

Caritas

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Christmas Greetings

from the Leadership Team

Last summer, 82 Sisters of Providence gathered in Montreal to take stock of how we are in living our mission and to determine our direction for the next five years. The 2007 General Chapter delegates committed our international community to “respond actively to the cry of the poor, especially women, children and the Earth.” They said the sisters will “promote reconciliation by engaging in concrete actions for healing, justice, unity and peace.” [General Chapter Orientations, 2007]

They also asserted that “we live in a world of communications which facilitate networking and collaboration with laity, Providence Associates and organizations which share our objectives and values.” We believe the General Chapter affirmed your link with us. As an individual or organization, you help form the network for Mother Joseph Province and collaborate in the mission of Providence.

People in the United States and in the wider international community long for prosperity and peace on earth. This Christmas season we invite you to continue with us, listening to cries in the night, walking our talk about healing and justice, following Jesus on the path of unity and peace.

With you we hope to find better ways to actively help women, children and Earth. With you we hope to heal broken individuals and groups. With you we hope to engage in honest dialogue and negotiation when people and nations clash.

Finally, with you we pray that

*on the path of peace the Prince of Peace
may be born anew in our hearts and in our world.*



Sr. Margaret

Margaret Botch, SP
Provincial/Team Coordinator

Sr. Anita

Anita Butler, SP
Team Member

Sister Kaye

Kaye Belcher, SP
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Karen Lauby

Karen Lauby
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Sr. Charlotte

Charlotte Van Dyke, SP
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INSIDE: Mother Joseph Award ● Wisdom Keepers ● El Salvador update

Karen Bell, Oregon hospice movement pioneer, receives



Karen Bell

2007 MOTHER JOSEPH AWARD

“In hospice, you never get a second chance to get it right. Think first and foremost about the patient, for the rest will follow.”

Those are the words of Karen Bell, a pioneer in the hospice movement in Oregon state and the 2007 recipient of the Mother Joseph Award. Since the mid 1980s she has been manager/director of that state’s largest provider of hospice and palliative care services through Providence Home and Community Services in Portland. Nominated by its administration, a host of others signed on to sing Karen’s praises, including staff members and other hospice leaders.

“Karen has accomplished a feat that is virtually unparalleled,” her nominators wrote. “She envisioned and built, from the ground up, a hospice program that today cares for 500 terminally ill patients every day.” Moreover, for decades she has been an advocate and a leader of the hospice movement at the local, state, regional and national levels.

Born in Pennsylvania, Karen recalls the fun of the one-room school for five grades that she attended alongside her twin sister and older brother. She also has memories of her family’s travels as her father served in the Army and as a Methodist minister and chaplain. The family lived in Fort Lewis, Wash., then in Alaska, where she graduated from high school. After nurse’s training at Sacred Heart General Hospital in Eugene, Ore., she became a staff nurse. Engagement to a law school student in Salem led to a move to Salem Memorial Hospital. From 1967 to 1973 she was a staff nurse at Providence Hospital in Anchorage, followed

by 18 months with the Visiting Nurse Association in Portland.

A pivotal moment came when Karen heard Dr. Cicely Saunders, considered the founder of the modern hospice movement, speak in the mid ‘70s in Portland. Karen was a discharge planner at St. Vincent’s Hospital, helping with the transition from hospital to home care. The community was just beginning to talk about the idea of hospice. A light switch went on when she realized it would be her ideal career.

“I had an affinity for care for the dying, but no training in that was being offered,” she recalls. But of the many patients she cared for, the ones she recalls most clearly are the ones who were dying.

When she was 20, working nights as a nurse, she remembers a University of Oregon football player about her own age who came into the hospital for a physical.

It was discovered that he suffered from leukemia and he died not long after in a four-bed ward. “It was a sudden diagnosis and there was no family around. That was common,” Karen says.

Dr. Saunders’ words were “an epiphany for me,” Karen explains as she recalls patients who died and whose families were called to the hospital, told only that there’d been a change in condition. “We would meet them at the elevator and then go get the doctor to tell them the patient had died,” Karen says. “Then we gave them their personal effects. That was it. There is a way of doing it much better.”

After literally years of talks and committee meetings about hospice, finally St. Vincent’s Hospital said it would create one in 1985. (Providence Portland Medical Center had started a demonstration hospice project in 1980.) “I was thrilled with the ‘85 decision and encouraged others to apply for the director’s position,” Karen recalls. Surprised to be asked to consider the position herself, Karen said yes, then developed the business plan and garnered support.

