Dear Friends,

It seems that with the blink of an eye, we find ourselves in the season of fall. My mother used to say that the older one gets, the faster time goes. Her words certainly ring true for me. This is also true for our Sisters Marietta and Marie whom you will read about in this issue. A couple of dreams have come to fruition this summer at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center with the developments of the sensory garden and the partnership for the community gardens. So much new life is evident! Though in-person retreats have been on hold because of the pandemic, the St. Francis Spirituality Center continues to be a resource for healing and spiritual growth by way of technology for Zoom conversations and prayer opportunities. We, together with you, continue to respond to God’s call to be instruments of peace for creation and for one another.

Peace and all good things to you!

Sister Sara Aldridge
Community Minister
Hands Healing Body and Soul

It all began the spring of 1988 when Sr. Marie Reinhart attended Exodus, a 15-week sabbatical program in Dittmer, Missouri. “One of the teachers offered massage, and I cannot express in mere words what happened to me. It was as if my whole being was overhauled!”

Sr. Marie decided that if she could do this for the sisters back home or anyone who might come, she would love to do it. In the summer of 1989, she attended the course of studies at The New Mexico Academy of Massage and Advanced Healing Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. She graduated from the academy on June 23, 1990.

Her clients not only experienced physical healing, but opened their hearts and souls in many other ways she never could have believed. “In reality, we healed each other,” said Sr. Marie. “Bodywork helped to soothe away deep wounds, fears, unwanted memories; it brought forth cleansing tears and physical and mental healing in depths only the Divine Healer could reach.”

“My ministry got me in touch with my own body and what a wondrous artistic machine of minute working parts God had bestowed on me. Jesus was my constant co-partner in bringing His wondrous love and healing to others.

Sr. Marie retired in spring 2020, earlier than anticipated due to the pandemic. “I was happy when one of my Sisters asked for some help recently. It was good to be able to serve. I miss the life stories people had to share: their joys, sorrows, tears. I will always pray for my clients, living and deceased,” Sr. Marie continued.

Beverly Abbott, a former hairdresser, heard about Sr. Marie from one of her own clients and then became a client of Sr. Marie in 2001. “My husband joined her client list in 2003 after he retired, and we went monthly ever since. She has helped us with relaxation and mobility,” explained Beverly. “I miss her calming effects, our conversations on gardening and her great attitude towards life. She has helped us spiritually and physically. We are so blessed to have her in our lives.”

Norma Schalk, a client for about 22 years, first received a gift certificate for massage from her daughter. Her own mother had previously gone to Sr. Marie for massage in prior years. “Receiving a massage helped me immensely,” explained Norma. “When I was working I had a lot of back pain and massage really helped. I loved the spiritual feeling that sister gave me.”

Another longtime client, Kay Enderlin also received a gift certificate for her birthday. “Sr. Marie has had a profound impact on my life and health. I miss her. My monthly massage always started out with a prayer or a reading with soft quiet music playing in the background. It would set the tone that filled my soul with peace. She always seemed to find the spots in my body that needed that healing touch. I would leave feeling rejuvenated in both body and soul. I will be so pleased when we can get together again in person. Being in her presence brings me peace and joy. She is a fantastic woman, and I am so blessed she is a part of my life,” said Kay.

Marcy Brickner was another client of Sr. Marie’s from 1992 until late 2019. Marcy had been visiting Sr. Marie every three weeks. “There was such a realm of different ways that she did massage and other healing techniques,” said Marcy. Sr. Marie was also a mentor to Marcy who gave facials at a salon in Fremont. I would sometimes exchange massages for facials with Sr. Marie. “I was honored that she valued my treatments, as well. Every experience was different for me. They were all spiritual, not just physical. Her sessions were more special to me because she was a sister. She was like a palm reader that always knew exactly what I needed.”

