religious groups find conference rooms, small and mid-sized gathering space and break-out rooms.

◆ **Communication.** CEDC assists community and social justice groups to communicate their message by providing affordable web and graphic design services. For example, it helped My Sister’s Place showcase their message to empower survivors of domestic abuse and Franciscan Action Network to highlight its newly formed Franciscan Earth Corps.

◆ **Leadership.** The **Office of Educational Leadership** provides non-profits and schools with such services as strategic planning, board enhancement and organizational management. It offers a variety of educational and leadership training programs such as the *Summit Leadership Academy* for high school students, *Global Citizen Project* for young adults and the *Sacred Heart Internship Program* for professional-level experience in the non-profit sector. It also offers leadership/empowerment training for adult groups.

◆ **Connectedness.** The **Ministry Office** is a resource for Religious of the Sacred Heart who are in transition and seeking new ways to respond to the call to mission, whether in a new ministry or in the transition from full-time to semi-retired ministry or with RSCJ from other provinces who come to the US and Canada to study.

◆ **Integrity.** Integrity lies in the alignment of what we believe, say and do. The **JPIC Office** (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation) consists of a team of RSCJ and collaborators. It serves as a resource in our mutual, ongoing efforts to achieve balance and right relationship among all people and the earth we share.

The Stuart Center is one way the United States–Canada Province responds to the educational and social justice needs of our society. At the Stuart Center, we believe that our collective capacity to impact social change rests in taking actions marked by critical analysis, prayerful reflection and recognition of the full potential of each member of the human community to advance the good of the whole.

To learn more about the Stuart Center and how you might collaborate, visit [www.stuartcenter.org](http://www.stuartcenter.org).

*Imma De Stefanis, RSCJ, is a developmental psychologist currently serving as the executive director of the Stuart Center and the director of the Office of Educational Initiatives and Leadership.*



## A central value and a daily challenge

By Therese Fink Meyerhoff, Director of Communications

*Back in the day of habits and cloister,* there was an air of mystery surrounding nuns. Depending on one's age, the question might be, "How do they give up having a family of their own?" or "Do they have hair under that veil?" Thankfully, with the end of cloister came opportunities for religious to become part of the broader community, which enabled the rest of us to get to know them better and understand their call. But one aspect of vowed religious life retains a bit of mystery: community life. What is it like to live in community? How exactly does a "shared goods" arrangement work out with unrelated adults? And for the young or realistic among us, do they ever argue?

One of the secrets that can be revealed here is that nuns are people, too. They share with the rest of humanity the desire to be part of a community, the comfort in the company of others and the irritation at the discovery of an empty milk carton. How they deal with that irritation, and other issues both large and small, stems from their unity within the Society and their commitment to their vows.

Religious of the Sacred Heart are called by the *Constitutions* of the Society of the Sacred Heart: "Through our mutual trust, the sharing of our prayer and life experiences, through our love and loyalty towards one another, we come to find real joy in living together, welcoming our gifts and our differences of culture and mentality. Our desire to live in mutual love helps us to overcome our egoism, and to work through our moments of tension, open to forgiveness and reconciliation." (*Constitutions* of 1982, ¶ 31)

But how, concretely, is community created and maintained? The General Chapter of 2008, noted, "As RSCJ we are called to follow Jesus in community, in the manner of Sophie.

*Deeply rooted in our relationship with Jesus, we reaffirm that life in community is a fundamental expression of our spirituality."*

Living in "the manner of Sophie" clearly entails fostering relationships, and fostering relationships requires patience, generosity of spirit and understanding. "You know very well we don't live with angels but with human nature which we must learn to understand and make allowances for," Mother Barat wrote to one of her daughters.

### *A Visit to Mason Road*

Just as there is no such thing as a typical RSCJ, there is no typical Sacred Heart community, no one "right way" to live in community as RSCJ. But getting to know one community may provide a glimpse of what community life is like for all. Let's visit one of the sixty communities in the United States—Canada Province.

