

# Vision

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF NEW YORK

VOL. 23, ISSUE 2 *Now in Our Third Century of Living Lives of Love* SPRING 2019

## Ending Homelessness



## Congregation Elects New Leadership Team

*Calling Us to Renew Our Commitment to Those on the Margins*

## From the President

Dear Friends,

Assembly 2019 was truly a graced and sacred event for us, your Sisters, Associates, and Companions.

As we moved through each day, we realized anew that our future is filled with life and energy to continue the mission.

The election of our new leadership team truly embodies our call and the promise that our God will be with us along the journey. We will be blessed by the leadership of each of these, our Sisters.

In this issue of *Vision* you will catch glimpses of our ministry to the homeless, both for today and into the future. Each sponsored work approaches these complex concerns in a unique way. Their stories give evidence that our mission to those living on the margins is a consistent force to eradicate homelessness. Prevention, advocacy, and accompaniment are just a few examples of this ministry.

Step by step, person to person, we join with others in building a community of hope—one that both reaches out to individuals and works for systemic change. Together, we can make significant inroads into ending this blight in our society.

This is a continuing challenge to us all. The task is ours.

Let us be a consistent presence to our homeless brothers and sisters in whatever way we can.

On a personal level, it has been both a privilege and grace to serve as President during the past eight years. I am grateful for your support and generosity to me and know you will continue to share these gifts with Sr. Donna Dodge.

Blessings,



Jane Iannucelli, SC



On March 30, 2019, the Sisters of Charity of New York elected Sister Donna Dodge President, and approved the appointment of Sister Dorothy Metz as First Assistant to the President, and Sister Dominica Rocchio as Second Assistant to the President for a term of four years, 2019 – 2023. On March 31, Sisters Sheila Brosnan, Margaret O'Brien, Margaret Egan, and Claire E. Regan were elected as Councilors for a term of four years. The transfer of leadership will be held in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Vincent on June 29, 2019. Congratulations and blessings on our new Leadership Team.

Cover photo top: *Homeless Jesus* sculpture by Timothy P. Schmalz

Bottom photo from left: Sisters Margaret Egan, Dominica Rocchio, Dorothy Metz, Donna Dodge, Margaret O'Brien, Claire Regan, and Sheila Brosnan were elected to serve for a term of four years at Assembly 2019.

*VISION* enables the Sisters of Charity of New York to make a cohesive statement about how we reveal God's love in our lives and the many and varied ways in which we respond to the signs of the times.



SISTERS  
of CHARITY  
NEW YORK

### ADVISORY BOARD

Regina Bechtle, SC  
Maryellen Blumlein, SC  
Sheila Brosnan, SC  
Anne Marie Gardiner  
Mindy Gordon  
Mary E. Mc Cormick, SC  
Eileen McGrory, SC  
Patricia McGowan, SC  
Dominica Rocchio, SC  
Lisa Shay, SC Associate

### EDITOR

Elena Miranda

### ASSISTANT TO EDITOR

Margaret Comaskey, SC Associate

Articles without attribution are by the editor.

Article contributions to this publication are welcome. All submissions are subject to editorial and space constraints. See rear cover for our mailing address and contact information.

©2019 Sisters of Charity of New York  
Articles or material may be reproduced with permission.



# Ending Homelessness



*Homeless Jesus*  
Papal Charities Building, Vatican City  
Sculpture by Timothy P. Schmalz  
[www.sculpturebytps.com](http://www.sculpturebytps.com)

*By Carol De Angelo, SC, Margaret Comaskey, Associate, and Bill Hurley, Associate*

What might the charism of charity look like in the twenty-first century? At the conclusion of the 400th Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism of Charity in Rome in 2017, an invitation went out to the worldwide members of the Vincentian family that everyone have a place to call home and a stake in their community. Initiatives are happening around the globe to end homelessness. The FamVin Homeless Alliance: [fvhomelessalliance.org/eng](http://fvhomelessalliance.org/eng) was established.

The Sisters of Charity of New York have accompanied adults, children, and families who are homeless or facing homelessness for over 200 years. As times changed so did our way of accompanying persons and addressing homelessness compassionately and systemically.

It is not enough to provide the homeless person with a place to live or a meal for today or tomorrow. The reasons for their homelessness need to be determined, and the societal structures that underlie these reasons can then be addressed. This is the Vincentian goal of systemic change.

In November 2017 NGO Representatives from Vincentian Family Groups at the United Nations, including Sisters of Charity Federation NGO Representative Sr. Teresa Kotturan, formed a UN Working Group to End Homelessness (WGEH). Many other NGOs have joined the WGEH, as well as LEFSA (Life Experience and Faith Sharing Associates) staff members and Sisters of Charity volunteer Nicholas Farnham.

The main purpose of the working group to end homelessness is to include in the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals a definition of homelessness and indicators to measure it. There is now no global definition of homelessness. WGEH members have visited the Member States of the United Nations seeking their commitment to this project. It was decided in February 2019 that the theme of the 58th Session of the Commission on Social Development (in February 2020) would be: Affordable Housing and Social Protection For All To Address Homelessness. This is a great achievement and came about because of the advocacy and outreach of Vincentian Family NGOs at the United Nations.

With the spearheading efforts of Sr. Carol De Angelo, Director of our Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation, many local collaborative efforts to address homelessness are being realized with the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness, the Campus Ministry of the College of Mount Saint Vincent, and other organizations whose goal is to eradicate homelessness.

We do not have to look very far to find examples of Vincent's principles today in New York. This issue of *Vision* tells stories of how several of the Sponsored Ministries of the Sisters of Charity of New York are working to change the lives of homeless persons in various ways. We hope that you will be encouraged and inspired by them.





Sr. Elizabeth Boyle Manor provides housing for seniors in Staten Island. The 65-unit building is located on Gordon Street.



