Healing the world – one step at a time

What could compel four women to leave their native France and cross the ocean to a little known country? Called by Amadeus Rappe, first Bishop of Cleveland, they came to build a hospital in a new city of muddy roads, where cholera and malaria plagued the inhabitants and left behind a growing orphan population. The vast array of needs should have overwhelmed them. They could have, should have, gone home. Others did. But they did not.

Their motivation was to perform works of charity. The disruption of family life brought about by illness and premature death was what the sisters saw, and that need dictated their involvement in the care of the poor.

From that early beginning move ahead 157 years to the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine (CSA) in the year 2008 and find the same desire to show charity and healing wherever needed.

This issue of Images highlights some of the ways that CSA is trying to meet needs in today’s world and heal wherever possible.

"Out of the traditions of the past, we find meaning for the present and hope for the future, responding as our founding sisters did to the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of God’s people...We minister through a variety of means but always with the same purpose, to share the love of God with those around us."

from the Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine
Clare Sikora

Clare Sikora, a CSA Associate since 2004, says her hands “were made to read muscles.” She says her hands can sense people’s pain or stress and begin to relieve it. Recently Clare earned an associate’s degree in massage therapy from Stark State College in Canton, Ohio. She is now a licensed and insured massage therapist, and works at the Center for Holistic Medicine in Canton.

Clare volunteers at Regina Health Center once a month, where she gives healing massages to residents by appointment. Passionate about the power of massage to heal the body and spirit, she affirms that in addition to relieving back pain, joint pain, and promoting circulation, massage relieves depression, enhances mood, and relieves stress.

How did Clare become the health-conscious healer she is? It started with her loving family in which Clare says she was “protected,” not “babied,” by her five brothers and a father who organized and promoted youth wrestling. Clare’s brother Nathan is a chiropractor and co-owner of the Center for Holistic Medicine where Clare works.

While a student at Glen Oak High School in Canton, she volunteered at Mercy Medical Center, transporting patients, and working in “same-day surgery.” Being around CSA has inspired Clare to give selfless service to others and to use her time and talents generously. God has indeed given her “healing hands.”

Plans are underway to provide a wellness ministry for the CSA Sisters and Associates. Two rooms at Mt. Augustine will be refurnished providing a place where regular physical exercise can become part of daily routines. Exercise is especially important for the Sisters who are released from the physical therapy provided by Regina Health Center and are given instructions to continue exercising on their own.

Sr. Cheryl Keehner and Sr. Marian Durkin are working with Sr. Mary Grace Betzler and two CSA Associates, Clare Sikora and Norma Kuchera. The group enlisted the expertise of two members of the Regina Health Center’s Physical/Occupational Therapy Department staff, Kimberly Placak and Debbie Rozak. Together they will outfit the rooms with user friendly equipment and amenities. The hope is that posters, mirrors, massage and aroma therapy will serve as enticements to the curious and the committed and exercise will continue.

A Migun Thermassage bed is available thanks to a donation received by Sr. Patricia Gardner. The room will also contain a table and chair for massages. Sr. Mary Grace, Clare and Norma are in the process of developing a brochure and a menu of services they will provide on a regular basis.

If you would like to help with the set-up, offer suggestions or volunteer your time or talent, contact Sr. Cheryl Keehner (chk@srssofcharity.org).

In addition, near the exercise rooms is a large meeting room that can be used for group gatherings. The room is equipped with sound equipment for speakers and music. We would like to offer programs on wellness and welcome any suggestions or contacts.
It is not only “out of the traditions of the past” that CSA finds meaning for the present. In our efforts to grow in awareness of the needs of God’s people and the planet, we invite speakers to educate us, our friends and neighbors, and then we pray, study and reflect together.

We are increasingly aware of society’s growing understanding of wellness and wholeness and that each person needs to be considered on all the levels of humanity. Spiritual healing is the condition that recognizes each one.

