

SAVE THE DATES FOR 2022

May

- 10 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 17 Just for the Fun of It Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 18 Cyber Cluster with Jeanie Fritscher

June

- 14 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 21 Just for the Fun of It Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 22 No Cyber Cluster this month
- 22-26 BVM Assembly Best Western Plus Dubuque, IA

July

- 12 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 19 Just for the Fun of It Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 20 Cyber Cluster with Jeanie Fritscher

August

- 9 Zoom Social with Grace Mendez
- 16 Just for the Fun of It Zoom with Vicki Smurlo, BVM
- 17 Cyber Cluster with Jeanie Fritscher

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

Contact Us

For more information about associates and events, contact:

bvmassociates@bvmsisters.org.

Submit your associate events, stories, and photos to: swright@bvmsisters.org.

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

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

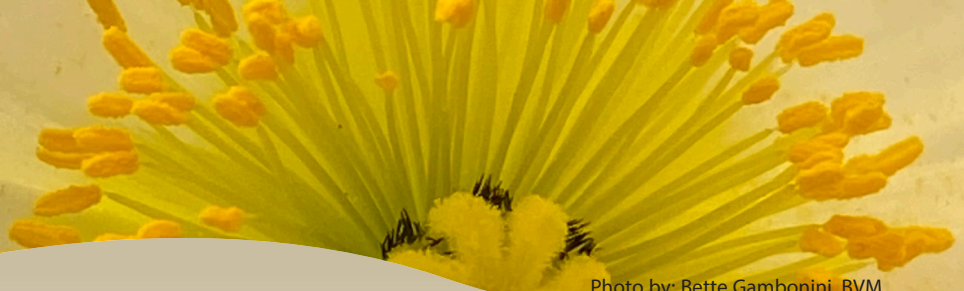


Photo by: Bette Gambonini, BVM

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 2022

Dear Circle of Friends,

Happy Easter, Happy Spring!

Easter and Spring bring so many signs of rebirth. They are all around us:

- Trees are beginning to leaf out.
- Grass is turning green.
- Crocuses, daffodils, and tulips are sharing their colors with us.
- Construction continues at Mount Carmel Bluffs.
- The 2022 BVM Congregational Assembly is in-person for the first time in three years.
- Clusters are beginning to meet in-person.
- Summer plans are being made.

Spring and Easter bring hope to our world and joy to our hearts. So look around your world for these signs and in the words of the poet Mary Oliver, "Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it."



Associate Coordinator Team (ACT):
Jeanie Fritscher, Grace Mendez, and Eileen O'Shea

We hope to see you at the BVM Assembly in June, either in person or virtually.

Please remember that we coordinators are only a phone call away!

Easter Peace and Joy to you all.

—Eileen O'Shea for the ACT

Choosing Joy

Sometimes your JOY is the source of your smile, and sometimes your smile can be the source of your JOY.

—Thich Nhat Hanh



When I first saw this quote, I thought to myself, "Well, that's true," and moved on to the next thing. Later that day however, I found these words making their way back into my consciousness, and I began to see a greater depth than I had first considered. Questions came into my mind like, "Where does my joy come from? Can I manufacture joy or is it given? Is feeling joy a choice?"

The idea of joy being the source of a smile makes sense; something or someone engenders a feeling that makes us smile, but a smile being the source of our joy is not as obvious. Are our bodies and emotions really so interconnected that an expression on our faces can invoke an emotion within us?

Thich Nhat Hanh has written much about the gentle power of a smile, not just for others but for ourselves as well. Try it. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and allow a soft smile to come to your lips. What do you notice? Hopefully a moment of peace and JOY.

—Associate Katie Anders

An Associate You Should Know: Sean Bradley

I approached the room of a friend in Gables, a new section of Mount Carmel Bluffs, and found her sitting with Associate Sean Bradley, going through the many papers she had acquired since her eyesight dimmed and deciding which she needs to keep.

Usually I meet Sean pushing a wheelchair or delivering packages, but he's a man of many abilities. He taught mathematics at Clarke University for over 20 years. As chair of the Catholic Identity Committee, he made many good BVM friends. In 2014, Sean applied to be an associate at the blessed moment when he could have as companions Sue Rink, Helen M. Garvey,

and Mary Ellen Caldwell—what he calls the "Dream Team." I am jealous.

In 2020, he left Clarke to become a home health helper for elderly men. In time, Director of BVM Community Life Services, Cari Simpson, contacted him about working at Mount Carmel Bluffs.

Sean shares, "It's the most natural fit. My desire to be of service meets with the needs of the sisters in this time of physical loss. Their willingness to trust me and to let me share in their vulnerability is a gift. We bless each other in ways I can hardly express."

—Mary A. Healey, BVM



Mary A. Healey, BVM (I.) enjoys spending time with Sean Bradley, a new member of the BVM Community Life Services team.

An Associate You Should Know: Katie Gibson



Associate Katie Gibson has an unusual and interesting ministry. She makes greeting cards that are out of the ordinary. Katie is a former BVM and was accepted as a BVM associate in 2016. When Katie's husband, Fred, passed away she was invited to live with her daughter, Ann, in Minnesota. Katie was asked to join a card group and to her surprise they were not playing cards, they were making greeting cards—and the rest is history.

Her cards are whimsical, profound, creative, and engaging. Making the cards enabled Katie to stay active

during the COVID-19 pandemic. She sends cards to a wide range of people: residents in nursing homes, and those who need a little encouragement, celebration, and joy in their lives. BVM Pat Thalhuber wrote that Katie's cards "have touched so many people who receive them."