Sr. Regina Bechtle meets Mariya and Arye Merlin, residents at St. Elizabeth's Manor in Staten Island. The building provides 80 units for seniors.

## Homes & Hope—SC Housing Development Corporation

*Maureen Reiser, Associate, with contributions from Donna Dodge, SC, and Vanessa Reilly*

The Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation (SCHDC) was created in 1998 to respond to the need for safe and affordable supportive housing opportunities for the most vulnerable members of our communities in New York City and the surrounding areas.

In the 21 years since it was established, first under Mr. Eric Feldman's direction and since 2012 under Sr. Donna Dodge's direction, SCHDC has grown to include Seton House, Casa Cecilia, and Fox House, all located in Manhattan. On Staten Island St. Vincent's Manor, St. Elizabeth's Manor, Sister Elizabeth Boyle Manor, Joseph House, Lafayette Manor, and Markham Gardens Manor all provide affordable housing for seniors. Also located on Staten Island is St. Louise de Marillac Manor for adults with mental disabilities.

Seton Village offers affordable housing to seniors aged 55 and older in Rockland County. Ground-breaking for Vincent's Village, adjacent to Seton Village and also offering affordable housing to seniors, was scheduled to take place at press time.

The new residence at Vincent's Village will also have 45 units set aside for two specific populations at risk for homelessness. These units are being funded by the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI). Ten units will be set aside for survivors of domestic violence or trafficking and 35 units for the "Frail Elderly," defined as seniors 55 and over who are at risk of homelessness because of chronic illnesses and disabilities, life challenges, and an unmet housing need. An additional 48 units at Vincent's Village will be available to seniors 55 and older earning between 50 and 60% of the Area Median Income for Rockland County.

Fox House focuses on offering housing to young women and their children. Fox House residents are typically high school dropouts with little or no work experience. They may be third-generation welfare recipients, and may have never lived

on their own. Often these young women may be the victims of domestic violence. While at Fox House they are offered a case manager, referrals for education and vocational programs, and counseling on employment, parenting, and housing issues, all under the caring administration of the Fox House staff.

On one of the coldest days we had this winter, I had the privilege of having a conversation with one of the tenants at Casa Cecilia, whom I'll call "Esperanza." Esperanza was more than willing to courageously share her story, as it parallels that of so many women in our city. As a young adult and overwhelmed by the challenges of parenting a special needs child, Esperanza first came to know the Sisters of Charity at Fox House.

It was there that Sisters Florence Speth and Ann Citarella helped her to navigate the New York City Department of Education to get the services she desperately needed for her child. At that time programs were not readily available to enable a child to reach his or her potential and live a full and rewarding life. When Esperanza speaks of those days she peppers her sentences with the words "grateful" and "relief" to describe what she felt then and continues to feel about the support she was given and has continued to receive for many years at Casa Cecilia.

Esperanza's gratitude to the Sisters of Charity, that she calls "The Charities," also informs her belief in "paying it forward" as she has taken an active role in advocating for other special needs parents whom she has met. As she says, "every kid has a voice whether you can hear it or not."

As she saw her child begin to flourish, Esperanza could envision a future filled with hope and dreams realized, not just for her child but for herself too. Casa Cecilia has become someplace to call home and Esperanza was very clear in the message she wanted to convey: "It's okay to ask for help."

Visit us at: [sistersofcharityhousing.org](http://sistersofcharityhousing.org)



## The New York Foundling's Fight Against Homelessness in New York City

*Margaret Dennehy, SC, and Charlotte Raftery, SC*

When 25-year-old Kelvin first met his case planner at his future apartment, tears came to his eyes. “It was overwhelming,” he later shared, “to have my own space.” Kelvin spent much of his adolescence on the streets and describes himself at that age as a “closed-off person,” avoiding the drug and alcohol abuse surrounding him and trying to “make it to the next day.”

About a year ago, an outreach worker from Breaking Ground approached Kelvin on the street near Citi Field (where The New York Mets play). After multiple contacts and conversations, Kelvin agreed to go to the Breaking Ground shelter and he was immediately befriended by the staff. He says he did what was asked of him and followed the steps as he “believed in them and believed in myself.” One of those steps was to meet with Tiffany Walker, Program Director of The New York Foundling’s Supportive Housing program.

Since the Sisters of Charity first opened their doors to abandoned children in 1869, The New York Foundling has sought to serve the most vulnerable and marginalized in New York City. Unfortunately, many of the systemic causes of child abandonment and youth homelessness that challenged late 19th century New York are still problems the City faces today. This includes the lack of safe, stable, and affordable housing; racism and discrimination; familial abuse; and cycles of poverty. The connections between child welfare and homelessness are startling, with over 20% of those who have been in foster care experiencing homelessness after age 18.

Jah-nita, another 25-year-old currently in The Foundling’s Supportive Housing program, had returned to live with her foster mother after several years in foster care with another

New York City agency, and the experience wasn’t pleasant. When she was 18, her younger brothers were placed back into foster care and she found herself relying on friends for a place to stay. She took to searching online for programs that could assist her—and that’s when she discovered The Foundling.

The New York Foundling started its Supportive Housing Program for young adults aging out of foster care (also known as “Y.E.S.”—Youth Enhancement Services) in 2008 and has since expanded to a current capacity of 40 slots in scattered site apartments throughout Brooklyn. Ninety-five percent of the nearly 120 young adults who have lived and participated in The Foundling’s Y.E.S. program have transitioned to permanent housing.

Tiffany Walker (The Foundling’s Supportive Housing Program Director) and her team recognize that young adults need more support than just subsidized rent to achieve their goals of independence, which has led to more intensive programming that includes in-house mental health evaluation and treatment, evidence-based models for independent living and financial literacy, and targeted education and career assistance.

