

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2018

March 1-11

Ecuador Immersion Trip
St. Mary Church
Los Gatos, Calif.
Contact Associate
Carol DeCarvalho:
c.decar@yahoo.com

March 10-16

UN Commission on
Status of Women (CSW)
New York, N.Y.
Contact Roberta White, BVM:
rwhite@bvmcong.org

April 20-23

Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD)
Washington, D.C.
Contact Elizabeth Avalos, BVM:
eavalos@bvmcong.org

June 12-17

2018 Congregational Assembly
Dubuque, Iowa

July 13-15

Associate Summer Retreat
Dubuque, Iowa
Contact Associate
Grace Mendez, ACT:
gmendez@bvmcong.org

You're Invited!

SEA is a group of BVM sisters and associates who work with other members of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) to encourage corporations to adopt policies and practices that promote justice and sustainability.

Members meet face-to-face once a year for a two-day meeting and three times during the year by conference call.

New members are encouraged to attend a five-day conference in New York City during their first year for deeper understanding of ICCR's work, policies and practices.

Orientation is provided for new members. All expenses related to SEA are reimbursed.

We'd love to have you join us!

Contact Carol Cook at 563-556-3240 or Mary Ann Krems at 715-344-2453 if interested.

—SEA Committee Members

BVM Associate News

will be emailed and posted on the Associate page of the members' website. Copies mailed on request. Contact bvmassociates@bvmcong.org.



BVM Associate News

A Faithful Present, a Hopeful Future

FREEDOM • EDUCATION • CHARITY • JUSTICE

WINTER 2018

Dear Circle of Friends,

It is a new year, filled with the promise of new opportunities for us to grow in relationships with our God, our families, and one another!

Some ways to share: meeting with your cluster (if you are not in one, and want to be, let us know!); serving in your parish or your town, by yourself or with others (take pictures!); or, planning to visit Mount Carmel in Dubuque for the July Associate Retreat or the June Congregational Assembly!

"The Congregational Assembly?" you say. "Isn't that just for vowed sisters?" Aha! No!

Associates are welcome to attend these days of learning, sharing and reflection. "I always come away from these meetings refreshed and renewed," says Grace Mendez, ACT.

Chicago area associate Virginia Piecuch adds, "Since I became an associate in 1994, I have attended just about every BVM assembly. I have been welcomed, have taken part in discussions, and have even served on the planning committee. They have been enriching experiences."

Remember, the Mrs. Berkeley Fund is available to help pay



for registration and fees for the assembly or the retreat. See "Save the Date" (l.).

Happy New Year, and know that we are truly blessed to have each of you as part of our Circle of Friends!

—Suzie, Kimberly, Eileen and Grace
Associate Coordinator Team (ACT)

Associate Mary Maas Honored for Ministry



Amicus Supervisor Carl Wickland presents Associate Mary Maas with the award.

The 2017 Champion of Change Award from Amicus, a nonprofit organization in Minneapolis, was presented to BVM Associate Mary Maas on Nov. 18, 2017. The award recognizes an individual whose commitment helps Amicus to support those seeking second chances as they rebuild their lives after incarceration.

Mary began with Amicus as a volunteer in 1998. In 2006, she was hired as their reconnect manager, working with those leaving prison by assisting them with housing, employ-

ment and transportation issues as they transition to a new life in community.

Amicus notes that Mary is one of the Twin Cities' most beloved and sought after re-entry colleagues. "I totally believe in second chances. Society defines people by the mistakes they've made. Amicus and I believe that who people are is not defined by what they've done."

—Pat Thalburger, BVM
(Herbert Mary)

Colorado Cluster News

The Colorado Cluster gathered to share news with other participants, from Virginia to California to Arizona, in person and via Zoom.

Our group usually meets on the second Wednesday of the month. Over the past year, we have discussed various current topics like the eclipse in August; the happenings in Charlottesville, Va.; the status of our country; and other events on our minds and in our hearts.

