



CROSSROADS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHICAGO



ISSUE 42 - SUMMER 2024



FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHICAGO

Celebrating 129 Years of Compassionate Service to Those in Need

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**ROOTED IN THE GOSPEL, UNITED IN PRAYER AND COMMUNITY,
WE SHARE FRANCISCAN JOY AND SERVE GENEROUSLY.**

--- Mission Statement of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, December 8, 2010

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION LEADERSHIP TEAM

Sister M. Bernadette Bajuscik, General Minister
Sister Jeanne Marie Toriskie, General Vicar
Sister M. Helene Galuszka, General Councilor/General Secretary

CROSSROADS - LOOK INSIDE

Page 3	National Catholic Sisters Week
Page 4	Regina Umanskiy honored as a Chicago Titan 100
Page 6	The Storyteller
Page 10	Franciscan Ministries Celebrates Years of Service for Associates
Page 12	The History of Madonna High School
Page 20	Madonna High School- Photos Through the Years
Page 23	Madonna Foundation News
Page 26	St. Jude House News
Page 29	Honor Roll of Donors
Page 33	Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik Spiritual Enrollment

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Megan Wells, *Storyteller*

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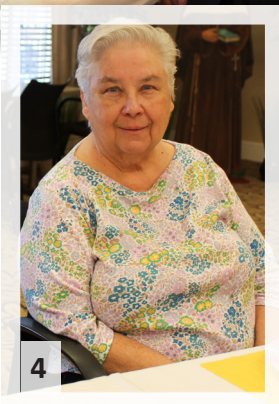
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Sister Jeanne Marie Toriskie
Sister Kathleen Melia

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SISTERS WEEK



March 8-14 is National Catholic Sisters Week during which we pay tribute and honor all the Sisters who enriched our lives through the years. Whether they served in education, healthcare, social justice, helping the poor and sick, or the empowerment of women, Catholic Sisters contributed so much to society by dedicating their lives to helping others. During this week, the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago were honored with a special party organized by the FSC Mission Team in Marian Hall. The Sisters enjoyed treats and sweets during the celebration. Many thanks to all our Franciscan Sisters of Chicago who have been an inspiration to so many of us over the years. You have touched many hearts and we are truly blessed by the impact you have made on our lives! Below are photos of the some of the Sisters who attended the celebration. At the right is a list of current members of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago.

Sr. M. Bernadette Bajuscik
Sr. M. Joella Bielinski
Sr. M. Helene Galuszka
Sr. Jean Therese Jarosz
Sr. Doloria Kosiek
Sr. M. Colette Kwieczka
Sr. M. Francine Labus
Sr. Emilie Marie Lesniak
Sr. Kathleen Melia
Sr. M. Francis Clare Radke
Sr. Lois Marie Rossi
Sr. Monica Sendlosky
Sr. Jeanne Marie Toriskie
Sr. M. Celeste Walkowski
Sr. Joseph Marie Zenda



In Photos: (1) Sr. M. Celeste Walkowski and Sr. Emilie Marie Lesniak (2) Sr. M. Joella Bielinski and Sr. M. Francis Clare Radke (3) Sr. Jeanne Marie Toriskie and Sr. Lois Marie Rossi (4) Sr. Helene Galuszka. (5) Sr. Doloria Kosiek and Sr. M. Bernadette Bajuscik

FRANCISCAN MINISTRIES CEO REGINA UMANSKIY HONORED AS A CHICAGO TITAN 100

The Chicago Titan 100 Held Awards Ceremony in February



Regina Umanskiy, President and CEO of Franciscan Ministries

On February 8, 2024, Regina Umanskiy, President and CEO of Franciscan Ministries, was honored along with one hundred other CEO's and C-level executives from the Chicagoland area at the 2024 Chicago Titan 100 awards ceremony at Navy Pier's Aon Grand Ballroom. The Titan 100 program is a national program that recognizes business leaders and the "Titans of Industry" in numerous industries and trades in both the private and public sectors. The program is now in seven markets across the United States and is continually expanding. Each honoree was profiled in a limited-edition Titan 100

book, as well as an online profile on the Titan 100 website (titan100.biz). The honorees enjoyed networking and connecting with other Titans at the awards event. Senior executives from Franciscan Ministries were on hand to celebrate the honor with Regina. "As a registered nurse by trade, my passion has always been helping and caring for those in need, so it was a natural progression to enter the world of senior living healthcare," she said. "Now, as the president & CEO of a mission-driven, faith-based organization, I feel that my journey has come full circle."

Franciscan Ministries (sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago) is a mission-driven, nonprofit senior living organization offering independent living, assisted living, memory care, post-acute rehabilitation, and skilled nursing services. "This journey throughout my career was not an intentional one, but merely a path that I walked with others to ensure that I was part of making a difference for our senior population so that they would be able to continue to thrive throughout their retirement years," said Umanskiy.

Under Umanskiy's leadership, six of the communities within the organization have been recognized as part of the U.S. News & World Report's Best Senior ratings for 2023-2024 in the categories of Best Independent Living, Best Assisted Living and Best Memory Care. Addolorata Villa and the Village at Victory Lakes received recognition as the nation's best independent living and memory care communities. In the last three years, Franciscan



Senior executives from Franciscan Ministries attended the ceremony.

Ministries experienced growth by developing partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations to offer development, consulting, and management services through the branch called Franciscan Advisory Services. Additionally, as part of the growth of the memory care service offering, the organization has finalized the addition of a new person-centered memory care neighborhood.

"This journey throughout my career was not an intentional one, but merely a path that I walked with others to ensure that I was part of making a difference."

- Regina Umanskiy, President and CEO, Franciscan Ministries

"While companies talk about reinvention as the wave of the future, we are focusing on our legacy to reignite the spirit of our ministry, repositioning it for growth," said Umanskiy. As a leader, Umanskiy said she challenges herself to learn one new thing a day. "This challenge helps me to foster my passion for the business because there is always something new to learn and implement," she said. "We are surrounded by changes in economic and political spheres, new regulations, new opportunities for partnerships or technology - and the best part is that we continuously meet new people: associates, business partners, residents, and their families." Congratulations to Regina Umanskiy on being recognized as one of the 2024 Chicago Titan 100 honorees for her passion and commitment to bettering the lives of the senior community.