Today Jah-Nita is preparing to find her own apartment in Brooklyn with the support of her case planner and Kelvin is working temporary jobs while studying for his GED with dreams of becoming a computer engineer. Both take a similar tone when asked to give advice to those still on the streets: “Don’t lose hope, you are not alone.” Visit NYF at: [www.nyfoundling.org](http://www.nyfoundling.org)

*Special thanks to Tim Jefferson and Tiffany Walker who run The Foundling’s Supportive Housing Program and interviewed the youths mentioned.*





## POTS—Sharing Our Love

*Margaret Comaskey and Bill Hurley, Associates*

**F**riendly, Loving, Caring, and Hopeful—this is the spirit that greets all visitors arriving at POTS, Part of the Solution, at 2759 Webster Avenue in the Bronx, across the Metro-North train tracks from Fordham University. The folks talking on the sidewalk, in the front lobby, or at reception stations seem to possess a special happiness and peacefulness. They are at POTS and they know they will be gifted by care and love.

POTS was begun in 1982 as a soup kitchen in an empty storefront on Fordham Road by Timothy Boon, Sr. Jane Iannucelli, SC, and Rev. Edward (Ned) Murphy, SJ.

It has grown into a “one-stop shop” with a wide array of assistance programs designed to move its clients from crisis to stability and self-sufficiency. Services include a community dining room with the look and feel of a local diner. This promotes the self-worth of the hungry and homeless. There are also homelessness prevention and transitional residence programs, a food pantry, a clothing program, haircuts, health care, mail service, a Family Club, case management services, a job coach, and a legal clinic.

In 2018 POTS served over 1,000,000 meals to local individuals. And 4,000 were provided showers, haircuts, and a safe mailing address. Many of those served are street homeless or reside in shelters that provide only a place to sleep.

While clients using the dining room can choose to remain anonymous, POTS encourages all clients to meet with a case manager. Here they are screened and interviewed with the goal of connecting them to the array of services at POTS. In this interview each individual relates their needs and then it is determined how POTS can meet those needs. In the same facility POTS provides a legal clinic, workforce development tools, a Family Club, immigrant rights advocacy, and medical and dental clinics. If the need cannot be met on site, clients are connected to partner agencies throughout the city.

Alicia Guevara recently came to POTS as Executive Director. Alicia states that “the aim of POTS is to move people from poverty and homelessness, whether short-term or long-term, by supplying them with food, clothing, or housing for their immediate needs while giving them the tools and building their confidence to become self-sufficient.” The skilled staff provides assistance in finding or maintaining adequate housing, access to nourishing food for their families, guidance finding a job, or gaining the necessary skills that build confidence. The support will continue: POTS is there to help and encourage clients as they move ahead and become more self-sufficient.

*Continued, see page 11*



**Tyra, A Client**

Tyra moved from South Carolina last year with her three children to be independent and self-sufficient, as she fled an abusive situation. They are living now in a one-bedroom apartment in the Fordham Family Shelter and the children attend local public schools. They all participate in the activities of the POTS Family Club.

Tyra is studying full time to finish her degree in Business Administration in June. She is able to do this online, thanks to a computer given to her by POTS. She is planning to have earned her PhD in another five years.

Tyra has a strong faith and a positive outlook. She feels as if POTS has adopted her family.



**John, A Volunteer**

John has been a volunteer at POTS for 28 years, helping out in many different jobs. But he has also been supported over those years by POTS programs: when he lost his job; when he was homeless; when he needed to get medical or dental care, clothing, or a meal. And he was able to share with his friends at POTS when he reconnected with his son and daughter.





## “How Can I Help You?”

*Florence Mallon, SC, and Bill Hurley, Associate*

If you are familiar with health care in Westchester County you will know about Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Yonkers and its St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester division, ten miles to the north. As you visit either facility, it is clear that the charism of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton abounds in the lives of the staff. In the words of one staff member: “Poverty is not just an economic factor, it brings a certain spirituality with it. Love, care, and concern dominate our care and help us deliver our services with great respect.”

Saint Joseph's formally opened on March 19, 1890, with a primary objective of caring for the sick and poor. At that time it depended on voluntary contributions. By 1891, 100 patients were treated without charge. In 1946 a school for practical nursing was opened, and in 1949 a psychiatric clinic opened with an inpatient clinic starting in the 1960s.

The Sisters of Charity opened St. Vincent's Hospital in Harrison, N.Y., in 1876 for frail and sick children. In 1879 it became a retreat for those with mental disorders, and continues today as an inpatient facility, a day hospital, and clinics in local neighborhoods. The clinics provide outreach services for those unable or unwilling to come to the hospital for treatment. St. Vincent's was acquired by Saint Joseph's Medical Center in 2010.

Once a patient is admitted at Saint Joseph's, a team of health professionals begins its assessment, asking questions, contacting relatives when possible, and administering tests. Staff members assist clients with their food and clothing needs and as a team they ensure that all members are on the same page. Concurrently, a social-service team performs an independent assessment.

Based upon the health care assessment, the team will know how long it has to meet the client's physical, social, and mental

health needs. Does the client have Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, health care benefits? Will the person need a nutrition program? Does he or she have a home; do they reside with a relative, in a shelter, or on the street? Will housing be needed: temporary, supportive, or residential? How will rent be covered: vouchers, Section 8? Temporary housing may need to be made arranged or appropriate support groups found. What is the patient's primary language? Is there a means of transportation and a communication system? Is the person documented or otherwise?

Often the staff at Saint Joseph's determines that a day or two of unreimbursed care is needed. In a typical year, approximately \$23 million of “charity care” may be provided. Upon appeal, New York State may authorize about \$19 million as reimbursable. This leaves \$4 million to be covered by donor generosity, foundation support, or special government grants. The facilities have a Mission Department which can provide many of the extras needed by patients and sees to their spiritual needs.

