



Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill  
Volume 31, Number 1

# Celebration



Be prepared to meet  
your grace in every  
circumstance  
of life.

*Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton*

Jane Strittmatter, *Editor*  
Sister Mary Kay Neff, *Graphic Designer*

**Contributors:**

Casey Bowser  
Julia Cuccaro  
Sister Barbara Einloth  
Sister Annette Frey  
Sister Catherine Meinert

**Special thanks to Giant Eagle and Elizabeth Seton Center for sharing photos for this issue.**

Paper used for the production of this magazine is rated Forest Stewardship Council Certified (FSC Certified), containing 30% recycled material. The FSC is an international non-profit organization that provides information about forest products (paper and wood). It confirms sources that are environmentally-friendly, socially responsible, and economically viable. FSC certified paper comes from wood suppliers that work to protect habitat, prevent pollution, plant more trees than are harvested, and avoid displacing native peoples and harming wildlife. FSC forest management certification confirms that the forest is being managed in a way that preserves biological diversity and benefits the lives of local people and workers, while ensuring it sustains economic viability.

## Newly Elected Korean Provincial Leadership Team



Front row: Sister Sun He Kang,  
Sister Son He Lee (Provincial Superior)  
Back row: Sister Kyoung Sun Seo,  
Sister Sun He Kim, Sister In Ock Kim

May the Lord bless these sisters with much grace and many blessings for their response to the call to leadership. Please remember all of these sisters in your prayers. May the Lord continue to guide them and give them many blessings, especially in the days ahead.

April, 2021



Dear Friends,

One of my favorite songs is “Sunrise, Sunset” from the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*. It always reminds me that life goes so quickly into eternity, that whatever we engage in—whether it is a ministry, raising a family, developing a career—is a time-limited endeavor. Time passes and the children are raised. The ministry or career is developed and it is time to move on to our next adventure.

That time has come for me as the President/Provincial Superior of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. I have been privileged and honored to serve in this ministry for the last nine years. Due to your partnership and generosity, we have been able to accomplish important undertakings. Our charism and mission of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill has always been to provide for the vulnerable among us. This was always Mother Seton’s vision.

We have had the opportunity to begin two new ministries during the past 5-6 years. We are proud of the Elizabeth Seton Memory Care Center at Caritas Christi and Mary House in Uniontown. The Memory Care Center provides compassionate care to cognitively vulnerable women. Mary House serves women in need of transitional housing. Two Sisters of Charity share community life with the residents and offer programs to encourage personal, social, economic, and spiritual growth.

We continue our ministry at Elizabeth Seton Center, where the very young to the frail elderly come together in a welcoming, supportive atmosphere for intergenerational lifelong learning through childcare and senior services. Our sisters continue to live at and minister to St. Joseph House of Hospitality, which provides private, furnished rooms to men with limited income who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. We partner with other Sister Communities through Sisters Place to provide housing and social services to assist women and children to overcome poverty and homelessness.

These ministries would not be possible without your partnership and belief in our mission. I, personally, cannot thank you enough for journeying with us as we continue to be present to our “wounded world.”

The Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill will announce a new leadership team in April. I know you will be as supportive of these Sisters as you have been to the present administration.

May God bless you always,

*S. Catherine Meinert, S.C.*

Sister Catherine Meinert, SC  
Provincial Superior  
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill



# Sisters of Charity and Giant Eagle

## —Partners in the Prevention of Coronavirus

by Sister Barbara Einloth



GIANT EAGLE PHOTO



The clinical staff from Giant Eagle Pharmacy

GIANT EAGLE PHOTO

along the serious virus was welcome! And it was partnerships that made it possible.

Giant Eagle Pharmacy was ready to stage its first COVID-19 vaccine clinic among elders in long-term care residences in Southwest Pennsylvania. The Sisters of Charity were ready to begin the two-month process of gaining protection from COVID for the sisters and the staff. It was an ideal partnership and a win-win situation.

When vaccination possibilities were initially mentioned to Giant Eagle pharmacist Brenda Rohosky, she signaled to Director of Healthcare Services Kathy Carulli that she had Caritas Christi in mind. Brenda is familiar with the residents of Caritas Christi, since Giant Eagle is the pharmacy of record for the elderly and infirm sisters who live there. The partnership has a 20-year history. When Moderna vaccine became available, Brenda and others at Giant Eagle moved into action, collected the necessary

information, outlined schedule and procedure, and set the date. Brenda and Kathy used their partnership for mutual benefit of Giant Eagle and the Sisters of Charity.

Meanwhile, at the first mention of a date when the vaccine would arrive and the clinic could be scheduled, Public Relations Director Jane Strittmatter connected with the Giant Eagle public relations staff. They partnered for two weeks to assure that this first clinic would succeed in achieving the goals of both organizations. Protection of sisters and staff was one goal. Promotion of vaccination as a key way to protect from and interrupt the spread of the virus was a second. Demonstration of Giant Eagle's commitment and ability to "hit the road running" once vaccine arrived in Greensburg was a third goal.

Television stations and newspapers were alerted and invited by Giant Eagle, and Jane made arrangements to accommodate reporters' preferences for outdoor interviews or socially distanced interviews in the first-floor atrium of Caritas Christi. Pittsburgh's WTAE and WPXI sent videographers and reporters who captured visuals and stories as the day unfolded. Sisters Mary Michael Burns, Mary Agnes Kirsch, Gemma Del Duca and Donna Marie Leiden as well as Kathy Carulli agreed to be videoed and/or interviewed as they received their injection, putting faces and personal stories on the event. The evening and night newscasts of the two television stations shared the event with the broader community. Snippets of interviews with various sisters gave it a personal touch.



Giant Eagle Clinical Coordinator Kelly Chappell administers vaccine to Sister Marie Margaret Wolf. Kathy Carulli, Director of Healthcare Services for the Sisters of Charity provides moral support.



Giant Eagle pharmacist Brenda Rohosky

GIANT EAGLE PHOTO





Renatta Signorini, reporter for the *Tribune Review*, was also welcomed to the motherhouse that morning. She gathered information for an article about the vaccine clinic from public relations professionals, the sisters, and Vic Vercammen, Giant Eagle's Chief Pandemic Officer. Mr. Vercammen explained to her that Giant Eagle was interested in helping to prevent the spread of coronavirus in long-term care centers and other facilities that do not have an association with a hospital. "We're certainly excited to be part of this critical early phase of vaccination efforts," he said.

The house was abuzz with anticipation and gratitude that day. Sisters and staff, masked and socially distanced, arrived in waves at the second-floor atrium or at the McCullough Room according to a set schedule. The Giant Eagle pharmaceutical staff traveled room to room to give injections to non-ambulatory sisters on the nursing floor. Smiles and high spirits filled the atmosphere. It was a day of hope for which the sisters had prayed.

