

Spirit

fall • winter | volume seven | issue two

Into the Heart of Africa
Sisters' Mission to Cameroon



Stories of the Illinois Valley

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Fall Winter Spirit



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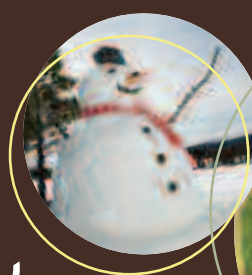
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Enjoy Spirit



Generosity of Spirit

"Infinitely more important than sharing one's material wealth is sharing the wealth of ourselves—our time and energy, our passion and commitment, and, above all, our love."—William E. Simon

In this issue of *Spirit*, you'll find stories that illustrate the fruits of giving. Travel with two Sisters of Mary of the Presentation to Cameroon, Africa, and see how their Order is helping the people there. Learn how little steps, like donating shoes, filling a shoe box with small gifts or preparing a meal can touch lives in your community and across the world.

On these pages, you'll get to know people who are using their gifts to reach others, from a couple who embodies the Christmas spirit as they play the roles of Santa and Mrs. Claus, to a priest who has taken on a new role shepherding his religious community.

You'll also meet people who channel their interests for good, including a mayor with a passion for history, a couple who helps injured birds of prey soar once more, a children's-book author whose words delight and inspire, and many others.

We've also included stories about recognizing and seeking help for hearing loss, to encourage those who are facing this issue to seek help so they can fully enjoy holiday gatherings. Plus, you'll find information about how and when to use St. Margaret's Convenient Care at Midtown Health Center for non-emergency medical care.

As we head into the holidays, consider how you might share your gifts with others.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Tim Muntz".

Tim Muntz, *President & CEO*



St. Margaret's Health

SMP Health System

600 East First Street | Spring Valley, Illinois | 61362 | www.aboutsmh.org

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Timeless travel

Horse-drawn carriage drivers offer passengers a trip down memory lane

When you catch a ride with Dave and Leslie Guinnee, you're conveyed into the past, back to a time when roads resounded with the clip-clop of hooves rather than the roar of motors.

Through their Iron Horse Carriage Service, the couple transports brides and grooms, festivalgoers and party guests in a variety of horse-drawn vehicles. They launched the business a decade ago, just after the couple settled into a historic Rutland Township farm northwest of Marseilles.

Dave had long entertained the notion to drive a horse and carriage, and with the purchase of an American Cream draft horse named Sundance (known affectionately as Sunny) and a training cart, he was on his way to making that dream come true.

These days, Sunny and his pal, Big Mack, are one hardworking team. As four-legged partners in Iron Horse Carriage Service, they're busy for up to 30 weekends out of the year marching in parades, adding old-fashioned luxury to weddings or giving rides to families at celebrations throughout Northern and Central Illinois.

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"You take care of them and they pay you back. They're like man's best friend, only bigger."

-Dave Guinnee



Iron Horse is familiar at such venues as the Ottawa Riverfest, Blackberry Farm living history museum in Aurora and Starved Rock State Park Lodge.

Separately or in tandem, Mack and Sunny can be seen proudly pulling an elegant carriage, a springy doctor's cart, a buckboard wagon or a sleigh. Nearly all the vintage-looking vehicles were handmade by Amish craftsmen. The carriage, known as a vis-à-vis in which passengers sit face to face, is the wedding "limo" of choice. The sleigh can be converted to wheels or runners, depending on the terrain.

These throwbacks to one- or two-horsepower transport delight adults and children alike, say the Guinnees.

"So many children know nothing about farm life. Many people have never stood next to a real horse before," explains Leslie. "People are awestruck by their size and beauty," adds Dave.

Children love to pet the horses, and the horses love the attention. Each has a distinct personality, says Dave. "Sunny is our practical joker. He opens fences and unbuttons your jacket. Mack is a born carriage horse. He thinks he's a little puppy, and would sit in your lap if he could."

Leslie brings the horses to visit area nursing homes, where they are greeted with delight and inspire many residents to reminisce about

the days when they used horsepower for work, play and travel. "It brings back yesteryear for them," says Leslie, whose oldest passenger was 100. "They love seeing us. Some people get tears in their eyes."

Soon-to-be wedded couples consider a horse-drawn carriage just the thing to set their special day apart, says Dave. "Five years later, when couples look over their wedding photos and see a limousine, they see a five-year-old limousine and the photo is dated. But when they see a carriage, it's timeless."

The Guinnees themselves have been married for 35 years and first met in a high school German class. "She was the prom queen and I was her escort," recalls Dave, whose German lessons eventually came in handy when he became canine handler at the Ottawa Police Department because the police dog, Ollie, responded to commands in German.

Though they love motorcycles and Dave's prized 1961 Corvette convertible, the Guinnees have been riding horses for most of their lives. Whenever they and their sons, Aaron and Jason, went on vacation, horseback riding would be on the itinerary.

Because they enjoy riding, they have other horses for that purpose, since a draft horse's gait is none-too-comfortable. Leslie, a nursing supervisor, competes in horse shows for fun, and Dave heads the volunteer mounted search-and-rescue unit for the LaSalle County Sheriff's Department, where he is a detective.



“Driving horses requires completely different skills than riding,” Dave says. “You’re driving two horses with eight legs and two brains, and you have to get inside their heads and convince them to turn two blocks ahead and ignore the noise and the bustle.”

Dave usually drives, but when long events leave him stiff and sore, Leslie takes the reins so he can relax. When the horses sense her lighter touch, they’re apt to turn playful, but a stern reminder from Dave brings them both in line again.

The ideal draft animal is patient and unflappable, requiring a combination of gentle demeanor and long training. “They have to be quiet, consistent and levelheaded when you’re up against a constant array of obstacles,” says Dave.

Mack and Sunny have become accustomed to public life, with its noise, traffic, car horns, emergency sirens and crowds of people, but it’s never all work and no play for these pampered pets. Like concerned parents, the Guinees make sure the horses don’t get tired or overheated.

“They’re our babies,” says Leslie, who cleans the stalls, ministers to the horses’ needs, and soothes their fears. “If they’re tired or thirsty, we take a break.”

“She knows if a horse isn’t feeling good just from the way it stands,” Dave marvels.

It takes hours to get the team—both humans and animals—ready for an appearance. For an afternoon appearance, the Guinees rise at 7 a.m. so they have time to polish and inspect harnesses, groom and brush the horses, and polish and decorate the carriage. Formal occasions require the couple to don formal attire; cold-weather appearances warrant layers of clothing and hand-warmer pads.

But, most of the time, it doesn’t seem like work to Dave or Leslie. “I’m happy when I’m on a horse. A ride brings you back in check with reality,” enthuses Dave. “There’s a total trust. You take care of them and they pay you back. They’re like man’s best friend, only bigger.”

The Guinees say, that, in addition to being a fun hobby and a source of extra income, driving, along with riding, renews their spirits. Time spent with their horses is peaceful, they say. And, they’ve found that horses are good listeners. “When you talk things out with a horse,” Dave says, “You learn that your worries are not as bad as you thought.”

Back in the mid-1980s when Ed Allen decided to buy an old barn-turned-smorgasbord and move his thriving restaurant, Hank's Fine Food, from Naplate to Ottawa's northeast side, people thought he was nuts.

After all, Hank's had been a Naplate fixture since the 1940s, and Ed had continued the winning tradition since buying the place 10 years earlier. Why move?

"We couldn't grow," Ed explains. From the outset, the barn could seat three times more diners, and, later, a second story addition made it possible to accommodate even more.

Plus, the ability to purchase the surrounding acreage enabled the entire family—Ed and his wife, Zelda, their children, Ed Jr. and Marie Koepke and their families—to build their own homes on the 20-acre property. And Zelda has spent the last several years turning the public area surrounding the restaurant into a landscaper's dream, complete with a duck pond and fountain. "It was great to get back home," says Ed, who, like Zelda, is an Ottawa native.

FARM fresh

With its down-home cooking and rural setting, Hank's has delighted diners for decades.

When he first purchased Hank's, Ed kept the name of the previous owner since the business had been around for decades. He later replaced "Fine Food" with "Farm" to reflect the new rural location.

Situated on the crest of a hill along Illinois Route 71, just south of the Interstate 80 interchange, the barn commands a grand view of surrounding farmland, with the city of Ottawa in the distance. Closer to home, the family's wildlife, including sheep, chickens, peacocks, ducks and magnificent tom turkeys, lend to the agrarian atmosphere. An expansive garden provides fresh produce and herbs for the restaurant's kitchen. But, says Ed, "The animals are not on the menu—they are just pets."

Hank's menu ranges from steaks and seafood to burgers and chops, and the restaurant is known for its Sunday and holiday buffets. Father and son preside over the kitchen, turning out made-from-scratch desserts and fresh, tantalizing food. While other restaurants promote prime rib on a single day of the week, Hank's offers it every day. Chicken, baked or fried, is always popular, and is served more than any other item.

Hank's draws customers from Ottawa, Mendota, Princeton and the Chicago suburbs. Some of Ed's current customers are the grandchildren of patrons who have been dining at the restaurant for decades, and some of the current employees are relatives of those who worked there in the past.



Chef/Owner Ed Allen

The Hank's building

The entire enterprise is a family affair. In addition to Ed and Ed Jr. (the sous chef) in the kitchen, Zelda works the hostess desk, Marie runs the gift shop and grandchildren and other relatives bus and wait tables.

Ed, now 70 years old, has a long history of satisfying area appetites. He first donned his chef's whites more than 50 years ago, at age 18, when he ran Allen's Dairy Dream, dishing up burgers, fries and ice cream to a generation of young Ottawans. At the time, shakes cost just a quarter, and the hamburgers and french fries even less. A bit later, he leased the WigWam Drive-In near Starved Rock State Park, serving barbecue ribs and an upscale menu to tourists and locals, selling souvenirs and hosting Native American dancers on the lawn. In those days before Interstate 80 was completed, Route 71 was the main entrance to the park and business was booming. However, after the interstate altered the traffic pattern, business dwindled. Ed exchanged his spatula for schoolbooks and went to college, where he eventually majored in business administration.

During the next decades, he became a regional manager of nationwide restaurant chains, a job that required uprooting his family some 22 times in 20 years. When Hank's Fine Food came up for sale, Ed bought it and settled the family back in his hometown.

"I realized I was working 80 to 100 hours a week for someone else," he says of his decision.

Scratch-made pastas and fresh salads found their way onto the

menu, and Ed doubled or tripled the business volume, even though his workspace was a cramped kitchen in the basement. The move to the new location provided a bigger kitchen and prep area, and the barn's wood beams, brick floors and high ceilings evoke a rural comfort. Diners can see how it has evolved by viewing photos in the lobby that depict the original barn and, later, the restaurant, parking area and shop overlooking the pond.

That shop, now called Curious Goods Costumes Company, began as an antiques shop, and Ed built the structure from scrap lumber. The original purpose was to provide an outlet for selling some of the couple's collections. "We were antique collectors on top of everything else, and we wanted to get rid of some of our stuff," Ed recalls.

Today, Curious Goods features a variety of unique gifts, such as Marie Osmond purses, WoodWick candles, assorted jewelry and the work of local artists. It is also a full-service costume shop, where customers can find costumes to rent or buy as well as a complement of accessories. The Allens got into the costume business six years ago, after purchasing the remaining inventory from two costume rental shops that were closing, one in Ottawa and one in Chicago. It's only natural that Marie, who studied fashion design and previously worked with Hollywood film studios, manages this aspect of the business. As for Ed, he's content to stay in the kitchen, trying out new recipes and tinkering with favorites. "I always liked to cook," he says. "It's an avocation that worked into a vocation."

Though he anticipates the day his son and daughter will take over the business, he doesn't plan on retiring anytime soon. "I enjoy what I do, so I'll just slow down a little bit. I will die with my chef's hat on, I guess."