THE STORYTELLER

Megan Wells brings Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik to life

Florence Nightingale. Diana Spencer (Princess of Wales). Eleanor Roosevelt. St. Clare of Assisi. Mary Magdelene. These are just some of the famous women from history that theater artist and storyteller Megan Wells has brought to life. Megan's theatrical specialty is storytelling. She portrays and impersonates historical and religious characters from the past in intimate and theatrical settings. Creating monologues, Megan highlights the various events and the personal struggles that shaped the the person's life. She often uses written biographies, historical documentation, and other resources to write storytelling pieces to paint a total theatrical vision of the person. Thus, she transforms into these historical individuals and gives the audience a window into history and their lives.



Megan Wells (in costume as Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik) stands in front of a portrait of the foundress at St. Joseph Village of Chicago.

Megan portrayed St. Clare of Assisi at the Village of Victory Lakes, in Lindenhurst, Illinois, (a senior living facility operated by Franciscan Ministries and sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago). Her performance was so well-received that she was asked to portray Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik, foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago at the 125th Anniversary of St. Joseph Village of Chicago in October. She later reprised her role as Mother Mary Theresa in Lemont for the Sisters, invited religious, and residents at Franciscan Village.

Megan has been interested in the theater since she was a young girl living in Des Plaines, Illinois. Growing up with three brothers, she was very active outside, either biking with them or playing kick-the-can. "When I was seven,

my mother thought my imaginative nature needed more than just boy antics so she enrolled me in a drama class at the local community theater. The program was called 'Footlighter's' and I'll never forget it. I fell deeply in love with theater and have been devoted to the performing arts my entire life," Megan recalls.

Her first play was *The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson, the famous play about Helen Keller and her teacher Annie Sullivan. Megan was cast as Helen Keller's mother. Soon other plays and high school shows followed. She eventually received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theater from Illinois Wesleyan. Later she decided to focus her efforts on directing and attained a Master of Fine Arts from Illinois State University. "I have directed over 30 plays in my career. My initial theatre career in Chicago was as a director and I received the Joseph Jefferson Award (also known as the Jeff Awards) for Directing. I also started a drama club for sixth graders at my daughter's school and wrote eight plays which I directed for this club. That was such satisfying work!"

Megan eventually moved into storytelling. After attending the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee, she felt storytelling was a better fit for her theater aspirations. "I loved performing in the theater but discovering the audience/storyteller relationship was even more thrilling. I became a full-time professional touring storyteller in 1990." She performed her storytelling characters at many venues including national festivals, regional theaters, orchestras, women's clubs, libraries, universities, and schools. "In 2002, I was commissioned to create my first historical portrayal. I now have over 24 famous women in my repertoire. I love the research and the challenge of finding each famous woman's unique calling and voice." Not only has she performed as some of the famous women listed at the start of this article, Megan lists some of the following historical people and their respective performances:



Megan Wells as Mary Magdalene.

- Mary Shelley: *Love and Frankenstein*
- Clara Barton: *Learning from the Civil War*
- Abigail Adams: *From Colony to Constitution*
- Elizabeth Hamilton: *My husband Alexander*
- Miep Gies: *On finding and protecting the diary of Anne Frank*
- Maria Anna Mozart: *Our family and my famous brother, Wolfgang*



(Seated) Sr. Doloria Kosiek and Sr. M. Joella Bielinski. (Standing) Sr. Fr. Ken Baker, Sr. M. Francis Clare Radke, Sr. Emilie Marie Lesniak, Pat Camalliere, Megan Wells, Sr. M. Helene Galuszka, Sr. Jeanne Marie Toriskie, Fr. Robert Lucas, and Fr. Thomas Bernas.

When asked if she has a favorite, Megan says she enjoys whoever she is in the moment during the performance and doesn't have a particular favorite character. "My favorite is whichever one I am portraying at the time I'm playing her. I also enjoy the direct relationship with the audience. In storytelling, I address the audience directly and their responses impact the stories that I am weaving anew with each telling. Storytelling is both learned and improvisational. You 'know' the story and the audience impacts 'how' you tell as you tell." In addition to the historical women she has portrayed, Megan includes religious based performances in her repertoire. She also has portrayed various religious figures through the years including Mary of Nazareth, the Samaritan Woman at the Well, and Prisca of Rome.

Megan was commissioned to play Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik, she started doing research on her life. She received a copy of *The Chronicle*, Mother Mary Theresa's personal journal that was re-published in 2020 by the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago. She read it extensively, taking notes as she read. "Once I started the research on the foundress' life, I fell into admiration and curiosity. Mother Theresa was a deeply courageous, fiercely persistent,

and gentle soul. When I research a person, I try to extricate the character from biographies, documentaries, and any source material that I can find. Then I attune myself to their struggles and courage.”

Megan is also very well-versed on the history of Chicago and the major events that happened during the years Mother Mary Theresa lived such as, the Chicago Fire, the Haymarket bombing, and the World’s Fair Exposition). “Putting Mother Theresa in historical context reveals her character as she faced so many challenges in a city that was recovering from fire, plus the economic struggle and hardship citizens faced at the time. It gave her the strength and drive to care for the elderly and disabled.”

“There is a spirit that moves in me when I portray her. I can feel her depth and introversion and I feel useful. To help the world know her is a powerful addition to healing our hearts in these chaotic and traumatic times.” - **Megan Wells, Storyteller**

After her research, Megan developed Mother Mary Theresa’s storytelling theme and her monologue and then created the performance, complete with a full religious garb costume which transformed her into Mother Mary Theresa. She touched on various parts of Mother Mary Theresa’s life. “There is a spirit that moves in me when I portray her. I can feel her depth and introversion and I feel useful. To help the world know her is a powerful addition to healing our hearts in these chaotic and traumatic times.” The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago went to Franciscan Village to watch Megan perform as Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik. “We loved Megan’s portrayal of our foundress, Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik. She captured the essence of Mother Mary Theresa’s character and the beauty of her soul,” said Sister Jeanne Marie Toriskie, General Vicar of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago said.

Megan has more storytelling performances coming up. You may check her website meganwells.com or visit her Facebook page at facebook.com/MeganWellsStoryteller for upcoming storytelling shows. She may return to play Mother Mary Theresa in the future. Megan thanked the Sisters for giving her this opportunity. “Thank you for trusting me with the task of embodying your beloved Mother Theresa. May her path to Sainthood be swift and smooth.”

FRANCISCAN MINISTRIES CELEBRATES YEARS OF SERVICE FOR ASSOCIATES

On March 22, Franciscan Ministries (sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago) honored all associates with 15 to 50 years of service for the Ministry with a "Years of Service Celebration." Associates from all sectors and departments of the Ministry, including the home office and senior living communities, attended the recognition luncheon and event at Eaglewood Resort and Spa in Itasca, Illinois.