The Mason Road Community in St. Louis County is made up of Sisters Mary Pat Rives, Sally Stephens, Susan Maxwell, Kathleen Hughes, Regina Shin and Pricillian Nyirampamira from the Uganda-Kenya Province. They live in a large, comfortable house, which has been reconfigured over the years as the numbers in the community varied. Each member of the community has her own bedroom, but for the most part bathrooms are shared. There is a large living area on the lower level used for monthly Associates gatherings and other meetings. As in many Sacred Heart communities, there is a chapel.

Mornings are quiet in the house on Mason Road, as each member begins her day – usually quite early – with individual prayer and contemplation before beginning the work of

her ministry. Sister Hughes works from an office adjacent to her bedroom. Sisters Stephens and Rives are long-time staff members of Villa Duchesne/Oak Hill, not far from the community. Sister Shin works at the provincial offices, and Sister Nyirampamira is a full-time student at nearby Maryville University. Sister Maxwell is currently living at Oakwood for a few months of recuperation.

The community shares cooking and prayer preparation each day. Whoever prepares the evening meal also prepares the day's prayer, which usually includes music, a reading, reflections, and intercessions. Sister Shin, who moved to Mason Road within the past year, is an artist and often provides a visual, which, according to the others, has added new life to their prayer. Perhaps that is what inspired Sister Rives to incorporate her iPad as she leads prayer. There is a community meeting every month. It includes prayer and planning, but is primarily a time to touch base and share the current state of their hearts and their minds. The members of the community go away together each fall to plan the year ahead in a retreat atmosphere.

## Priorities

Posted on the refrigerator at Mason Road is a set of priorities for the year, created by the community at their annual retreat last September. These are:

1. Hospitality
2. A quiet atmosphere
3. Beauty – caring for the space
4. Thoughtfulness – caring for each other
5. Celebrations
6. Involvement in the life of the area

Visitors are welcomed with grace and a knack for meeting needs before they are even felt. Sisters Margie Strom and Sherry Smith, who live together in Bethesda, are frequently found at Mason Road because they serve on boards at Maryville University and Villa Duchesne. They are there often enough to have their own self-assigned gardening chores. Sister Strom noted that Mason Road, “feels like home. We are comfortable here because we know we are accepted and loved.”

This community values celebrating together: birthdays, Society feast days, holidays. And they celebrate each other: “Our variety of gifts is like a bouquet,” Sister Stephens remarked. Every community is like this, and as members come and go, the make-up of the bouquet is changed, but the beauty remains. For several months last year, this community was home to Secondina Baitwababo, RSCJ, who has now returned to the Uganda-Kenya Province. Her presence added a new dimension to the community, which the remaining



*The Mason Road Community gathers each evening for prayer before supper. Left to right: Sisters Regina Shin, Kathleen Hughes, Pricillian Nyirampamira and Sally Stephens. Sisters Mary Pat Rives and Susan Maxwell were away.*



*Mary Pat Rives, RSCJ, confers with Associate Marilyn Lorenz at an Associates meeting at Mason Road.*

As RSCJ we are called to follow Jesus in community, in the manner of Sophie. Deeply rooted in our relationship with Jesus, we reaffirm that life in community is a fundamental expression of our spirituality.

## Sophia House: Building our vision together

### *Outreach to women and young adults in Berkeley*

The province recently established a new community: Sophia House, in Berkeley, California. The mission of Sophia House is to reach out to women and young adults in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. Currently, three RSCJ live in the community, and there is room for more. The community at Sophia House will place an emphasis on simplicity of life, care for the environment, contemplation, community. They will regularly welcome people to the house, as individuals and groups, for prayer, meals, discussion, and celebrations. For example, their first party was a Chinese New Year celebration with some friends from Southeast Asia. Each member carries out her own ministry, but each has also committed herself to the shared ministry of the House.



members miss. In a few weeks, Donna Collins, RSCJ, currently serving as the Society's secretary general in Rome, will join the community as she begins her new ministry at Villa Duchesne. "Being community" is always a work in progress, with each person learning how to live well and love well.

