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31 How to Rebuild a Nation
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34 Empowering a Community
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30 Contemplation, Action & Transformation
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30 Contemplation, Action & Transformation
Turning listening into action at the BMA Institute

CAUSE FOR SAINTHOOD

24 Beyond Beatification
Making the case for canonization

VOCATIONS

26 How Does the Journey Begin?
Mapping out the path to becoming a Felician Sister

JUSTICE & PEACE

22 Shining Light in Dark Places
Join the fight against human trafficking

FEATURES

12 Canticle of the Creatures
An excerpt by St. Francis of Assisi

13 Our Franciscan Heritage
A reflection by Sr. Suzanne Marie Kush

15 A Consumer’s Role in Human Trafficking
Understanding the impact of everyday purchases

16 What is MY Role in Creation?
Teaching Franciscan values through Montessori education

18 Unconditional Love
Living without judgment

20 Breaking Down Barriers
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21 Caring for God’s Creatures
Living in communion with nature

THE FELICIAN

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SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

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In Every Issue

2 Letter from the Provincial Minister
3 Letters to the Sisters
4 Around the Province
38 What to Watch in 2022

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FALL 2021

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Cover

“Saint Francis” by artist Jen Norton is full of vibrant earthy tones and joyfulness. Jen believes through art, one can hear the whisper of the mighty creator. She seeks to cause viewers to pause and reflect.
See Jen Norton’s work at jennortonartstudio.com.
Dear Felician Sisters...

A Treasure
Sr. Mary Ellen Pollack, who had her 61st anniversary in March 2021, served in Rome for 16 years from 1995 to 2011 and acquired a rosary that was “blessed” and “hand-handed” to her by Pope John Paul. She mailed me that rosary when she heard I didn’t have one. She gave up a treasure for me. “Impacted!” Yes — and very blessed.

Bill Penkava

A Guiding Star
In 1964, Sr. Mary Simplicia was my junior and senior business class teacher at Sacred Heart Academy in Syracuse, NY. Her grace, humility and kindness were an important influence on me at that time and made a difference in who I am today.

Donna R. Jarka

Model Franciscan Felician, Mentor and Friend
I had the privilege and good fortune to work with Sr. Fredrica Polanski as an administrator at a school. She taught me a great deal and is a wonderful model of what it means to be a Franciscan Felician.

M. Anne Wojick

Discovering Family
Sr. Alice Dunlop came to our home as a hospice chaplain in 2006. A conversation about a St. Francis statue in our garden led to us learning about family connections that fill us with pride and gratitude, as well as fill in our Miller family history of three great aunts: Sr. Gertrude, Sr. Delores and Sr. Bernice, who were sisters in life and of St. Francis.

Richard and Jane Miller

Inspirational College President
I taught at Felician College when Sr. Theresa Mary Martin was president. I will never forget her saying “God can’t not love you!”

Jacqueline Bakal

With Us in Hard Times
If I had a strong arm, I could throw a stone and hit the Felician grounds in Livonia from my house. When my dear wife Joan was fighting cancer, Sr. Mary Agnestine Rosinski would call her many times a week. The Felician Sisters also hired my special-needs son Scott in the kitchen on their grounds.

John S. Elliott

Grateful for What I Am Today
When I was young, I was in an orphanage in Utica, NY because my mother was too ill to care for us. If it weren’t for the Felician Sisters I don’t know where we would be. At Our Lady of Lourdes, Sr. Joan D’Arc saw in me what others did not — she knew I had ADD before it was heard of. She told me, “You just learn differently than others.” She never gave up on me — what I am today I owe to many, and Sr. Joan and other sisters are at the top of the list.

Gregory J. Olsowski

SEND YOUR THOUGHTS, MEMORIES & PICTURES to: FelicianMagazine@FelicianSisters.org or via mail to: The Felician, Felician Sisters of North America, Office of Mission Advancement, 871 Mercer Road, Beaver Falls, PA 15010-6815.

FROM THE PROVINCIAL MINISTER | LETTER

Dear Friends,

Most of us lead busy, complicated and demanding lives. The practice of mindfulness can help us to maintain our focus so we don’t lose sight of what is really important. Mindfulness can keep us centered on leading the life that God, in His goodness, intends for us.

Mindfulness has a way of opening up our lives and opening up our vision of reality. It enables us to reach out with empathy to others, especially those who may be different from us. Such openness inspires compassion and leads to action. And when we open our ears to the voice of God, we become more aware of how He speaks to us in ordinary, daily experiences.

When Blessed Mary Angela Truszowska founded our congregation, she chose the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. The legacy of this poor man of Assisi inspires our life and our Constitutions. And while popular myth has depicted Francis of Assisi as a lover of animals, the reality goes deeper than that. Today Francis’ love for nature inspires us to respect all of creation as God’s precious gift. This challenges us to live simply and with ecological sensitivity. Pope Francis’ encyclical, _Laudato Si’_, calls us to responsibility for our common home. Both St. Francis of Assisi and our foundress, Blessed Mary Angela, were mindful — attentive to the call of God expressed through the needs of God’s people.

I am delighted and humbled to serve as provincial minister of Our Lady of Hope Province. Our dynamic community of sisters is serving God’s people across the continent and in Haiti. Our many ministries express the charism of our foundress, Blessed Mary Angela, as we meet the needs of today’s society through presence, openness and acceptance. We uphold her legacy in our daily actions by seeing Christ in every face we meet and following God’s plan wherever it leads.

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Inspired by the fruit of our ministry — from new leaders and innovative programs to the successes of children and young adults moving through our Felician schools and universities — I recognize God’s hand and your support in the positive changes we have made in the world and have hope for even greater progress in the future. In the words of St. Francis, I greet you, Pax et Bonum!

Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki, CSSF
Provincial Minister, Felician Sisters of North America
Our Lady of Hope Province
Felician Sisters and Ministries
SEEKING THE NEEDS OF THE TIME

St. Francis of Assisi said, “We have been called to heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, and to bring home those who have lost their way.” He calls on us to set aside our biases and fears and build relationships based on love and understanding.

Change begins with the choice to take action, and the Felician Sisters and their ministries make that choice every day — identifying the needs of the times and evolving to meet those needs. When an earthquake and tropical storm hit Haiti, they packed and shipped a container the size of a tractor trailer. When Felician University students didn’t have professional clothing for interviews, they created Suits U. When people were suffering from diabetes and obesity, they created the Felician Wellness Center.

It takes humility to let go of the idea that you know what needs to be done and allow God to reveal His will in His time. It requires an investment in building relationships, listening without bias and being truly present. The Felician Sisters and their ministries will continue to accompany their neighbors, always asking what the needs are and always seeking to meet those needs.

Virtual Volunteerism

Work has begun at Felician Mission: Haiti to enroll students from Jacmel in H.E.L.P., Madonna University’s online bachelor’s degree program. To enroll, Creole-speaking students must pass a proficiency exam in English.

Felician Volunteers in Mission (VIM) are lending a hand. VIM offers a remote tutoring program, connecting volunteers in the U.S. with students in Haiti via Zoom to practice English.

