

# From Our Associates

## Dear Circle of Friends,



Never have I understood so well the power of those oft-repeated words, "Dear Circle of Friends" than I did during the month of

June. It was an adventure filled with special times. Hospitality was provided at every stop by associates and sisters alike during my 10-day trip to visit the western associates and sisters, and my three-day visit with our northern associates and sisters.

Much gratitude is felt for the hospitality of associates Lori Ritz, Nancy Niles, Teresa Tiffany, Kay Harrison, Carol De Carvalho, Francis De Carvalho, and Marilyn Highlander-Pool. Sincere

appreciation to Lori Ritz and BVM Marguerite Murphy for being rock star drivers and tour guides. Between the two of them we saw nearly every BVM service location in Phoenix (Lori) and San Francisco (Marguerite). Carol and Francis were wonderful hosts who made sure the downtime part of the trip included multiple chances to experience redwood forests and the stunning Monterey Bay.

The BVMs at Xavier Prep held a feast of food and conversation which included delicious deli delectables followed by an extensive tour of their impressive campus.

BVM Pat Thalhuber helped Associate Mary Maas organize the cluster's potluck and the Hope meeting in Minnesota. Mary and I had extended conversations about the past and future of association both before and after the meeting.

Pat and her sister Margaret made for excellent travelling companions on our way back to Dubuque. The views along the way were as lovely as the people.

These talks, plus the talks in Chicago earlier this year, and a recent Hope conversation with the Cyber Cluster, have given much food for thought. The deepening of my understanding of the needs and wants of the associates was invaluable, as was the creation and strengthening of relationships near and far. These conversations were essential foundational work that will help inform the next steps of the Associate Relationship Steering Committee when we meet in late August.

Hope and hospitality really do blend well.

—Suzie Coulthard  
Associate Coordinator



**1:** A campus visit to Xavier Prep in Phoenix included BVM Lynn Winsor (I.), Associate Suzie Coulthard, BVM Isabel Conchos, Associate Suleyka Salas, BVM Kathleen Sinclair, Associate Lori Ritz, and BVM Joan Fitzgerald.



**2:** Many gatherings and meetings were held during the 10-day West Coast trip. Front row: Associates Suzie Coulthard (I.), Nancy Niles, Teri Piña, BVM Marguerite Murphy,



and Associate John Bromberek. Back row: Associates Cheryl Hannah (I.), Carol Walsh, Faith Holland, Teresa Tiffany, and Dolores Bromberek. On Zoom: BVM Vicki Smurlo (I.), Associates Grace Mendez, Lia Avila, and Clara Schwartz.

**3:** At Associate Kay Harrison's house in Northern California are Associates Nancy Moreno (I.), Barbara Harper, Kay, BVM Marguerite Murphy and Associate Carol De Carvalho.

**4:** Sending Suzie off on her last night in California were Associate Marilyn Highlander-Pool (I.) and BVM Marguerite Murphy.

**5:** BVM Susan Coler joined Minnesota cluster associates for a Pilgrims of Hope Discussion on Zoom including Associate Katie Gibson (I.), friend Margaret Thalhuber, Associate Mary Maas, Associate Ann Klejment, and BVM Pat Thalhuber.



**6:** The discussion on Pilgrims of Hope brought together Dubuque associates, discerners, and BVMs.



## Associate Relationship Planning Progress

The Associate Relationship Steering Committee (ARSC) took a break from its regular monthly meeting in July. The last couple of months have included the creation of two tools—an associate survey and a benchmarking report—which have been compiled, reviewed, and analyzed. These will be used at the upcoming retreat.

The Planning Team (Eileen O'Shea,

Lori Ritz, Marybeth Coleman, and Grace Mendez) have been meeting with Sheila McAnanly and Laura Field of Change Agency, Inc. to prepare for the upcoming ARSC meeting at Mount Carmel Bluffs on Aug. 22–23. This retreat will be the third time for the group to meet in person. Please keep them in your prayers during this busy time.

