

# LADIES OF CHARITY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA® SERVICETTE

*"To serve rather than to be served"*



AIC USA

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## KEEPING CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS *The Crèche Tradition*



*From the Huffman collection, figures carved from elk antler by a Zuni Indian craftsman, with inlays of turquoise, coral and lapis.*

The Friends of the Crèche is a non-profit organization for those who collect, exhibit, study, create or simply treasure Christmas Nativity scenes ([www.friendsofthecreche.org](http://www.friendsofthecreche.org)). At the group's 2012 convention in Toronto, Canada, two Ladies of Charity from opposite ends of the country, Carol Huffman from Salt Lake City and Kathleen Sieracki from Buffalo, found themselves seated together at the closing banquet. In addition to their commitment to Ladies of Charity, they share a deep



*Miniature wooden triptych, created in the Southwest United States, a gift from Sally Pasternak to Kathleen Sieracki.*

*Continued — see The Crèche Tradition, p. 11*

## Empower Women/Strengthen Families Resounded Throughout National Assembly

The opening day of the assembly, Friday Sept. 20, began with a core group of members gathered early in the morning to pray the rosary. Following breakfast, the Rev. Richard Gielow, CM, national spiritual advisor for LCUSA, presided at Mass. Fr. Gielow tied the assembly's theme, Empower Women/Strengthen Families, to recent remarks by Pope Francis: "The church cannot be herself without the woman and her role. The woman is essential for the church." Bishop



*Morgan Hill LOC leading Prayers of the Faithful at the opening Mass.*

Patrick McGrath of the Diocese of San Jose was present at the Mass. Women make up two thirds of the world's workforce, yet their wages are less than 20 percent of total earned income. Sr. Margaret urged that women never forget they are daughters of God, made in his image and likeness.

Sheila Gilbert, president of the National Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP), spoke about Frederic Ozanam, born 200 years ago, and founder of the SVDP in 1833. Ms. Gilbert stated that "disintegration of the family is one of the root causes of poverty." Debbie



*Marge Fiala and Joan Kachel, 2013 assembly co-chairs*

In her welcome, Sr. Marjory Ann Baez, Visitatrix of the Western Province of the Daughters of Charity, stated that "St. Vincent and St. Louise would be proud of the goals of this assembly." Keynote speaker Sr. Margaret Keaveney, DC, reminded members that the face of poverty in Vincent's time, the face of women and children, is the same today.



*Keynote speaker Sr. Margaret Keaveney, DC*

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The **SERVICETTE** is a publication of the Association of the Ladies of Charity as a record of their activities in the USA

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### MISSION STATEMENT

To provide Vincentian leadership to women acting together against all forms of poverty.

### VISION STATEMENT

LCUSA-AIC provides Vincentian leadership of transformation assisting persons who are vulnerable to move from marginalization and despair to participation and hope.

## INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

Individual members are supportive of the mission and purpose of LCUSA and participate in the ministry of the Ladies of Charity by prayer and/or service and pay dues prescribed by the board of directors.



## SERVICETTE NEWS DEADLINE

The deadline to submit articles and photos for the Winter issue of the **SERVICETTE**:

**Monday, January 13, 2014**

Articles and photos can be sent by e-mail to: [kathleen.sieracki@gmail.com](mailto:kathleen.sieracki@gmail.com)  
Articles and photos should be sent separately and not within the text document.

**Please contact us for info.**



## The Sound of Silence

**Bishop David A. Zubik**  
*Episcopal Chairman*

**F**or baby boomers growing up in the 1960s, one common hobby was to collect “records.”

For my post baby boomer readers, these were round discs made of vinyl that played on something called a phonograph. During those days of my adolescence and early adulthood, one of my favorite groups to listen to on my phonograph was Simon and Garfunkel. They had a big hit with a song called “The Sound of Silence.”

Recently, I have been reflecting on how much noise there is in the world in which we live. We have television stations that air programs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Any number of people carry personal CD players or iTouches or iPods into schools, on planes, in the car, while jogging, riding, flying - all sorts of sounds all the time. While I try not to focus on my pet peeves in my writing to you, I’m taking the risk of sharing one with you.

There is something blessed about “The Sound of Silence,” and I’m not talking about the Simon and Garfunkel hit song. I’m talking about those silent moments when we have the opportunity to connect with ourselves and God! This is an important matter to consider, given that “The Sound of Silence” is a necessary prelude to prayer—to connecting with God and especially to hearing what God has to say to us.

Over the course of the last years, church architects have introduced us to the “gathering space” in our church structures. This space has been especially designed for folks when we enter a church building, affording us the chance to chat, to get caught up and connect with one another before we actually

enter the nave of the church. It surprises me how many of these “visits” continue in the body of the church, another “gathering space” but this one specifically designed to chit-chat with God—before, during and after Mass or any other communal prayer. Less and less is there the peace and quiet to be able to do just that in so many churches.

Many may argue the point that the church is where we come together as family. And that’s true. But it is especially the place where we come together as family to connect with God in prayer.

Clearly, there are many ways in which God connects with us in the liturgy—through his word in the Scriptures; through the Eucharist, both as sacrament and celebration; through our singing of hymns; through the exchange of our hugs and kisses in the sign of peace; but also in “The Sound of Silence.”

“Be still, and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46: 10) As you and I continue to address noise as one of the pollutions of our age, perhaps we can even more so look for, respect and respond to “The Sound of Silence” as a need in our personal lives, especially as we connect with God in church.

In that silence, we not only come to listen more clearly to God speaking to us, but also actually come to better know God and ourselves. ♦

## LCUSA ELECTIONS

2014 is an election year for the officers and board of directors for LCUSA. If you are interested in being a candidate or would like to recommend someone else, please contact Marilyn Martone, chair of the Nomination Committee, at:

[mamartone@aol.com](mailto:mamartone@aol.com)

New board members with new ideas and insights are always welcome.





