Dear Friends,

Spring’s colors popping out have surely offered signs of hope these past months. Multicolored buds and blooms have also ushered in many other signs of hope as COVID restrictions have relaxed and people are gradually returning to some normalcy. That’s surely the case for St. Francis Community’s ministries as you read the following pages about in-person and hybrid retreats and renewal opportunities at St. Francis Spirituality Center, summer camps and science classes – plus the Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center, and personal touches bringing healing to those in need where our Sisters serve.

Thank you for keeping hope alive by continuing your generous support of all who are in need and come to our ministries to grow, to heal, and in turn, to pay it forward.

Blessings on you and yours for a happy, healthy and safe summer with family and friends,

Sister Sara Aldridge
Community Minister

We strive for accuracy

We have tried to include an accurate listing of contributors in each Annual Report magazine; however, some of our donors were omitted in our 2020 Annual Report. Please accept our deepest apologies if we omitted your name, and be sure to inform us of any errors at mission@tiffinfranciscans.org or by calling 419-447-0435, Ext 131.

We sincerely apologize to the following donors who were omitted from the 2020 Annual Report.

Garry and Kathleen Peiffer
The Betty Jane Memorial Fund of the Tiffin Community Foundation
The White Family Fund of the Tiffin Community Foundation
Youth Advisory Council of the Tiffin Community Foundation

On the Cover: Sister Shirley Shafranek takes homeschoolers exploring in the woods. Students found some important players in nutrient cycling and discussed how to keep our soils and woods healthy.
A Novel Approach to a Non-traditional Retreat

After a very demanding and draining year of separation, anxiety and uncertainty due to COVID, this non-traditional retreat has been designed to offer respite. Participants are invited to absorb nature’s beauty and be the recipients of her healing properties. *Nature’s Way: Healing and Revealing* is the theme of a week-long insertion into the restorative and revelatory power of nature so needed in these difficult times. Despite the many disruptions and disappointments of this past year, the seasons, with all their serene loveliness, have greatly helped to maintain or regain balance and perspective.

This non-traditional retreat includes a morning prayer followed by a documentary video which introduces participants to some spectacularly beautiful places on earth. Each day has a theme, varying from mountains to canyons, rivers to oceans, forests to deserts, and holy places where people have encountered God for centuries. Retreatants are given a reflection guide based on the day’s theme which includes questions for pondering and personal application, related Scripture references, quotes by scientists, poets, philosophers, naturalists, and a recommended list of places (see the examples provided) to visit in the afternoon, all within a 2-hour radius of Tiffin, Ohio where retreatants can soak in some local beauty, healing and revelation. An optional guided imagery meditation concludes the day.

The retreat was offered for the first time in late June, when week-long guests were welcomed back to St. Francis Spirituality Center after a hiatus of 15 pandemic months during which the Center was closed to the public. Meals and lodging were provided, along with supplies including bag chairs, beach towels, sun screen and insect repellent. A main meal was offered at noon, after which all retreatants were provided a picnic lunch for their evening meal, leaving them free to explore and absorb nature without needing to meet an evening scheduled mealtime.

The novel part of this retreat is that it is also available in a “take-home” format that can be used by anyone at any time. Upon registration and payment, all the needed materials (i.e., folder of handouts, flash drive with videos and songs) are mailed. Participants can make a retreat in the privacy of their homes or in a favorite get-away place. Internet access is not required, but participants need to download the free VLC media player app on their device. Special arrangements can be made for participants who only have an iPad but do have Internet access which will allow them to access the videos and music.

This retreat was created and facilitated by Sister Edna Michel, OSF, Director of St. Francis Spirituality Center. For more information, contact her at 419-443-1485 or peace@franciscanretreats.org. Other retreats are also being offered, either in person or via Zoom throughout the summer months. For that listing, please visit the website: www.franciscanretreats.org

Marblehead Lighthouse on Lake Erie, photo courtesy of Paul Carpenter.

All locations are within 2 hours or less of Tiffin

Places in Ohio are recommended based on the nature theme of the day.

