

Associates instill SSND influences in sponsored ministries

By Suzanne Blackburn, Director of Associates, Atlantic-Midwest Province



Associate Kathy Sylvester (bottom right) is with her retreat team of students and faculty from Academy of the Holy Angels.

In a recent conversation with **S. Kathy Jager**, who coordinates SSND mission integration at the Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore, Maryland, Sister Kathy stressed the importance of proclaiming and articulating the SSND charism in this, the congregation's first mission in America.

She spoke of the way in which the charism impacts prayer, retreats and outreach projects at the school. I asked myself, "Is there a role for associates in keeping the vision of Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger alive in our sponsored high schools?" I didn't have to look far to find a resounding "Yes!" to my question. Associates are serving as campus ministers and are working every day to direct their students' lives "toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent."

Associate **Libby Keady**, at Notre Dame Preparatory School in Towson, Maryland, feels that being an associate has impacted her approach to campus ministry.

"As an adult, a married woman with children of my own, I model to our girls how a lay person can remain connected to SSND and be empowered by the charism. I identify myself to them as an associate and show them how they can share the empowerment that our oneness can bring to a divided world."

Associate **Kathy Sylvester**, campus minister at Academy of the Holy Angels (AHA) in Demarest, New Jersey, keeps a copy of her covenant on her desk. She says that the SSND charism resonated with her early on in her career at AHA. When she began "to understand charism as a call," she decided to enter into the associate relationship.

Raising awareness of the charism that is fundamental to the foundation of their institutions is an important part of the work of these associates.

Kathy Sylvester says she tries "to SSND" prayer services and retreats, using stories of Blessed Theresa, Mother Caroline Friess and their school's history to remind the students of their heritage.

Both associates involve outreach to other SSND-sponsored ministries in the service opportunities for their students. This year, students from NDP visited the construction site at Marian House, an SSND co-sponsored ministry that provides housing and advocacy services to the formerly incarcerated.

"I wanted the girls to see the nuts and bolts of creating attractive and safe housing for those in need," says Libby.

Kathy looks for ways for AHA to link ministries with places like Caroline House in Bridgeport,

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Associate Libby Keady (left) took students from Notre Dame Prep to tour Marian House's Independence Place construction site, where a vacant Catholic school building was transformed into an apartment building for 22 homeless families.

Connecticut, and St. Peter's School in urban Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Students volunteer at the tutoring center in Bridgeport, while being housed at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton. Visiting the retired sisters in the evening and hearing their stories has become a highlight of their service project.

AHA students help faculty prepare classrooms for the opening school year at St. Peter's and then return to be with the students on St. Nick's Day. Once a year, they host St. Peter's students for a field day at AHA. Libby and Kathy actively look for ways to engage

their students in the Atlantic-Midwest Province's four commitments: immigration, human trafficking, water, and Haiti. Students from AHA have even participated in a Mission Awareness Process (MAP) program on the Arizona-Mexico border.

Is there a role for associates in SSND sponsored education? "Absolutely!" Libby says. "We intend to carry the torch of light and hope that is SSND, celebrating what unites us, into a world that is crying out for the light." □