



A 34-Year Quest

by Joyce Bieber, CHM Development Director

On March 4, CHM President Sr. Mary Ann Vogel was honored with the prestigious Kay Anderson Friend of Iowa Award from the Iowa Finance Authority. The award recognizes an individual who goes above and beyond to improve the lives of those around them and in their community. Sr. Mary Ann was recognized “for outstanding commitment to advancing housing opportunities for Iowans,” specifically her 34-year quest to effect change in the lives of people facing housing uncertainty.

The application, submitted by Humility Homes and Services, Inc. (HHSI) staff members and board of directors, states, “Do all things with great love.’ This quote by Mother Teresa resonates loudly in the work that HHSI does daily with the over

250 individuals we serve on any given day in the year. Being able to serve those experiencing homelessness and helping those most vulnerable in the community would not be possible without Sr. Mary Ann Vogel, CHM. ...Sr. Mary Ann has been a stable and consistent presence, not only in our agency for the last 30 years, but also in the Quad Cities community. She has been a mentor, leader, and a friend to many. She is a believer in systemic change and advocating for what is right.”

Sr. Mary Ann is honored to be recognized for her work; however, she is quick to point out the team effort required to provide the services and that the work is not complete. “The problems are multi-faceted and the need for affordable housing has increased,” she said.

Growing up in a loving and secure household made it apparent to Sr. Mary Ann that those who didn’t

have an established home were at a disadvantage. “I always had a great concern for children who did not have a stable environment,” she said. Early experiences such as working one summer, during college, at St. Vincent’s, a former orphanage operated by CHMs in Davenport, IA, also influenced Sr. Mary Ann.

Her work in education was a natural lead into work with young single parents. Sr. Mary Ann was among a group of CHMs who began a visioning process in 1987 to investigate the establishment of temporary housing for women, and their children. Services, they speculated, would include support services to help transition into self-sufficiency; thus began Humility of Mary Housing, Inc. (HMH) in 1990.

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Photo: CHM Sisters, HHSI Board and Staff, Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce, and friends gather for the Jubilee Campus ribbon cutting.

Summer 2021

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“The Flame” is published three times a year for the Congregation of the Humility of Mary and friends.

Our Mission: We, the members of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, call one another to live the Gospel with simplicity and joy following the example of Mary.

Like our founders, we strive to be attentive to the call of the Spirit in the signs of our times, especially the needs of the poor and the powerless.

We commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to work for justice within the human family and to care for Earth itself.

Do all things with great love.

-Mother Teresa

Congregation of the
Humility of Mary
820 W. Central Park Avenue
Davenport, IA 52804-1900
563/323-9466
sisters@chmiowa.org
www.chmiowa.org

Executive Editor: Lisa Martin
Asst. Editor: Joyce Bieber

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Dear Friends and Donors,

Religious communities of women in the United States have been spending this past year on a comprehensive study of their futures. We believe there is a future and that it will probably involve more collaboration among the communities. Keep us in your prayers as we work through this interesting and challenging time. To add to the times we are in, we CHMs are preparing to elect our new leadership in September. One of their responsibilities will be to continue guiding us through the process of change. Like our founders, who left their home land in France and set sail for an unknown home in the United States, our Vision Statement calls us to “face our contemporary realities and step deliberately into the future with courage and grace.”

Our Mission Statement calls us to “commit ourselves as individuals and as a congregation to work for justice within the human family and to care for Earth itself.” The two articles in this issue of “The Flame” are two examples of how that mission is being carried out. The work is being done, almost exclusively, by very committed lay people. We CHMs serve on boards and advisory committees. We also provide financial support which is possible because of you, our generous friends and donors.

If you have not yet visited either of these ministries, I encourage you to put that on your “to do” list. Humility Homes and Services, Inc. had a ribbon cutting ceremony and open house at the new Jubilee Campus the last week-end of June. This campus is the former St. Mary’s church, rectory, convent and school and the transformation is a great addition to the neighborhood and to the housing program. Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat has had many Earth-friendly upgrades and the addition of a new maintenance Sunrise Shop. After nearly a year of virtual programs it is wonderful to experience the total environment of the retreat center in person.

