

In

# HARMONY

*Sisters of Mercy, New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community*

## Ministries, future focus of sponsorship meeting

Sister Bonnie Heh remembers Carol, an inner-city, single mother of four who was a substance abuser convicted of dealing drugs.

They met at Intersection, Inc., a Pittsburgh-area social service ministry sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy to provide the poor and marginalized with food, clothing, health services, individual support and referrals. Founded in 1972 by Sister Peg O'Neill, Intersection serves more than 2,500 clients each year.

According to Bonnie, Intersection's finance director, Sister Peg encouraged Carol to use the time in which she would be incarcerated by working to free herself from her addiction.

Six years later, Carol was out of jail and with Peg's encouragement, left McKeesport

where previously she had fallen into substance abuse and relocated to a residential program in downtown Pittsburgh where the pitfalls of going back to her former way of life would be lessened.

Carol credits Peg with helping her turn her life around, "Sister Peg had a belief that something in me was worth salvaging."

Today, Carol – and one of her daughters – are seniors at Mercy-sponsored Carlow University. Bonnie said Intersection has occasionally helped Carol pay for textbooks and she sometimes drops by for food, conversation and encouragement. "I really enjoy seeing her when

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## Rochester women make journey to religious life

Days before she was to take temporary vows in Rochester as a Sister of Mercy, Sister Jennifer Lang was praying at the Mercy Regional House in Mindanao, Philippines. This was no ordinary prayer. She and others were praying with Sisters of Mercy for the safety of the people there following a series of terrorist attacks.

The attacks by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front on Aug. 17 in Mindanao, where several Mercy ministries are located, took nearly 30 lives. None of the sisters were harmed, but they were evacuated to safety; Jennifer among them.

On Sept. 6, Jennifer and Sister Madeline Rockwell professed their temporary vows. They will be eligible to profess final vows in three years.

"I'll leave it up to God as to what kind of woman religious I will be. I just want to be



Sister Jennifer Lang visits with one of the mothers, who was dishing up a meal of hot porridge and chicken for children at the Mercy Mobile Clinic in the village of Lala, Philippines.

myself and allow others to do the same," said Jennifer, faith formation coordinator at Holy

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## In Harmony

A bimonthly publication of the  
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Pennsylvania,  
Pacific West Community

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# Advent challenges us to keep alert

By Sr. Patricia Prinzing, NyPPaW Vice President

“What is it that keeps us alert to today’s challenges? Of the many challenges, which ones do we choose to address? How do we attempt an answer, a solution?”

The beautiful colors of autumn are giving way to bare trees, snow fences and the appearance of snow plows. The church year moves us from ordinary time to the season of Advent, calling us to “keep alert.”

Our membership discussions with the Community Leadership Team have challenged us to locate ourselves at the edges of life for mission. It is at these edges that we struggle to know where we as New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community need to be in ministry today. It is at these edges we discern how we are called to be in community life in today’s reality. No day is ordinary; every day we must stay alert to challenges of mission and ask our God for the courage and direction we need to answer that call.



Sr. Patricia Prinzing

It is from the depths of our souls that we discern and discover ever new our call to serve to those who are poor, sick and uneducated. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges is to discern how to respond to need. Systemic change, direct service, prayer and many other modes are available to us. Sometimes the fastest answer is not always the best; the problems we face today often are the result of yesterday’s “solutions.”

I believe that prayer, community life and supportive friendships help guide our decision making, leading us to respond to the challenge of mission as individuals, as a New York Pennsylvania Pacific West Community, as an Institute and as consecrated women in the Church.

The bare trees, snow fences and appearance of snow plows keep us alert to the coming winter. What is it that keeps us alert to today’s challenges? Of the many challenges, which ones do we choose to address? How do we attempt an answer, a solution?

As we move into Advent, let us give ourselves the time to become alert once again to the tending of our personal and communal prayer, our community life and our friends, so that our passion for mission will call us to the edge.

# COMMENTARY: Reflecting on the presidential election

By Sr. Patricia McCann

Reflecting on the historic Nov. 4, 2008, election of Barack Obama as 44th president of the United States, I am struck by what a potentially transformative moment this is.

Hope and joy radiated around the world. Who could miss the symbolism of unity captured in Chicago's Grant Park on election night when the black Obama family and the white Biden family gathered on stage hugging and greeting one another amid cheers of 70,000-plus Americans of all races, creeds and ethnic backgrounds?

After two years of campaigns, primaries, debates, political ads and endless analysis on CNN, MSNBC and umpteen "talk shows," the election is over. Mixed feelings remain: elation at the outcome, relief that a long campaign season ended, nostalgia for the camaraderie and energy generated among campaign workers, and most of all, realization that the real work of implementing the "politics of hope" must now begin.

As Americans, we have to embrace the sacrifice to which President-elect Obama alluded in order to recapture and build upon concern for the common good. Greed-based lifestyles and unbalanced consumption of the world's resources need to give way to deepened concern for the good of neighbor, national and international cooperation, and to a more sustainable approach to natural resources and the environment.