Susan Nowak met Sr. Marie in the late 60’s when she was visiting St. Francis campus with a high school friend and was introduced to Sr. Marie as one of her favorite teachers. “Sr. Marie’s simplicity, joy and caring ways were so striking,” explained Susan. “Little did I know that 20 years later, I would become a Tiffin Franciscan Associate and enter into a different relationship with Sr. Marie or that she would be the one to help alleviate my arthritis and joint pain. Sr. Marie had a way of knowing where my pain was before I even told her. My sessions with her over these years have reduced my pain and allowed me to keep moving and walking. She followed her passion and I admire her tremendously for that. Even after many years of formal study and certifications, she spent hours of reading, studying and researching. Her knowledge of the human body, its structure, different techniques and forms of massage helped treat myself and others. Sr. Marie was a lifesaver for me.”

“I will miss Sr. Marie’s humility in serving others, her dedication to God and her serving others through massage. She is so self-giving. I am forever grateful and will always value the relationship that has grown over the years. I will also miss our life sharing conversations during our sessions. Sr. Marie is truly one of God’s gems,” added Susan.

Sr. Marie’s services will be missed by those whom she healed over the years including several clients battling cancer and other medical conditions. “One of my favorite memories was when a woman with cancer came to me. I became part of her posse and the medical team at the James Cancer Center. Acupressure seemed to help her and eventually her cancer went into remission,” said Sr. Marie.
All Good Things Come to an End

The St. Francis School of Music began in 1939. In June of 2020, the school closed. The physical school went through many homes on St. Francis Campus, the final years in the north wing of St. Francis Spirituality Center.

So many have been touched by the many teachers who passed through this school. Some years there were as many as 104 students. One of the outstanding and long-standing teachers is Sr. Marietta Kill who has continued this ministry since 1969 and has taught generations of families. She has given countless lessons to students of piano, organ and violin.

Several former students chose a Musical career path. Others have continued to play whether as a hobby or volunteering in hospitals, nursing homes, or special community events. Excerpts of their reflections are shared below, read the entire story at https://www.tiffinfranciscans.org/all-good-things-come-to-an-end/.

Amy Fretz began lessons at St. Francis at the age of six and continued until she graduated from Calvert High School. She was a student of Srs. Veronica and Marietta. Amy majored in piano and received her Bachelors of Music degree from Heidelberg College in Tiffin. She has been teaching for over 20 years and still plays for special events. Amy taught at St. Francis from 1997 until March of 2020 and now has a private studio in Tiffin.

Music has always been a big part of Amy’s life: “My strongest memories as a student were of playing duets, especially for the All Ohio Piano. I even continued to send students to the All Ohio Piano Ensemble until the year the event was discontinued.”

Tom Fretz took lessons in 1978 as a second grader and continued until his senior year recital in 1988. He began on the piano, and at age 15, he began to study organ. “There was a need locally for organists in local churches, so I took up organ in order to get a job playing the organ in a church,” Tom explained. “My first church job was at Liberty St. Andrew and Bascom St. Patrick. I still play the organ and piano in church, and I also play many brass instruments including the trumpet and trombone.

“Music had a major impact on my life as it has been my career choice. It is very fulfilling, and I would never change that. I will miss the School of Music. It was a big part of my life growing up.”

From 1976-1993, Sr. Ritamarie Miller taught piano using the Suzuki method at the School of Music. As a child she learned to play the piano and violin. Sr. Ritamarie shared memories: “When teaching music, I was a full time classroom teacher at Willard and Carey, plus a few years when I was Director of Music and Liturgy at St. Mary’s Tiffin. After work I drove to Tiffin weekly to teach music lessons.

“One thing that I learned as a student and then passed on to my students is that the key to making beautiful music is practice, practice, practice. And, just to have fun… if you really like a particular song, play it when you begin your practice time, again in the middle of your practice time and then end your practice time with it.”

When Sr. Marie Reinhardt arrived at St. Francis as a freshman, she took lessons from Srs. Roberta, Damien, and Cecilia. In later years when she became a piano teacher, she challenged students to excel, to practice and love the music they could produce and, through their music, make others happy.