A social worker at Saint Joseph's tells of a patient who left the hospital before discharge. The worker ran out to South Broadway and found him behind a dumpster. He didn't understand that temporary housing would soon be available. The social worker was not about to “lose him” back to the streets. Often such patients are diagnosed with diabetes, yet if insulin is prescribed, they may not have a refrigerator to store it in. Other patients are suffering from malnutrition and need a good meal daily, yet the federal government's SNAP Program (food stamps) does not allow the purchase of processed food and many clients do not have access to a stove or a refrigerator.

On the plus side, these two organizations are successful in placing 90% of their discharged patients in housing.

Partnerships have been developed with drug and alcohol rehab facilities such as St. Christopher's Inn at Graymoor and the Maxwell Institute in Tuckahoe.

A conversation with Michael Spicer, CEO for 18 years and on staff for 35 years, lets him express the pride he feels for staff. He states, "They are well-trained professionals who understand the Medical Center's philosophy is to offer all patients hope."

Mr. Spicer tells us they have an ever-growing network of various outpatient care and housing programs in Westchester, and a strong network of referral organizations. Griffin House, in Yonkers, provides 83 units of independent-living care for the frail and elderly, who receive medical care at the hospital's clinic across the street. Seton Manor provides independent, subsidized housing for the elderly and working poor. The Sisters of Charity's former retirement facility, Mary the Queen, will soon become a facility containing 70 supportive housing apartments for the frail elderly with physicians and health care professionals located in the building. On School Street, also in Yonkers, ground was broken in January for an 80-unit supportive housing complex for behavioral health clients.

Bernadette Kingman-Bez, Executive Director of St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester, tells us that, in addition to all their Westchester-based services, the Department of Residential Services was established in 1986 to provide an even greater consortium of residential and housing options in the broader NYC community. Today, Marianne DiTommaso, Vice President, Residential Services and Opioid Treatment Services, oversees a network of 1,200 units of housing options so that persons with serious mental illness, co-occurring mental illness and substance abuse disorders, and other special needs can live as independently as possible. These units are mostly in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. This division also offers employment opportunities for consumers with mental illness through their affirmative business, "Rainbow Environmental Services," which provides recycling, paper shredding, and office cleaning services.

All of these programs and their dedicated staff are a testimony to the legacy of Sr. Mary Linehan, President from 1969 to 2000. She was often known to say, "if a need exists in our communities, we strive to answer that call."

Pope Francis recently said, "The Son of God came into this world as a homeless person...we can find no social or moral justification, no justification whatsoever, for lack of housing." Saint Joseph's Medical Center and its many programs at St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester are certainly helping!

## How Some Have Been Helped—Their Stories

Lelia (not her real name) was admitted to a supportive housing program sponsored by Saint Joseph's Medical Center in Brooklyn early in 2017. She says that the supportive housing program is her "guardian angel."

Lelia has a long history of incarceration for drug use and possession, but she has been clean for 11 years. She says, "When I was in prison no one visited me and I have 6 children, but I get it, they were mad at me. When I got out I was in the shelter so my family could not come and visit me...Now I have grandchildren I didn't ever meet. My daughter told me if I found an apartment I could meet my grandchildren and she would visit me. When I moved into my apartment it was a blessing."

She knows that her "guardian angels" did not give up on her. Since she has her apartment all of her children have come to visit her and she has met all her grandchildren. Lelia says "it's a miracle because I didn't get to raise my children because I was locked up, but now I can be good to my grandchildren. Because I have an apartment and I am not homeless, I am able to have my family back and slowly work on everything I lost. I am thankful for you and my case manager; to me you all are my family too."

Linda (not her real name) is a client at St. Vincent's Hospital, Harrison. She has a history of trauma with a diagnosis of Dissociated Identity Disorder. She has worked closely with her care coordinator and therapists in the outpatient health service unit. Linda has had the same therapist for ten years who helps her to address her feelings of worthlessness, low self-esteem, and fear of abandonment and rejection. Linda knows she "must continue to work on healthy relationships." In addition, because of a predisposition to cancer, she has had surgery to ensure she would be alive for her son.

Linda was referred to the Care Coordination Department ten years ago when she was living in a shelter with her son in White Plains. Linda was "concerned about my son having to live in the shelter. I had lived in a Section 8 apartment with my son's father, but after I left him we had to go to a shelter." Her care coordinator advocated for her to return to the apartment but the arbitrator granted the apartment to the father who had the lease. "Thank God, my care coordinator wouldn't give up and finally I got the apartment. My son's father was given another apartment close by so he can be with his son."

Despite these social, medical, and psychiatric challenges Linda is enrolled in the College of New Rochelle and spends many hours completing her assignments. She was very grateful when "St. Vincent's helped me pay for books and supplies and a computer. Now I can earn a degree and help others."

Linda has always maintained that she does not want to be hospitalized on a psychiatric unit because she wants to be present for her son. She has successfully met this goal, in spite of bouts of deep depression and anxiety. Despite her substance and alcohol abuse, her care coordinator says she is a true survivor and gives her credit for the obstacles she has had to overcome. Linda states, "I am so very proud of my son. He overcame his problems in school and today he is a responsible young man."

Visit us at: [www.stvincentswestchester.org](http://www.stvincentswestchester.org)



Fifty years of service is celebrated often in the Congregation, but this golden anniversary has a different twist. In February 2019, Marianne DiTommaso celebrated her fiftieth anniversary of employment that began at St. Vincent Hospital, Staten Island, and was later transitioned to Saint Joseph's Medical Center.

It was in 1969 that Marianne sought to end the arduous commute from Staten Island to Manhattan. She was out of high school just a year when she accepted a job transcribing psychiatry notes at St. Vincent Hospital's outpatient mental health clinic, a role that would ultimately lead to the position of Vice President at Saint Joseph's Medical Center Residential Services and Opioid Treatment Services.