If you’d like to tutor from your own home, contact Caroline Stanfill at csanford@feliciansisters.org or complete an application online at FelicianSistersNA.org/VIM.

Read about H.E.L.P. on page 31.

Maryville’s Blessed Solanus Casey Sold Out

First in the four-part Heroes of Faith series, Blessed Solanus Casey, presented by Fr. Dan Gribby, OFM, Cap., filled the space to capacity on September 1.

Maryville Retreat Center in Holly, MI, hosts a variety of monthly programs, including Voices of Peace, Coffee Time, and Taizé Prayer Experience. New programming is always added. Sign up for email alerts at FelicianSisters@FelicianSisters.org.

Sr. Bernice Pikul — Bardzo Kochany
Posthumous Lumen Gentium Awardee for Catholic Education

Sr. Bernice Pikul, an immigrant from Poland, served most notably at St. Adalbert School in Providence, RI, and is credited with having organized a high-quality religious education program there through her innovative and welcoming teaching methods. Fr. Marek Kupka, pastor of St. Adalbert, said of her early days as principal, “In a time of noticeable influx of Polish immigrants to Rhode Island, her mission was not only to pass on the knowledge and faith to her students, but also to introduce many non-English-speaking children and adults to the American church and to American society.” Sr. Bernice passed away on April 25, 2021, at the age of 94.

Madonna University Hosts Author, Mitch Albom at New Welcome Center

Madonna University in Livonia, MI, furthered its commitment to educating Haitians by hosting the 3rd annual Mitch Albom & Friends scholarship fundraiser in their new Welcome Center. The event, which included live and recorded messages from actress Kate Hudson and NFL Hall of Fame athlete Barry Sanders, raises money to help students at Albom’s Have Faith Haiti orphanage earn their degrees from a participating Michigan college. Two students from Albom’s mission are currently enrolled at Madonna University, which also runs a satellite degree program based in Haiti. Programs like these aim to empower the Haitian people to return to their country and effect change in their communities.
Students at the Felician School for Exceptional Children in Lodi, NJ, spent time with Michelangelo, an equine therapy horse, as they kicked off their Empowerment Program — part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the school’s founding in 1971 by Felician Sr. Mary Ramona Borkowski.

Introducing President Crawford

After almost a year of interim service, Admiral James W. Crawford III was appointed president of Felician University in Lodi, NJ. A retired admiral and the 43rd Judge Advocate General (JAG) of the United States Navy, Crawford successfully guided the university through the dark days of the COVID-19 pandemic, even seeing an increase in enrollment under his leadership. Chris Swenson, chair of the university’s Board of Trustees, said, “Many we spoke to during this process described him as inspirational, a servant leader and someone who truly lives our Felician core values. His hands-on experience in steering the university during one of the most challenging periods in its history enables him to step into the role of president, fully prepared to take us to new heights.”

Felician Associates Recommit

In August, ten active Felician Associates and one prayer associate renewed their annual commitment to the Felician Sisters at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Chapel in Coraopolis, PA. It was the first in-person associate commitment service since the pandemic began. Felician Associates are lay men and women who make an annual commitment to share in the sisters’ mission and to live in the spirit of Blessed Mary Angela. The Felician Sisters, in return, promise to support the associates through their prayers, hospitality and love.

If you are interested in becoming a Felician Associate, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/Associates.

New Head of School at Immaculate Conception High School

LaShawn Chinn Appointed Director of Sr. Mary Josette Food Pantry

LaShawn Chinn believes that by providing services and resources to help people improve, we are better as a community. This spring, the Villa Maria College graduate became director of the Sr. Mary Josette Food Pantry in Buffalo, NY, assisting supervisor Sr. Mary Michælanne Galas. The food pantry, located on the Villa Maria campus, serves mostly community residents, but 10% of the clients are students. “In addition to food, we provide deodorant, toothpaste and laundry detergent,” Chinn said. She is challenged with getting the word out that the pantry exists. With 14 years in social services at the county and state level and impressive degrees in business management and public administration, Chinn feels that the job is a perfect fit.
“Suits U” Dresses Students for Success

In 2019, Felician University commissioned a study to determine the unmet needs of its students. The findings were shocking. A significant number of students reported being food- and housing-insecure. Students were investing in a college education for a better future and, in doing so, were giving up daily meals or a place to sleep.

As director of the Blessed Mary Angela Institute of Contemplation, Action and Transformation at the time, Sr. Annelle Velvis knew she had to help. The reality that college students worried about where their next meal was coming from or where they would sleep that night led to another question; How could they interview for a job without the means to afford professional clothes? Sr. Annelle turned to Mike Omansky from the Felician University School of Business and Information Science. He worked with his students to create business plans for an on-campus store offering professional clothing and accessories to students.

“It was important to maintain the dignity of the students who were in need, so we chose the business plan in which students could perform community service hours in exchange for clothing,” Sr. Annelle explained. Students choose to volunteer at local hospitals, churches and urban ministries. “It gave the students an opportunity to earn the clothing and to help others in the process. We called it Suits U.” Daquan Pullum, a graduate assistant at the time, was brought on as the first manager. “Daquan went to work with bags of donated clothing to create a boutique-like store,” Sr. Annelle recalled. “He put so much thought into the dressing rooms, mannequins and organizing items so perfectly. He gave the student shoppers style ideas to instill them with confidence.”

A grant from the Felician Services, Inc., St. Francis Fund provided start-up for the project. Students volunteer and inventory is donated from the community and university staff. “Ridgewood Moving Services, a local company, partnered with us immediately,” Sr. Annelle said. “They told me that it’s amazing how much people leave behind when they move.” One student proudly shared “Will you take a look at me? This is the first suit I’ve ever had, and I never knew how to tie a tie, but Professor Mike helped me.”

Since it opened, Suits U has helped many students dress for the successful careers ahead of them, despite their lack of funds. The university will also soon open a food pantry to address the issue of food insecurity. Sr. Annelle said, “Mother Angela’s life was all about service to the poor. We found that the poor can be disguised in the form of a college student, and we will continue to find ways to serve them.”

Beatrice Carcao of Holy Name of Mary College School, Mississauga, Ontario, earned a silver Duke of Edinburgh Award this year. Students who participate must work toward various levels of the award that encompass service, skills, physical recreation and an adventurous journey. The award program is aimed at encouraging young people, aged 14 to 24, to set their own goals and challenges, work toward achieving them, and then be recognized after completion for sustaining the commitment they have made. The fundamental principle is self-motivation.

Carcao describes her adventurous journey:

We travelled around the city for five days, exploring Toronto’s rivers and creeks and deciding whether urbanization affected the natural trend known as the Bradshaw Model by potentially rerouting rivers and diverting water due to the novel construction of buildings. Through our onsite research, we were able to conclude that yes, urbanization has affected the natural trend of rivers — which was evident at Black Creek (a creek in Toronto that was channelized following the flooding of Hurricane Hazel).

Carcao says in the process of working toward the award, she has been able to give back to the community she loves directly through volunteering, and indirectly by forming friendships and using laughter to emotionally aid herself and others. She says the connections she made and the growth achieved are some of the most rewarding parts of the award.