In April, the Congregation partnered with Centering Space, one of our newest ministry sites in Lakewood Ohio, to bring Rev. John Surette, SJ from Chicago for two presentations on the relationship between faith and today’s scientific discoveries.

On Friday evening, April 11 in the chapel of Lakewood Catholic Academy, the speaker’s gentle but compelling arguments addressed the need for each person to be in a relationship with the Divine Creator and through that relationship, with creation itself. Father Surette’s presentation entitled “God’s Cosmic Banquet,” looked at the gift of creation as a feast in which all are invited to take what they need, but are also invited to be good food for the other guests. The question was “How do we become tasty morsels at God’s Cosmic Banquet?” The 65 attendees responded enthusiastically to the life-enhancing insights they received.

The discussion continued the next day with a full day retreat at Mount Augustine where the topic was “Walking with God in an Evolutionary Universe.” In the light of our modern understanding of the Universe, Surette offered new metaphors / images of God for consideration. The persuasive encouragement of the presentations combined with active sharing in question and answer sessions made the day rich in grace for all who attended.

Sr. Joanne Zeitz, SND and Sr. Kathy Andrews, CSA attended the presentation at Mt. Augustine.
The Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine continue the healing ministry of Jesus in many ways. The gift of hospitality and the call to "share the love of God" and "recognize the person of Christ in our neighbor" challenges us in each of our varied ministries.

Many of the sisters started out in one form of ministry and have been called into another.

Such is the case of Sr. Mary O'Grady whose first mission was childcare as a cottage parent at Parmadale, an orphanage that was run by the sisters. Now she is a registered nurse on the staff at St. John West Shore Hospital. Joining her as another healing presence at the hospital is Sr. Carole DeCrane. She began her ministry as an elementary school teacher. Sr. Carole is a chaplain and now serves in Pastoral Care at the hospital. She has been registered with National Association of Catholic Chaplains for many years.

Sr. Mary Grace Betzler is trained as an occupational therapist and as a hospital chaplain. She is a Reiki Master and specializes in healing touch therapies.

Sr. Loretta Spotila is a registered nurse who established the Interfaith Wellness Ministry in Irvine, Kentucky ten years ago. Sister's ministry calls for health, education and social service skills among the poor in the eastern part of the state.

Sr. Marietta Rohr was a pastoral associate at Christ the King parish. Committed to healing the social ills that flow from violence, poverty, and racial tension, Sister recently began the Rainbow Peace Ministry. She is asking that individuals make a commitment to pray, either alone or in a group, for those living and working in the city of East Cleveland.

Sr. Elizabeth Schur is a retired art teacher living in Lakewood. She now volunteers at St. Augustine Towers, an assisted living facility on Cleveland's Near Westside, taking care of the sacristy, setting up the altar for Mass and transporting residents to and from their rooms. Happy to be part of the worshipping community there, she experiences the presence of the healing Christ in the Eucharist and witnesses the daily transformations that occur among the elderly who are so close to God.
Centering Space
A ministry of prayer, listening and discernment Centering Space provides a place for individuals and small groups to gather in an environment conducive to prayerful listening. The goal is to enable ordinary people from any background to discover the presence of God in their lives through quiet attention to the voice of the Spirit. Three CSA sisters on the staff began their ministries as school teachers. Another, Sr. Mary Ann Andrews, is a Canon Lawyer and registered dietician.

Ecology Committee
Committed to protect and nurture the grounds of Mt. Augustine, the committee also seeks to educate those around them about ecological issues. In another effort to live this mission of protecting the earth and its resources, the Sisters of Charity purchased a hybrid Honda Civic this spring. Sr. Evelyn Flowers, CSA Coordinator of Environmental Issues, drives the Honda. Sr. Evelyn taught Spanish at St. Augustine Academy for 12 years.