**Tiffin Area**
- Pioneer Mill Restaurant – island – rapids on Sandusky River
- Schekelhoff Park
- Howard Collier Park
- Steyer Nature Preserve
- Clinton Nature Preserve
- Hedges Boyer Community Park
- Garlo Heritage Park (Bloomville)
- Forrest Nature Preserve
- St Mary, St. Joseph, St. Francis, or Greenlawn Cemetery – or a cemetery where your loved ones are buried
- Bowen Nature Preserve
- Mercy Community Nature Preserve
- Zimmerman Nature Preserve

**Other Places**
- Findlay Riverside Park
- Cascade Park, Elyria (waterfalls)
- River Walk, Grand Rapids
- Mull Covered Bridge, Fremont
- Indian Mill, Upper Sandusky
- Marblehead Lighthouse – on Lake Erie
- East Harbor State Park – on Lake Erie
- Toledo Botanical Gardens
- Mohican State Park & Clearfork Gorge, Loudonville
- Oak Openings Metropark, Swanton
- Lake Front Park, Huron – on Lake Erie
- Sherod Park Beach, Vermilion
- Pearson Metropark, Oregon
- Schedel Gardens, Elmore
- Kingwood Center Gardens, Mansfield
- Wildwood Preserve Metropark
- Side Cut Metropark, Maumee
- Our Lady of Consolation Basilica and Shrine, Carey
- St. John Neumann Shrine, Peru
- Sorrowful Mother Shrine, Bellevue
- Islamic Center of Greater Toledo

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Providing Spiritual Care and Compassion

A warm air of compassion surrounded us as we walked into the doors of Mercy Health-Willard Hospital in April 2021. Behind the masks doing COVID screening were welcoming, helpful smiles, with a vase of fresh brilliant lilies lighting up the counter behind. Tiffin Franciscan Sister Diane Hay, Chaplain for the past 15 years soon greeted and ushered us into the chapel, the sacred refuge for staff and visitors.

The chapel, as well as many hospital locations, is adorned with beautiful ‘living’ flowers, a monthly gift from Susan Taylor, a friend and benefactor in partnership with Sister Diane and with Carriage House Florist. Sister Diane tearfully related the pandemic crises experienced by hospital personnel who snatch some reflective moments in chapel for grace and strength to go on.

Hospital chaplaincy was not the first stop for Sister Diane. Born in Bismark, Ohio, she had the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin as teachers. “I fell in love with Sister Jovita in first grade, went home and told my parents, ‘When I grow up, I want to be just like Sister Jovita.’” In 1966, Diane was received as a Sister of St. Francis; this August 2021 she will celebrate 55 years in Religious Life.

In her ‘past life’ of ministry, Sister Diane served as elementary school teacher at St. Joseph School in Blakeslee, teacher and principal of St. Louis School in Custar, and principal at St. Charles School in Toledo and St. Jerome School in Walbridge.

Sister Diane shared her discernment which led to the current chapter of her life: “Getting into hospital chaplaincy was truly a Godwink for me. After being in education for 35 years, I knew it was time for something else, but what? I asked my Community for a three-month sabbatical at Mercy by the Sea in Madison, Connecticut to discern where God wanted me to be next. Meanwhile a former classmate, Paula Karr who was Mission Director at Willard Mercy Hospital got my phone number from my sister, Clarice and invited me to think about chaplaincy. Here it is, 15 years later and I KNOW this is what I am meant to do.

Being a chaplain is very fulfilling for me. To be able to see Christ in all the people who come into my life every day not only humbles me, but calls me to a deeper relationship with God. I cannot do what I do in ministry without the companionship of Jesus. I KNOW God uses me and works through me. I have had so many times when someone has come up to me and said, ‘I remember when you prayed with me before my surgery,’ or ‘When you prayed for me, I felt peaceful and calm.’ These are the things that transform me because I know it is not me. It’s God using me as an instrument for others.”

Shelly Loy, Retired Pharmacist – “Sister Diane embodies St. Theresa of Avila’s prayer, ‘Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion into this world.’ That’s what Sister Diane does in our most vulnerable times.”

Julie Landoll, Mission Integration & Spiritual Care Director, responded reflectively to What is Sister Diane’s gift? – “The healing presence of God, a calming…Presence. Sister says, ‘It’s God.’ You never feel Sister doesn’t have time. Sister is the constant, the feet on the ground for the employees.”
Your Life Makes a Difference After You’re Gone

When we reflect on what we leave behind when we are gone, we want to believe we can and have made a difference, and that the world is a better place because we were in it. Support healing ministries into the future with the Sisters of St. Francis. To learn more, see https://www.tiffinfranciscans.org/plan-a-gift-2/, email mission@tiffinfranciscans.org or call Sister Joanne at 419-447-0435.

“Sr. Diane is always there to comfort me when I need her. When she speaks to patients she has a calming hand; she sits with them and gives them a hand to hold.”

“I had my baby early and Sr. Diane drove all of the way to Toledo to visit me. We like to laugh and share stories and I show her pictures of my baby that is 20 months old now.”

“St. Diane is a team leader. She keeps me updated. She has an important role in this facility with her feet on the ground. She is the constant person that people see in every department.”

“She is living her authentic life and that is rooted in her faith and that is not going to change.”

“I think to be a messenger for Christ, she meets people where they are and that’s what she does.”