"I was attracted to the Society because everyone was so different," Sister Hughes remarked. "I met women with rich personalities, interested in the world, who led a life of prayer and who seemed to love each other. And that's what I have still."

Perhaps it is worth noting that RSCJ communities are, after all, homes. Like other homes, they are tended to with care. St. Madeleine Sophie valued beauty, and it can be found in small things throughout the house – framed prints, comfortable pillows, vases of flowers. The neatness of the house reflects the consideration each member shows her sisters.

At the Mason Road Community, they take the ideals found in the *Constitutions* seriously, and live them in their daily interactions. For instance, Sister Nyirampamira, from Uganda, joined the community this year in order to attend classes at Maryville University. Her class schedule keeps her out late several days each week, so the community is exploring new ways to pray together that will fit her schedule.

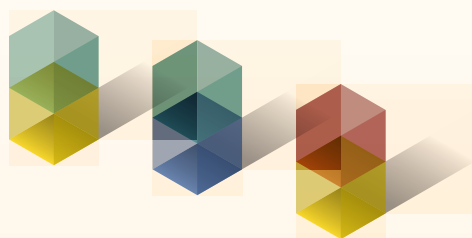
Life in community works through a combination of mutual respect, accommodation and acceptance. There is a very real process of getting to know one another, discussing what's important – everything from world news to prayer life, holidays, transportation, individual space, etc. Often it comes down to feeling "home." Communities handle crises, illness, accidents and aging together, as a family would.

Community life is a gift and a process that invites Religious of the Sacred Heart to constant transformation. They learn to welcome and accept one another, appreciating their differences as gifts. It is not always easy, but the daily challenge to share, to set aside self-interest, to think of the needs of others, is a call to communion, not only with their sisters, but with the broader community. ❖

*Sisters Mary McGann, Mary Pat White and Cecile Meijer enjoy welcoming young people to Sophia House.*



Schools of the Sacred Heart students greet exchange students from their sister school in Nantes, France, as they arrive on campus in February. SSH students will travel to France in April.



# Building community in a Sacred Heart school

By Lynne Lieux, RSCJ

How many times have I heard Religious of the Sacred Heart and my school colleagues say “Sacred Heart education—it is all about relationships!” I was reminded of this recently while interviewing a prospective staff member. When she spoke about the importance of relationships in her life, I thought that this person clearly had the potential to be a Sacred Heart educator. Relationship really is the foundation stone of any Sacred Heart community. It is a value, but also a skill to be learned by both students and adult members of the school community.

The importance that Sacred Heart educators place on relationships and on each individual is the foundation of Goal IV of the Goals and Criteria of Sacred Heart Education, “the building of community as a Christian value.” So important is this facet of our education that it permeates all that we do and is, perhaps, the most distinctive characteristic of our schools while being the most difficult to define.

For me, community is most visible and most felt at school liturgies. We gather together to celebrate the heart of our school, our belief in the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. At the Schools of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau, our celebration of the liturgy is often followed by another community gathering, *gôûter*. One of our fourth grade boys recently made me more aware of the importance of this tradition when he inquired where *gôûter* was after the first production of the Berchmans lower school musical. So important was this to him and to me that I scurried to the dining hall to have the staff create *gôûter* for the boys!

We cannot be in a right relationship with others without a strong sense of self, our own worth and lovability. By trusting that we are precious to God, we can love others and allow them to be their authentic selves. Class retreats are often focused on how each one can be a better friend to all. Recently, I found some of our lower school students in the front gardens carrying some of the camellias they had picked. When I inquired



what they were about, with great joy they said “We’ve been doing a community-building activity, and we created a heart out of the flowers we found!”

Each morning, every division of the school gathers together for prayer and announcements. At these assemblies, faculty and students ask the community to pray for someone or recognize an individual’s birthday or the achievements of students. For me, the fact that we gather, rather than listen to announcements over an intercom, reflects the importance that we place on being community. Since my own days as a Sacred Heart student, I have valued these “general instruction” times because it is during these moments that we come to know the giftedness of our community and what is in one another’s minds and hearts.

