



familylines

Uniting hearts in a spirit of family

A Day for Gratitude and Hope

Last fall at our Family Center in Walden, New York, a group of joyful Jubilarians celebrated their many years of presence and service to God and to the poor of the world. Together, the six Jubilarians total more than two-and-one-half centuries of lives committed to persevering love and hope. These two hundred and sixty-three years have been lived in the midst of families experiencing difficult periods of illness and other forms of suffering and struggle.

The celebration was energized by a richly symbolic liturgy in which the Sisters were joined by our Volunteers who currently represent five countries. A moment of hope was expressed in the commitment and commissioning of the new volunteers by the Jubilarians. The volunteers pledge to continue to live the same spirit of love and hope in the midst of impoverished families. This part of the ceremony was a powerful symbol of the handing on of the work of the sisters to the laity in the spirit of our founder, Father Pernet. Each sister, who had dedicated so much of her life to walking with the people

in their struggles, presented the volunteer before her with the challenge and the call to continue this dedication: To carve his or her own road into the hearts and the lives of the people they have chosen to serve.

The Little Sisters have been focused on direct at-home care within families since their beginnings in the mid-1860's and in New York City since 1891. Their vision has always extended from the family in the home to the family in society. Little Sisters see themselves as actualizing a gradual transformation of this world by joining in community with families of diverse cultures and different socio-economic conditions, creating together a consciousness of the values of the Kingdom of God. Our lay volunteers act as extra hands and hearts in carrying out this integral work.

The Little Sisters of the Assumption are an international presence in 28 countries including Latin and Central America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. In the United States they operate a variety of services in

locations such as Project Hope, Dorchester, MA; Pernet Family Health Service, Worcester, MA; LSA Family Health Service in East Harlem, NY City; Newburgh Ministry, Newburgh, NY; Queen of Peace Family Center, Walden, NY and two sites in Philadelphia, PA which offer a variety of services to local families.

In each of these communities we work in a spirit of mutuality with religious, lay staff and volunteers in the hope of transforming both the people we work for and each other. The commitment and commissioning ceremony this fall at Walden was a true embodiment of the beauty and the privilege of a life of service.

by Sr. Maureen O'Keefe



Sr. Gemma presenting Sara with a candle representing her being sent forth as a bearer of Christ's Light; Sr. Berenice presenting a T-shirt signifying being robed in a mantle of Justice

I-r front: Sr. Berenice Mulholland, 40 yrs; Sr. Gemma DeBaggis, 40 yrs ; Sr. Margaret McConville, 40 yrs; Sr. Ann Hayes, 50 yrs; Sr. M. Lucille du St. Sacrement, 60 yrs; Sr. Annette Allain, 25 yrs; I-r back: Deanna, Los Angeles; Christina, Germany; Laurent, Belgium; Sara, Los Angeles; Etienne, Germany



one heart, one family

with a grateful heart...

Dear Friends,

*"Were not our hearts burning within as He walked with us along the way."
Luke 24:13*

Like the disciples who were walking along the road trying to make sense of all that had happened prior to the Resurrection, **we, too, walk humbly with others** in much the same way. Initially the apostles did not recognize this "stranger" because of His changed appearance. He looked like any other human being, flesh and blood like us. It was only after reflecting upon their walk with Him that they remembered how their "hearts burned within". They then realized the unbelievable miracle of Easter – Jesus was among them!

Our foundress, Mother Mary of Jesus, radiated this kind of Love in the midst of her own life of service. One of the first Little Sisters is quoted as saying: "My heart feels so warm when I am with her."

The Loving Warmth we receive from another is not meant just for ourselves. It needs to be shared so that we, too, might "warm" the hearts of others in the same way. In so doing, the **giver and the receiver are changed** and become more whole. When this kind of Transformation occurs, the Kingdom of God becomes a reality.

A Little Sisters' heart is the warmest when she is in the midst of the poor. It is there she seeks for Jesus to reveal Himself. It is there she makes her home -- among the people. This is true also for those who share in our Mission, in particular, our resident Volunteers.

