Briefs

Re-blessing at Providence Emilie House

The million-dollar-plus renovation of Providence Emilie House in Portland, a federally subsidized, independent living facility for the elderly and disabled, was celebrated in August with a re-blessing ceremony. Sister Rita Ferschweiler offered the blessing. Residents were moved into a hotel for nearly four months while the building received a new roof, siding, vinyl windows, plumbing, hot water heaters, smoke detectors, upgraded landscaping and a remodeled office. Emilie House, built in 1986, is one of 12 apartment buildings that are part of the housing program founded by the Sisters of Providence and owned and managed by Providence Health & Services. The buildings are in Seattle, southwestern and eastern Washington, Portland and Oakland. ●

Sr. Rita Ferschweiler (left) takes the podium with Shannan Stickler, housing director.

Mission Day events

Sisters took the spotlight in fall celebrations of Mission Day for Providence Health & Services employees. Four Sisters of Providence – Dorothy Byrne, Mary K. Cummings, Judy George and Rosalie Locati – shared thoughts on Providence in **Spokane.** "To be who you are as Providence is the mission; being the hands, face and voice of Providence," Sister Rosalie told employees. "We sponsor, we encourage, we pray, but you are writing this story today."

Sisters sharing in Spokane are (from left) Judy George, Dorothy Byrne, Mary K. Cummings and Rosalie Locati.

In **Renton,** Mission Day was celebrated under a tent outside, with 25 sisters in attendance. Four offered thoughts on a similar panel: Sisters Charlotte Van Dyke, Barbara Schamber, Clare Lentz and Alice St. Hilaire. A particular highlight was the unveiling of a 6-foot statue of foundress Blessed Emilie Gamelin, created by Canadian artist Raoul Hunter, who did a similar sculpture that is in a subway station in Montreal. Rene Campagna, mission director at Providence Portland Medical Center, initiated the idea of replicating the statue at various sites. Six-foot and 4-foot versions of the statue are being placed at locations around the areas served by PH&S. The one in Renton at the Washington/Montana Region campus is enjoyed by Sister Rebecca Berghoff (bottom left photo) and Sister Susanne Hartung. Sister Rebecca recently was honored at St. Joseph/Marquette School in Yakima for her many years of service there, including as principal.

Sisters Rebecca Berghoff (left) and Susanne Hartung admire the statue of Mother Gamelin.

Sister Claire Gagnon shares with PH&S employee Aura Davis.

System Office employees gathered in **Seattle** for a Mission Day program highlighting the service of Sisters of Providence in Alaska. Sisters Helen Brennan, Paula Cosko, Susanne Hartung and Claire Gagnon shared tales of their years spent in Nome, Fairbanks, Anchorage and Kotzebue, on the frontier north of the Arctic Circle on the Bering Sea. Clearly, there is and has been a strong love connection between the sisters and the lands and peoples of Alaska. Others shared their love of the Alaska experience, too, including Al Parrish, vice president and chief executive of the Alaska Region, and Monica Anderson, director of Alaska's mission integration. Communications analyst Aura Davis was delighted to get acquainted with Sister Claire. ●

New office

Jennifer Roseman, editor of *Caritas,* has been elected to a three-year term on the board of directors of the National Communicators' Network for Women Religious (NCNWR). Jennifer has been director of communications and development for the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, since 2001. NCNWR promotes understanding of women religious, enhances their image and advances their mission. It also provides a network of professional support for its members.

Renewing vows

Sister Vilma Franco (right) renewed her vows in October in a simple ceremony at the Spokane home that she shares with several sisters including Lang Tran (left) and Sharon Fitzpatrick.

Award nominee

Mary Tyllia, a Providence Associate in Spokane, recently was among the nominees for the Sister Peter Claver Award given by Sacred Heart Medical Center. Mary is a lab instructor at Sacred Heart and a community volunteer.

Blessing her namesake

Sister Carolyn Koreski was at the new building at Providence Centralia Hospital in October for a special prayer service and dedication of a room named in her honor, the Koreski Conference Room. The hospital already has Carolyn's Café, also named in recognition of her 18 years as a sister representative and patient advocate. Cathy Johnston, spiritual care director, holds a bowl of water as Sister Carolyn blesses the room.

