

## SAVE THE DATES FOR 2021

**May 11**  
Zoom Social  
with Grace Mendez

**May 12**  
Exploring Intersections:  
Migration, Zoom

**May 14–16**  
Associate Coordinating  
Committee Meeting  
Zoom

**May 18**  
Zoom Social  
with Vicki Smurlo, BVM

**May 23**  
Pentecost Reflection  
Zoom

**June 8**  
Zoom Social  
with Grace Mendez

**June 9**  
Exploring Intersections: Racial  
Justice, Zoom

**June 15**  
Zoom Social  
with Vicki Smurlo, BVM

**June 22–28**  
BVM Assembly  
Virtual

For a complete list of events,  
visit the members' website:  
[members.bvmsisters.org](https://members.bvmsisters.org)>  
[Resources](#)>[Calendar of Events](#).

## Contact Us

For more information  
about associates and  
events, contact:  
[bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org](mailto:bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org).

Submit your associate  
events, stories, and photos  
to: [swright@bvmsisters.org](mailto:swright@bvmsisters.org).

For a list of volunteer  
opportunities, visit:  
[bvmsisters.org/volunteer](https://bvmsisters.org/volunteer).

**BVM Associate News**  
will be emailed and posted  
on the associate page of the  
members' website. Copies  
mailed on request.



Spring photo in honor of Earth Day  
by Associate Jill Burleson.

# 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

Spring 2021

## Dear Circle of Friends,

### Happy spring!

As we see new life pop up all around us in nature, may we reflect and sow seeds of new life as associates.

With this thought in mind, I hope you had a chance to join us online for some of the Lenten Reflections led by Eileen O'Shea, associate coordinator, each Sunday during Lent. Going forward, the Associate Coordinating Committee will host regular gatherings for spiritual discussions.

As associate coordinators, our goal is to continue to create multiple avenues to connect with associates and sisters

through reflection and sharing. So I encourage each of you to check out the various Zooms available to you (see I.).

Remember, we coordinators are only a phone call away.

Peace and joy to you this Easter season.



—**Jeanie Fritscher**  
For the Associate Coordinator Team

## Associate Reflection: Lighting the Way



Looking up at a star at night, one can see light traveling through time. The light continues to be visible even though the source of that light may have died long ago.

Light continues to travel even when you can't see it during the day. It is an ongoing effect of something which is no more.

It is easy for me to see Mary Frances Clarke and countless other BVMs like that: Light traveling through time, still visible, the ongoing effect of people who

are no longer with us, continuing to burn brightly in the Sisters of Charity, BVM and the associate community.

As an associate, part of that light is now in my hands, entrusted to me to continue the ongoing effect of the work started so long ago.

That task is not an easy one; however, by placing unwavering trust in God, as Mary Frances Clarke did, I can do my part to bring light into our world.

—**Associate Kraig Pfiffner**



## CARMA Postponed Until April 2022

The Conference of Associates and Religious of the Midwest Area (CARMA) initially scheduled for this spring is rescheduled for April 2, 2022, at the Best Western Plus Dubuque Hotel in Dubuque, Iowa.

Associates, religious, and guests are welcome. More details to come in early 2022.



## Interview with the Freunds

**Associates Norm and Marabeth Freund of Dubuque, Iowa, are both teachers who will retire at the end of this school year.**

**Read about how association impacted their teaching and their lives in this Q&A interview by Associate Coordinator Grace Mendez.**

### ***How long have you been teaching?***

**Norm:** I have taught full-time since the fall of 1980 (one year at Luther College, in Decorah, Iowa, and the rest at Clarke University).

**Marabeth:** I started in 1984 at Holy Ghost School in Dubuque . . . that makes 37 years.

### ***Was there something special that led you to choose to teach? To teach at the level that you have been?***

**Norm:** I had to present my junior year in a class at St. Ambrose in Davenport, Iowa. I felt "God's pleasure" doing so and knew I wanted to teach at the collegiate level from that moment on!

**Marabeth:** Throughout my growing up years, I remember my mother telling me that I would be a good teacher. Believe it or not, I exhibited a bit of rebelliousness

as a teenager and young adult, so when I started college, I wanted to major in anything but education . . . and I tried out a lot of different majors, finally settling on sociology. (No regrets . . . it was a great liberal arts education, and I loved the learning.)

In the year after my graduation, as I was holding our newborn baby in my hospital room, I had what I think can be described as an epiphany. I realized that I would be placing this precious child in the care of teachers for 13 years of his life. Suddenly, a paradigm shift! Teaching became not just a job that women are funneled into, but a vocation that compassionate and educated people devote their lives to and one I felt called to. Two years later, Mom was smiling, and I was a teacher!

