“Now, from the Sponsored Ministries’ office window … a view of needs, justice, people, resources…”

“… to sustain the fundamental right of every person to pursue the fullness of life and to share in the common good.”

—from the Constitution of Sisters of St. Dominic of St. Catherine of Siena – Article 8

Racine, WI

Dominican ROOTS

Racine Dominicans
Commited to Truth • Compelled to Justice
As coordinators of sponsored ministries Ss. Carmen Agbuis, Jane Weiss and I have a unique perspective on our Dominican ministries. In this issue of ROOTS we offer you a view of our ministries as they appear through our guiding documents on “sponsorship.”

Presently, the Racine Dominicans hold six sponsored ministries—founded from 1864 to 2008: St. Catherine’s High School Corporation; Siena Retreat Center, Inc.; Catherine Marian Housing, Inc. (Bethany Apartments); HOPES Center of Racine, Inc.; Eco-Justice Center, Inc.; and Senior Companion Program, Inc.

Sponsored ministries are not-for-profit organizations formed under canon (church) and civil (state) laws. As such, they operate under a two-tiered governance structure. The leaders of our community, the Corporate Member, have reserved authority while a Board of Directors is the policy-making body and oversees the general well-being of the ministry. Day-to-day operations are the domain of an Executive Director.

Each ministry, consistent with the mission and values of the Racine Dominicans, was created to address a humanitarian unmet or undermet need, not duplicate existing services. Each endeavor holds the promise of promoting justice, reaching people to be served, achieving financial viability. A ministry exists until it is no longer needed and/or has fulfilled its purpose.

All sponsored ministries have varying sources of revenues, sources accessible to some and not to others, e.g., fees for service and government grants. Racine Dominican Mission Fund grants, use of properties, in-kind services, and volunteerism are some of the ways by which sisters and associates collectively and individually help to support our ministries.

Now, from the office window … a view of needs, justice, people, resources.

S. Chris is Sponsorship Coordinator for the Racine Dominicans, as well as Editor of Dominican Roots.
From the President
Maryann McMahon, OP

The Racine Dominicans follow in the footsteps and values of Saints Dominic and Catherine of Siena and our Foundress, Maria Benedicta Bauer. Though the historical backgrounds have changed, there is still need to serve the poor and to promote justice in our world. There is a paragraph in the Racine Dominican Constitution that is fundamental to our vowed commitment as women religious in the Dominican tradition:

“Commitment to truth in the light of the Gospel compels us to consecrate whatever power we have, personally and as community, to sustain the fundamental right of every person to pursue the fullness of life and to share in the common good. Today such a stance demands an explicit solidarity – in prayer, struggle, suffering, and hope – with those who are oppressed and alienated by systems designed to serve the interests of the wealthy and advantaged. This perspective governs our every ministry, whether that ministry is among the economically advantaged or among the economically poor.”

Each of our sponsored ministries was developed to meet an unmet or under-met need in society, such as:

- the education of German immigrants early on and now providing some central city poor children and others the benefit of quality education and character development,
- meeting the spiritual hungers of our times,
- providing care for our wounded Earth and teaching others to do the same,
- being companions to the lonely and frail elderly and homebound,
- helping women and their children rebuild their lives after experiences of abuse and neglect, and
- seeking to house and meet the unique needs of the homeless and mentally ill.

We share in the rich traditions of Dominic, Catherine and Benedicta through each of these ministries, striving for truth and justice in a broken and fear-filled world. Get a glimpse of how each ministry brings to life our commitment to sustain the right of every person to fullness of life and a share in the common good in this edition of ROOTS.

S. Maryann is the President of the Racine Dominicans
According to the Partnership Against Domestic Violence, every nine seconds, a woman in the U.S. is beaten. Every nine seconds! One in four women in our country will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, according to the Safe Horizon organization. Furthermore, domestic abuse is often complicated with mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse and homelessness.

The mission of Catherine Marian Housing (Bethany Apartments) is to provide transitional housing for women and children who have suffered domestic abuse. Those who staff Bethany recognize the life and dignity of the human person and choose to serve those who are among the most vulnerable in our midst.

