

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2019

For a list of 2019 volunteer opportunities, visit:
www.bvmsisters.org/volunteer

March 10–15

UN Commission on the Status of Women
New York, NY
Contact: Roberta White, BVM
rwhite@bvmsisters.org

April 5–8

Ecumenical Advocacy Days
Washington, D.C.
Contact: Elizabeth Avalos, BVM
eavalos@bvmsisters.org

April 6

Legacy, Love, Leadership:
The Unfolding Associate Path
CARMA
Best Western Hotel, Dubuque, IA
Contact: Associate Mary Chapman
mary.chapman55@gmail.com

April 7

Immaculata HS Alumnae
Luncheon
Niles, IL
Contact: Suzie Beckman
mbeckman@att.net

April 28

St. Mary HS Alumnae
Luncheon
Lombard, IL
Contact: Eileen O'Shea, ACT
eoshea@bvmsisters.org

May 3–5

Associate Coordinating
Committee
Mount Carmel
Contact:
bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org

May 19

Memorial Mass
Mount Carmel
Contact:
development@bvmsisters.org

July 12–14

BVM Congregational Gathering
Best Western Hotel, Dubuque, IA

Sept. 8

Diamond Jubilee Celebration
Mount Carmel Motherhouse

BVM Associate News

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



BVM Associate News

A Faithful Present, a Hopeful Future

F R E E D O M • E D U C A T I O N • C H A R I T Y • J U S T I C E

WINTER 2019

Dear Circle of Friends,

Monthly, there is an informal gathering of associates, employees, and sisters to discuss various spiritual topics at Mount Carmel. It provides an opportunity to deepen understanding of God and each other.

Participants engage in activities like praying, discussing articles, sharing stories, listening to music, and sharing sacred texts. Questions such as "How do we explore the crosses in our lives?" and "What is the

difference between joy and happiness?" as well as the topics of freedom and gratitude have been the focus.

The group discussed visiting Saint Joseph on the Prairie, the site of the first BVM Motherhouse; engaging in local service projects, and hosting a music night.

If you would like to be part of the group, contact Associate Suzie Wright. Video conferencing is available upon request for remote attendees.



What topics are you covering in your area? Are you interested in being part of a gathering?

Please email us at:
bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org.

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

'Helping Hands' Welcome Associate Holly Bernhardt

On Nov. 11, 2018, an audience of friends, family, and BVM Sisters and associates welcomed new associate Holly Bernhardt during her commitment ceremony in the Motherhouse Chapel at Mount Carmel.

The theme of the ceremony, "Helping Hands," was evident in Holly's words of gratitude for the many helping hands in her life. Her discernment companions BVMs Carmelle Zserdin, Mary Jean Ferry, Roberta White, Joanne Lucid, and Judy Callahan as well as Associate Lori Ritz, director of the Office of BVM Life and Mission; and Associate Coordinators Eileen O'Shea and Suzie Wright each played a role in the ceremony.

Holly's husband Shane and children Lyric and Aria participated in the procession.

Associate Andy Schroeder sang "You Raise Me Up," and Associates Jolene Clauer and Christine Olsem performed the song "Hands."

LaDonna Manternach, BVM was the congregational representative who welcomed Holly to the BVM associates.

A reception followed with root beer floats, squeaky



Mary Jean Ferry (l.), Judy Callahan, Holly Bernhardt, Roberta White, Carmelle Zserdin, and Joanne Lucid hold a heart that reads: "Thank you Lord for giving us each other."

cheese curds from Holly's home state of Wisconsin, and sweet treats.

—Associate Suzie Wright, ACT

Meet an Associate: Mary Clair Wenger



Mary Clair Wenger with the President of Missouri Botanical Garden.

Mary Clair has enriched our St. Louis area cluster with great insights, an energizing personality, and marvelous cooking and hospitality skills. She is a BVM woman at heart bringing many gifts from a rich and fulfilling life.

Long before I met Mary Clair, her then future mother-in-law and my mom were best friends. We often visited their farm as children—what a surprise to learn later of that connection!

Mary Clair and her late husband Jacob raised a family of five with an extended family member who had an extraordinary impact on their children's lives. Jacob was a pharmacist and supported Mary Clair's early interest in growing herbs and in experimenting with their use in tasty cooking.

She reflects her family tradition of volunteering and the BVM core values through her passion for charity, education, and environmental activities. Volunteering at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis deepened her expertise in herbal use and her desire to share what she had learned. She brought her knowledge to scouting and school groups. Mary Clair joined the St. Louis Herb Society in 1968 and served on its speakers' bureau.

Mary Clair recently received an award for 50 years of volunteer services from Dr. Peter Wyse Jackson, President of Missouri Botanical Garden. She is also celebrating almost 30 years of religious education in the St. Louis Diocese.

I value Mary Clair as my longtime friend who never ceases to inspire me as a holy woman with her hands in the earth and her heart ready to help someone.

—Mary Frances Reis, BVM



At the BVM Network for Women's Issues meeting, participants illustrate the universe timeline and their role within it.

BVM Network for Women's Issues

Dear Friends,

My name is Victoria Roehl. I am an associate candidate living in Chicago.

Recently, I had the privilege to attend the BVM Women's Network meeting held the weekend of Oct. 26–27 at the Felician Sisters' Motherhouse in Chicago. The topic was "Women and the Cosmos: Implications and Insights of the Universe Story on Women's Ways of Knowing, Being and Working." The presenter was Catholic Theological University professor Dr. Christina Zaker.