As you read this issue of Family Lines, may you **recognize the face of Jesus** and may you feel your own heart "burn within". By the grace of God these stories are also your own missionary accomplishments. Thank you for your generous support which enables us to continue the Mission which has been entrusted to us.

*May the Blessings of Love and
Peace warm your heart this
Easter season.*

With a grateful heart,

Sr. Annette Allain, LSA
Mission Development



family lines is a publication of the Little Sisters of the Assumption. This forum enables us to share our mission: "to bring together the least advantaged and the privileged in a spirit of family in hopes of creating a just society."

Please send us your change of address.
We welcome your comments and feedback.

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Writer: Alice Nelson, LSA Volunteer

Little Sisters of the Assumption believe in the dignity and integrity of all people, regardless of Race, Creed, National Origin, Age, Color, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Disability or Marital Status.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION FYI

To keep you up to date, we share with you some of the happenings at our various service sites:

From Walden, NY:

Queen of Peace Family Center continues to be a place where the Little Sisters of the Assumption Family can come home for healing, nourishment and fresh energy. We hosted an evening for those of our neighbors who were in any way affected by the events of September 11. This was sponsored by the United Way of Orange County.



"Come Drink Deep" was the theme of our Women's Spirituality Weekend held last October. Forty women who work at the various LSA mission sites came together for a weekend of prayer, reflection, and rejuvenation. It was an

opportunity for our caregivers to receive the care and nurturing they give so freely, to forge new friendships and to enjoy LSA hospitality! Participants left the retreat refreshed and renewed in mind, body and spirit. An April follow-up retreat is planned.

A strategy meeting was planned in February with the First Reformed Church's Youth Group and interested neighbors. The group will continue to be responsible for our vegetable gardens, whose produce

delights the participants of a local Food Pantry. We are still dreaming of the future development of a meditation garden. ♡

From Newburgh, NY:



Newburgh Ministry has a new Director. His name is Jim McElhinney. Jim has been a staff person here for the last two

and a half years. We are so grateful for his talents and willingness to accept this new position. We look forward to working with him in this capacity.

We are working on a task force with the Greater Newburgh Ministerial Association on Welfare Reform – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families. They will sponsor a forum on April 25th. Invited to be on the panel are statewide politicians and Congressperson Hinchey, the Hunger Action Network of New York State, a doctor from a local clinic and our new Director, Jim. ♡

From East Harlem, NY:

On Sept. 21st approximately 200 people gathered at a church next to Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service for prayer and reflection. There was then a candlelight procession to local East Harlem police and fire stations to give thanks to those who risked their lives to save thousands at the World Trade Center and to seek healing for those thousands we lost. Roses, donated by local florists, and



Sara leading the procession in song

candles were laid at the stations and prayers were offered. Many community members who are recipients of service from the Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service spoke to these offi-



cers and new relationships were created.

Another highlight of the year at LSAFHS was the birth of a client-run fund-raising committee. Approximately 15 mothers from our parents and ESL groups led by a staff member joined efforts to raise \$4000 for a trip to Sesame Place in Pennsylvania. Fund-raising activities included weekly food sales and a dinner dance with live music. This was the first year that clients planned and raised their own funds for a project!!! ♡

From Project Hope, Dorchester, MA:

Our Adult Learner Program is completing the third year of a 3-year

grant entitled "Women, Violence and Adult Education" received from World Education. The program was one of only 11 selected in New England to study how violence impacts an individual's capacity to learn. In this final year of the grant, our program is sharing what they have learned with other education programs in the region.

Our children's Center was re-accredited in November by the National Association for the Education of Young Children as a high quality program for young children. Less than 7% of child care programs in the country have received national accreditation. ♡



חג שמחת תורה

Happy Hanukkah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

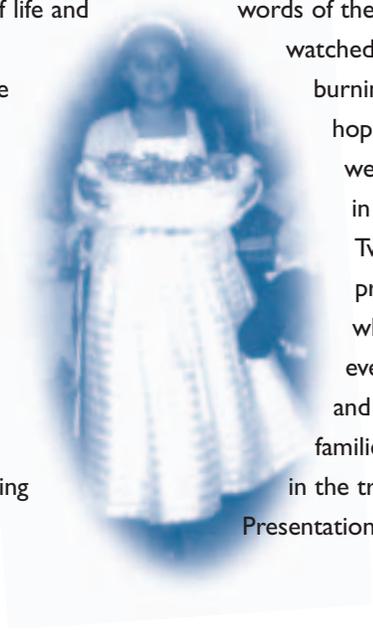
Every person is sacred and holy

Signs of Hope...