***You have both been teaching at schools founded and/or taught at by BVMs. Did you know the BVMs before?***

**Norm:** Yes, I have a second cousin (Genevieve Freund) and a now deceased great aunt (Jean Freund) who are community members.

**Marabeth:** Yes, I was in the first grade class at Sacred Heart School in Maquoketa, Iowa, the year that the school opened. After moving to Dubuque, we enjoyed many holidays with Norm's great aunt, Jean Freund.

### ***Were there any BVMs who strengthened your desire to teach? Or mentored you? Or challenged you?***

**Norm:** The correct answer is yes and just about all of them! Some of my best mentors have been Pat Nolan, Sara McAlpin, Marguerite Neumann, Mary Ellen Caldwell, and Catherine Dunn . . . I could go on and on!

**Marabeth:** This is one of those questions that I can answer by realizing that we live our lives forward, but understand them by looking backward. (I think that's a paraphrase of Kierkegaard.)

At the time, I didn't recognize her attention as something that gave me a desire to teach, it just made me feel special. Mary St. Owen, my sixth grade teacher at Sacred Heart, trusted me to do little jobs for her (like running the mimeograph machine!) and gave me challenging work to do. Memorizing and illustrating one poem each week was something I loved, and I still have some of them! Looking back, she was



**Associate Norm Freund speaks about Clarke University's BVM heritage and continuing connections. 2019**



**Associate Marabeth Freund (r.) plays piano during an Advent Lessons and Carols virtual program. 2020**

someone who helped me develop confidence and a desire to learn. I took those qualities into my teaching.

**How has being an associate affected your teaching?**

**Norm:** It has made me more aware of bringing the core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice to the forefront of what I do. It also has reinforced for me that teaching is more than a career, it is a calling . . . and one that asks you to go above and beyond the call of duty!

**How has being an associate affected your relating to students?**

**Norm:** Justice, in part, is how you treat that person right in front of you; it is recognizing the dignity and worth of every student and urging them onward with the values embraced by Clarke and the congregation.

**Marabeth:** Norm became an associate several years before I did, but I started my discernment about it then. During those years some things were happening that affected where, who, and how I was teaching.

The core values that I learned about first through Norm and then later during my “formal” discernment were very much a part of some decisions that I made about teaching during that time.

Very briefly, through an Ecumenical Emmaus weekend, my eyes were opened to see that there are children in Dubuque who are not Catholic, white, and middle class, and I felt called to teach in a school that would reach some of them.

It was a difficult and painful decision, but I decided to leave St. Anthony School and accepted a position in a public school that served some of those children I felt called to. Through my association and embracing the core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice, I taught at Marshall Elementary for seven years.

Then, in answer to a call to serve an even more marginalized population, I have been an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher for the last eight years. It has been rewarding and humbling to teach many children of immigrants (mostly Marshallese) and

refugees, and come to know their families.

**Why are you choosing to retire now?**

**Norm:** While we originally planned to retire one year later, Marabeth’s health challenge of last summer was an eye-opener regarding not taking the next stage of life for granted. We actually want to get to that next stage!

**Marabeth:** The time is right. We have grandchildren whom we love spending time with, a yearning to travel, and we are healthy enough to enjoy both!

**Any plans for after retiring?**

**Norm:** Many—more time with grandchildren, more travel (and, for the first time, not just in summers), volunteer work (at Clarke, for example), and I believe I have some more teaching left in me for Roberta Kuhn Center!

**Marabeth:** A dog, a truck, and a camper. . . but Norm might not be on board with one of these, so we’ll just keep it under wraps! Ha-ha!



## Associate Reflection: There For Each Other



When my daughters began attending elementary school, we became friends with many BVMs living at St. Bernard Convent in Los Angeles. Through the years we celebrated many happy occasions and also shared the sad ones.

It was an incredible gift. During that time, they (and their respective families) became part of our family and continue to be so.

Over the past few years, many BVMs encouraged me to become an associate. For some reason I did not feel that I was qualified.

I finally decided that if God did not think I was qualified, the opportunity

would not have been offered. Since the time I began my discernment everything fell into place.

The wonderful sisters and my fellow associates convinced me to join. I am still a little upset that I wasted so much time thinking I was not suited for the task.

I have been an associate for several years now, and I do not know what I would have done without the wonderful BVM sisters and associates. My husband Carl suffered many years of ill health, and I always felt that they gave me an incredible amount of support up to the time of and since his passing.