Books we have reviewed include: *The Nonviolent Life* by John Dear, *Elizabeth Johnson: Questing for God* by Heidi Schlumpf, and *Laudato Si—On Care for Our Common Home* by Pope Francis.

Currently we are reading *The Faith Club* by Ranya Idliby, Suzanne Oliver, and Priscilla Warner. Reviewing this book leads us into a lively discussion by all. Several of us identified reactions in ourselves, leading us to realize our own prejudices that we



The Colorado BVM and Associate Cluster meets monthly to review books, discuss current events, and socialize.



were unaware of, and how uncomfortable we feel when these arise.

We featured questions and prayers from the Women's Network meeting in October, which included a panel of women from various faith traditions, sharing their common faith practices and concerns for our world.

At our January meeting, we will continue our review of these amazing women—brave enough to be pioneers for interfaith friendship and developing hope, when it often feels like we have very little.

—Associate Jeanie Fritscher

Prayer Group Gathers for Year End Reflection

Each year on Dec. 31, BVMs have a tradition of gathering for prayer to reflect on the past year and look forward to the coming one.

As 2017 came to a close, BVMs, associates, sisters from other religious congregations, and friends gathered in prayer at the Marie Rose Center in Campbell, Calif. At right, participants engage in discussion.

The process for the day was developed by Dolores (Dee) Myers, BVM and Associate Valerie Lozowicki. The group came together to reflect on Mary Magdalene having seen the risen Christ and to share how they, too, have seen Jesus in their lives.

—Elizabeth Avalos, BVM



Renewal of Vows and Promises



Associates Rosalia Avila (l.) and Erica Brown renew their commitments at Holy Redeemer Church in Montrose, Calif.



At Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa, associates gather in the Marian Hall Chapel to renew their commitments.

Commitment Ceremonies

Jill Burleson—Pacific, Missouri

*"I am with you on the journey,
and I will never leave you.
I am with you on the journey,
always with you."
—Kathy Sherman, CSJ*



This refrain was chanted throughout St. Bridget of Kildare Church in Pacific, Mo., following the children's liturgy for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on Dec. 8.

BVM sisters and associates, as well as schoolchildren and parishioners, witnessed the commitment of Jill Burleson as a BVM associate. In her testimonial, Jill shared that she always "felt a strong affinity to the Blessed Virgin Mary and had a deep love for her." It made sense to Jill that she would become an associate on this special feast day.

We thank Jill for her commitment and support her as she continues to journey as an associate.

—Associate Lori Ritz
Director of the Office of
BVM Life and Mission

Jolene Clauer—Dubuque, Iowa

Jolene (Jo) Clauer's associate commitment ceremony was held in the Motherhouse Chapel at Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa, on Jan. 21.

BVM C. Jean Hayen gave the opening prayer and Jeroma Day, BVM read the poem, "Seek His Face" by Stephen Mickey. BVM Julie O'Neill and Associate Sharon Scully read the "I AM" statements from John 6. LaDonna Manternach, BVM, Associate Coordinator Suzie Wright, and Associate Christine Olsem led the rest of the ceremony.

Julie, Jolene's companion, presented her with a red stole and the associate pin. The afternoon ceremony included music by Jolene's brother and sister-in-law. Jolene performed the song, "Who Am I That the King Would Bleed?" as she played the guitar that she uses



while working in the activities department at Mount Carmel.

Jo and her family performed more classical bluegrass at the celebration in the Caritas Dining Room. The acoustic guitars and mandolin inspired more than one sister to dance and clap. Jo even sang a song she wrote about the "Mount Carmel Mouse."

We thank all who were able to join us that day and all those who made it special.

—Associate Suzie Wright
ACT Member

Meet the ACC: Susan Hoerger

First things first: I am very grateful to be an associate and to be part of the Associate Coordinating Committee (ACC). For the first year I was an associate, I kept wondering what my mission is, and how I can best contribute and be of service. I watch others who are impassioned by difficult social justice issues, and I admire their constant action and vigilance.