If there is to be peace, we need to tamp down power mongering and xenophobic fear and live as citizens of the world rather than as nationalis-

tic "America firsters." We need to redesign health care and educational systems so that all people have affordable access. These are starting points toward the grounded-in-hope change of which President-elect Obama speaks.

As American Catholics, we face particular challenges as well. Throughout the campaign, I experienced the disconnected feeling of hearing evangelical churches articulate principles of Catholic social teaching which I studied/taught in my lifetime, while at the same time individual Catholic bishops with their moral pronouncements and threats sounded more like old-time evangelical fundamentalists.

The guidelines of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in "Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility" provided a clear assessment of the interrelatedness of the whole gamut of life issues and the role of conscience in voting decisions. Some individual bishops, however, appeared to take exception to those guidelines — and in very public ways.

On the other hand, some conversations among committed Catholics



Sr. Patricia McCann

indicated more ability to address the complexity of political strategy related to life issues — including anti-abortion and euthanasia — than did the pastoral letters of some bishops which focused solely on anti-abortion isolated from all the moral concerns that affect it: poverty, teen-age pregnancy and the anti-life culture created by racism and war. This is not a helpful situation either for the church or for society.

The future demands that we call one another — Republicans, Democrats, Independents, bishops/clergy and laity — to continue dialogue on these issues with each other and with the larger community. Painfully difficult as it is, we need to work together toward a new political strategy to effect an authentic pro-life culture which can be embraced by most Americans, whether Catholics or others.

Our new president-to-be clearly articulates his conviction that abortion is a serious moral concern. He, too, stands for the sacredness of life, the dignity of all people and the quest for the common good. It is not helpful for Catholics to "pull up the moat bridge" in a kind of siege mentality and attempt to address this issue alone. Results from the recent election verify that this is neither desirable or workable.

It is time for the Catholic community to call upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit to assist us in the process of building political/legal strategy grounded in a genuinely life-affirming consensus that can work in a religiously diverse population.

*Sister Patricia McCann is archivist in Pittsburgh and writes on social justice issues.*

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**"Painfully difficult as it is, we need to work together toward a new political strategy to effect an authentic pro-life culture which can be embraced by most Americans ... "**

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## Sponsorship (from Page 1)

she stops in. We have become friends,” Bonnie said.

Carol now wants to use her education to make a difference for others, Bonnie said. She would like to work with young women, helping them to build self-esteem and teaching them life skills.

Bonnie told that story at the NyPPaW sponsorship council’s Nov. 9-10 meeting in Buffalo. Representatives of NyPPaW’s separately incorporated ministries each told a story about someone who has been served by their respective ministry.

During the meeting Nov. 9, three sisters from the Northeast Community shared with NyPPaW’s Education and Ministry sponsorship councils their experience in working on sponsorship issues.

The meeting on Nov. 10 involved NyPPaW’s sponsorship council members, administrators and board chairs from sponsored ministries, and the Community Leadership Team. According to Georgine, many ministries discussed the rising costs and other issues shared in common.

“This is the first time this group has been together,” said Sister Georgine Scarpino, NyPPaW sponsorship director.

Sister Lorraine LaVigne, sponsorship director for the Northeast, said she and her group told NyPPaW about the membership roles in the sponsorship structure, and how it was to work with differing levels of skills and knowledge needed to govern.

“The major focus of the council in the first two years has been to strengthen mission integration for the sponsored ministries,” said Lorraine, who was accompanied by Sisters Lillian Framer and Barbara McLean.

Lorraine explained that Northeast eventually com-



**Pictured at the sponsorship meeting Nov. 9 in Buffalo in the front row, from left, are: Sisters Lillian Fraher, Georgine Scarpino and Joan Sherry. In the back row, from left, are Sisters Barbara McLean and Lorraine LaVigne. Lillian, Barbara and Lorraine are with the Northeast Community and shared with NyPPaW members their experience of sponsorship councils.**

bined their two sponsorship councils into one. She said working with sponsored ministries now is crucial.

“There will come a time when there will not be Sisters of Mercy able to serve in leadership positions either as administrators or on boards of trustees, and it is important that we educate and form our lay partners to carry on the mission of mercy in these sponsored ministries,” she said.

Georgine said the information provided by Northeast was helpful to NyPPaW’s discussion on Nov. 10. At that meeting, she shared documents on roles and the process for board nominations for those whose appointments were up for renewal. “This was a great opportunity to get to know people and their ministries,” she said.

## Stories about NyPPaW ministries touch hearts

According to Sister Georgine Scarpino, NyPPaW sponsorship director, a representative of each NyPPaW ministry told participants at the sponsorship meeting Nov. 10 about someone served by that ministry.

“Those stories were very touching,” Georgine said.

Sister Mary Walter Hickey, president at Notre Dame High School, Elmira, N.Y., shared the story of Angela Stevenson, an African-American girl who appeared to have trouble navigating the halls and opening her locker. Mary Walter alerted the freshman’s grandmother who

took her to a doctor. The diagnosis: a brain tumor.

After 22 hours of surgery, the girl began a slow recovery and was able to complete her limited schedule as a ninth-grader. She eventually finished high school in 2002 and entered college.

