



Benedictine Sisters
of Watertown, SD

Spring 2017 | Vol. 39
Issue 01.

The Focus

Recently, at a high school career fair, small groups of students good-naturedly competed in a quiz about the Benedictine Multi-cultural Center and the Watertown Initiative to Prevent Sex Trafficking (WIPST). They had no trouble identifying soccer as the world's most popular sport and that human trafficking is happening. However, they were shocked at the numbers – more than 21 million victims of trafficking world-wide.

The career fair was just one of continuing events sponsored by WIPST to build healthy communities by preventing sex trafficking.

Spearheaded by Mother of God Monastery with the help of a violence prevention grant from Catholic Health Initiatives and in collaboration with schools, law enforcement and social agencies, churches, and interested individuals, the Initiative has reached out to thousands of people.

Trafficking Prevention

Sisters Form a Coalition to Help Educate the Watertown Community.

Human trafficking is the illegal trade of human beings, primarily for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. Simply stated, it is human slavery.

And, yes, it happens in South Dakota and is especially egregious during the annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, pheasant hunting season, and on Native American reservations. Native women and children are at higher risk than any other racial group.

The first reaction of many South Dakotans is shock and denial that this could possibly be happening in our

Trafficking Prevention
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S. Marlene Gives Final Greetings as Monastery Prioress



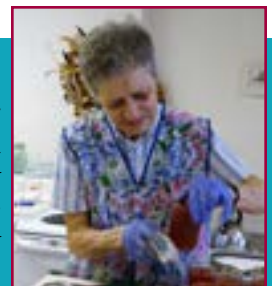
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6th Annual Garden Tour is Planned for July 22nd



6 The Sisters' Ministries

Sister Rebecca Keeps Busy at the Monastery





Greetings From the Prioress

Sister Marlene Minnaert
Prioress of Mother of God Monastery

Easter greetings to all of you. My prayer is that you are having a blessed Easter season! It is such a joy to celebrate Jesus' Resurrection and also the new life that comes with spring. It is always exciting to discover all the new life that appears on our grounds. Just a few weeks ago, everything seemed dead and hopeless. Just as we prepared for Easter during Holy Week with the promise of resurrected life, so we know in our hearts that life will come from what appears to be barren.

Spring renewal of life reminds me of a quiet renewal that we hope will soon come to our grounds and spread beyond. Recently, the Watertown Bramble Park zookeeper and a local Eagle Scout were looking to renew the declining population of kestrel falcons in the Watertown area.

Because of our quiet open

On February 16th, priests from the northeast region of the Sioux Falls Diocese joined the Sisters of Mother of God Monastery for dinner and discussion. The theme of the evening was based on a presentation given recently to the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) entitled "Forming Intentional Disciples" by Sherry Weddell. In her presentation, Ms. Weddell shared her concerns about the unmet needs of youth and young adults. During dinner, ideas were shared on how young people can be reached at the parish level and how the Sisters can assist in this process.



prairie they asked to put some special kestrel nesting boxes on a telephone pole and on some cottonwood trees. They hope to entice falcons to come our way in order to be renewed. There is much in this that we could contemplate as we seek renewal in our lives. This reminds me of you, our benefactors, who continue to help us with your prayers and gifts. Your response to our request for exercise equipment has certainly brought a wonderful renewal of life for our older Sisters.

"May we become one with God within us, with God in creation and with God who dwells in our sisters and brothers" has been the underlying theme that S. Terri, our liturgist, is using for this liturgical year. This, too, has helped to bind us together at the monastery. And united we work and pray for the needs of so many people, for all of creation and for our world. Please continue to pray for us and with us as we recognize our benefactors in this edition of the FOCUS.

This is my last letter to you as Prioress; in the near future the Sisters will elect another Sister to serve for a term of six years. I want to thank you for the opportunity of sharing our life here at Mother of God Monastery - the joys and sorrows, the needs and challenges, and daily prayer.

Thank you again for your generosity and unfailing support. Please know that you are always in our prayers.

100 Years Young!!

How often in any of our lives do we get the opportunity to celebrate someone's 100th birthday? March 10th, 2017 was a remarkable day at Benet Place Senior Apartments because we got to do just that with our long-time tenant and friend, Thyra Gustafson, who was born on **March 10, 1917!**



Thyra has been a tenant at Benet Place since 2003 and as her picture indicates, she's got PERSONALITY!! This was her chosen attire and fun attitude this past January on "Wear Your Mismatched Clothing Day!"

During her birthday celebration, Thyra shared her happy memories of riding

horseback up Mount Rushmore when sculptors Gutzon and Lincoln Borglum were in the early stages of carving the faces of the four Presidents, working the family ranch and taking wonderful trips after retirement.