Learn more at holynamedeemarycollegeschool.com.
Doing “Knotty” Work

Every month, the ladies of Villa Angela at St. Anne Home in Greensburg, PA, gather for what Marilyn Hartman calls some “knotty work.” She is quick-witted, compassionate and one of a group of personal care residents who donate their leisure time to make pet beds for CART (County Animal Rescue Team) in Westmoreland, Allegheny and Fayette counties.

Betty Burns, a resident for 10 years, is the expert making beds on her own, then other residents joined in. Making pet beds is now a community event. Jeff Long, president and CEO of St. Anne Home, shared, “Engaging the residents to find ways to give back and find new purpose and passions in life is one way we continue the healing mission of Jesus Christ.”

Conducted of donated fleece and pillow stuffing, the beds are made using a no-sew tying technique. Aides Lynn Scarpe and Misty Barr do all of the cutting and the residents do the tying. The group also creates toys for the pets by braiding strips of fleece. The activity combines socialization, occupational therapy and community building. Last month, they donated nine bags of beds. Pet beds are one of the most requested items for CART. “The beds go to any of our disaster clients,” said CART chief Lori Mozina, “those who have lost nearly everything because of financial distress.”

Learn how St. Anne Home provides spiritual, social and emotional support to their residents by visiting StAnneHome.org.

The EDEN Alternative®

The Felician Sisters dedicate themselves to caring for those in need — but what happens when they are in need of care? Implementation of The EDEN Alternative model of care has begun as sisters reimagine the care of the elders and medically fragile members of the community.

This summer, lay leaders from across the province gathered at Marysville Retreat Center in Holly, MI, to participate in Certified EDEN Associate Training. They had opportunities throughout the three-day training to learn the theory of The EDEN Alternative as well as to interact and put that theory into practice. In the coming months, sisters will also be provided options for further training in the model’s philosophy of well-being.

For information about The EDEN Alternative visit EdenAlt.org.

OLSH Grad Dunks on PJ Tucker in NBA Finals

The Felician Sisters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Convent in Coraopolis, PA, had plenty of reason to cheer during the NBA Finals this year. Cameron Johnson, a graduate of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School (OLSH) and now a starting guard for the Phoenix Suns, was putting on a stellar display — including a dunk on Milwaukee Bucks PJ Tucker that blew up on social media.

The sisters have always been fans of the OLSH Chargers, making frequent appearances in the stands and on the sidelines of the games and even participating in pep rallies. But this is the first time they have been able to watch one of their own play in the pros.

“We followed Cam through high school, then college and now in the NBA. He is an extraordinary player — so smart and so generous. Despite all of his success, he is just such a gentleman,” said Sr. Mary Francine Horos, a teacher at OLSH.

Johnson graduated from OLSH as the salutatorian and was recruited to play at the University of Pittsburgh, where he earned his bachelor’s degree in communications in three years. He then set off to the University of North Carolina, where he had three impressive years on the team while pursuing his master’s degree in sports administration. In fact, when he’s not on the court, he is in the midst of writing his master’s thesis.

In 2019, Johnson was drafted by the Minnesota Timberwolves as the 11th overall pick and was quickly traded to the Suns. In his first professional appearance, he came off the bench to help the Suns defeat the Los Angeles Lakers. In his first start less than a year later, also against the Lakers. Two years later, he is continuing to make a name for himself, and the sisters in Coraopolis are hoping he’ll come home for a visit soon.

“I am still our school nurse at OLSH,” said Sr. Francine, “so we hear all about him. We hope he’ll stop in to see us. We’re so proud of him.”

ICH Alumna Cast as Disney’s Snow White

Rachel Zegler’s dream was to be a real-life Disney princess, and it looks like that dream will finally come true. Disney has cast the Immaculate Conception High School in Lodi, NJ, alumna as Snow White in their new live-action film.

This role comes on the heels of Zegler’s film debut in Steven Spielberg’s reimagining of West Side Story, scheduled for release later this year, and her announcement that she will also be appearing in the Shazam sequel.

Zegler’s success comes as no surprise to those who know her at ICHS, where she frequently earned starring roles in the school musicals. Now that she has graduated, they expect great things from this rising star.

Rachel Zegler (left) with Disneyland’s Snow White.

As we await the completion of the Felician Sisters of North America Heritage Center & Archives in Livonia, MI, slowed due to nationwide supply shortages, enjoy an up-close look at the stained-glass feature. The Madonna University Welcome Center, now open and in use, resides within the same structure.

See the entire window on our home page and learn more about our history at FelicianSistersNA.org.
Our Franciscan Heritage

By Sr. Suzanne Marie Kush | Provincial Councilor, Co-President of the Franciscan Federation and Franciscan Pilgrimage Program Staff

An Excerpt from
canticle
of the creatures

Praised be you, my Lord, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through whom you bring us light.

And he is lovely, shining with great splendor, for he heralds you, Most High.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars. He blesses you with them: Lightsome and precious and fair.

And praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Wind, through air and cloud, through calm and every weather by which you sustain your creatures.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Water, precious and chaste.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Brother Fire, robust and strong.

Praised be you, my Lord, through those who forgive, with all your creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the day through whom you bring us light.

In one of his letters, St. Francis wrote, “O how happy and blessed are those who love the Lord and do as the Lord himself said in the gospel. You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and your whole soul, and your neighbor as yourself.” He asked no more of his followers than he asked of himself — to live according to the gospel.

Franciscan theology emphasizes the unconditional love of God. The focus is not on sin, but on the goodness of God and our own personal goodness because we are made in the image of God. Francis expressed this belief through respect for the dignity of creation — without bias.

Franciscan spirituality is an emphasis on the boundless love of God, building relationships, a dedication to the gospel, respect for all of creation and a desire to surrender to God’s will.

The Felician Sisters are a Franciscan community, following the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska called on her sisters to live as St. Francis had lived — in simplicity and humility, in reverence for all God’s creation, as living examples of the gospel message, and in compassionately caring for and serving the marginalized and those living in poverty.

Conversion
Surrender to God and God’s service.

Contemplation
Prayer that flows from the depths of an inner life.

Poverty
Embracing an attitude of poverty.

Minority
Solidarity with the poor

have perhaps all seen the iconography of St. Francis of Assisi surrounded by animals — he is, after all, the patron saint of ecology — but this is only one expression of the essential elements of his teachings. At the heart of Franciscan spirituality is an emphasis on the boundless love of God, building relationships, a dedication to the gospel, respect for all of creation and a desire to surrender to God’s will.

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Franciscan theology emphasizes the unconditional love of God. The focus is not on sin, but on the goodness of God and our own personal goodness because we are made in the image of God. Francis expressed this belief through respect for the dignity of creation — without bias.

Franciscan spirituality is an emphasis on the boundless love of God, building relationships, a dedication to the gospel, respect for all of creation and a desire to surrender to God’s will.

The Felician Sisters are a Franciscan community, following the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis. Felician Foundress Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska called on her sisters to live as St. Francis had lived — in simplicity and humility, in reverence for all God’s creation, as living examples of the gospel message, and in compassionately caring for and serving the marginalized and those living in poverty.
their physical needs, but also for their salvation, seeking to turn hearts and minds toward the ways of God.