"The greatest testament to our culture of Living Joyfully is the longevity of our associates," stated President and CEO of Franciscan Ministries, Regina Umanskiy. "This inaugural celebration to recognize the milestone anniversaries of 15 to 50 years of service comprises 140 of our associates. We're so grateful for their dedication and service, as well as their commitment to the Ministry and our residents."



(In photos above and on next page) The staff of Franciscan Ministries were honored with their respective years of service.



Recently, Franciscan Communities, a subsidiary of Franciscan Ministries, was awarded the certification as a *Great Place to Work* from the *Great Place to Work Institute* and its senior care partner *Activated Insights*. The certification process involved surveying 100% of associates from across Franciscan’s locations and evaluating more than 60 elements of team members’ experience on the job. These included employee pride in the organization’s community impact, belief that their work makes a difference, and feeling their work has special meaning.

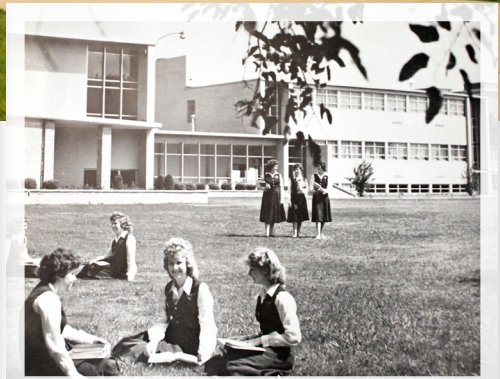


“While years of service have been recognized at the community level, it has never been recognized system-wide. This is part of our ongoing initiative to strengthen our employer brand, focus on associate culture, ongoing educational, and career development. We also will focus on diversity, inclusion, enhanced benefits, and well-being initiatives programs,” Umanskiy said.

When you choose a career path at Franciscan Ministries, you become part of something bigger, giving you the opportunity to become an integral part of making a difference in the lives of men, women, children, and older adults. Working at Franciscan — you’ll join a Ministry that’s deeply rooted with associate and Ministry values, with a rich legacy and a diverse and inclusive culture that puts people first while creating purpose for our associates and residents in an environment that values transparency, innovation, success and life. Find your purpose with a career at Franciscan Ministries.

Visit franciscanministries.org for more information.

THE HISTORY OF MADONNA HIGH SCHOOL



The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago founded Madonna High School in Chicago in 1949. Over the years, thousands of young women were embraced by both Sisters and lay teachers who dedicated their lives to the education and empowerment of women. The idea of creating and ministering at an all-girls Catholic High School in Chicago was originally conceived by Mother M. Jerome Dadej and through her vision and leadership, Madonna High School opened in 1949. Enrollment soon skyrocketed and with the help of so many educators and administrators, it became known for its scholastic and academic excellence. The high school functioned for 50 years, but was sadly closed in 2001 due to economic hardships and declining enrollment. On the following pages, the history of Madonna High School has been provided in a timeline format with photo galleries highlighting the Sisters who taught there over the years. Thank you to all the Sisters, teachers, and administrators who made Madonna High School so impactful on so many young women's lives! Thank you to Sr. Anne Marie Knawa, whose book, *As God Shall Ordain* (A history of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago), provided the research information for this article.



Mother M. Jerome Dadej

1945 The seeds of Madonna High School were first planted in 1945. During a general council meeting, Mother M. Jerome Dadej, Superior General of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, suggested that the Sisters expand their ministry into secondary school education. They had long ministered as teachers in elementary education in many schools in the Chicagoland area and several US states. She thought that a Catholic high school for girls would be a wonderful way to attract potential vocations and entice women to enter religious life. Mother Jerome met with Samuel Cardinal Stritch, the Archbishop of Chicago, to discuss the idea. He agreed with Mother Jerome on the need for an all-girls high school and encouraged her to pursue it.

1948 In 1948, the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, who ran the Ephpheta School for the Deaf (on the corner of Belmont and Pulaski Avenues in Chicago), decided to sell some of the land around the school's property. After gaining permission from Samuel Cardinal Stritch, the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago decided to buy the land in 1948. The idea of building a school was still out of reach though, as the Sisters were more focused on the construction of St. John Hospital and School of Nursing in South Dakota. They decided to locate the new high school at a temporary site, the former St. Vincent Orphan Asylum, which was next door to their Motherhouse in Chicago. Mother Jerome selected the name Madonna High School for the new school and it was her determination and vision that bore Madonna High School to fruition.



The original St. Vincent Orphan Asylum served as the first location for Madonna High School.

1949 On September 8, 1949, Madonna High School opened on the first floor of the former St. Vincent's Orphan Asylum with four students. Sr. M. Crescencia Chmiel was named the school's first principal. Much of the future success of Madonna High School can be attributed to her school leadership. Sr. M. Crescencia, with her vast experience in teaching and as an administrator at previous schools, was essential in getting the school up and running and ready for the students. A special Mass was held at St. Joseph Home in Chicago to mark the historic occasion.



Sr. M. Crescencia Chmiel



The Ephpheta School for the Deaf eventually became the second location of Madonna High School.

1950 In 1950, the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary decided to sell the Ephpheta School for the Deaf. After surveying the school, Mother Jerome and the Sisters decided it would be a great place to relocate Madonna High School temporarily to serve as a convent and day school. While they still hoped to eventually build a brand-new school on the grounds, the Sisters acquired the building. It was needed to accommodate the increasing number of young women who enrolled at the school.

1951 In the summer of 1951, the Sisters officially took possession of the Ephpheta School for the Deaf and began renovations and cleaning. They worked tirelessly to have the building ready for the first day of school. Thus, on September 6, 1951, Madonna High School officially opened in the Ephpheta building with 102 students.

1952 In 1952, Madonna High School received full accreditation by the State of Illinois. The school would continue to receive accreditation every seven years during the state's evaluation period throughout its entire existence. Soon applications skyrocketed and the Sisters were forced to only accept a certain number of students due to the lack of space. Some parents even sent applications for their elementary school-aged daughters early, as they hoped to hold a space for when their daughters were older. In the meantime, the Sisters continued to



The faculty at Madonna High School, 1952:

(Seated) Srs. Alvernia, Seraphinia, Maxentia, and Therese.

(Row 2) Srs. Roseanne, Marinella, Sponsa, Tarcisia, Leontia.