Volunteer Program Director

As the Lenten season dawns upon an increasingly complicated, troubled world, we are all looking for signs of hope and transformation. In working with the Little Sisters of the Assumption Volunteer Program it is always heartening to see signs of living hope in the volunteers who come to us from all over the world. Each volunteer is a vibrant presence who chooses to weave their life into the colorful tapestries of love, pain and faith that make up our communities.

Our Little Sisters of the Assumption Volunteers work actively to bring hope in countless ways to the families with whom they work. At this time of year, which is so rich with the mysteries of life and death, we think of the astounding surprise of the disciples as they walked the Road to Emmaus with Jesus and the clarity and joy with which they began to understand his message. So too we walk with our volunteers as they walk with those whose lives they touch while together transforming each other's lives.



A moment which truly embodies this spirit of mutual transformation was the recent Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service 'Spirit of the Holidays' program which brought together hundreds of families in East Harlem for prayer and pageantry. It was a moment of hope, a moment when we saw families of diverse backgrounds, religions and cultures come together to express their hopes for the season, to speak from their faiths and to listen with open hearts to the words of others.

As we listened to the words of the Hanukkah story and watched the lights of the Menorah burning like flickering signs of hope we were reminded that we are all called to be candles in the darkness of the world. Two Islamic women read proudly words of the Koran which call upon us to see every man and woman as holy and sacred. A band of Mexican families in native costumes led us in the traditional posadas or Presentations of the Nativity. The



African-American Mother's Group relayed for us the story of the Shepherds and the Angels and we all joined together in a spirited round of Christmas Carols and holiday songs. Every aspect of the evening from the selection of the prayers to the eclectic smorgasbord of refreshments and the lovingly decorated stage, was organized by volunteers from the community. It was a sacred moment to see such varied expressions come together in one place; the beauty of each person revealed in gathering and ritual. It was also a pertinent reminder of the simple ways we can establish inter-faith dialogue and the strength that is forged when communities come together.

Observing our Little Sisters of the Assumption volunteers that evening, and their joyful sharing of life and love with the people of the community, was truly a sign of hope and a symbol of all that we can accomplish when we walk together with each other and with God.

May we all be signs of hope for each other this Easter.

Trish Gough, Director

Surprised By Joy - A Volunteer's Story

By Sara Otto

How many Easters have I sat in church listening to the words of the story of the Road to Emmaus and wondered what it meant to have your heart 'burn within' as you met Jesus along the road? For years the words of the story, beautiful and sacred as they were, were just words. I was wrapped up in my studies, my friends and family and the familiar and safe world of my life in California.

This Easter, after almost a year of service with the Little Sisters in East Harlem, I feel that finally the words have come alive for me in a more powerful and overwhelming way than I could ever have imagined.

My walk to Emmaus began not in the dusty hills of Calvary, but among the decaying tenements of Spanish Harlem. When I arrived last summer I found it hard to imagine that here among the struggling, battered families of 'El Barrio' I would recognize the face of Jesus with the same joy and astonishment as the disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