Since 1990, when Bethany Apartments opened its doors to the first resident, nearly 300 women and over 400 children have been served. Families are offered up to two years of housing to become stabilized and to participate in individual and group-designed supportive programming, e.g., counseling services, treatment referrals, job skills, etc. Programming is intended to help prepare women and children to be safe, free from abusive relationships and self-sufficient.

As women and families come into Bethany with few financial resources to provide for their own needs, assistance is required. To that end, funding sources have to be identified for residents’ basic needs (food, clothing, rent), for programs appropriate for the women and children, and to maintain a qualified staff – all in a pleasant, secure, homelike facility. Like other ministries that serve primarily the poor, finding new operational revenue is always a challenge.

The following graph illustrates the sources of support for Catherine Marian Housing (Bethany Apartments). The annual operating budget is approximately $325,000.

Changes in previous funding sources and the changing needs of those who are served make fund development challenging. The Board of Directors and staff are working to create a Fund Development Plan that will sustain contemporary programming into the future.

In the midst of international concern for biodiversity, climate change, energy, environment and water, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, former Soviet president, in the Foreword to State of the World 2005, said, “We need a policy of ‘preventative engagement’: international and individual solidarity and action to meet the challenges of poverty, disease, environmental degradation and conflict in a sustainable and nonviolent way.”

Since the dedication of our Racine Dominican Eco-Justice Center in 2005, we continue to reflect upon our relationship to Earth and to respond to those who are in need. In keeping with its name, Eco-Justice, themes of social justice are echoed in the alliance with the food pantry, an option for the poor; and in the everyday work of the organization, the stewardship of creation.
The Racine Dominican Eco-Justice Center is dedicated to environmental education and care of Earth in a context of community, contemplation, creativity and cultivation.

The staff is committed to environmental education, sustainable living, and a wholesome environment where youth and adults can contemplate the interrelationships in all of creation.

At this time of the year, the gardens are in various stages of growth and harvest. Youth from the city participating in the Racine Area Youth Farm Corps are learning to garden and discovering the importance of good nutrition. Youth camps provide opportunities for children to experience life on a farm, tend to the animals and harvest the crops. A portion of the harvest is always offered to a local food pantry.

Adults gather to engage in discussions (e.g., Laudato si – Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment), to bake with herbs, to participate in a grains and yeast workshop and much more. Family events are also held.

Following is a graphic representation of the resources for the operations of the Eco-Justice Center. The annual budget for the Eco-Justice Center for 2015-16 was just under $210,000.

The future does hold its challenges: planning programs, attracting qualified volunteers, involving urban youth in the activities. As with many other non-profit organizations, funding has the attention of the Board of Directors and Board Committees.

St. Catherine’s Female Academy was founded in 1864 to prepare sisters for the advanced education needed to become school teachers. It then became an option for area girls to have a Catholic high school education. This humble beginning mushroomed into St. Catherine’s High School in 1924 with a new building, a co-ed program and numbers so large as to warrant teaching classes in two shifts! Throughout those years the sisters filled nearly 300 staff and faculty positions. The needs of the times dictated such faithfulness to the education of the youth of many immigrant families.

Today, there are approximately 350 students at St. Catherine’s; there are no sisters on staff; and operational cost is nearly six million dollars annually. Daunting! However, the future planning for St. Catherine’s School is a testimony to the commitment of the Racine Dominican Sisters to Catholic education. At a time when religious congregations are closing their sponsored schools, plans are underway for a rededication to excellence in K-12 Catholic school education in Racine.

St. Catherine’s is part of an initiative to form a K-12 Catholic schools system in Racine. This is no simple endeavor. Tearing down the walls of parochialism and “ownership” and rebuilding for the common good has both its perils and its joys. Archbishop Jerome Listecki has asked all Racine parishes to support Catholic education. The Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (vouchers) makes possible the benefits of Catholic education to all Catholic families.

Not all sponsored ministries are forever. When times change, when a need has been fulfilled, when there is a new need, something new happens. Follow the progress of this emerging project at www.racinecatholicschools.org.
As the human family awakens to the realization that nations and individuals cannot effectively live in silos, Siena offers a holistic and peaceful way of being in the world.