—Associate Relationship Steering Committee

## Milestones Completed



Associate Gina Burkart hosted a Writer's Workshop that traveled full circle from Clarke University to Mount Carmel. Here is her reflection on a week dedicated to reading and writing, and the poetic creativity that emerged:

[tinyurl.com/ClarkeWritersWorkshop](https://tinyurl.com/ClarkeWritersWorkshop).



a pair of cranes are flying overhead  
smooth and slow  
like wind  
they don't know i'm here  
they just know  
each other  
and the clouds  
that carry them home

—Avery, Clarke Student

## Commitment Ceremonies



Associates Eileen O'Shea (l.), Jen Stork, MJ Meister, and Lori Ritz gather with family, friends, associates, and sisters for Jen's and MJ's associate commitment ceremony.

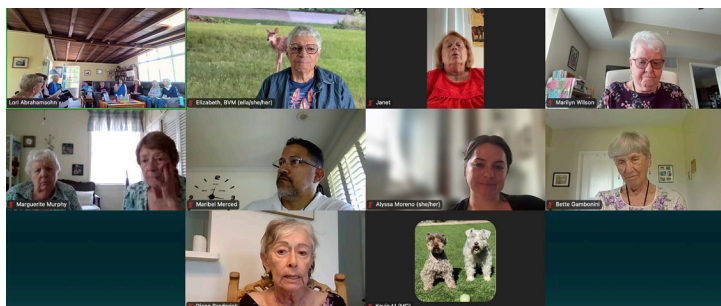
## Associates in Action



Associate Ann Kljement at the "No Kings" protest in St. Paul, Minn.



The "No Kings" protest brought Associate Nancy Barrett (r.) and a friend to the San Mateo, Calif. rally.



Pictured are the people who attended Associate Nancy Moreno's commitment ceremony. Nancy is with the in-person group who gathered at Associate Kay Harrison's home in Aptos, California.



Associate Joanie Davis, sister of BVM Catherine Jean Hayden (d.) returns to Mount Carmel Bluffs for this year's Benefactor Prayer Service.



Associate Kathy Linhardt's coast-to-coast train journey included a visit with BVM Roberta White (l.), a friend, Kathy, and BVM Nancy McCarthy.



**GOD IS LOVE; WE ARE LOVE; the BVM COMMUNITY IS LOVE. That gives me a surpassing hope.**

**"Be still and know that I am God!" (Ps. 46:11) —Jill Burleson**



*"Anniversary celebrations!" We recently returned from five days at the Red Brick Farm in Spirit Lake, Iowa, where Marabeth and I, sons and their wives, and our grandchildren celebrated our 50 years of marriage. —Norm Freund*



*Attending a nephew's graduation. —Pat McTeague and Soyna Rendón*



*The (double) rainbow, the cross, and the BVMs' Mount Carmel reassure us of God's abundant graces and promises of love, faith, hope, peace, joy, and freedom for us all. —Jill Burleson*



*Meditation group that meets weekly in my home. We've been meeting for eight years. —Jeanie Fritscher.*



*My son using both legs after his hip surgery. I am so thankful for his caretakers. —Kathy Weishaar*

**Recently associates were asked to respond to the question, "What blessing are you enjoying that is bringing you hope?" This image is comprised of their short answer responses.**



*My adventure will begin in late August. Poland! —Anne Klejment*

*The positive attitudes of my friends, who are dealing with cancer, and how they are handling their diagnosis and treatments. They are an inspiration. —Mary Maas*



*An Arizona Diamondbacks game with my son!!! —Lori Ritz*



*Double rainbow over the Mississippi. —Grace Mendez*



*I spent four days with my brother Mike and his family fishing 50 miles or more north of Ketchikan, Alaska. I was so filled with hope at what our bodies were able to reel in as we kept standing! —Teresa Tiffany*



*Great-granddaughter Mia, my daughter Dori, in the background, from Texas. —Marilyn Wasmundt*



*Humor gives me hope! As long as we can laugh together, we'll make it together. —K Kriesel*

# In Memoriam

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



## Veronica "Ronnie" (Rosine) Higgins – 4553

Veronica "Ronnie" Higgins, 79, died Wednesday, July 2, 2025, at Mount

Carmel Bluffs.