Back: Chef/Owner Ed Allen and Ed Allen, Jr.
Front: Marie, Zelda and Ed Jr.'s wife, Della Allen



Hank's gift shop, Curious Goods

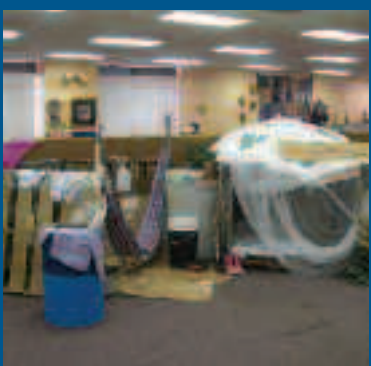
Hank's Farm Restaurant

815.433.2540

Curious Goods

815.433.3453

curiousgoodsgcc.com



Left, center: Tom Sickly (right) with Share Your Soles worker in Chicago

St. Margaret's employees support charity that donates footwear to the needy.

When Mona Purdy, a mother from the Chicago suburb of Palos Park, visited Guatemala in 1999, she was shocked to see children painting tar on their feet so they could run in a village race. She learned that this was because they had no shoes, making them susceptible to foot injuries and infections (in some cases leading to amputation). This experience spurred her to found the charity Share Your Soles, which now supplies needy children around the world with shoes collected by groups across the United States.

Early on, Mona collected used children's shoes from friends and family, but soon, churches, schools, corporations and other groups began to hold shoe drives, and the project has grown beyond her wildest expectations—so far, 1.25 million shoes have been delivered to the poor in nearly 30 countries.

Inspired by the charity's work, organizers of St. Margaret's Health Hospital Week unanimously decided to choose Share Your Soles as the focus of the mission project that is part of the annual event, which was held last May.

"I read about the Share Your Soles organization in a publication," says Cathy Baracani, St. Margaret's Dietary Manager and Hospital Week committee member. "I was so touched by the story of how this organization got its start and impressed with Mona and her generosity and determination that I decided to bring the idea to the

Hospital Week committee. I felt the Share Your Soles ongoing project would fit nicely with our 'mission event' during Hospital Week, and I knew St. Margaret's employees would embrace the idea of putting shoes on others less fortunate than us."

And embrace it they did—during Hospital Week, employees raised \$1,609 through a raffle and Denim Day, during which employees were able to wear jeans in exchange for a monetary donation. The committee also organized a shoe drive, which netted 349 pairs of shoes. They set up drop boxes in several locations throughout the hospital for employees, or any visitors, to donate shoes.



When Hospital Week committee member Sue Sickley, RN, told her husband, Tom, about the hospital's project, he graciously volunteered to transport the shoes from the hospital in Spring Valley to the charity's 400,000 square-foot warehouse in Alsip, Ill. "The warehouse was filled with thousands of shoes," says Sue. "My husband and I were very impressed by how organized and friendly everyone was when we delivered the shoes. The volunteers we met were very grateful for the hospital's efforts."

Mona credits much of the organization's success to the many volunteers, both those who help organize shoe drives and those who give their time to help prepare the shoes for delivery.

At the warehouse, volunteers work five days a week. Some shoes are boxed and ready to ship, while others must be sanitized, polished and sorted first. Volunteers are taught to sort the footwear

depending on the region they will be shipped to, taking the area's terrain and needs into consideration. The charity accepts all sorts of shoes, as long as they are clean and in good condition. Rubber

boots, water shoes, sandals, hiking boots, gym shoes, baby shoes, slippers, and even fancy pumps find a new home.

Besides the collection drives, shoes are gathered from drop boxes located throughout the Chicago area. Monetary donations and major corporate sponsors also help fund delivery of the shoes.

Through their generous donations, St. Margaret's employees helped hundreds of children, but those who participated in the mission event likely received

more than they gave. As Mona writes in a letter on the charity's website, "When you choose to make a difference in an innocent child's life, you bring love, hope and a sense of belonging into their life—as well as your own."

"When you choose to make a difference in an innocent child's life, you bring love, hope and a sense of belonging into their life—as well as your own." - Mona Purdy



Top: Hospital Week committee members include Jolene Linker, Melissa Felzer, Ramey Lovelady, President & CEO Tim Muntz, Holly Pinter, Cathy Baracani and Cheri Adrian

How to Help

Collect shoes Volunteer your time

Make it a family, school or church project. For a small contribution, schools or other groups can visit the warehouse and participate in prepping the shoes for shipping.

Contribute money

Just \$10 buys detergent to wash a case of shoes, and \$30 pays for packaging a case of shoes.

For more information, contact Share Your Soles at 708-448-4469 or visit www.shareyoursoles.org.

perfect harmony

Local barbershop chorus gives voice to musical memories.

Their a cappella stylings recall a bygone era when ice cream socials were all the rage and horseless carriages were new on the scene, but Princeton's Covered Bridge Chorus first belted out barbershop harmonies in the 1950s and has been going strong since 1976, when the group reorganized after a short hiatus.

The chorus, made up of 15 men from Princeton, Peru, Lacon, Tiskilwa, New Bedford, Malden and Tampico, performs about 23 dates a year at county fairs, festivals, churches and nursing homes, singing everything from turn-of-the-20th-century barbershop standards to adapted modern classics. Four of the members also perform separately in a quartet known as Second Wind. By day, the chorus members are truck drivers, accountants or farmers. Several are retired Caterpillar employees.

These days, "barbershop music" isn't just four guys in straw boaters and armbands, but encompasses choruses of unlimited members. Barbershop isn't a dress code; it's tightly blended four-part harmonies (from guys and gals) consisting of melody (lead), bass, baritone and tenor.



Some members of the Covered Bridge Chorus travel 30 or 40 minutes to Princeton's Prouty Building for two-hour weekly practice.

"I don't have a lot of friends that I spend nearly as much time with as that," says Dale Fiste, who directs the chorus and sings in the quartet. Several of his colleagues roundly endorse the organization as "a good bunch of guys."

The average age is 62, though David Ohlson of Princeton is under 30 and Don Burton of Peru is over 80. Many members are retired and have raised their families. "I wouldn't have been able to do this when my kids were small," says Ron Wall of Tiskilwa, who still farms. "There's only so much time to spread around."

Ohlson joined after meeting one of the barbershoppers in church. "I wanted more experience than just singing in the church choir, and I wanted to join a group that knew its stuff and wasn't messing around. They're serious and passionate about their music," he says.

A veteran of 50 years of barbershop singing, Burton has sung every part, from tenor to bass. Burton and Gene Beck of Peru joined the Princeton chapter after the Illinois Valley Chapter folded. The two Peru residents are quick to credit a local barbershop legend with drawing them and about a dozen other members to Princeton. LaVerne Harris was a retired barber and a seed corn seller who "loved barbershop from the tip of his toes to the top of his head," says John Wabel of Lacon.

Wabel remembers, "He'd be unloading a truck and had a tape of barbershop music playing. He'd smile this huge smile and ask you if that (music) didn't make you feel wonderful." Harris died in 2005.

Like Ohlson, many members started singing in church or school choirs. "I've been singing somewhere all my life," says Dale Wheeler of Lacon, a 20-year member.

"People sang more then," recalls Fiste. "We had to make our own music, and it was a style that lent itself to barbershop – something written for the common man with melodies everybody could hear."

In these days of iPods and earbuds, music is often served up as an individual, rather than shared, enjoyment. Listening has replaced participation. And, sadly, says Gary Keffeler of Sheffield, "the new generation doesn't connect with us." Asks Fiste: "How do you become more contemporary when barbershop doesn't lend itself to modern music?"

As one solution, some barbershop chapters host "universities" aimed at high school students to introduce the style to younger generations. When they hear it, "the thing that still attracts them is the harmony. It still wows them," Fiste says.

Barbershop's songs and style still resonates with men and women of the singers' generations. Military veterans love the patriotic tunes. Nursing home residents sing along, mouthing the words they don't remember, sometimes getting teary-eyed with nostalgia. "The songs tell a story," Beck says, and, Wabel adds, "They're uplifting."

"One guy (in a nursing home) had been sitting by himself for years. When we started singing, they said it was the first time he'd reacted in years," Wheeler remembers.

Absence of musical instruments scares some novices to the genre. "It frightens a lot of guys that we don't carry musical instruments," Fiste says. "They think it's tougher than it really is, but then they get used to the idea that we are all the musical instruments."

"An operatic voice is not necessary," says Wheeler. "If you can sing 'Happy Birthday' in a way we can recognize, you can sing barbershop."

As director since 2003, Fiste's job is to corral all the voices into the signature harmonies. Says Wheeler: "His job is to get us to tell the story. He interprets it and gets us to sing the way he wants it sung."

The chapter is a member of the Barbershop Harmony Society, (abbreviated from the original Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc., or SPEBSQSA), an international organization of barbershop chapters

headquartered in Nashville, Tenn. One of 17 regional districts in the nation, the Illinois District is comprised of 33 chapters representing more than 1,200 members.

Barbershop's feminine counterparts are called Sweet Adelines.

In preserving and promoting barbershop, the society sponsors training sessions and competitions. The Covered Bridge Chorus emerged one year with a second-place finish at the Peoria competition, but is content to remain out of the national limelight. National competition can be rigorous, so, says Wabel: "We sing for people and for an audience. That's more important to us."

"Singing brings us together," says Fiste of the weekly practices. "But what keeps us here are friendships."

In these days of iPods and earbuds, music is often served up as an individual, rather than shared, enjoyment. Listening has replaced participation.

Top, left: Chorus Group. Top row: John Wabel, Ron Wall, John Swanson, Gary Keffeler, Joe Waterhouse. Middle row: Rusty Gunawan, Marvin Strom, Scott Lathrop, Marvon Polte. Front row: Dale Fiste, Dale Wheeler, Gene Beck, Don Burton. (Missing from the photo: Marvin Hartz and Dave Ohlson)

Bottom, left: Left to right: John Wabel, Ron Wall, Dale Fiste, Dale Wheeler



Marseilles Mayor Patti Smith remains passionate about preserving memories of her hometown's past.

Patti Smith has long been passionate about her hometown's history, even founding a group to share stories about the past, so it seems only fitting that she's now making history—as Marseilles' first female mayor.

Patti grew up surrounded by generations of family who kept Marseilles' history alive and warm and vital. As the years passed, however, she noticed those older generations were disappearing. Some had died and others had left the area, and Patti wondered if her beloved hometown's history was in danger of following in their wake. "I never gave history a thought when we were going to family gatherings and everybody had a lot of stories about Marseilles. Once they all passed away, it was hard to keep the stories going, and I knew I was missing something."

Patti and her husband, Fletcher Smith, are both fifth-generation residents who stayed in the area to raise their family. Though that was the norm in her day, things are different now, says Patti, noting that her own children and grandchildren do not live in the area.

Determined to keep Marseilles' history alive, Patti, who previously served as executive director of the Illinois River Area

memory KEEPER

Chamber of Commerce, organized Marseilles Meanderings, a group of citizens of all ages who came together monthly to revisit the Marseilles of the past. Connecting with the history of a place is a comforting, says Patti. "Doesn't everybody want to know about where they live? It's human nature." Every month,

the group met at the Marseilles Public Library to discuss a particular topic, issue or historic site, ranging from the creation of the town's manufacturing district to Saturday night pastimes. They hosted speakers and took field trips to such sites as the Marseilles Hydroelectric Plant.

Patti took one such trip to the Illini State Park, a property that was once home to the Marsatawa Country Club and golf course, in the company of two former caddies who were in their 90s. Ennie Mooneyham and Charlie Calligaris had caddied alongside Patti's dad, Nick Schank, and were eager to share what they knew about the old course, which had been founded by Ottawa resident W.D. Boyce (also known for starting the American Boy Scout movement). "We hit the park road and the stories started pouring out," recalls Patti. "With their stories I could almost picture it all."

The Meanderings group drew native townsfolk eager to recall yesteryear as well as newer residents who wanted to immerse themselves in the history of their adopted hometown. Eager to preserve these memories for future generations, the group soon morphed into a committee of core members working to prepare



for the town's 175th anniversary in 2010.

Their primary goal was to produce and publish a compendium of Marseilles history—*Marseilles: Main Street and More*. When the discussion group started, the anniversary seemed years away, but time passed quickly in the flurry of gathering documentation about families, organizations, businesses and buildings. The new publication updates material last compiled for the sesquicentennial in 1985.