(Standing) Srs. Kingnetta, Maristella, Alberta and Dorothy.

raise and save money for the new high school building project and they also pressed the Archdiocese of Chicago for funding. Sr. M. Alvernia Groszek and Sr. Hilary Dadej ran a fundraising carnival on the grounds of Belmont and Karlov avenues and the Sisters also held bingos and other fundraisers for the building fund. Later in the school year, the Madonna High School Mothers Club and Auxiliary was founded. This group would be incredibly supportive throughout Madonna High School's existence. A similar support group was founded in 1956 called the Madonna High School Fathers Club and Auxiliary. In her book, *As God Shall Ordain*, Sr. Anne Marie Knawa wrote: "The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago were consistently aided by the loyalty and support of their families, friends, and benefactors who watched the school's progress with fondness and concern. Without this aid and encouragement, it would have been exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for the Congregation to finance the erection of the new school."

1953 Madonna High School held its first graduation commencement ceremony at St. Joseph Home in 1953. Later that summer, Sr. Crescencia was transferred to Johnstown Central Catholic High School in Pennsylvania to run that school. Sr. M. Alberta Bialas, assistant principal at Madonna High School, was promoted to principal. During her time as principal, Sr. Alberta helped expand the curriculum at Madonna and assisted in managing the enormous increase in enrollment.

1955 Cardinal Stritch officially approved the building of Madonna High School after reviewing the budget and architectural plans for the school.



Sr. M. Alvernia Groszek with children at a fundraising fair.



Sr. M. Alberta Bialas

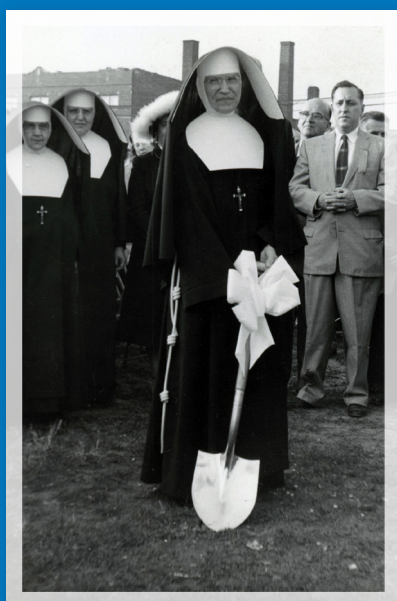


Sr. Alberta and Mother Jerome get official permission from Cardinal Stritch to begin construction of Madonna High School.

1956 In 1956, Sister M. Hugoline Czaplinski was named Madonna High School's new principal. Sr. M. Alberta returned as assistant principal and remained on the faculty until 1970. Later that year, the official groundbreaking ceremony was held for the new Madonna High School and work began on the new school. The cornerstone was inscribed with the school's motto, "For Sanctity and Wisdom."



Sr. M. Hugoline Czaplinski



"For the past few years you have been splendidly responding to my plea for organizing a building fund for the new Madonna High School, and no doubt, you are still eagerly looking forward to its realization. It is, therefore, my great joy and pleasure to announce to you, dear Sisters, that we have obtained His Eminence's approval to build." - **Mother M. Jerome Dadej's announcement to the Sisters that a new Madonna High School was approved to be built.**

(Left) Mother Jerome at the new Madonna High School groundbreaking ceremony in 1956

1958 Construction workers worked tirelessly to complete the new facility and finished just in time for Madonna High School to hold its first graduation ceremony in the new school on June 1, 1958. On September 2, 1958, the new Madonna High School opened its doors for the new school year. Enrollment increased to over 650 students with 26 Sisters on the faculty. The Very Reverend Msgr. William McManus who visited the school remarked: "It is a magnificent building, well-planned and expertly constructed. All who had a hand its development deserve to be congratulated most highly. It is true to say that inside and outside of Madonna High School is in the best tradition of Catholic secondary education in our great Archdiocese."



The official blessing of Madonna High School in 1958.

1959 – 1962 Enrollment at Madonna High School skyrocketed during this period and grew exponentially every year. In 1959, the school enrollment rose to 892. By 1962, the school held a record 1,165 students (340 freshmen alone) and 45 teachers (Sisters and lay teachers). The Sisters made great adjustments in managing the large number of students every year. Mother Jerome's hope that the school might serve as an inspiration for young women to enter religious life was coming to fruition as many aspirants and postulants entered the congregation during this time.



A May Crowning at Madonna High School in the 1950s.

Late 1960s By the late 1960's, times were changing. The Sisters had to rely more and more on lay teachers to work at Madonna High School. Because of religious and societal changes, fewer women were entering religious life.

1970 In 1970, Sr. Hugoline was chosen to be Superior General of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago and thus had to leave her position as principal of Madonna High School. In her 14 years as principal of Madonna High School, Sr. Hugoline oversaw enormous change and growth in the school. It was through her leadership that Madonna High School established its outstanding academic reputation in the Chicago area. During her tenure, the curriculum expanded with advanced classes in art and biology as well as a newly built science research laboratory. The students were also encouraged to participate in state science fairs and did very well over the years. The business and journalism departments were also expanded. Sister Joseph Marie Zenda, assistant principal was named principal of Madonna High School.



Sister Joseph Marie Zenda

1973 During the 1970's, Madonna High School enjoyed a high enrollment. Thus, sophomores, juniors, and seniors attended classes in the newer school building, while freshmen attended classes in the old Ephpheta School building (otherwise known as the "Old Building" or "Freshmen Building"). Maintenance costs on this old building were exorbitant, so the Sisters decided it was time to raze the building and sell the land to Jewel Food Company. Freshmen classrooms were then moved to newly-installed mobile units on the high school's campus. A new religious faculty residence was constructed on the grounds to house the Sisters who previously had resided in the Old Building.

1980 Through Sr. Joseph Marie's leadership, a College Acceleration Program (CAP) was developed, enabling Madonna students to earn college credit while still in high school. Advanced Placement Courses and more classes were also added to the curriculum.

1983 In 1983, Madonna High School went through several building renovations and many necessary improvements were added. Computers were becoming a new and accessible technology in the world so the Sisters created a student computer lab. The school also began computerizing student records, report cards, and other administrative functions. The Sisters were at the forefront of the computer age.

Sr. Joseph Marie approved renovations that included more front office space and conference rooms with upgraded colorful redesign. The gymnasium also welcomed a new electronically-operated scoreboard (for basketball) and a new exercise room.

Later that year, Sr. Joseph Marie was elected Superior General of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago. Sr. M. Alvernia Groszek was appointed as the new principal of Madonna High School. Sr. Alvernia had long been associated with Madonna High School. She had served as the head of the science department from 1951 to 1970. As principal, she continued the academic excellence that Madonna High School had become known for by expanding the curriculum and offering more courses and electives.

