Dear Friends,

An old friend used to say, “Let’s have an ice cream cone. It improves the attitude.” It reminds me of that song, Little Things Mean a Lot.

In this magazine, we share joys of little things – like the sisters on the front cover tending and enjoying their flowers; like the butterfly garden in the making at FELC; like the happenstance of Rita discovering her roots while making retreat at St. Francis Spirituality Center; like our Franciscan Associates making a difference in both big and small ways as they reach out to others.

On October 4, 2021, the feast of St Francis of Assisi, there was a ‘formal launch’ of Pope Francis’ LAUDATO SI’ Action Plan. Over the next 7 Years, 7 Goals will provide focus for key groups across the world-wide community:

- a response to the cry of the earth
- a response to the cry of the poor
- address ecological economics
- adopt simple lifestyles
- engage in ecological education
- develop an ecological spirituality
- and community engagement and participatory action.

We know that our current times present huge challenges. In the midst of wars, wild fires, floods, hurricanes, pandemics, political strife, one can feel so helpless. Yet by our baptism, we are all called to rise up and respond in the way we can. As Associate Patti Condello shares in her article, “God doesn’t call the qualified; God qualifies the call.”

May we all be graced to do what is ours to do.

Peace to you,

Sister Sara Aldridge
Community Minister

St. Francis Community Ministries
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On the Cover: Sisters nurturing various gardens on the St. Francis Campus. Includes: Sr. Barbara Jean Miller, Sister Carolette Grote, Sister Shirley Shafranek, Sister Christine Belinda, Sister Marie Reinhart and Sister Rosann Morman.

Left: Sister Jane Frances Omlor and Dave the dog at the St. Francis Fish Pond.
Franciscan Associates on the Move

The Tiffin Franciscan Associate Movement began in 1973 when five people asked to be affiliated with the Sisters of St. Francis through prayer and ministry. As time moved on, more women and men felt called to share the Franciscan charm and spirituality of the Tiffin Sisters, and the Movement grew. Today there are 56 Associates in the United States and 12 Associates in Cuernavaca, Mexico.

The Associate Movement finds its roots in the spirit of Vatican II and the universal call to holiness, though one does not have to be Catholic to become an associate. Associates make an annual voluntary covenant with the Tiffin Franciscan Sisters. Associates live the Franciscan values of care of creation; hospitality and partnership; peacemaking; prayer, discernment and conversion of heart; serving the poor and marginalized; and living simply and joyfully. Associates strive to live these values into the world of their families, parishes and workplaces.

Associates also share life and ministry with the sisters in Franciscan Circles which meet regularly to pray, share faith, and study. They are welcome to join the sisters for prayer and other gatherings. The associates have their own Leadership Resource Team which works closely with the Sisters' Leadership Team.

The Mexican associates in Cuernavaca staff the Cuernavaca Children's Mission. Their ministry is to the poor children of Cuernavaca, providing education and tutoring so children can attend and be successful in school. Many U.S. associates sponsor children. The U.S. associates have many and varied ministries, some of which are highlighted in this edition of the magazine. Anyone interested in learning more about Tiffin Franciscan Associates may contact Linda Haas (Email: lindakhaas@centurylink.net)

FNV GED/Adult Education

Associates Sue Nowak and Kay Shrewsbery coordinate a program that is part of Friendship New Vision Inc., housed at Friendship Baptist Church. Originally initiated as a cooperative venture by the communities of sisters in Northwest Ohio called Women Blessing Women, this program has broadened to become a multi-faith endeavor with both men and women as clients. The instructors are all volunteers who teach classes for adults needing basic educational skills as well as those seeking a GED, certification with Ohio Means Jobs, or a driver’s license or citizenship certification. Among the volunteers are sisters from other religious orders as well as Tiffin Sister Toni Rode.

Students set their own schedules and study at the center or online. The program serves a broad base of students from a variety of racial and economic backgrounds. Among these students are immigrants from several countries and students with special needs. There is no cost for class time or materials and enrollment in the program qualifies participants for assistance from the state of Ohio, greatly reducing the GED test fee.