After a short while of transcribing notes, Marianne realized her calling: social work. Marianne began evening studies as she assumed new positions in the mental health clinic at St. Vincent's Hospital. Sister Mary Assisium Byrne, a social worker in the clinic who had just returned from



## *Marianne DiTommaso, VP* Saint Joseph's Medical Center's Champion for Housing Celebrates Fifty Years of Service

*2019 Fire of Charity Award Recipient*

*Below from left:* Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Residence is a 78-unit apartment building in Brooklyn with 24-hour support services in a single-site building; St. Louise de Marillac Manor provides supportive housing in Staten Island for individuals who have transferred from other more restrictive residential programs; Tompkins Residence in Staten Island is a 24-bed residence for individuals with mental illness who are over 45 years of age. The program offers 24-hour supervision with comprehensive structured and therapeutic activities.

those dually diagnosed with mental illness and developmental disabilities. The transition to administration only served to strengthen Marianne's connection and commitment to care for persons in need of mental health services.

In 1986, Marianne was appointed to the new position of Director of Residential Services. At the time, the

*Continued, see page 14*







LEFSA team members held an information night for parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi Church in Manhattan.

## LEFSA—A Place to Call Home

*Carol De Angelo, SC, and Mary Sugrue, SC*

**T**he question was intriguing, “How does Life Experience Faith Sharing Associates—LEFSA—connect with the homeless, with people who have *no place to live*? Eight team members, seven of whom have been homeless in the past, gathered around the table to share with Sisters Mary Sugrue and Carol De Angelo the uniqueness of LEFSA. Here is how they describe LEFSA!

The obvious answer is respect and dignity! “Treating people with respect is ingrained in us!” said James Addison. “When people walk through the door into a monthly Leadership meeting from off the street they know they will be treated with respect and dignity.” These foundational values are clearly visible in LEFSA, its team members, and associates today.

To know LEFSA as an organization is impossible unless one knows the people—persons who have no place to call home: single adults, families, children living on the streets or in shelters. LEFSA, with its team and associates, carry on the spirit and vision of Sisters Dorothy Gallant, SC, and Teresa Skehan, RSM, LEFSA’s cofounders.

“Building community and relationships are two of the greatest strengths of LEFSA” says James Addison, who first met the two sisters when he was living in a shelter 32 years ago. Team members described from their lived experience and practice how LEFSA builds community and relationships.

Team member Mario Pimentel spoke of LEFSA as “creating a space where people share their life experience and how God is in it.” He says, “It isn’t easy. Many people are like me. Curious but not interested. I stayed on the sidelines.”

LEFSA teams of two visit shelters once a week and invite people to gather, pray, and share from their life experience. James Butler continued, “Possibilities emerge from the sharing. The people choose the topics. It can be about fear, hope,

procrastination, whatever they want. At the end of each gathering, people choose the topic for the next week. As LEFSA team members go into the shelters, they create a welcoming space. People gather...are invited to take ownership...to take responsibility for the role and the part we play. Empowerment happens. You can change, and then you want to change root causes.”

For over 32 years since Sisters Dorothy Gallant and Theresa Skehan first walked into the shelter, teams have been visiting weekly at city shelters. From the beginning, leadership training, enrichment, skills building, advocacy, and addressing root causes have been cornerstones of LEFSA. Currently over 100 people come to the monthly Leadership Day; over 40 attend the LEFSA annual three-day retreat; 30 women and men participate in the monthly Women’s Empowerment Group and the Men’s Spiritual Development Group, and the LEFSA Street Ministry has expanded and currently serves about 220 people in Midtown and Harlem.

### Mario’s Story

Mario Pimentel has been a LEFSA team member since 2014. In 2012 Mario was living in a shelter, seeing no hope. When LEFSA team members and volunteers visited his shelter weekly he noticed them from afar, but he didn’t want to get involved. One day, “The topic of faith resonated with me and from that day I began to look at things from a different perspective. Seeing people stand up at weekly meetings and say they got an appointment gave me hope. That could be me. I realized that I had to work within the system to get out of homelessness. Being involved with LEFSA, I experienced people in the same situation and they were going from being homeless to having a home.”



For Mario, “LEFSA is more than just a community. It’s a family, not just friends but family...uncle figures and grandmother figures. We don’t have to be related by blood to be family. I didn’t find LEFSA; LEFSA found me. I was lost and then found. This means a lot to me since I don’t have family. More and more, as time goes on the bond becomes stronger.”

There were many factors that led to Mario’s being homeless. He threw himself into work after his wife of 23 years died. He became more and more depressed and lost interest in everything, which led to eventual homelessness. He says that what a person who has not experienced homelessness should know is that “LEFSA provides space and time for people who are homeless to voice their opinions, feelings, and what they are going through. This is so important because people who are homeless are often judged, not spoken to, and avoided by others. The Leadership Group, Men’s Group, and others are rays of sunshine through the clouds and darkness that the homeless walk through.”

Mario is glad to be a member of the team. “I’m grateful I can be doing something meaningful. I have a sense of purpose now. What was missing was the God perspective... That first step is the hardest. You are at the worst part of your life. You wonder how you got there. Your world has turned upside down. You have no other place to turn to. And then you meet the LEFSA team and volunteers. They are different from an agency. We are on the front line. We see people coming into the shelter where they feel all alone and desperate.”

“It’s so important for those who are homeless to know that the shelter is not the destination; that there is a way out. You lose faith in the system and in yourself. I remember talking one day to someone who had been incarcerated. He said, ‘Being incarcerated you know when you’ll come out. In a homeless shelter you don’t know when.’ So many lose hope because of the long time it takes to provide housing. People need patience, faith, hope, self-esteem, and community. They need to keep going, to continue to push on.”