In addition to the stories they gathered, the committee also offered business owners, families and other groups the opportunity to purchase and create their own pages. Patti and Fletcher each purchased a page on which to document their family histories for their children and grandchildren.

The original print run for the book was 2,000, and most of those copies were sold via preorders and at anniversary events. "I was amazed at how many we sold," says Patti. "It was an awesome book full of lots of memories."

Patti credits city officials, librarians and longtime residents for sharing their knowledge, resources and devotion. Funds raised by the book have been funneled back into the community. "It took hundreds of volunteers to create it and get it sold, and the money generated has been donated back to several civic organizations, and some of it was used to support (anniversary) events," says Patti.

Today, the book is also being used as a resource by local schools, which are now making Marseilles history part of their curriculum.

In addition to the book, the now-defunct group has another legacy—a beautiful mural painted on the exterior of a store in

downtown Marseilles. The mural contains images depicting things and people that represent the town's past and present. "It was dedicated in 2009, and we are now adding benches, plants and landscaping—in an area that was otherwise blighted," says Patti.

Patti also had a hand in creating a similar group of history buffs in nearby Seneca, called the Seneca Historical Guild. Someday, she says, both Marseilles and Seneca might gather enough memorabilia to stock museums. Even in its infancy, Seneca's group drew interest from people who wanted to contribute documents, pictures and items, and Marseilles

residents have offered letterman sweaters from the 1930s (the high school closed in the 1990s), autograph books and many photographs.

Since taking office as Marseilles mayor in May 2011, Patti now spends most of her time at city hall. "It seems natural," she says of her new role. "It is something that I have always been interested in."

But even as Patti looks forward to ushering her hometown into the future, she still reflects on the past. "I'd like to bring back the quality of life from the 1950s and 1960s, with that emphasis on shopping local," she says, recalling the days when downtown was not only a hub of commerce but also a community meeting place.

For Patti, meandering down memory lane has restored a vital piece of her community, and she feels that honoring the past is essential because it will "ultimately help the communities preserve their history and remain united."

Connecting with the history of a place is a comforting, says Patti. "Doesn't everybody want to know about where they live?"



SOARING

to the rescue

George and Bernadette Richter are the wind beneath the wings of injured eagles, owls, falcons and other birds of prey that they rescue, restore to health and release back into the wild.

From their home near Shabbona Park in northern LaSalle County, the Richters operate SOAR (Save Our American Raptors), a non-profit organization dedicated to the welfare of native birds of prey. The organization was founded in 1989 by the couple, both of whom are licensed master falconers, rehabilitators, falcon breeders, raptor banders and educators.

Injured birds of prey, also known as raptors, that land on their doorstep are nursed back to health and released into the wild—if all goes well. Birds that can no longer make it in the wild are kept and introduced to audiences in wildlife education programs. Birds that are too badly injured to survive may have to be euthanized.

At the Richters' rural home, they maintain a Cooper's hawk, two red-tailed hawks, a peregrine falcon, a barred owl, a screech owl and a great-horned owl. Some have met some misfortune that prevented their reintroduction into nature, but both George and Bernadette are also falconers who have trained a pair of birds as hunting partners.

"Each raptor has its own personality. Some are aggressive; some are laid back," says George, noting that these majestic creatures can never be considered pets. "We can train them, not tame them. Having a bird for years doesn't change the relationship. It stays one way: we give, give, give."

One very vocal resident of their tribe is a female bald eagle named Deshka, named for the Alaskan river where she was found

12 years ago. The immature bird had fallen or been pushed from a nest and sustained a broken wing. When she was found, she was freezing and starving to death.

The Richters were licensed to accept an eagle, but were warned that Deshka was a mean-spirited bird. "She was an alpha female... but so is my wife," George says, indicating the struggle of wills between rescued and rescuer. Now a calmer Deshka, who weighs 16 pounds and has a wingspan of 6 feet, reigns over the live presentations the Richters make to various groups. George fell in love with birds of prey after hunting with a friend who was a falconer. Bernadette adopted the interest after she met George, but now is the organizer and manager behind SOAR.

George retired as an insurance salesman and now sells real estate. Bernadette had been a commercial art teacher and animal control officer. The couple moved to LaSalle County in 2001.

Both George and Bernadette have been trained and licensed to care for and keep raptors. State and federal wildlife regulators require such licenses to maintain healthy bird populations.

In the 1990s, the duo participated in the Chicago Peregrine Release Project, releasing some 70 young falcons in and around Chicago to restock nature. The project helped restore peregrine populations, and the falcon was removed from the federal endangered species list and downlisted from endangered to threatened in Illinois.

Around the same time, SOAR developed a Raptor Removal and Relocation Program to remove raptors from O'Hare Airport, where congregating birds were endangering themselves and the air traffic. With the approval of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife

"We can train them, not tame them. Having a bird for years doesn't change the relationship. It stays one way: we give, give, give."



George and Bernadette Richter are dedicated to helping native birds of prey.

Services, SOAR live-trapped and banded more than 300 raptors, then released them off site. The program was eventually expanded nationwide.

Despite such successes, statistics can be grim. Some 70 percent of young birds of prey don't survive the first year because of natural predators or manmade dangers, such as power lines, vehicles, windows or billboards.

"That's why we're here. We get these birds and do what we can so they have the best chance as possible," George says. George and Bernadette nurse the broken bodies, wings and internal systems, with the cooperation and medical skills of veterinarians near Earlville, in Geneva, and at the University of Minnesota, all of whom specialize in treating birds of prey.

Rehabilitation can take from six weeks to up to six months, depending on the bird's progress. Restoring flight can be the toughest challenge, George says. Birds recover in large indoor flight rooms before undergoing an outdoor regimen.

But not all birds can be successfully released. "When we first started with rehab, we were encouraged because our success rate seemed good, with 87 to 89 percent (released). As more and more people got to know what we do, we started getting animals that couldn't be rehabilitated and our success rate dropped. We are at 50 percent, which is about normal," George says.

As the Richters became known, they'd find boxes on the front porch containing disabled birds. The more they worked with them, the more they learned. "Every time you learn something new, you

realize there's so much to know about and there's always a lot more to learn."

Eager to share their knowledge, the Richters train others in the art of raptor management, rehabilitation and falconry. Their course, which has been accredited by the University of Illinois School of Veterinary Medicine, has seen a couple hundred graduates, with students coming from Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa and Indiana. Students include falconers, conservationists and other wildlife rescue unit members.

In addition to rehabbing birds and teaching, the Richters give public presentations to organizations, such as schools, churches, business fraternities, birding and conservation clubs and outdoor sportsmen's groups, on flighted hunters, owls, falconry and rehabilitation. The presentations give them a chance to introduce live birds to new audiences, some of whom have never seen wild animals, and to raise money to keep SOAR going and pay for vet bills and food.

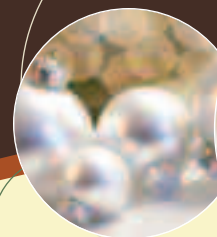
"Fifty years ago, it was common for birds of prey to be shot and trapped and poisoned. Today, the majority of people abhor shooting and trapping. We'd like to think we had something to do with changing that attitude," says George. "Ultimately, nothing will work if you don't respect the environment. Every species of animal, including humans, will only benefit from a good management of the environmental resources."

To find out more, visit SOAR's website, www.soar-inc.org.

"Every time you learn something new, you realize there's so much to know about and there's always a lot more to learn."

Above, left to right: rescued eagle, rescued owl and George with a rescued falcon.

Community Calendar of Events



Fine Arts

Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra Concerts

Dec. 10-11:

The Nutcracker

LaSalle-Peru High School
Auditorium

Mar. 11:

The Planets

Ottawa High School
Auditorium

May 12:

Mozart and Sibelius

LaSalle-Peru High School
Auditorium

Visit www.ivso.org for more
information.

Legacy Girls

Nov. 9-10:

Andrews Sisters

Dec. 12:

Christmas Holiday Show

Dec. 17:

Christmas Cheer Holiday Show

Jan. 23 and Mar. 5:

Andrews Sisters

Feb. 6:

50's and 60's Review

Starved Rock Lodge Great Hall,
Utica (815) 667-4211, ext. 386

Festival 56

Nov. 11-19:

Tuesdays with Morrie

Nov. 25-Dec. 3:

All the Great Books (Abridged)

Dec. 11-Dec. 23:

This Wonderful Life

Festival 56, Princeton
(815) 879-5656

Starved Rock Lodge Productions

Nov. 14-15:

*Double the Divas—
Marilyn & Connie Musical*

Dec. 5-6:

A Tribute to the Tuxedo Singers

Jan. 24-25:

Tom Jones and Company

Feb. 14-15:

*A Walk Down Memory Lane
with Frank Sinatra*

Starved Rock State Park Lodge
(800) 868-7625 ext. 386

Classical Musical Tea at Lock 16

Nov. 17

Lock 16 Visitors Center, LaSalle
(815) 223-1851

Music at the Mansion

Nov. 18: *Lyric Winds*

Hegeler Carus Mansion, LaSalle
(815) 224-5895

Dinner and Christmas Concert

Dec. 10-11

Reddick Mansion, Ottawa
(815) 433-6100

Old-Fashioned Christmas Service

Dec. 11

St. Peter's Danish Evangelical
Lutheran Church, Sheffield
(815) 454-2850

A Hegeler Carus "Turn of the Century" Christmas

Dec. 1-4

Hegeler Carus Mansion, LaSalle
(815) 224-5895

3rd Annual Ice Odyssey

Dec. 10

Ottawa
ottawadowntownmerchants.com

Festivals

Festival of Lights Parade

Nov. 25

Ottawa

(815) 433-0161

Light Up Streator Festival

Nov. 26

City Park, Streator

(815) 672-2055

Outdoor Fun

Trolley Tour

Every Sunday through December

Starved Rock Lodge, Utica

(815) 220-7386

Starved Rock Walkers' Club

Thursdays, excluding holidays

Starved Rock Lodge, Utica

(815) 220-7386

Annual Turkey Trot

Nov. 24

Oglesby

www.starvedrockrunners.com

Jingle Bell Run/Walk for Arthritis

Dec. 3

Baker Lake, Peru

(815) 224-2799



Community Events

Christmas in the Valley

Nov. 12
Spring Valley
(815) 664-2753

SVFD Annual Equipment Fund Drawdown and Dinner

Nov. 12
Spring Valley Boat Club
(815) 664-2753

Victorian Christmas at the Mansion

Nov. 25-27
Reddick Mansion, Ottawa
(815) 433-6100

Christmas at the Weber House and Garden

Dec. 1-31
Weber House and Garden, Streator
(815) 672-8327

Christmas at the Lodge

Dec. 2
Starved Rock Lodge, Utica
(815) 220-7386

Peru Christmas Parade

Dec. 3
Downtown Peru
(815) 223-0061

Pearl Harbor Parade

Dec. 3
Peru
(815) 223-0061

Santa Parade

Dec. 3
Streator
(815) 672-2439

Miracle on First Street

Dec. 3
LaSalle
www.lasalle-il.gov

Tea at Lock 16

Dec. 8: Christmas Carol Tea
Feb. 23: Black and White Tea
Mar. 15: What Rhymes with Orange Tea
Apr. 19: Nothin' Sweeter Than a Honey Bee Tea
May 5: Once Upon a Time...Tea
Lock 16 Visitors Center, LaSalle
(815) 223-1851

Lighted Santa Parade

Dec. 10
Downtown Spring Valley
(815) 664-2753

Breakfast with Santa

Dec. 17
Starved Rock State Park Lodge, Utica
(800) 868-7625, ext. 386

Utica Christmas Parade

Dec. 17
Utica
(815) 667-4113

More Fun

August Hill Winery Events

Nov. 11: Veterans Day Celebration
Jan. 13: Winter Artisan Showcase Weekend
Feb. 11: Wine and Chocolate-Lovers Celebration
August Hill Winery, Utica
(815) 667-5211

Leinenkugel Dinner

Nov. 11
Starved Rock Lodge, Utica
(800) 868-7625, ext. 386

Trolley Christmas Light Tour

Dec. 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
Starved Rock Lodge, Utica
(815) 220-7386

New Year's Eve 2011 at Starved Rock

Dec. 31
Starved Rock State Park Lodge, Utica
(800) 868-7625

Bald Eagle Trolley Tour

January-February
Starved Rock Lodge, Utica
(815) 220-7386

Bridal Expo at Starved Rock Lodge

Jan. 8
Starved Rock State Park Lodge, Utica
(800) 868-7625, ext. 386

Sled Dog Demo and Awareness


Jan. 15
Starved Rock Lodge, Fox Ridge Area and Visitor Center
(815) 667-4211, ext. 386

Bald Eagle Weekend

Jan. 28-29
Starved Rock Lodge, Utica
(815) 667-4211, ext. 386

*Events are correct at time of printing; to confirm, please call or check the website.