Planting Seeds of Hope

Judy Hofmann has been an associate for 16 years. In 1987 she moved from Detroit, Michigan where she had resided for 23 years, to Fostoria, Ohio and was introduced to the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin in the late 90’s. That opened the door for renewal and transformation and an opportunity to be part of a community that “walked its talk” and helped to hold one another accountable in their Christian journeys, following the model of St. Francis of Assisi.

During her associate years, Judy has participated in many peace and justice ministries including a ministry to victims of human trafficking, Sisters in Shelter which was originally founded and sponsored by the Tiffin Franciscans. She has served on a number of the community’s committees, is currently on the Associate Leadership Team, and serves as co-coordinator of the Mission Core Team where she has been engaged in “Open Wide our Hearts” – the church’s focus on working for racial justice. Judy’s efforts related to “Open Wide our Hearts” created an awareness that conversations about race in church and family settings were often avoided and sadly created ever-widening gulfs. She has been personally facilitating gentle and non-threatening small group discussions via Zoom and in-person gatherings using books such as Drew Hart’s Trouble I’ve Seen. The free sessions are designed to meet the group’s preferred schedule. The goal is to create a comfortable setting for open and honest sharing, to increase awareness of the realities of racism and how it affects all people regardless of skin color. In Judy’s words, “This has been a most rewarding and exciting ministry – to meet with people who are just beginning this journey and to witness their desire to continue the transforming conversations. It plants seeds and generates hope!” For more information, phone Judy at 419-619-1425 or email hofjnr@bright.net.
 Associates In Action

Associates have sponsored three projects in recent years.

Hug-In-A-Mug

In response to the dedication of nursing home staff during COVID, Associates gathered to fill gift mugs with hot chocolate, tea, candy, and cookies. The mugs also have a bookmark thanking the recipient for the care they give to nursing home residents. To date, 500 mugs have been delivered to healthcare and essential workers in Ohio nursing homes in Tiffin, Fremont, Maumee, and Walbridge and another home in Fort Wayne, IN that serves the handicapped. A partnership with Libby Glass helped to finance this endeavor.

Socks Project

Socks are the most often requested clothing item from homeless people living on the streets. Bombas Socks partnered by donating socks. Associates donated and stuffed each pair with a $5.00 McDonald's gift card the recipient could use for a meal plus some gum and candy. Associates and Sisters keep the stuffed socks in their cars and give them to homeless individuals they meet on their travels. Some children's socks were sent to an orphanage in Ukraine.

Little Dresses

Tiffin Associates have joined with the Toledo Area Associate Networking Group (TAANG) in a project sewing dresses for girls and shorts for boys in third world countries. Associates gather twice a year, donating time and fabric. Some associates sew at home. Associate Pauline Reinhart alone is responsible for providing over 100 new dresses. Items have gone to Ukraine, Vietnam, Africa, El Salvador, the Philippines, and Haiti. Recent partnerships with Hope for the Poor and Cross Catholic have delivered the dresses and shorts across the world.

Lucas County Jail Ministry

Until pandemic precautions altered schedules, Associates Sue Nowak, Kay Shrewsbery, Deb Johnson, and Jack and Ellen McComis, along with Sister Virginia Welsh have been conducting Bible study and Communion services at the Lucas County Jail since the early 1990's. Each week, there is a one-hour session for men and a gathering for women. The session begins with song and prayer. Then after a reading from Scripture for the upcoming Sunday, an open discussion follows with inmates reflecting and sharing how living out the Scriptures influences their lives. The personal sharing creates bonds with the inmates, many of whom become faithful attendees. Discussions are often deeply personal and sometimes quite lively. Once each month, the group is joined by a priest who presides at the celebration of Mass.