As one of eight team members, Mario has varied responsibilities such as weekly visits to three shelters, leader of a

weekly Men’s Group, and street outreach. “People come up to me now on the bus, the street, people that I knew two years ago. They say, ‘I remember you. I was so down that day. You listened to what I had to say.’ It’s not that they tell me I helped them. It’s that they say, ‘You listened to me.’”

### Georgia James

Georgia James has been on the staff of LEFSA for over 18 years. She was a resident in New Providence Shelter when Sr. Dorothy invited her to the gathering of faith sharing and empowerment. Through these encounters Sr. Dorothy recognized Georgia’s deep faith, thoughtfulness, and ability to lead and inspire others. When Sr. Dorothy was not able to attend meetings, she asked Georgia to substitute for her and facilitate. That is where it all started for her. Sister Dorothy’s belief in her was most healing and led to Georgia’s being employed as a staff member.

Georgia believes that participation in these prayerful gatherings enables participants to deal realistically with their current situations of homelessness. They are encouraged to get to know one another and they develop community strength, hope, and trust in overcoming the difficulties of not having housing. Commitment to the group process of decision making of the staff members promotes equality, dignity, and leadership.

### Deborah Byrd

“I first met Sr. Dorothy and James in the shelter. They were having a gathering and I joined in the singing. From that encounter I connected with LEFSA. After I left the shelter, I heard the spirit telling me to volunteer and help others who are homeless. After two years of volunteering I was asked to be on the staff. Sister Dorothy reminded me of a flying nun. Her spirit was exuberant, joyful, just loving people, doing whatever she could for people. She loved the street ministry and reaching out to those who are homeless in Penn Station. Her spirit continues.”

Visit us at: [scny-lefsa.org](http://scny-lefsa.org)

## POTS

*Continued from page 6*

It’s not likely that POTS will work itself out of business any time soon. There is an acute lack of adequate, affordable housing and public housing in the Bronx. Government funding is available for some programs at POTS and, when appropriate, POTS applies for additional governmental support. POTS also relies on a network of individual supporters, which is more dependable and is built on personal relationships.

Maeve Callagy is a staff attorney, a graduate of Fordham University and Brooklyn Law School. She is hopeful and dedicated to her clients. Maeve was aware of POTS as a child and now feels that this is her dream job. She represents clients in Housing Court, guiding them through the intricacies of New York City laws and regulations. Through the Legal Clinic

she helps those living in shelters to find permanent housing and the financial support they will need. The most frustrating part of her job, she says, is the lack of affordable housing in the Bronx and the difficulty of sourcing records that clients need to support their claims in Court. The POTS legal clinic was also successful in preventing the eviction of 424 families.

POTS volunteers come from all walks of life, local residents, college, high school, and law school students who enjoy standing with those they can help. Many express that they “get as much, if not more, than they give.” Board members show up on weekends to lend a helping hand, often bringing a spouse and children. POTS—the staff, volunteers, and supporters—have made a loving commitment to nourish the needs of the homeless in the Bronx. They are there when they are needed.

Visit us at [www.potsbronx.org](http://www.potsbronx.org)



# Assembly 2019

By Lisa Shay, Associate

Kairos time. Sacred space. Holy ground  
God is present here, in this time.  
The Spirit is at work here, in this space.  
The Word is alive here, on this hallowed ground.

Following these prophetic and profound words at the opening of Assembly 2019, Charity Rising led personifications of our founders—Vincent, Louise, Elizabeth Seton, and Elizabeth Boyle—to support and affirm our quadrennial gathering. Our President, Sr. Jane Iannucelli, reminded us that “We come to Assembly to set direction, to adopt new policies, to change our Constitution, and to elect our new President and Councilors. These are soul-sized tasks!”

Assembly 2019 marked a new age for Charity Rising: for the first time a Sister from Guatemala was a Delegate; a new role of “Assembly Partner” was available to Associates, Companions, and professed Sisters who were not Delegates; and an innovative “Marketplace” showcased many facets of the Charism of Charity in thriving partnerships among Sisters and lay colleagues.



There were presentations on new initiatives for Health and Wellness, the formation program in Guatemala, and Associates. Delegates passed resolutions enhancing the Sisters of Charity Ministry Network, reaffirming our commitment to Peace, Justice, and the Integrity of Creation, and approving updates to governing documents. Another highlight was Thursday evening’s joyful reception with friends and colleagues.

The presence of the Holy Spirit, the action of Charity Rising, was palpable throughout. By Friday lunch, we were





ahead of schedule—how often does that happen? It was a Kairos time. Acknowledging that the agenda can overly constrain the possible outcomes, facilitator Sr. Sherryl White, CSJ, opened the discussion to “topics that need to be voiced, but which were not on the agenda.” One result was a proposal from the Guatemalan Associates requesting the Leadership Team “develop ways to ensure ongoing communication and dialogue that will free us for a deeper communion with each other and the world.” It seemed to be a clarion call, not only for the Leadership Team but for American Associates to better integrate with the Guatemalan community.

Saturday morning, before elections, Sr. Sherryl reminded us of the solemn, yet graced, responsibility of leadership. Leaders

“are called to invite themselves to be transformed. To be transformed by grace to meet new challenges. They are called to walk a line of strength in the midst of vulnerability...of power in humility...of prestige in simplicity...of decisiveness in charity.” Those remarks introduced the final discernment period, individually and communally discerning who is called to lead this Congregation forward now. The next issue of *Vision* will have more coverage of Assembly, including profiles of the new leaders.

As so many remarked before, during, and after Assembly: there’s something different happening in this Congregation right now. We are on the edge of a new moment. Charity is Rising—Now more than ever! How are we called to respond?