## President's Message

**Gayle Johnson**  
LCUSA President

The Feast of St. Vincent on September 27 creates an opportunity for us as Ladies of Charity to renew our charism. We have opportunities for retreats, celebration Masses, prayer days and meetings to focus on the mission of our founders. We can ask ourselves a question the Rev. Richard Gielow, CM, LCUSA's spiritual advisor, frequently proposes, "Could I do more?"

At the national assembly in San Jose, LCUSA emphasized the role of women in evangelizing our faith and serving as beacons of light, precursors to the arrival of Christ. Women and children comprise 70% of those living in poverty and are caregivers in the majority of instances.

They care for children, the disabled, the aging and the sick.

Historically, women have played an important role in the Church. They served as disciples of Christ and had a role in his stewardship here on earth. Prominent were his mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, the women with Mary at the foot of the cross, and the women who were the first witnesses of the risen Christ. Later women served as deacons of the Church. Among those women was St. Phoebe of Cenchreae, who assisted St. Paul in his work. However slowly it happened, first in the western rite, and ultimately in the eastern rite, this role was eliminated.

In our Vincentian history, women have always been a part of the Vincentian charism. Madame de Gondi had a strong influence on Vincent during his early priesthood period when he served in her household. (Refer to the article on Madame de Gondi in the Winter 2012 *Servicette*.) There he began to focus his work on the poor. His first creation was the Confraternity of Charity

(Ladies of Charity), a lay organization composed of women and active to this day as the International Association of Charities (AIC). Then, with St. Louise, he founded the Daughters of Charity to help instruct and instill the virtues of humility, simplicity, and charity in the ladies' service to the poor. Both organizations shared the mission of putting faith into action, seeing the face of the poor in each person, and realizing that lives are transformed whether for the served or for the one serving.

What is being asked of the Ladies of Charity today is that we remain prominent in our role as servant leaders. We need to continue to have a place at the table when the needs of those living in poverty are being discussed. As the Rev. Michael Mulhearn, CM, said at a recent Mass, we must continue to be that beacon of light spreading our rays in the lives of those we touch. In a commissioning prayer at the end of our assembly the Ladies of Charity spiritual moderators sent us forth to play a prominent role in living our faith through action. ♦

## NEW STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPED

*We must receive with respect whatever God presents to us, and then examine the situation with its circumstances in order to do what is most expedient.*

St. Vincent de Paul

During its spring meeting in April, the LCUSA Board of Directors, aided by facilitator Karen DeHais, worked through a multi-step process to develop a new strategic plan which will provide a framework for activities over the next five years. The board had been working under a previous plan put in place in 2006.

The five strategic goals are (the numbering is arbitrary, not in order of importance):

**Goal One:** Develop a process that will deepen spirituality for members.

**Goal Two:** Increase communication and visibility of Ladies of Charity locally, nationally and internationally.

**Goal Three:** Increase membership through personal invitation and strategic use of social media.

**Goal Four:** Grow and diversify funding for the Ladies of Charity, nationally and locally and sustain fiscal responsibility.

**Goal Five:** Engage the national board and membership in advocacy, especially on behalf of women and children living in poverty.



LCUSA Board of Directors

The five goals established in the plan and a series of associated objectives were presented at the recently completed national assembly, and members had the opportunity to provide their input during a series of five round table discussions. Members of each goal committee were divided among three tables, and those present at the assembly were able to choose a table for a 12 minute discussion and then move on. Discussion topics were: A) Do you think the strategic priorities goal is complete? What would you add or change? B) What activities would you suggest the board prioritize to reach this goal in 3-5 years? C) How can the local associations contribute?

Local association presidents will have a chance to comment on the strategic goals. Their participation is important and meaningful to LCUSA's future. Look for this mailing in the near future. ♦



Kathy Kavanaugh (front) accepting Downey Grants for Albany and Saratoga from Kathleen Sieracki, regional v.p.



Sandy Stark, president, LOC Bountiful, Utah (left) accepting a Hager Grant from Theresa Ward, regional v.p (right).



Geraldyn Fialkovich (left), accepting Hager Grants on behalf of two parishes in Pittsburgh and Sr. Catherine Fitzgerald, DC.

## Hager and Downey Grant Winners Announced New Grant Program for Junior Ladies Introduced

Making grants available is one of the ways LCUSA provides support to local associations. During the recent San Jose National Assembly, regional vice-presidents announced that in 2013 eight associations were awarded Hager grants and eight groups received Downey awards. The checks had been sent in the spring, following evaluation of applications by the LCUSA Executive Committee at its April meeting, so that the funds would be immediately available to help bolster grassroots programs.

Hager grants are intended to help support local projects in which members are directly involved in working with disadvantaged and marginalized persons. In the Western Region, the Morgan Hill, Calif. association received \$600 to purchase supplies for tutoring children in reading and math. The Ladies in Bountiful, Utah were awarded \$1000 to purchase food, clothing and Christmas gifts for low income, high risk families.

Five associations in the Mid-Atlantic Region received Hager grants. The group at St. Maria Goretti Parish in Pittsburgh received \$300 to sponsor a retreat for members and prospective members. The other groups in the region each applied for and received \$1000. The District of Columbia Parish Units intended to purchase gift cards for children's shoes. Our

Lady of Perpetual Help in Washington, DC, needed a commercial refrigerator to store perishable items for their food pantry. St. Sebastian Ladies of Charity North Hills, Pittsburgh, used the money to expand offerings at a gift/snack shop they maintain at a nursing home. Ladies in Emmitsburg, Md. utilized the grant to refurbish the building and garden at a crisis pregnancy center. In New Orleans in the Southern Region, the award of \$800 helped members hold monthly birthday parties at a homeless shelter. (See the article about that program in the Summer 2013 Servicette.)

All Diane Downey Reading Enrichment Grants were \$300. In the Southern Region, the Ladies of Central Alabama planned to purchase materials and promote summer reading for students ages four through eight in a school serving a low-income population. In the Northeastern Region, Albany planned to expand the library at Mary's Corner, encouraging parents to read to their young children. The Buffalo association has been reading with children for 13 years. Their grant was used to purchase new books for children to keep and build their own libraries at home. The Ladies of Saratoga read with students at a regional school and bought books for children in Pre-K through fifth grade.