All of the sisters living in both the nursing and assisted living areas of Caritas Christi had been sequestered in their bedrooms since December 11, when the virus made the first sister ill. The tireless effort and meticulous care of the staff had kept the virus at bay from March 2020 until December, but when it made its way into the house, separation was necessary to slow the spread. On January 13, the influx of gowned and masked inoculators generated the promise of opportunities to again mingle safely in the future.

Sisters Mary Michael Burns and Mary Agnes Kirsch were among the sisters who had weathered the infection. Both were happy to appear on camera to stress the necessity of receiving the vaccine. Sister Mary Agnes said, "I was happy that we are getting it. What I went through, I wouldn't want anybody else to endure."

Although none of the 11 sisters and 7 staff who tested positive for the virus required hospitalization, the ramifications of

the illness hit hard nonetheless. Symptoms and struggles of those infected, some lasting many weeks beyond recovery. Isolation for everyone. New and more time-consuming ways for dietary staff to prepare and deliver three meals a day to 69 residents. Additional precautions by nursing staff. Disinfection efforts by housekeeping and laundry staff. Conversion of two rooms to negative pressure isolation rooms by maintenance staff. And, for Administrator Sister Donna Marie Leiden, being the solitary mobile resident to see to issues during quarantine weeks.

Again partnerships, with each person or group doing what she/he/they could under the circumstances, made it possible to manage until vaccination day arrived. Kathy Carulli reflected on the staff's motivation. "Nobody wanted to bring the virus to the Sisters! Everyone exercised precautions very seriously, both inside Caritas Christi and among their own family members. The staff worked long and hard to keep the sisters safe."

Kathy continued, "We have a phenomenal rapport with Brenda and the Giant Eagle Pharmacy staff. We share a mutual respect and a commitment to keeping the community safe." Hence before it became time for pharmacist Kelly Chappell and five other professionals to return to give the second dose, Kathy and Brenda had a conversation. They discussed their concern about volunteers and other Sisters of Charity, age 75 and beyond, who assist the Caritas Christi community, as well as resident sisters who are part of Senior Life program who had not been included in the first round of vaccinations. Would it be possible for them to secure a first dose on February 10 when Giant Eagle administered the second round? Brenda agreed, and another 40 persons began their vaccination process that day. Kathy noted, "For us to achieve wide protection of the community, each of us has to do his or her part. Working together, Giant Eagle and the Sisters of Charity are advancing toward that goal."



Employee Susan Seman is proud to show off her vaccine documentation.



Crystal Dowson (pharmacy tech), Brenda Rohosky (Pharmacy Team Leader), Lindsey Love (Pharmacy tech), Dennis Schweinsburg (Pharmacy delivery driver).



Partnership is not a new concept—in the world or for the Sisters of Charity. Back in the late 1990's when we celebrated our 125th Anniversary as a congregation, "Partners in the Work of Charity" served as the tag line. We honored people who had been our partners through the years. We invited new people to partner with us. Now the congregation is 150 years and counting! Our planned celebrations for the sesquicentennial year have been deferred by restrictions imposed by the pandemic, but our collaboration with donors and friends continues—and it allows us to persist in making the Charity of Christ alive and evident wherever we are in the world.

Because of partnerships, our retired and infirm sisters receive loving care from our dedicated staff. Because of you who are reading this issue of *Celebration*, our Sisters can and do share the legacy of Mother Seton in parishes, senior living situations, food pantries, retreat center and other ministries. Our Sisters hold our benefactors in daily and ongoing prayer. Current and former students, co-workers, patients, friends, family members—and their extended circles of connection—appear in our daily prayer requests, and thus, in all of the Sisters' hearts and prayers.

Working together, we support and care about one another through the "dazzle times" and the challenging ones. Like the Trinity, a community of Persons in one God, we partner with one another for the common good and thus reveal the presence and love of our God.



# Life in Progress at Seton Center for Over 35 Years

by Casey Bowser, Archivist of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

Weathered hands and sparkling eyes. Wide-eyed, toothy grins and giggles. Laughter and learning. Conversation and connection. The value of wisdom and the delights of youth. Lessons and joys of life, and much more, have been on display for more than 35 years at Elizabeth Seton Center in the Brookline neighborhood of Pittsburgh. A sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, Seton Center functions as a site of "intergenerational lifelong learning." With an active childcare facility, after-school programs, and special educational offerings paired alongside adult daycare services, an active senior center, targeted senior outreach programs, and a music program, Seton Center serves as a model for community-centered enrichment and quality care. Under the tutelage of Sr. Barbara Boss, President & CEO, and her devoted staff, Seton Center and its satellites, Overbrook Senior Center (Pittsburgh), and Adult Day Services Center (Greensburg), provide essential services to the public and have thrived even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.



## HISTORY

The Seton Center property was first purchased by the Sisters of Charity in 1941. The old West Liberty Public School would become Elizabeth Seton High School, an all-girls Catholic school, which would graduate throngs of dedicated Setonians



until the institution merged with South Hills Catholic in 1979 to form Seton-LaSalle High School.

Shortly after the merger, the Sisters of Charity lent space to the Allegheny Community College to host evening courses. Sisters Edith Marie Fullen and Marie Anthony Flavin directed the site as a community resource, offering GED and summer school tutoring, craft activities, piano lessons, and rental opportunities to locals. The Sisters of Charity, in the spirit of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, sought new ways to address vulnerable populations and embrace the educational legacies of their founders with creative reuse of their former private school.

By 1985, Seton Center, as it became known, was home to Sr. Francis Assisi Gorham's Suzuki School of Music and a

new program to address "latch key kids." The program, funded by the YMCA, initially provided before and after school care for children between 6 and 12 years of age. The Children's Center was formally established in 1987 by Sister Mary

Lucilla Wertz to continue the extended care program and to develop a preschool. With an eye toward the value of intergenerational interaction, the sisters decided to expand offerings with a Senior Center and Adult Day Care.

Adult Day Care services were also offered in Greensburg at Assumption Hall under the direction of Sister Mary Janice Grindle.