Blessings on each of you and thank you for all your support.

Sister Mary Ann Vogel
CHM President

-Quest continued from page 1

Since that time Sr. Mary Ann has been an integral part of the effort to end homelessness in the Quad Cities. The application states, "Through her work with HMHI, Sr. Mary Ann was not only able to assist mothers and children meet their basic needs in their time of need but was able to affect lasting change for the mothers served. She ultimately helped to break the generational culture of poverty."

Connie Coopman, the program's first client shared, "I have had the pleasure of knowing Sr. Mary Ann Vogel for 30 years. She was the first positive experience I had in finding a solution for housing for myself and my newborn daughter to move us out of homelessness. I walked into an interview with her carrying my child and walked out with the reality of being able to provide a home and a safe shelter for us as I continued the pursuit of my dreams of completing my education and caring for my child." She went on to say, "I know that without her commitment and leadership, I would not have had the same outcome to my situation. I was able to finish my education, secure a job and career and move on to become a homeowner myself."

Lloyd Kilmer, chairperson of HHSI, said the award and recognition of Sr. Mary Ann's contributions is so appropriate. "Her passion for kids and families and giving them opportunities by putting a roof over their heads is tireless," as is her willingness to step in wherever and whenever she is needed, he noted.

This became evident when, in 2008, Sr. Mary Ann accepted another leadership role related to housing insecurity as CHM was asked to take over management and operations of the bankrupt local emergency shelter. Humility of Mary Shelter, Inc. (HMSI) was formed and Sr. Mary Ann, already serving as finance director for HMHI, added new responsibilities to her position by taking on the same role for HMSI. She also served as interim CEO for a short period of time and is a member of the board.

"I've always liked working with numbers so working as finance director was a way for me to contribute to this ministry." There was a lot to do as HMSI secured community and grant funding, hired staff and grew the programs. In 2018, the housing (HMHI) and shelter (HMSI) entities merged to form HHSI.

Ashley Velez, now HHSI executive director, was a case manager in 2008 as CHM took over operations of the shelter. "I was there on day one and I have such admiration for what she has accomplished. She's willing to do whatever is needed to end generational poverty and that starts with a home." Ashley points to HHSI's success rates as proof that "housing first" is the right approach to take: consistently 39-40 percent of shelter participants transition into permanent housing. That is double the state's success rate.

Sr. Mary Ann is continuing her role on the board for now; however, the HHSI board is transitioning to a structure more independent of CHM. Though the congregation will be stepping back, the plan is that a CHM representative will remain on the board. Ashley knows Sr. Mary Ann will continue to be available to offer advice and assistance. She recently asked Sr. Mary Ann to mentor a young mother. "She told me 'whatever she needs.'"

When asked to sum up her philosophy regarding homelessness, Sr. Mary Ann doesn't hesitate in her response, "If they have a place to call home, they have a better foundation."



Sr. Mary Ann Vogel, HHSI Vice Chair and Founding Member, and Lloyd Kilmer, HHSI Board Chair, stand in front of the building that once was the St. Mary's Rectory which has been transformed into affordable housing.

CHM Connections Led to OLPR Connections

by Joan Meierotto

One day in 2015, Sister Kathleen Storms, SSND, then Director of Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat, told me that Richard and Joan Meierotto wished to name OLPR as beneficiary of an annuity. They hoped that a conservation easement there could protect precious farmland. That led to my meeting Joan and learning of her deep passion for “care of Earth,” a phrase in the CHM mission statement. Our conversations, coupled with extensive research and the commitment of CHMs and many others, led to the establishment of the 81.46 acre Our Lady of the Prairie Conservation Easement. I asked Joan if she’d be willing to share how her relationship with OLPR began and why she has chosen to financially support this ministry. Joan graciously responded and her article follows.