Consider the story of St. Francis and the wolf. Francis finds himself in a town that is being terrorized by a wolf who is killing people and animals. The people are afraid to go outside the walls of the town. They carry weapons and throw rocks to scare off the wolf. Both sides are acting out of fear, and the result is chaos — until St. Francis steps in.

St. Francis goes into the forest to meet the wolf on his own terms. He goes without fear or judgment and simply asks the wolf, “Why?” He finds out that the wolf is hungry and afraid of the people. All he wants is enough to eat. Francis brings about reconciliation between the townspeople and the wolf. They agree to feed the wolf and not hurt him, and the wolf agrees not to harm the people or livestock. They reach an understanding and build a relationship of mutual respect. Fear is replaced by love and understanding, and the result is harmony.

On the surface, this is a lovely tale about St. Francis communing with nature, but it also strikes upon many fundamental elements of Franciscan spirituality — perhaps most notably minority and conversion. Minority is a humble acceptance that we are one with all of creation. For Francis, there is no difference between himself and the wolf. The people have no more right to the land than the wolf does and his needs are equally important.

Conversion refers to a change of heart, which both the wolf and the townspeople experience after St. Francis’ intervention. He builds a relationship between them, and they now live together in peace.

Francis was inspired to live among those who society had cast aside. He accompanied them, recognizing that in order to serve them, he needed to know them and build relationships with them. He did not distinguish between the rich and the poor, the healthy and the leper — they were all God’s children and therefore all worthy of compassion.

Conversion is a life-long process of self-reflection, renewal and transformation that is essential to Franciscan spirituality. Toward the end of his life, St. Francis wrote: “I have done what was mine to do, may Christ now teach you what you are to do.”

For Francis, there is no easy as forced and trafficked labor are so prevalent in our world today, but there are some resources available to help consumers find information on companies’ supply chains and labor policies, such as the Fair Labor Association, WRAP Program and Know the Chain. You might be surprised how your favorite brands rate. The 2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery produced by the International Labour Organization and Walk Free Foundation reported there are 40 million victims of modern slavery throughout the world with women and girls comprising 71% of them. It may be shocking, but this is a problem close to home, too. The Global Slavery Index 2018 compiled by Walk Free estimates that on any given day in 2016, there were 403,000 people living in conditions of modern slavery in the United States, the majority of them in domestic work, agriculture, traveling sales crews and restaurants or food services.

In addition to labor trafficking, sexual exploitation is more prevalent than one might think, especially surrounding events like the Super Bowl and online, where child pornography has become a major business. Consumers should know about products produced in other countries that are most at risk of involving modern slavery. Laptops and mobile phones produced in China and Malaysia, and clothing made in Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand top the list. The seafood industry and mining for precious metals needed in the production of electronics also often utilize child labor.

We can make a difference, but we must take action.

• Investigate products you buy and the companies that make them, and make informed, ethical decisions as a consumer and an investor.
• Petition companies that are not transparent about their labor practices to make ethical choices.
• Educate yourself about the dangers of sex trade on the Internet so we can better protect children and young adults.
• Pray for victims, that they will find comfort and strength in the Lord.
• Pray for perpetrators, that they may realize the suffering their actions cause and end this cruel and inhumane practice.

For resources, including a link to Pope Francis’ Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/SocialJustice.
very one of God’s creations has a job to do. Immersed in the beautiful natural setting of their Enfield, CT, campus, surrounded by wildlife and trees, students of the Enfield Montessori School have the space to explore and discover their role in the care of creation.

In 1965, Felician Sisters Mary Aniela Urbanek and Mary Anastasia Holak planted a special seed in Connecticut when they founded the Enfield Montessori School. Little did they know that 56 years later, this ministry they started with two teachers and one classroom would be educating over 180 children each year, instilling them with Felician values.

For middle school Montessori students, the focus is on education with purpose — again with a close connection to care for creation. For the students in Enfield, this means planting pollinator and vegetable gardens, building bat houses and designing a rain barrel system for gathering water — and this year, the parents helped refurbish a building to accommodate a chicken coop.

While the children enjoy collecting and selling eggs and learning to manage the money, Beaulieu is more impressed by another change.

“When the students arrive at school in the morning, they can pull on their boots, make sure there’s food and water in the coops and get back to class in time for prayer,” she said. “You find them now getting to school 15 to 20 minutes earlier because they want to go see their chickens.”

Plans are also underway to add some pottery wheels and a kiln to the building housing the coop and a second building has been acquired in the hopes of transforming it into a greenhouse.

“Adolescents have these brilliant minds and this capacity to absorb vast pieces of knowledge that we never really have the capacity to absorb again in our lives,” says Beaulieu. “So often the middle-school experience is difficult for children because there isn’t enough to fill their minds. By introducing children to an environment where there is a lot of purpose and a lot of responsibility and care for the environment, we fill their minds up in great ways.”

Beaulieu clearly loves this school community and the Felician Sisters who have embraced her. She is dedicated to ensuring that the Felician mission and values are instilled in every student.

By educating the whole child, recognizing their unique gifts and tailoring an education to feed those gifts, she hopes to teach children to “be an asset to your community, whatever that community is.”

Cliona Beaulieu, head of Enfield Montessori and Chiaravalle Academy.
Unconditional Love

One sister who is unable to actively communicate but can read aloud waits for Sammy each day and recites her prayers to him. “He always waits until she’s done,” said Sr. Nancy.

Many of the sisters have made accommodations to their rooms or routines to make Sammy feel welcome. Some even make sure their beds are lowered so Sammy can hop up without trouble. “I’ve seen sisters cover him with a blanket so he doesn’t get cold,” said Sr. Nancy. “Sr. Lawrence had hip surgery, and I remember walking into her room one day and asking, ‘Why are you in a chair and Sammy’s in the bed?’ And she said, ‘Well, I wanted him to be comfortable.’”

After nine years as part of the family, Sammy has pretty much free rein of the facility. “He goes from room to room with the sisters. He knows who will allow him on the bed. He’s even figured out when maintenance has their break in the morning,” said Sr. Nancy. “He just wants to be with everybody. He’ll wait for the elevator or find his way down the stairs. He’s been wonderful therapy for everyone.”

Sammy is also exceptionally perceptive. “When a sister is dying, he’s the first one to know,” said Sr. Nancy. “There was a sister whose presence is particularly comforting to the sisters who have difficulty speaking, especially those with dementia. The sisters will talk to him, and he’ll just sit there and listen,” she said. “Because he doesn’t correct them, they gain confidence.”

If you would like to join the Felician Sisters in their mission by becoming an Associate, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/Associates.
Caring for God's Creatures

Resident photographer and creature caretaker, Sr. Samuel Holowacz enjoys the rich natural setting of Mother of Good Counsel Convent in Chicago, IL. The sisters have made deliberate choices to create a campus that invites communion with nature. Sections of their gardens are reserved for milkweed and indigenous wildflowers to attract bees, butterflies and hummingbirds. Bat houses, bird houses and squirrel feeders also draw wildlife in for a visit. To support bee populations, the sisters have also invited local residents to keep beehives on their grounds, who share the honey they collect with the sisters.