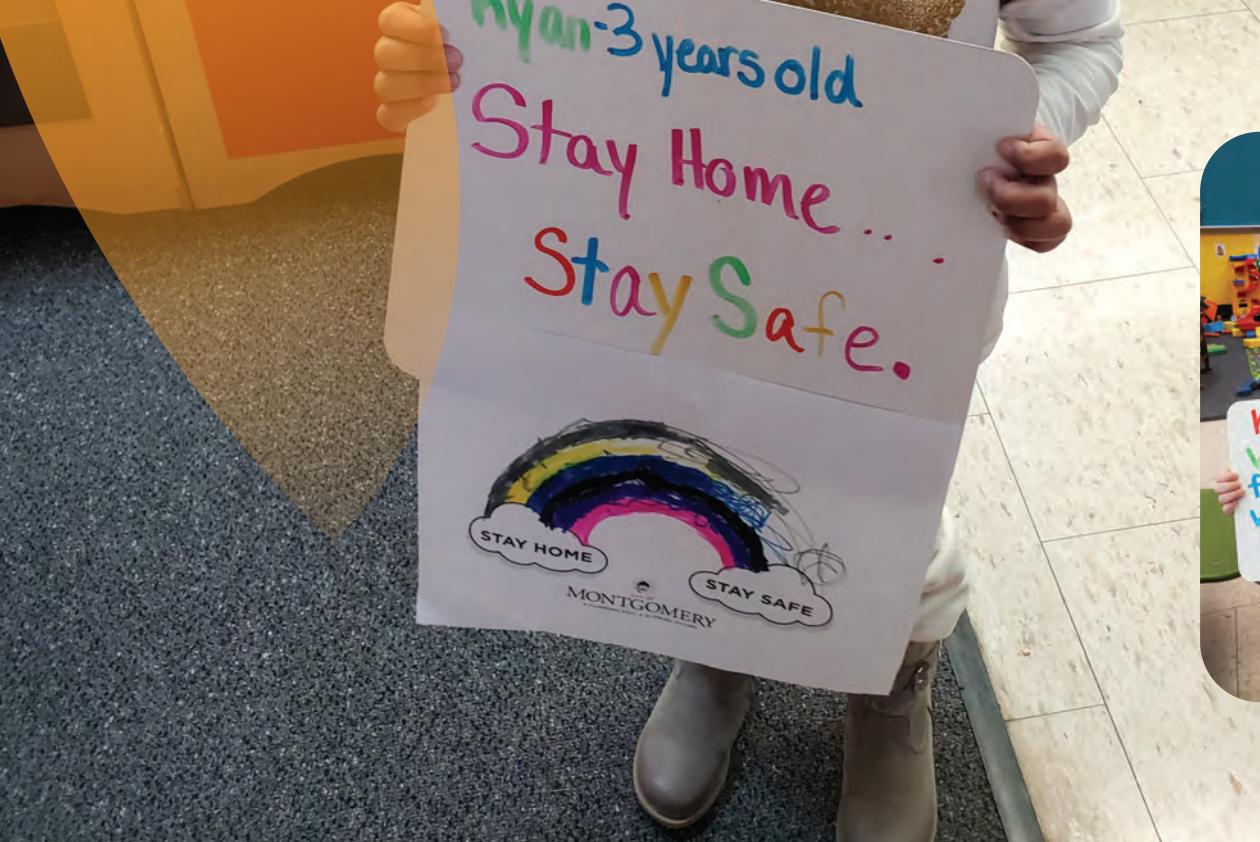
Sister Mary Lucilla Wertz



Sister Mary Janice Grindle



Sister Mary Joseph McElhinny



The visionary leadership of the late Sister Mary Joseph McElhinny at the helm of the senior citizens' programs of Elizabeth Seton Center from 1987 to 2002 led to superior, personalized services for the elderly, including daily hot meals, card games, crafts, line dancing, health screenings, songs, companionship, community service programs, and much more. The Children's Center also continued to increase services for families in need of quality care. In 1992, Sister

Kathleen McGrady founded the Infant-Toddler Care Program. With 3/4 of working-age women in the workforce, by choice or necessity, by the early 1990s, Seton Center embraced the notion that it takes a village to raise a child. Concurrently, the rising costs of long-term elder care and the needs of working families have been met with the Adult Day Care programs. Offering respite for home caregivers, the Adult Day Cares provide socialization, recreation, rehabilitation, and nutrition for the frailest individuals. As needs arose in the community, Seton Center answered the call. The Brookline building has been home to offices of the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, the Diocesan Youth Orchestra, counseling programs, and has played host to public and private events. Funding provided by the Allegheny and Westmoreland County Area Agencies on Aging, the City of Pittsburgh, the Sisters of Charity, and individual and endowment contributions have supported the mission and vision of Seton Center through these many years.

What makes Seton Center unique is the variety of our services and how we use these services to make us one. In many cases, what society has done through the years is develop programs for the senior members of society and programs for the younger generation, separating the two. A stronger foundation occurs when you bring the two together....

## SETON CENTER NOW

According to Generations United, "participation in intergenerational programs and meaningful cross-age relationships may decrease social isolation and increase older adults' sense of belonging, self-esteem, and well-being, while also improving social and emotional skills of children and youth participants." Approximately 200 individuals benefit from the services of the three locations of Seton Center on a



“

What makes Seton Center unique is the variety of our services and how we use these services to make us one. In many cases, what society has done through the years is develop programs for the senior members of society and programs for the younger generation, separating the two. A stronger foundation occurs when you bring the two together....

”

Sister Barbara Ann Boss  
Director of Childcare Services  
1988-2001  
President and CEO  
2001-present

daily basis. Building on the foundation built in the 1980s, the benefits of intergenerational interaction are even more firmly rooted in research and experience. Sister Barbara Boss, President & CEO of Seton Center, explains, "What makes Seton Center unique is the variety of our services and how we use these services to make us one. In many cases, what society has done through the years is develop programs for the senior members of society and programs for the younger generation, separating the two. A stronger foundation occurs when you bring the two together....We have found that the seniors benefit from the enthusiasm and sense of wonder the young, and younger members learn from the wisdom and experience of the seniors. This helps to build respect between the generations and tears down walls of fear and distrust."

The Child Care Center in Brookline has earned a STAR 4 rating from the Pennsylvania Keystone STARS Program of the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. Integration of the arts and STEAM-based activities have become a hallmark of the childcare programs. An engaging and enriching curriculum provided by a highly qualified and enthusiastic staff, nutritious meals, and vigorous physical activity have been key to the success of the children and the program. In addition, the Senior Center and Adult Day Care, beyond serving the critical and practical needs of the elderly, benefit from regular interaction with the children. In one instance, an intergenerational lunch became the turning point for an elderly man. Things were hectic, and the staff was hustling to adapt. In the midst of it all, one gentleman who hasn't spoken in months reached out to former Intergenerational Program Coordinator Amy Ernst. He took her arm and said, "You do good. I love these kids coming here!" And a week later during the Halloween parade, he said, "I love this." That he spoke and what he said, Amy confessed, brought tears to her eyes. "We are making a difference here," she said.

Sister Kathleen Gallagher and her team at Monahan Center experience the delights and challenges of working with individuals with Alzheimer's and dementia. "They become a second family . . . they take care of us right back," said Adult Day Care Aide Kim McKinney. The Greensburg satellite also celebrates decades of compassionate care this year.