From the earliest days of Sacred Heart schools, time has always been given for students and faculty to enjoy together a break from the ordinary routine of academic life. Congés continue to provide opportunities for students to work and play together as they prepare a skit and games.

It is in living Goal IV that we find just how much all the Goals are

interrelated. Learning Goal IV is rooted in Goal I (a personal and active faith in God) and Goal V (personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom). The lived experience of the communion of these three goals is service to others. Through community service, students and faculty learn that they belong to a larger community beyond the school. Working with those most in need or tutoring students provides students and faculty with the opportunity to create community in a variety of situations.

The Sacred Heart exchange program is another way our students connect with a community beyond their own school. Welcoming students from other Sacred Heart schools in the United States or other countries, or going to another Sacred Heart school, helps students know that they are a part of a worldwide network of people who share the same educational mission.

When trying to help students grow in their understanding of the importance of making wise choices (Goal V), adults often focus on how behavior impacts the community. Even our youngest students understand the need “to be a friend to all,” and to make choices that are respectful of others. An

environment in which each person is respected and allowed to be her or his best self creates community.

At Grand Coteau, the boarding school presents a unique opportunity for the building of community. It can be a challenge for adolescents to live together because of the familial and cultural differences among students. Our staff plans weekly activities designed to help create community. Each evening after study, the boarders gather together for a brief prayer, often followed by some discussion about life in the boarding school. I try to join this activity at least one night each week in order to be a part of the boarding school community. I want the boarders to know I value their joys and concerns and their presence. I want them to feel that they are a valuable part of our community.

While our primary emphasis is on building community among our students, faculty and staff, time is also given to creating a sense of community for our parents, alumnae and trustees. Parent clubs and programs for parents provide opportunities for parents to know one another and to understand the education that their children are



Far left: Boarding students from China organize a Chinese Calligraphy Workshop for Upper School students as part of a weeklong celebration of Chinese Spring Festival.

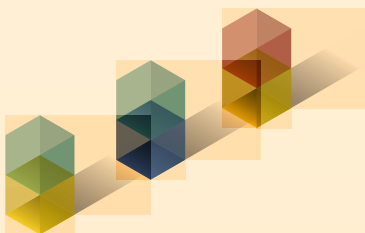
Middle: SSH students pack the gym in a sea of red in support of the Academy volleyball team.

Left: Upper School students pair up with second grade students in a Biology lab.



Fifth grade Berchmans Academy students show care for their community as they plant Bald Cypress seedlings at Avery Island as part of the Coastal Roots Project.

I have valued these “general instruction” times because it is during these moments that we come to know the giftedness of our community and what is in one another’s minds and hearts.



receiving. Board meetings and retreats include elements that emphasize the board’s role in ensuring that the school remains faithful to living the educational mission of the Society. For the board to be successful, board members must see themselves as a vital part of the school community; their actions and decisions have to be focused on creating community among all constituent groups. Graduates are told that Coteau will always be home and are encouraged to return to this holy place to remember what grounded them here. An annual weekend for alumnae and other gatherings in various cities across the country allow for the renewal of friendships and ongoing participation in the life of the school community.