Veronica was born Nov. 21, 1945, in Chicago, to Joseph and Roseanne (Keenan) Higgins. She entered the congregation July 31, 1963, from St. Bartholomew Parish, Chicago. She professed first vows on Feb. 2, 1966, and final vows on Jan. 6, 1974.

Veronica was an elementary

teacher in Iowa at Visitation ES in Des Moines and Iowa Catholic ES in Iowa City, and in Illinois at St. Anne ES in East Moline. In Chicago, she was an elementary school teacher at St. Jerome ES, religion and social studies teacher at The Immaculata HS, and also worked in the public relations office and in the learning center at Mundelein College. She ministered as a hospital chaplain in Illinois at Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights, Memorial Medical Center in Springfield and St. Elizabeth Hospital in Belleville, and at St. Mary's Health Center in St. Louis, Mo.

"Ronnie knew the value of companionship in times of suffering and

appreciated the privilege of being present to one who is suffering. Speaking about her ministry, she shared, 'It is important to remember that a family member never forgets the death of their loved one or what was said (or not said) in that experience. I consider each patient and family encounter sacred, intimate and personal. I am privileged to offer comfort, presence and prayer at a very personal time in the lives of those I serve.'" (Eulogy)

She was preceded in death by her parents and siblings Bernadette (Edward) Nolan, Pat Higgins, Tom Higgins, and Dan Higgins. She is survived by nieces and nephews.



## Julia (Lorenzo) Acosta – 3211

Julia Acosta, 99, died Monday, July 21, 2025, at Mount Carmel Bluffs.

Julia was born on Aug. 13, 1925, in Valley Junction, Iowa, to Lawrence and Henrietta (Horcasitas) Acosta. She entered the BVM congregation Sept. 8, 1943, from St. Agatha Parish, Chicago. She professed first vows on March 19, 1946, and final vows on Aug. 15, 1951.

Julia taught secondary Spanish at St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Fr. Bertrand in Memphis, Tenn., Carmel HS in Mundelein, Ill., and Cathedral HS and St. Benedict in Chicago. She ministered as an elementary teacher in Iowa at St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids and St. Joseph in New Hampton; and in Illinois at St. Joseph in Rock Island, Holy Name and St. Thomas of Canterbury in Chicago, Mary Queen of Heaven in Cicero, and St. Rose in Wilmington.

"Julia was always friendly, supportive and helpful to the students, administrators, and co-workers. She truly

was loved by her students. One wrote '[Sister] Julia made all the difference in my life at a time when I needed her kindness, love and attention. She did the same for my other classmates. I can't stress how much she was loved. [She] helped so many of us. She taught me to love learning.'" (Eulogy)

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers Lawrence, Arthur (Olga), and William (Frances) Acosta; and sister-in-law Maxine Acosta. She is survived by a brother, Henry Acosta; nieces; nephews.

## We Remember Our Associates

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



### Mary Ann McGee

Peoria, Ariz.

Sept. 2, 1941–June 23, 2025

Accepted June 30, 2013



### Kathryn Kean

Cascade, Iowa

March 4, 1935–July 31, 2025

Accepted April 28, 1996

## Notes of Sympathy

Prayers and sympathy are extended to sisters and associates who have lost these family members through death in the past months:

- ✕ Tori Smith, sister of Janet Desmond
- ✕ Ann Baker, former BVM John Marion
- ✕ Margaret Jean (Young) Culotta, former BVM St. Neal