“She would not be deterred,” says colleague Rick Warren. She was successful because of “sheer determination, thoughtful planning, building community support and through leading by example.” Rick says Karen wore many hats – director, spokesperson, discharge planner, physician liaison, and staff nurse. She even took night call in the wee hours, “bundled up her two young children and attended to the pain and suffering of these patients.”

The first patients were taken in April 1985. “I was the only employee,” Karen recalls. “We used home health nurses for nursing care.” In those days, Karen says, many physicians did not understand what hospice was or why it was needed. “There was no talk about dying, and we certainly did not want to develop a program for it.”

Gradual acceptance of the need for and the role of hospice led to the hospice hiring its own nurses in 1990. It was among the first in the state to offer palliative care. Jerry Hunter, administrator of Providence Home and Community Services, says it now has a staff of about 170 at three sites. An MBA Karen earned while working full time gave her added skills to ensure the long-term financial success of the program. “Like Mother Joseph, Karen is an astute business-woman who has prudently managed the financial and human resources entrusted to her,” says Sister Karin Dufault, director of the Supportive Care Coalition.

The many innovative end-of-life programs and services that Karen has encouraged include:

- A joint volunteer training program
- Extension of Medicare hospice benefits to commercial health plans
- First palliative care benefit in state of Oregon
- Establishment of a role for nurse practitioners in palliative care
- Creation of joint community outreach and bereavement programs to support friends and loved ones facing serious illness or loss, and
- Services for children including a grief program and a grief camp.

Jerry suggests that there is a parallel in Mother Joseph’s first report from Vancouver back to Montreal, when she included “night watching,” sitting with individuals and families during the last days of life, in her list of ministries. That is the very spirit of hospice, he says.

Karen shares Mother Joseph’s dedication, work ethic, compassion, integrity and advocacy for the poor and vulnerable, her nominators say. Like the foundress of the Sisters of Providence in the West, Karen responds to unmet needs. “Paying for expensive pain medications, equipment, respite care or a funeral, helping to locate a long-lost sibling, or helping a terminally ill father return to Mexico to be with family are just a few examples of how Karen envisions our mission.”

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Aside from launching hospice services in Portland, Karen helped the hospice movement in the state face its greatest challenge – physician assisted suicide, says Ann Jackson, executive director and CEO of the Oregon Hospice Association (OHA), Inc. “We’ve done it remarkably well, without divisiveness, and Karen Bell led the way,” acting as primary spokesperson for hospice during the public debate in 1993-94, Ann explains.

Karen focused her statements on moral, ethical, religious and professional beliefs, Ann says. After the failure of repeal of the law, she encouraged OHA to invite the proponents of the Death With Dignity Act to the organization’s annual meeting. “Oregon’s hospices would neither deny access to care nor ask dying Oregonians to choose between hospice and the new law. Dying Oregonians could choose both,” Ann says. While the issue was and is a very sensitive one, “Karen Bell’s blessing helped move us forward after a very difficult time.”

OHA, for which Karen has been a former board member and board chair, honored her with its Beth Wessinger Award for dedication and commitment to the hospice movement in Oregon and for being an inspirational mentor.

Those who consider Karen a mentor and role model are legion. “I’m not sure Karen even realizes how many of us she has mentored,” says Barbara Farmer, manager of Legacy Hospice Services. A proclamation signed by Providence hospice employees underscores that.

“We all feel Karen’s influence in the way Providence Hospice responds to a patient in need, a family in crisis or a co-worker in distress. Karen does not waver when it comes to matters of justice, compassionate care or respecting the rights of others.” In their jobs, in which independent decision-making and a certain amount of risk taking are required, the employees said, “It is a great comfort to know that Karen can be counted on to stand by her staff in support of optimal patient care, doing what is right, what is fair. She sees to it that we have the tools we need to do our jobs and she holds us all up to the highest standards.”

Karen plans to retire in January after 30 years of service. Adrienne Simmons, director of planning for the Portland Service Area, is certain that “what she has established will not leave when she leaves; it is ingrained in the organization.” Linda Downey, executive director of Willamette Valley Hospice in Salem, agrees. “What a legacy to leave – not only has she consistently served with all her heart the dying patient, advocated for them, but also shared of herself unselfishly with others who are doing the same. Helping others who do the same work ensures that the work will live on.”

That reflects the thing that Karen says gives her the most pride and motivation, “integration of end-of-life care into the Providence system. “I didn’t single-handedly do that, but it has driven me. Whatever small part I’ve had in that, I’m very pleased.”

Receiving the Mother Joseph Award means a great deal to her, Karen says. As a nurse, she has long been an admirer of Florence Nightingale, a strong and opinionated woman who would not give up. Karen believes the pioneering nurse and Mother Joseph were kindred spirits.