“Music is a gift of life and healing to my soul. It has been a gift for me in helping many other people in times of need, sadness, joy and grief; plus a means of supporting others’ gift of music.”

Around age 10, Sr. Veronica Nowakowski became interested in music. She began taking lessons from a neighbor while living in Willard and later played drums and bassoon. In 1945, she arrived at St. Francis and began trombone lessons with Sr. Cecilia, later becoming a student of Srs. Thomas and Marietta. She served as a part-time music teacher at St. Francis from 1980-1984, teaching piano and voice. At age 90, Sr. Veronica still enjoys various forms of music: playing the washboard on occasion during local parades, singing in choruses, and cantoring at Mass.

Sr. Judy Leibengood taught piano at St. Francis and served as convent organist. She herself began piano lessons at age eight. “When I came to high school at St. Francis, I took piano lessons with Sr. Damien. In my senior year, I took organ lessons to play organ when sent out to teach. “Music impacted my life greatly as I ministered as organist and taught piano/organ. My favorite memory was teaching a student piano for a couple years who later became an accomplished band director.”

Deceased Sisters Who Taught Music Lessons

Sr. Thomas Kill + Sr. Roberta McKinnon + Sr. Damien Morman + Sr. Cecelia Buchman + Sr. Imelda Dolweck +
Sr. Beatrice Linder + Sr. Jovita Morman + Sr. Eileen Callahan + Sr. Stephen Cerney + Sr. Pat Neckel +
Imagine the number of people who have been touched by the many teachers, sisters and lay, who selected the scores of music flowing through St. Francis School of Music. Some years there were as many as 104 students. As the School of Music closes, we remember the gifts of one of our outstanding and long-standing teachers -- Sr. Marietta Kill. Sr. Marietta has continued this ministry since 1969 and has taught generations of families. She has given countless music lessons to students of piano, organ and violin. She especially loved teaching small children, using the Suzuki method. She was a gifted member of the Ohio Music Teachers Auditions Festival, which she chaired. She also coordinated several recitals annually at St. Francis to enable each student to perform.

Sr. Marietta gave many years of dedicated service to her myriad number of students and never faltered in her intense desire to pass on the gift of music to others. All have been enriched by her love of music and the many ways she spread joy through concerts of her students and the liturgical music at the convent. St. Francis School of Music closed in June 2020, but Sr. Marietta’s music lives on in the hearts of all she touched, indicated by excerpts from student testimonials. Read the full story at https://www.tiffinfranciscans.org/the-music-lives-on/.

“I will never forget my last performance. It was at the Winter Recital in December of 2019 where I played a Mozart piece. By far, it allowed an escape from things happening in the world which relaxed and inspired me to compose music. Currently, I have not been playing the piano, but I have still been composing.”

- Raphael Confesor, age 18

“No words could ever describe how thankful I am to Sr. Marietta. My career, my music, my habits – she’s had such an important role in helping me be me. The recitals taught me confidence. Playing at nursing homes/assisted living made me thankful; it would later play a large influence in me becoming a family doctor that plays in nursing homes on my down time”

- Anson Tran, age 24

“For the Lortz children, the technique that they will always remember most that Sr. Marietta taught them is the Suzuki method where one learns by hearing first. Suzuki always taught: “speak before read and hear before you play.”

- Lynelle Lortz, parent

“I was always anxious about playing in front of people, but I always admired the process and practice working with Sr. Marietta. It was also great to finish the piece and stand in front of the crowd looking at your teacher and family once all is finished. Playing music At a young age developed certain traits into my life. In regards to music, I have a fond appreciation for the artists, their sound, and the feeling it gives me when listening to something I enjoy. Sr. Marietta was a teacher and friend that taught me many things, not just for piano class, but for life. She was a great person to be around; remembering that feeling still leaves me with joy.”

