

Loretto

MAGAZINE

Summer 2025 Volume 66, No. 2

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Loretto's commitment to Earth

50 years later: Operation Babylift

Mary Luke Tobin Award 2025

Loretto celebrates golden jubilarians

Our 2024 Annual Report

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Front cover:

A view across a field of pollinator habitat at Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky., is a breathtaking sight.

Photo: Cody Rakes, Loretto Motherhouse Farm director



Back cover:

The former adoptees from Vietnam who participated in the Motherland Tour pose for a photo on their final night together. The women wear their new Vietnamese dresses.

Photo: Lani Lang

At bottom: A beautiful lotus flower and a bee are snapped by Tobi Peters, tour participant.

Photo: Tobi Peters



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Sisters of Loretto • Co-Members of Loretto

'We work for justice and act for peace because the Gospel urges us.'

Loretto Community members teach, nurse, care for the elderly, lobby, minister in hospitals, provide spiritual direction and counseling, resettle refugees, staff parishes, seek to abolish nuclear weapons, work with people who are poor and marginalized and minister to those in need. Our ministries are diverse.

The Loretto Community, founded in 1812 as the Sisters of Loretto, is made up of Catholic vowed sisters and co-members.

Loretto co-members are those who, by mutual commitment, belong to the Community through a sharing of spirit and values, and by participating in activities that further our mission.

For information on co-membership:
<https://www.lorettocommunity.org/join-us/co-members>

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Dear Friends,

You make a difference!

These days as we both grieve the loss of Pope Francis and welcome Pope Leo XIV to lead us, we gather in prayer with gratitude for Francis, and gratitude for Leo as we follow him, creating a just and peaceful world.

I thank each of you for your support of Loretto. Your generous philanthropic gifts make it possible for us to continue to address our Community mission and goals.

We named these goals at our July 2024 Assembly. I would like to share with you what we are addressing. Each of our goals is in capped **BLUE**. The goals reflect specific articles in *I Am the Way*, the Constitutions of the Sisters of Loretto. You will read what drives us to do the things we do and the reasons we ask for your support.

CARE FOR THE SISTERS

- * We affirm that the greatest asset of the community is the life of every member.
- * We need to be realistic about our needs and about what we are able to do for others, both as a community and as individuals.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- * What we need to sustain us in the present and in the future becomes a corporate responsibility shared by each member. We are called, therefore, to prudent concern and wholesome freedom, seeking the delicate balance between being naive and being preoccupied about goods of any kind.

MISSION

- * We work for justice and act for peace because the Gospel urges us.
- * As we stand with Mary at the foot of the cross, we strive to bring the healing spirit of God into our world, and we commit ourselves to improving the conditions of those who suffer from injustice, oppression and deprivation of dignity. In this way, we participate in the Church's mission of proclaiming the transforming love of God.

COMMUNITY/SPIRITUALITY

- * The Spirit of God is not bound; it reveals itself in the lives of everyone. Even as we give to others, we acknowledge our need to learn from those to whom we are sent.

You will read in this issue some of the Loretto Community activities that further these goals: things we are engaged in with our members, people we served 50 years ago, young people in the school we began 160 years ago. We are including our annual report to you with such gratitude. Just as you have given back to your many communities, Loretto remains focused on being present for and with others. We strive to be a part of what Francis and now Leo XIV call us to do, that is, to walk in the steps of Jesus. Let's do this together.

Thanks to each of you for your life in whatever way you are part of Loretto.

God bless.

Sr. Mary E. (Buffy) Boesen SL
President of Loretto



Enjoying time in community at last summer's Loretto Assembly are, from left, Kathy Santopietro Weddel CoL, Carole Eschen SL, Mary Ann McGivern SL and Eleanor Craig SL. Photo: Paulette Peterson CoL

St. Mary's Academy celebrates Loretto and Earth

St. Mary's Academy students in Denver created prayer flags for Earth Day, April 25. Calling their commemoration "Be Loretto Day/Earth Day," the creative effort was aligned with the Students Spark Peace Rebuild Project, an organization St. Mary's has worked with for many years. Spark Peace encourages kids to share their visions for peace through creativity; in return they donate funds to peace-building groups around the world. (Watch a video about Spark Peace: <https://bit.ly/SparkPeace>.)