1986 Sr. Alvernia was elected General Councilor during the General Chapter of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago. Because of her new role in leadership, she had to step down as principal. Sr. Carol Marie Schommer was appointed Madonna High School's principal. A former graduate of Madonna, Sr. Carol Marie served as teacher at the school since 1970, teaching a wide range of math and science courses and later served as assistant principal.



Students at Madonna High School work on a computer in the computer lab.



Sr. Joseph Marie looks at the architectural plans during the renovations at Madonna High School



Sr. M. Alvernia Groszek

Late 1980s Enrollment at Madonna High School began to decline in the 1980's. Many factors included changes in economics in parochial schools as well as other external factors. Parents, faculty, former Madonna alumnae, and Sisters, as well as the Madonna board of directors launched an aggressive campaign to reverse the enrollment decline.

1991 The United States Department of Education named Madonna High School as a *Recognized School of Excellence*. At the time, only 13 schools in Illinois and only 200 nationwide received this Blue Ribbon Schools Program Award. After a year-long intense evaluation, the school was officially selected recognized at a ceremony in Washington, DC.

1994 Madonna High School received an award from the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans. This award honors schools that encourage young people to succeed in America's free enterprise system.

1999 Madonna High School celebrated its 50th anniversary with an event honoring Sisters, lay teachers, administrators, and all who helped make it such a wonderful high school over the years.

2000 - 2001 Enrollment at Madonna High School continued to decline throughout the 1990's. The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago continued to subsidize the school and formed an exploratory committee to look at ways to keep it open. This was a difficult time for the Sisters who spent countless hours and explored so many options to keep Madonna High School open. Some of these options included merging with other schools and possibly transforming the school into co-ed. Sadly, it became too difficult financially to keep the school open and Madonna High School was officially closed in 2001. With the school closing, the Sisters wanted to continue their ministry in Catholic education for young women so they started the Madonna Foundation that year. The Madonna Foundation provides scholarships to young women in the Chicago area to receive a Catholic secondary education. The Foundation continues to strive for the academic excellence that the Sisters began at Madonna High School in 1949. The Foundation has provided more than 600 awards totaling \$4.1 million in scholarship funding, along with a dynamic college readiness program. It continues to be a successful ministry to this day and carries on the Madonna tradition.



Sr. Carol Marie Schommer



Sr. Carol Marie Schommer with students at the *Recognized School of Excellence* ceremony in Washington DC.



Madonna students in front of school (1951).



Sr. Diane Marie Collins taught English at Madonna.



The Madonna High School Glee Club (1952)



MADONNA HIGH SCHOOL PHOTOS THROUGH THE YEARS



A May Crowning ceremony at Madonna High School in 1953



Sr. Anne Marie Knawa with students (1980s).



Sr. M Alacoque Czartoryski with Home Economics students in 1959.



Sr. M. Charitas Gajdzinski with students (1980s).



A Madonna High School trip to Washington D.C.(1955).



*Madonna High School's first band in 1961 with Sister Euphemia.
Robert Strum was the band director.*



A Madonna High School play (1950s).



Chemistry class in the 1950s.



Sr. Rosemary Ferus in 1988.

(Left) At Madonna High School, the Sisters Choir of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago included aspirants, postulants, and young temporary professed.



Mother Jerome with a Madonna High School student (1950s).



Sr. Hugoline presents a trophy to outstanding gymnasts (1968).



Front of Madonna High School in 1955



Madonna High School students in 1976 commemorating the United States bicentennial.



Srs. Carol Marie and Sponsa at prom night at Madonna High School (1966).



Group photo of Sisters from Madonna High School (1958) - (First row) Srs. Sponsa, Maxencia, Seraphine, Benigna, Antonine, Jerome, Gonzaga, Marinella, Therese, Eleanor, Alacoque, Alvernia, and Alberta. (Second row) Srs. Dolorosa, Maristella, unnamed Sister, Aloysetta, Dorothy, Hugoline, Kingnetta, Tarcisia, Lucretia, and Leontia.



*Franciscan Ministries sponsored by
the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago*

MADONNA FOUNDATION NEWS

The Madonna Foundation, sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, continues the tradition the Sisters began at Madonna High School in 1949. Established in 2001, the Foundation has provided more than 1,600 awards totaling \$4.1 million in scholarship funding, along with dynamic college readiness programming. Thank you to all who continue to support the Foundation. It's been a wonderful year for the Scholars!

STEAM Careers

To further scholar interests in STEAM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), the Madonna Foundation teamed up with program partner, the Chicago Field Museum. Scholars spent the day working along scientists to identify various mammals by their skeletal structures and then create muscular clay models.

Madonna Scholars also took a behind-the-scenes

tour where they saw how fossils are stored for research, toured the art floor to see how displays and scenery are created to compliment artifacts, and learned about several careers in the museum. In April, the students also took a trip to visit the Chicago offices of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (a new Madonna Foundation program partner). The professional team shared their career paths in engineering and architecture. The students were very eager to learn how these professionals create their designs to answer the urgent environmental challenges of the future.



Madonna Scholars visit the offices of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill.

Service Projects

In February, the students dedicated time to giving back to the Misericordia Community, a community that cares for children and adults of all faiths and cultures who have intellectual and developmental disabilities. They toured the Misericordia campus and devoted some time to volunteering in the various work programs along side the Misericordia residents.



Madonna Scholars did service work at the Misericordia Community.

Career Day

This year's focus was *Women in Business and Women in Law*. In November, the scholars attended an event hosted by Andersen Tax and met with several women professionals to gain an understanding of potential career paths in accounting, business, human resources, and information technology. The common message of these highly-accomplished professionals urged our scholars to follow their passion and rise above societal limitations imposed by society to achieve their goals. In March, the scholars participated in a *Women Everywhere* event hosted by a group of lawyers, judges, and court officers at the Cook County Courthouse who shared their personal journeys with the scholars. This informative day showcased several different careers in this field and the students were invited to sit in on the court proceedings to gain firsthand knowledge of possible careers. The Madonna Scholars also participated in a panel discussion with program partner Nuveen Investments. The students learned about a variety of careers that Nuveen offers as well as internships they can apply for once they are in college.



Madonna Scholars visit the Cook County Courthouse in March.



Madonna Scholars visit Nuveen Investments.



The 2024 Madonna Scholar graduates with former Madonna Scholars and Madonna High School alumnae.