Angela contacted her former high school four years after her graduation to report that she was in the hospital with a condition later diagnosed as lupus. She was taken

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## Empty (from Page 5)

to a larger hospital in Rochester, where she died on Jan. 17, 2006, a short time later. Sister Nancy Kelly, Notre Dame's assistant principal, officiated at the funeral at the request of Angela's brothers.

Following her death, the girl's family designated a scholarship in her name to be used for students who cannot afford tuition.

Today, a young man, who wanted to enroll at Notre Dame because he didn't want to fall into gang activity like some of his neighbors, is benefiting from that scholarship. The school is helping the boy, whose father is critically ill, work through his learning difficulties. In all, three students – two of them African-American – have benefited from the scholarship.

"We are very proud of his success," Mary Walter said. "We extend mercy and compassion to sick and unfortunate, as well as finance tuition for minority students."

Mercy Associate Chris Tombaugh, executive director of the Mercy Center for Women, Erie, talked about a week a few years ago in which few things seemed to go according to plan. On a Monday, she had hoped to pick up samples for a new carpet at the center, only to have the task postponed several times by other needs.

Then, one of the clients living at the center, a refuge for homeless women, left and did not return. On Wednesday of that week, the client called wanting to return. She had relapsed into her addiction to alcohol. Chris told her that she had to return right away. The woman, who would not reveal her location, did not return.

Two days later, Chris received another call from the woman wanting to come back to the center. Chris said that she would wait for her. After two hours, the client never appeared.

So, Chris finally left to pick up the carpet samples. As she drove, a voice in her head told her to look at her gas gauge, which read empty. She wondered how she would get across town with hardly any gas. She prayed to have enough gas to get to the next gas station several blocks away. But once she arrived, each of the eight pumps had a sign that read, "Out of Gas."

Off she went to search for another station.

"I continued on for **miles** out of my way, praying the whole way that I wouldn't run out of gas," she recalled.

Finally, she found one. Frazzled, she jumped out of the car and began filling her thirsty gas tank when, for no reason she could explain, she looked at a phone booth to her left. There, on the phone, was her missing client.

"I was astonished," Chris said. She approached her, touched her arm and called her name to get the woman's attention.

Chris said: "She turned around in amazement. 'What are you doing here?' she said in a startled voice. The only thing that I could get out of my mouth was, 'God sent me.'"

She related to the client about not being able to get to Erie's westside until the end of the week, forgetting to get gas and then nearly running on empty as she looked for a station at which to fill up. And then she finds the gas station at which her client was making a call.

"Wow, did God use me, and did God ever love this woman. He knew she wouldn't come back, and He sent me to rescue her," Chris said.

Chris took the woman back to the center, where she completed its substance-abuse recovery program. Today, she is an alumna of the center.

"God is surely in this place. Each day at Mercy Center we provide opportunity for change," Chris said.

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## Sisters (from Page 1)

Apostles/Holy Family Parish, Rochester.

"The most important gift we have to give others is the gift of ourselves," Jennifer said.

Added Madeline, "I want to be the best that I can be and be present to those to whom I minister and to the sisters in my community." Madeline is a child advocate at both Casa de Misericordia and Lamar Bruni Varga Educational Center, which are part of Mercy Ministries of Laredo, Texas.

### Jennifer's work in the Philippines

During her visit to the Philippines, Jennifer worked with Filipina mothers who work hard to make soap to supplement their family incomes. They also helped make herbal medicines and prepare food for the Mercy Mobile Clinic's feeding program.

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## Philippines (from Page 6)

“As I left the village of Lala, I felt a deepening sense of joy in my heart as I was able to witness God’s compassion for God’s own people in the hands, eyes and words of the sisters and their companions,” she said.

Today in her parish work, she said she is amazed by the faith of parishioners and especially how children unfold in God’s love.

“I am continually surprised by the connections God allows to happen in my life and in the lives of others,” she said.

### Madeline’s ministry crosses borders

As a child advocate, Madeline explained that she plans activities for children living at the shelter and makes sure they have school clothing and supplies when they return to school. At the educational center, she helps plan activities for the children of former residents who come back to attend a weekly support group. The center also hosts many celebrations including all major holidays as well as Mother’s Day and fiestas for Mexican days of celebration.

Also, she spends Sunday afternoons at a shelter in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, giving foot massages to people who are hoping to cross the border.

Madeline considers her ministry along the border of the United States and Mexico to be a blessing.

“I find it inspiring to see how the staff at Casa and the educational center, as well as volunteers — many of them former residents — and partners from the Laredo community are working together to address the needs of women and children who come to the shelter. There is nothing better to see in this ministry than the return of a smile on the face of a woman who has endured more than we can ever imagine,” she said.

### Teaching, service part of Jennifer’s journey

Jennifer, who grew up in South Buffalo with her two brothers and one sister, first thought of becoming a sister in the third grade when two sisters came to her class to talk about the mobile medical van in the Philippines.

“I remember drawing pictures and writing stories of me doing the same thing. I was always fascinated by the church and helping others,” she said.