“She is the glue that holds this hospital together.”

“Her presence has made such a difference in our community. She has a great connection between the assisted living facility near the hospital. Sr. Diane leads the rosary and helps bring people to Mass.”

“When I was really sick she was right there with me, was not sure if I was going to make it.”

“She prays with staff daily at 11 am, which started during COVID and I hope it continues.” Sr. Diane would say, “Take a moment and go to your peaceful place,” and immediately eyes were closed and heads down followed by a prayer.

Hospital Patient – “Sister Diane brings me Communion every day. I can talk with her about anything. You could not have someone better on your side.”

Katie Fries, Emergency Room Nurse – “The hospital wouldn’t be the same without Sister Diane, both personally and for the patients. I called her down to E.R. for a woman who was contemplating abortion. Sister listened, helped her come to peace within, and prayed with her. Later the woman called and said she decided to keep the baby and that Sr. Diane had taken her to Abigail Pregnancy Center where she got the emotional, physical and spiritual help she needed. The mother recently called and said she and the baby are fine.”

Jackie Vanderpool, Environmental Services – “I had my baby early and Sr. Diane drove all of the way to Toledo to visit me. We like to laugh and share stories and I show her pictures of my baby that is 20 months old now.”

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Community Support Reaches Many

The Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC) would like to recognize with heartfelt appreciation the long-time support of grant funding organizations, particularly those under the umbrella of the Tiffin Community Foundation. “Because of the generosity of these organizations, FELC has sustained and expanded education programs through the pandemic, re-imagined an agricultural education program for a new group of students and adults, provided financial assistance for summer camps, and much more,” said FELC Director Mimi Johnston.

The Tiffin Community Foundation, along with other local philanthropic organizations such as the National Machinery Foundation, the B.A. Seitz Fund of the Columbus Foundation, the Tiffin Rotary Foundation, the People Fund of the North Central Electric Cooperative, and the Sisters of St. Francis, has helped to provide life-changing resources to FELC and other non-profit organizations across the community. FELC is grateful for how Tiffin Community Foundation grants have made a difference to FELC over the past few years:

The Betty Jane Memorial Fund has long provided grant funding for scholarships so local families, regardless of ability to pay, can send their children to nature and STEM-centered camps and Science Day programs at FELC. More recently, it has partnered with FELC Seeds of Hope Agricultural Educator and Program Coordinator, Sister Shirley Shafranek, to bring new opportunities to high school students and adults with developmental disabilities by funding transportation, classroom, greenhouse, and gardening supplies, and other necessities.

In 2020, a generous grant from the Betty Jane Memorial Fund made it possible for Seeds of Hope to launch an ambitious new summer work/study program for individuals with developmental disabilities, providing funding for supplies, curriculum development, and stipends for program participants. Over the course of five months, these individuals not only learned how to plant, tend, and harvest produce in chemical-free gardens, but also how to interview for a job, be part of a team, and communicate in a professional work environment. “It’s all a testament to what can happen when partners come together with intention and a dedication to excellence,” said Mimi.

For 2021, in addition to providing more work/study stipends, the Betty Jane Memorial Fund made it possible to add a chicken coop and pen, specially-designed to accommodate individuals with physical and developmental disabilities. Forty baby chicks arrived at FELC in April; by fall they will be ready to start laying eggs.

Seeds of Hope Program Coordinator Sister Shirley is excited and grateful for this grant, saying, “It’s another part of the dream of a complete farm out here. With program participants taking care of the chickens, we will have eggs to sell, which will help us take another important step towards making Seeds of Hope a self-sustaining program. I cannot thank the Betty Jane Memorial Fund for all the support they have given us over the years.”

The White Family Charitable Fund, through the Tiffin Community Foundation has also contributed greatly to the success of FELC over the past several years. In 2020, it funded technology which made it possible for FELC to provide virtual education programming during the pandemic, with a Go Pro camera system, computer, and classroom supplies that allowed students to follow FELC Educator and Camp Coordinator Samantha Busack, who taught students remotely from the FELC classroom. It also provided scholarship funds for Camp in a Box, Samantha’s innovative alternative to in-person summer camp, which was a big hit with families all across the country and even into Canada.

In 2021, the White Family Charitable Fund is helping welcome back visitors, campers, and students to campus with an exciting new Butterfly Garden and Monarch Way Station. Construction began in May and will be completed by late Fall 2021, featuring a pathway...
14th Annual Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala

Participate and support the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC) on two days in two different ways!

FELC will be holding their Day of Giving on Thursday, August 12th. In addition, FELC is excited to offer a Hybrid Gala experience with a gourmet meal pick-up on Friday, August 13th that also includes an opportunity to drive through St. Francis’ campus and experience some popular activities and special raffles, including the Spin to Win Wheel and Wine Cork Pull.