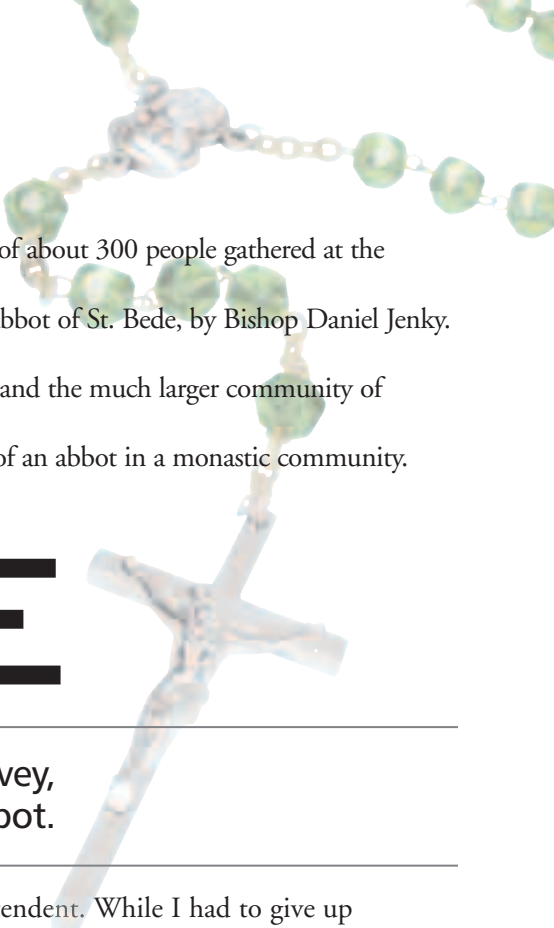




*"How beautifully leaves
grow old. How full of light
and color are their last days."*

-John Burroughs





On September 14, in the mid-afternoon of a cool and rainy day, a joyful and enthusiastic crowd of about 300 people gathered at the St. Bede Abbey Church to celebrate the abbatial blessing of me, Abbot Philip Davey, as the eighth abbot of St. Bede, by Bishop Daniel Jenky. They came to pray with and for me that I may be a good spiritual father for the monks of St. Bede and the much larger community of students, alumni and friends of St. Bede. I would like to share a bit about my journey and the role of an abbot in a monastic community.

a new **ROLE**

In the first of a two-part series by St. Bede Abbot Philip Davey, he discusses the blessings of being an abbot.

Life as a Monk

After I graduated St. Bede Academy and St. Bede Junior College, I came to the abbey with little sense of what I would be asked to do. As a young monk, I helped with the dairy herd, and, to some extent, with the pigs. I vividly recall shoveling out the stalls of the cows and driving the “honey wagon.” I also worked in the orchard and the vegetable garden. Later, I was sent to finish college at St. Anselm’s College in New Hampshire. I studied for the priesthood in Rome and then at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where I also did internships in teaching religion and conducting youth retreats.

After ordination, I was a prefect for boarders and had the joy of working with one group of young men for four years. By the time they graduated, I felt like their father. Under the direction of Fr. Placid, I was the founding spiritual director of the Peterstown Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) program.

A few years later, I went to study in a spirituality program at Duquesne University, where I learned about spiritual direction and then began to meet with people to help them grow spiritually. When I returned to St. Bede, I began to work as Novice and Junior Master to help new monks who wanted to learn how to live our way of life. I also taught religion and began a career as head softball coach that spanned about 25 years.

In the early 90s, I went to Loyola University in Maryland to study pastoral counseling and earned another master’s degree as well as a certificate of advanced study. While studying there, I also assisted in a parish for two years. Upon returning to St. Bede, I began counseling students and then became Prior. After

a year, I became Superintendent. While I had to give up counseling students, I began an evening career as a licensed clinical counselor. As Superintendent, I became involved in a capital campaign and then moved to the development office where I was serving when I was elected Abbot.

Only God knows what will be in store for me, but to keep me grounded, I continue to clean the first-floor bathroom and shower rooms. Like many of our monks, I am simply trying to do what God asks of me as well as I can.

An Abbot’s Role

Jesus referred to God as “Abba,” an affectionate title that was used for the father of a family. Likewise, the abbot is the spiritual father of the monastery. In his rule, St. Benedict makes it very clear that the primary role of the abbot is to guide the community in a way that fosters the spiritual growth of each community member. The abbot is admonished to recognize and respect the differences of each member. He is to treat them in such a way that “the strong have something to strive for and weak are not discouraged.” Benedict wants the abbot to correct the faults of his monks and spends several chapters of the rule outlining a process to foster the amendment of faults. Above all, the abbot is to teach more by his example than by his words.

Just as any parent, the abbot is responsible for the physical and psychological welfare of the members of his monastic family. Benedict provides guidance about work, meals, proper rest and a whole host of other issues. In our day, the responsibility of the abbot extends to the external work of the monastery as well. I feel a sense of responsibility for the students and staff of St. Bede



Like many of our monks, I am simply trying to do what God asks of me as well as I can.

Academy and for our extended family of alumni and friends. As a fallible, imperfect human being, I can only accept the position of abbot because I trust that the power of God working in me can do infinitely more than I could ever ask or imagine (cf Ephesians 3:20).

The Selection Process

For centuries, Benedictine abbots were elected for life. At Saint Bede today, an abbot is elected until he is 75. At the end of an abbot's term, the monastic community begins a process of discernment and prayer. This year, we invited two current abbots to speak to the community about the role of the abbot and the challenges he faces at this time in history. Abbot Vincent Batille of Marmion Abbey and Abbot Placid Solari of Belmont Abbey spent part of two days speaking to us and leading us in discussion. We then had several meetings where we discussed the current needs of St. Bede Abbey and the qualities that would be needed in an abbot. Throughout this process, we added specific petitions for guidance in our daily prayer, and we were very fortunate to have our annual community retreat immediately before our election.

Abbot Hugh Anderson, the abbot president of the Cassinese Congregation to which St. Bede Abbey belongs, came to St. Bede to conduct the election on June 6 and 7. The election process consists of three sessions. At the first, the abbot president reviews the election process, asks the monks to take an oath of secrecy about the election itself, and directs a nomination ballot after which a specific number of monks are considered candidates. At the second, which is called the *scrutinium*, each of the nominees is asked to leave the room while each member of the community is given an opportunity to talk about the positive qualities and concerns they might have about the candidate. Reflection and prayer follow this session.

After Mass the following morning, the actual election begins. In the first three rounds of voting, a candidate needs two thirds of the vote to be elected. If more rounds are needed, a simple majority is required. After election, the candidate is asked whether he is willing to accept the role of abbot. If he wishes, he can take a half hour to decide. After I agreed to be abbot, I took an oath of fidelity to the church and its teachings and the abbot president put the abbatial cross around my neck. I then had all

the responsibilities of the abbot. We then proceeded to the church, where we offered prayers of thanksgiving that included a fraternal embrace with every member of the community. Words cannot express how humbling it was to be chosen for the position of abbot and how small I felt when I looked at the many responsibilities I was facing.

Receiving a Blessing

After the election, the thanksgiving service and the immediate assumption of responsibilities, the idea of the abbatial blessing at first felt like an afterthought and a lot of work. As the event grew closer, the need for the blessing grew increasingly clear, and I could sense that I really needed a concrete expression of the blessing of God, the Church, the monastic community and the entire St. Bede Family.

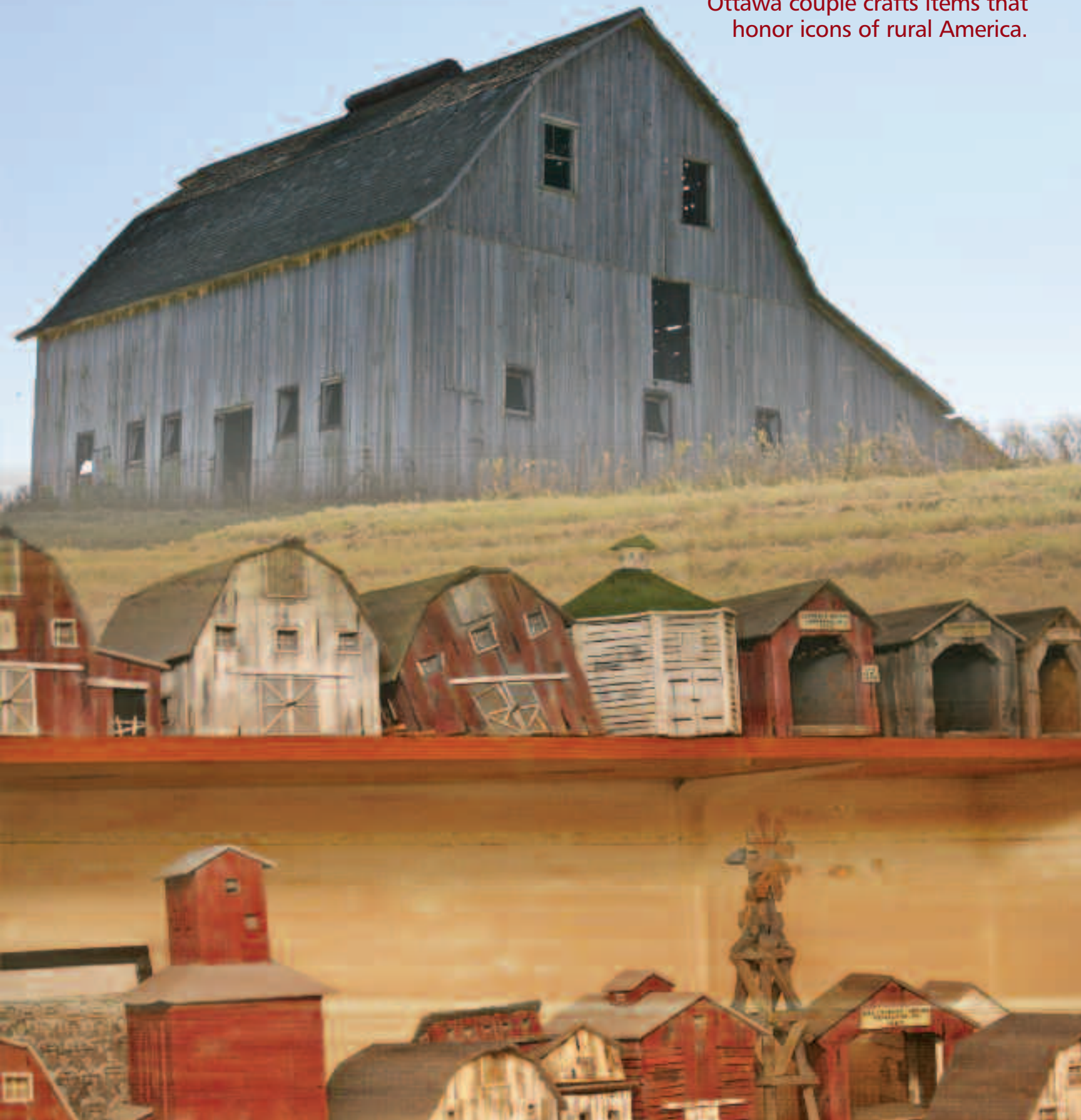
As I think back to the blessing, I wish that everyone associated with St. Bede could have been there. From the opening moment when Bishop Jenky greeted the congregation and people responded with such enthusiasm, it was clear that God was really present and blessing all who were there.