Four Downey grants were awarded in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Holy Redeemer members in Pittsburgh planned to expand the accelerated reading program in their school. Good Shepherd Parish, also in Pittsburgh, provided Bibles and other grade appropriate books for summer reading. St. Sebastian and Emmitsburg both received Downey grants as well as their Hager awards. St. Sebastian works with two pre-schools in poor neighborhoods and gives books to both the children and the school libraries. The women in Emmitsburg assisted in the organization of a mother-daughter book club at Mother Seton School. Congratulations to all recipients!

Lucky Van De Gejuchte, chair of the LCUSA Membership Committee, announced that a new grant program for Junior Ladies of Charity associations will be initiated in 2014. Each LCUSA registered group may apply for up to \$150 to be used for a project in which the girls are actively involved.

Guidelines and applications for the each of the three grant programs will be mailed to association presidents in January. ♦

Visit LCUSA online at  
<http://aic.ladiesofcharity.us>



## ADVOCACY CONNECTIONS

### *Women On A Mission Against Trafficking*

Lucy Ann Saunders

“*Women On a Mission Against Trafficking*” hosted a presentation on human trafficking at the Southern Calvert Baptist Church (Maryland) on July 20. As a Lady of Charity in the Washington Archdiocese I attended to increase my knowledge and to contribute my efforts on behalf of the Ladies to raise awareness of this issue. I learned that human trafficking is a mobile crime facilitated by contributing factors of technology and travel that should raise concern to all Ladies of Charity residing in cities that mirror these traits.

The speaker was Jeanne L. Allert, executive director of The Samaritan Women, a Christian nonprofit organization committed to promoting health, healing and hope for those impacted by domestic human trafficking. Their website is:

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

Today, sex tourism is a large part of trafficking via escort services; strip clubs; sports events such as the Super Bowl; truck stops; military bases; brothels; store front businesses; and social media. Jeanne testified that the Catholic nuns in Indianapolis made a big difference in that city last year where the Super Bowl was held. Nuns visited the hotels and discussed with the staff the potential signs of human trafficking. Also included in the definition of Human Trafficking is the buying and selling of body parts, forced labor and domestic trafficking where the victim is under 18 years of age. In addition to the federal laws, each state has laws that may apply to both the definitions and to the enforcement. Experience and service have taught Jeanne that the ease of exploitation is a result of many factors, including language; ignorance of the law; no advocate; fear of the law; cultural conditioning; and having no other option.

She began her ministry in 2007 when she felt that God had called her to purchase property that would become The Samaritan Women's residence, an 1893 Victorian house which has been lovingly restored by community volunteers. It is the only Christian long-term restoration program in the mid-Atlantic. They serve women 18 or older who have endured significant trauma, including homeless female veterans and women rescued from exploitation and human trafficking. Their program focuses on restoration and independence through development in the areas of academics, vocational programs, spirituality, relational and self-care. Women are cared for at no cost and can stay up to two years. In Maryland it costs



*Sr. Caritas Foster, Sister of the Holy Family, leading an assembly workshop on Human Trafficking.*

\$38,383 per year to incarcerate a woman for prostitution. The Samaritan Women's program, which provides a holistic approach to restoration, operates at a cost of \$26,000 per year. Which investment would you consider worthwhile as it relates to a woman's life?

Ladies of Charity need to be aware of the elements of trafficking that involve forced labor, open harvesting of organs, child exploitation and forced prostitution. Worldwide, 27 million are enslaved each day. It is the second most profitable criminal enterprise in the world after drugs. It is estimated that in four years human trafficking will surpass the drug market. Each year 14,500 – 17,500 persons are brought into the United States. Sex labor, beginning as young as age nine, involves 300,000 children. The harvest of cotton is a product of child labor. As a reminder of vacation travels, many collect cotton T-shirts never thinking that child labor is involved.

When you witness suspicious activity, a simple tool to begin the fight against human trafficking is calling the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888. It was suggested that you ask your teenager or teenaged grandchild to put that telephone number in their phones. If they are ever approached, they would have the number handy. As a Lady of Charity you are asked to be aware and be an advocate for those caught up in human trafficking. Look for a local presentation in your area so you too will have the opportunity to learn and hear about the eradication of this modern day slavery and the exploitation of innocent persons. ♦

Editor's Note: Sr. Mary Ellen Lacy, DC, has been a member of LCUSA's Advocacy Committee and also active with the Nuns on the Bus. She was incorrectly identified in the last issue. ♦

# Ruby Roa ~ Advocacy Alive in Austin, Texas

Sister JT Dwyer, DC

*There is no charity without justice....*

St Vincent de Paul

Lady of Charity Ruby Roa was named the Volunteer of the Year for 2012 by the "American Statesman," a leading Austin newspaper. In November of the same year the Texas Low Income Housing Information Service recognized Ruby with a Texas Housers Award which is presented to individuals "who, through their work on behalf of housing and shelter, are dedicated to achieving a just and caring society that ensures all people a decent home in a quality neighborhood."

Ruby's nomination for the Volunteer of the Year Award was sponsored by 15 people, including both professionals and beneficiaries of her dedication. The portrait that emerges from the testimonials is of a woman of small physical stature but great empathy, determination and leadership. Ruby worked with tenants of three low-rent complexes who were being forced to relocate because of unsafe conditions or redevelopment. In each case, she educated residents on their rights and supported them as they negotiated groundbreaking agreements regard-

ing security deposits, utility transfers and even free rent for the first month in a new location. She also stood by them, literally, until everyone single person was safely moved. According to Carol Biedrzycki of the Texas Ratepayers' Organization to Save Energy, Ruby "shows people down on their luck where they can find some bootstraps and then she shows them how to pull themselves up."