Sr. Mary Jacob Yelcho, retired Administrator of Providence Hospital, Columbia, SC, lives at Mt. Augustine. On her daily walk she is clocking miles back home to Columbia while she prays for the staff at the Sisters of Charity South Carolina Foundation and their grantees.
Sr. Mary Denis Maher was one of four authors whose books were featured at Joseph-Beth Booksellers in Legacy Village. The authors’ night was a part of Ursuline College’s Alumnae Appreciation Night in December 2007.

On October 27, 2007, the Akron Beacon Journal ran an article describing the Women’s Interfaith Spiritual Heritage (WISH). Sr. Catherine Walsh is a member of WISH and was in a picture that was included. Comprised of women of all backgrounds and faiths, WISH focuses on members learning about each other and sharing each other’s unique cultural heritages and faiths. Established in 2006, WISH meets 4 times a year, with goals to break down barriers and prejudices, and to empower females.

The Most Rev. Robert J. Baker, Bishop of Charleston, South Carolina, presented Sr. Judith Ann Karam with the “2007 Caritas Award.” It was awarded in recognition of “her exemplary service to the Church in promotion of charity, stewardship and mercy through her work in the … hospitals.”

In one of his final acts before his assignment to the Diocese of Birmingham, Bishop Robert J. Baker nominated 30 residents to receive papal honors. On December 9, 2007, Sr. Judith Ann Karam received “Pro Ecclesia et Pontificie Cross” in recognition of her service and dedication to the sick through her work in the healthcare field.

Sr. Marian Durkin was asked to write an article for Occasional Papers. It will be published sometime in early summer. Occasional Papers is a booklet published by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) and contains article and reflections on topics pertinent to women religious leaders.

Nominated by Sr. Mary Patricia Barrett, the late Sr. Ignatia Gavin was inducted into the 2008 Modern Healthcare – Healthcare Hall of Fame. Sr. Ignatia played an integral part in the founding of AA, with Dr. Bob and Bill Smith in Akron OH. Modern Healthcare is a weekly, news-driven publication and leading source of healthcare business news. Srs. Mary Patricia, Mary Denis Maher and Miriam Erb traveled to Chicago on March 9th to accept the award.

Sr. Catherine Walsh has spent much time on the road the last several months speaking to various groups. She was at the Humility of Mary Ministry Center in Villa Maria PA in October to talk about human trafficking. This was in conjunction with a series sponsored by the Sisters’ Collaborative Initiative. She gave the same talk at the Ursuline Motherhouse in November. In March she spoke at the Summit Regional Council of Catholic Women’s Annual Lenten Day of Renewal held at St. Hilary’s Catholic Church in Fairlawn Oh. Her talk focused on meeting God in daily life.

Located in Canton, Ohio, Mercy Medical Center (MMC) is celebrating its 100th Anniversary this year. Founded by the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, the congregation is contributing to the hospital’s celebration by participating in the Mercy PALS Program.

Started in the fall of 1996, Mercy PALS (Partners with Allen & Lathrop Schools) began with hospital volunteers offering health screenings to parents during Parent/Teacher conferences at the schools. The partnering program with these two Canton City Schools, Allen and Compton (formerly Lathrop) has evolved to include in-classroom activities and student visits to the hospital.

Sisters Joan Gallagher, Marietta Rohr and Sharon Anne Yanak have been traveling to the schools this school year and filling the role that “room moms” would have. The visits are centered on holidays that will be spent in school, like Valentine’s Day, and include a class party. The “room moms” provide healthy snacks and activities for the children. In turn, the students make tray favors for the patients at MMC several times a year. They have also provided art work and writing that is displayed in the “PALS Art Gallery” at MMC.
The Irish American Archives Society honored Sr. Joan Gallagher at their annual Walks of Life Awards Dinner. In addition to her teaching career, she was given the award in recognition of her stewardship of three major development projects: the conversion of Notre Dame Academy to affordable housing; the renovation of part of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine motherhouse into Regina Health Center, a home for elderly religious, clergy and laity; and the establishment of Joseph’s Home, a short-term residence for homeless men discharged from local hospitals.

In conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the Navy Nurse Corps, Sr. Mary Denis Maher was asked to write the cover article for The Grog Ration. “Holy Cross Sisters: Forerunners of the Navy Nurse Corps” was in the Jan.-Feb. issue of the publication which is produced by the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

She also reviewed Ordinary Sisters: The Story of the Sisters of St. Agnes [the “other” CSA community] by Margaret Lorimer, CSA in the recent edition of the History of Women Religious Newsletter. She also provided the independent evaluation for the plan for the proposed A Walk With Grace, a 90-minute documentary film being funded by the Illinois Humanities Council. The film focuses on the changing nature of US women religious from Vatican II until the present.

Sr. Carrie Ferritto was asked to participate on a team reviewing the Finance Department of the Sisters of Notre Dame (SND). The SND are analyzing each department in their Provincial Center.

She was invited to the Maritime Institute in Baltimore, MD by the NRRO (National Religious Retirement Office) to make a presentation at their Property Planning for Religious Institutes Seminar in November 2007. She also was invited to Cincinnati to make the same presentation. The presentation was on the development of Regina Health Center and the work done to date for the CCRC (Continuing Care Retirement Community) at Mt. Augustine.

Sr. Evelyn Flowers, Coordinator for Environmental Issues, gave a presentation entitled “Practical Ideas for Saving the Environment” to the staff of the Sisters of Charity Health System on April 2.

Sister Evelyn recently completed 5 years as a volunteer tutor in English as a second language for Hispanics at the Spanish American Committee.

The staff (Core Circle) of Centering Space was honored to present a session on Diversity and Spirituality to the leadership class of Catholic Charities on Wednesday, March 19. The Core Circle is Sr. Mary Ann Andrews, Sr. Mary Jean Eucker, Sr. Carol Kandiko, Sr. Jennette Kearns, OSU and Mrs. Peggy Gerovac.

Sr. Cabrini Ferritto was asked to participate on a team reviewing the Finance Department of the Sisters of Notre Dame (SND). The SND are analyzing each department in their Provincial Center.

She was invited to the Maritime Institute in Baltimore, MD by the NRRO (National Religious Retirement Office) to make a presentation at their Property Planning for Religious Institutes Seminar in November 2007. She also was invited to Cincinnati to make the same presentation. The presentation was on the development of Regina Health Center and the work done to date for the CCRC (Continuing Care Retirement Community) at Mt. Augustine.
This year, Regina Health Center celebrates its 15th anniversary of providing “compassionate and wholistic health care services ... for persons desiring a God-centered environment and needing nursing care.” Regina Health Center (RHC) was the first of its kind, a collaboration of religious congregations bringing together their aging members in one place where they receive quality healthcare and access to many spiritual and supportive services.

Crystal is one gemstone that commemorates the 15th anniversary. Crystals have their own inner beauty but also reflect the beauty around them. How beautifully these facets apply to RHC.

The real gems of RHC are, of course, the residents. We acknowledge, too, a compassionate staff providing the care and programming that has resulted in RHC receiving a ranking of 22 out of 955 in the residents’ survey conducted by the Ohio Department of Aging for Long Term Care, and 13 out of 514 in the Assisted Living survey. The Ohio Department of Health awarded RHC a perfect score after completing its annual inspection.

Beyond nursing services, RHC offers its residents quality care through its Pastoral Care Department. There are also excellent physical, occupational and restorative therapy departments.

The Activities Department engages residents in stimulating recreational activities and works to support residents’ artistic skills. Residents consistently receive ribbons and citations for their art and writing entries in the state wide competition sponsored by AOPHA (The Association of Ohio Philanthropic Homes, Housing and Services for the Aging).

It is “crystal clear” that Regina Health Center is truly a place of peace and healing. Each individual, resident or staff, has added uniqueness, light, brilliance and depth in the past 15 years to bring about the healing of all in body, mind and spirit, as each day we live out the mission of Jesus. Congratulations to Regina Health Center staff and residents for being the gem that you are.

*Mission Statement of Regina Health Center*