

# From Our Associates

## Dear Circle of Friends,



What amazing, dynamic changes are happening all around our world. Some of the changes are ones that are easy to embrace, such as the sprouting of flowers and the lengthening amount of daylight each day. Other changes feel more like challenges as we see famine, fires, and

fighting taking place in much of our world. It is one of the reasons why the Pope's call for a year focused on Hope seems providential wisdom.

In the articles written for this issue, you will see hope popping up often, much like the crocus and daffodils beginning to brighten our lawns and lighten our hearts.

Whether you are reading the stories about associate gatherings, reflections

on calls for prayer or those seeking discernment, hope abides.

May you each share in the hope that comes with this season. May you be empowered to hold on to the hope when storms come and to share the love of our Creator to those who lack the hope that is ours.

—Suzie Coulthard  
Associate Coordinator

## Associate Relationship Transformation Update

Since October, our three working groups (about 19 people), have been reporting monthly to the Associate Steering Committee (ASC), which is guiding the process. Highlights of recent work include:

1. **Communications** expanded its group and is creating a communications plan to keep all stakeholders informed on a regular basis.
2. **Interim Structure** investigated the gap between Suzie Coulthard's responsibilities as associate coordinator and the project change management needed to move these efforts forward. The team's request for additional resources in February led to the BVMs filling the gap by offering a part-time consulting contract to Associate Laura Field. Laura now works directly with ASC Chair Eileen O'Shea, the working groups, and the ASC.
3. **Organizing Framework** is benchmarking organizations to gather lessons learned as it explores potential

structures and consider the pros and cons of our options. The group recently completed an interview with the Loretto Link, an inclusive mission-oriented group rooted in that community's values.

In April, the ASC embarked on research that will include focus groups and an online questionnaire to better understand associates' collective hopes and dreams for the future. We will distribute the survey in English and Spanish for the bulk of our associates. It will also be available in print as needed.

The survey will be available to all associates in May.

—Communications Working Group



*The four associates celebrating a little in-person community building are Associate Coordinator Suzie Coulthard (I.), Director of BVM Life and Mission Pat Maddux, Associate Relationship Transformation Consultant Laura Field, and Associate Steering Committee Chair Eileen O'Shea.*

## Save the Date

### Associate Commitment Ceremony

**MJ Meister and  
Nancy Moreno**

July 11, 2025 at 6 p.m.  
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel

Social following  
in St. Joseph Hall.

## We Remember Our Associates

Read Obituaries for Associates: [bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries](https://bvmsisters.org/associate-obituaries)



**Lois A. (Schnier) Nilles**

Feb. 26, 1932–  
March 9, 2025

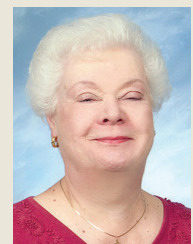
Accepted Sept. 24, 2009



**Patricia Halpine**

Oct. 12, 1942–  
March 15, 2025

Accepted Dec. 8, 2002



**Pat Driscoll**

July 29, 1943–  
April 19, 2025

Accepted May 3, 1998



# Being Pilgrims of Hope BVM Community

*Carried by Love,  
seeds of hope can spread  
far and wide.*



Attending the first gathering on being "Pilgrims of Hope" at Carmel Catholic High School in Mundelein, Ill., are BVM Peggy Geraghty (l.), Associate Helen Gabel, Discerner Donna Lane, Associates Andy Fitzpatrick, Jo Pohl, Kausar Khokhar, Laura Field, Mary Vallely, Mo McGrain, Razia Khokhar, Pat Dieveney, and Joanne Yerkes.

## Being Pilgrims of Hope

In March, community strengthening meetings were held with associates in the greater Chicago area as they focused on the topic of hope. Associate Coordinator Suzie Coulthard facilitated the group events and one-on-one meetings.

The conversations began with a time of sharing and community building followed by prayer. Then they explored how people were individually struggling to maintain hope, followed by how they might collectively spread hope in their community.

Associate Andy Fitzpatrick hosted at Carmel Catholic High School the first group of 11 associates, one discerner, and one sister with the assistance of associates Helen Gabel, Mary Vallely, Mo McGrain, and discerner Donna Lane.