Each card has a label that states, "Handmade with love by Katie." Her prayers accompany each card. A recent

recipient of one of Katie's cards shared, "I just wanted to thank you for all the creative and encouraging cards that you have been sending me. Each one is so different, supportive, and positive. They have been wonderful to receive. Thank you for thinking of me."

Thank you, Katie, for your unique way of sharing the BVM core values.

—Associate Coordinator Eileen O'Shea

Did You Know?

 There is a private group space on Facebook that all BVM associates are welcome to join. Reach out to Grace Mendez, Eileen O'Shea, or Jeanie Fritscher if you would like to be invited to the group. All posts in the group are private.



Samples of Katie's cards will be given to sisters at Mount Carmel Bluffs for their use.

How We Keep Going and Growing Together

Recently, I was invited to review my role as a member of the Associate Coordinating Committee. Thinking back, I was struck by how our southern California associates over the years exemplified our new and current mantra: “*See, we are doing something new.*”

Here are a few examples:

Former BVM Mary Lu Coughlin invited us to work with Wellness Works to connect with veterans. We hosted St. Patrick’s Day parties and volunteered at the “Not on My Watch” suicide prevention weekends.

Once, we spent a Saturday fixing care packages with “Operation Gratitude” to send to our military, as suggested by Associate Clara Schwartz.

Early on, Associates Bobbi and Elias Lopez introduced us to the street ministry of making and delivering sandwiches for homeless people.

Another example was the Ministry of Correspondence initiated by Associate

Shirley Federico, seeking out those sisters and associates who might appreciate a more personal way of feeling connected as BVMs.

My point is that for all these outreach activities, it was the associates themselves who were alert, present, and found the opportunities to do something new.

In some instances, these led to further involvement by individual associates to continue ongoing commitments of time and talents for these organizations.

What else is out there that’s *something new* to keep us BVM associates and sisters going and growing together?



Associate Shirley Federico writes letters to sisters at Mount Carmel Bluffs as her correspondence ministry. She also makes bookmarks and sends yarn to the Mount Carmel Bluffs knitting group.

—BVM Vicki Smurlo



SAVE THE DATE:

May Speaker: Tania Ibarra

Co-founder of Step Up Equity Matters
Sunday, May 22, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. CST
via Zoom: tinyurl.com/yc84epwd

and Stretch: portal.stretchinternet.com/bvmsisters



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT:

April Speaker: Caprice Jones

Founder of the Fountain of Youth, Dubuque, Iowa
The recording can be found on the BVM Sisters’ YouTube channel:
youtu.be/GSUzy_ut0a8.

We Are All Related Speaker Series

We Are All Related Speakers Series provides opportunities to deepen relationships with people of diverse populations, cultures, and backgrounds. The series is a stepping-stone to establishing connections with various speakers and valuing their wisdom and their journey. *We Are All Related* is inspired by Directional Statement #2.

The May speaker is Tania Ibarra. She is a high school graduate of Nuevo

Mundo in Guayaquil, Ecuador and was BVM Luann Brown’s student in Honors English. Tania graduated from Clarke University with a B.A. in accounting and business administration with an emphasis on finance. She went on to attain certification as a lean six sigma green belt, and has a professional trainer certificate from UW-Madison. She also serves on numerous volunteer boards as well as co-founded both

Step up Equity Matters and the *Latino Professionals Association*.

For more information about Tania’s work with *Step Up for Equity* check out this website:

stepupforequity.com/team/tania-ibarra

—Committee members:
BVMs Luann Brown, Pat Thalhuber and Associate Suzie Wright

Associates in Action



SENALZE
Alfonso and Joan' KOAT Program Awareness Spot 2022

Joan's Journey With Dementia

Joan Judge Mirabal, a BVM associate and her husband, Alfonso Mirabal appear in a video (above) by the ABC television affiliate in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The video is part of a public service announcement (PSA) project, for the Alzheimer's Association of New Mexico.

Joan realized she had a problem when she couldn't get words out at times. She expressed it by saying, "the words stay behind my eyes." She had the same problem in addressing friends whom she knew well.

After a lengthy process of testing and evaluation by the neurologist, it was determined that Joan had early onset of vascular cognitive impairment—a form of dementia.

Early on, both Joan and Al accepted the situation, and their attitude came to the attention of the Albuquerque Alzheimer's Association. The experience of the Alzheimer's Association is that many with a form of dementia do not deal with the condition until late in the process and therefore do not avail themselves of the help that the association could provide.

Monthly virtual gatherings provide information and support for small group exchange. In the support group, helpers meet to discuss ideas and provide assistance for the caregivers.

Joan still participates in a monthly book club and a prayer group to keep her mind active.

—Associate Joan Judge Mirabal



BVM Julie O'Neill, Associate Christine Olsem, BVM Veronica Higgins, and Associate Jolene Clauer are part of a monthly spirituality group that shares prayers, poems, songs, images, and stories. April's theme was renewal.



Associate Marabeth Freund recently came out of retirement and accepted an invitation to teach ESL to eight children aged three to fifteen. The children are all from an Afghan family recently resettled in Dubuque. Marabeth shares, "The children are delightful, hard-working, and eager to learn. I'm amazed at what they've already learned and am loving my time with them!"

We Remember Our Associates

Full obituaries are posted online at:
bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries.



Mary Therese Gill

May 2, 1931–
Feb. 2, 2022
Commitment:
Jan. 14, 2003



Jocile Walsh

April 13, 1935–
March 2, 2022
Commitment:
Feb. 14, 1997

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.

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