“This has been a challenging journey for me. Sometimes I doubted my ability to do something or that I was the right person, but perseverance is my nature.” Mother Joseph also faced many obstacles but summoned the courage to do so much, she says. “If I have even a small bit of that, I’m very proud of what has been accomplished, but also very humble. This award is a reflection of the people I work with, the ones providing the care, as well as all the staff who are not direct caregivers but who support hospice. We could not do what is done for patients without them. I am very fortunate and am proud to work with all of them.” ●

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Ministry spotlight



Sister Jessica Taylor teaches special education

“Miss Taylor,” voices chime as hands go up in a classroom at Sylvester Middle School in Seattle. The students in her special ed classroom know that she is a nun, Sister Jessica Taylor says, because she has told them so. While they may not be entirely sure of what that means, there are hints that the concept is not entirely foreign. “Can guys be nuns?” one student asks. “Do you have a boyfriend?” queries another who is quickly set straight by another student who responds, “No, she’s married to God.” Staff members at the school in the Highline School District also are aware that Miss Taylor is a Sister of Providence, but view her as a colleague, although her entrance into the staff breakroom occasionally can be a conversation stopper.

But clearly, this school where she taught for two years before she entered the religious community is a comfortable home for Sister Jessica. Constantly on the move in her classroom, she connects with each student, offering detailed instructions, smiles and good humor, and a firm reminder of the established rules in her classroom. Her students’ demeanor indicates her presence and manner are appreciated.

Sister Jessica returned from nearly a year in the Philippines at the end of July 2005. After just a week at home in Seattle, visiting with friends and family, she applied for and received a teaching position at Sylvester Middle School, teaching 7th and 8th grade special ed mathematics. That means she essentially is teaching math levels from Grade 1 to Grade 8, and from number sense and meaning to addition to algebraic equations and geometry.

“I have a bachelor’s degree in special ed and psychology from Central Washington University,” she says. “Basically,

Sojourner Place celebrates 20 years of service



Sojourner Place, founded in 1987 to help single and pregnant women transition into stable, independent living, is a lifeline that has served more than 350 women in its 20 years of service. Sponsored by the Sisters of Providence, it is run solely through community donations and grants.

Since Sojourner Place opened in Seattle, it has had three different directors (Sister Mary Wilson, Polly Irish and now Barbara Murphy), several staff members, numerous committed advisory board members and countless dedicated volunteers. Through it all, its original mission and loving spirit have not changed.

It is more than a place to live for women searching for stability. Sojourner Place offers life-skills classes, on-site counseling and resources to help women deal with other life issues, like drug use, domestic violence, mental health concerns or poverty. In the last two years, 90 percent of the women

who lived at Sojourner Place have graduated into independent living.

The success stories are no less than amazing. The first child to be born while his mother was a resident at Sojourner Place is now 19 years old! Sojourner Place set his mother on a stable path that allowed her to raise him in a healthy, supportive environment. Today he is attending college and building his own future.

A more recent story: “I was really a hopeless drug addict, the kind of drug addict you would see on the street: really skinny, with scabs all over my face, and homeless,” says Christine, who graduated from Sojourner Place in January 2006. “As hopeless as I was, they believed in me before I even believed in myself. They’re so supportive, and the director gave me that extra strength I needed.”

Chris arrived at Sojourner Place after she was released from prison on drug-related charges. “Sojourner Place really helped save my life.

When I got there, it was just one of those things where they assumed I was going to make it. It was almost like they believed in me before anyone else did.” Through her determination and the help of Sojourner Place, she now lives a clean, independent life. She recently received a job promotion and plans to return to school to study design.

With continued support of its many donors and God’s blessings, Sojourner Place will serve the community for another 20 years.

Last September, Sojourner Place joined with Providence Hospitality House to hold the 9th annual “A Cause To Dine For” dinner and auction which raised more than \$100,000. Among the auctioned items was a handmade quilt lovingly created by the women of Sojourner Place. All of the funds raised at the event will be split between both missions and will help more women and their children lead productive, independent lives. ●

— Barbara Murphy

I learned how to modify the curriculum for students and math was a subject I excelled in as a student.”

At Sylvester, she sees about 60 students each day in five classes with an average of 10 to 15 students in each. Sister Jessica, who has six years’ experience teaching special ed, also is co-chair of the school’s special education department.

“It takes a lot of personal time to prepare and to teach well,” she says. “This is individualized instruction. I teach to the student and not to the curriculum.” That involves spending about a month going through students’ files, talking to the students’ other teachers to make sure they can be successful in other classes, as well, acting as an advisor and advocate. In addition, there are talks with parents and progress reports.