Although the second group hosted by Virginia Piecuch was much smaller, a different intimacy blossomed between the three associates present— Virginia, Anne Marie Long, and Suzie Coulthard.

While in the Chicago-area, Suzie had the opportunity to meet with Associate Linda Heying.

Throughout all the interactions came a deepening understanding of the need for more opportunities for in-person gatherings and for a continuing commitment to be a body

seeking engagement in community-building, justice actions, and spiritual development through personalized, yet collective, efforts. For some, this meant a commitment to reaching out to BVMs and associates for personal interactions. Others committed to engage in more advocacy on social justice topics, while

some rededicated themselves to prayer.

Suzie looks forward to holding similar events in other areas of the BVM community throughout this year. If you would be interested in helping to host such gatherings, please contact Suzie at: [scoulthard@bvmsisters.org](mailto:scoulthard@bvmsisters.org).

## Associates in Action



Sisters and associates from Minnesota and Iowa gathered for a celebration of life for Associate Nancy Harding (d.) represented in this photo by one of her tulip paintings. Attending were BVM Pat Thalhuber (seated, l.), Associates Eileen O'Shea, Mary Kay Ross, and Kay Gibson; Associates Suzie Coulthard (standing, l.), Mary Maas, Marybeth Coleman, BVMs Amy Golm, Susan Coler, Kathy Kandefer, Kate Hendel, LaDonna Manternach, Anne Marie McKenna, Fran Donnelly, and Associate Anne Klejment.



# Welcome New Associates:



## Nancy Moreno

Along with spring flowers, a new associate, Nancy Moreno, has blossomed in San Jose, Calif.

She was nurtured through the discernment process by companions BVMs Elizabeth Avalos and Marilyn Wilson; Associates Carol DeCarvalho, Francis DeCarvalho, and Kay Harrison; and personal friends, Rebecca Wong and Robyn Schlice.

Nancy is a proud mother of three adult daughters and works in the tech industry. When she isn't working, you can find her volunteering in her parish at Santa Teresa Church with the youth, leading a grief care group, championing good mental health initiatives, and advocating for the environment.

She first connected with BVMs through anti-human trafficking efforts and developed close friendships that they are sustaining through a Zoom-based Christogenesis group.

Nancy is already rooted in many of the justice issues that are entrenched in BVM life. While a discerner, Nancy joined the DeCarvalhos in standing for justice during a January protest and is eager to continue to deepen her justice work.

We look forward to Nancy's growth in the associate relationship.



## Jennifer Stork

Jennifer "Jenny" Stork is the 350th associate in the BVM Associate Relationship. Jenny lives in Dubuque, Iowa, with her husband John. They

have five children and delight in being grandparents to 24.

Jenny was educated by BVMs at St. Eugene in Chicago during elementary school and again when she attended Clarke University. Recently, she has grown into a deeper understanding

of the BVM community through her discernment process with her companions BVMs LaDonna Manternach, Mary McCauley, Mary Ann Zollmann, and Associates Eileen O'Shea, Marybeth Coleman, and Linda Heying.

In her application, Jenny shared this reflection about her companions: "Their gentleness and openness was a gift that allowed me to be myself and to be honest in my discernment process."

Companion BVM Mary McCauley stated that Jenny "is a sensitive, wise, perceptive, and caring woman."

## Getting Fueled for the Journey



*In March, three of the 12 discerners met with associates in Dubuque, Iowa. They discussed volunteer opportunities and the Congregational Assembly. Discerners are currently located in Arizona (2), California (1), Iowa (7), and Illinois (2). A few inquirers may also need discernment circles in the future.*

## Reclaiming Voice: Writing Workshop



This summer as part of the Clarke University Scholarly Projects, BVM Associate Gina Burkart will facilitate a writing workshop for high school students enrolled in

grades 10–12. The workshop will take place July 19–25 from 10 a.m.–12 p.m. at Clarke University. It will conclude July 26 from 10 a.m.–12 p.m. at the BVM Motherhouse with participants reading aloud a chosen text they wrote and revised during the writer's workshop.