After graduating from St. Bonaventure University, Olean, N.Y., with a degree in mass communications, she was drawn to serve others. Her journey began with the



Sisters Jennifer Lang, left, and Madeline Rockwell, right, professed their temporary vows as Sisters of Mercy on Sept. 6 at Mercy Center, Rochester. Pictured in the middle after the ceremony is Sister Cynthia Serjak, NyPPaW incorporation minister.

Franciscan Volunteer Ministry and work at St. Francis House, a shelter in Boston for men who were homeless. A year later, she taught at St. John Indian School on the Gila River Reservation in Arizona. When the school closed, she moved to New York City to teach third graders at St. Aloysius School and help start a summer camp for middle-school girls. Then, it was off to Illinois to work at LaSalle Manor, a retreat center for teenagers.

She was invited to teach at La Escuela de San Jose, a mobile migrant school in Fremont, Ohio, and Plant City, Fla., sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. There, she sensed a strong connection to Mercy.

“I realized that Mercy was part of my past, and my present was helping me to trust it could be part of my future. So, I took a leap,” she said.

During her “inquiry year,” she finished her master’s degree in education and taught theology at St. Martin of Tours School, Buffalo.

She entered the Mercy community in Buffalo and, as a candidate, taught English to seventh- and eighth-graders at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Orchard Park. Also, she taught religious education at St. Ambrose Parish, Buffalo.

During her novitiate, she volunteered in the pastoral care department of Laredo Medical Center, Laredo, Texas, and taught religious education at El Cenizo colonia near Laredo.

Then, she moved to Rochester to continue the

(See **HOSPITALITY** on Page 7)

## Philippine woman returns home to be ‘blessing for others’

Gregoria Loren Smith is a gracious host.

A native of the Philippines, she seats a visitor in her cozy living room in North East, Pa., and briefly disappears into her kitchen. She returns with an infectious smile and a platter of fruit, a small plate of eggrolls and a Philippine dish of chicken and assorted vegetables on rice noodles called “pansit.” And, oh yes, a can of Coca-Cola.

“You go to a Philippine home and you eat, eat, eat!” she said with a quick laugh.

That giving spirit is woven strongly in the fabric of her life, some of which was strongly influenced by the Sister of Mercy in Erie. A recently retired machine operator from Welch Food Plant in North East, Gregy, as she is known, is taking that spirit back to her hometown: General Trias in the province of Cavite on the Philippine island of Luzon. On her trip there this past spring, she began to transform a three-bedroom ranch-style home owned by her family into a center for poor children.

“I grew up with the help



Gregoria Loren Smith proudly displays photos of children she has helped in her native Philippines.

of others, and now I want to help others,” she said, showing photos of smiling

(See ‘Gregy’ on Page 8)

## Hospitality (from Page 6)

apostolic year of her novitiate. She became a pastoral associate at St. Charles Borromeo Parish and worked on mission integration at Our Lady of Mercy High School before her current ministry.

### Madeline: Mercy sister, mother

Madeline came from a very close Catholic family in Binghamton, N. Y., and, seeing the example of the Franciscan Sisters, considered religious life at a young age. But after high school, she earned associate degrees in medical records and chemical technology and worked in a doctor’s office.

She married and with her husband had two girls and a boy. But the couple divorced, leaving Madeline to raise the children, then aged two, four and six. Madeline operated a day

care center out of her home while she worked hard to raise her children.

“I persevered in faith and had a lot of support from family and friends. I learned how blessed and graced I really was,” she said.

As her children got older, Madeline got more involved in the life of her parish. She was a Eucharistic minister at Immaculate Conception Parish, Ithaca, N. Y. There, she received caregiver training with Stephen’s Ministry and listened to the struggles of hurting people.

Once her children left home, she was looking to make more of a difference for others. Over time, she considered becoming a Sister of Mercy, a decision supported by her family.

“I was drawn to the Sisters of Mercy by their hospitality and learning about Catherine McAuley

and her passion for the poor and service to women and children,” she said.

She moved to Rochester and was accepted as a candidate in June 2004. During her time as a candidate, she was a teacher’s assistant at Seton Catholic School and volunteered at Mercy Outreach Center and the Mercy Center on Aging, all in Rochester. She also completed work for a bachelor’s degree in community and human services from Empire State College, Rochester.

Madeline spent her novitiate year in Laredo where she volunteered at the Laredo Medical Center. She also worked with women and children in the education center sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

“Catherine said that God can bend and change any of his creatures for his purposes. That pretty much has been my life,” she said.

# Sisters of Mercy Mass recalls Russert's life, legacy

Minutes before a Memorial Mass for NBC News journalist Tim Russert, Mercy Sister Lucille Socciarelli smiled as she looked out at nearly 1,000 people who had come to Our Lady of Victory Basilica, Lackawanna, N.Y.

"Tim would have liked this: the people, warm weather, sunshine and the Buffalo Bills are winning right now," she said.

The Mass Sept. 15 was sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas New York, Pennsylvania, Pacific West Community of which Buffalo is part. Mercy sisters participated

in various ways during Mass.

"We want people to remember Tim's legacy. I am so proud of the Sisters of Mercy for doing this," she said.

Russert, Washington bureau chief for NBC News and moderator of the political news program "Meet the Press," died June 13, 2008.