**SETON ADULT DAY CENTER  
WILL BE CLOSED UNTIL  
FURTHER NOTICE**

*"In March on our first shut down, we had over 30 clients. We now have 13. What a drastic drop. None have died of COVID, but some of old age. Some needed to be placed in long-term facilities because of their decline when the Center was closed. We used to have up to 16 clients a day. We can only provide services for eight clients at a time because of social distancing requirements."*

*Kimberly McKinney*

## CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES DUE TO COVID

When COVID-19 disrupted our world in 2020, no organizations felt the impact more keenly than care facilities and educational organizations. Seton Center, which embraces intentional, personalized interaction with generations both young and old, needed to adjust to pandemic guidelines with social distancing and mask-wearing. Providing quality childcare and education in a safe and sanitary environment were among the Center's first priorities. According to the Census Bureau, nearly one in five working-age adults, primarily

women, in the United States were unemployed in 2020 because COVID-19 interrupted their childcare arrangements. Grateful working parents have relied on the dedicated staff at Seton Center to keep their children safe and healthy throughout the pandemic. Teachers in the School-Age Program helped facilitate online learning and the Child Care staff continued creating an engaging and fun curriculum while maintaining a place of calm and normalcy in a chaotic world. Mask-wearing, embraced by teachers and children, may now conceal smiles, but the energy and zeal of the Center's youth has not faded.

The Center's senior citizen programs faced new challenges due to the vulnerability of the elderly population during the pandemic. How did Seton Center and Monahan Center respond? With true creativity, resilience, and love, all inspired by the charism passed on by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Partnering with the Community College of Allegheny County, Senior Services Director Judy Gawlas and the Seton Center staff in Brookline have embraced new technologies for programming like Zoom, Skype, and Google Meet. Although the Pennsylvania Department for Aging forced the Seton



*Clients of the Adult Day Care Services in Greensburg are socially distanced for their noon meal.*



Senior Centers to close for several months during the pandemic, efforts in Pittsburgh have been made to “virtually” connect with seniors. Michele Werme, the Intergenerational Program Coordinator, has organized a pen pal program and delivery of handmade cards and messages from preschool children to homebound seniors. “Battling isolation,” has been the primary challenge for Seton Center in the age of COVID, according to Jamie Hudzik, Director of Development. The Center has offered nutrition for body and soul by providing daily grab-and-go meals for seniors, delivering special treats at holidays, offering craft kits to keep seniors engaged, and holding virtual bingo games and basket raffles.

In Greensburg, the Adult Day Care staff have made significant changes to policies and procedures. Space has been reoriented to accommodate for social distancing, surfaces are constantly cleaned, and popular programs like music and pet therapy are on hiatus during the pandemic. “The main [element] of our program is togetherness,” explains McKinney, “and it is very hard to explain the changes to Alzheimer’s patients.” The services of the Ombudsman Program, which has provided support and advocacy for senior citizens in more than 132 long-term care facilities in Westmoreland County since 1996, are more in-demand than ever.

## FUTURE OF SETON CENTER

“These ministries embody the charism of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill,” said Sister Catherine Meinert. “It is the mission, charism, and vision that our Community will always be ready to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable in our midst. This is the legacy of Mother Seton and all those who followed her. We have been blessed with the capable, dedicated leadership of Sister Barbara Ann Boss as Executive Director of the Center and the many sisters and lay staff who have made this ministry possible for so many years,” she continued.

As Seton Center looks forward to the future, it faces a few challenges, including long-term building maintenance and improvements. An elevator will be added in the Brookline Child Care Center as part of a long-term capital improvements project. A new roof was also recently installed. Hudzik explained that the elevator “will enable us to bring less-mobile seniors into the classrooms to join in activities and special celebrations with the children.” Additionally, there are concerns about funding and monetary support to continue vital programming. “We want to keep our services reasonable in price while having the ability to pay our staff a just wage,” said Hudzik. Staff at the Pittsburgh and Greensburg locations anticipate their services will be cherished even more in a post-COVID world and rightly so. The Adult Day Care in Greensburg has a waiting list, according to Sister Kathleen, but they cannot accommodate

everyone due to limited space, even beyond that required by social distancing. Intergenerational bonding strengthens emotional intelligence and wellbeing, provides a sense of purpose for the elderly, and encourages communication and positivity. Social distancing, though, won't break these bonds at Seton Center. Over more than 35 years, The Centers have matched adversity with the strength of compassion and the power of love to best serve the needs of our world's most precious assets, the young and the old.

Sisters, former and present staff, "graduates" of the children's programs, community members, stakeholders, and current friends of Seton Center will have an opportunity to recognize the many outstanding accomplishments of this "home away from home." On April 25, 2021, Seton Center will celebrate its 35th anniversary with a virtual program and a published commemorative booklet. Registration is free online at <http://setoncenter.eventbrite.com> or contact Jamie Hudzik at [jamie@setoncenter.com](mailto:jamie@setoncenter.com) or 412-561-8400 x242 for more information.



Sister Rosemary Donley



ELIZABETH SETON

## MEMORY CARE CENTER

*a place of Amazing Grace*

by Jane Strittmatter, Director of Public Relations for the  
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill



Joan Dysert and her daughter  
Debbie Dysert Ficco

"Our mother was a beautiful lady inside and out. She was selfless to a fault, and had a kind and caring heart. She was a simple lady who led a simple life. She was soft spoken and humble—a lady of faith, adored by her four children and two grandchildren. Dementia slowly took away the mother that we knew, and the mother who knew us. She looked like our mother, sounded like our mother, but she was now a mother with whom we had to reacquaint ourselves," recalled Debbie Dysert Ficco. As Joan Dysert's dementia progressed, her family wanted to provide her with the best of care in a safe and loving place—one where they could spend as much time with their beloved mother and grandmother as they possibly could in her remaining days. "I truly believe it was divine intervention that led us to Elizabeth Seton Memory Care Center. When our family toured the facility, we knew without a doubt that this was where our beloved mother Joan was meant to be." Joan moved into the ESMCC on December 20, 2017. Her days in her new home were grace-filled with the daily visits of her devoted family members and the love and kindness of her attentive caregivers and the Sisters of Charity.

This scenario is exactly what the Sisters of Charity had envisioned in 2015, when Elizabeth Seton Memory Care Center (ESMCC), a licensed professional care facility specializing in memory care for women, was opened in a first-floor wing of the sisters' motherhouse, Caritas Christi. Sister of Charity Rosemary Donley, a member of the Board of Directors of ESMCC and a renowned nursing professional and instructor, explained how this remarkable facility came to be.



Sharon Dysert with  
Mother Joan



Residents and their families enjoy the home-like setting at ESMCC.



Sister Janet Neider, a resident of ESMCC, enjoys the homey environment of the Center and the friendly company of staff member Ann Stinebiser.