National Catholic Sisters Week (NCSW)



S. Johanna Schumacher is pictured above, serving soup for the Ecumenical Lenten Prayer Service and Luncheon. The Sisters partnered with the women from Holy Name of Jesus Parish in preparing and serving the meal on March 8th, the first day of National Catholic Sisters Week.



Ss. Teresa Ann Wolf and Ida Hericks share their wealth of knowledge of Guatemala with Immaculate Conception students.



Ss. Rose and Aurelia Palm are enjoying a little puppy time with newborn pups courtesy of Benet Place's Administrative Assistant, Tami Namken.

Trafficking Prevention
Continued from Front Page

communities. However, once they know that this 32 billion dollar criminal enterprise has its claws in South Dakota, they want to stop it.

The partnerships and collaboration to prevent sex trafficking have been fantastic. In the last six months alone, information and trainings were



presented at an international day of prayer service against human trafficking (pictured above); to the Gary Catholic community; at a methamphetamine community meeting; and the department of health.

Legislative advocacy resulted in laws making it easier to prosecute those who exploit minors.

A free movie with free popcorn and pop further educated the community about who is vulnerable and how pimps control their victims. Upon request, this feature movie can be shown at your church or community center.

With the help of private donors and the Presentation Sisters of Aberdeen, five billboards along major highways provide information about sex trafficking and the hot line number to report suspicious behavior.

If you see something, say something. Our information campaign to alert South Dakotans to the horrendous crime of trafficking and how to stop it is showing results.

Recently, a man called me on a Saturday morning from a nearby city, saying that he had spotted suspicious behavior and reported it. Well-informed, he did all the right things: called the police to describe an older man with a much younger girl (between 14-17 years), who was scantily and suggestively dressed, the make of the car and the number of the out-of-state plates, and the name and location of the gas station.

Trafficking Prevention
Continued on page 5

He said he didn't know if he did the right thing in reporting his suspicions. I assured him that he did exactly the right thing, and I thanked him for contacting me.

If you see something, say something. This is how to prevent sex trafficking in our communities. And our mission is to help you become informed so that you know the signs and how to report it.



PRAYER
TO END
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Loving and compassionate God, we pray for the millions of victims of human trafficking. Free them from the chains of this modern-day slavery. Heal their pain, renew their hope, and restore their sense of worth and human dignity. Convert the hearts of all those whose actions contribute to the exploitation of the most vulnerable members of the human family. Touch our hearts so that we will be instruments of your justice, love and peace.



Article by:
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Sisters Foundation Highlights

By Jennifer Vick - Benedictine Sisters Foundation Director

Happy Spring to all our Friends and Benefactors!

Our Spring edition of the FOCUS is special because it gives us an opportunity to thank you for all you have done to support the ministries of the Sisters of Mother of God Monastery. The Sisters have been praying all through Lent for the people for whom you have asked them to pray and are very humbled by your response to this request.

Mark your calendars for this summer's annual Garden Tour. It will be held on July 22nd. Save the Date postcards have been mailed. Remember to give me a call early to reserve seats for you and your

Save the Date for the annual
Garden Tour on July 22nd



friends as the Tour was sold out in May last year. If you would like to register, please contact me at 605-882-6646 or communications@dailypost.com.

Pictured to the right is S. Marlene Heck exercising on the state-of-the-art NuStep machine thanks to your generosity. This piece of equipment is very convenient and safe for all our Sisters in the supportive care unit to use.

And, finally, it is not too late to plan for the 2017 Annual Pheasant Hunt. Mark your calendars for Sunday, Oct. 1st!



Thank You to all our 2016 Donors

2016 was a very busy yet fulfilling year. Thank you for your prayers and financial support throughout the year.

Thanks to you, we were able to purchase exercise equipment for the Sisters in the monastery's supportive care unit. The Benedictine Multicultural Center was able to once again offer a summer youth program thanks to your support.

Emergency funds were granted to S. Charles in Fort Thompson to help supply the food pantry on the reservation. Funds were also granted to the Watertown Initiative to Prevent Sex Trafficking to help this coalition established by the monastery, with its trafficking awareness efforts.

And, finally, Benet Place is very blessed to begin their kitchen remodel this year thanks to your tremendous generosity.

With Great Gratitude,
Jennifer Vick
Executive Director of the
Benedictine Sisters' Foundation

This list includes all donors from Jan. 1, 2016-Dec. 31, 2016. If we inadvertently excluded your name, please contact us at 605.882.6646.

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Your prayers and financial support are a blessing to us.

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You hold a special place in our hearts and we hold you in our prayers.