Reaching Abroad

SARA, Sharing America's Resources Abroad has been Associate Lana Sakash's mission since February 1999. SARA began as a medical mission to Ukraine, but it has also become a teaching mission and resource sharing. When volunteering, Lana resides at St. Michael's Children's Home in Ra't. Her involvement, at times for a year's stint, includes teaching English at a Catholic and a public school. She also teaches crafts, leads games with the children, and distributes vitamins, over-the-counter medicines and medications.

Over the years Lana has rallied support and donations from many people and organizations for the Ukraine mission. Other U.S. associates have supported Lana's mission. Associate Darlene Crow has accompanied Lana to the mission. Associates have donated vitamins and sewn dresses and shorts for the children. Lana's husband obtained a grant from Rotary to purchase a van for two of the established homes for children, and then they raised enough for a van for a third and fourth home. Donations have purchased house furnishings like refrigerators, stoves, and furniture; shoes, clothing and toys; hearing aids, false teeth and glasses as well as surgeries for children. Hospice and local hospitals have donated medical supplies.

SARA has been blessed with many helpers and volunteers. Everyone who has been a part of this mission, including Lana, feels they have received so much more than they have given. As the founder of SARA, Rev. Stephen Szilagyi always said, “To God be the glory.”
God Doesn’t Call the Qualified, God Qualifies the Call

by Pattie Condello - Parish Leader

In my forties, I found myself with three incredible daughters, a rapidly declining marriage, and myself in need of a job. I took a part time job at my parish as RCIA coordinator where I met Sister Karen Lindenberger. Her selfless work with the Hispanic population and her Franciscan joy pulled me further into God’s plan for my future. I became a Tiffin Franciscan Associate in 2012 and was welcomed into a loving community that feeds my soul. Together with being an RCIA Coordinator, I struggled with the question – Is God pulling me into full time ministry to God’s people? My Pastor and mentor urged me to train as a chaplain, which I did. At the same time, our Diocese of Youngstown was developing a new form of leadership for parishes due to a lack of priests. Nudged by the Holy Spirit, I asked to be considered for the year long training program and after was chosen by the Bishop to be a Parish Leader! Unbelievable! July 2021, marks my fourth year as Parish Leader of Holy Family Parish with churches in Navarre and Brewster, Ohio. I have two Sacramental Ministers who celebrate Masses and the Sacraments, one being the priest and mentor who led me into ministry. My duties include the rest that come with being the pastor of a Church: pastoral care of 325 families, liturgy, RCIA, bereavement, finance and parish councils, overseeing staff, maintaining buildings and cemetery...the list is endless.

“God doesn’t call the qualified, God qualifies the call” defines my life.

Associates in Mexico

In 2007 Sister Maggie Slowick’s dream of a mission in Mexico began when she saw the needs of children who lived in extreme poverty in Cuernavaca. She observed the little ones with their mothers selling handicrafts on the streets. Believing that education was the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, Sister Maggie, along with two Mexican friends, Malena Rubi and Yolanda Rodriguez created a small sponsor-a-child program. Soon Silvia Hernandez and Rutila Bernal joined the effort. United around this ministry, these women became the first Mexican associates of the Tiffin Sisters. Currently there are 12 associates, 6 in process of becoming associates, and numerous other volunteers at Cuernavaca Children's Mission. In the beginning years, the associates were a group of people who became friends. Now they have become a Franciscan family: brothers and sisters helping children towards a brighter future. Those desiring to become associates go through a period of formation as do associates in the United States. The team at the mission is formed according to the aptitudes, gifts, and knowledge of each associate and volunteer.