Madonna High School Alumnae Luncheon

The 2024 Madonna High School Alumnae luncheon was held on April 14 at La Villa Restaurant Lounge and Banquets in Chicago. Over 200 former students of Madonna High School attended the luncheon and reconnected with former classmates and friends. This year marked the inaugural presentation the Spirit of Madonna Award. This award is given to an individual or group in honor of its support of the Madonna Alumnae Association. The recipient of this award exemplifies the ideals of a Madonnian through outstanding service, devotion, generosity, and support to the ongoing legacy of Madonna High School through the Madonna Foundation Scholars. This year's honorees, the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, Rosa De Luna-Frede (Class of 1991), and Terri Roeslmeier (Class of 1974) were bestowed the award for their dedication to the Madonna Foundation. Thank you to all who attended the Madonna High School Alumnae luncheon.



The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago receive the Spirit of Madonna Award. (From left) Sr. Helene Galuszka, Sr. Jeanne Marie Toriskie, and Sr. Emilie Marie Lesniak



*(In photos)
Over 200 former
Madonna High
School students
attended the
luncheon.*

If you would like to support the Madonna Foundation, you can make a donation online at madonnascholars.org or contact Betsy Garbrecht at (331) 318-5170. You may also follow the Madonna Foundation at Facebook.com/madonnianpride and instagram.com/madonnascholars. If you are a Madonna High School Alumna, please visit madonnahsalumnae.org and update your contact information. If you would like to volunteer, join a committee, or help in any way, you can visit the alumnae website for more details.



St. Jude House, sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago, is a family violence prevention center and shelter in Crown Point, Indiana. Since 1995, this facility has provided compassionate care, legal support, and emergency shelter to over 15,000 survivors of domestic violence.” .

ST. JUDE HOUSE SURVIVOR COUNCIL COMBATS LONELINESS

One of the biggest public health problems Americans can face is the issue of loneliness and its effect on one’s physical and mental well-being. Loneliness is especially difficult on survivors of domestic violence who are often isolated from friends, family, and other supportive social connections. In 2023, St Jude House Executive Director Ryan Elinkowski held a listening session event with domestic abuse survivors. The topic was the issue of loneliness and developing strategies on how St. Jude House can help their clients overcome these feelings of loneliness and isolation. “The idea of having a Survivor Council, which would be tasked with coming up with ideas on how to help our clients with loneliness was mentioned. Thus, the first meeting took place in June of 2023 with a group of survivors who were all eager to make a difference,” Ryan said.

Teri Wallace was named President of this council. Teri herself is a survivor and has long been a volunteer and a mentor for clients at St. Jude House. Last October she spoke on behalf of the Survivor Council at the St. Jude House’s “Survivor Celebration,” the annual event that kicks off Domestic Violence Awareness Month. “The initial core members of the council all have some history with St. Jude House as employees, volunteers, residents, nonresidents, donors, and people we have crossed paths with over the years. Together we all saw value in sharing stories about our pasts and discussing where we all were in our previous experiences of domestic violence versus how we overcame them and where we are all now in our lives,” Teri said. “We had this vision of utilizing our histories and experiences and then using our growth to help others who are just starting on their similar journeys. Ryan brought us all together and when he shared his vision, we were all on board and very excited to be a part of it and be in the community to have an impact on others as our previous mentors had on us.”



*Teri Wallace, President
St. Jude House Survivors Council*

Once the council was formed, they began planning survivor engagement activities. These survivor engagement activities include community outreach events, one-on-one weekly sessions with survivors, and community education. “We received a grant from the Crown Point Community Foundation Women’s Giving Circle to provide

survivor engagement activities. This past February we hosted our first event at St. Jude House and had a catered taco bar. The Survivor Council spent time sharing some portions of their journey and wisdom and letting our residential and nonresidential clients know they are not alone. Special gift baskets were also presented including self-care items and meaningful items that the council used during their journey of healing,” Ryan said. With the success of this first event, the council is encouraged by the overall response. “Last year was really a foundation year for us. Our plan is to have 3-4 survivor engagement activities to build relationships and have some one-on-one time with domestic abuse survivors. We’re looking forward to taking this idea that we created and putting things in motion,” Teri said.



Members of the survivors council at a recent survivor engagement activity.

STAND UP FOR ST. JUDE HOUSE CONTINUES ITS ANNUAL SUCCESS

On May 17, St Jude House held its annual spring fundraiser ‘Stand Up for St. Jude House.’ Over 400 people attended the event at Country Lane Orchard in Hobart, Indiana. The guests enjoyed a night of food and entertainment with stand-up comedy from several comedians and live music from the band Cat Man Dog. There was a wonderful dessert bar assembled by the St. Jude House team and fun photo booth opportunities for attendees. The event also featured a silent auction, as well as a paddle raise portion of the evening. Both were very successful in raising generous funding for St. Jude House. This year was a special year at the event as it was the first time for presenting the “Don Burrell Corporate Responsibility Award,” an award given annually to an individual or group that has been an amazing support to St. Jude House over the years. The award was named after Don Burrell who in 1995 was so instrumental in helping St. Jude House get started. It was his vision with the assistance of the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago that made St. Jude House a reality by funding



In photos (1) The event was held at Country Lane Orchard in Hobart, Indiana. (2) Thank you to the staff of St. Jude House who worked tirelessly to make this event so successful.



(1) Ryan Elinkowski (right) presents Jeff Strack with the Don Burrell Corporate Responsibility Award. (2) Guests participate in a paddle-raise fundraiser. (3) Music was provided by the band Cat Man Dog.

the property and turning it into a family violence prevention center. This year's honoree was Jeff Strack, CEO of Indiana Grocery Group, LLC. Jeff has been a long-term supporter and community partner of St. Jude House. St. Jude House would like to thank all who attended and the many donors and community partners who have given so much support the St. Jude House mission. For more information on St. Jude House, and how you can support this mission call (219) 662-7066. Please visit their website: stjudehouse.org or follow on facebook at

facebook.com/stjudehouse.



Community Partner Spotlight

St. Jude House thanks Community Partner Wintrust Bank, an organization that recently presented St. Jude House with a donation of \$5,000.

(In photo) John Kratkoczki (Board Member) Curt Bowers (Development Committee) Ryan Elinkowski (Executive Director) and Lauren Zurbriggen (Director of Development)

St Jude House Wish List

For the safety of our clients and staff, we ask that you please call ahead before bringing donations and please do not leave donations outside the front door.

Gift Card Needs: Amazon, Target, Walmart, Family Express, Speedway, Strack & Van Til, and Walgreens.