The actual blessing took place after a wonderful homily in which Bishop Jenky spoke about the Triumph of the Cross and a number of important elements of Benedictine spirituality. After praying the litany of saints, during which I laid prostrate on the ground as a sign of completely surrendering myself to God's will, the bishop spoke a prayer of blessing. The bishop then presented me with four gifts. The two that seem to me to be the most important were a copy of the Rule of St. Benedict, which is to guide all I do, and a crosier, or pastoral staff, which reminds me that I am to be a good shepherd for all I am called to care for. I was also given a ring and miter, a throwback to the Middle Ages when many abbots were also bishops.

The Mass continued as usual, except that, before the final blessing, I said a few words to the assembled congregation about accepting and embracing the cross, which represents all that God is asking of me as Abbot, and offering encouragement to all present who were carrying their own crosses. I think everyone who was present would agree that not only was I blessed, but all who were present were also enriched by their participation.

HARVESTING HERITAGE

Ottawa couple crafts items that honor icons of rural America.



Bob and Joan Anderson each keep a piece of America's vanishing rural landscape alive. Bob does it one small board at a time as he crafts scale replicas of barns, while Joan does it straw by straw as she fashions decorations of woven wheat.

While the actual barns that inspired some of his scale replicas have been swept away by weather, age and an evolving agricultural landscape, Bob, an Ottawa resident, works from memory as well as photographs. Noting that he's often racing against time to capture the fading rural icons, he reflects, "I thought I could build them faster than they disappear, but I'm losing ground."

His replicas, built in 1/64th scale, can be found at the Curious Goods shop at Hank's Farm Restaurant and at some area craft shows. He's also a regular exhibitor at the annual farm toy show in Sublette. Collectors of his work come from Illinois, the Midwest and as far away as California.

Though he uses new wood, Bob sands and distresses it to give it a rustic, weathered look, and then glues the wood facades to Luan plywood for stability. Sometimes he exercises his imagination and adds whimsical details, such as windmills, woodpiles and broken windows.

Several locally known buildings are among his models, including the Farmers Grain Service elevator in Grand Ridge, an iconic barn along Interstate 80 west of Princeton, and a stone barn near Mendota.

The Grand Ridge building, created for the elevator's anniversary, is one of Bob's personal favorites. He says the original was built in the 1850s and was still in operation until recently. Peering into the model's interior, you see the conveyor belt that carried the wagons through the barn, where the grain was collected and dropped through chutes to waiting train cars.

From contact with the owners and families, he's learned the histories of some of the barns. The stone barn near Mendota was built in the 1830s and was a haven for smuggled slaves. The barn perched on a hilltop overlooking Interstate 80 is actually newer than many, built in the 1940s. When the interstate went through, it divided the farm. The homestead eventually disappeared, leaving only the barn.

Bob and Joan discover many barn buildings during their travels throughout the Midwest. "We spent a lot of time traveling every back road from here to the Wisconsin border and in southwest Wisconsin," says Bob, who also finds inspiration in photo collections of American barns.

Some trips uncovered the whimsical leaning barns that remain among Bob's favorites. For authenticity's sake, the models come with two poles to prop against them as if to keep them from total collapse. Craft show customers love them, but they're less popular with farm toy show fans, Bob says.

"I thought I could build them faster than they disappear, but I'm losing ground."



Joan Anderson



One model was based on an image that the couple's son David, a photographer, captured while traveling out West. His father's replica captures the gaping hole in the sloped roof, with moss (represented by yarn) spilling from the gap.

Bob's 22-year hobby has its beginnings in his appreciation of the barn across the road from his childhood home in Spring Valley. "I always thought that was a good-looking barn and I'd like to have one someday. This is the closest I've come to that," he says.

Upon retiring from Ottawa Township High School after 27 years as a history/English teacher and track coach, Bob started building replicas of barns like the one he'd admired long ago. He'd learned woodworking in high school and was finally able to put those skills to use and indulge his creative impulse.

While Bob spends hours hunkered over model projects in various stages of completion, his wife of 50 years coaxes wheat straw into delicate and intricate tapestries. Joan is one of a handful of people in the nation who can weave wheat, an art form that dates back centuries.

After years as a stay-at-home mom, Joan, an empty nester, got hooked on a craft technique that traces its roots to an ancient agrarian superstition, in which tokens were created to represent and honor the spirit of the harvest.

Joan had enjoyed crafting since her childhood, but when she attended a wheat-weaving class offered by the University of Illinois

Extension in the mid-1980s, she was instantly smitten. "It's so unique, and has so much detail," she says.

Her skilled fingers can plait the wheat shafts into three-dimensional spirals and delicate, intricate patterns. She's fashioned crosses, windmills and angels for wall hangings. Petals of her dried-flower arrangements are woven from the straw and dyed as lilies or other flowers, and her wreaths feature wheat heads dangling like feathers. "I enjoy traditional designs, but I like to do my own. I'll take what I've seen in another medium and apply it to my weaving. A lot of my designs I'll work out in my head," she says.

Joan has become so adept at weaving that she has a copyright on several of her own designs and is in demand as a teacher at national and state wheat weaver conventions.

Practitioners of the art are vanishing, and membership in the Illinois association can be counted in the hundreds. Members gather annually at state and national conventions. Most of Joan's counterparts live in the Bloomington area.

Just as models for Bob's replicas are vanishing from the Illinois landscape, so too is a supply of material for Joan's handiwork. Until recently, wheat suitable for weaving could be obtained from Illinois farmers, but it has since fallen out of favor, so she has to seek suppliers from further away.

But even as these classic barns and wheat varieties are fading from the local landscape, the Andersons continue to create works of art that honor the spirit of Illinois' past.



Bob Anderson





do you hear what I hear?

How to recognize and seek help for hearing loss.



The first signs of hearing loss usually present themselves gradually. People with hearing loss might misunderstand what others are saying or find themselves turning up the volume when their favorite TV show is on. In many instances, family members are the first to recognize the problem because they hear what the patient is missing. Frequently, they are the ones who suggest hearing evaluations.

“Gradual hearing loss that occurs as you age is common,” explains Beth Wallace, an audiologist at St. Margaret’s Ear, Nose, & Throat Center, who notes that, even so, hearing loss can affect people of all ages. Heredity and prolonged exposure to moderate levels of noise are the main contributors to hearing loss over time,

but infection, illness, medication, trauma and genetics can also play a role.

The first step toward determining the type and severity of hearing loss is a visit to an audiologist. Audiologists can perform a hearing evaluation, and the results can then be evaluated to see whether the problem can be treated surgically or medically or whether hearing aids are needed.

Claire Grey has benefited from hearing aids since she was 3 years old. Her difficulty hearing was first noticed when she repeatedly asked for the car radio to be turned up because she couldn’t hear it. Her mother, Carmen, says that, since Claire had

Above Left: Claire Grey with Audiologist Beth Wallace

Above Right, Top: Audiologists Beth Wallace and Brianna Young, Dr. Dale Chilson, Above Right, Bottom: Helen Wayland

normal speech development as a toddler, it appeared as though she could understand and hear just fine. Upon further investigation, however, it was discovered that Claire actually had failed a newborn hearing test.

After an appointment at St. Margaret's ENT Center and a few weeks of hearing tests with Beth, Claire was fitted with her hearing aids. Now 6½, Claire has graduated out of speech therapy and is doing remarkably well. "From the start, Beth has been wonderful with how she was able to connect with Claire to get accurate results during her testing. I cannot say enough about how much she has helped her," says Carmen.

All hearing aids consist of four main parts: a microphone to pick up sounds, an amplifier to make sounds louder, a speaker to deliver sounds to the ear, and a battery to power the device. The way the components are put together depends upon the sophistication of the hearing aid being used.

Hearing aids have been improved drastically over the years—in fact, those that are used today are far superior to those used just five years ago. Today, all of the hearing aids that are used at St. Margaret's ENT Center are digital, which improves clarity and makes the sound much more natural. They also handle background noise better and are completely automatic, which means that the user doesn't have to adjust the volume manually. Feedback managers assure the patient that the hearing aids will never buzz or whistle inappropriately while they are in their ears. Many hearing aids are also Bluetooth compatible.

Beth notes that, even though technology continues to improve, prices haven't wavered much in the past decade. Costs vary depending on the selected technology, but a midlevel hearing aid can cost around \$2,000. These highly featured instruments will provide five to seven years of improved hearing, and the price includes follow-up care and servicing of the hearing aid.

Since everyone's hearing loss varies, hearing aids are customized for each patient independently based on their hearing loss and listening needs. They come in different styles, from traditional behind-the-ear (BTE), mini BTE (smaller on-ear piece and receiver in the canal), in-the-canal (ITC) and in-the-ear (ITE). Most children are fit with BTE hearing aids because the fit can be easily adjusted as the child grows.

While wearing a hearing aid, the brain and auditory system have to be "retrained" to hear again, and this process can take a few months, but the results are well worth the wait. "No matter what your age, if you have hearing loss, hearing aids will help you to hear better and make your life easier and more enjoyable," says Beth.



Indicators of Hearing Loss

More than 36 million Americans have a hearing loss—could you be one of them? See an ear, nose and throat specialist or an audiologist for a hearing evaluation if you are experiencing some of the following signs:

- Do you have to strain to understand conversation?
- Do you often ask people to repeat themselves?
- Do you have difficulty participating in conversations when several people are talking at the same time?
- Do you think others mumble?
- Do you fail to hear someone talking from behind you?
- Do others complain you turn the television or car radio volume too high?
- Do you have difficulty communicating on the telephone?
- Do you have trouble hearing your alarm clock?
- Do you struggle to hear dialogue at the movies?
- Do you feel uncomfortable at places where there is a lot of background noise, such as restaurants or parties?
- Do you misunderstand what people say and respond inappropriately?
- Do you have trouble understanding the speech of women or children?

Sources: National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders and Hearing Loss Association of America.

Selecting a Hearing Aid

Before deciding on your hearing aid, ask the following questions:

- Did I receive a thorough hearing evaluation by an audiologist?
- Is the hearing aid digital?
- Are there two microphones present on the hearing aid to handle background noise?
- Is there reserve power in the hearing aid, in the event my hearing gets worse?
- Is there a trial period to test the hearing aid? (St. Margaret's ENT Center allows three months.)
- Are there any fees for follow-up or maintenance?

There are two audiologists available at St. Margaret's ENT Center to assist you. Please call (815) 224-3040 to schedule an appointment.

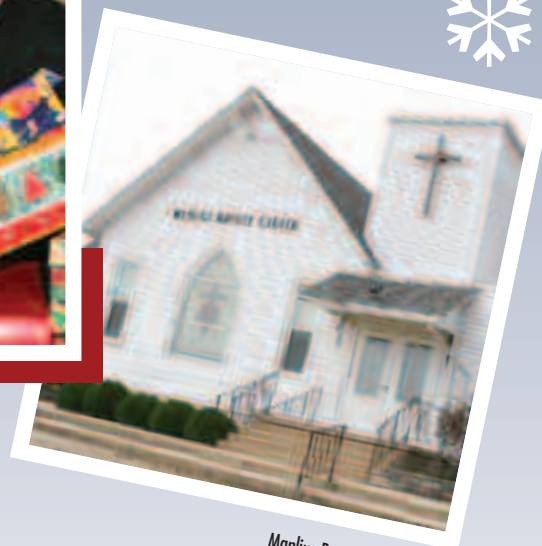
Top: Staff at St. Margaret's Ear, Nose & Throat Center

A BOX FULL of Joy

Local church
reaches out to
the world's needy
children through
Operation
Christmas Child.



Left to right: Nancy Hartz,
Sherry Johnson, Linda Peterson



Manlius Baptist Church

Who would have thought that joy could be contained in a simple shoe box? Yet, that is exactly the case with the shoe-box gifts delivered to needy children around the world through Operation Christmas Child. Filled with small toys, toiletries, clothing items and school supplies, these small packages are likely the only holiday gift these youngsters will receive and offer them a tangible message of Christ's love.