Congratulations Ruby and thank you for your example of true grassroots advocacy. ♦



Ricardo Brazzell, Austin-American Statesman

## Vincentian Spirituality Retreat

### Mater Dei Retreat & Spirituality Center Evansville, Illinois

Mary Nell Williams, Lady of  
Charity, Indianapolis

Led by Sr. Fran Ryan, DC, Ph.D., the participants at September's Vincentian Spirituality Retreat focused on Blessed Sister Rosalie Rendu, DC. Rosalie was very close to and influenced by her mother. From the age of 15, she knew she wanted to be a Daughter of Charity. Her mother was initially hesitant because Rosalie's father died at a young age and her mother had hoped that, as the oldest daughter, Rosalie would help raise her younger sisters. Both she and her mother knew that once Rosalie joined the Daughters of Charity, they might never see each other again. During the next 54 years, her mother would visit Sr. Rosalie only once in Paris.

Those at the retreat were aware that Rosalie mentored Frederic Ozanam, the young college student and founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. However Rosalie, they discovered, was much more of an advocate for the poor

of Paris than many had initially realized. She met with the rich and the poor in her parlor. They came to her and she was often among them in the streets in the poorest sections of Paris. She used the poor to help the poor. She also engaged the rich and collaborated with all classes of people and systems to help the poor. Rosalie was a woman of great influence. In all people she inspired hope and trust using her gifts of compassion, empathy and at times, impatience. She is recognized by her name and her actions as the one associated with the beginnings of all charitable works initiated in the first half of the 19th century.

Like St. Vincent and St. Louise, she knew her resources. One thing that was especially impressive was that she never gave the poor more than they requested. In other words, she was not a woman of bounty. She respected where the poor were in their poverty. As a result of her blindness, and her resulting inability to write letters to her mother, she agreed

to sit for a portrait so that her mother would have a picture of her. It is the only known picture of Rosalie. She was unaware that her mother had died three days prior to her own death.

It was estimated that 30,000 people came to Rosalie's funeral. To this day, fresh flowers appear daily at her grave, which was moved to be closer to the cemetery entrance to accommodate the many visitors. Her grave stone reads "To Sister Rosalie, Her Grateful Friends, The Poor and the Rich." As Sr. Fran said, "To know her (Rosalie) is to love her." The Cardinal of Paris, speaking at her beatification in Rome (2003), said, "It will be 'the Poor of Paris,' not the Church of Paris, the Daughters of Charity or the Vincentians who will see that Rosalie is canonized."

The definitive biography of Rosalie was written by Sr. Louise Sullivan, DC (2006) Sister Rosalie Rendu: A Daughter of Charity on Fire with Love for the Poor. Chicago, Vincentian Studies Institute. ♦

## Twinning with AIC Madagascar

Debbie Chadwick

Ladies of Charity are called to continue the mission begun by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac in 1617 by acting against all forms of poverty and marginalization not only at home but also throughout the world. Globalization, systemic change, and twinning are familiar terms directly relating to LCUSA's mission with AIC Madagascar.

AIC Madagascar continues to express sincere appreciation on behalf of the volunteers for the continuing prayers and financial support from LCUSA. We want you to meet one of the young girls, Pelatsra, who has benefitted greatly from your support. Pelatsra is an orphan who lives with her brother in a small house in Manakara, a house built by the AIC Manakara project A Roof First. She studied very hard during her last year of secondary school preparing for exams this past August. She is nurtured and encouraged by the AIC Centre in Manakara to study and work hard. Pelatsra is a good student who has never repeated a school year. Her dream is to continue her education by becoming a midwife so she can help others as she has been helped. Her brother Jean Chry currently attends college while he cares for his sister.

The local AIC Centre shared Pelatsra's beautifully expressed words: "When I get my diploma as a midwife and have a job, the first thing I'll do is to buy rice for the AIC children and give some of my free time looking after the small children at the centre. I'm so grateful to those who have been help-

ing my brother and me, and the volunteers, my mothers." In those words, she shares the hope of a young girl dreaming of her success as a woman, a woman contributing to her community. She is grateful to you, the LCUSA AIC-USA volunteers whom she calls her mothers, for that support.

Systemic change is truly taking place and will continue through your prayers, support, and efforts to help children grow into successful members of their community, who in turn will continue the growth of systemic change. There are many young children in Madagascar whose stories have yet to be told, children who will grow into the young women and men whose lives will be changed forever because of your support. For additional information about AIC Madagascar, visit [aic-madagascar.org](http://aic-madagascar.org).

Thanks for helping to create an environment for systemic change in Madagascar where children and women can realize their dreams. Please consider this important mission as part of your giving. Gifts are welcome and gratefully accepted at any time and may be sent to LCUSA National Service Center, 100 N. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, Missouri 63103 (write Madagascar on the memo line). Your twinning partnership benefits both the women and children of Madagascar. ✦



### Introducing Margaret Hanson AIC Representative

Kathleen Sieracki



Margaret, of Binghamton, N.Y., has been a member of the LCUSA Board of Directors since 1992. She was elected president in 2002. She first became involved with the International Association of Charities (AIC) in approximately 1995 when Doris Hoag, a former LCUSA president and AIC Representative at that time was unable to attend a meeting and asked Margaret to fill in for her. As she says, the AIC

leadership and Margaret "got to know each other" over the next several years, and in 2007 LCUSA President Mary Beth O'Brien nominated Margaret for her current role. Following a complex application process, Margaret was accepted for the AIC Executive Board, and has since been elected one of two vice-presidents.

Recognizing that members cherish the title 'Ladies of Charity (LOC),' LCUSA is continuing to honor that name, while also acknowledging our solidarity with women throughout the world who belong to AIC. Thus, the revised logo was created, combining the traditional LOC faith, hope and charity insignia with the title AIC-USA.

Based on her years of involvement, Margaret can offer LCUSA members a deeper perspective on AIC. She reports that particularly for women in third world countries, AIC associations consist of women in need joining together to help themselves and other women in need. For these groups, belonging to AIC is a privilege and an honor. All associations in the poorest nations of the world are current with their AIC dues (2 Euros per member per year). The same is not true for some wealthier countries.