In the workshop, students will practice journaling and free-writing, as they closely read and discuss short texts from a variety of different genres and authors. While reading, they will engage in annotating the texts and journal in response to free-write prompts related to the texts.

Small group discussions will focus on rhetorical analysis—with the goal of using the texts as springboards for writing. Students will practice writing in different genres and use rhetorical analysis to read, write, discuss, and offer feedback to each other for revisions.

Finally, in sharing their polished drafts of writing with a live audience—students will experience first-hand how their writing connects and resonates with an audience. The hope is that the students who attend the workshop will observe how reading and writing connects us—and empowers us to voice our thoughts, ideas, and stories with each other. Literature offers a unique lens for understanding one another and breaking down walls of division. Reading and writing evoke and release emotions that help us better understand each other—literacy is a powerful tool to

spread empathy and evoke change.

In this sense, having the students conclude their week sharing their writing at the BVM Motherhouse is especially significant, as it revisits the mission of the BVMs and Mary Frances Clarke—empowering our youth with the tools of reading and writing. In a culture of technology, reading and writing can help our youth find their voices and use them to connect with others in transformative ways.

BVMs and residents of Mount Carmel Bluffs are welcome and encouraged to come and listen to and discuss the students' writings. Light refreshments will be provided. More specific details about the event will be provided closer to July 26. [tinyurl.com/9zry9zr5](https://tinyurl.com/9zry9zr5)

—Gina Burkart, EdD; Associate, Assistant Professor of First-Year Studies and Director of Learning Services, Clarke University





Over 30 sisters who grew up in or were missioned in the West gather to share memories, stories, and impact with Katie Anders and Colleen McGinnity as they prepare for Katie's novitiate Heritage Tour.

## Heading West!

To prepare for our novitiate Heritage Tour in Arizona and California, Colleen McGinnity and I gathered with more than 30 sisters who grew up in or were missioned in the West throughout various times in their lives. There were sisters present who ministered in Arizona and California, as well as Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Washington, and Oregon. After an hour and a half, we had only scratched the surface of the impact of the presence of BVMs in the West and the impact of the West on the BVMs!

Story after story was shared with us about the beauty of the various

landscapes, the churches, schools, and convents that made up the day-to-day environment, as well as the best places to get ice cream!

Amidst the memories and the laughter, there were two threads that connected everyone's story. First, was the depth of gratitude for the students the BVMs taught and the families who were their neighbors. The second thread that ran through the storytelling was that during both the good times and the difficult times, the community that was created among the BVMs who lived and taught together helped to shape



Katie Anders (l.) and Ann DeLeeuw enjoy hearing the stories of the "Wild West."

Right: Mary Frances Reis (l.), Helen Wolkerstorfer, and Ann Cronin participate in the storytelling.

not only the lives of the students but the individual sisters as well.

I am both excited and grateful to be able to see the places that are so much a part of our history as a congregation and that remain near and dear to so many sister's hearts.

—Katie Anders, BVM



BVMs Katie Anders (front row, l.) and Colleen McGinnity visit Southern California Associates Nancy Niles (front row, center), Teresa Tiffany; Clara Schwartz (second row, l.), Faith Holland, BVM Marguerite Murphy, Associates Carol Walsh, and Dolores and John Bromberek.



BVM Katie Anders (l.), visits Northern California Associates Kay Harrison, Francis De Carvalho, Carol De Carvalho, and Nancy Moreno; also visiting were BVMs Colleen McGinnity and Marguerite Murphy.





# Pondering



## With Instead of For

In his book, *Tattoos on the Heart*, Greg Boyle recounts many stories of his work with former gang members. But it is a change of prepositions he suggests that I remember most clearly: it is better to work *with* others than it is to work *for* others. This slight shift might have an outsized impact on the way we carry ourselves in the world.

The word “with” indicates working together, a compassionate companionship, solidarity. It also recognizes the relationship of giving to

receiving—whenever we give, we receive; and whenever we receive, we also give.

This helps me in my ministry with elders (who, by the way, provide an awful lot of ministry to me!). As I visit someone who is homebound, sick, or dying, I try to remember this: I am not doing something for this person. We are doing something with each other, together. What a gift. Thanks, Greg Boyle.