*Page 12 photos top row:* At the opening ceremony, Sr. Rosenda Castañeda Gonzalez presents the symbol of earth to Associate Nicole Quaranto, who represented Charity Rising. *Right:* As a focal point for prayer at the Assembly, this table held statues of wisdom figures significant to the Sisters of Charity—Saints Louise de Marillac, Elizabeth Seton, Vincent de Paul, and Mother Elizabeth Boyle. They circled symbols of four elements essential for life (clockwise from left): energizing wind (rain stick), nourishing Mother Earth (soil), fire of love (cauldron); water of renewal (bowl – center). *Bottom row:* With Sr. Jane Iannucelli looking on, Sr. Catherine Cleary, Vicar for Religious of the Archdiocese (left), confirmed the election of Sr. Donna Dodge (center)

as President of the Congregation. *Right:* Sisters Dominica Rocchio (left), and Dorothy Metz (right) will both serve as Assistant to Sr. Donna Dodge.

*Top row from left:* Sisters Manuela Quiché Tzoc, Dorothy Metz, Rosita Tzul Say, Postulant Odilia Chen Argueta, Sisters Dominica Rocchio, Donna Dodge, and Postulant Victoria Chaman Sis. *Right:* Sisters Carol Barnes, Charlotte Raftery, and Vivienne Joyce at the Marketplace.

*Bottom row left:* Sr. Loretto Thomas Donohue counted the green votes at Assembly. *Right:* Sr. Mary Ann Daly carried the processional cross at the Saturday evening Mass.

Visit our website at [www.scny.org](http://www.scny.org) to see all our Assembly photos.





Marianne was the recipient of the 2010 Mission of Charity Award. From left: Sisters Sheila Brosnan, Miriam Kevin Phillips, Thérèse Donnelly; Marianne, Sisters Margaret O'Brien, and Jane Iannucelli.



From left: Brian Fitzsimmons, PhD, Sr. Carol Barnes, Marianne, and Msgr. Austin Bennett at the 2006 ground breaking for the Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan apartment building located in Brooklyn.

Residential Services consisted of only two programs with a total of 33 units of housing. In this role, Marianne became responsible for day-to-day operations as well as the development of new housing and related programs. During this time, she continued her education, earning an MBA from Wagner College in 1999.

In the year 2000, the Department of Residential Services was transitioned to the newly formed Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers as part of its St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester, Behavioral Health Division. In that same year, Marianne was named Vice President of Residential and Opioid Treatment Services. In 2010, St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester became part of Saint Joseph Medical Center.

Today Marianne's responsibilities have grown from those original 33 beds on Staten Island to now include the oversight of over 1,200 beds or housing units, which cover the full continuum of residential/housing, including 24/7 supervised licensed community residences. Also included are licensed apartment treatment, community based family care, and single-site and scattered site supportive housing in Staten Island, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Westchester. In addition, she supervises Immaculata Hall Supportive Housing, a 100-unit mixed-use apartment building in Queens, Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Residence, a 78-unit supportive housing building in Brooklyn, and Sr. Anne Mary Regan Residence, a 20-bed chemical dependency community residence for women in Westchester. In addition, Marianne oversees behavioral health programs such as personalized recovery-oriented services (PROS), care coordination, assertive community treatment program (ACT), and affirmative employment programs. The opioid treatment centers provide chemical dependency care to over 2,600 patients in Brooklyn and Queens.

The extraordinary growth of the programs under Marianne's supervision is the result of successful procurement

of New York City, New York State, and Federal funding for which she wrote and secured grants. She has also obtained capital improvement grants to renovate the residential facilities.

To say that Marianne's success over the past fifty years has been the result of the tremendous energy, time, training, and talents she has devoted would be true, but not complete. Over the years she has been inspired by the many Sisters of Charity with whom she has worked. Marianne's husband of thirty years, Stanley Katzman—a former intermediate school principal in Staten Island—has been a wonderful partner and supporter throughout her career. Their daughter, Nicola Frances Katzman, is a source of pride and support. Nicola is currently a PhD candidate in social psychology at the University at Buffalo.

As an administrator, Marianne has collaborated with four Sisters of Charity presidents to help secure services, care, and homes for people with mental health disabilities and others on the margins. Three former presidents, Sisters Carol Barnes, Elizabeth Vermaelen, and Dorothy Metz, current president Sr. Jane Iannucelli, and incoming president Sr. Donna Dodge, will be leading the cheers as the Congregation honors Marianne with the Fire of Charity Award at the Spring Benefit at The Lighthouse at Chelsea Piers on May 16.

To the thousands of clients Marianne has helped place in safe, affordable, and caring residences in New York City and Westchester, Marianne has been a true blessing. Reflecting on Marianne's legacy, Sr. Karen Helfenstein, Director of Sponsorship said, "It's impossible to count the number of family members of mentally ill persons who benefit from the care for their mentally ill relatives. Knowing that their loved ones are safe and receiving needed services, they are free to carry out their other responsibilities of work and other family and personal needs."

In years to come, many more will benefit from Marianne's hard work and dedication; they just don't know it yet.

# With Love and Appreciation We Remember...

Visit our website at [www.scny.org/news](http://www.scny.org/news) for complete biographies

## **Sister Helen Scoltock, SC** (*Sister Margaret Dolores*)

Entered: 1947 + Date of Death: February 2, 2019 + Age: 92

Sister Helen's ministry was for forty-four years in the field of education, teaching the elementary grades in Manhattan, Poughkeepsie, and East Elmhurst, before becoming a principal from 1972 at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Manhattan, and Our Lady of Angels, Bronx, and Our Lady of Lourdes, Malvern, Long Island. In 1993 she joined the administrative team at Convent of Mary the Ocean Star in Ventnor, NJ. In 1996, Sister Helen moved to Mount Saint Vincent Convent and, for fourteen years, performed volunteer service in the Development Department at the Sisters of Charity Center. Sister Helen will be remembered by her students, their parents, and the Sisters with whom she lived and worked as kind, compassionate, and ready to assist anyone who needed help.