Visit the AIC website ([www.aic-international.org](http://www.aic-international.org)) to sense the truly international nature of the organization of 200,000 volunteers in 53 associations across five continents. Content may be viewed in English, Spanish or French. Currently featured are the 25th anniversary of AIC Madagascar (twinning partner of LCUSA) and the 2013 national assembly in Brazil, attended by 250 women. AIC is developing a three year plan

*Continued — see Margaret, p. 12*



# What's In A Name?

Lucy Ann Saunders

For the eastern region of the United States, the name Vincentian Family Leadership East (VFLE) represents “partnership, sharing, collaboration and action.” For more than six years, meetings have been held to collaborate and share knowledge of projects that recognize the self-worth of individuals, families and communities.

Highlighted at October's annual meeting was DePaul USA's success in opening Macon, Georgia's first comprehensive day/resource center for the homeless, known as Daybreak. Another project known as Movin' On connects St. Joseph's Rebuild Center with services located in New Orleans. Their DePaul House in Philadelphia offers 27 homeless men the opportunity to progress toward independent living. DePaul USA in St. Louis hopes to operate permanent supportive housing in scattered site programs for 70 homeless men and women.

St. Vincent de Paul Society Eastern Region has volunteered one million service hours; made 40,000 home visits; served 556,000 people; donated \$8,000,000 of in-kind food and furniture. In Philadelphia's Germantown area there is a community-wide project for systemic change that includes health care, housing, job training, adult education and rent assistance, all coordinated by various Vincentian organizations. A priority of the Congregation of the Mission Eastern Province is to support the St. Vincent de Paul Parish and all Vincentian ministries in this Germantown community. Also active in that area is the Saint Vincent de Paul Center where young adults learn and experience the Vincentian Charism, Catholic social justice teaching, causes of poverty, possible solutions and systemic change. It offers young adults

(college age and post college age) and youth (high school age) the opportunity to serve for and with the poor and marginalized. Check out their website: [www.svdpcenter.org](http://www.svdpcenter.org)

Three Daughters of Charity from the Province of St. Louise work together as liaisons among all Vincentian organizations. Retreats and orientations are sponsored with representatives present for Vincentian gatherings throughout the United States. It was reported that the Vincentian Lay Missionaries will send 15 young adults to Africa. An Affiliate Pilgrimage to Paris is planned for April 2014. Interested? Email: [Elyse.Staab@doc.org](mailto:Elyse.Staab@doc.org) or call 478-477-0573.

The Sisters of Charity of New York work with students from the College of Mount Saint Vincent in the Seton Service and Leadership Program. One student served as an intern last year at the United Nations. Together with Ascension Health, they are collaborating to eliminate deaths of children by water and parasites in Guatemala. New York and New Jersey Charities are taking action steps against human trafficking. This involves contacting hotels, advertising in local newspapers and educating the public in advance of the 2014 Super Bowl being held in the New Jersey Meadowlands.

Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth are finishing their first year in a collaborative effort in Haiti with the Maryknoll Sisters. In late spring the congregation took a public stand on immigration reform, moving beyond publicity into initial implementation of the position.

Sisters of Charity – Halifax spiritually and financially support the work of NETWORK, the Catholic social justice lobby. Sisters have direct involvement in the works of local conferences of the

Saint Vincent de Paul Society. Sisters of Charity Federation focused on collaborative efforts to include the United Nations non-governmental organization (NGO) office, House of Charity New Orleans and Seton Heritage Ministries in Emmitsburg, Md. They promoted systemic change training regionally and nationally and investment in the work of the Vincentian Family Collaborators.

The Ladies of Charity USA are active participants in the Vincentian Family Collaborators. They partner with the Conference of Catholic Bishops for the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington D.C. Various associations are actively engaged in systemic change in their communities, working with individuals and families on a personal basis. Members are attempting to mobilize Ladies of Charity in Tennessee, Alabama, Missouri, New York and Texas to work with their state networks on adopting the Medicaid expansion program.

The Congregation of the Mission Eastern Province sent two priests and 11 young adults to the Vincentian Gathering and 2013 World Youth Day. They were joined with two students each from Niagara and St. John's universities. It is hoped that other regions of the country will take advantage of collaborating in their areas as a team effort to promote and maximize the potential of Vincentian Family members working together, realizing that not only in unity but also in collaboration there is strength.

Thanks to Sister Barbara DeMoranville for hosting this VFLE meeting at the Mother Boniface Spirituality Center, Philadelphia. As a member of the Vincentian Family, Sr. Barbara represented the Missionary Cenacle Family. ♦





*Daughters of Charity performed commissioning prayer at LCUSA Assembly.*

## Daughters of Charity Look to the Future

In 1634, St. Vincent de Paul told the Daughters of Charity, “You have to be ready to go wherever you are told to go, and even to request this, saying ‘I belong neither here nor there, but wherever God wants me to be.’ You are chosen to be at the disposition of Divine Providence.”

Recognizing the signs of the times and also aware of future needs, the

Daughters of Charity of St. Louise Province plan to withdraw fully or partially from 10 Catholic dioceses or archdioceses in the United States by the fall of 2014. As a result, seven Ladies of Charity associations (Birmingham, Ala., Indianapolis, Buffalo, Nashville, and Austin, Lake Travis and Harker Heights, all in Texas) will lose or have a change

in their respective Vincentian Spiritual Moderators.

In consideration of this impact, and wanting to maintain the tradition of collaboration between the two groups, the Daughters are creating a new transitional position, Vincentian Spiritual Advisor. The Advisor will be a Daughter of Charity, working through the LCUSA structure to educate and train new moderators in the Vincentian Heritage, using resources found on the LCUSA website, <http://aic.ladiesofcharity.us/resources/lay-spiritual-moderator-formation/>, and [www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org), the international Vincentian Family website. The new moderators may be lay women or members of other religious communities.

LCUSA thanks Sr. Fran Ryan, DC, for initiating this plan to support associations as they assume more responsibility for Vincentian formation. LCUSA also thanks the many Daughters who have served with the Ladies of Charity in their various ministries. May God keep all of you in his care and love! ♦



### Dates to Remember

- **February 2–5, 2014**  
**Catholic Social Ministry Gathering**  
Washington, D.C.
- **March 15**  
**Feast of St. Louise de Marillac**
- **April 10–12**  
**LCUSA Spring Board Meeting**  
Evansville, Ind.
- **June 29–July 8**  
**Christianity and Islam Symposium**  
De Paul University, Chicago
- **September 12–13**  
**LCUSA National Assembly**  
Milwaukee  
Details to follow in upcoming issues of the Servicette.