—Sean Bradley  
Spiritual Care Minister

## Eco Tip: The Issue of Water

*“Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance . . . it is indispensable for human life . . . Sources of fresh water are necessary for health care, agriculture, and industry.”*

—*Laudato Si’*

Growing up in Southern California at a very young age, I was aware of the preciousness of water. My siblings and I were trained to turn on the water to get our hands wet, turn off the water, use the soap to wash our hands, turn on the water, and rinse our hands. We were educated to use this same process for brushing our teeth. Never leave the water running while you were actually washing your hands and/or brushing your teeth. This would be wasting water!

When we had the occasional winter rains, my father would bring out a large barrel and buckets to collect rainwater. He would let us know how precious this resource was. “We need to collect

this water so we will have water for our plants,” he would preach.

When I arrived at Mount Carmel Bluffs and saw people allowed the water to run freely as they washed their hands and brushed their teeth, I was surprised to see how they were seemingly wasting so much water. It was a new cultural reality.

Recently, I heard a lecture from an Iowa woman involved in educating the population in keeping the Iowa water healthy and clean. She discussed the ways livestock and fertilizers were destroying the waters of the rivers and lakes and the need for educating the farmers and cities in ways to combat these harmful practices. It was encouraging to know these practices are being discussed in agricultural programs.

What can I personally do to protect our clean water? Each of us needs to reflect on our use of water.

How careful and respectful are we of this precious gift? How do we model this for others? Are we aware of the countries suffering from severe droughts and unsafe water, often due to first-world industrial practices?

Looking to the future, what will be the repercussions in the world if control of water becomes a multi-national business? These are some of the challenges facing the world today.

Each time you wash your hands, brush your teeth, or ask for a glass of water, remember to thank God for this precious gift of clean water—a gift all too often taken for granted.

“Fresh drinking water is an issue of primary importance . . . it is indispensable for human life . . .” —*Laudato Si’*

—Mary Elizabeth Galt



### Ponder:

What practices regarding the preciousness of water did you learn from your parents, teachers, neighbors, and friends?

How is fresh drinking water an issue of primary importance for you?

—Rose Mary Meyer



# BVMs and Associates Attend 'Hands Off' Rallies

Standing for justice, BVMs and associates participate in the national "Hands Off" rallies on April 5 to let their voices be heard. They were among over 1,300 registered rallies nationwide and globally.



Associate Laura Field gets serious about bullying at the Chicago rally.



In Dubuque, BVMs Mary Ellen Meckley (l.), Lynn Lester, Mary Nolan, Irene Lukefahr, Janet Desmond, and Paulette Skiba stood for justice. BVMs Theresa Caluori and Teri Hadro were also present.



Associates Norm and Marabeth Freund shiver for justice at the rally in Dubuque, Iowa.



Associates Helen Gabel (l.), Andy Fitzpatrick, Mary Valley, and Mo McGrain let their voices be heard in Gurnee, Ill.



Associate Kay Harrison (r.) and friend attend a rally in Northern California.

## Save the Dates:



### Celebrating 50 years of Salt:

Join us for an open house to celebrate Salt magazine's journey through 50 years. Snacks and refreshments will be provided.

**Thursday, June 5**

1:30–3 p.m.

Bethany room in the Motherhouse

Visit our website! As we celebrate the legacy and impact of Salt, we will be featuring various articles from the magazine's 50-year journey:

[bvmsisters.org/celebrating-50-years-of-salt](http://bvmsisters.org/celebrating-50-years-of-salt).

## Celebration of Generosity



Prayer service in honor of our benefactors:

**Wednesday, June 4**

1:30–2 p.m.

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel

Reception to follow in St. Joseph Hall.

To register, please call the Office of Development: 563-585-2854

The prayer service will be live streamed on 994 and on [stream.prestosports.com/bvmsisters](http://stream.prestosports.com/bvmsisters).