Regina Drey SL, director of Loretto projects at St. Mary's, shares that the 250 lower school students came together in buddy groups to create prayer flags using their own images and prayers for peace. "The purpose of this project is to inspire students to actively participate in creating their own spiritual space and to promote community wellness," Regina says. The flags were made of upcycled cotton fabric soaked in natural dyes using a traditional Japanese dyeing process taught by an artist from Japan. St. Mary's plans to send flags to the Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky., to display on the International Day of Peace in September and keep some to hang at the school.

In addition, as you'll see in this issue's [Spotlight Video](#), on Be Loretto Day/Earth Day, fourth grade Loretto Leaders held sessions to teach other students about the problem of microplastics. Even in the Himalayas, including on Mt. Everest, plastics are an environmental hazard. Read a fascinating article shared by Regina about the local traditions and meaning of prayer flags that have been increasingly made of plastic-derived materials like polyester: <https://bit.ly/HimalayaPlastic>. Local groups in the area are working to raise awareness and replace synthetic prayer flags with traditional biodegradable flags — similar to those made at St. Mary's.



Above, students create prayer flags for peace. In the photos at right, two students work on dyeing the flags. *Photos courtesy of Regina Drey SL*

Spotlight video



Regina Drey SL shares about St. Mary's Academy and Loretto Day/Earth Day.

On Be Loretto/Celebrate Earth Day at St. Mary's Academy in Denver, the lower school kids engaged in hands-on activities to join the Loretto Community in honoring and protecting Earth. Regina Drey SL is featured in the Spotlight Video, sharing, "Our little video is just about the lower school, but the middle school had many activities and high school artwork made of repurposed paper is displayed in a local gallery."

Check out our Spotlight Video page here: www.lorettocommunity.org/spotlight.

We love that we can join Loretto on Earth Day.

Regina Drey SL



Lower school children at St. Mary's Academy in Denver created prayer flags from reused cotton fabric and natural dyes, decorating them with their hopes for peace. Photos: Regina Drey SL



Vector World Maps

Pancratia Hall re-design wins award



A new apartment at Pancratia Hall on the Loretto Heights campus includes an original spiral staircase and a basketball hoop from the gymnasium. *Photo: Ruth Routten CoL*



Ruth Routten CoL, left, Mary Nelle Gage SL and Susan Ely pose for a photo. *Photo courtesy Mary Nelle Gage*



Pancratia Hall stands tall on the former Loretto Heights campus, welcoming new residents as it has for many years. *Photo: Ruth Routten CoL*

Pancratia Hall Lofts on the Loretto Heights campus in Denver recently was awarded a 2025 Mayor's Design Award in the Affordability – Existing Buildings category. The building, known as Pan Hall in Loretto circles, has been redeveloped by Jim Hartman and Susan Ely of Westside Investment Partners, who purchased the property in 2018. It now includes 74 affordable apartments. Westside Investment Partners shares, "The reuse of Pancratia Hall as affordable housing promotes sustainability and equity and ensures the future of the Loretto Heights campus remains rooted in the campus' treasured history." Historic Loretto photos line the walls and remnants of the building's original use have been incorporated throughout, including original terrazzo flooring, the chapel's stained glass window, spiral staircases and the gymnasium's basketball hoops.

Mary Nelle Gage SL, who has been closely involved with the redevelopment project from the start, shared about Loretto Heights's beginnings, "Pancratia Bonfils SL purchased farmland on Sheridan Hill in southwest Denver in 1888, engaged architect Frank Edbrooke, and the construction began." The 72-acre site sits at 5,510 feet, 230 feet above Denver, with panoramic views of the city to the east and the Rocky Mountains to the west.

In addition to the 2025 Mayor's Design Award, in 2023 Pancratia Hall was awarded the Stephen H. Hart Award for historic preservation by the Colorado Historical Society.



A historic postcard shows off Pancratia Hall, which housed students and classrooms for many years before Loretto Heights changed hands in 1989. *Postcard image: Loretto Archives*



Mother Pancratia Bonfils SL supervised the purchase of land and construction at Loretto Heights College in southwest Denver. She was the school's first superior when it opened in 1891. *Photo: Loretto Archives*

Operation Babylift: A return to Vietnam 50 years later



Attending the memorial service for victims of the plane crash in 1975 include, from left, Mary Nelle Gage SL, Phil Wise, U.S. Air Force crew member who barely survived the crash, and Aryn Lockhart, infant survivor of the crash. *Photo: Lani Lang*

In March and April of this year, Mary Nelle Gage SL and Ruth Routten CoL escorted former Vietnamese adoptees and their families to Vietnam to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Operation Babylift. The group ate together, traveled the country together, grieved and laughed together.