Families, school and church groups across the nation pack and wrap shoe-box gifts for the organization every year, and the First Baptist Church in Manlius is one of them. Over the past six years, this congregation of about 40-50 has contributed hundreds of shoe boxes to the cause.

The tiny church was established more than 110 years ago and draws members from the surrounding areas of Manlius, Wyand, Walnut, Princeton, Buda and more. In 2005, parishioner Nancy Hartz began something she had been hoping for a while to accomplish. She started working with Operation Christmas Child, a project through charity Samaritan's Purse.

Bob Pierce, who also founded international charity World Vision, founded Samaritan's Purse in 1970, with the goal of meeting emergency needs in crisis areas through existing evangelical mission agencies and national churches. Today, Samaritan's Purse reaches out to people around the world who are victims of natural disaster, disease, famine and war with food, water, medicine, and other

assistance in the name of Christ. Operation Christmas Child is one of the organization's projects.

Each year, during a national collection week (this year it's November 14-21), packed shoe boxes are dropped off at local collection sites, where they begin their journey to a child in need. According to their own statistics, Operation Christmas Child has sent more than 86 million boxes to 130 countries through the work of 500,000 volunteers.

Since they started packing shoe boxes, Manlius First Baptist Church has averaged approximately 40 boxes a year. Nancy and 12 other volunteers, among them Linda Peterson and Sherry Johnson, kick off the season with an October "weenie roast" and bonfire at the church to remind members to start thinking about shoe boxes.

Families and individuals can donate their own filled boxes, supplies for a box or money toward filling the boxes. Donations of empty shoe boxes are also needed.

Because they are able to pick the gender and age of the recipient, families who choose to fill a box can include their own children in picking out gifts that they would like, while also using it as an opportunity for a lesson about those less fortunate. Children can include a photo of themselves and a personal note with their box.

Some years, Sherry has taken the Sunday school students shopping to purchase items to fill their own boxes. The volunteers collect the boxes in November, with a dedication and blessing at their

**"Even by giving me
an empty shoe box,"
she says, "that shoe
box represents hope
for one more child."**



Thanksgiving Dinner, this year being held on November 13.

Manlius First Baptist Church has embraced this charity with open arms. Recently, Linda and four other members traveled to the shoebox processing center in Minneapolis to volunteer inspecting and shipping boxes. The warehouse was absolutely filled with boxes, all waiting to be inspected.

In addition to Operation Christmas Child, Samaritan's Purse also offers the opportunity to donate money toward other holiday "gifts" to the world's needy, including items such as livestock, mosquito netting, household water filters and other items. These donations provide more than a smile on Christmas Day, as evidenced by a thank-you note for one such donation that was printed in the First Baptist Church bulletin: "Thank you to the family that contributed money for two dairy goats. One goat will supply a gallon of fresh milk a day. For a family, that is plenty to drink with some left over to make cheese, yogurt or butter. Surplus dairy products can be sold to pay for essentials like medicine and schooling."

Each donation, no matter the size, is appreciated. Linda, a St. Margaret's X-ray technologist, wants to thank all the St. Margaret's employees who have donated shoe boxes to her over the years, whether filled or empty. "Even by giving me an empty shoe box," she says, "that shoe box represents hope for one more child."

Choosing to support this charity was easy, says Nancy. "It is an extremely worthwhile project, and any organization can do it," she explains. "Also, with each box being filled with whatever denomination the donor decides, each family can give what they can afford. Every gift these children receive is a blessing to them, filled with gifts and prayers."

How to **PACK A SHOEBOX**

Start by gathering a shoebox or similar-sized container and determining the age range and gender of the intended recipient. For both girls and boys, you can select ages 2-4, 5-9 or 10-14.

The organization provides a list of suggested items, which includes small toys, such as cars and dolls, school or art supplies, hygiene items like toothpaste and a toothbrush, treats, such as hard candy, lollipops and gum, among other things. They ask that donors not include used or damaged items, war-related toys, breakable items or things that might leak, like liquids or chocolate.

After the box is full, wrap it, the lid separately from the box, and secure with a rubber band. Attach the appropriate label (available to be printed from the website) indicating the gender and age of the child for whom you packed the box.

Each box must be accompanied by a donation of \$7 to cover shipping and other project costs. Before dropping off the box, Samaritan's Purse asks that you add one more thing, perhaps the most important of all—your prayers.

For more information on Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child, please visit www.samaritanspurse.org/occ or email Nancy at nmhartz@gmail.com.



St. Margaret's Health marks two decades of providing food for local homeless shelter.

Every evening for the past 20 years, the dietary staff at St. Margaret's Hospital has assessed what remains from the day's food service and set aside some leftovers to be donated to the local homeless shelter, Illinois Valley PADS. Last year, hospital employees went even further to serve the needy—volunteering their time to cook monthly dinners for shelter guests.

Illinois Valley PADS (Public Action to Deliver Shelter) got its start

Carol Alcorn of Peru began volunteering at PADS by coordinating her church's team of volunteers. That led to two terms on the board of directors, and she has served as the organization's executive director for the past eight years.

For Carol, the decision to serve was an easy one. "I am convinced God encourages us to help those around us," she explains. "I saw a great need in those who seek service. I also saw a great need for this program to be more organized to meet these needs. I took the opportunity to lead the way to better service to bring more effective help to those in crisis."

Mary Maggio, Kathy Derix, Jeannie Leonard, Pam Dornik and Diane Donna from St. Margaret's Social Service Department prepare a meal.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me," (Matthew 25:35)



Sharing Sustenance

in 1991, after area churches, social service agencies, hospitals, and township supervisors recognized the need for a sustainable overnight shelter for area homeless persons. PADS serves LaSalle, Marshall, Bureau, Grundy and Putnam counties through two shelters, one in Peru and one in Ottawa.

The two shelters open to serve guests during the colder months—October through April. The Ottawa shelter is a 3,300-square-foot building with 18 total beds. The Peru site offers 22 beds in a 3,200-square-foot building. According to information collected by PADS staff, roughly 90% of guests are from the local communities.

For those in need, the shelters not only provide a warm bed, food, shower, and laundry, but also offer vital connections, including referrals to social service agencies, caring ministry from staff and volunteers, and assistance finding jobs and housing.

Service is also a large part of the mission of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, the founding order of St. Margaret's Health. Last year, St. Margaret's Mission Integration Team asked St. Margaret's employees if they would be interested in volunteering their time to cook a dinner for PADS guests once a month.

In response, almost 50 employees, with the help of the Dietary Department, cooked, delivered and served food once a month, October through April. The varied menus included such fare as Italian beef and mostaccioli, enchiladas, and meat loaf and mashed potatoes. Every meal came with all the trimmings, plus wonderful desserts. Because of these employees' commitment to service, St. Margaret's will again be providing meals throughout this PADS season.

The number of volunteers was not surprising to Karen Gress, VP of Ancillary & Support Services for St. Margaret's and Mission

Integration Team Leader. “St. Margaret’s employees consistently live the mission of the Sisters in their everyday lives by continuing their volunteerism, dedicating themselves and genuinely caring about others,” she says.

Because PADS relies on volunteers for much of their day-to-day responsibilities, including helping to staff the shelter once a month, providing a meal, helping with fundraising, or assisting with maintenance, Carol was appreciative of St. Margaret’s contribution. “I was thrilled to hear that the staff were ready and willing to participate on that level,” she says. “Food is a basic need for every

guests on topics such as budgeting, beginning computer skills and employment skills.

Though guests do encounter setbacks on their paths, this only serves to inspire PADS volunteers and staff to work harder to help them. “It is eye-opening and stressful to listen to the abusive and hurtful relationships and circumstances in the lives of those we serve,” acknowledges Carol. “It is disappointing when, after all your best efforts, an individual refuses to help themselves, and it is frightening to watch the destructive grip that substance abuse has on the lives of the user and their families.”

Drew Jessen, a St. Margaret’s cook, prepares a meal for PADS.

How to Help

Here are some of the supplies that the shelters need:

- Paper goods (plates, napkins, toilet paper, paper towels)
- Gallon-size freezer bags
- Garbage bags
- Disposable bowls, cups and cutlery
- Travel-size toiletries (including soap, shampoo, toothpaste, etc.)
- Socks and underwear
- Cleaning products (laundry detergent, toilet cleaner, glass cleaner, etc.)
- Powdered drink mix
- Coffee and creamer
- Dry cereal
- Canned soups, stews, ravioli and vegetables
- Peanut butter

Donations can be dropped off at the shelters between 6:30 and 10 p.m., October 1-April 30. To contact the Peru shelter, call 815-224-3047; for the Ottawa shelter, call 815-433-1292.



human being. The evening meal is so essential to our service.”

Volunteering at PADS can be a fulfilling experience. As Carol explains, “It is very rewarding to see individuals and families improve their lives with housing, jobs, increased income, and better health, and it is wonderful to work with the many people in the communities who really care.”

For those who are unable to volunteer, shopping or donating items at the PADS-run resale boutique, Lily Pads, in Peru is another way to support the organization’s work. All profits from the resale of donated items directly benefit both shelters. Each shelter also accepts donations of supplies, including toiletries, cleaning products and food.

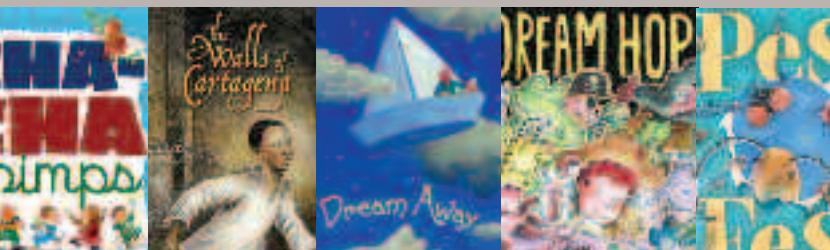
The organization is always seeking new avenues to assist the homeless, and this season will be adding a life skills class to educate

Despite such difficulties, PADS volunteers and staff are committed to supporting the homeless, as long as there is a need in the community. Their volunteer motto sums up the essence of the group’s mission: “Extend hospitality to each guest. Provide a caring and compassionate encounter. Be aware of needs and be willing to listen. Share the gift of oneself. Impart blessings to all. Have fun!”

For more information on PADS, Lily Pads, or to see the needed donations list, please visit www.ivpads.com.



write from the heart



Children's book author
Julia Durango spins tales of adventure
for readers of all ages.

Just this summer, Ottawa resident and author Julia Durango saw the publication of her tenth children's book, *Under the Mambo Moon*, a collection of poems that pays homage to Latin music. Nearly a decade in the making, the work had its genesis in the searing events of 9/11, when Julia turned to music to lift her spirits.

"It was such a scary time, and my kids were little. I started thinking about what kind of world I was raising them in. When I put on salsa or merengue, these cheerful songs about overcoming adversity and bringing people together, I felt better."

In *Under the Mambo Moon*, the poems are tied together with a narrative about a young girl whose father owns a record store. Julia, who has an undergraduate degree in Latin American studies, has spent time in Brazil, Colombia and Costa Rica, where she fell in love with the people and their music. "This book is my own tribute to an art form that has made me so happy throughout the years," says Julia.

Left: Author Julia Durango with her sons Kyle, left, and Ryan, right.



"I love words, but that's
not why I write.
What drives me is the story."

Julia did not set out to become a children's author. She planned on a career in social work and was pursuing a doctorate in international health when she married and started her family.

Becoming a stay-at-home mom and moving to the quiet city of Ottawa was a serious change of pace, she recalls. "I didn't know what to do, staying at home. Babies are time-consuming, but... well, they nap, too. I needed something to occupy my time."

A lifelong reader, Julia enjoyed sharing books with her sons. Soon, she found herself brimming with ideas for stories of her own, and she began to wonder how to translate them to the written page.