ESMCC Administrator Vicky Ahrens makes resident Shirley Prosperi smile as she dances to a Frank Sinatra tune.

care was a new outreach. The sisters recognized that as our loved ones age, they are at increased risk of dementia or Alzheimer's disease, the fifth leading cause of death in America. We also knew that while there are many nursing homes and rehabilitative centers, there are fewer memory care centers. Understanding that placing a loved family member in a long-term care setting is very difficult, the Sisters wanted to share their beautiful, safe home and provide special care in a professionally staffed unit that was family friendly. Residents can attend daily Mass and prayers with the sisters, participate in exercise programs, enjoy "sing-alongs," play cards and games, read, watch TV, walk or sit in an enclosed garden, and talk with their families, the sisters, the staff or other residents. Residents celebrate holidays and often help decorate their private rooms and doors. They enjoy home cooked meals together, sometimes joined by their families."

Under the direction of Administrator Vicky Ahrens, the staff at ESMCC helps

"When the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill broke ground for our motherhouse, Caritas Christi, in 1999, we included a memory care unit in their building plan. Although its first residents were Sisters of Charity, ESMCC later welcomed lay women who would benefit from holistic, family centered care. Although the Sisters of Charity had operated McGuire Memorial, a nursing home in Beaver County, Assumption Hall and, currently, adult care centers in Pittsburgh and Greensburg, memory

care was a new outreach. The sisters recognized that as our loved ones age, they are at increased risk of dementia or Alzheimer's disease, the fifth leading cause of death in America. We also knew that while there are many nursing homes and rehabilitative centers, there are fewer memory care centers. Understanding that placing a loved family member in a long-term care setting is very difficult, the Sisters wanted to share their beautiful, safe home and provide special care in a professionally staffed unit that was family friendly. Residents can attend daily Mass and prayers with the sisters, participate in exercise programs, enjoy "sing-alongs," play cards and games, read, watch TV, walk or sit in an enclosed garden, and talk with their families, the sisters, the staff or other residents. Residents celebrate holidays and often help decorate their private rooms and doors. They enjoy home cooked meals together, sometimes joined by their families."

Some of the sisters who frequently pop into the Center for visits also gave Bob comfort during this difficult chapter in his life. "It was a blessing. The Memory Care Center was just like home to me. I don't know how I got so lucky." Bob went on to explain, "The reason I didn't go there first was because I am not Catholic. But that didn't matter to the sisters. They



Bob and Eileen Kronen

accepted me 100 per cent!" The sisters often stopped him in the hallway to see how he and Eileen were doing. They occasionally invited him for lunch, and consoled him at Eileen's bedside.

After Eileen Kroner died on September 2, 2019, her husband Bob continued to visit and volunteer at ESMCC. He took residents for walks or played games with them. The sisters, the staff, the residents and their families have all become family to him.

"Elizabeth Seton Memory Care became extended family to me," said Mimi Wilson. Her mother, Pat Boyle Smith came from Morgantown, West Virginia, to live at ESMCC on February 1, 2017. Pat had not done well in assisted living situations, and her family felt that she deserved to live with more dignity than what they had seen at other homes. Sister of Charity Rachel Blais, who ministers in Morgantown, knew of the family's needs for Pat. She suggested that they consider ESMCC as Pat's new home. Pat loved to go to Mass, had attended Seton Hill for one year, and had two relatives who were Sisters of Charity (Sisters Electa Boyle and Sara Fidelis Boyle). Mimi took her mother for a visit and it was decided that Pat could be happy living at the beautiful complex of the Sisters of Charity.

Mimi traveled from her Pittsburgh home for regular visits with her mother. Pat's son, Steve, traveled from Morgantown every weekend to visit his mom. Daughter Sally Henderson and son Patrick Smith both resided in Florida but visited their mother in Greensburg as often as they could. Mimi explained, "We all were so impressed with the dedication the staff demonstrated to our mother. The women who worked there talked with love about her. When people have dementia, they become a different person than the one you knew. But I could tell that they loved my mother for who she was." Mimi recalled, "In the early days after she moved in, she decided she wanted to get out and leave, but the staff knew how to redirect her attention." When Mimi would take "wheelchair walks" through the motherhouse



Mimi Wilson takes her mother for a stroll during a visit to ESMCC.



Steve Smith gives his mother a birthday kiss.



Luretta Volk's family members visit through the glass.



Covid visits through the windows were both heartwarming and heart-wrenching.



with her mother, Pat felt she was in her own home. During a visit to the library on the first floor Pat made Mimi laugh as she exclaimed, "I just love what I did with these curtains!"

Although his job required him to travel throughout the week, Steve made the effort to drive from Morgantown to Greenburg for a visit with his mother every weekend. He loved to see that Pat enjoyed praying the rosary with the staff members and going to Mass in the chapel with the sisters. Steve observed, "When I was there visiting, I expected that the caregivers would be attentive to my mother, but what really impressed me was how attentive they were to the other residents who didn't have anyone there to visit them." Steve described the caregivers as "being driven more by mission than duty. We were at peace because we knew we could not provide that kind of care."

During the worst days of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became necessary to restrict family visits to ESMCC. "We did not worry for a minute!" offered Mimi Wilson. "There is no better place in the world for someone you love. Vicky's heart is always in the right place and she chooses workers who treat the residents like family." With the heart of a mother, Vicky works hard to make a happy home for the residents. "It's easy for the ladies and their families to feel at home here because the staff feels at home here too!" said Vicky with pride.

As death became close for Pat Smith, family members were able to be with their mother. Steve requested that his mother be given the Sacrament of the Sick, and Sister Mary Edmund Speer called Monsignor Rathgeb, the chaplain at Caritas Christi. Steve and Mimi were able to be with their mother for the sacrament. "She received tender loving care until the day she died," said Mimi. Her brother Steve couldn't agree more. "Grateful is not a big enough word for the Sisters of Charity and the caregivers at ESMCC."

Debbie Dysert Ficco spoke for her family but she eloquently described the anguish that afflicts every family struggling with dementia.

*"This disease may have taken away her memories, but ours are clear. Regardless of which mother stood before us, she was still our mother, and we loved her unconditionally. We are extremely grateful for the mother God gave us. This is not an easy journey for a family to travel. Dementia and Alzheimer's are cruel diseases. You watch your once vibrant, productive, independent, intelligent loved one revert to total care and dependence for their every need. Even though our mother is here physically, it is beyond her control that*

*she is not here for us emotionally. My sister battled cancer, I had a milestone birthday, and my daughter graduated college. None of which our mother understood or participated in. Our focus is just to be present for our mom/grandma, and to spend as much time with her as we possibly can."*

The restrictions imposed by the pandemic stung the families with loved ones living at ESMCC with even more pain and anguish. Debbie laments, "When COVID hit and we were no longer permitted to visit our mom, it was heartbreaking. These were days we would never get back with her." In addition to the sorrow of losing precious time with a loved one, the pandemic deprived the ESMCC families of the precious support system they found in each other. Debbie describes it this way:

*"Since ESMCC has only 12 residents, it's relatively easy to get to know all these beautiful ladies and their families. We have traveled this unique road together and have bonded because of it. We are each other's support system. We laughed together, cried together, and stood in the gap for each other when we were needed. We had this unspoken pact that we would look out for each other's moms. The families became a family.' The Sisters of Charity also became like family. They frequented the Center to visit and spend time with the residents. Our family is grateful to the sisters for welcoming our mom and us in with open arms. They are so gracious and dear."*

Pat Smith died on November 19, 2020 and Joan

Dysert died on January 7, 2021, both of natural causes. No resident of the Memory Care Center died without an immediate family member present during the days of the pandemic. Yet for those who lost their mother during the time visiting restrictions were in effect, the grief was intensified. Those persons were deprived of the comfort of their "ESMCC family."