Pantry needs: Canned pop, fresh vegetables/fruit, potato chips and snacks, dry pasta noodles (spaghetti), ramen, macaroni and cheese, and salad dressing.

Health & Beauty Needs: (New/Unopened) lotion, shavers, hair dye, mousse, hair oil, hair gel, and body spray.

Household Needs: Heavy-duty aluminum foil, pots and pans, silverware, toasters, dishes, and coffee pots.

Children's Needs: Diapers (sizes 4-7), pull-ups (all sizes), action figures, teen craft sets, legos, and infant toys.

Clothing Needs: Children's pajamas (sizes 2t and 3t), girls shirts (sizes 5-10), boys pants (sizes 5-12), bathing suits (all sizes), women's summer shirts (sizes small - XL), leggings (medium-XL), and women's gym shoes (sizes 8-10)

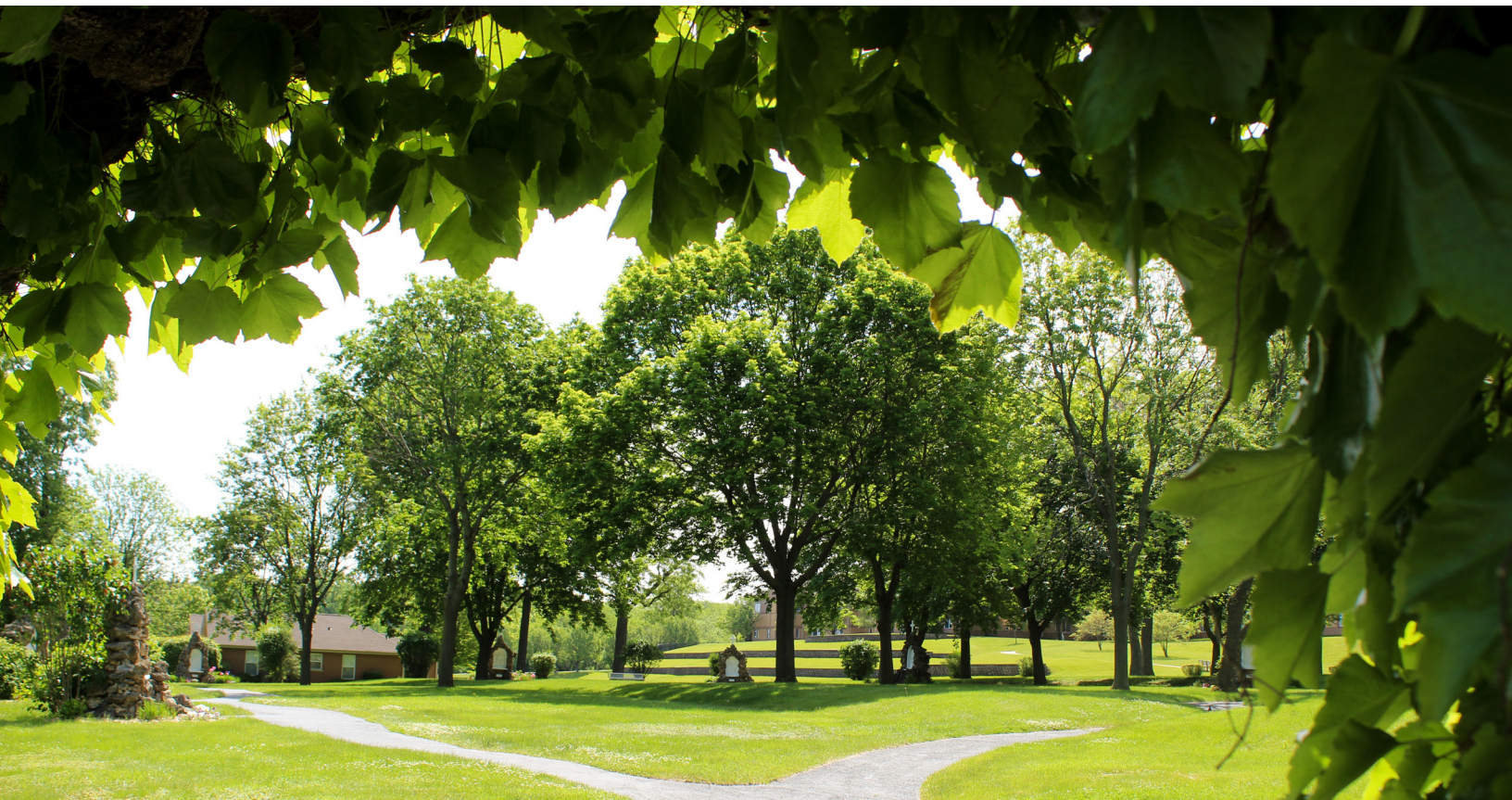
HONOR ROLL OF DONORS

December 15, 2023- May 25, 2024

The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago thank their donors and friends for partnering with them. The Sisters offer their gratitude and sincere appreciation for their donors' generosity, which has allowed them to continue the ministry started by Venerable Mary Theresa Dudzik.

These donations have helped the ministries of the Sisters in a profound way. Their sponsored ministries include a shelter for victims of domestic abuse, senior retirement communities, and scholarships for all-girls Catholic high school tuition.

The donor list in this issue is recorded from **December 15, 2023 - May 25, 2024**. The Sisters make every effort to keep accurate records and each gift is acknowledged promptly. Should something be amiss, however, the Sisters ask the donors to call them at once. Inquiries should be directed to Vicki Olsen at (630) 243-3556 or email: volsen@chicagofranciscans.com.



A view of the Stations of the Cross on Our Lady of Victory Convent campus.

VENERABLE MARY THERESA DUDZIK BEATIFICATION FUND



Gifts sent to the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago for the Beatification Cause are sent immediately to this Fund. Gifts received through the League of Mother Theresa are used to cover the cost of operating the League Office and once a year (or more often) money from the League is transferred to the Beatification Fund. Thanks to everyone who has helped build the Beatification Fund. Every step in the process requires fees and the Beatification Fund must continue to grow so that funds are there when needed.

Dr. and Mrs. Peter Doris

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

The Unrestricted Fund is important because it allows flexibility for the Sisters' use. Gifts are directed to where the need is greatest. The Sisters are able to use unrestricted gifts immediately or to allow them to accumulate until a significant need arises. The thoughtfulness of unrestricted gifts is greatly appreciated.

