



Sisters of
St. Francis
of Assisi



NOJOSHING NOTES

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NOJOSHING is an Indian word. It means "Straight Tongue."

In 1849, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi built their Motherhouse on land that was called Nojoshing by the Indians, because it protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue.

Clare Hall Residence Evolves to Meet the Changing Needs of Aging Sisters

In the Winter 2008 *Nojoshing Notes*, Clare Hall, one of our three major retirement facilities, was featured. The article focused on how Clare Hall offers communities of support and opportunities for 'presence' in the lives of others.



None of us remains static. We are changing each day – sometimes imperceptibly, sometimes more drastically as a result of an accident or illness.

And the buildings we call home are subject to change as well. Our focus in this issue is again Clare Hall, but from a different perspective – namely the change in leadership and the physical changes to the building.

Sister Marlene Stawski (at left), who served as the second administrator of Clare Hall since June of 1995, resigned this year. She succeeded Sister Rita Menke who had been the administrator from the opening of Clare Hall in 1989. From the beginning, the facility was designated for our well elderly.

During her tenure, Sister Rita worked to establish small groups on the six wings of the building. These groups then organized their lives together, scheduling their prayer and social time each week.

The sisters then came together as one large group each day in the Chapel for Liturgy and in the dining room for meals and for special events. That concept of relating to a small group in the context of a larger group is still operative after 20 years, and it is at the core of Clare Hall's philosophy.

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Clare Hall Director's Focus is Sisters' Well-being

Some of the sisters who moved into Clare Hall in 1989 are still residents there. Others moved to the Motherhouse because their health needs required nursing care, and still others God has called home in death.

Over time, accommodations were made to enable those with increased health needs to continue to live at the facility. In 1995, a wellness coordinator was on duty three days a week for preventative treatment. The sisters went out as necessary for any medical attention, and they managed their own transportation needs.

However, "aging in place" responsibly calls for changes on the part of an individual and in the place she calls home. So gradually changes took place and are still taking place for ease of mobility, health care, and quality of life for the sisters.

Some of the physical adaptations include railings in the hallways, increased handicap accessibility in bathrooms, lighting, and push panels to open main doors. Added personal assistance, as needed, includes help with carrying trays in the dining room, cleaning, laundry and shopping. As the number of sisters who drive decreases, trips are scheduled with a driver and, in addition, Transit Plus Bus gives the sisters the opportunity to plan trips at any time.

Recently there has been a significant change in health care delivery and staffing. On weekdays now, for first and second shifts, there is a licensed practical nurse (LPN) and/or certified nursing assistant (CNA) on duty. On Saturdays and Sundays, someone is on duty during the day. Five rooms in the north wing of the first floor were converted into a nursing office, an examination room and three respite care rooms. These respite care rooms can accommodate sisters from Clare Hall or from other locations for post-operative care.

Another critical issue facing the residents at Clare Hall is mobility. Elevators may not

be used in times of emergency, so for evacuation purposes, it is necessary to be able to walk the stairs. This means that some sisters are moving to the first floor.

Perhaps this is one of the more difficult changes they encounter. They have been a part of a small group and now must choose to stay affiliated with that same group or join the new group on the first floor.



Either way, the members of both groups are faced with some adjustments. All of this resurrects the skills of earlier years when sisters moved from mission to mission as assigned by their superiors.

Another facet of change at Clare Hall is the leadership and administrative structure. While Sisters Rita and Marlene functioned as administrators, Sister Mary Louise Schramer (above), who replaces Sister Marlene, is the director of Clare Hall. Mr. John Schmitt, the administrator of St. Francis Convent, now oversees the administrative functions of Clare Hall due to the consolidation of departments under one office. Food service, housekeeping, maintenance and grounds now include both campuses, just two blocks apart, not only for the purposes of economy and efficiency, but also to provide for the sisters as best as possible.