- Phillip Tran, age 29

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- Ryan Alvarado, age 20

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Thinking Outside of the Box in 2020

According to Samantha Busack, Environmental Educator at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC), the “Camp in a Box” program was a very successful alternative to regular summer camps, due to the pandemic. Last Spring, Samantha created 6 themed boxes, Dig In and Plant, Kitchen Chemistry, Amazing Animals, Mad Scientist, Nature Chef and I Will Survive. “Boxes were themed after the summer camps that would have otherwise been offered and have served as a way for FELC to continue to provide fun and educational programs to families in the area,” explained Samantha.

The most popular themed box was Kitchen Chemistry. A total of 80 themed boxes were sold. The box offered lots of slimy things to explore. Children were able to make glitter slime, moon dough and Oobleck! They reacted volcanoes and made their own pop rocks to eat. They even turned the actual box into a mini solar oven to cook up some tasty treats for themselves. “FELC is proud to have been a source of fun, active, STEM-based learning with the “Camp in a Box” program.

Garden Attracts Many

The new Sensory Garden at FELC is almost finished! Filled with beautiful live plants and other features, this unique, inviting space encourages visitors of all ages to explore the garden using every sense–touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing, with colorful signs to educate and guide the way. Children will especially enjoy interacting with multiple fairy gardens and visiting with the rabbits, chickens, a duck and even a small fish pond. The area also includes a new picnic area complete with new plastic lumber picnic tables, benches and sun sails. The Sensory Garden is made possible through generous grant funding by the Meshech Frost Foundation and the Foundation for Sustainability and Innovation.
This past summer the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center’s community garden plots more than doubled. Area gardeners rented 17 plots, including 10 plots maintained by children and adults from the local SMYL (Seneca Mentoring Youth Links) program in Tiffin. Additionally, the Seeds of Hope Farm employees gardened 8 plots in addition to the hoop house, raised beds and cold frames where chemical-free veggies were grown and sold throughout the week at FELC’s farm market stand.

“FELC has worked with SMYL for several years,” said Sr. Shirley Shafranek. “This is the first summer they raised veggies, and it was wonderful to see the families taking care of their food plots. There were more people out here during the day and evening hours, which probably helped keep some of the deer away. The kids worked well as scarecrows! I hope we can develop more ways to work together in the future.”

“The partnership between SMYL and the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center has been ongoing, enabling us to mentor training and other recreational activities over the years,” explained Matt Coleman, SMYL Mentor Coordinator. “This year we were able to be creative and advance the program with the help of the FELC staff, keeping many of our SMYL participants busy during the pandemic.”

Nearly 50 people from the SMYL family participated in FELC’s community gardens program this year. “We would love to expand that next year, hoping to be free of COVID-19 restraints,” said Matt. “In addition, FELC Director Mimi Johnston obtained a grant from the Sisters of St. Francis for 40 camp-in-a-box scholarships as respite kits for some of the younger mentees.”

“Both the FELC gardens and the camp boxes provided learning activities during an extremely difficult time. The gardens were a special aid in educating and empowering families to work together, actually putting food on their tables. For many of our families, it was their first attempt at gardening, and it was a learning experience to plant, weed, water and harvest. This was extremely rewarding for the youngsters, taught them patience and kept them busy and outside in nature.”

In addition to gardening, families commented on how peaceful it was just to take a walk on the beautiful St. Francis campus, check out the animals and relax on some of FELC’s new patio furniture. And the kids loved the new figure of the cardinal carved in the tree stump! They did have a few challenges with particular plants, along with deer and other animals helping themselves for lunch, but it was really just an overall learning experience.

“Growing Partnerships and Veggies, Too”

Matt extended gratitude to all: “FELC and Molyet’s Farm Market were very helpful. We also thank the Mental Health & Recovery Services Board of Seneca, Sandusky and Wyandot Counties - Levy Funds. These funds served as SMYL matching funds for the St. Francis’ grant, providing this opportunity for mental health and respite time for our families. We are extremely thankful to both organizations.”

