



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.

Meeting Determines OSF Direction for Mission

November 6 to 11, 2014, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi held the first part of a two-part meeting that is called General Chapter. The task of the 76 delegates at this meeting was to set the direction for the congregation for the next four years. Foundational to any decisions is a Direction for Mission.

There is a Mission Statement in our Constitutions, so a new one is not needed, but the Chapter body focuses specifically on what we want to emphasize at this time in history. The facilitators led a discussion process which concluded with each table group choosing the most important words or ideas to be included in the direction statement. A small writing group took these table reports and synthesized the feedback. The following statement was approved unanimously:

As we journey in the next four years, we, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, choose to live more consciously out of a contemplative stance in order to:

- ▶ deepen our relationships with God, each other, and all of creation;
- ▶ expand our collaborative efforts as needed for our congregation, the church, and society;
- ▶ stand in solidarity with those on the margins of society through our presence, prayer, and/or service.

Visible at right (l to r): Sr. Humbeline Guenther, Aspen, Sr. Diane Oman and Sr. Mary Catherine Thomas.

The Chapter meeting also looked at other congregation concerns for which direction was given to the Administrative Team.

Prayer was integrated into the meeting. Each morning the day began with 10 minutes of contemplative silence. Mass was celebrated together and a special ritual was planned for Sunday. The focal point for that ritual is pictured here.



In the Franciscan spirit of joy, a program was presented on Friday evening based on the "Transformative Etiquette in the Refectory." As the points of etiquette were read by Sr. Edna Lonergan, the actors demonstrated them. There were four visible actors and four invisible actors who provided the hands. Laughter permeated that evening and the guest performer won the hearts of everyone! Guess who stole the show?



Dealing with Mental Diminishment:

In the course of our life, we have no idea where our health will take us. We expect some physical diminishment, but it may also be accompanied by some form of dementia. This has come to be a reality for many of our sisters, but new approaches to mental diminishment are helping to provide an environment in which they can feel safe and engage in appropriate interaction.

There are 46 sisters living at the Motherhouse and, of those, 15 participate in the Memory Care Program. This program began in June, 2014, and was scheduled from 2 to 7:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Since December 1, the program runs all day. The sisters gather in the lower level of the Motherhouse in a space that was formerly used by St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care. There are two large rooms, St. Francis Hall and Leander Hall. The latter was designed with persons experiencing dementia in mind.

When the sisters come down from the third floor in the morning, they begin with exercise in St. Francis Hall. This helps not only physical strength and agility, but also engages and stimulates the brain. The unison activity eases the transition from one area to another. In the afternoon, when the sisters return from their after-lunch rest period, they begin with 'tea time.' All are served a beverage and a snack, which again

gives time to make the transition to the program area.

Following the initial activities, sisters are divided into groups according to their need. Researchers tell us there are over 60 types of dementia, so an individualized approach for each person is imperative. Observing the respect that is given to the sisters, it is obvious that the therapists recognize the uniqueness, skills and history of each one.

In the small groups, the sisters work on various activities. Some groups are able to work at the same table, like making their own Christmas cards or doing a word-scramble sheet. Others work best individually with sensory activities such as sorting objects or matching patterns.

Recently students from the Milwaukee School of Engineering spent four weeks working with the sisters using iPads. The use of computer programs on different formats is proving to be a very meaningful therapy tool. Since touch is such an important factor in working with memory loss, the touch screens available today provide easy and suitable access for therapeutic use.

Another very important part of this program is the volunteers who work one-on-one with the sisters. These volunteers are sisters



New Approaches Enhance Daily Life

from the Motherhouse, Clare Hall and nearby houses. They are peers of the sisters who are in the program and can often stimulate conversation and recognition from the past.

Reminiscing to tap long-term memory is very beneficial. A person with memory loss cannot sit and daydream, but can find satisfaction in being able to engage in past memories. At times this can resurrect a past skill.

One of the sisters taught reading for years, but as her dementia progressed, she did not even speak. When a volunteer who had worked with her in the Reading Clinic reviewed the process for helping a student to read, this sister began to read aloud. She is now also doing other activities. Another sister who was a musician now plays the piano daily. These are small victories, but they make a big impact.

The deterioration of the brain affects not only mental abilities but also physical abilities. Eyesight may be narrowed or muscles may forget how to swallow because the brain cannot process signals. The calling out that a person may engage in, such as “help me, help me,” is a way to signal a need. This behavior right before lunch time often says, “I am hungry.” Once the need is met, the person is calm again.

Kim Kunert and Kim Karshna are the Therapeutic Recreation Assistants who work with the sisters at the Motherhouse. Kim Kunert manages the program, assisted by Kim Karshna, who divides her time between working in the Memory Care Program and doing activities with the other sisters at the Motherhouse. Other supportive services are provided by the nurses and aides, and the dietary and housekeeping staffs. Everyone recognizes that the care of all of our sisters is a team effort.

One of the main goals of the Memory Care Program is to provide a safe, secure and welcoming environment. This means not only the physical space, but also how the staff interacts with the sisters. Structure is needed in all of our lives, but especially by those who are cognitively impaired. Balancing quiet with stimulation and monitoring the individual needs of each sister call for flexibility and adaptability on the part of the staff.

What may seem like child’s play, when we observe what the sisters are doing, is in fact, very essential in helping them reengage the parts of their brains that have become incapacitated. There is no reversal for memory loss, but respecting who the person is and providing an appropriate environment and beneficial activities contribute to the overall well-being of each sister in the program.



Sister Marie



Sister Sira

Bequests

With gratitude to:

Dorothy Bichler
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Kenneth Thelen
Ruth Whaland

Total \$116,614.64

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and concern for them.

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Coming Events

Pie and Prayer 2015 Schedule

You are invited to **Pie and Prayer** – a time of scripture sharing, pie, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at St. Francis Convent, 3221 S. Lake Dr. St. Francis, Wisconsin. For more information and to register, call 414-294-7306.

Sunday, January 25, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. (12:30 tour)
Thursday, March 26, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Thursday, April 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Sunday, June 28, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. (12:30 tour)

Earth Echoes Educational Offerings

The **Land Use Committee** of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi is sponsoring educational offerings at Clare Hall on the third Thursday of the month, January thru May, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. A variety of topics is planned, including the land use project, environmental and sustainability practices, and other topics as suggested. There is no fee for attending, but a free-will offering is appreciated. All are welcome.

2014 Wellness Wrap-Up

The **Wellness Program** for employees of St. Francis Convent and St. Ann Center for Intergenerational Care, the residents at Canticle and Juniper Court, and other interested persons wrapped up with a healthy luncheon on December 5. The potluck buffet was very delicious after exercising enough to visit all the Presidential Libraries and then the National Parks this year.

Participants in the program recorded their minutes of exercise each week. These were converted to miles (20 minutes = 1 mile) and the journeys took off. Each week a progress report was emailed detailing where they were on the map along with a healthy recipe.

The lunch included a discussion on how to focus the program for next year. Those ideas will be taken into consideration as a 'new twist' is designed for the 2015 program.