Julia readily credits her sons' imagination and experiences for inspiring her books, which have evolved as they have grown. Their monkeyshines gave her the idea for her biggest-selling book, *Cha Cha Chimps*, published in 2006. The concept has a lot going for it, including a catchy refrain, counting, and loads of bouncing monkeys that fairly dance off the page. "It's a very teachable book to read aloud, and it's the one I always read when I make school visits," she says of the book, which is now in its fifth printing and inspired a 2009 spinoff, *Go Go Gorillas*.

Another book, *Pest Fest* (originally published in 2007, but released in paperback this October), was inspired by her older son's insistence on repeated readings of an insect encyclopedia. After shooting down her suggestion to read a fairy tale as a change of pace, he suggested that she write a book about bugs. And *Angels Watching Over Me* (also released in 2007) got its start when Julia made up additional verses for the traditional Southern spiritual while singing the boys to sleep.

Today, Kyle is 15 and Ryan, 10, and Julia has progressed from picture books to middle grade readers as they have grown. "I find myself writing books with them as the primary audience," she says, noting that Kyle, an avid reader, has been serving as the first "editor" of the book she's currently working on—a fantasy novel set in the highlands of Peru.

The book is a collaboration with author Tracie Vaughn Zimmer, who Julia met through a writers' critique group. "Her strengths are my weaknesses," says Julia, pointing out that Tracie loves descriptive language and wordplay, while she prefers action and dialogue. "I love words, but that's not why I write," she says. "What drives me is the story."

Though she's penned several books for older children, she still works on picture books, including another published in July 2011 called *Dream Away*, a joint effort by Julia and local songwriter Katie

Belle Trupiano, who is Julia's friend and neighbor and also the mother of two boys. The bedtime tale follows a father and son as they journey across the night sky, amid the constellations.

Growing up, reading and travel were two constants in Julia's life. Frequent moves as a result of her father's promotions and job transfers resulted in a strong bond between Julia and her sister Sherry (older by one year and one week). "My sister and I realized that we always had a friend in each other," she recalls.

Books also became her consistent companions. Her childhood experiences, she believes, created a recurring theme for the books she would write.

"The commonality seems to be the idea that you make your own family. There are important choices you make—you can choose your friends and make your own family. Each time we moved, we had to make our own family. My protagonists are in search of a family they can call their own."

When she decided to make the jump from reader to author, she spent considerable time doing her homework—reading hundreds of children's books, attending conferences and networking. Her first sales were to *Cricket* and *Ladybug* magazines, and she also penned a children's book review column in a local newspaper. More than mere talent is necessary to make it in the competitive publishing industry, she says. "You have to have patience and perseverance."

Becoming a successful author has brought in a second source of income as well as accolades from teachers and readers, but she hasn't yet given up her day job at a school library at McKinley School in Ottawa. She continues to write, and Hollywood may be calling, too—a major studio has expressed interest in one of her ideas.

Though writing keeps her busy, she is careful to prioritize her time so that she can attend to her most important role—mothering her sons. "I don't want to use the time with my kids to write books. I want to write books that are worth the time and where I can manage the load," she says.

Looking back, Julia reflects that being a children's author isn't such a far cry from her first career choice. "I still am in service to children by promoting reading. Studies show that children who read do better academically and in their lives and careers. Any avid reader has a story about books that changed their lives. Reading together is a way to share that allows conversations to happen, and lets us be together in a peaceful way."

For 11 months of the year, Jerry Curl dispatches trucks for a Morris transport firm and his wife, Pat, volunteers locally. But six weeks before Christmas, Jerry exchanges his work shirts and jeans for a red suit, white beard and wide belt and Pat dons a red gown, hooded cape and white wig. The Ottawa couple's transformation is complete as they step into the roles of Santa and Mrs. Claus and prepare to embody the spirit of the season.

For 17 years, the Curls have played their parts for the city of Ottawa, arriving with great fanfare at the annual Festival of Lights parade and ceremony the day after Thanksgiving. Children line up by the hundreds to see Santa and share their Christmas wishes.

But it takes more than outward trappings to create a Santa, and Jerry's fur-trimmed red suit envelops a heart of gold and a desire to make a few minutes in a child's life special. Jerry refuses to rush any

child through a visit. "I want to take as much time as the child needs. This is his time. Sometimes they're scared or shy, but if you're patient, they'll talk to you."

Pat, his partner of 50 years, radiates Mrs. Claus' benevolence, tenderness and good humor and is never far from Jerry's side as advisor, schedule manager, crowd control director, wardrobe supervisor and narrator of Santa's story.

The Curls first adopted their Claus personas more than two decades ago. When a job transfer placed them briefly in California, Jerry appeared as Santa in a regular promotion at a costume shop. He volunteered Pat to accompany him. She remembers: "They wanted somebody who sang. I don't sing, but I volunteered to read 'Twas the Night Before Christmas.' I had no idea even what Mrs. Santa should wear."

Jolly Holidays

Ottawa's Santa and Mrs. Claus enjoy decades of spreading Christmas cheer.

These days, Mrs. Claus is attired in a heavy red gown and ankle-length hooded cape suitable for Illinois' harsh winters. Santa wears a heavyweight red outfit at his outdoor appearances and a lighter-weight suit indoors.

A pair of snow-white wigs completes the outfits, and Jerry pastes on a flowing white beard, which remains attached despite strong tugs from curious fingers. For years, Jerry's outfit did not include padding, but he added some in 2010 after losing weight for health reasons.

Wardrobe is only part of the transformation, Jerry says. "No matter what sort of day you have, when you put on the suit and step out the door, you have to leave all that behind."

The Curls' return from California in



Lilly Drea, 5, with Santa



the 1990s coincided with Ottawa's need to replace its Santa for the annual parade and Festival of Lights. The role seemed a natural fit, but no amount of individual meetings or posing for pictures could prepare them for their first parade, Pat remembers.

Arriving with a police escort to the piped-in tune of "Here Comes Santa Claus," the couple looked out over the crowd and saw "all the happiness on the boys' and girls' and parents' faces," says Pat. "It was overwhelming! People were standing shoulder-to-shoulder, just waiting for (Santa)."

After the annual parade, the Curls spend the next few weekends welcoming youngsters to Santa's little log house at the corner of Jackson and LaSalle streets. Some of the children who now pass under Santa's gaze are accompanied by parents who themselves stood in line to meet him years ago. In a reversal of one such visit, one man brought his father.

When children hand him a long list, Jerry asks them to show him three or four of their favorite items. He admits some requests can stump him. "They'll ask for things I've never heard of, so I tell them I'll have to talk to the elves about what they're making."

Pat watches parents' reactions so Santa knows how to respond to requests for outlandish or expensive gifts. Over the last few years, she says, "kids have realized the economy is not good and Santa is on a budget."

Santa and Mrs. Claus are so much in demand for personal appearances at private events, schools and other venues that their own family must reserve a Christmas visit from Santa, notes Pat. The Curl family's holiday gathering (including the couples' four grown children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren) now occurs at Thanksgiving, which suits everyone. The extended family sometimes gets into the Santa act, with grandchildren occasionally serving as escort elves at Santa's house.

Santa's guests have included not only local residents, but also people from other states and even other countries. Jerry and Pat also visit nursing home residents, who, Jerry says, "enjoy Santa just as much, if not more, than the kids."

Neither snow nor wind nor car trouble deter the Clauses from their appointed rounds. "I won't disappoint the kids. People depend on you no matter what. I'd have to be in the hospital not to make a visit," Jerry insists.

Sometimes Santa is asked to deliver presents at appearances, and he gladly obliges, tucking them into the empty bag he carries for that purpose. Over the years, he's delivered everything from kids' toys to the keys of a red Lexus convertible.

At the end of each visit, the Curls carry away the memories of the children and families they meet. "How can this not lift you up when you're having a down day?" Pat wonders as she sorts through a storehouse of snapshots filled with the smiling faces of the children they have met over the years.

But as much as the Curls try to spread cheer and joy, there are times when even Santa struggles to be jolly. "You'd be surprised at the heartaches that come with Christmas. Holidays can be rough," Pat reflects.

"One teen told me all she wanted was for her dad to live through Christmas. He had cancer," Jerry recalls. They later learned the father died just before the holiday.

As hard as it can sometimes be, the Curls are determined to hide their own tears and offer a kindly response in the face of a child's heart-tugging request for things like the return of an absent parent, health for an ailing relative, or a house to live in. "You have to be emotionally strong," says Pat.

Even with these occasional challenges, the couple insists the job is an extremely rewarding one. "We get more out of it than we put into it," reflects Jerry, who says he and Pat have no plans to retire from their holiday roles. "From Thanksgiving until after Christmas is a wonderful time for us."

So what is Santa's Christmas wish? When asked, the couple says the answer can be found in the closing line of Clement C. Moore's famous poem, which Pat has read hundreds of times over the years: "Happy Christmas to all and to all a good night."

Left to right: Isaac Langley, 3, at Santa's mailbox; Mrs. Claus; Cameron Tedrick, 1, with Santa; Santa's House in Ottawa

Into the Heart of AFRICA

Sisters serve the poor and share Christ's love in Cameroon.

In southeastern Cameroon, the rainforest-dwelling Baka people are engaged in a daily struggle for survival. Hunters and gatherers, they spend most of their days seeking out sources of clean water and nourishment. The Sisters of Mary of the Presentation minister to these impoverished people as well as many others throughout this Central African nation as they serve in schools, clinics, hospitals, prisons and for the Church.

The SMP have been serving in Cameroon since 1956, when a diocesan Bishop requested that they come to Batouri from their Motherhouse in France. Today, 31 Sisters, as well as 10 young women currently in formation, live and work in six geographic areas of the country.

This summer, Sister Anne Germaine Picard of Princeton and Sister Suzanne Stahl, assistant provincial leader for the United State Province of SMP in Valley City, North Dakota, traveled to Cameroon to spend three months living, praying and working with their

"They are so happy with little things—things we take for granted. It made me wonder, 'who is the poorer—us with our abundance or them with their joy in the simplicity of life?'"

fellow Sisters there. "We wanted to really become part of their mission, not just to visit," says Sister Anne Germaine.

Sister Anne Germaine and Sister Suzanne departed from Chicago March 30 and returned July 1. During their trip, they traveled from the capital city of Yaoundé to the towns of Batouri, Yokadouma, Diang and Kentzou before

ending up at the remote town of Salapoumbé, where the Sisters run the diocesan hospital.

Sister Anne Germaine was able to spend some of her time in Cameroon teaching English in one of the local schools. Though French is the official language in most of the country (it is English in

a small western portion), there are also more than 250 tribal languages spoken in the country. Many of the people are eager to learn how to communicate in both French and English. The schools there have no books and few supplies, so students learn by rote memorization from what is written on the blackboard.

Sister Anne Germaine was struck by how grateful the people were to receive small gifts, such as colored pencils, glue sticks, leftover parish calendars and rosaries. "They are so happy with little things—things we take for granted. It made me wonder, 'who is the poorer—us with our abundance or them with their joy in the simplicity of life?'"

Sister Suzanne brought along a donated guitar and taught some of the Sisters how to play, leaving the instrument behind for their continued use. She also taught some computer skills to teachers and sisters.

Later in the trip, Sister Anne Germaine and Sister Suzanne helped out at the Catholic hospital in Salapoumbé, which is managed by SMP Sisters. Because resources are so costly and difficult to obtain in Cameroon, the Sisters there and hospital staff were glad for the medical supplies donated by St. Margaret's Health and St. Andrew's Health Center in Bottineau, North Dakota.

Sister Anne Germaine and Sister Suzanne also helped at the hospital by cleaning and painting the inside of the maternity building using supplies donated by their Sisters in the United States. "It is nothing like what we have here," says Sister Anne Germaine. "The walls were so dirty, with peeling paint."

While we might be shocked at the thought of a hospital with dirty walls, it does not faze a local population that lives in shelters made of mud, notes Sister Anne Germaine. She points out that there are many differences between healthcare here and in Salapoumbé. Each area of care is housed in a separate building and there are no housekeeping, laundry or dietary departments. "Families bring and wash their own linens and prepare meals for their patient in a shelter that's located on the hospital grounds."