Breaking Down Barriers

In 2013, Detroit was the most distressed major city in the United States, with 35% of the population living below the poverty level. Watching the city’s historic bankruptcy unfold from 20 miles away, a group of Felician Sisters in Livonia, MI, felt called to do something to help.

The sisters wrote a proposal for their ministry, which they called Deo Gratias (Thanks be to God), a phrase associated with the patron of the Felician Sisters, St. Felix of Cantalice, and began spending time visiting Detroit. True to their Franciscan roots, the sisters were determined to live among the people they would serve, no matter the risk, to better identify with them and make a difference in their lives.

As they met those struggling with homelessness, poverty and food insecurity, they quickly learned that earning the trust of the community wouldn’t be easy. The streets were tough, and people were guarded. They also realized that living within a high-crime area like Detroit would make them vulnerable, so they requested permission to get a dog for protection.

The sisters began scouring animal-rescue sites and God’s providence was at work. Each sister’s computer search landed on the same dog — a female Husky-Shepherd mix named Takaari. Sr. Mary Francis Lewandowski and Sr. Rita Marie Vondra were the first to move into their house in southwest Detroit. Ministry and logistical delays with the other sisters meant that Sr. Francis spent much of the first few months alone. She was nervous, but with Takaari at her side, she began to walk around the neighborhood.

While Takaari most certainly gave her a sense of security, Sr. Francis also found people were drawn in by the dog. “They would talk to her first,” Sr. Francis said. Eventually, as she saw the same faces during her daily walks, the people who had seemed shy or reluctant to engage with her began to open up through Takaari. “She helped us begin to build relationships.”

Sr. Francis’ reverence for all creation rested in acknowledging and honoring each element’s unique role. Chosen for one purpose — protection — it soon became clear to the sisters that Takaari’s true role was much more than that. As they grew their Deo Gratias ministry, opening a community garden and the evangelization cafe that was Sr. Felicity Marie Madigan’s dream, Takaari broke down barriers with her canine charm.

“I was really depressed, feeling bad and really had no one to talk to, but these sisters welcomed me so much with open arms,” one neighborhood resident recalled of the impact the sisters had on her. “They really make you feel so welcome, like you’ve known them a long time.”

A few years ago, a shepherd named Skylar came to live with the sisters. She accompanies Sr. Felicity and Sr. Shelley Marie Jeffrey, co-directors of Deo Gratias, as their four-legged relationship builder.

“We have made them part of the ministry and part of our community,” said Sr. Francis. “We like to talk about the story of Francis and the wolf. That story is so much like ours. We take our ‘wolf’ into the city and bring people together.”

Breaking Down Barriers

Photo by Karen Varnas

Our Franciscan Heritage
“Shining Light in Dark Places”
Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller
Justice, Peace & Integrity of Creation Coordinator

Even before she was called to religious life, Sr. Maryann Agnes Mueller was engaged in social justice. As a member of Pax Christi, USA, a Catholic organization founded at the end of World War II to bring peace and reconciliation to the world, she felt strongly about the dignity and value of every human life. Today, as social justice coordinator for Our Lady of Hope Province, Sr. Maryann has marched in demonstrations and led forums and is one of the founding members of the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking.

“It’s important for the Felician Sisters to take a stand on issues in our world that demean other human beings — racism, human trafficking, gun violence. If we don’t speak out, then we are not doing what we were called to do,” she said.

Unfortunately, human trafficking is more common than any of us might think. Sr. Maryann said often when she is giving a presentation on the topic, someone will raise their hand and say that it doesn’t happen where they live. “It happens everywhere,” she said, “nail salons, hair salons, restaurants, hotels, farms, domestic workers in private homes. They aren’t paid. They’re forced to work long hours. If they’re new to our country, their papers are taken away so they are trapped.”

Sr. Maryann explained that human traffickers prey on victims of natural disasters, immigrants, people with disabilities and of course children and human trafficking victims are demeaned — racism, violence, forced marriage.

“All teenagers are vulnerable in some way,” she said. “Traffickers will go to a high school football game and look for girls sitting away from the crowd and target them. They’ll act as a love interest, and it goes on from there.”

Sr. Maryann also pointed to teenagers aging out of the foster care system. “When they get out of foster care at 18, where are they to go? The day they leave foster care many are trafficked, because who else is there for them?”

Even the pandemic has had an impact on the trafficking of children. With the schools closed and children online, some for the first time, they are falling prey to luring and victimization.

“Calls to the Center for Missing and Exploited Children have tripled since last year. In her fourth year of serving as social justice coordinator, Sr. Maryann was one of 15 sisters engaged in anti-trafficking efforts invited to Washington, D.C., for a conference on Catholic initiatives, and to attend then-President Obama’s forum on human trafficking. During their time together, the sisters decided to unite as women religious focused on raising awareness, providing resources and supporting survivors. In 2016 they formed U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a nonprofit organization with more than 100 women religious members. “It’s one of the things I’m most proud of,” Sr. Maryann said, “proud that the Felician Sisters are founding members of this group, and we’re very active.”

The organization took over the Stop Trafficking! monthly newsletter launched in 2003 by the Sisters of the Divine Savior and Capacitar International, and in 2020 Sr. Maryann was asked to take over the demanding task of managing the newsletter. “I was in chapel asking God for guidance on the task, and He put it in my lap. I prayed that with each issue of the newsletter, one person would be saved from being a victim.”

Sr. Maryann’s leadership and example inspire many other Felician Sisters in their own social justice work. Sr. Maria Louise Edwards, vice-president of Águilas del Desierto (Eagles of the Desert), a nonprofit dedicated to rescuing and recovering remains of migrants trying to cross the southern border, said, “The whole reason I’m involved with Águilas is because of Sr. Maryann. She works hard to make sure that our Felician community is educated about issues of social injustice. She draws us right into the places where God’s grace is most needed. That is why our Franciscan call to be with God in the midst of our sometimes messy and confusing humanity.”

Sr. Judith Marie Blizzard who recently participated in a march against racial injustice, agreed. “I love how invested she is in the ministry of peace and justice,” said Sr. Judy. “Her passion is obvious and contagious when she shares with the sisters about particular issues and our responsibility in making a difference. She makes it easier for us to get involved and to have our say with our state representatives.”

Sr. Maryann said there are ways all of us can fight human trafficking. “First, we need to be aware. If something doesn’t look right, or feel right, call the human trafficking hotline. It’s better to call and be wrong than not to call at all.”

She described a case in Philadelphia involving a woman who always went to the same nail salon, striking up a conversation with the nail technicians. “The workers always chatted with the customer unless one particular woman came. Then they would shut down and act strangely. After witnessing the behavior a few times, the customer called the hotline and uncovered a human trafficking ring at the salon.”

Sr. Maryann encourages parents and guardians to keep an eye on their children’s technology use. “I always say if you have someone under 18 in your house, you need to see what’s on their computer and on their cell phone. It’s not an invasion of privacy; you are protecting them.”

The work that Sr. Maryann and so many others do is critical; however, human trafficking will only be wiped out when it’s no longer profitable. “Until there is legislation that decreases the profit and increases the risk to the perpetrator, nothing will change,” she warned. “That’s what we need to work toward.”