Families of the residents develop strong bonds.

These were the persons who knew best how to bolster spirits and soothe sorrows as loved ones lost precious memories day by day, year after year. These were the ones who through their shared suffering, found the grace to help one another bear the heartache. Dementia robbed these families once and the restrictions imposed by a pandemic robbed them again.

Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton said, "My own troubles will teach me, I hope, how to comfort others."

The precious families of the ESMCC residents have embraced the legacy of charity of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton in a very special way by comforting others in the midst of their own troubles. The Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill and the staff of the Elizabeth Ann Seton Memory Care Center extend their thanks to the ESMCC families for sharing their journey with us. You have been an amazing source of love and grace for the loved one you entrusted to us, for each other, and for us. Know that we are blessed and honored to accompany you on your journey. Know that we will always be family!



# Everyday Heroes

at Caritas Christi of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, U.S. Province



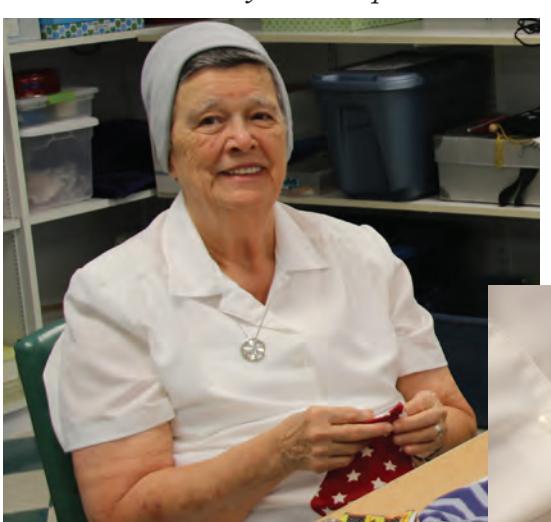
**R**esponsive to the needs of a changing world." These words from their mission statement aptly describe the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill. Whenever and wherever there is a need, there is a Sister of Charity willing and ready to step forward to address the concern. Think of the Sisters you know who have touched your lives. It matters not how great or small the issue, nor what it takes to solve the problem. Nothing fills the heart of a Sister of Charity with joy more than meeting the needs of others. "It's in our Charity DNA!"

When the COVID-19 pandemic rocked our world with "sheltering in place" and "social distancing" restrictions, retired sisters at Caritas Christi wanted to help others adapt to the changes that accompanied the "new normal" imposed by the Coronavirus. When one sister received a request to help slow the spread of the virus, the result was the emergence of a troupe of Everyday Heroes at Caritas Christi ready to help.



Sister Beatrice Parenti tells how this group of Everyday Heroes came to be.

*The stay-at-home alarm had just gone out from Governor Wolf in March, and he was asking everyone to wear masks and social distance for their protection. Where could we get masks? Everywhere our nurses and employees searched, they could not find masks! Sister Donna Marie Leiden, Administrator of Caritas Christi, approached me and asked if I could make masks for the nurses, employees and sisters, stressing the need in that order. It was imperative that our nurses and employees obtain masks immediately. Without hesitation, I said yes. I consulted with our Director of Healthcare Services, Kathleen Carulli, who explained what was needed. I then viewed a YouTube presentation of patterns and instructions for making the masks. Sisters generously responded with donations of material, but we also needed sisters to trace the pattern, cut the material and sew. When we were ready to start, sisters immediately volunteered to try their hand at what they thought they could do. At the beginning of this undertaking, I would just sit down to sew, and a voice of one of the sisters would call for assistance. 'I need help with my bobbin' or 'My machine jammed,' or 'I need help with this thread.' Then it happened—everyone was doing the job assigned. We became an assembly line and produced*



*1,000 masks! We made masks each day until we had to stop in December after eleven sisters became infected with the Coronavirus and we were quarantined."*

The sister-volunteers included Sisters Ann Patrick Adams, Marian Joseph Adams, Cory Canon, Rosemary Donley, Pauline Grentz, Geri Marr, Anne Toomey, and Sister Beatrice Ann Parenti.

The "Sewing Sisters" looked forward to working each weekday in the activity room. The time was filled with laughter and love. They enjoyed readings from spiritual books and mystery novels voiced by Sister Mary Victor, who read as they sewed. They shared their sewing triumphs as they established a smooth division of labor and assembly process. And they marveled over the sweet little masks that would be sent to Sister Barbara Ann Boss for day-care children, age two and older, at the Seton Center in Brookline. They laughed at their mistakes, like the time Sister Ann Patrick accidentally cut through the measuring tape along with the strip of elastic she was sizing. The sisters used the time to share joys of family births and new jobs, and they prayed about trials, sorrows, and illnesses of family and friends and benefactors. It was a hardship for the sisters to give up this collective effort when they were quarantined to their rooms for two months when COVID entered the motherhouse in December.

During the months of January and February, vaccines were provided to sisters and staff at the motherhouse to protect them from Coronavirus. The "Sewing Sisters," with appropriate precautions, can now look forward to returning to their mask-making ministry through which they will continue to meet a new need in our changing world. Their time together will again prove to be much more than crafting. It will remain an opportunity to lift in prayer the joys and needs of family friends, benefactors, the congregation, and of the world. Every motion expended, and every stitch applied by these

everyday heroes has been "rooted in faith, animated by prayer, supported by the common life, and performed in humility, simplicity and charity." May we all learn from them to be compelled by the love of Christ to joyfully serve one another in thought, word, and deed.