Today, Siena Retreat Center’s staff and Board continually strive to identify contemporary spiritual hungers:

- Telecommunications that offer instant information and helpful services also offer an overload of stimuli and an ever-quickening pace. The societal need for opportunities to practice mindfulness and prayerful reflection on life and life’s meaning is met through the center’s prayer and mindfulness opportunities, spiritual direction, and private retreats.

- Transitions due to career, family, and aging create the spiritual hunger for companionship through loss. Siena Retreat Center’s grief-related offerings open up worlds of peace and comfort to many who grieve various losses in their lives.

- An increasingly complex and interconnected global society surfaces the need for understanding of a diverse world. Retreat programming related to interreligious and interspiritual dialogue, ecology, theology, and current events helps to meet the need for learning how to live on this small planet.

When we understand ourselves as “spiritual beings on a human journey,” it is clear that meeting spiritual needs is as important as meeting basic human needs, which is the foundation of justice. Acknowledging the dignity of the human person, fostering the flourishing of life, caring for creation, and promoting solidarity within the human family are ways in which Siena Retreat Center’s and the Racine Dominicans’ commitment to truth and justice align.

Over 6,800 adults participated in programming at Siena Retreat Center from July 1, 2015, to June 30, 2016. People come from throughout the Midwest and beyond. Following is a picture of the income sources that support the operation of Siena Retreat Center.

HOPES springs eternal! What can better be said about a ministry that is caught in the throes of rapid social change and lives to serve?

Beginning in 2008 as an entrepreneurial ministry, the HOPES Center of Racine has actively evolved, responding to emerging needs and impacting factors, such as a growing availability of similar services, newly identified hardships, and available funding.

Presently the HOPES Center primarily serves the homeless. It does so in these ways: outreach (going out into the streets to find people without shelter), case management (assisting individuals to access needed services) and housing (finding appropriate housing and supporting an individual or family in successfully creating and maintaining a household).

From September 2015 to June 2016, nearly 800 counseling sessions were offered, over 400 street contacts were made, 17 individuals or families were placed in permanent housing.
No individual pays for the services of the HOPES staff. The 2015-16 budget was approximately $450,000. As the graph illustrates, income is primarily from grants. This is how the ministry presently stays alive.

Recognizing the worth and dignity of each person, HOPES Center serves the mental health and social service needs of the poor and homeless. Being faithful to this mission and securing uncompromising funding is at times like walking a tight rope. When a ministry is alive, it can change; when the priorities are the life and dignity of the human person and a choice for the poor and vulnerable, the ways to serve are endless.

Presently, Racine County has a population of about 195,000. Of that number nearly 30,000 people are 65 years old or older, some are in poverty.

As the number of older adults increases, so does the need for companionship to ease loneliness. The volunteer visitors in the Senior Companion Program (SCP) continue to help provide for this need on a weekly basis. Women and men are visited by volunteers who go to the homes of those interested in having this relationship. The mutuality of caring between visitor and visitee develops over time, and the visits become real opportunities of sharing life stories, memories, a prayer or a walk.

Currently, approximately 60 volunteers are visiting about 120 persons. The call for companions continues weekly. The need for volunteers is great, especially for men. New volunteers are often those who have had loved ones who participated in the program; they saw what it did for them and now volunteer to visit others.

Founded in 1978, SCP enhances the quality of life for adults through socialization and information. Participants believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person. Volunteers are equipped to provide useful information, e.g., how to apply for heating assistance, if needed, etc. The Senior Companion Program is attentive to the life and dignity of the human person and addresses the needs of those found wanting.

In 2015-16 the operating budget for the Senior Companion Program was $150,000. In the following graph, depicting the income sources for the program, notice there is no program revenue; there is no cost whatsoever to the persons being companioned.

The Board of Directors of the Senior Companion Program oversees the program, sets service guidelines, and monitors the income and expenditures of the organization. As the Senior Companion Program moves into the future, financial astuteness to provide the necessary funding for the program and its activities will be needed. Essential to the program, too, are volunteers to participate as visitors, matching the talents, experience and backgrounds to their mutual pleasure.
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