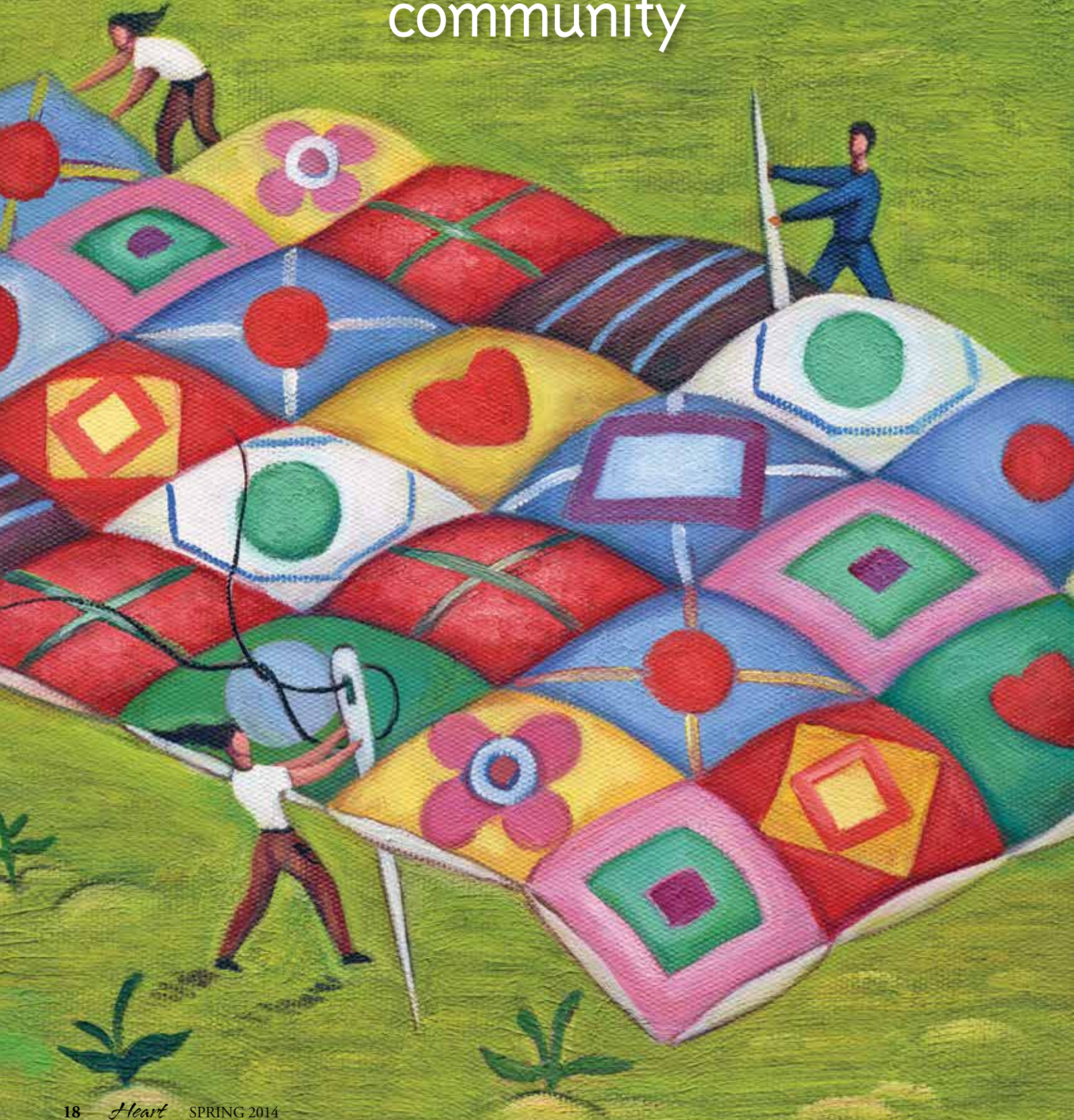
One must experience a Sacred Heart school to know what a gift it is to be a part of a Sacred Heart community. For me, I feel it in the spontaneous conversations that I have with students in the hall or in my visits to the four-year-olds’ French class when they say “Sister Lieux, you speak French!” Knowing every member of the school community by name gives me a sense of community. The joy, the love that I experience daily

with our students, despite the many issues and concerns that occupy my day, are my confirmation that community exists at Schools of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau. ✦

*Lynne Lieux, RSCJ, is a graduate of the Academy of the Sacred Heart, Grand Coteau, where she now serves as head of school. Three other heads of Sacred Heart schools contributed to this story: Maureen Glavin, RSCJ, Academy of the Sacred Heart, St. Charles; Sheila Haggas, Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart, Omaha; Matthew Anita MacDonald, SSJ, Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.*



# Our part in the broader community





This issue of *Heart* magazine explores several interpretations of the word “community,” all of which hold a place of importance in our lives. As apostolic women, Religious of the Sacred Heart are members of many communities beyond the Society. Here, four RSCJ reflect on the communities that are their ministries.