## At Your Service

Maureen McMillan, executive administrator at the LCUSA National Service Center, says that every day at her job is different. She is responsible for all communication between LCUSA and the local associations. That includes maintaining the Servicette mailing list and sending it to the printer at the proper times; coordinating correspondence from the national president to local presidents, including the annual report forms, scholarship information and dues notifications; and receiving and recording all checks for supplies, memorials, assembly registrations and the Annual Appeal.



Another important part of her job involves fielding telephone calls about a variety of matters from local presidents, individual members, spiritual moderators, the general public and from groups inquiring about how to establish a new association. She has responded to a request to create certificates of appreciation for long-time members and has completed an on-line form for an association seeking tax-exempt status.

Maureen’s job requires her to be creative and flexible. If you have a question about the Ladies of Charity including what to do, where to look, whom to ask, please contact the National Service

Center (314-881-6017). Your call is truly important to Maureen as executive administrator of LCUSA. ♦

Center (314-881-6017). Your call is truly important to Maureen as executive administrator of LCUSA. ♦

Chadwick, LCUSA AIC-USA Twinning Chair, tied the thoughts of the earlier speakers to the LCUSA twinning project with AIC-Madagascar. The remainder of the day was devoted to presentation of LCUSA's new strategic plan, with members in attendance sharing their comments and suggestions regarding the plan. (See related articles about Madagascar and the strategic plan.)

Group recitation of the rosary again opened the proceedings on the second day, Saturday Sept. 21, followed by a prayer service honoring Sr. Elizabeth Hurley, a Daughter of Charity with a long history of service in the Western Province. Dr. Carolyn Woo, President/CEO of Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

delivered the keynote address. Quoting St. James, she reminded the group that "Faith without works is dead." She also emphasized that it is not enough to simply serve the poor. They must be served well. Dr. Woo provided many facts and descriptions about CRS projects in 90-100 countries throughout the world. Perhaps the most memorable part of her presentation was the example of how systemic change is possible, taken from her own family history. Dr. Woo's grandmother lived in China and had her feet bound in the traditional way, "a form of torture." Two generations later, her granddaughter is the head of an organization serving more than 100 million people on five continents.

Attendees were able to attend two workshops among five possibilities, and took the opportunity to consider and discuss more topics related to the assembly theme, including tools to bring systemic change training to local associations, servant leadership, Jesus empowering women, compassion fatigue and human trafficking.

The planning committee for the Sept. 11-14, 2014 assembly in Milwaukee presented a spirited invitation to visit



*LCUSA officers leading the procession at the closing Mass.*

their city next year. Jude Schubert, a member of the committee, was attending her first assembly. Her reactions: "Wow! Inspiring! I've already contacted five people telling them they have to come next year!"

The Rev. Thomas A. Daly, Auxiliary Bishop of San Jose presided at the closing Mass in the beautiful Cathedral Basilica of St. Joseph.

Thank you to 2013 co-chairs Joan Kachel and Marge Fiala and all the Ladies from Morgan Hill and throughout the Western Region for a warm welcome and a job well done. ♦



*Dr. Carolyn Woo, keynote speaker on Saturday.*

↓ Lucky Van De Gejuchte leading a discussion on the Strategic Plan.



↓ From left, board members Mary Nell Williams, Winona Nelson, Francine Hovanec, Peggy Keene and Kathy Kavanaugh



↓ North Central regional meeting.



↓ Ladies from around the country met at Saturday's luncheon.







↑ Winona Nelson leading a meeting of members from the Southern Region.



↑ Assembly participants gather early to pray the rosary.

↓ Roundtable discussion of the Strategic Plan



↓ Ladies from the Western Region



→ Theresa Ward, Western Region V.P. and President-Elect Mary Ann Dantuono confer.



↓ "Lavernes and Shirleys" from Milwaukee invite everyone to the 2014 assembly.



## The Crèche Tradition Cont'd from p. 1

interest in collecting nativity sets from around the world, including Africa, Asia, Central and South America and Native American tribes, representing Christ's image through the eyes of many cultures.

Carol and her husband John have about 200 items in their collection, accumulated over 20 years. From Thanksgiving through Epiphany, they display about 150 sets throughout their living and dining rooms. Their home is open every Sunday afternoon, advertised in the church bulletin. All the children from the parish school, one grade at a time, take a four block field trip to view the exhibit. Carol made a list of some of the substances used in construction

of the nativities for the children to look for. The materials include pine needles, tree bark, felt, corn husks, stone, beads, Coke cans, Popsicle sticks, toothpicks, driftwood, glass, clay, wooden spoons, rolled magazines and newspapers, bread dough, rock, tile, pewter, elk antler, banana leaves, bullet casings, snack wrappers and more.

Kathleen and Roger Sieracki own about 100 crèches. About twenty favorites, changed annually, are kept on permanent display in their home. The balance of the collection is set up in December for family and friends to enjoy. Images of six of the nativities were printed on notecards and sold as sets to benefit the Ladies of Charity. Carol and Kathleen would agree that while the

unpacking, set-up and re-packing process is time consuming, there is great joy in rediscovering the treasures each year, recalling the time and place where each was found and remembering the true meaning of Christmas.

Hint from a collector: Watch for four traditional poses for the Baby Jesus in nativity scenes. He may be dressed in swaddling clothes, pre-figuring the tomb; posed with arms widespread in welcome to the world; lying casually with a hand curled near his face, the most baby-like position; or with his right hand raised with three fingers extended in a blessing.

As you set up your own crèches during this wondrous time of year, LCUSA extends best wishes to all for a holy and happy Christmas season. ✧

## MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

Both the persons named below and the donors will be remembered at a special Mass said by LCUSA's national spiritual advisor, Fr. Richard Gielow, CM. Please use the enclosed envelope to send your donation with the identifying information to the National Service Center.