John Albee
Bernadette M. Benson
Sandra Jamison Chafen
Father John Czyzynski, SCJ
Samantha Fastenau
Joan M. Gratz
Marion Jelcz, M.D.
Theresa Kolczak
Roselyn Lucas
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Raymond & Marlene Mosser
Laura Nanko
Michael Niemiec
Therese B. Perna
Patricia Tarczewski
Rita M. Waters
Sophie Wolniakowski
John A. Zuraw

NON-CASH

The Sisters are restricted by law and policy as to the kinds of non-cash gifts they can accept. Among those items are medications and some used items or partially used items. Some changes in legislation also affect the donor. In fact, Congress passed new rules for deducting household goods, clothing and other items. Unless the item is in good used condition or better or was donated before August 18, 2006, donors will not get the tax deduction. Congress wanted to stop people from using charitable organizations to dump unwanted items in order to write off a donation of minimal or no value. It is always best to call the Development Office at 630-243-3556 before giving a non-cash gift. Dropping off something the Sisters cannot legally accept often requires the Sisters to pay for the disposal of these items, which assuredly was not the donor's intent.

RESTRICTED GIFTS

Restricted Gifts enable the Sisters to purchase the items that donors specifically request their donations be used for. The explicit designation by the benefactor allows the donor to become an integral part of the ministries of the Sisters.

Dr. & Mrs. Peter Doris

RETIREMENT FUND

Gifts to the Retirement Fund are very important to us as they provide support in the care of the retired and infirm members of our Community. The rising cost of health care and medicine are as serious an issue for us as they are with the general public. We're grateful for your gifts.

Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Sendra

LEGACY FUND

Using the envelope included with this issue of Crossroads is the easiest way to contribute to any of the Sisters' funds and it makes it especially easy to direct a gift to the Legacy Fund. There are several categories to which a Legacy gift can be directed — the two most popular are Memorials (for deceased loved ones) and Tributes (in honor of living individuals or groups). Some donors make regular gifts to this fund on anniversaries as in the case of memorials, birthdays, marriages, and our Jubilarians. General, undesignated gifts may be made to this fund as well as donations for one's own special intention. The Legacy Fund is the Sisters' Endowment, which they continue to grow by reinvesting the income from the fund. A gift to the Legacy Fund also continues to grow in perpetuity.

MEMORIALS

In Memory of Sister M. Claudia Bomba

Robert and Annemarie Bomba

In Memory of Sister M. Petronia Budzinski

Reverend Gerald P. Riva

In Memory of Sister Diane Marie Collins

Dorothy Harris

Sharon Rock

In Memory of Marie A. Ernst

Robert J. Ernst

In Memory of Cardinal Francis George, OMI

William J. Napiwocki

In Memory of George and Eleanor Haske

Douglas Haske

In Memory of Sister M. Josephine Haske

Douglas Haske

**In Memory of Walter and
Katherine Koziol and Family**

Stanley J. Koziol

In Memory of Sister Mary Kulik

Michele Gulas

**In Memory of
Sister M. Olga Kulik**

Michele Gulas

In Memory of Mildred Lang

Marie Maciejewski

**In Memory of
Sister M. Altissima Netzel**

Robert J. Ernst

**In Memory of
Sister M. Alcantara Ochwat**

Frank Swiderski

**In Memory of
Sister M. Dolorine Piwowarski**

Vincent Sztul

In Memory of Mary F. Reynolds

Joan Reynolds

In Memory of Mary Rita Rzcona

Keith & Karen Urban

**In Memory of
Sister M. Placidia Rzcona**

Keith & Karen Urban

**In Memory of
Sister M. Albertine Schab**

John & Bernadette Vlock

**In Memory of
Sister M. Marylla Stanislawczyk**

Karen Chuey

**In Memory of
Sister M. Kingnetta Szczypula**

Cindy Tidei

In Memory of Julia Vargyas

Richard C. Vargyas

**In Memory of
Sister M. Agatha Walerski**

Rita and Van Stout

**In Memory of
Sister M. Benilda Walkowska**

Frank Swinderski

**In Memory of
Harry, Sophie, & Carol Witkiewicz**

Patricia Witkiewicz

In Memory of Annette Wontor

Keith & Karen Urban

In Memory of Wally Zurek

Lorretta Zurek

TRIBUTES

**In Honor of
Sister Emilie Marie Lesniak**

Ed and Kay Burton

In Honor of Mary F. Reynolds

Jean Reynolds

MOTHER MARY THERESA DUDZIK SPIRITUAL ENROLLMENT

December 15, 2023- May 25, 2024

The Mother Mary Theresa Dudzik Spiritual Enrollment Program provides an opportunity for the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago to share their prayer with others in a special way. A monthly Mass is celebrated for all those enrolled, living or deceased. The Franciscan Sisters of Chicago remember everyone who is enrolled in their prayers. The Spiritual Enrollment card with a matching mailing envelope is exquisitely designed and easy to use. It may be used to celebrate any occasion or to remember a loved one. Please be sure to complete the section requesting the donor's name and address so that the Spiritual Enrollment Book has the donor's name as well as the name of the person being enrolled. A one-year enrollment is \$15. To obtain the enrollment packet, please contact Vicki Olsen at (630) 243-3556.



SPIRITUAL ENROLLMENT - LIVING

Belinda Alicea

Enrolled by Franciscan Sisters of Chicago

Karen Kubas

Enrolled by Edith Kubas

Most Reverend Michael Kwiatkowski

Enrolled by Steven Schmaltz

Sister M. Colette Kwieczka

Enrolled by Mary I. Mosser

Denise & Julia Longo

Enrolled by Edith Kubas

Rita Ryan

Enrolled by Sister Helene Galuszka

Most Reverend Michael Smolenski. CSSR

Enrolled by Steven Schmaltz

Violet Velicka

Enrolled by Franciscan Sisters of Chicago

David Zenda

Enrolled by Our Lady of Victory Convent Sisters

SPIRITUAL ENROLLMENT - DECEASED



John "Mick" Avon

Enrolled by Franciscan Sisters of Chicago

Thomas Blaszczyk, Jr.

Enrolled by Diane Kulma

Dorothy Bogan

Enrolled by Pat Camalliere

Dale Henry Buelter

Enrolled by Tim and Wendy Bellagamba

Casey Choragwicki

Enrolled by Anna Choragwicki

Teresa Choragwicki

Enrolled by Anna Choragwicki

Paul Cimino

Enrolled by Diane Kulma

Sister Claire Marie Czerwiec, SSND

Enrolled by Sister Jean Therese Jarosz

Frank Guy Delsignore

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Patricia Fuster

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Franciscan Sisters of Chicago

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Mary Juryta

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reading our newsletter and wish you God's blessings!