## Living Wages, a learning community

By *Betsy Hartson, RSCJ*

My ministry, Living Wages, is a community of adult learners, seekers, neighbors, volunteers, staff and graduates.

In 1998, three colleagues and I started what has become two Living Wages Adult Education Centers in Washington, DC, home of the highest rate of functional illiteracy in the United States. For fifteen years we have assisted hundreds of low-income adults to obtain a high school diploma. These 400 graduates and their families are the building blocks of our community. We are on a journey together. They, and we, know that education is the only sure means of reaching the goals of opportunity and equality.

We draw from popular education models built on the idea that empowerment begins from within, and that marginalized people need to develop a new awareness of themselves as people, in a community context, who can individually and collectively set and achieve goals. This consciousness-raising process links the personal with the political and draws heavily upon culture, spirituality and small-group support as sources of sustenance.

We learn from one another and we support one another in the learning process. Members of our community aspire to be better parents, better workers and better citizens. At Living Wages, individuals who have struggled with school in the past are able to receive a high school diploma, apply for jobs and work toward a living wage.

Living Wages is a peaceful place where together we learn, tutor and assess, celebrate, work, eat, cook, clean, pick vegetables, sit on the deck and chat, feed the cats and celebrate successes, families, and the wonders of creation. It can best be thought of as a circle of friends, with various roles and responsibilities but with genuine equality. When graduates return, as they often do, to report on their accomplishments or to ask for further educational help, I know that I am part of a strong and vibrant community of people who care about one another and who make a difference.

God has asked us “to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God” (Micah 6:8); and St. Francis prayed, “Make me an instrument of your peace.” I try to live this in prayer, in informal sharing at work, in openness to other faiths, connecting with people at the two churches where we are located, and with my “begging bowl” at home on my prayer table. I learned the concept of the begging bowl from Anne-Marie Conn, RSCJ, at a retreat years ago. The begging bowl is a bowl where I place all of the issues that are so overwhelming in our neighborhood and those who have asked for prayers for their sick children and relatives, incarcerated family members, those struggling for jobs and many more. The begging bowl is trusting in the relationship that God is with me. I put situations and people between God and me. God gives me a new light to see people and the present situation in a different way.

## Building community in the West Grove

By *Rosemary Bearss, RSCJ*

The Barnyard Community Center in West Coconut Grove, Florida, like the community it serves, has come a long way since the building was constructed in 1926. Originally built to house mules and the equipment they pulled, this “barn” is now



Betsy Hartson, RSCJ, with her administrator's hat on at Living Wages in Washington, DC, where she also tutors, gardens and counsels.

**These 400 graduates and their families are the building blocks of our community. We are on a journey together.**

Rosemary Bearss, RSCJ, with two of the neighborhood children who come to the Barnyard for after school enrichment.



Maureen Chicoine, RSCJ, has served as parish administrator in several churches in the San Bernardino Diocese.

home to after-school and summer programs for the young people of this traditionally black and low-income neighborhood. If this building could talk, it would tell you the path has not always been easy. It has not always been fair. But this is a building of and for its community, and that's what makes it work.

To understand the Barnyard, you have to know about Elizabeth Virrick. Back in 1948, Mrs. Virrick attended a gathering to learn about the black community in the West Grove. She was horrified by what she learned: these families – most of whom were immigrants brought to Miami as maids and laborers – were living in tiny rundown shacks without indoor plumbing, on unpaved streets. Elizabeth made their living conditions her crusade. She engaged her friends to go to the Farmers Market and begin a food co-op for the neighborhood. She worked with residents to learn how to abide by laws they found difficult to understand. She established Coconut Groves Cares, Inc. She began building community in the West Grove.

The community life that began in 1948 has continued for six decades, and each generation of families has held the memories of those early days. New people arrived, and some had to leave because of gentrification, but those families who held the stories in their hearts continued to tell them, reinforcing the sense of community.