Sister Lucille, a longtime friend of Russert and the seventh-grade teacher who steered him toward journalism, sat with members of his family



Mercy Sister Lucille Socciarelli, pictured at far left, poses with members of Tim Russert's family just before a Memorial Mass for the NBC News journalist Sept. 15 in Lackawanna, N.Y. Pictured with Lucille, from left, are: Maureen Orth, Russert's wife; Patricia Scozzaro, his sister; Russert's father, Timothy J. "Big Russ" Russert; his sisters, Kathleen Russert Hughes and Betty Ann Buckenroth,; and his nephew, Jesse Hughes.

at the Mass. Russert's wife, Maureen Orth, and his father, best known as "Big Russ," were at the Mass.

In a welcome before

the Mass, Sister Nancy Hoff, president of the New York, Pennsylvania,

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## 'Gregy' (from Page 6)

children she met on her recent trip.

She left Erie to work on her project in September and will return to Erie in December to sell her local home. Then she will return to live in the Philippines.

"When you help a stranger you are more blessed," she says.

She has already set up a library with books she and others have gathered in the United State and shipped to the Philippines along with clothing and other items. And she looks forward to giving children a place to go and participate in learning with fun activities, much like those utilized at Erie's Mercy Center for Women, and the House of Mercy's Kids Club, where she volunteered. Other ideas were gleaned from ministries offered by the Erie Benedictine Sisters and the Sisters of

St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania.

Friends in the Erie area recently hosted a retirement party for Gregy at which they raised \$500 for a foundation that bears her name. The foundation will help fund the activities and food for children. She also is establishing a version of the Big Brothers and Big Sisters programs there that will provide children with adults with whom to share activities and friendship. Participants at her retirement party sponsored children who were photographed during her last trip to General Trias.

She recounts an incident during that visit in which some of the children to whom she distributed Hershey Kisses candy decided to take them home to be shared with their families.

"That really touched me," she said.

Gregy worked as a Mercy volunteer at the Community Country Day School in Erie. Shortly after that she moved to Philadelphia where she met her future husband, who, two years after their marriage, died of cancer. Mercy Sister Felice Duska, then director for the Mercy Volunteer Program in Erie, convinced Gregy to return to Erie. There, she found a job and volunteered for several ministries and formed friendships with other Mercy Sisters like Rita Brocke and Mary Ann Bader.

The experiences in Erie and other places have helped her in getting to where she is today.

"If you have been blessed, be a blessing for others," she said.

## Russert (from Page 8)



Mary Alice Walz of Buffalo, N.Y., signs a memorial book at a Mass Sept. 15 to remember Tim Russert.



Buffalo Sisters Virginia Marie Grasso, left, and Lucille Socciarelli are interviewed by a Buffalo television news reporter before the Memorial Mass.

Pacific West Community, called Russert a well-respected journalist who put faith and family first and thought often of the Sisters of Mercy who educated him.

“Faith shaped the way he lived his life,” she said. “What made him so special is that he was one of us; he was proud of his Buffalo roots.”

In a homily, Jesuit Father John Mattimore said Russert was a humble man who thought of others. “He was a man who knew that anything that God gave him was to be used for others,” said Father Mattimore, main celebrant of the Mass. Fifteen other priests concelebrated.

The priest said Russert learned from women who are called by the “great name of Sister of Mercy.”

He defined “mercy” as another word for God.

“Mercy means doing good for those in need and helping all you can ... On June 13, Tim met God, who is mercy,” he said.

Hundreds of people signed

memorial books at each entrance to the basilica. One of them, Tim McCarthy of Hamburg, N.Y., waited patiently on the hot and humid afternoon to sign the book.

“(Russert) was an icon,” he said. “He meant so much to Buffalo and the world. He was a man of family and faith.”

After signing a memorial book Mary Alice Walz said she grew up three blocks from Russert in South Buffalo.

“He did so much for the Sisters of Mercy,” she said.

After Communion, Mercy Sisters sang the “Suscipe,” a prayer of their foundress, Catherine McAuley.

Sister Lucille said that the Mass was a wonderful way to remember Russert’s life. And as for Russert’s beloved Buffalo Bills of the National Football League, they came from behind that Sunday afternoon to beat the Jacksonville Jaguars, 20-16, to give them their best start in five years.



Sisters of Mercy from Buffalo participated in various ministries of the Memorial Mass. Three sisters are pictured in the opening procession. Nearly 1,000 people attended the Mass at Our Lady of Victory Basilica, Lackawanna, N.Y. A childhood neighbor, Mary Alice Walz, said Russert did much for the Sisters of Mercy.

# News Around NyPPaW

## NyPPaW

### Anti-racism training



More than 40 Mercy Sisters and associates from across the Institute participated in an introductory anti-racism training program Aug. 15-17. NyPPaW representatives attending were, from left, Mercy Associate Mary Jane Longo (Pittsburgh), Sister Anne Curtis (Rochester and member of the Institute Leadership Team) and Sister Guadalupe Lumantas (NyPPaW Leadership Team). Seated is Sister Jean Murin (Pittsburgh).