-S. Johanna Rickl, CHM

To begin with, I should probably mention that I graduated from Marycrest in 1957. Sr. Bernadine Pieper, CHM was a favorite teacher and mentor.

Some years ago, I read in “The Flame” about Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat. As I thought about it, this seemed like an opportunity for a pay back. The fact that OLPR is located on the Wapsipinicon River perhaps was providential. This was the river that I loved above all rivers, because it was where I learned to swim, fish, water ski, paddle, row, and ice skate. My home town was many miles upriver from Wheatland. Serendipitous circumstances provided the chance to visit OLPR with my daughter, Mary Ann. On our first visit, Sr. Marcia Eckerman, CHM gave us a fine tour of the property. We met you (Sr. Johanna) there during a delicious brunch featuring many of OLPR garden’s treats.

OLPR seemed to encompass the things that I would like to leave as a legacy. As a volunteer for Minnesota Land Trust, I was aware of the requirements and benefits of a conservation easement. With a biology background, I knew the great ecological value of the Sisters’ piece of prairie, how it retains the soil and its nutrients, is home for wildlife, plus many other natural virtues. We visited the land later when it was flooded so I could see its added value as a wetland acting like a kidney to filter and clean the water. Now, with climate change, we see how badly these benefits are needed.

The wise managers at The Prairie Retreat are also using solar energy and have started an apiary, helping to care for threatened pollinators.

My favorite memory of OLPR was our first visit when we were able to see the whole property including the Cosmic Walk, labyrinth, and the memorial stone garden via golf cart with our guide, Sr. Marcia, and her commentary. Then, experiencing it on our own, walking the trails to the lovely river. It was inspiring to hear about the OLPR plans and potential from Sr. Storms.

The Prairie Retreat will be used to teach stewardship and nature appreciation while offering visitors a peaceful space for renewal. Pope Francis keeps reminding us to care for Earth. OLPR will be used to further those efforts.

Little Open House on The Prairie

Sunday, October 3, 2021

1:00 - 5:00 pm

Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat

2664 145th Avenue - Wheatland, IA



All are Welcome - Bring the Whole Family!

Join us for a short time, or stay the entire afternoon, while basking in the beauty of The Prairie.

Live Music-Tours-Refreshments-Children’s Activities

Find out what’s new at OLPR and tour The Prairie’s beautiful grounds: Labyrinth, Gardens, Cosmic Walk, Nature Pond, Prairie Timber and Trails, Pollinator Strips, Retreat Centers and New Sunrise Shop!



For more information go to
theprairieretreat.org 563-336-8414

Honor and Remember

The Congregation of the Humility of Mary is grateful for the donations received in memory or honor of loved ones between January and May 2021. CHMs remember these individuals in our daily prayers and Masses.

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Sr. Marcia Eckerman, a member of the CHM Leadership Team and an avid photographer, takes advantage of the beauty in St. Joseph's Courtyard at Humility of Mary Center.

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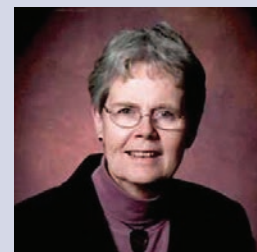
-in honor of Sr. Hanley continued

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In Loving Memory



Sister Kathleen Hanley
July 21, 1942 -
March 26, 2021

Tributes to our departed sisters can
be found at www.chmiowa.org
in the Sister Stories section

Jubilee 2021

The Sisters of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary are motivated by compassion and justice and give themselves wholeheartedly wherever the needs are greatest. The following sisters and their associates are celebrating their 2021 Jubilees. Cards may be sent in care of the sister, to Humility of Mary Center, 820 W. Central Park Ave., Davenport, IA 52804. Read more about our Jubilarians in the Sister Stories section at www.chmiowa.org.