We moved into this building in 1982, when the children of the community made it clear they wanted – needed – a safe place to be after school. We have 122 children in our after school program and about 150 in our summer camp. Their families are struggling to pay for food and health insurance, but thanks to our community, the children can come here to learn to play the violin or cello, all kinds of arts, like drama or fabric design and so many other activities. Now, as before, the people of West Grove come to us when they need help to understand the law, but they also come to us to help them understand their children. And they know that we will help them.

We are always stretched for funds, but we get by with the help of our community. Agencies provide materials and personnel. The funding for our computer lab came from the local grocery store. Donors and friends are another kind of community of people who really want to help. They want our insights and they turn to us to help them figure out how they can help. Together we are creating the solutions to the challenges facing low income families in the West Grove.

## Building community in a parish

*By Maureen Chicoine, RSCJ*

After years as a parish leader entrusted with the care of a parish by a local diocesan bishop, I have often reflected on “community.” A parish most often experiences community (or not) within the weekly Eucharist. That requires the best liturgy for which the parish has resources. It also requires a strong sense of hospitality and welcoming the stranger. To do this, parishes need subgroups of committed members: a liturgy committee, greeters, musicians and choirs, liturgical ministers and skilled presiders. Supporting the living out of the Eucharist also requires people to promote catechesis and initiation, ongoing formation and social action ministries for justice. Depending on parish composition, ministries to ethnic groups or groups dealing with issues such as bereavement, youth/young adults, divorced, and others could also be needed.

The biggest challenge for me as a parish administrator was to help these groups not only perform their tasks but to deal with community building and relationships among the ministers themselves. Discord and dissent within these subgroups damage and can destroy the effect of their ministries to the larger parish. Personality conflicts, unhealthy group dynamics and rivalries diminish the effectiveness of the most well-intentioned service.

I often turned to the letters of Paul, especially Galatians, Philippians and 1 and 2 Corinthians. It was somewhat consoling to realize that the conflict of theologies and ecclesiology, the clash of personalities and possessiveness are as old as the Christian community. I would wonder if Paul ever got the two rival women leaders in Philippi to settle their differences. Did the controversy over meat sacrificed to idols continue after his letter was read? We know from later writing that the ethnic and religious conflict between Christians of Jewish origin and those of Gentile origin was resolved eventually but only long after Paul's death.

As an RSCJ, I looked at this building up of community within the larger parish community as an extension of our charism to be women who create communion (*Constitutions* §6) while recognizing that it would be a constant source of asceticism for me, a Paschal opportunity to grow in that union with the Heart of Christ.

### **Thensted Center, a vital part of the Grand Coteau community**

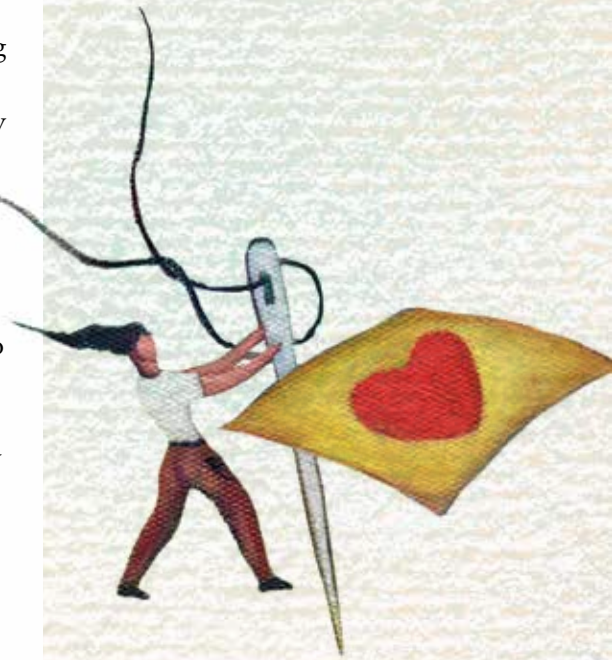
*By Elizabeth Renard, RSCJ*

Since its founding in 1982 by Margaret Hoffman, RSCJ, the Thensted Center in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, has always had a least one Religious of the Sacred Heart on staff. Today, that commitment falls to me.