Even so, Sr. Maryann has room in her heart for the traffickers, too. “Mother Angela had compassion even for those who are difficult to care about, those that we might consider our enemy. Because I’m a Felician I ask myself what would Mother Angela do? What would St. Francis do?”

“I always say if you have someone under 18 in your house, you need to see what’s on their computer and on their cell phone. It’s not an invasion of privacy; you are protecting them.”

“We need to educate ourselves about human trafficking. It’s not like the movies. It’s real. We need to learn how to recognize the signs of human trafficking and know how to respond.”

“To receive a few pens that you can leave behind to share the trafficking hotline, email feliciansisters@feliciansisters.org To learn more and read the Stop Trafficking! newsletter, visit SistersAgainstTrafficking.org

Photo by Rick Armstrong
All Christians are called to be saints. Saints are persons in heaven whose flowers filled the room — and the pain stopped.

Lillian Halasinki had been diagnosed with diabetic neuropathy, an incurable condition that caused extreme pain and swelling in her leg. Doctors had been unable to help her.

In January 1984, a Vatican-certified miracle happened. As Lillian Halasinki sat in the living room of her home in Dunkirk, NY, crying out in unbearable pain, she prayed to Felician Foundress Mary Angela Truszkowska, begging for intercession — and was instantaneously healed.

Sr. Ambrose passed away on October 20, 2021, prior to the publication of this article. May Blessed Mary Angela welcome her into eternal peace.

The Cause for Sainthood

The path to sainthood is not an easy one. It is fraught with outreach, research, investigation and documentation. In North America, these efforts are led by Sr. Mary Ambrose Wozniak, provincial coordinator for the cause. Sr. Ambrose added, “The seed she planted in us continues to look after all of us.”

The Path to Sainthood

The process has changed many times throughout history. At one point, sainthood could be granted by popular opinion. Bishops held the authority to elevate a person to sainthood for a while, but now, the decision lies with the pope and involves three stages of elevation:

Step 1: Venerable
Typically, a person is not considered for sainthood until five years after their death — although this waiting period can be waived by the pope. According to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), once the waiting period has passed, a person may become a Venerable if they are recognized formally by the pope as having lived a heroically virtuous life or offered their life.

Step 2: Blessed
The next step is beatification — a process that grants a person the title of Blessed. In order for this to happen, a miracle must be attributed to the intercession of the Venerable — and this miracle must be investigated and affirmed by the Vatican as scientifically unexplained.

Step 3: Saint
Canonization — which officially elevates a Blessed to a Saint — requires that a second miracle be attributed to the candidate. Again, it must be investigated and affirmed by the Vatican and recording reports of favors and claims of miracles. “People who have a devotion have received favors,” said Sr. Ambrose, “but a miracle is different. It has to be an instantaneous healing.”

Much of the work of Sr. Ambrose and her committee is outreach — making sure people know who Blessed Mary Angela is and how to pray to her. They distribute medals, holy cards, and publications and reach out through their ministries and everyday encounters. If there are claims of miracles, they report them to Sr. Danat Marie Brysch, Felician Sisters minister general, who is based in Rome, Italy.

Sr. Mary Justice Pryzbocki, regional promoter for the cause of Blessed Mary Angela for southwestern Pennsylvania, tells the story of a young man whose mother reached out to the Felician Sisters for prayers when he was diagnosed with cancer at age 4. “We prayed to Blessed Mary Angela for him and continue to ask for her intervention. I even put his name at the foot of her statue.” Recently, Sr. Justice received a card from Elliott, now age 9, and his family saying that he is “fully recovered.”

Though there is still work to be done for Blessed Mary Angela’s canonization, in the hearts of her spiritual daughters — the Felician Sisters — she is already a saint. “Anything she did, she did for the love of God,” said Sr. Justice. “Look at where we’ve come. We could not be here if God hadn’t blessed it.”

Sr. Ambrose added, “The seed she planted in Warsaw has germinated and blossomed into service across the globe. I don’t think she ever thought about becoming a saint when she was living, but as she looked after her sisters in her lifetime, she continues to look after all of us.”

Read about Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska

On Earth as in Heaven: The Life Story of Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska, Foundress of the Felician Sisters by Marie Joann Lewko

An Ordinary Life Lived in an Extraordinary Way: Reflective Readings, Blessed Angela Truszkowska by Reverend Jan D. Szczurek

Sr. Mary Cynthia Strzalkowski, et al.
Have you been carrying a secret in your heart? Do you feel the Holy Spirit nudging you toward religious life? The first step in exploring the possibility of becoming a sister is called Inquiry, and it’s as simple as an email or phone call to a vocation team member who at one time in her life felt just as you do now.

Find your unique path through discernment. Prayerfully seeking God’s plan for your life is called discernment. When you dedicate time to consider the path you are meant to take, you will be surprised at the answers you’ll receive. Volunteering with one of our ministries can help you know for sure. The Felician Sisters are in active ministry across the continent, serving the homeless, protecting nature, supporting people with disabilities and more.

The modern Felician Sister embodies compassion and capability. While society’s needs are always evolving — from the time of our foundress Blessed Mary Angela in 1855 to the birth of our North American ministry in 1874 — the Felician spirit of boundless love and compassionate service remains the same. Today’s world requires us not only to be selfless, but also educated leaders who can oversee ministries in the spirit of compassion. Your unique experience and skills may be exactly what our future ministries need to achieve miraculous outcomes.

An Invitation to Discern
Life as a Felician Sister of North America

So, you’ve thought about life as a religious sister — or someone has suggested you think about it. What now? How does the journey begin?

WHAT IS THE PROCESS? HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE? HOW WILL I KNOW? IS THERE SOMEONE TO HELP?
FORMATION PROCESS

Formation is a six-step process through which you explore, learn and determine if becoming a Felician Sister is your path in life.

1. INQUIRY
   "I’m curious."
   During the Inquiry stage, you will spend time discovering if God is truly calling you to religious life. Vocation Director Sr. Judith M. Blizzard can help you discern your path and offer spiritual guidance on the journey. You may be invited to join us in a prayer experience or discernment group or to stay at our discernment house in Pennsylvania.

2. CANDIDACY
   "I’d like to get to know you better."
   6 months – 2 years
   If you discover through the Inquiry stage that becoming a Felician Sister feels right, you can submit a formal request for Candidacy. You will then join the sisters in prayer, ministry and conversation, while you continue to live on your own and participate in your chosen profession or volunteer service.

3. POSTULANCY
   "I’m moving in."
   1 – 2 years
   If the Candidate phase reassures you that you’re on the right path, you can petition to become a Postulant and live in community at our formation house. You will have opportunities to meet the sisters and visit ministries throughout the province. You’ll also complete a yearlong course of study covering Felician spirituality, faith and spiritual development, community life and the history of the congregation, and begin to serve in a variety of ministries.

4. NOVITIATE
   "Call me “Sister.”"
   2 years
   This stage is a time of personal growth and deepening your prayer life and relationship with Jesus. You will receive a religious name and the title “Sister.” As a Novice you will wear the Felician religious habit. You will live in the formation house, under the guidance of the director of novices, and continue to experience community life.