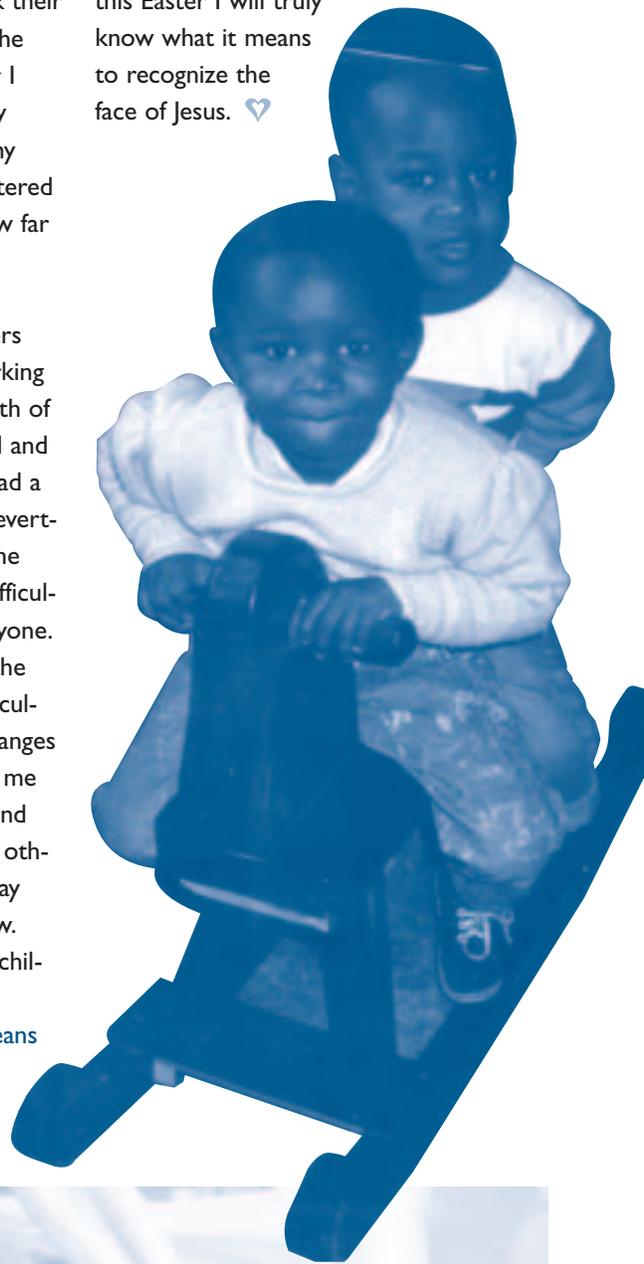
My work with the children of the neighborhood is what began to open my

eyes to the joy and the privilege of being present with the people as they walk their own roads. Today when I arrived at the Nursery where I currently volunteer I was greeted exuberantly by two very active little boys who called me by my name and danced around me as I entered the room. I am still in disbelief at how far they have come since our paths first crossed last May.

As a volunteer in the Little Sisters Developmental Nursery I began working closely with these two little boys, both of whom were developmentally delayed and from at-risk families. The first child had a severe speech problem and always reverted to baby talk when speaking and the other boy had serious attachment difficulties and seemed to be afraid of everyone. The road we walked together over the year was tough and fraught with difficulties but day by day I began to see changes in their behavior. It is so amazing for me to see these two little boys smiling and talking and responding to me and to others with joy and enthusiasm. Every day they surprise me with something new.

This morning when I saw these children's happy faces I realized that the warmth and joy I felt was what it means to have your heart 'burn within'. Here, with my presence among the people, I have been walking my own

Road to Emmaus. Finally, as I sit in church this Easter I will truly know what it means to recognize the face of Jesus. ♥



in memoriam



Sr. Isabelle Heaney, LSA

Born 1/10/11

Entered Religious Life 11/21/1931

Born to Eternal Life 1/2/02

Favorite Scripture Passage:

"In the shadow of your wings I shout for Joy." Psalm 63

Sr. Isabelle wrote a poem to the tune of "Beautiful Dreamer" which was sung at her Resurrection Mass. We invite you to sing along:

*Beautiful Jesus dwelling in me, Beautiful face I am longing to see
Beautiful voice I'm longing to hear; Sing to me Jesus I know you are here.
Sing in the deepest depths of my heart; Songs that a bridegroom alone may impart.
Beautiful Jesus dwelling in me; Grant that I may make my dwelling in thee.
Grant that I may make my dwelling in Thee.*