Sr. Maggie, now residing in Tiffin continues as Executive Director of the mission with daily Zoom meetings and regular on-site visits to plan with staff. Malena is the onsite Director. Some of the children who have been helped over the years are now in college. Grateful for all the support they’ve received over the years, they also have become tutors for the younger children at the mission. Three of the college students are also in the process of becoming associates themselves! Services provided by the associates at the Cuernavaca Children’s Mission include a children’s library, computer lab, tutoring, a meals program, financial assistance, activities for preschoolers, counseling, and emergency outreach. Extra help is offered to help the families during the pandemic. The mission is supported through donations and sponsorships from people in the United States. Anyone interested in donating to the mission or becoming a “godmother” or “godfather” (sponsor) to a child may contact the Sisters’ Mission Advancement Office. (Phone: 419-447-0435 or email mission@tiffinfranciscans.org.)
Serendipity - A happy and unexpected discovery

Rita “Jean” McPolin Rudmann, age 84, had intended to make retreat near her home in Cleveland, Ohio, but nothing caught her interest. So she googled ‘Catholic Retreat Centers’ and discovered St. Francis Spirituality Center. Little did Jean know what she would learn from her visit to Tiffin, Ohio. “It was the most special life experience that I have ever had,” said Jean.

“When Jean first called in June to check on the possibility of coming to St. Francis Spirituality Center for an individually directed retreat, she told me that she was pretty sure her father had been an orphan here. So I asked Sister Judy Leibengood the sisters’ archivist to check, and she found an entire page of information on Jean’s father, an orphan raised by the sisters,” said Sister Edna. “So during her stay, I showed Jean the Holy Family building where the orphans lived.”

“It was so touching to be able to go upstairs in the convent (then called Saint Francis Home for orphans and the elderly) and see where my Dad had lived as an orphan.” Jean shared.

Jean’s father, Benjamin Joseph Lipinarski (adopted name McPolin) arrived at Saint Francis Home in 1918 at the age of six, along with his three siblings. His mother had passed away, and his father was not able to care for four young children. When Benjamin was a teenager, Harry McPolin, a bachelor from Ireland, often visited the orphanage and took some of the boys to baseball games. Benjamin was the only boy who sent a thank you note. Harry was very impressed by this and also thought Benjamin was very bright. He decided to adopt Benjamin and later supported his education at the University of Dayton where Benjamin graduated before moving to Cleveland in 1933. He began his career as an investment banker with McDonald and Company, a prestigious brokerage firm.

Benjamin was the youngest of four children. Benjamin’s brother Joseph was never adopted. He became the maintenance man at Saint Francis and was also an engineer at General Electric. Ted, the eldest brother, was adopted by another family and went on to work for the Ford Motor Company and eventually went into the health food business. Their sister Mary left the orphanage as a teenager, married when young and raised four children who led very happy lives, had good jobs and were productive members of society.

Benjamin and Joe shared the same last name and eventually were able to reconnect when they were older while both residing in Northeast Ohio. Later on, they were also able to locate their siblings Ted and Mary after doing further research. Once the siblings connected they shared many happy memories together.

According to Jean, her father died in 1959 at the age of 47. He was a devout Catholic throughout his life, which she attributes to his years with the Sisters of Saint Francis. Although he did not talk a lot about his early life or his adopted father, he corresponded with Sister Vincent DePaul Kohls who was very special to him.

“My father only had great things to say about Saint Francis Home. Sister Vincent, not yet professed at the time, befriended Benjamin and continued communications with him, sending Christmas cards and enclosing a picture every year until his death.

“I really felt that I was meant to come to Saint Francis,” said Jean. While on retreat, she enjoyed exploring the cemetery, grotto and gardens. And a synchronicity while visiting the grotto, she met up with a little girl named Grace who was walking the grounds with her grandparents. Grace shared that she had a little brother named Benjamin. BENJAMIN was the name of Jean’s father and GRACE was the name that Jean gave to a metal sculpture of a blue heron that she received as a birthday gift. The Great Blue Heron was the favorite aquatic bird of her daughter who passed away in 2019.

“This retreat experience is something that I will always remember. I really enjoyed Sister Edna and the time I spent there. She was so warm and welcoming and just a great person with whom to talk. She gave good advice and gently reminded me that God is always watching out for me. With trust in Him, I will be filled with peace.”