There is a high level of unemployment in the Grand Coteau area, due in part to our relative isolation. Low incomes are exacerbated by a lack of public transportation and high rates of high school drop-out, teen pregnancy and single parent households. Our mission at Thensted Center is to educate people of all ages, races and religions to help them attain a more independent and stable standard of living. The Center offers an emergency food pantry and thrift store, as well as tutoring, summer enrichment, counseling and job skills training.

I work primarily with elderly residents of Grand Coteau and the neighboring town of Sunset. A group of thirty-five to forty senior citizens gathers twice a month at Thensted for education, socialization and a hot meal. Since there is no other program for older folks in the area, this activity is well attended. I also make home visits to many seniors who are house-bound and/or bed-ridden and bring the Eucharist as requested. The Thensted Center is operated by our parish church, St. Charles Borromeo, a place of welcome and community. Sundays become an opportunity to respond to both happy and sad news with our friends and parish family.

The challenge for me is to be open to a different culture, to listen and to keep hoping even when change is slow or seems seldom to happen. Often I am put to shame when I see the simple, unshakable faith of these folks. Many of them may not know much about Jesus, but they know Jesus. To be the Heart of Christ for others and to show forth the love of God through education is what this ministry is all about. ❖



Betty Renard, RSCJ, (left) with Julia Richard, director of Thensted Center, which serves the poor in Grand Coteau.

## Before you go...



**J**an Dunn, RSCJ, has recently written *Faithful Friend: Ursula McAghon, RSCJ*, about her friend and former director of probation.

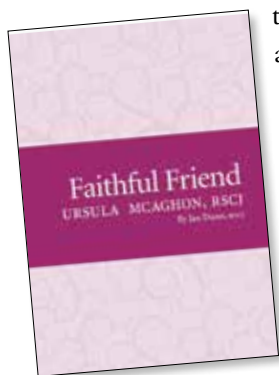
Ursula McAghon, RSCJ, (1916-2000) served for many years as director of “probation,” the period of preparation for final vows in the international Society of the Sacred Heart. She held this office during a time of turmoil and change in the Church and in the Society (1975-82).

She also served as a superior and spiritual director and helped many people to a deeper love of God. “She made many contributions to the Society, and her life needed to be written!” Sister Dunn said.

Sister Dunn did extensive research with family and the many religious that Sister McAghon

guided and influenced, and the book conveys an accurate picture of this much-loved religious.

Copies may be ordered for \$20 from the provincial office by contacting Dot Schmerbauch (dschmerbauch@rscj.org or 314-652-1500).



### *Cor Unum 2*

From the water rises,  
spiraling, pierced,  
a humble bold calling  
that is now time real.

Real like listening is real;  
real as sisters are real  
who teach me by their lived truth  
and allow me the privilege  
of sharing truth with them as well.

Real like the heart is real—  
is real and sacred like the Heart  
where gloriously divine  
and completely human meet.

And the call is this:

Do not be afraid.

Ever deeper,  
ever onward,  
not alone.

—Kimberly M. King, RSCJ

# Prayer, community, ministry, internationality

The Society of the Sacred Heart is an international community of women living a life that is wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic. Through prayer and ministry we discover and reveal the love of the Heart of Jesus in our world.

▶ **Become an RSCJ**

CONTACT: Mary Pat White, RSCJ, [vocation@rscj.org](mailto:vocation@rscj.org)

▶ **Become an Associate**

CONTACT: Sheila Hammond, RSCJ, [shammond@rscj.org](mailto:shammond@rscj.org)

▶ **Support our mission financially**

CONTACT: Shirley Miller, RSCJ, [smiller@rscj.org](mailto:smiller@rscj.org) or visit [www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org)



**Society of the Sacred Heart**  
United States – Canada

[www.rscj.org](http://www.rscj.org)

[www.facebook.com/SocietyoftheSacredHeart](https://www.facebook.com/SocietyoftheSacredHeart)