## **Sister Rosemarie Bittermann, SC** (*Sister Marie Anthony*)

Entered: 1941 + Date of Death: March 6, 2019 + Age: 96

Sister Rosemarie spent close to sixty years in elementary schools in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Westchester, including six years in St. Mary of the Snow, Saugerties, her alma mater. Sister was a volunteer at St. Peter, Yonkers, providing various services for students and administration, until her retirement to Saint Patrick Villa. She was among the first group of sisters to move from Convent of Mary the Queen to Kittay Senior Apartments. Sister's sense of humor, generous heart, and love of community life are memories for those with whom she lived. She will also be remembered for her hobbies of solving jigsaw puzzles and crocheting afghans.



## **Sister Maria Teresita Duque, SC**

Entered: 1954 + Date of Death: March 17, 2019 + Age: 91

Born in Bogotá, Colombia, Sr. Teresita came to know the Sisters of Charity as a student at St. Vincent School of Nursing. During her years as St. Vincent Emergency Room supervisor, she was co-founder, coordinator, and "heart and soul" of the Chelsea Village Program, which served the needs of the severely disabled and homebound elderly living in Chelsea and Greenwich Village. In 1988, Sr. Teresita went to Convent of Mary the Queen, Yonkers, as the Director of Nursing. After retiring in 1991 she continued as a volunteer at St. Vincent's until 2008. Sister Teresita's deep commitment to peace and justice led to active participation in Pax Christi Metro New York and the organization honored her with its Service Award in 2001.



## **Sister Margaret E. Angelovich, SC** (*Sister Regina Margaret*)

Entered: 1955 + Date of Death: March 19, 2019 + Age: 83

Sister Margaret's first ministries were teaching in elementary schools in Staten Island and the Bronx, and in Bishop McDonnell High School in Brooklyn. She was the principal of St. Paul the Apostle School in Manhattan and then a Pastoral Associate in the parish. She returned to Mount Saint Vincent as Director of Special Programs at the College until she was appointed the Vocations/Pre-Admission Director for the Sisters of Charity. Sister Margaret then served as a guidance Counselor at St. Raymond Academy, a Mentor at Fordham University, and a Consultant and Facilitator in adult spirituality until she retired to Mount Saint Vincent Convent in 2012. Sister Margaret could always be counted on for an informative and enjoyable conversation, a bright smile, and a few good laughs.



## **Sister Mary Jane Fitzgibbon, SC** (*Sister Mary Baptista*)

Entered: 1951 + Date of Death: April 3, 2019 + Age: 85

Sister Mary Jane spent twenty-two years in education. She taught the lower grades in the Bronx and Yonkers, then taught Spanish at Cardinal Spellman High School and Saint Raymond Academy in the Bronx, and Saint Joseph By-the-Sea High School in Staten Island. In 1976, Sr. Mary Jane began twenty-seven years in public relations work as the Director for Public Relations at the New York Foundling and later at Abbott House in Irvington, NY. She then served as Administrator of Mount Saint Vincent Convent. She continued her compassionate, kind, and thoughtful concern about others in volunteer activities after her retirement.



## SC NEWS



Sisters and Associates joined Colonel Lisa Shay, SCNY Associate, at West Point Military Academy on January 4th for her retirement from the U.S. Army after a thirty-year career. Congratulations and blessings for a long and fruitful retirement!





## SISTERS of CHARITY NEW YORK

Sisters of Charity Center  
6301 Riverdale Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10471-1093  
718.549.9200 • [www.scny.org](http://www.scny.org)



Like us on Facebook®  
@SistersofCharityNY

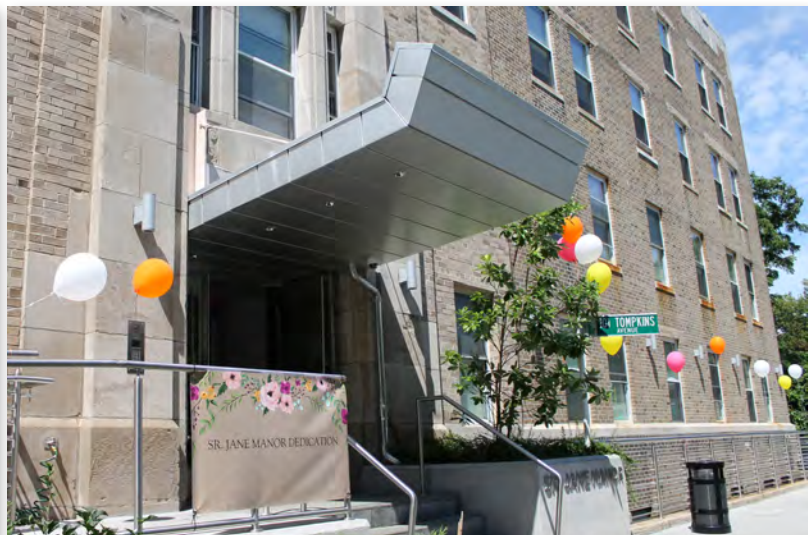


Follow us on Twitter®  
Sisters of Charity @scny1



Follow us on Instagram®  
@SistersofCharityNY

## ENDING HOMELESSNESS



*Above left:* Markham Gardens, operated by SC Housing, provides 80 units for seniors on Staten Island. Photo by James Shanks. *Above right:* Sr. Jane Manor, operated by Saint Joseph's Medical Center, is a transitional and extended stay community residence for adults recovering from mental illness.

*Left:* Immaculata Hall, operated by Saint Joseph's Medical Center, provides 100 permanent housing in efficiency apartments with 24-hour staff support for persons with mental illness. Units are also available to low-income families from the community. *Right:* Casa Cecilia, an SC Housing residence, provides 33 apartments for the formerly homeless in Manhattan.