All of the proceeds benefit children who attend FELC classes and camps virtually or in person. Carolyn’s Personalized Catering, LLC of Millbury is preparing a gourmet dinner, or choose a gift card for an equivalent meal at Ironwood Steakhouse in Tiffin, redeemable until December 31, 2021. The pick-up dinner is available by appointment on the St. Francis Campus every 15 minutes, from 4:30-6:30 pm. The online auction runs from August 1 (8pm) – August 12 (8pm) at https://sistersstfrancis.betterworld.org/. Ticket price includes a special raffle drawing for $500, a $315 gift card tree raffle and music by a live jazz music trio. Honorary Co-Chairs are Paul and Jane Dell Burtis.

Online auction items will be available for pickup on August 13th from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the Gala Drive-Thru event. Winners of all raffle drawings will be announced on Facebook Live at 8:00 p.m. on August 13th. Winners will be contacted and also posted on FELC’s Facebook page and website.

Early bird tickets cost $65 before July 1st or $75 on or after July 1st. For more information or for tickets, call the Mission Advancement Office at 419-447-0435 or visit www.felctiffin.org to purchase tickets online.

To view auction items and set up an account to bid, visit: https://sistersstfrancis.betterworld.org/. Follow on Facebook at FRANCISCAN EARTH LITERACY CENTER for daily auction features starting August 1st. Winners of auction items will be notified at noon on August 13th and may pick up items during the Gala Drive-Thru event on Friday, August 13th between 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. in the front parking lot of St. Francis Campus.

with multiple stations along the way, interpretive signage, sculptures, plants, a fountain, and special places for butterflies to bask in the sun and drink water. For summer campers eager to get outside to learn, play, and explore, there will be portable restrooms and hand washing stations to help keep everyone safe and healthy, all thanks to the generosity of the White Family Charitable Fund.

The Youth Advisory Council of the Tiffin Community Foundation has also become a strong supporter. Over the past few years, it has funded a cozy classroom reading corner, portable voice amplification systems for outdoor education programs and, most recently, a beautiful chicken coop and rabbit hutch to house animals in the Peaceable Kinkom, FELC’s outdoor animal education area adjacent to the Sensory Garden, which was completed in 2020.

Samantha added, “None of these things would have been possible without the continuing support of local philanthropic organizations including the Tiffin Community Foundation and its grant-funding partners who believe in the mission of FELC. As we continue to expand the Seeds of Hope program and position ourselves to offer more ground-breaking nature and STEM-based educational programming to area students, families, and adults, we want to express our gratitude for all they have done and continue to do!”
Online Audience Continues to Grow

A Lenten Zoom discussion group on Pope Francis’ recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship)*, drew an average of 27 participants for the 8 week series. Pope Francis teaches that care for each other, particularly the poorest and most marginalized in society, cannot be divided from care for creation which he focused on in an earlier encyclical, *Laudato Si*. In this, his second social encyclical, Pope Francis sets out his vision for a post-COVID world. The pandemic has reminded us how interdependent we are and how vital it is to truly live as brothers and sisters, not only with people of every continent, but with our vulnerable planet earth as well.

Participants in this discussion series hailed from Tiffin, Carey, Toledo, Ada, Huron, Cincinnati, along with cities and villages in Kentucky, West Virginia, Washington, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, D.C. and Mexico. The 1 ¼ hour sessions began with a prayer by Pope Francis, then moved into Zoom breakout rooms for discussion of each chapter of the encyclical, which focused on the social, political and economic aspects of life on this one shared planet and our own call to expand our horizons. Sessions concluded with some time for large group sharing of pertinent stories and learnings. Because participants came from various backgrounds and experiences, conversation was rich with diversity and wisdom. Friendships formed among those gathered on the Zoom screen; Pope Francis would be pleased. How strengthening it is to know that people, having bought into the pope’s vision, regardless of their religious denomination, are working to extend that vision wherever they live!

Sister Edna Michel expressed gratitude to all the participants for their contributions. Future Zoom study groups will surely be planned.

Tiffin Franciscans Help Those in Need

Sisters Stella Magers and Veronica Nowakowski volunteered to organize a project, gathering items to share with migrants. Alicia Hernandez, Defiance, Ohio and her friend Elizabeth Brown minister with migrants and also with women who have been released from prison. They filled two vans with usable items shared by the Sisters, including sheets, blankets, pillows, clothing, toys and games for kids and personal items. Money collected provided beans, rice, and other needs. “When you have nothing, anything is everything,” said Alicia. Alicia thanked the Sisters for being “angels of kindness.”