# Q&A

12.21.2020

## INTERVIEW WITH Jeremiah Shepard

by Julia Trimarchi Cuccaro, Esq., Director of Development for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

The Q&A Interview for this issue of *Celebration* with Mr. Jeremiah Shepard traces his family's tradition of military service to the nation, particularly that of his uncle, George Clifton Slike. Mr. Slike passed away in 2014, and under his Last Will and Testament, he bequeathed a gift to the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in honor of Sister Helen Hart. He was born in 1951 at the Roselia Foundling and Maternity Asylum, located in Pittsburgh's "Hill District." Sister Helen was the administrator of Roselia when Mr. Slike was born. The two remained friends for the rest of her life. His nephew, Jeremiah Shepard, the Executor of the Slike Estate, told me during the course of estate administration, how young George was adopted as a toddler by Leonard and Ruth Slike, and raised on the family farm in Sigel, Pennsylvania. At his retirement, he earned the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, having served the Army Reserves, Military Police Corps, and the U.S. Department of State, Diplomatic Service, as a Special Agent. He was an expert in dignitary protection, surveillance detection, and counter surveillance operations. He served as Agent in Charge of protective details for U.S. Ambassadors in several Central American countries and in the Middle East. Additionally, he served on the protective details for two U.S. Secretaries of State.

Q: Evidently your Uncle George Slike's career in the military is a family tradition?

A: My grandfather Leonard Slike served in World War II in an armored unit with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard. His tour of duty took him through France and into Germany in the Hurtgen Forest. After the war, he came back home to Sigel, Pennsylvania, where he worked on the family farm and in the gas line construction. My grandmother Ruth was from Clarion, Pennsylvania, and she was a school educator. She taught all grades. They were unable to have children, so they adopted Uncle George and, a few years later, my mother Theresa, both from Roselia Foundling. I believe she knew of Roselia and the Sisters of Charity through a family member, Agnes Songer. They were a very close family.

Q: I know a family farm creates strong bonds. Tell me more about your Uncle George.

A: My uncle was a great man. I'd say he was a really diplomatic person, an ambitious, aware man, and always took care of things. Due to his work, he could be tough when need be, but deep down, he was really kind hearted. As a boy he learned discipline and responsibility because he had to work so hard on the farm. He loved animals. He left a gift to the Humane Society in Florida when he died. I remember when he served in Turkey, he found two cats by the road and brought them home with him.

Q: Oh my, that surely could not have been easy to get them home on a plane!

A: No it sure wasn't. He attended Catholic grade school and Brookville High school before he went on to Indiana University of Pennsylvania and studied criminology and law enforcement.

Q: Indiana, PA, my home town!

A: He was in the ROTC program and was commissioned at IUP as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army as a military police investigator. From there he went onto the Officer Branch Academy at Fort McClellan, Alabama for the basic officer course. He received a full commission with the Army Reserves. After returning home, he was hired in Maryland as a police officer. In 1980, he was recruited by the U.S. State Department Diplomatic Security Service and became a Special Agent. He served 28 years with the Department of State. At one point, he had been part of Henry Kissinger's detail.

Q: No kidding! A huge name in our history. How did he land such a responsible job?

A: Actually, he was noticed because he had apprehended a serious criminal while he was out on police patrol in Maryland. At the State Department he provided security to the embassies and was part of the ambassadors' security detail. He was in Beirut during the 1983 bombing. I will never forget it. I was 6 years old and was watching ABC News, with Peter Jennings, with my grandfather when news of the bombing came on. I spotted Uncle George carrying a stretcher. I yelled out, "There's Uncle George!" My grandmother was in the kitchen and broke a dish and began crying. We had no idea where he actually was. We only ever knew he was "abroad."

Q: That was a real tragedy that day. You obviously have a great deal of respect and admiration for him.

A: He was my godfather and he looked out for me and made sure I had what I needed. I could always talk freely with him. He was a straight shooter. His career took him all over the world, so he didn't get home much, but he'd come when he could and help out. He'd send great gifts. He always stayed in touch with Sister Helen Hart. He would visit her over the years and was always very grateful for what the Sisters of Charity did for him. He wanted to give back as much as he could.

Q: Please tell me about your career in the military.

A: After I graduated from Brookville High School in 1994, I joined the U.S. Army and did my basic training at Fort Benning, Georgia as an infantry soldier. I received an Infantry Airborne Ranger contract and eventually joined the 75th Ranger Regiment that engages in special assignments and operations. Interestingly, I went to Fort Drum in New York to work as an Infantry Drill Sergeant. My grandfather had been at Fort Drum too. You know, I really believe that faith brings us around in circles. The highlight of my career was receiving the highest leadership award at Ranger School, where we had to spend 68 days in dangerous and harsh environments in Georgia and Florida. Eventually I did tours in Kosovo, in South Korea, and two tours in Afghanistan.

Q: The Sisters of Charity have a Korean Province!

A: I was in the joint security area. It was more like the USA, but had better technology than we had at that time. Afghanistan was worlds apart. I was stationed in northeastern Afghanistan, close to the high mountains. The scenery is surreal, especially K2. I'm particularly proud of a project I worked on, to help build a hydroelectric plant in the Waygal Valley in eastern Afghanistan to provide electricity and then security for a children's school.

Q: What amazing experiences you've had. Thank you very much for your time today and your service to the country. I wish you the very best, particularly with your current efforts to help veterans transition their military training to gainful employment through the Business Technology Association and Veterans Enhancing Technology "VETech".



Sister Helen Hart



Sisters cared for many infants at Roselia Foundling



Young Jeremiah Shepard



Jeremiah and Uncle George Clifton Slike



Jeremiah and Uncle George Clifton Slike prior to a deployment to Kosovo in 2001



Jeremiah's retirement photo

# *News from Mary House*

—Five Years and Thriving

*by Sister Annette Frye*

**M**ary House, Inc. located in Uniontown, PA helps women who are homeless and/or in need of transitional housing. Mary House welcomes women of limited means who agree to live in community and share financial resources as a way to secure, safe, and affordable housing. Residents complete a comprehensive interview process,

must be in good health and physically mobile. The women may not have active addictions to drugs or alcohol and must share housekeeping and meal responsibilities. It is expected that residents, already have or will look for a job (or be engaged in volunteer service), and will contribute to the rent. Dependent children are not permitted to live at Mary House.