Sr. Helen Ryan, LSA

Born 10/9/23

Entered Religious Life 10/22/42

Born to Eternal Life 7/29/01

Favorite Scripture Passage:

"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full." John 10:10

Sr. Helen's suggestions for friendships:

Listen with exquisite care; Communicate often, especially what is of highest value to you; Laugh together; Seek forgiveness when necessary; Unite in prayer and Be grateful for such a gift.



back row: Sr. Eleanor, Lisa from Italy, Christina from Germany, Trish our Director;
seated: Sr. Berenice, Sr. Catherine, Sr. Agnes

From Overbrook, PA:

We were pleased to provide hospitality to several LSA Volunteers, along with the Volunteer Director, who attended last September's Call to Action Conference in Philadelphia. Just days after the events of September 11th, the conference had particular relevance for our attendees, particular with one workshop, "Living Peace" – a Spirituality of Gospel Non-Violence, offered by John Dear, SJ. He told of his own journey in working for peace. He has been challenged to understand what the nonviolence of Jesus means for us in our world today. Our attendees left more knowledgeable, motivated, and engaged to work for the struggle of justice and peace.

February 9th the Ignatian Guild of St.

Joseph's Preparatory School consisting of Mothers of Young Men who have graduated from the school attended a mass in our Convent to Honor Father David Sauter, S.J., President of the school who is leaving for another assignment.

February 18th began a series of "Disciples in Mission" prayer meetings. These are being held every Thursday evening during Lent. We have hosted them for three consecutive years. They are based on a Paulist Father's concept of small family centered prayer groups gathered during the Lenten season. They follow the Scriptural readings of each Sunday in Lent and are oriented toward prayer rather than holding a discussion group.



From Worcester, MA:

Christmas at Pernet has always been a time of both thankfulness and giving; a time of reaching out to those we don't always see. It is the opportunity to be a conduit for the larger community to share with those who are needy in a manner that respects all involved.

Together through the kindness of people in the Worcester area, we have been able to provide gifts with a loving spirit for 569 children of 235 families. Pernet's Board of Directors adopted families this year. It was heartening to have so many people involved in assuring that our families would be able to celebrate Christmas with gifts. The greatest gift of all, however, was the gift of Jesus visible in those offering their "labor of love".

One new program, "Adopt a Mom", publicized through United Way attracted several individuals who had never heard of Pernet before. One woman called and asked questions about what we did and who we served. Then she explained that she and a friend always exchanged Christmas gifts. This year they decided to adopt a family instead. They stated that this had been their best Christmas ever. ♡



thanks to you...

Your support continually encourages us to "keep on keeping on"! We have applied for a substantial grant to Americorps which began under President Clinton and continues to be supported by President Bush. Americorps funds community-based initiatives utilizing volunteers working in

poverty areas. Receiving this funding would cover a significant portion of our Volunteer Program Budget in Massachusetts for the next three years. We will be notified in May if we are approved for funding.

We are getting to know you through your personal stories and

prayer intentions. We are at one with you. You have become part of our ever growing community both through your financial contributions and through the spirit with which you live. We join with you as we pray for World Peace. May this be a reality for all of God's people everywhere. ♡

Announcing our 3rd Annual **Mother and Daughter Mission: A Pilgrimage of Loving Service**

Moms, bring your teen-age daughter to work among the poor for one week with the Little Sisters of the Assumption.

Monday, July 22nd to Friday, July 26th, 2002
Worcester, Massachusetts
Cost: Suggested Donation

Benefits:

"Hands-on" ministry opportunities among families in need
Time for prayer and reflection
Bonding between mom and daughter (13-19)
Live in community
A Rewarding and Fulfilling Experience
Room and Board provided

FOR MORE INFO: Please Call Trish Gough at 1-800-482-4376 or 212-369-4406



"Love burnt to intensity –
that is what Service means"
— Fr. Pernet, founder

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IN THIS ISSUE...

- A Jubilee to Remember* p1
- With a Grateful Heart* p2
- Signs of Hope* p4
- Surprised by Joy* p5
- Mother/Daughter Pilgrimage* p7

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