### Close SOA



Sisters Guadalupe “Loly” Lumantas and Mercy Associate Angie Giuffre were among those who participated in the protest and prayer vigil Nov. 21-23 to close the military training School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Ga. Pictured at the protest, from left, are Aileen Hayes, a student from Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., who participated in Mercy Challenge this past spring; Angie and Loly.

### Presidential meeting



The presidents of the Mercy colleges within NyPPaW met Aug. 14 at Mercyhurst College, Erie, to share ideas and work on ways in which to collaborate. Pictured, from left, are: Gary Brown, Ph.D., executive vice president, Mercyhurst North East; Thomas Gamble, Ph.D., Mercyhurst College; Mary E. Hines, Ph.D., Carlow University, Pittsburgh; Sister JoAnne Courneen, representing NyPPaW; and Paul Hurley, Ph.D., Trocaire College, Buffalo.

### On ‘vocation’



Pictured during a break at a vocations conference, from left, are: Mercy Associate Angie Giuffre, and Sisters Phyllis Marie Zaworski and Sheila Stevenson, who represented NyPPaW’s New Membership Office. Nineteen Sisters of Mercy were among those who attended the National Religious Vocation Convocation in Louisville, Ky., Oct. 9-13. Sister Mary Bendyna (Buffalo), a representative with the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., presented a preliminary report on a major study of entrants into religious congregations. She said the most surprising “Mercy” presence came from a young woman who shared about the influence of women religious in her life, and those religious lauded were Sisters of Mercy.

## News Around NyPPaW

### BUFFALO

#### Buffalo Mercy Associates welcomed



New Mercy Associates were welcomed at a covenant ceremony Sept. 28 at Mercy Center, Buffalo. Pictured, from left, are: James Carlin, Carole Carlin, Sherwood Hagen Jr., Shirley Fahrner, Ronald Heiss and Marion Grimes, who is celebrating this year her silver jubilee as an associate.

#### A lifetime of achievement



Sister Mary Ann Schimscheiner, center, Buffalo local leader, received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Kenmore Mercy Hospital Foundation, Buffalo, during its annual fundraising event Nov. 21. She was honored for serving her ministry “with dedication and absolute selflessness.” Mary Ann served in several positions with Buffalo’s Catholic Health System, including chief executive officer of Kenmore Mercy Hospital from 1981-99. In 1998, Mary Ann received the Sister Mary Mechtilde Memorial Award, the hospital’s highest honor. Mary Ann is pictured with Amy Habib, left, who received the Sister Mary Mechtilde award at the event, and Dr. Ann Saldhana, a pathologist.

#### Benefactors’ Day



The Sisters of Mercy in Buffalo hosted an appreciation day for benefactors at Mercy Center Sept. 7. The day included a prayer service in the chapel and special honors. Benefactors who attended included members of the Twenty-First Century Club, Legacy Society and the Many Faces of Mercy Giving Circle. Pictured, from left, are Sisters Maralynn Sciarrino of Buffalo and Pat Prinzing, NyPPaW vice president.

## News Around NyPPaW

### ERIE

#### Center celebrates 35 years



The Mercy Center on Aging, Erie, celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a luncheon Oct. 1 attended by clients and friends of the center, and public officials. Sister Georgine Scarpino, NyPPaW sponsorship director, also participated in the celebration. In the photo, Georgine, right, receives a gift from Sister Mary Dolores Jablonski, executive director of the center.

#### For your listening pleasure



WQLN-FM, Erie's public broadcasting radio station, presented the Mercy Center on Aging, Erie, with a set of classical music compact discs Nov. 20. Pictured at the presentation, from left, are MCA clients Madelyn Hartleb, Walt Chevalier, Louise Seib, Richard and Beverly Irish, and Traci Teudhope, the station's outreach manager.

#### Good Morning, Domenica



Sister Domenica DeLeo, local leader in Erie, speaks with Chris Cuomo of ABC-TV's "Good Morning America" program at Union Station in Erie. Cuomo and cohosts – Diane Sawyer and Sam Champion — stopped in Erie Sept. 16 during the program's whistlestop tour across America to learn from people about issues in the presidential campaign. Sister Domenica, Sister Mary Dolores, executive director of the Mercy Center on Aging, and several of the center's clients; and Gary Loncki, NyPPaW communications director, were among the 100 guests invited to the event.

## News Around NyPPaW

### PHILIPPINES

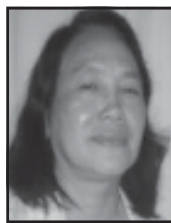
## Sr. Elsa to mark 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee Dec. 28; helps nurture vocations

To hear Sister Elsa Caberte tell it, no single person influenced her decision to enter the Sisters of Mercy. Yet, she chose religious life as the best way to serve God.

“It is the life of Catherine McAuley, especially her charisma, the challenging rhythm of contemplation and action and the fourth vow -- to care for the poor, the sick and the uneducated -- that have impressed me and led me to join the Sisters of Mercy,” said Elsa, who is celebrating her 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee on Dec. 28. The ceremony will be at Ozamis City, Misamis Occidental, Mindanao, Philippines.

She said the Sisters of Mercy through their innovative and traditional ways inspired and attracted her to become one of them.