“This was our first gardening experience,” said Reannon Hayes, “and it provided quality time with family. We grew banana peppers, tomatoes, kale, cucumber, squash and zucchini. The boys were excited to watch the process from seed to harvest. It was a great way to experience gardening without being 100 percent responsible. I would advise to start small since there’s a lot of work to keep up with watering and weeding.”

Until this summer, Lucy Baines and her three children had only talked about having a garden. Thanks to the partnership between FELC and the SMYL program, it became a reality. According to Lucy, the family thought it was funny and exciting to watch the plants grow. “It also got us outside instead of playing on our phones and watching TV,” said Lucy. Her son Aden added, “I think it brought us closer together.”

Michael Baines was employed by the Seeds of Hope Farm this summer. “Raising a garden was a great experience for the entire family. I enjoyed nurturing the plants,” said Michael. “We harvested pumpkins, green peppers, beans, corn, watermelon, cabbage and tomatoes.”— “And learned to use the tools to weed!” added his sister, Emily.

“I took pictures of our patch throughout the entire process,” said Lucy. “My advice for any family considering a garden would be to just give it a try. It’s hard work at first, but it pays off.”

Community Garden plots are available in various sizes and can be rented from May – October, weather permitting.
Support St. Francis Spirituality Center by purchasing a ticket for the 2021 **Christmas 365 Raffle**! Raffle drawings for cash prizes on the **25th day** of every month in 2021 giving away **$4,500** in cash prizes with up to 13 chances to win, including an extra **$500** drawing on Christmas Day 2021. Each winning ticket goes back into the drum for a chance to win on the next drawings. **Tickets are $10 each or 6 for $50.** As an added pandemic incentive, purchase 6 tickets online and receive 3 FREE entries, 12 tickets and receive 6 FREE entries, or 18 tickets and receive 9 FREE entries. **Tickets can be purchased online by visiting [https://franciscanretreats.org/christmas-365-2021-raffle/](https://franciscanretreats.org/christmas-365-2021-raffle/).**

**Tickets on sale through September 30, 2021.** Winners will be notified by phone, and names will be posted on St. Francis Spirituality Center’s Facebook page and website: www.franciscanretreat.org.

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**Stocks and Mutual Funds**

Did you know appreciated stocks, mutual funds, and bonds in a taxable investment portfolio can be transferred as gifts to support St. Francis Community’s work? Giving stocks (that you have held for more than one year) directly to a ministry provides a significant opportunity to avoid capital gains tax, receive a deduction at the full-market value of the securities, and simplify your giving. In fact, giving appreciated stock can be more beneficial than giving cash! Contact us to make this simple but tax-wise gift.

If you have questions about giving stocks or mutual funds, or would prefer to arrange your gift over the phone, please contact our legacy planning team at mission@tiffinfranciscans.org or 419.447.0435.

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Despite all of the pandemic challenges, one thing has remained the same, St. Francis Spirituality Center’s outreach is going strong, offering programs virtually via Zoom. Conversations about Faith, Conversations about Coping through COVID-19, Vatican II and the Church of the Third Millennium, Beloved Disciples – A Virtual Retreat with John’s Gospel and the recent Oasis Day Mini Retreat on grief which included participants from Washington, North Carolina and California, which, without virtual attendance, would not have been possible. Sr. Edna Michel, Director is also offering Spiritual Direction appointments via Zoom and in person. Contact Sr. Edna at emichel@tiffinfranciscans.org for topics of interest.

Follow St. Francis Spirituality Center on Facebook or contact Jenifer at 419.443.1485 to receive e-newsletter updates on future programs.

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St. Francis Spirituality Center welcomes Jenny Theis, of Heaven’s Hands, LLC, who offers therapeutic/relaxation massages and/or craniosacral therapy treatment. Cash or check only. For an appointment, call 419.618.9411.

~*All services are provided in the context of prayer, peacefulness, and serenity*~

“Then He embraced them and blessed them, placing His Hands on them.” - Mark 10:16