### † MEMORIALS †

<i>In Memory of</i>	<i>Bequeathed by</i>
All my loved ones who have left me here	Brenda Kukuia
Joyce Dillman	Harker Heights LOC
Michele Davis	Lake Travis LOC
Marie Dinges	Gayle Johnson
Lucille Edwards (mother) Herb Edwards (brother) J. Edwin Edwards (father) Mary Frances Jones (aunt)	Mary Margaret Edwards
Ruth Geblein & Joan Suttel	Kathleen Sieracki
John Graham & Ernestine Graham Jackson	Carolyn Lancaster
Joseph Varlinsky & Deceased of the Charles Netzel Family	Anna Mae Varlinsky

### † IN HONOR OF †

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Gigliotti On the occasion of their wedding anniversary	Anna Mae Varlinsky
Louise Ugliano For recovery from illness	Rosemary Meyer



## The Walk Series by Richard Paul Evans

Reviewed by Lucy Ann Saunders

There are four Walk Series books that tell the story of Alan Christoffersen, once a successful advertising executive, who left everything he knew and loved to begin an extraordinary cross-country journey from Seattle to Key West. Alan's journey occurred because of the loss of his wife and sweetheart, McKale, who had died suddenly from a horse-back riding accident. While Alan cared for her, his business partners stole his advertising clients and his home was foreclosed. These words of Winston Churchill best describe Alan's decision to walk from coast to coast, "if you are going through hell, keep going."



The Walk Series tell the stories of people Alan met who affected his life and whose own lives changed as well. God definitely played a part in Alan's journey and his encounters that stretched across the country. Richard's series of stories begin with *The Walk*, followed by *Miles to Go* and *The Road to Grace*. The fourth book of the Walk Series is *Step of Faith*. According to the author, "We must all walk in faith, for to live without is to live frozen in circumstance. Even if the faith or dreams of our past have been shattered, as they often are, we must gather the shards and dream again—for achieving dreams is not a single act of will, but like the felling of a tree, a process of small, steady blows. It is the short footfalls of a great walk." To learn more about the Walk series or to join Richard's mailing list, visit [www.richardpaulevans.com](http://www.richardpaulevans.com).

This series of books reveals the impact that each of us has as we travel the highways of life. Keep in mind that "heroes and angels usually arrive in disguise." (*Alan Christoffersen's Diary*) ♦

## Margaret Hanson

Cont'd from p. 8

to lead up to the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the Confraternities of Charity, forerunner of AIC, the first foundation established by St. Vincent de Paul. The entire Vincentian Family will participate. The goal is to make the celebration both meaningful and a means to contribute to the growth of AIC.

In her spare time between AIC meetings and other international travel, Margaret has been a social worker since 1969, and following 23 years in psychiatric work at Binghamton General Hospital, she transitioned to counseling at Samaritan Counseling Center in 2005.

LCUSA is grateful to Margaret for representing us on the international level. ♦



# Buffalo Ladies Score a Touchdown

Patra Mangus and Marian Snyder



Leona Prinzbach with commemorative football.

**“Y**ou see a great deal of distress that you are unable to relieve. God sees it also. Bear the pains of the poor together with them, doing all you can to give them whatever help they need, and remain in peace.” St. Vincent de Paul

The Ladies of Charity of the Diocese of Buffalo helped 1833 people (including 1015 children) in 2012 to make a “Fresh Start” following a crisis in their lives. Social workers from Catholic Charities of Western New York refer persons who have been displaced by circumstances such as fire, flood, domestic violence, release from confinement and completion of a substance abuse rehabilitation program. Volunteers spend many hours packing items such as bedding, curtains, dishes, pots and pans, cutlery, utensils and small appliances. The items are selected based on the family composition. Special requests based on cultural needs (for example, a pot which has never contained meat) are honored. The goals of the program are to restore dignity, enabling recipients to move on in their lives, and to help establish a home where families can eat together and have a safe place to sleep and study.

One of the many dedicated volunteers is Leona Prinzbach,



Junior Ladies sorting donations for the Fresh Start program.

a Lady of Charity for 19 years. She contributes several hours each week to this service. In recognition of her efforts and of the value of the Fresh Start program, Leona was recently named the winner of the first annual “Jim Kelly Community Quarterback Award” by the Buffalo Bills of the National Football League. The award was named in the spirit of Hall of Fame Quarterback Jim Kelly (who wore uniform #12). Leona received a commemorative football, and in her honor the Ladies of Charity received \$12,000.

The success of the Fresh Start program requires both volunteers and a constant stream of supplies. To help meet the need, the Junior Ladies of Charity at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Lancaster, N.Y., hold an annual collection of household goods in collaboration with a clothing collection by the parish’s St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) conference. The Juniors and SVDP members work together in unloading cars. The girls sort the donations meant for Fresh Start, pack them safely and then load them onto a truck. In this year’s collection on a September weekend, the truck was filled to the brim. The donations were unloaded on Monday at the LOC Center, and some of the articles were used that very day to fill requests.

Congratulations to Leona and the Buffalo Vincentian Family members for all they do to give those facing unexpected tragedies a “Fresh Start,” definitely a winning team effort for all involved. ♦

## Let Us go to the Poor Vincentian Family Gathering October 25–27, 2013

**O**ne hundred and seventy members representing 11 of the various branches of the Vincentian Family, including six members of the Ladies of Charity, gathered to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the birth of Frederic Ozanam, founder of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The gathering took place at the Marten House in Indianapolis. The theme of the weekend was “Let Us Go to the Poor.”

Much more detailed and in-depth information can be found at [www.famvin.org](http://www.famvin.org).



Ladies of Charity members attended the Vincentian Family Gathering.

# Bear Project Provides Comfort to Heart Patients

Elaine Columbus



The Binghamton, N.Y., Ladies of Charity collaborate with health care providers and senior citizens in the “Heart Bear” project. The Ladies began to sponsor the project after it was abandoned by another local non-profit organization, and continue to support the program both financially and personally. Using profits from their thrift store, the Ladies purchase filling fiber and identification labels. The material from which the bears are made is salvaged from the hospital laundry rooms.