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Thank you to all the businesses for supporting the efforts of the Benedictine Sisters Foundation. Without your help, our popular Pheasant Hunt and Garden Tour events would not be possible!



Thank You!

Monastery Welcomes "Trinity II" Icon



the project, spending a great deal of time in prayer throughout and 'painting' the image they receive through that prayer. They are quite popular in the devotions of Eastern Christians, but have been used by all the religions of the world.

In the Trinity, Divine outpours in a perpetual exchange of pure and total love. In the words of the artist, "Christ is depicted on the cross, having surrendered, his head bowed down in death. His pose is one of great hospitality and openness; having said yes to the cost of love. Holding him from behind, the abstracted Spirit, positioned between Christ and the Creator, is in rich greens, whites and grays as part of the cross, empowering him with love from the Creator who is in gold: the same One who calls Christ to the cross IS the very cross from which he hangs. Their love is constant giving. Thus, the same Spirit portrayed behind him is also in front of him, caressing him in intimate love. The Creator's hands cover His Son's, who has never been forsaken."

We invite you to stop in and spend some time in prayer before the image. Pamphlets describing the icon will soon be available as you enter the small chapel for prayer.

Three years ago this coming July, seed money was given for a memorial in remembrance of Sister Leona Gauer, OSB. This seed money grew into a fund with other donations to commission an original icon by artist Paula Habbena of Sioux Falls, SD. Since the presentation of it and its installation in our chapel of reservation last November, a number of guests and sisters have made inquiries about it.

Many of you might be wondering, "What is a religious icon?" A religious icon is *written* by the artist using paint and gold leaf on a wooden board. It is of a religious image (i.e. a saint, Jesus, an event, etc.) and used to focus prayerful meditation, thereby enabling one to go more deeply into conversation with God in the silence of their heart.

The artist gives herself totally to

Article by:
Sister Terri Hoffman,
Monastery Liturgist

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caregiver, regularly visiting the sisters who are in a nursing home, giving rides to sisters who want to run errands, and administering eye drops to a sister in need.

Having served Hispanics in Guatemala and Iowa City for over eight years, S. Rebecca has a working knowledge of their language. She volunteers at the Benedictine Multicultural Center when needed. Presently, she is teaching English as a Second Language on Friday afternoons. As we approach warmer weather you will find Sister busy planting flowers and cleaning the produce from the Monastery's gardens.

Sister Rebecca Keeps Busy

A Woman With a Compassionate Heart

In her spare time, S. Rebecca corresponds with a poor, young girl from Africa that she "adopted" through a caring international organization. She was excited when she recently received a second letter from her!

Sister Rebecca quietly serves God and others in numerous small or maybe not so small ways. She certainly lives her life as stated in Colossians 3:12 "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience..."

After ministering in cities outside of Watertown and even in different countries outside of the United States, predominately as a nurse or in pastoral care, Sister Rebecca Littel returned to the Monastery in November, 2014 to serve God in any capacity that would be needed. Although she is a soft spoken individual, she is never too timid to volunteer her assistance.

She bakes pies for special occasions and jam when fruits are in season. Like many of the other sisters, she is assigned to do dishes every third week, although she is always willing to fill in for a sister when she is not scheduled for this duty. S. Rebecca is a compassionate



Article by:
Jennifer Vick
Director of Community Relations and Development

Good Luck Patricia!

Patricia Nguyen, director of the Benedictine Volunteer Program, will be leaving this ministry in May to move to South Carolina. She will be greatly missed by all!





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Check us out online: www.watertownbenedictines.org

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Upcoming Events

- **MAY 4** - Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation Training - Lake Area Tech. Institution, 8 AM
- **JUNE 6-JUNE 29** - Around the World Youth Program at the BMC. Tues, & Thurs. nights
- **JULY 9** - Private Jubilee Celebration of Sisters
- **JULY 10-14** - Annual Chapter Meeting
- **JULY 22** - Sixth Annual Garden Tour
- **AUGUST 21-AUGUST 28** - Journey Program Beginning Retreat
- **OCTOBER 1** - Fifteenth Annual Pheasant Hunt and Auction
- **OCTOBER 21** - Pax Christi Peace Conference in Watertown

AROUND THE WORLD YOUTH PROGRAM

THIS PROGRAM PROVIDES A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE FOR CHILDREN OF ALL FAITHS AND CULTURES!

During the month of June, children in the Youth Program will "travel" to different countries exploring culture, food, arts and sports.

AGE: 8-12 YEARS

COST: \$10

CONTACT: 605-878-2021
srteresawolf@gmail.com

TIME: 5:30-7:00 PM
Tuesdays and Thursdays.



For more information on any of the events, check out our website:
www.watertownbenedictines.org