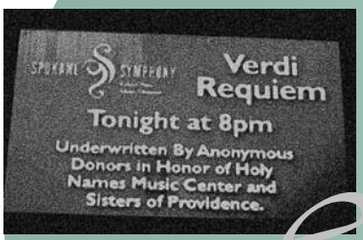
A new citizen

After passing her citizenship exam with a perfect score on September 24, Sister Silvia Troncoso took the oath of citizenship on September 28 in Yakima. She now has dual citizenship in her native Chile and in the United States. Friends gathered to celebrate over dinner at the China Buffet following the ceremony. Congratulations, Sister Silvia!

Sister Silvia Troncoso

Symphony spotlight

The marquee at the Spokane Symphony concert put the name of the Sisters of Providence up in lights in October, thanks to the generosity of a donor who offered the religious community the spotlight. After the performance of *Verdi's Requiem,* Sister Margaret Botch, Provincial Superior/Leadership Team Coordinator, addressed the crowd at a reception. She was introduced by Maggie Crawford, president of the board of directors of the Spokane Symphony Society.



CHILDREN AND YOUTH of Angela Montano are a treasure

Youth group of Hacienda San Juan

Playing balloon soccer in Sr. Fran's garage

Five groups of young people of various ages gather every week in small Christian Base Community groupings in Angela Montano, El Salvador. They are a great joy for Sister Fran Stacey. She is their cheerleader as they take initiative preparing meetings with Christian themes, organizing community service activities like cleaning the park or raising money to help the sick, and enthusiastically participating in play days of Bingo and balloon football.

Two girls who made their first communion last year decided to visit all the homes in their village of Angela Montano to see if other kids were interested in preparing for communion. By the time the two were done, they had a list of 32 potential candidates. Sister Fran followed up. The result was three groups preparing for first communion.

Piano students practice five days a week to prepare for Saturday lessons

"There are youth serving as catechists in every small community preparing for first communion," Sister Fran says. The older ones, some in their early 20s who have been meeting together for the last seven years, surveyed the younger kids about forming a new group for early teens. This group meets on Friday evenings.

Another source of joy and challenge for Sister Fran are the scholarship students. Nine of them will graduate from high school this year. For lack of finances, students' only option for continued study is a weekend program offered at a satellite campus of the Lutheran University in the Bajo Lempa. It offers degrees in computer systems, early childhood education, agriculture and social work. Sister Fran commented, "This is a fine university with an obvious commitment to serving the poor. The monthly fee for students in our area is only $25. They study only two days, which means they also can work to help with their expenses. The typical expenses are local transportation, books, computer, meals, etc., but a young person could go to this university with a scholarship of $50 monthly."

Since the sisters of Mother Joseph Province ratified the Earth Charter, the high school and college students with scholarships sponsored by donors to the Sisters of Providence have studied the Earth Charter together. Also, the parish pastoral team has been studying the Earth Charter for 10 to 15 minutes weekly since July.

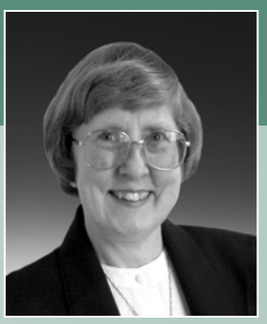
"El Salvador is the size of San Diego County," says Sister Fran. "The country is ecologically threatened by mining projects, new dams and highways. To make one gold ring takes the same amount of water that a campesino family would use in 30 years. Earth and water are polluted by these projects. The poor receive little benefit. The long-term damage is enormous."

"Concern for children and youth, and their options for the future, continue to be a concern of the Sisters of Providence and of the Providence Associates," says Sister Fran. ●

Pre-teen group and two moms get ready for an outing

Part of the first communion group meets about a service project

Sister Pauline returns to El Salvador to teach



Sister Pauline Lemaire

Sister Pauline Lemaire had never thought about being a missionary before then-Provincial Barbara Schamber asked her in 2002 if she was interested in going to El Salvador. She was being invited to go and teach English to two pre-postulants, Vilma Franco and Margarita Hernandez, who since have become professed Sisters of Providence and live in Spokane. "It was a limited time and it was an opportunity for an adventure," Sister Pauline recalls. "I stayed for five months and I loved it. I had no real Spanish, no grammar, just some vocabulary of nouns only, no verbs," she explains with a laugh. "I talked with nouns and hand signals."