SFSC offers individually directed retreats, usually scheduled according to the retreatants preference. For more information, visit www.franciscanretreats.org or call 419-443-1485.
Garden Attracts Many

The butterfly garden at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center (FELC) is taking flight! Designed two years ago by FELC’s Educator Samantha Busack, the garden’s first plantings took root in 2020 and progress is continually being made. This year, with the help of grant funding from the White Family Fund of the Tiffin Community Foundation and ODNR’s Division of Wildlife, Samantha added additional plants, mulch for the planting beds, a border fence for the walkway, puddling stations, interpretive signage, and solar lighting.

“It’s exciting to see it come to life,” Samantha said. “The plants we put in this year complete our circle path so visitors can walk the entirety of this first phase, enjoying a variety of pollinator species as well as the butterflies and bees.”

FELC used the butterfly garden as an educational tool for summer camps this year, and future educational programs will include counting and tagging monarch butterflies, harvesting eggs and caterpillars to raise indoors, workshops on garden care, and programs on how to design and manage a pollinator or butterfly oriented garden.

In 2022, visitors can look forward to the addition of bench seating, basking stones for the butterflies, and an extension of the trail that includes a flower garden planted by Sister Shirley Shafranek and the Seeds of Hope agricultural work/study program. Franciscan Associate Linda Haas and FELC Board Member Anne Marquis are currently raising funds to add a fountain to the garden which will be the centerpiece of the circular butterfly trail.

“It’s a wonderful community resource that we’re proud of, and we look forward to bringing old and new friends together at FELC through the butterfly project,” said Mimi Johnston, FELC Director.

Phase 1: Monarch Waystation
A monarch waystation that is in process at FELC will help to increase local monarch populations. This area will be certified as a monarch waystation by monarchwatch.org and will be added to their national map.

Phase 2: Butterfly Garden
The in-process Butterfly Garden consists of a variety of host and nectar plants that feed not only monarch butterflies but also other Ohio-native species such as black swallowtail, spicebush swallowtail, cabbage white, orange sulphur, fritillaries, American painted lady, and other butterflies and skippers.

Later stages of the butterfly garden will include a paved walking path leading to and through the garden that will be ADA compliant and accessible to individuals with limited mobility.

Phase 3: Butterfly Conservatory
Phase 3 keeps existing gardens with trail adaptations that lead to a stand-alone conservatory behind the gardens. The temperature controlled conservatory will be operational year round to accommodate butterflies in any stage of life. Having an enclosed butterfly conservatory will allow FELC to host tours, activities, and other educational programs for the public year round, and participants can learn about butterfly lifecycles at all stages. The conservatory will also house a variety of host and nectar plants for Ohio-native butterflies in order to expand the variety of species housed.

All species of butterflies housed in the conservatory will be Ohio-native and once the butterflies are of a mature stage, they can be released. Choosing to house only Ohio-native species will set FELC apart from other butterfly houses in the state as FELC’s conservatory will focus on local flora and fauna.
Support St. Francis Spirituality Center by purchasing a ticket for the **2022 Christmas 365 Raffle**! Raffle drawings for cash prizes on the **25th day of every month in 2022 giving away $4500 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 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-365-2022-raffle/.**

**Tickets on sale through September 1, 2022.** 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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**Monthly Giving**

*A convenient and easy way to make a gift*

A commitment to monthly giving throughout the year is a concrete way to ensure support for those served by St. Francis’ ministries. A monthly partnership through a traditional check, credit card or the electronic transfer of funds also assists us to budget appropriately and responsibly. You can change the amount of your gift or cancel the automatic donation at any time. **For more information, call Sister Joanne Lammers at 419-447-0435 or email: mission@tiffinfranciscans.org.**

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**Save the Date**

**Mardi Gras**

**VIRTUAL EVENT**

Friday, February 25, 2022

**More details coming soon!**

Proceeds benefit the ministries of St. Francis Community

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Honorary Co-Chairs Paul Burtis and Jane Dell Burtis assist Kelli and Bill Jones at the “Spin to Win” wheel during the Felc Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala drive-thru event. Over $29,000 was raised from the event and Day of Giving held on August 12-13th.