As the director, Sister Mary Lou's focus is the well-being of the sisters. Because she is a registered nurse, she will be able to act as a strong link between the nursing services

and the residents. As the sisters age in place and their health needs change more rapidly, she will be a vital advocate in helping them choose what could give them quality of life in spite of their health condition.

In addition, Sister Mary Lou plans to continue the facilitation of the sisters coming together for long-established traditions, such as the visit of St. Nicholas on his feast in December. The Christmas trees were decorated throughout the house for Christmas. The priests who celebrate Liturgy with the sisters were honored at a dinner last November.

To Sister Mary Lou, the “town hall meetings” attended by all of the sisters and the coordinators’ meeting for the sisters who help to facilitate life in each of the small groups are important for keeping communication open and participative. She says she has no preconceived ideas or plans – only to follow the needs of the sisters.

The outgoing administrator, Sister Marlene, states that some of her greatest joys came from experiencing the sisters’ humor and wisdom, and observing the beautiful way many accept their aging. A lot of the sisters knew her when she was younger, so she appreciated getting to know them better in the time she spent at Clare Hall. She learned a lot about aging, gratitude and hospitality. Her greatest challenges were helping sisters accept their limitations and working to create an environment for aging in place responsibly.

In the midst of all the changes of personnel and to the building, the sisters at Clare Hall continue their outreach in a variety of volunteer services. They extend warm hospitality to all who visit. And they model for all of us what it means to value prayer, work, and fun in community. Thank you Sisters Rita and Marlene for all of your past service. Thank you, Sister Mary Lou, for accepting the invitation to minister to and with the sisters at Clare Hall. You have inherited a great legacy and you bring many gifts to your new position.

Sisters Observed “A Prayerful Season of Quiet Waiting”

Four Sundays before Christmas, the Church calendar begins a new year with the season of Advent, a time of preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. This is a prayerful season of quiet waiting.

The sisters at our Motherhouse once again observed the Advent season and waited as long as possible before decorating for Christmas. In the Chapel, the Advent wreath (below) was lit each day and marked the weeks in the season. One candle was lit during the first week, two during the second and so on, until all were burning.

The altar had a simple white covering and a band of purple cloth. The barren branches in front of the altar (pictured on the next page) helped to recall the prophetic words of Isaiah 1:11, *A shoot will come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from its roots will bear fruit.*

Sister Clare Ahler lives at Clare Hall and volunteers her artistic skills in St. Francis Chapel. She creates the chapel environment



throughout the year. One of her favorite tasks is setting up the crib, or crèche, for Christmas.

The wood carved figures come from Bavaria and remind us of the land from which our foundresses came in 1849, and where the art of wood carving continues to this day.

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Holding onto the “Quiet of Advent” into 2010



At the right, Sister Clare is placing the infant Jesus on Mary’s lap, where the carving is held in place by a peg.

Recreating the scene of Bethlehem was given new impetus by St. Francis of Assisi. He was very motivated to help people to understand the full significance of Jesus coming as a child to be a human person like ourselves. In the town of Greccio in Italy, Francis re-enacted the night of Christ’s birth in a stable with live animals, and townspeople in the roles of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the child Jesus.

The crib scene in our Chapel was again a special place for quiet prayer during the Christmas season. Each year the sisters find time to sit in front of the crèche and meditate on the meaning of Christ’s coming.

Now that we have crossed the threshold into 2010, Advent and Christmas have faded into the background, but not before all of our donors were remembered in prayer in our Christmas celebrations.

And now we pray that, during each day of the New Year, you are experiencing some of the quiet that Advent held as well as the jubilation we felt at Christmas.

Thank You!

Bequests in 2009 were received from:

Bernard B. Brown	George Tierney Estate
Cecilia Udovich	Kathleen Mary Kreider
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Lillian Rusek	Donald F. Quinlivan
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Margaret A. Hart	Betty June Perryman
Gloria R. Crowder	

The bequests total more than \$600,000.

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