Being an associate has brought so much to my life. We are there for

each other no matter what.

I have learned not only about the BVM beginnings and their individual talents but also their core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.

One of the questions taken from the Associate Discernment Prayer is whether I feel peaceful since becoming an associate. The answer is of course, yes, and in so many different ways.

I pray that God blesses all of the BVM sisters and associates. I am especially grateful for our Montrose, Calif., group for your love and support.

—Associate Clara Schwartz

## Roberta Kuhn Center Offers Enrichment Classes Online



"It's the best kept secret in Dubuque!"

I've heard that comment many times, but I intend to dispel the myth of secrecy about the Roberta Kuhn Center (RKC) at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque, Iowa.

RKC, named after a previous BVM president, is a space at the Motherhouse where BVM sisters, associates, and other volunteers share their gift of education, enrichment, and community with the people of Dubuque and the area, age 55 and above.

Some of the classes are so in-demand that every August for many years, I've eagerly waited by the mailbox

(figuratively) for the registration brochure.

Just imagine this delightful range of classes: therapy aquatics, yoga, line dance,

art (collage, painting, art history), cards (Bridge, Cribbage), Great Discussions, cosmology, psychology, music, poetry, book club, composition, French, Spanish, genealogy, quilting, crochet and knitting, computer skills, and more.

The instructors are former teachers, experienced artists, crafters, and wellness professionals.

I hear you: "It must be expensive." Don't faint; classes are only about \$25 per semester! Financial assistance is available, too.

The warm and friendly atmosphere at RKC is as good as the classes. I've made several new friends. We meet after class at the café down the street to continue discussions and simply chat.

One of the people who makes RKC special is Director Karen Kane-Herber, a former middle school teacher.

Her intrepid nature and organizational skills were much needed when Mount Carmel Bluffs construction gobbled up the parking lot and entrance areas for the RKC students. Karen made sensible and workable changes.

Since COVID-19, Karen managed to pivot classes onto Zoom. This change to online sessions was a blessing in disguise for many, such as my sister Marlys in Iowa City, who can now take classes along with me.

"The huge majority of our participants are from the larger Dubuque



Director of the Roberta Kuhn Center Karen Kane-Herber (r.) greets RKC participant Margreet Ryan during a 2017 event. Karen recently started discernment to become an associate.

community," Karen says. "Last year with a total enrollment of 600, the ratio was 500 lay people to about 100 BVMs. The whole purpose of the RKC and its founding was to provide a service to an underserved part of the Dubuque community back in the early 1980s."

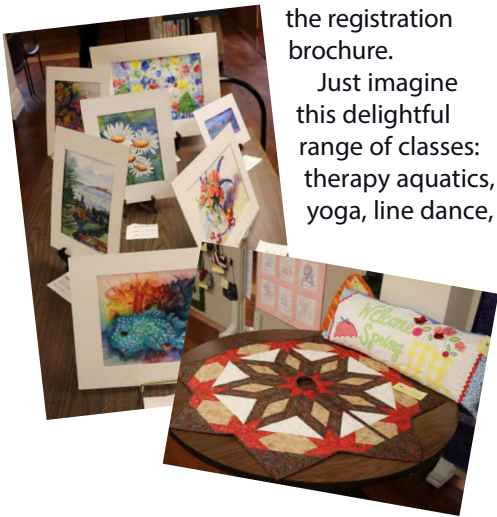
RKC fills me with knowledge, enjoyable skills, and interesting ideas. I have a heart full of gratitude to the BVMs, who are famed educators.

Now you know the secret of RKC; consider this an invitation to join us if you can.

More info:

[bvmsisters.org/roberta-kuhn-center](https://bvmsisters.org/roberta-kuhn-center)

—Associate Maureen Frommelt



## Associate Reflection: A Compass and a Path



Association with the Sisters of Charity, BVM provides a meaningful connection with a community of women

who continue to influence the world through their charm and core values of freedom, education, charity, and justice.

As an associate, I am inspired

through the personal relationships I am able to develop with the sisters, and I am also challenged and affirmed in using the gifts I have been given to serve others.

As I witness their commitment and faithfulness to the Gospel, they model for me the fact that there is not just one way to bring the community's charism into the world.

The love and support this Circle of Friends provides helps me to see what's mine to do.

Through association I am learning that the mission and core values of the community serve as both compass and path, and it's a journey we never have to take alone.

—Associate Katie Pfiffner

### 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, AND JUSTICE.**

[BVMSISTERS.ORG](https://bvmsisters.org)  
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