I am a woman in her early 70s with two grown daughters, six grandchildren, and now three great-grandchildren (I call them "The Greats," as if they were a rock group. It's somehow easier to handle than facing the fact that I am, thank you God, old enough to have great-grandchildren). My children, grandchildren, and The Greats all live in the Netherlands, which means I am "required" to visit them roughly once a year. Usually I stay for two to three weeks

and that time is devoted to paying attention to my family. IS KEEPING CLOSE FAMILY TIES PART OF MY MISSION?

I work, and in my job supervise directly and indirectly a number of smart, talented and dedicated human resources professionals. They are so good at their work that much of the time I just stand on the sidelines and cheer. But I also know that I am at the stage of my working career where the most important thing I can do is transfer knowledge to colleagues who are more junior in their careers. IS COACHING AND CHEERING FOR THE TALENTED PEOPLE I WORK WITH PART OF MY MISSION?

I have a wonderful husband of 30-plus years who is a terrific helpmeet and intellectual companion. He supports me in all my endeavors, has a great sense of humor, and is one of the kindest, most decent people



Susan Hoerger makes new friends in Kathmandu, Nepal.

I know. IS APPRECIATING MY SPOUSE PART OF MY MISSION?

Last June, I was very fortunate to be able to walk around Mount Kailash in Tibet. Mount Kailash is sacred to four different faiths (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Bon) and has been a pilgrimage site for thousands of years. It is a hard trek, starting at over 15,000 feet and reaching 18,600 feet at the highest pass. If you walk around Mount Kailash, they say that all the sins of your lifetime are forgiven. I

was eager to be sin-free, if only for a moment, but it is amazing how quickly one (by which I mean I) can amass new sins. IS RECOGNIZING AND EMBRACING MY OWN HUMANITY PART OF MY MISSION?

Last things first, too: Thank you for inviting me to write about myself as a member of the ACC. I look forward to contributing to the ACC and being of service. I WANT YOU TO BE PART OF MY MISSION.

—Associate Susan Hoerger

Associates in Action: The Bridge



The third annual “Not On Our Watch” vigil, held on the Colorado Bridge in Pasadena, Calif., by Wellness Works, a nonprofit organization in Glendale, Calif., endeavors to raise awareness of veterans who come back after defending our coun-

try and now need our help to heal. This bridge is locally known as Suicide Bridge, because of the many people who have jumped to their deaths from it.

I walked the bridge with a Seabee Vietnam veteran. When he came back from Vietnam, he was spit on and no one in his family asked him about his service—they still don’t. His wife is Vietnamese, and she

has no idea about the war, or what he went through.

This vet appreciates the efforts of Wellness Works, where veterans find comfort being with others who have experienced the horrors of war and understand the lifelong scars they carry.

—Associate Cheryl Hannah

Associates in Action



BVMs, associates and staff gathered in September 2017 to celebrate 43 years of 8th Day Center’s mission to promote justice.



BVM Marilyn Thomas enjoys a “stroll” in her wheelchair along the Mount Carmel cemetery’s Pine Walk with Lori Ritz (l.) and a Clarke University student.



Working for the annual Adopt-a-Family program in the LA Archdiocese are (top to bottom): Associate Grace Mendez and BVM Anne Kendall signing Christmas cards for families, Associate Teri Peña wrapping gifts for the children, and associate candidate Carol Walsh preparing gift boxes.



Associate Suzie Wright joins fellow members of the Coalition Against Human Trafficking after the screening of the film, “I Am Still Here,” at Mount Carmel.

BVM Mission:

We are the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a community of Catholic women called to live the mission of Jesus through our core values of

FREEDOM, EDUCATION, CHARITY & JUSTICE.

Check us out online:




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