Learning about the practices of another culture was one of the best things about the trip, says Sister Suzanne. "It reminds me again that there is more than one way to look at things and do things," she says. She also appreciated the chance to get to know Sisters from the





Sister Suzanne sitting with a group of small children playing near the Hospital in Salapoumbe



Painting the walls of the hospital

order's international congregation, "so we can work more as one heart and one soul."

The Sisters there live in solidarity with the people, and Sister Anne Germaine and Sister Suzanne joined them, staying in their cement home and experiencing life without running water or electricity. "They live very humbly, but give everything they have," says Sister Anne Germaine, pointing out that the Sisters share water with local residents, a task that has become more difficult since their pump broke in June. Water is currently being hand-drawn from their cistern.

Even at the hospital, the only electricity comes from a generator that is run only during surgeries and between 6:30 and 8:30 each evening, and the water comes from the same well used by the Sisters.

During her time at the hospital, Sister Anne Germaine witnessed some of the Baka customs, including how they care for their dying loved ones. She recalls the instance of a woman suffering convulsions from malaria. Her family carried her through the forest to the hospital and 10 of them sat with her through the night, during which she died.

Sister Anne Germaine was initially unnerved by what came next: "When a person dies, the Baka people wail all night long," she says. She soon came to understand it was their way of grieving, and began to offer silent prayer each time she heard the sound.

Many of the Baka people believe in forest gods, but there are some Christians among them, and, says Sister Suzanne, years of work by Sisters, Brothers, Priests and Catechists has led to the conversion of some to the Catholic faith.

"The local people used their traditional wood xylophones, drums and songs for the celebration of the Mass. Their beautiful and harmonious voices lifted our spirits to God."

During their journey, the Sisters were able to attend Mass at a variety of local churches. "We attended Masses spoken in Baka, Bangondo or French," says Sister Suzanne. "The local people used their traditional wood xylophones, drums and songs for the

celebration of the Mass. Their beautiful and harmonious voices lifted our spirits to God."

While in Cameroon, the Sisters also visited two prisons where SMP Sisters minister, and had two very different experiences. At the prison in Yokadouma, prisoners are housed 33 to a cell in dungeon-like conditions. "It is beyond description in its gruesomeness, disease and lack of space," says Sister Anne Germaine.

By contrast, conditions at the regional prison in Batouri were much more humane. Because government officials have allowed the Church to step in, prisoners there have access to an outdoor courtyard, daily prayer and classroom opportunities. The Church also supplies the prison with food, medication and clothing, as well as emotional and spiritual support for inmates.



Sisters in Diang: Novice, Sister Marguerite, Professed Sr. Sr. Rosalie, and Posutant Astrid

How to HELP

If you would like to help the people of Cameroon, there are multiple opportunities. Just \$1 funds one day in the hospital. Approximately \$35 a month will provide school fees for an elementary aged child; \$60 will pay for a month of high school, and \$120 will pay for a month of vocational high school. Funds are also needed to build a new well in Salapoumbé. Though expected to be quite costly to accomplish in this remote mission, it will make a difference in the lives of so many, including hospital patients, doctors and staff, the Sisters and most of the local villagers.

Sister Suzanne notes that 100 percent of any donation will go directly to the people of southeast Cameroon. No administrative fees will be deducted, and the money will be hand-delivered by the Sisters to those in need.

Send donations to the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation at Maryvale, 11550 River Road, Valley City, ND 58072.

If you have questions, contact Sister Anne Germaine at sisterannegermaine@gmail.com or 815-915-8035. Sister Anne Germaine is also available for speaking engagements about her experience in Cameroon and the Sisters' mission there.



Celebration in the Novitiate with the Novices



Catholic children in the court yard at the Maternal School in Batouri

As they prepared to leave Cameroon, the Sisters left behind most of their clothing and personal effects, such as scissors and fingernail clippers, which are considered luxuries to the people there. “(The trip) made me realize what true poverty is and that we can live without,” says Sister Anne Germaine. “The people live the present moment from sunrise to sunset just to survive.”

She says that she would love to return to Africa to serve, but even if she can't return, she hopes to continue helping the people there. Living and ministering with the Sisters deepened her commitment to her vocation. “I opened my life and heart to a God so big and a God whose creation is so beautiful that (it) envelops the poor and the rich and makes us truly one family, one body,” she reflects. “I am my brother's keeper and I have a responsibility to care for the earth and to use and share its resources so everyone is cared for with the dignity of a child of God. We have so much in our country, while others have so little. I am so grateful for the experience of these three months and pray to live my life differently as an American citizen and as a woman consecrated to God as a Sister of Mary of the Presentation.”

Sister Suzanne also intends to continue helping the people of Cameroon and hopes she and Sister Anne Germaine can spread the word about their needs. “I hope we can be a bridge between the people of United States and the people of southeast Cameroon, particularly the Baka,” she says. “They are good, hardworking people who need our help to stay alive and be educated and learn about Jesus Christ.”



Filling the Gap

St. Margaret's Convenient Care provides access to non-emergency medical care at times when your regular physician isn't available.

Perhaps you're on the way home from work when you start to wonder whether that cold you've been nursing has developed into a sinus infection. Or, maybe your toddler has awakened from her afternoon nap with a fever and earache. In both instances, you may not be able to see your doctor during regular office hours, but you needn't wait until the next day to receive treatment. St. Margaret's Health now has a solution—a Convenient Care center to treat your non-emergency medical problems when they happen at inconvenient times.

What Is Convenient Care?

According to a 2010 study by Press Ganey, a consulting firm serving the healthcare industry, the average length of an emergency room stay is just over four hours. The study also indicated that up to 70 percent of those visits are not for actual emergencies. When people use the ER for non-emergencies, wait times and insurance premiums rise. Plus, these visits prevent doctors from focusing on patients who truly need emergency care.

Convenient care centers offer ambulatory care delivered in a facility outside of a hospital emergency room. They are used to treat patients who have an illness or injury that needs immediate attention but that is not serious enough to warrant a trip to the emergency room. The care is unscheduled, which means that there's no appointment needed.

These types of centers first arrived on the scene in the 1970s, as healthcare providers noted the need for walk-in care for minor illnesses and injuries. Convenient care centers of today must have on-site diagnostic services, such as a laboratory and X-ray department, and are staffed by a combination of doctors, nurses and midlevel providers, such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants.

Providing treatment in a convenient care center is more affordable than emergency room treatment, which is typically reflected by the lower copayment. Your wait time may be shorter as well.

Convenient Care is available 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., weekends and holidays, at the Midtown Health Center in Peru.

When to Use Convenient Care

Though it is best to see your regular physician, because he or she is familiar with your health history and has access to your medical records, which can aid in diagnosis, there are times when your doctor's office may be closed or too busy to accommodate a work-in appointment.

If your illness or injury is not a life-threatening emergency, you can use Convenient Care, whether or not you are a patient at St. Margaret's Health.

Do not be afraid to use the ER when the condition is serious. Call 9-1-1 in a life-threatening emergency.



Medical Staff at Midtown Health Center

St. Margaret's Hospital Events



SCREENINGS/CLINICS

Cholesterol Screenings

St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room:
Second Wednesday of every month, 7-9 a.m.
Second Saturday in January, April, and July, 7-9 a.m.
Pre-registration required. Please call 815-664-1486.

Free Blood Pressure/Blood Sugar Screenings (every month unless otherwise indicated)

- DePue Library, second Tuesday, 8:30-9:30 a.m.
- North Central Bank (Hennepin), first Thursday, 8:30-10 a.m.
- North Central Bank (Ladd), first Wednesday, 10-11 a.m.
- Liberty Estates, second Thursday, 9-10 a.m.
- Oglesby Library, third Thursday, 10:30-11:30 a.m.
- Putnam County Senior Center, second Tuesday, 10-11:30 a.m.
- St. Margaret's Hospital, first Wednesday of odd months, 7-9 a.m.
- YMCA, fourth Tuesday, 8-10 a.m.

CLASSES

(All classes meet in St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room,
unless otherwise noted.)

Diabetes Education Classes

Classes meet once a week for four weeks in November and for three weeks in 2012. Different topics will be covered each week. Each participant receives a free glucometer. Classes will be held on November 7, 14, 21, 28; January 9, 16, 23; February 13, 20, 27; and March 12, 19, 26. For more information, please call 815-664-1616.

Topics covered include:

Overview of Diabetes, Complications and Monitoring

Speaker: Pat Schummer, RN, MS, CDE

Nutrition and Diet

Speaker: Marilyn Csernus, MS, RD, CDE

Medications

Speaker: St. Margaret's staff pharmacist

Stress Management

Speaker: Pat Schummer, RN, MS, CDE

Exercise and Activity

Speaker: Candy Ference, ACSM Certified Exercise Specialist

Foot, Skin and Oral Care

Speaker: Pat Schummer, RN, MS

CPR Instruction

These classes are open to the public and held on the first Tuesday of each month in the evening. Sessions rotate each month and include "CPR for Healthcare Providers," "CPR Anytime," and "CPR Instructor" training. Call 815-220-0075 for information.

Babysitting Clinic

December 28 and March 17, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
For more information, call 815-664-1440.

CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION

- **Prenatal/Lamaze Classes:** Classes meet for four consecutive weeks from 6:30-9:30 p.m. Sessions start on November 7. They are held in St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room.
- **Sibling Classes (for 3 to 8-year-olds whose mom is expecting a new baby):** Classes will be held on Saturday, December 3, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 309, St. Margaret's Hospital.
- **ABC Prenatal Classes (for pregnant women in their first and second trimester):** Class will be held on Monday, Dec. 5, at 6:30 p.m., in St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room.

To register for all childbirth preparation programs, call St. Margaret's Family Birthing Centre at 815-664-1345.

SUPPORT GROUPS

(All support groups meet in St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room,
unless otherwise noted.)

Grief Support Group

Third Tuesday of each month, 6-7 p.m.

Parkinson's Support Group

First Monday of each month, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Rebound (Breast Cancer Support)

Please call 815-339-6480 for details.

Rainbows (Grief Support for Children and Adolescents)

Second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
For more information, please call 815-664-1639.

Turning Point (HIV/AIDS Support Group)

Third Wednesday of each month, 6 p.m.
Location not disclosed for confidentiality purposes.
For more information, please call 815-664-1486.

Visions (Blind and Visually Impaired Support Group)

First and Third Thursdays of each month, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Auxiliary Bake Sale

Tuesday, Nov. 8
St. Margaret's Upper Lobby

Girl Talk

Thursday, Nov. 10
St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room
Call 815-664-1486 for more information.

Boys Will Be Boys

Thursday, Nov. 17
St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room
Call 815-664-1486 for more information.

St. Margaret's Gift Shop Christmas Open House

Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 12 and 13
St. Margaret's Upper Lobby

American Red Cross Bloodmobiles

Tuesday, Nov. 22
Tuesday, Jan. 24
Tuesday, Mar. 27
11:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room
Walk-ins welcome, or call 815-664-1130 for more information.

Auxiliary Scrub Sale

Tuesday and Wednesday, Nov. 29 and 30
St. Margaret's First Floor Presentation Room

Auxiliary Nut & Candy Sale

Tuesday, Dec. 8
9 a.m.-3 p.m.
St. Margaret's Lower Lobby

Auxiliary \$5 Jewelry Sale

Monday and Tuesday, March 19 and 20
St. Margaret's Lower Lobby



New **High Tech MRI**

Arrives at St. Margaret's Hospital

New MRI innovation

will help physicians reach
confident diagnoses, while
helping patients feel more
comfortable during the scan.

- Uncompromised image quality
- Larger opening to reduce patient claustrophobia and anxiety
- Faster scans
- Located in our all new in-house suite



St. Margaret's Health

St. Margaret's Hospital

SMP Health System

www.aboutsmh.org

St. Margaret's continues to add the most advanced diagnostic tools available for our patients' good health.

Spirit

Stories of the Illinois Valley

fall • winter | volume seven | issue two



Front Cover: Left to Right: The Sisters are Sister Claire Dumas,
Sister Anne Germaine Picard and Sister Suzanne Stahl.
Back Cover: George Richter with a rescued hawk.



St. Margaret's Health

SMP Health System