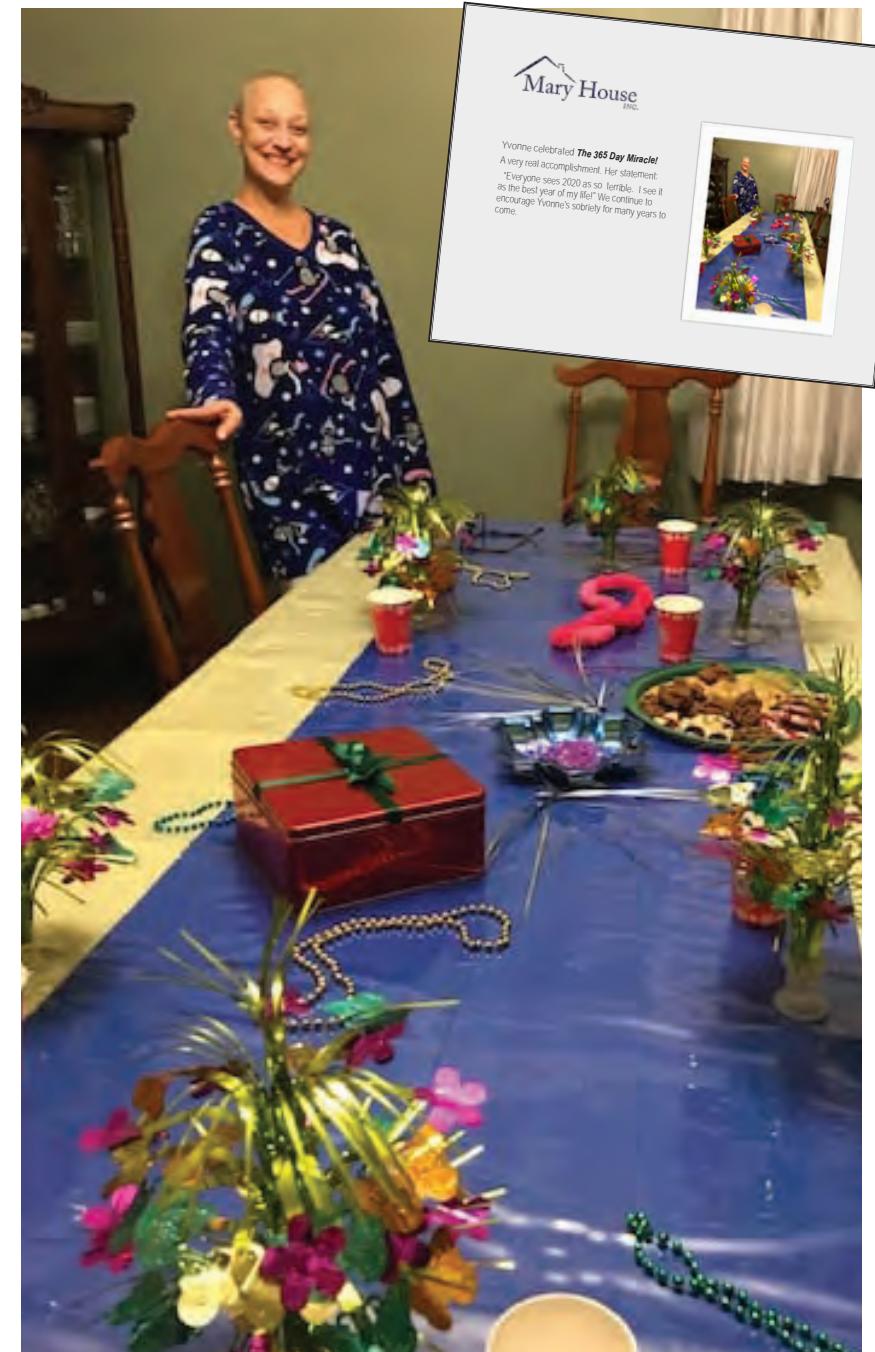
With the support of our Partners in the Work of Charity, Sisters Jean Augustine and Annette Frey have served as Administrators of Mary House since its opening in 2016. With gratitude, Sister Annette offers the following report after she and Sister Jean passed the five-year milestone of living and praying with women in transition at Mary House.



*"We have many things to celebrate as we look back on Mary House's first five years. Forty-four women have passed through our home since it opened. As time went on, we have become well-known to the addicted community. Many women have been through rehab followed by a half-way house, already have a job, and celebrate their year of sobriety while they are here with us. Thus it is has become more common for them to leave after four or five months. Others choose to stay in this 'stable structure' for up to two years to continue their path of healing while also building a savings account.*

*Although our present group came from two separate programs, forming a community seemed more natural to them. COVID-19 probably played a role here since both AA and NA meetings as well as counseling sessions were held on Zoom! We even stepped up our Mary House, PA Facebook page to let others know that we were indeed open.*

*We are very grateful to the many who have helped and continue to support us spiritually in prayer and monetarily in donations. Your interest and gifts have helped Mary House remain and sustain its program since 2016.”*



Pictured here are Kelli A. (left) and Jamie A. proudly displaying their achievement certificates for satisfactorily completing a 12 week class from Circles Laurel Highlands. Both women have learned the basics of budgeting, job readiness, and job interviewing skills, an important part of the Mary House program.

*Yvonne celebrated the 365 Day Miracle in January! A very real accomplishment! Her statement: "Everyone sees 2020 as so terrible. I see it as the best year of my life!" We continue to encourage Yvonne's sobriety for many years to come.*

*Follow Mary House on Facebook:*  
<https://www.facebook.com/MaryHousePA>.

## Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

DePaul Center  
144 DePaul Center Road  
Greensburg, PA 15601-1253  
724-836-0406  
412-243-4651 (Pgh.)  
724-836-8280 (FAX)  
Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Greensburg, PA  
Permit No. 434

# \*SISTER speakers

As part of our grateful response to the heritage of St. Elizabeth Seton, St. Vincent De Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, the Sisters of Charity are offering some programs to local parishes, and organizations.

To schedule a topic and speaker, contact: Sister Colette Hanlon, S.C. 724-836-0406, ext. 6616 or email [chanlon@scsh.org](mailto:chanlon@scsh.org)

## TOPICS

Human Trafficking in Our Neighborhoods and in the World

Taize Prayer: Candlelight Evening with Mantra Music, Scripture and Quiet Meditation

The Pandemic Pause: A New Journey with Jesus.

On Being Mary in a Martha World

Beyond the Nonsense: How Catholic Sisters Shaped Greensburg and the World

Using Humor to Thrive and Not Just Survive

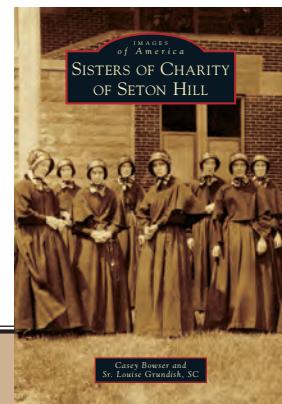
Pardon My Lenten Smile

Elizabeth Seton: Wife, Mother, Community Founder, Saint

I'm Inspired, Are You?



2021  
SPEAKERS FROM THE  
Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill



In honor of the 150th anniversary of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill, the Archives of the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill offer for purchase *Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill*, a recent addition to Arcadia Publishing's Images of America Series. Featuring over 200 historic images, the book delves deep into the history of the Sisters of Charity and their work in education, including Seton Hill University and parish schools, healthcare, social service, and pastoral ministry in western Pennsylvania, Arizona, Korea, among others.

*To order copies of this special book for your personal collection or gift giving, please call 724-836-0406, ext.1130 or email [caseybowser@scsh.org](mailto:caseybowser@scsh.org).*