What Sister Pauline did have, though, was a keen antenna to the needs of the children she met in El Salvador. Preschoolers had no preparation for school, says this longtime teacher. "The greatest single factor in success or the desire to read is being read to as a preschooler," she declares. But in El Salvador there are many adults who cannot read, and who have no pencils, paper or crayons at home, let alone books.

With that need in mind, she returned to El Salvador at the end of October to see if she can help.

"My vision is to observe, listen and see what they want and what they perceive the need to be," Sister Pauline explains. "I want to do things with and for the children, the parents, the teens and the young adults that will help the little ones. I will read to them, play games and write letters with them, and help them with concept development. When we count, we will count whatever is at hand – sticks, rocks, chickens, ducks."

This time, she has more Spanish language skills to draw on, learned in classes at Eastern Washington University. As a student of 65, Sister Pauline learned it was very different to learn than it had been at 30 or 40. What she needed was practice, so she went to Chile for 10 months to learn among the Sisters of Providence there. Sister Pauline also spent six months in Wapato in the Yakima Valley, working with Sisters of the Holy Names in their ministry with Mexican immigrants.

"I learned, but I am not really fluent," she claims. "I speak Spanish the way my French-Canadian dad spoke English, a hodge podge. My mother never learned English, so we talked for her."

As a child who learned to read in a language that was not her first, Sister Pauline knows the struggle of learning to read with limited preparation, and she'd like to make a difference for these children in El Salvador. She is living with Sister Fran Stacey in Angela Montano and is delighted to be doing something creative and challenging that leaves her feeling youthful. And she is doing what she has always loved most, playing with kids and helping them learn.

Does your heart cry out to **serve the poor?**

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Please remember in prayer

Eloise Bayless, sister-in-law of Georgette Bayless, SP, died August 27 in Santa Fe, Calif.

Martha Cummings, sister-in-law of Mary K. Cummings, SP, died September 1 in Spokane.

Jim Owens, brother-in-law of Karie Owens, PA, died September 12 in Des Moines, Wash.

Harvey Peacock, brother-in-law of Alexis Melancon, SP, died September 27 in Walla Walla, Wash.

Everett Dale (Sam) Sample, brother of Roberta Sample, PA, died October 3 in Klamath Falls, Ore.

Barbara Kaiser Madden, mother of Marcie Madden, PA, died October 4 in Kennewick, Wash.

Greg Francis Smith, brother of Katherine Smith, SP, died October 11 in Portland, Ore.

Gracieuse Desilets, sister of Paul Gabriel Desilets, SP, died November 1 in Drummondville, Quebec.

Familiar topic gets a new view

Sisters give weekend CULTURAL AWARENESS WORKSHOP rave reviews

Caroljean Willie, SC

Why another workshop on cultural diversity?

That was one of the questions asked of Sister Annette Seubert, the Provincial Council member who organized the event and encouraged participation. Evaluations of the weekend workshop in Spokane by Caroljean Willie, a Sister of Charity of Cincinnati, made it clear that "been there, done that" did not apply.

Sister Caroljean brought a depth of insight and experience born of her degrees in sociology, reading and multicultural education, cross-cultural work nationally and internationally, and teaching and teacher training at all levels. A few comments from the evaluations follow:

What was positive for you about the workshop?

• *For me, this was one of the best workshops we've had. I was not aware of how important it would be. I was not aware that tolerance is not enough when sharing life with sisters of different cultures. I think I will be able to communicate on a much different level – a deeper level with them in the future.*

• *The whole piece was great, informative, soul feeding. I am leaving a richer woman in so many ways. I am thankful.*

• *I thought I knew a lot about cultural diversity. How wrong I was! I learned and felt so much!*

Pre-candidate Rosa Nguyen (left) shares thoughts with Sr. Dianne Crawford.

Comments about the presenter:

• *Excellent! Great stories from her personal experience. Wonderful that she's a woman religious and so could bring up great reflections/questions pertaining to religious life.*

• *CJ is excellent! I really like the stress on "it's not right or wrong; it just is." It is so strong in many of us to automatically see things as "good or not good" or "this is better."* ●

Editor's Note:
Where will this lead? Participants were asked to write headlines that suggested future direction. A personal favorite:
NUNS DISRUPT STATUS QUO

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