5. TEMPORARY PROFESSION OF VOWS
   "I’m ready to say “Yes.”"
   During the time of Temporary Profession, you will profess your vows for a period of one year, and renew them each year for up to six years. You’ll live in several different Felician communities and be involved in ministries as you continue to explore the various opportunities available to you.

6. PERPETUAL PROFESSION OF VOWS
   "I belong here."
   After several years of professing your temporary vows, when you finally know that God has called you to be a Felician Sister, you will make your Perpetual Profession, a sacred commitment to dedicate the rest of your life in service to God and the Church. You will begin and continue this new life with a mind open to the Will of God and a heart filled with compassion for all those you serve. The entire process can take 6-9 years.

Are you thinking about life as a sister? We would love to talk.
Call Sr. Judy at 734-718-0632 or email us at Vocations@FelicianSisters.org.

Take a virtual tour of our formation house and Mother of Good Counsel Convent at our YouTube channel. Find the link and learn more at FelicianSistersNA.org/Vocations.
**BLESSED MARY ANGELA INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPLATION, ACTION AND TRANSFORMATION**

Examining Social Issues Through Listening

Ingrid Dul, Director of the Blessed Mary Angela Institute with her predecessor, Sr. Annele Velvis.

Born in Brazil, Dul came to the United States with her family when she was eight years old and lived as an undocumented immigrant. She felt like an American until she was sixteen. Since she didn’t have a Social Security card, she couldn’t get a job or driver’s license. “Every time you’re asked for ID, it’s embarrassing. It reminds you you’re not like everyone else.”

After high school, Dul applied and was accepted to her top college choice, but was crushed when she read the line, “admission contingent on proof of residency.” Then, she received a phone call that she almost didn’t answer. It was Felician University. She had been accepted into their program with a full scholarship, “I truly believe God was putting me on the path to where I now am,” she said.

Dul and the five-member Blessed Mary Angela Institute advisory team organize events open to the entire community. They recently collaborated with Make the Road New Jersey, a nonprofit that supports immigrants, working, class and Hispanic communities.

In March, the Institute hosted a panel featuring former New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey, the chief of police and the assistant prosecutor of Bergen County to discuss issues the formerly incarcerated face. Jim McGreevey, the chief of police and the assistant prosecutor of Bergen County to discuss issues the formerly incarcerated face.

**How to Rebuild a Nation**

Felician Sisters sent a team to assess the needs of the Haitian people after the 2010 earthquake. It was clear that more than food and water would be needed to rebuild this nation. Sr. Mary Christopher Moore, former provincial minister, wanted to do more. She asked Sr. Rose Marie Kujawa, then president of Madonna University, to explore the possibility of starting a satellite bachelor’s degree program. Eighteen months later, the Haitian Education Leadership Program (H.E.L.P.) was launched and built upon the foundation that each graduate uses the strategic, managerial and practical skills they gain to renew Haitian communities through meaningful change.

One of the first people she met was Yvon. “Sr. Rose Marie said I could help my country by giving education to the Haitian people. Her idea was to build a new generation of leaders,” he recalled. Yvon received his degree in 2015, began managing the H.E.L.P. in Haiti and has since recruited six cohorts of students. “The program is a gift from heaven,” he said.
Vanessa, one of the leaders of H.E.L.P. in Haiti, says, “We hope our work will serve as role models. Haitian women are smart young girls in Haiti, but they don’t believe in educating boys over girls. ‘There’s a lot of discrimination in Haiti, and we know that if we give them a chance, we know their strength. They do not believe in the culture which is requiring an education is the culture which is limiting their lives. If we could increase even to 30 students per year that would be wonderful,’” Yvon said.

A challenge specific to Haitian women desiring an education is the culture which favors educating boys over girls. “There’s a lot of smart young girls in Haiti, but they don’t know their strength. They do not believe in themselves. If we give them a chance, we open doors for them, and Haiti will do better,” said recent H.E.L.P. graduate Vanessa. Vanessa’s classmate, Fika, agreed: “We hope to see this in the education of the lives of their fellow Haitians is upheld by the strong sense of pride the Haitian people have for their country. ‘We are resilient,’” Vanessa said, ‘and we always try to see the good in everything. There’s kidnapping and no electricity here. We know things are hard, but we are patient, and we have hope that one day it will change.’

Another H.E.L.P. graduate, Batiae, said, “We fought to get our independence. We were the first black nation to have our independence, so I am very proud of my nation’s history.” She also takes pride in her country’s hospitality, saying, “We open our arms to receive people, to make sure they feel at home.”

The love students have for their country and their personal experience living in Haiti make them experts in developing ideas to best meet the needs of their communities. In the six years since Yvon earned his degree, he has sponsored the tuition of ten children in his community and teaches them about the importance of staying in school. Recent graduates are working on various projects from establishing orphanages and shelters for the homeless, teaching English, and inspiring and supporting single mothers and young girls in remote villages to pursue an education.

H.E.L.P. graduate Sibastian is focusing her efforts on something that limits access to the most basic resources. “If you want public services to reach people in the community, you need roads,” she said. Eleven years after the 2010 earthquake, there are still areas cut off by destroyed roadways. Sibastian and a group of Madonna University alumni have developed a grant proposal and budget to build roads and are currently seeking funding. She pointed out, “It doesn’t make any sense in this era for people to not be able to access clean water or food. These are basic needs. In many places in Haiti, basic needs are luxuries.”

Madonna University’s demanding coursework prepares graduates to be savvy, experienced professionals, well-equipped to lead improvement initiatives. “It gives us exposure to critical thinking. We get to debate our peers and our professors. We learn tolerance because we learn to accept that everybody’s opinion is not always the same. Everyone’s way of doing things is different,” Fika explained.

When Sr. Rose Marie and Madonna University established H.E.L.P., they did not envision it as a simple program to deliver education, but an investment in the future of Haiti through the valuable efforts of its graduates. The bachelor’s degree they earn upon completion of the program is not the final goal — it’s just the beginning. Sibastian agreed, saying, “It is the stepping-stone on which we stand to spread hope throughout our community.”

“When I look to the sky, I see peace. I see hope. That’s Haiti.” — Vanessa

FELICIAN HAITI INITIATIVES

When the sisters of Felician Mission: Haiti put out the call for help after an earthquake and tropical storm wallowed the country, the response was quick and generous. Donations of money, medical supplies, shoes, clothing, furniture and other items poured into the convents. Sisters, volunteers and staff quickly packed everything up and sent it to New Jersey, where it was placed into large shipping containers and sent on its way to Haiti. Donations will be a welcomed relief to restock the shelves to replace supplies sent to nearby Les Cayes in August, the epicenter of the earthquake. Please continue to pray for Haiti during this challenging time.

If you would like to make a donation online, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/Haiti.
Empowering a Community With Good Health

Photography by Ed Rieker

The names of the clients in this article have been changed to protect their privacy.