# In Memoriam

Read a sister's eulogy and watch the Memorial Mass: [bvmsisters.org/obituaries](https://bvmsisters.org/obituaries)



**Eugena Sullivan—3813**

Eugena Sullivan, 93, died April 13, 2025, at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque, Iowa.

Eugena was born in Chicago on June 26, 1931, to Eugene and Mollie (Fitzgerald) Sullivan. She entered the congregation Sept. 8, 1953, from St. Kilian Parish, Chicago. She professed first vows on March 19, 1956, and final vows on July 16, 1961.

Eugena ministered as computer center staff and registrar at Clarke University in Dubuque. She also was a secondary science teacher at Holy Family High School in Glendale and Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, both in Calif.; and Archbishop O'Hara High School in Kansas City, Mo. She was an elementary teacher at Our Lady Help of Christians in Chicago.

"Eugena was a gentle, kind, and loving person who never wanted to draw attention to herself. She was far more interested in learning about people

... She loved to cook and was a really good bartender. She was generous, gracious, and the essence of hospitality. She loved bringing people together and treating them, whether welcoming the new Clarke faculty by inviting them to dinner or organizing a pizza party for the members of her set who meant so much to her." (*Eulogy.*)

She was preceded in death by her parents, brothers Eugene (Maxine) and John (Joan) Sullivan and a sister Mary (Edward) Zidek. She is survived by nieces, and a nephew.



**Susan (Michaela) Rink—3490**

Susan Rink, 97, died April 27, 2025, at Mount Carmel Bluffs in Dubuque, Iowa.

Susan was born on Aug. 8, 1927, in Tulsa, Okla., to Raymond and Helen (McEvoy) Rink. She entered the congregation Sept. 8, 1948, from St. Patrick Parish, Dubuque. She professed first vows on March 19, 1951, and final

vows on Aug. 15, 1956.

In Dubuque, Susan was biology department chair and instructor at Clarke University, parish visitor at St. Patrick, and office staff at AARP. In Chicago, she served as assistant dean and president of Mundelein College and ministered as a youth and substance abuse counsellor. She was a secondary teacher at Holy Angels Academy in Milwaukee and Xavier High School in St. Louis.

"Saint Peter entreated, 'Let your love for one another be intense ... Be hospitable to one another without

complaining. As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace' (1 Peter 4:8-10). Sue put her gifts to good use in a life of service. She was a strong woman yet there was a gentleness about her. She could state her opinion, speak her mind, and then go with the flow and not fret about the outcome. Her twinkling eyes and warm smile welcomed everyone as a friend." (*Eulogy.*)

She was preceded in death by her parents. She is survived by cousins.

## Responses to the Associate Day of Prayer

In March, associates across the Midwest were invited to spend time in reflection and prayer—to take time to meditate, reach out to someone in the community, or just take time reflecting on association. Here are three:

I had a "long" talk with Anne Marie Long! Anne was in my 1961 BVM set. Her many years as an associate (the oldest living) always leaves me with a positive perspective. She is a blessing—as an associate and as my friend! We discussed several ideas to strengthen the associate program:

- Host regular Zoom meet-ups with only associates and associate-related topics.
- Get to know each other and feel community.
- Make personal phone calls to

associates to form community.

- Determine those who no longer use email or Zoom and send them updates via postal mail.
- Encourage associates to join clusters or create one.
- Realize that there may be associates who want to feel connected with BVMs in some way.

—Associate Jerry Delaney

Associate Jeanie Fritcher (part time Mesa, Ariz., resident) and I (a resident of Phoenix), shared prayer via telephone on Sunday, March 9. The beginning of our conversation was "catch up time" for all that is happening in our lives. Our shared prayer focused on the needs of those who have asked for prayer, prayer for our country, and prayer for

our families and friends. We ended our reflective time with the Prayer of Mary Frances Clarke—both of us were touched by how those words were a culmination of our conversation.

—Associate Lori Ritz

In response to the Day of Prayer, I spent quiet time reflecting on Mary Frances Clarke's prayer. Her advice about being sensitive to ways of compassion is the part that is especially important to me. I was able to be part of an Emmaus group at my church this weekend and the compassion shared by all of us is what Mary Frances was talking about.

—Associate Diane Kopp