

## Philippine crafts find home at Mercy Marketplace

Sisters Margaret O'Donnell and Caritas Quinn are looking forward to enjoying part of their summer visiting craft shows in the Buffalo area. Not to buy, but to sell. And not to sell items that they made, but those skillfully crafted by the hands of Philippine women who are trying to support their families. Mercy Marketplace may be coming to a craft show near you.

"We have book covers, which many of the sisters use on their Mercy Office prayer books, purses, passport holders, shoulder bags, overnight bags, table placemats and napkins," said Margaret, who, along with Caritas, co-directs the Mission Office in Buffalo – herself for the past seven years.

Margaret explained that the items are made by clients of Women Arise, a program started in 1998 in Tambacan, Lanao del Norte, Mindanao, in which women learn sewing skills to help support their families. Beaded bracelets, penholders and other items sold at craft shows are made by indigenous women in a program created by the Sisters of Mercy in Alicia, Mindanao.

"Families are very close in the Philippines, and the women work hard for their children," said Margaret, who spent 31 years ministering in the Philippines as a teacher, regional superior and chaplain. "There is great joy in obtaining an education for their children and getting them to help others. When children get jobs and marry, they help others in the family." Margaret explained that craft shows at Buffalo's Mt. Mercy Academy and Trocaire College, Buffalo-area parishes, Mercy events and other venues raises about \$5,000 annually for the Philippine women. They operated a booth of unique crafts at the Theology of a Merciful Heart gathering at the recent St. Bonaventure University.



Beaded bracelets are among the items buyers will find at Mercy Marketplace.



Sisters Caritas Quinn, left, and Margaret O'Donnell, co-directors of the Mission Office in Buffalo, display Philippine-made items they are selling at craft fairs this summer.

She said the items sold are popular with customers, and those buying them often pass the information on, by word of mouth, to their friends and neighbors. Caritas frequently joins her behind the table displaying the colorful array of crafts. Mercy Associates Rose Marie and Sherwood Hagen, Shirley Farnum, Gloria and Chuck Sherry, Jean Ormond, Maureen Kelly and Betty Poppagallo also give their time to prepare for and sell at the craft shows.

"It is a pleasure to help Sister Margaret with such a worthwhile project," said Rose Marie. "You get a good feeling by helping others."

Margaret said the Philippines holds a special place in her heart. During her last visit there in 2007 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Sisters of Mercy in Buffalo founding the Philippine community, she and Caritas greatly enjoyed renewing friendships and delighted in the flourishing ministries that really touched the lives of people.

“The women and children were so grateful for all that we did for them,” she said.