Today, Elsa is vocation and pre-candidacy director in Iligan City, Lanao del Norte, Mindanao, Philippines. Her other ministries have included candidacy director; teaching at Mercy Junior College, Tubod, Lanao del Norte; serving on the administrative team in Our Lady of Perpetual Help Acad-



Sr. Elsa Caberte

emy, Linamon, Lanao del Norte; and teaching in Mercy high schools in the Philippines.

Elsa said that she is called to witness enthusiastically and radiate Christian joy in bringing the love of Christ’s mercy and compassion to God’s entire community. That, she said, invites and encourages women to join in the journey of a religious vocation.

She said, “Thus, I would be able to say ‘come and see’ and ‘taste’ as a Sister of Mercy, be a woman for all seasons to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with God.”

### On a mission



The Sisters of Mercy actively reached out to 105 families, who were Muslim evacuees in Tangkal, Lanao del Norte. Sister Virgencita Alegado, pictured at right, Philippine local leader, and Sister Helen Libo-on were part of the National Interfaith Humanitarian Mission, NIHM, Oct. 23 to provide relief, psycho-social, documentation and medical mission services. They helped arrange the admission of three children who were ill to the Provincial Hospital of Lanao del Norte in Baroy, Lanao del Norte. Their action paved the way for more admissions of sick children to the same hospital. Parents of the children said the presence of NIHM delegates helped them realize that their children were dying and needed medical attention.

# News Around NyPPaW

## PHILIPPINES

### Diocese looks to future



Sisters of Mercy are pictured with Archbishop Fernando Capalla of Davao after a Mass Nov. 15 that closed a celebration for the silver jubilee of the Diocese of Iligan, Lanao del Norte, Mindanao, Philippines. The archbishop was the first bishop of the Iligan Diocese. Thirteen Sisters of Mercy participated in the diocese's third Diocesan Pastoral Conference Nov. 11-14. The conference addressed the ongoing armed conflict between government troops and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The conflict has had a great impact on the revision of the diocese's vision and mission statement which emphasizes a dialogue of faith, life and culture.

### Helping heal trauma



Sister Elva De Castro, center, participates in a workshop on trauma healing at Dapit Alim, Simboco, Tubod, Lanao del Norte, Mindanao. Elva is a guidance counselor at Holy Cross High School, Kolambugan, Lanao del Norte. She was one of several teachers from the school who attended the workshop on skills that are helping students work through the trauma of the August terrorist attacks in the region. Workshops were held Nov. 7-9.

## PITTSBURGH

### Diocese honors Sister Ignatius

After nearly four decades of service to the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Sister Ignatius Rooney is stepping down from her post Dec. 24.

For the past 10 years, Ignatius has been director of special events and special assistant to the secretary of education.

She came to the diocese in 1970 to serve as administrative assistant to the superintendent of Catholic schools and coordinator of Title I government education programs. Later, she was associate superintendent and administrative assistant to the rector of St. Paul Seminary.

Father Kris Stubna, diocesan secretary for education, said many are grateful to Ignatius's efforts to support the ministry and outreach of "total Catholic education."

He said: "She has had a deep love for Catholic schools and has surely contributed to their great success over these years. Sister Ignatius has worked tirelessly to support every dimension and facet of Catholic education. She will leave behind a tremendous legacy, and she will be greatly missed by so many of us who have been her colleagues and dear friends."



**Sr. Ignatius  
Rooney**

### Sister Vivian honored for 40 years of service

Sister Vivian McElhinny was honored by Carlow University Nov. 25 for her 40 years of dedication and service as a math teacher at the Campus School, which is affiliated with the university.

For more than three decades, Vivian taught math to students in the third-through sixth-grades at the school.

"Teaching at the Campus School has really been a blessing. It has been great to work with students, parents and faculty," she said.

She credits school officials with always encouraging her to be trained in current methods of teaching math.

Currently, Vivian is a tutor for students in grades one through five at the Campus School.

"I want to keep going as long as I can!" she said.



**Sister Vivian  
McElhinny**

## News Around NyPPaW

### ROCHESTER

## Elmira high school honors Sister Carmella

Notre Dame High School, Elmira, N.Y., presented Sister Mary Carmella Coene with the McAuley Award Oct. 21 for her service to education and life in Mercy.

Carmella, who will turn 100 years old on Dec. 21, remarked that it was great for her to be a teacher and described how much she loved teaching as a Sister of Mercy.

Sister Joyce McGinn, local leader in Rochester, said the community is proud of Carmella. "For 100 she is very spry, alert, articulate and interested in all things. To look at her and talk with her you would never know her age. She is one very special sister."

In his column in the "Catholic Courier," Rochester diocesan newspaper, Rochester Bishop Matthew Clark, who attended the honors dinner, said that Carmella, in her remarks, "spoke beautifully and simply about the choices she has made during the course of her life."

He continued, "Shining through her comments were her love for the



**Sister Mary Carmella Coene**

children she has taught, her reverence for the teaching profession and her convictions about the importance and power of education."