Sr. Miriam Anstey
75 years



Sr. Regina Mary Cratty
70 years



Sr. Harriett Ping
70 years



Sr. Helen Strohman
70 years



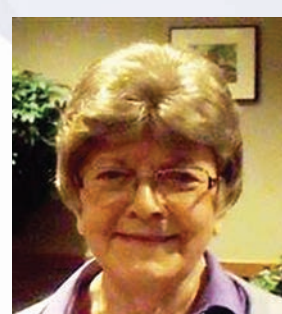
Sr. Sheila Seng
60 years



Sr. Marilyn Berger
50 years



CHM Assoc. Barb Gross
25 years



CHM Assoc. Rita Hagner
25 years

"We are deeply grateful for sisters, associates, family and friends who have accompanied us on our journey into Jubilee. May God continue to bless all with a spirit of humility, simplicity and joy as the the future unfolds before us."

Leave the World a Bit Better

by CHM Associate Barb Gross

I was born in 1948 in Cascade, Iowa. Our family life, neighborhood, going to church, and attending Catholic schools was most significant in my life. I learned that helping each other in our families, neighborhoods, farms, churches and town made our small community "a bit better."

In 1966, I joined the Dubuque Franciscans. I taught in elementary school and worked in pastoral ministry. I was always involved in peace and justice ministries. An important learning is not to be afraid wherever you are called. You need to find good mentors

and allow those you serve to be your teachers. This will "leave the world a bit better."

In 1989 I moved to Davenport to be a pastoral minister at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Through the advice of Sr. Joanne O'Brien, CHM, I volunteered at the homeless shelter and gained new awareness and insights. All involved were "leaving the world a bit better."

After much prayer and discernment, I left the Dubuque Franciscans in 1993 and in 1996 I became a member of the CHM Associate Program with Sr. Joanne as my contact sister.

Since 2015 I've been working at Bishop Drumm Retirement Center (BDRC) in

Johnston, IA, working for the CHM Sisters living there. I am thankful for the sisters that I have come to know and serve over the past 25 years. Srs. Jeanie and Elaine Hagedorn are my contact sisters and we pray together each Sunday. I appreciate our special times together, their ministry in peace and justice, their visitations to BDRC, and their gift of humor.

The CHM Mission Statement calls us individually and communally to live the gospel with simplicity, be attentive to the poor and powerless, work for justice and care for Earth. I am grateful for being a part of a community who strives to "leave the world a bit better."

Upcoming Prairie Retreats

August

Mass at The Prairie | Wed, Aug 4, 10:00am

Brave Hearts: From Loss to Resilience

Aug 6-Aug 8, Fri 5:00pm-Sun 11:00am

Exploring The Prairie

Thurs, Aug 19, 9:00am-3:00pm

Wrestling with God

Mon, Aug 23, 9:00am-3:30pm

September

Autumn Mass at The Prairie | Wed, Sept. 1, 10:00am

Cosmic Walk on The Prairie |

Wed, Sept 8, 10:00am-3:00pm

Stargazing: Beauty of Autumn Skies

Tues, Sept 14, 7:00pm-10:00pm

Come to the Quiet | Wed, Sept 15, 9:30am-3:30pm.

Cookin' Up a Prairie Storm

Thurs, Sept 16, 9:00am-2:00pm

Online: Ecumenical Prayer Service: Harvest Safety

Tues, Sept 21, 7:00pm-8:30pm

The Shamanic Journey | Sat, Sept 25, 9:30am-3:30pm

Circle of Life: Autumn

Tues, Sept 28, 10:00am-11:30am

October

Family Event: Little Open House on The Prairie

Sunday Oct, 3, 1:00-5:00pm

Mass in Honor of St. Francis and All Creation

Wed, Oct 6, 10:00am

Bread Making: No Fear, No Fail Yeast Bread

Tues, Oct 12, 9:00am-1:00pm



Greetings from Wheatland, IA,

*We've missed you and look forward
to seeing you soon!*

With Blessings From,

All of Us at The Prairie



Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat is now open!

Sign up for a sponsored retreat or create your own.

Visit theprairieretreat.org or call 563-336-8414.