Approximately 10 residents of a high-rise center for the elderly gather once a week, form an assembly line, and produce the bears, which are sent to two local hospitals. The bears are given to open heart surgery patients to use for

*Above: Binghamton members standing behind senior center residents, helping to create Heart Bears.*

cough suppression therapy. The Ladies of Charity participate as coaches for the assembly line.

This project provides the seniors with a great sense of contributing, and they receive positive feedback from the hospitals and Heart Bear recipients. The patients receive both comfort and a souvenir of a most significant event in their lives.

During the two years the Ladies of Charity have participated in this program, over 200 Heart Bears have been produced and utilized. ♦

## Humility: A Misunderstood Virtue

Sister Charlotte White, SCL

The Vincentian characteristic virtues are humility, simplicity and charity. Humility is not an appealing virtue for Americans, but that is perhaps because we don't understand it well. Mary is a model of humility, yet she questioned an angel and pondered her answer – in an era when women weren't supposed to make independent decisions. She gave

orders to Jesus after he and his friends finished off the wedding wine – in a time when men called the shots. So what are we to make of this virtue that is so strongly rooted in our heritage?

Vincent places complacency, not pride, as the opposite of humility: “Humility should also induce you to shun all self-complacency, which insinu-

ates itself in all activities that have an element of glory in them...how poisonous vain complacency is to good works. It is a plague that corrupts the holiest actions and makes a person quickly forget God. Be on your guard, in the name of God, against this failing, as in my opinion it is one of the most dangerous to progress in the spiritual life and perfection.” ♦



# Let the Bidding Begin!

Patricia Reed

The year 1982 was a significant one for the Saratoga Vicariate of Ladies of Charity. The association was founded at an informational and organizational meeting on January 14. On April 2 of the same year, the first annual luncheon was held and on June 10, Jean Lynch was installed as the first president. Current membership is nearly 130.

Keeping up with today's challenges, the Ladies of the Saratoga Vicariate hosted a HEALTH, HISTORY and HORSES Charity Gala in August where 125 guests were treated to sumptuous hors d'oeuvres complete with carving stations and cocktails while enjoying orchestra music. Longfellow's Restaurant was filled with silent auction items ranging from hand crafted wall hangings and jewelry to framed and signed prints from Saratoga Racing, the N.Y. Yankees and golf. Guests were welcomed by Patricia Babbie-Reo, president, who declared the bidding open. Guest bidding was vigorous, competing for gift certificates for Saratoga restaurants; greens fees; theater tickets; Arthur Murray dance lessons; spa services and photo sessions. Table settings carried out the theme of 150 years of Saratoga racing.



*Patricia Babbie-Reo, Saratoga president; Mary Beth O'Brien; Sr. Charla; Claudette Farchione; Earline Johnson and Beth Todd. Claudine and Beth were Gala Co-Chairs.*

The four seasons provided the theme for Ladies of Charity members to once again show off their talents in creating gift baskets overflowing with local area gift certificates for food, flowers, candy, personal care products and wine.

In preparation for the event, a member created a website, [www.ladiesof-charitysaratoga.com](http://www.ladiesof-charitysaratoga.com). Reservations and payment and donation options were included on the website. The gala alter-



*Above: Silent Auction table and (below) guests await the beginning of bidding.*



nates with a fashion show as the major fundraiser to benefit Catholic Charities of Saratoga, Warren and Washington Counties and other local non-profit groups. The annual charitable events pay dividends to all involved. ♦



*“To serve rather than to be served”*

## Vincent de Paul I: Family-Centered, Ambitious, Moody

Carol Schumer, D.C.

As a child, Vincent lived a normal life, wanting to become a priest and obtain a position in the Church in order to earn enough money to retire young and provide for his family. This certainly was not a very lofty ideal for the person we today call Saint and the Great Apostle of Charity. Without a doubt, transformation dominated Vincent's first 35 years.



Born in southern France in 1581, third of six children, Vincent learned hard work, frugality and care of others in his peasant family, filled with love and the strength of community. Given his intelligence, his parents sacrificed to educate him well, for priesthood. He was ordained at age 19, expecting to “make good” his hopes of a lucrative position.

Vincent travelled twice to Rome in hopes of advancement. He failed. From 1605 – 07, he vanished, later explaining he was captive in North Africa. His story claims he reconverted the last of his four masters and escaped with him. Historians have questioned the validity of this tale. However, the real Vincent of this time is unclear, his lack of inner freedom very evident.

Still searching, he moved to Paris in 1608, a pivotal choice on his spiritual path. More attention to God resulted through his association with influential religious Masters. In 1612, he became pastor of a poor parish in Clichy and found tremendous happiness. After only months, he was called back to Paris to be tutor and chaplain to the de Gondis. During these years, severe doubts of faith tortured him. Ultimately, when he promised to give his life in service to poor persons, his faith returned and set the stage for his life's mission.

The year 1617, a decisive one for Vincent, brought him to Châtillon-les-Dombes where he preached a moving sermon, urging his listeners to assist a desperate family. That afternoon he witnessed the generosity of people as well as their lack of planning. As a result, he organized a group of women to minister to those in need. Thus the Confraternities of Charity, the forerunner of the Ladies of Charity, were born. This experience reinforced his commitment to poor persons and his view of priesthood as a ministry.

Three additional areas of his life needed to be faced. First, his melancholy, moody disposition was addressed during a retreat in 1621 as he asked God to deliver him from this state. He believed his prayer was answered through the intercession of Francis de Sales. In 1623, he visited his family for the first and last time, telling them he would not claim his inheritance and they were to expect nothing from him. He suffered for months over this break, but eventually came to peace. Finally, in 1625, the need for priests to offer missions to country folk challenged him. He founded the Congregation of the Mission to meet this poverty.



Thus this 17-year adventure brought an immense freedom and readiness in Vincent to follow God's call, to do God's work. From these experiences came the energy for his final 35 years.

*(To Be Continued)*

### Reflection

How does Vincent's early life and conversion challenge my spiritual growth?