If it sounds like a burden, Sister Jessica assures that it is not. “It demands a whole lot, but this is a ministry, not just a job. I am here to be with the students as they learn, not just to teach them.”

The school is located in Burien, about five miles from Seattle Tacoma International Airport. Its more than 700 students come primarily from the surrounding areas and represent about 35 different countries. The school’s ethnic population is 14 percent black, 14.7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.3 percent American Indian, 21.4 percent Hispanic, and 47.6 percent white. Forty-seven percent of the Title I school’s students are eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Sister Jessica divides her students into two groups in each classroom by ability. On a recent day, after a warm-up



Sr. Jessica Taylor turns her attention to a group of girls in her classroom.

exercise consisting of three math problems began her 2nd period class, one group worked on multiplication facts while the other group tried to master counting coin. This was a Tuesday, so Sister Jessica had help from a twice-a-week volunteer Sue Boyle, who knows the Sisters of Providence through her association with the Providence Peace Community and through her sister, Chauncey Boyle, SP. By the end of the class period, the two have made some progress, getting students to focus, to figure out some things on their own, and even coaxing some smiles and laughter out of them in the process. It was a satisfying end to the first class of the day, with four more left to go. But it was more than that. It was another step taken toward Sister Jessica’s ultimate goal for her students. “I want to be that shining spot in their lives for the two years that I have them in my class.” ●

FORMER RESIDENT

SOJOURNER PLACE

was and is still home

Audrey Jernigan didn’t want much in 1995, just a secure, safe place and a religious life. A single mom since her husband died in New York in 1987, she was struggling to raise two children – a daughter just entering

her teens and a son eight years older. “I couldn’t handle New York anymore,” Audrey recalls, so she packed up her children and went in search of someplace else to call home.

Nothing seemed to work: Miami, Virginia, North Carolina. Finally, with her then teenage

daughter growing ever more distant and rebellious, a friend from New York who had moved to Seattle urged Audrey to give that city a try. Plans to stay with the friend fell through, so Audrey and her daughter moved into the YWCA in Seattle. Her son remained in Florida.

Mother and daughter still could not seem to connect. “We couldn’t stay together,” Audrey says. “I became more or less homeless.”

Providence stepped in then, in 1995, as Audrey discovered Sojourner Place, the secure, safe place and a religious life she

had been seeking. Working as a tenant/landlord coordinator for Americorps for a stipend of \$795 a month, Audrey saw the name “Sojourner Place” on the list and picked up the phone. Long an admirer of the African American abolitionist and activist Sojourner Truth, Audrey felt a connection. She dialed the number of the transitional shelter for women and found herself talking to Sister Mary Wilson. Audrey would live at Sojourner Place for a year.

“Sojourner Place was great for me,” she says with a broad smile. “Number 7 was my room on the second floor.” She loved the peace and quiet, and the company of the other women who lived there, but mostly she loved Sister Mary and Karen Hawkins, a Providence Associate who since has become a Sister of Providence. In fact, these two women were Audrey’s sponsors when she later became a Providence Associate. Audrey, now age 67, had wanted to become a Sister of Providence, but her age was a barrier. Becoming an associate offered her an avenue to remain close to the sisters.

Audrey was older than most of the residents, “so Mary let me do lots of things. I wanted my own phone rather than to use the house phone, and she let me,” Audrey recalls. Sister Mary also encouraged her to host a Sojourner Truth dinner for the community and came to Audrey’s graduation from Americorps. “She was always so open to listen. It wasn’t just me. For anyone who ever lived there, Mary and Karen

were always there. They instilled a sense of responsibility in us for ourselves, our actions, and others. We also were brought into a caring and sharing community.”

“To me, after so many places, Sojourner Place was home.” Even when Audrey left for her own apartment, Sojourner Place remained home, she says. “Mary and Karen were phenomenal. They helped me furnish it, moved me in and helped me set up the place. Weekends, I went back to Sojourner Place, and sometimes they let me be in charge.”

As the years went by, Audrey’s daughter married and moved from Seattle to Tacoma. Audrey left Seattle herself a couple of times, but she always came back to Seattle and stayed in touch with Sojourner Place. “Mary said I could always come back. I could stay in the guest room and volunteer to help. She said I always had a home at Sojourner Place.”

Today, Audrey lives in Cabrini Senior Housing, in downtown Seattle at Madison and Boren. She is an associate chaplain for the Seattle Police Department and teaches fifth-grade catechism at St. James Parish. She is just giving back a bit of the love she found at Sojourner Place.

“Whatever I can do in life for other people, I’m going to do it,” Audrey says with conviction. The sum total of my life is what the Lord said, ‘service.’” ●