At the Felician Wellness Center in Centralia, IL, exercise and wellness coordinator Jacy Keef sees many clients who struggle with obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

Unfortunately, in a city like Centralia, where nearly 20% of the population lives in poverty, limited access to affordable healthy food and fitness programs is common. These factors lead to obesity which puts people at higher risk for diabetes, heart disease, stroke and certain types of cancer. According to the CDC, 31.6% of adults in Illinois self-identify as obese, and the leading cause of death in the United States is cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Two of the Felician Wellness Center’s clients, Amy and Mary, were struggling. At 235 pounds, Amy had congestive heart failure, was on oxygen full-time and used a walker. Mary suffered from autoimmune disease and experienced debilitating neck, back and shoulder pain. For Amy, Mary and so many others like them, the road back to health seemed far too long; they felt like giving up before they had even begun.

Thanks to the NExT (Nutrition, Exercise and Training) program, they don’t need to travel the road alone. NExT, a first-of-its-kind program in southern Illinois, was introduced by Felician Wellness in 2010. Led by Keef and her team, the program joins people on their journey back to healthy, one step at a time, offering education, exercise and individualized training and support. Each NExT session meets twice weekly for six weeks and incorporates guest speakers such as physicians, dietitians and mental health professionals, to speak on topics like blood sugar control, healthy eating, anti-inflammatory diets, portion control and ideas for keeping active at home.

Participants are also given a free body-composition scan, which measures weight, BMI, muscle mass, hydration, metabolism and fat. These scans are used to track a person’s progress in more tangible ways than just weight. “Some people might get discouraged if the number on the scale doesn’t go down,” said Keef, “but then they see that they’ve turned fat into muscle mass and they recognize their progress.”

With the help of the NExT program, Amy lost 55 pounds; she is walking on her own and no longer requires oxygen. Mary lost 12 pounds in six weeks and has greatly improved mobility and energy. “Seeing people lose weight, get off medications, and reverse heart disease and diabetes is the best part of my job,” said Keef. “The program gives them hope for the future.”

Anyone over the age of 13 can participate, regardless of physical fitness, disabilities or other health challenges. Though there is a $30 fee for each six-week session, the Felician Sisters of North America offer 50% and 100% scholarships. “The sisters didn’t want cost to be a deterrent,” said Keef. “God bless them.”

“90% of them met or exceeded their fitness goals (flexibility, physical strength, muscular endurance and cardiovascular endurance). These are wonderful programs with great results for the money being spent.”

The impact of these programs on the community is undeniable, and as Felician Wellness continues to expand their programs and their reach, they expect to see more positive results as they seek to empower people to take control of their personal wellness.

For more information on the Felician Wellness Center and their programs, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/Wellness.

The problems of childhood obesity and diabetes are growing, but when schools have to make budget cuts, the physical education and arts programs are the first to go,” said Dr. Beadle.

With this in mind, he met with physical education instructors and superintendents in southern Illinois to collaborate on what would become LEAN (Learning, Exercise and Nutrition), a program that provides school districts with funds to cover salaries for physical education teachers, equipment, professional development, individual and group sports programs and testing to track progress.

LEAN is now in place in five school districts in southern Illinois and two Felician-sponsored ministries: St. Joseph Academy in Milwaukee, WI, and Mooncrest Neighborhood Programs in Moon Township, PA. “Last year, we served 972 students,” reported Dr. Beadle. “90% of them met or exceeded their fitness goals (flexibility, physical strength, muscular endurance and cardiovascular endurance). These are wonderful programs with great results for the money being spent.”

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FELICIAN MINISTRIES IN NORTH AMERICA

Since the Felician Sisters arrived in North America in 1874, they have continued to evolve to meet the needs of the time, by following God’s will and Blessed Mary Angela’s directive to “serve where you are needed.” Our sisters continue to shape the social service landscape in North America through their work in our ministries and in pastoral service in schools, parishes, prisons, hospitals, dioceses and other organizations. The ministries below are sponsored or co-sponsored or were founded by the Felician Sisters of North America.

EDUCATION & CHILD CARE

Early Childhood
Enfield Montessori School
Enfield, CT
Felician Children’s Center
Jackson, MI
Montessori Center of Our Lady
Lisieux, MI

Sister Celeste
Child Development Centre
Tulita, NT, Canada

High Schools
Holy Name of Mary
High Schools
Livonia, MI

Sister Celeste
Montessori Center of Our Lady
Jackson, MI

Early Childhood
Enfield Montessori School
Enfield, CT
Felician Children’s Center
Jackson, MI
Montessori Center of Our Lady
Lisieux, MI

MISSION TO THE MARGINALIZED

And Those Living in Poverty
St. Felix Pantry
Buffalo, NY
St. Anne’s Family Services
Los Angeles, CA
St. Felix Centre
Toronto, ON, Canada
St. Felix Pantry
Rio Rancho, NM

Angela’s Angels
Be a Leader

Seeds of Hope Youth Leadership Conference brings together high school students, peer leaders and adult mentors to give young women an opportunity to explore and enhance their talents, goals and capacity for leadership.

For information, visit FelicianSistersNA.org/SeedsOfHope.

Blessed Mary Angela Truszkowska recognized the social injustices of the time. Her compassion for the orphans, widows and homeless on the streets of Warsaw led her on a mission to serve — but she could not do it alone.

Donations from loyal benefactors supported her efforts — allowing her to serve in total availability. Today, we continue to follow Blessed Angela’s call to “serve where you are needed,” and like her, we rely on our benefactors — our “angels.”

We are pleased to announce the launch of our monthly giving club.

INTRODUCING

ANGELA’S ANGELS

Will You Join?
Participants in the monthly giving club provide a consistent source of funding, creating a safety net for those in need and allowing us to act swiftly in the face of a crisis. Automatic processing also helps us reduce our costs, freeing more resources for use in ministry.

Your monthly gift, at any level, will help us continue to serve the most vulnerable.

Become a Charter Member by joining Angela’s Angels with a gift of $10/month by December 31, 2021, and receive a Blessed Mary Angela rosary.

All members will also receive:

• Special communications throughout the year
• A personalized year-end giving statement
• The ability to update your giving level at any time
• Inclusion in an annual Mass intention
• The gratitude and prayers of the Felician Sisters for supporting our work and allowing us to respond quickly, when help is needed most
What to Watch in 2022

Sr. Judith Marie Blizzard will be a featured presenter at SEEK22, a national conference for Catholic young adults to be held February 4-6, 2022. This hybrid event will have both virtual and in-person options for attendees. Learn more at seek.focus.org.

Angela’s House is expected to be completed by June 2022. At the August 26 groundbreaking of the former Villa Maria Academy repurposed as a supportive living community, Felician Provincial Minister Sr. Judith Marie Kubicki proclaimed, “The ground on which we stand is holy ground — ground that has been hallowed by 84 years of educating young women to realize their full potential. This day marks the beginning of a new path of ministering to seniors by offering affordable housing.”

If you are 70 1/2 years old with an IRA

Honor the sisters who brightened your future. You can direct a gift to the Felician Sisters and satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution (RMD) from your IRA, 401(k), 403(b) or your life insurance plan. Talk to your financial advisor about this strategic giving opportunity.

Learn more at FelicianSistersNA.org/Giving or contact our Office of Mission Advancement at 724-944-9814 or giving@feliciansisters.org.