Bishop Clark, himself an honorary Mercy Associate, said he was impressed by her joy living as a Sister of Mercy for 80 years. "Her vocation to religious life, she told us, nourished her commitment to teaching and helped her to understand the ultimate purpose of teaching — to help people come to the full peace of freedom and holiness for which they were made."



### Living the Spirit of Mercy

Sister Catherine Kanick of Rochester displays the Spirit of Mercy award presented to her at Mount Mercy Academy, Buffalo, Nov. 13 at the high school's annual honors dinner. Catherine was one of five distinguished alumnae honored. She was cited for exhibiting the Mercy spirit in her professional and personal life. Catherine ministered for many years in substance-abuse programs and offers retreats for men and women in all 12-step recovery programs.

## We Remember

### Sister Rita Maher (Sister Mary Austin) PITTSBURGH July 16, 2008

Sister Rita, 90, was a deeply spiritual woman, always welcoming with her warm smile, ready to be of service to anyone in need and patient in suffering. She taught library science and was a librarian in several Pittsburgh and Greensburg, Pa., diocesan schools. She was a librarian at Carlow College, now Carlow University, Pittsburgh. She also served in the convent library. Knowledgeable in many areas, Rita was always eager to use her many skills in seeking information for those who needed it.



**Sr. Rita Maher**

### Sister M. Basil Swerbinski PITTSBURGH Sept. 19, 2008

A Sister of Mercy for 78 years, Sister Basil, 98, taught in several elementary schools in the Pittsburgh area, culminating in 20 years at St. Agnes, an inner city school. Her forte and love was mathematics, but she was also gifted in music and directed many musical productions. In addition, Basil was a meticulous and gifted seamstress creating beautiful dolls and baby clothes. A prayerful woman of deep faith, Basil maintained a positive attitude in the difficult years of her illness and was always kind to those around her.



**Sr. M. Basil Swerbinski**

## We Remember

### Sister Mary Frances Ferrara BUFFALO Aug. 17, 2008

Sister Mary Frances, 92, was a Sister of Mercy for 65 years. She taught mainly primary grades for 40 years in several schools staffed by the Sisters of Mercy in the Diocese of Buffalo. Mary Frances, a native of Jamestown, N.Y., loved life and her ministry with children. She was a most humble and joyous Sister of Mercy, a true daughter of Catherine.



Sr. M. Frances  
Ferrara

### Sister Sara Marie Healy PITTSBURGH Sept. 16, 2008

Sister Sara Marie, 99, was closely tied to Carlow University, Pittsburgh, where she earned an education degree, taught nursing, ran the student health center and represented two Carlow presidents. Sara Marie worked alongside Dr. Jonas Salk in the 1950s as a nurse at Pittsburgh's Municipal Hospital for Infectious Diseases when he was developing the polio vaccine. She was active in the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the first woman to be grand marshal for Pittsburgh's St. Patrick's Day parade. As a young woman she earned a pilot's license and was a flight instructor in Latrobe, Pa., during World War II. A Sister of Mercy for 81 years, she once said, "I've never had an unhappy day."



Sr. Sara  
Marie Healy

### Sister Carmella Greco PITTSBURGH October 3, 2008

After almost 20 years in teaching, Sister Carmella, 85, began to minister in social services in the Pittsburgh area at the Northview Heights Housing Authority, Lutheran Services, Schenely Gardens and Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish. Sister Carmella was an exceptionally compassionate woman who cared deeply for others, particularly the elderly and homebound. Even when she was homebound herself, she kept in touch by telephone with many she had encountered in her ministries; they knew they were always in her prayers. Sister Carmella was always aware of and interested in the current issues and developments of the community and took very seriously her responsibility of supporting the community through her ministry of prayer.



Sr. Carmella  
Greco

### Sister Jude McCluskey ERIE Oct. 29, 2008

A Sister of Mercy for 51 years, Sister Jude, 70, was a teacher at elementary schools in the Erie and Pittsburgh dioceses. She was certified in the theology and psychology of pastoral ministry and was a member of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains. She served as pastoral care manager and chaplain at DuBois (Pa.) Regional Medi-



Sr. Jude  
McCluskey

cal Center. At Shadyside Hospital, Pittsburgh, she worked with heart, cancer, neurology and diabetic patients.

### Sister Rosemary Murphy ERIE Oct. 31, 2008

Sister Rosemary, 83, was dedicated to carrying out the works of Mercy in her various ministries as an elementary school teacher; director of curriculum library at Mercyhurst College, Erie; and as a reading specialist for Catholic and public elementary schools in northwestern Pennsylvania. A Sister of Mercy for 64 years, her love for Jesus, Mary and the rosary gave her strength. She took great pride in showing visitors the calendar with pictures of her family.



Sr. Rosemary  
Murphy

### Sister Rosemary Fitzsimmons (Sister Mary Timothy) BUFFALO Nov. 6, 2008

A Sister of Mercy for 63 years, Sister Rosemary, 81, spent most of her ministry in education and library science. Among her ministries was being the librarian at Mt. Mercy High School and Trocaire College, both in Buffalo. Rosemary loved to read and pray, and those who knew her said it seemed that her rosary was always in use.



Sr. Rosemary  
Fitzsimmons