Approximately 50 BVMs, associates, and friends attended. Saturday opened with a business meeting at which all were welcome. Afterward, we were invited to participate in a ritual where we reflected upon our unique relationship to the universe story. On Sunday, Dr. Zaker provided a thought-provoking presentation. We then had the opportunity to break into small groups for discussion deciding which current topics the network would tackle through direct action, correspondence, and advocacy.

The overall experience so richly demonstrated BVM charism and core values that I found myself reflecting upon it for some time afterward. I still am, in all honesty. I should preface this statement by mentioning how moved I was simply by the fact that Associate Coordinator Eileen O'Shea extended this invitation to such a new candidate as myself in the first place. At that point, I had only been in discernment for a few weeks. She warmly assured me I was more than welcome to attend.

During the weekend, I felt an overwhelming sense of welcome and belonging. I admit to having the initial concern that in my new state of discernment, I would not know anyone



Jane Rogers, BVM (I.) and Associates Jean Ann Fritscher and Kimberly Emery discuss the universe story.

or have little to contribute. I also worried I would have to introduce myself to the entire group. Every BVM associate and sister directly approached me to introduce herself and welcome me with an open heart.

The gathering was a powerful statement that BVMs value, encourage, and enable strength in others. I am just getting to know who Mary Frances Clarke was, but I have the feeling that I was able to witness multiple incarnations of her throughout this weekend. It was a wonderful, unexpected blessing to participate in such a spirit-filled event. The weekend left me with the reflection to heed the call to "act out of love and be what others are not expecting;" as Luke 10:37 says, to "go and do likewise." My heart is filled with gratitude.

—Victoria Roehl

Walk With Us Blog:

Associate Suzie Wright reflects on the BVM Network for Women's Issues Meeting at: bvmsisters.org/WomensNetwork.

Associates in Action



At the Operation Gratitude Warehouse, a young volunteer (top, l.), helps Associates Cheryl Hannah, Carol Walsh, Rosalia Avila, and Vicki Smurlo, BVM. Associates Rosalia Avila (bottom, l.) and Cheryl Hannah pack boxes for service members.

Montrose Cluster: Operation Gratitude

Once a month, Operation Gratitude in Chatsworth, Calif., opens its doors for volunteer groups and individuals to give three hours to express thanks to military personnel and first responders. This October, four from the Montrose cluster were able to travel to participate with hundreds of all ages to lend helping hands.

The group stood in organized lines and stuffed 10,000 small gift bags that held various goodies of treats and useful items. Others helped write letters; bind letters, cards, and comics to be included in 4,000 care

packages to be shipped out by Veterans' Day; braided bracelets, and stuffed small military-uniformed teddy bears. Throughout the morning the group found encouragement from letters of appreciation.

It was gratifying for the group to be able to engage in the BVM core value of charity through this meaningful activity. The group hopes to continue to share this value as opportunities arise in the future. As the group helps bless others, they too are blessed.

—Vicki Smurlo, BVM

Sisters and Associates Adopt-A-Family

On Dec. 1, BVMs and associates volunteered at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels' Adopt-A-Family Christmas Program. Volunteers organized and packed gift boxes "filled with Christmas Magic" for 500 families in downtown Los Angeles and the Skid Row area. Some of the

sisters and associates also wrote Christmas cards to the families and created tags for the Cathedral's Angel Tree Program. This program was a special experience for all involved, helping to bring the true meaning of Christmas to those less fortunate.

—Associate Kathleen Hebron



Msgr. Terry Fleming (l.), Associates Kathleen Hebron, Teri Piña, and Carol Walsh, BVM Anne Kendall, Discerner Shirley Federico, BVM Vicki Smurlo, Kathleen's friend, David, and BVM Mary Beth Galt volunteer at Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels.

Cluster Klatch: Southwest Chicago

The Southwest Chicago cluster met Nov. 2. Associate Helen Gabel chaired the meeting and brought a wonderful discussion idea: "The Many Faces of Contemplation."

Discussion topics included:

How does God come to us disguised as our lives?

What are some of the disguises through which the Holy One has come to you?

Which were easy or hard to recognize?

The sharing was inspiring. We also talked about our members who have moved to Mount Carmel, and prayed for people in need.

We all enjoyed the Women's Network meeting held the week prior. The midterms were also a lively topic.

—Associate Kathleen Weishaar



On Nov. 2, BVMs Rose Marie Lorentzen (back l.), Kathleen Conway, and Associates Anne Marie Long and Helen Gabel, and BVM Barbara celebrate BVM Theresa McNerney's (seated) birthday.

Associates in Action

Renewal of Vows and Promises

Each year on Dec. 8, sisters and associates gather across the country to renew their vows and promises.



Dubuque, Iowa



Stevens Point, Wis.



Montrose, Calif.



Sunnyvale, Calif.



Associate Coordinating Committee



The ACC met in October at the Felician Motherhouse in Chicago. After, associates and sisters gathered for fellowship.

Getting Into the Spirit of Christmas



Associate Gina Burkart (top, second from r.) and husband, Steve (l.), stop to visit with Mary M. O'Connor, BVM while joining Clarke University students to decorate a Christmas tree at Mount Carmel, (bottom, r.).

Associate Jo Klauer, a Mount Carmel activities employee, played the guitar while the sisters and guests sang familiar Christmas carols.

"I am so glad to have had this opportunity," comments Gina. "It truly is the spirit of Christmas—not only sharing and giving, but also receiving so much in return."



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

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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