"The aim of Operation Babylift," Mary Nelle Gage SL told a former Vietnamese adoptee, "was to get you children out of harm's way." Mary Nelle, who cared for war orphans in Vietnam starting in 1973, wrote in an article in the [fall 2021 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine*, "By early April 1975, it was clear that South Vietnam was about to be overrun by forces from the north." The situation was urgent, the children vulnerable; as the bombing came closer, Mary Nelle and others frantically arranged for transport. Mary Nelle shared, "On April 4, in a devastating turn, the first Operation Babylift flight out of Saigon on a C-5A military transport aircraft carrying 320 passengers crashed shortly after takeoff. On board were 230 children. Seventy-eight children and six of our volunteers died, in addition to crew members and other passengers." In the 24 hours following the crash, two flights carried children to safety, and Operation Babylift flights continued through the month. In all, approximately 3,000 war orphans were emergency evacuated before Saigon was overtaken by Vietcong forces on April 30.

continued ...



Rows of mattresses fill the gymnasium at the Presidio, a former military post in San Francisco, accommodating children airlifted from Vietnam in April 1975 as they awaited transport to adoptive families. "This is where each child had a place to land, and where doctors, nurses and anyone from the community who would sit and hold a child and a bottle came and helped," Mary Nelle Gage SL shares. *Photo: Presidio Trust*



At New Haven Nursery in Saigon, Mary Nelle Gage SL holds Drew while Gregory looks on. Both children would be adopted into American families. *Photo: Loretto Archives*



In this photo, those on the Motherland Tour with April birthdays enjoy a special celebration. From left are Ben Johnson, Tobi Peters, Lonnie Markson, Tam Mihalic, Xindha Yaeger and Mary Nelle Gage SL. Photo: Ruth Routten CoL

Creating community

Most adoptees are now in their 50s. They share a history largely lost to memory, and for many, an uncertainty about their origins. Over the years, in addition to planning regular gatherings, Mary Nelle has led trips to Vietnam so that those who were adopted into other countries are able to experience their homeland, visit orphanages they lived in as young children and get to know their peers. The gift of connection is priceless. Lani Lang, a Motherland Tour 2025 participant, wrote, "The unspoken bond with these adoptees is deeply woven." Another adoptee said, "We are more than friends. We are family."

Susan Carol McDonald SL, who died in 2020, also organized reunions and escorted groups to Vietnam. She had been a nurse who was caring for orphans in Saigon in 1973 when Mary Nelle offered to help. Susan Carol accepted, saying to come immediately. Serving with the children and getting to know them as adults has served as a priceless gift for Mary Nelle and Susan Carol.

Two Places, One Heart

*Some say you must choose just one home,
But my family spans oceans, and I've grown
With stories told of both countries,
With love that crosses all the bridges.*

*Two places, one heart,
I knew it from the start —
Home is more than where you lay your head.
It's in every word my mother said,
In every meal, in every song,
In all the hands that helped me belong.
I'm at home in every part,
Two places, one heart.*

- Mirko Höfelmayr, Cologne, Germany

Read about Loretto's work in Vietnam in the [fall 2021 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine*. Watch a film created by Fox31 in Denver in honor of the 50th anniversary of Operation Babylift, including clips of Mary Nelle: <https://bit.ly/Babylift>.



Susan Carol McDonald SL, foreground, a nurse, tends an infant; she is assisted by Rosemary Taylor. Photo: Loretto Archives



Mirko Höfelmayr, center, meets two of his caretakers from the New Haven Nursery in Vietnam. Mary Nelle Gage SL and Susan Carol McDonald SL, who served at New Haven, also cared for Mirko in his early days. Photo: Ruth Routten CoL

"I am from DaNang ..."

I was at the Sacred Heart Orphanage. My birth certificate is blank. My adoption may be different from the others, as I was adopted directly by an American Marine. I was found in the woods by an American troop patrolling the area. They took me to the Sacred Heart Orphanage where my adoptive father happened to be visiting with the chaplain from his troop to pass out candy to the orphans. He saw me and told the nuns he wanted to adopt me. He left the country the next month, so he hired a lawyer to handle the adoption which took almost three years to complete. I was able to sit with my adoptive father before he passed away to document my beginnings."

Kim Johnson



Former adoptees visit the orphanage that was once home. In back, from left, are Kim Johnson, Heather Earls and My-Angela Buescher. Seated are Mary Nelle Gage SL, holding the Sacred Heart Orphanage record book, and Nguyen Thi Huynh Cuc. In the background photo, Kim Johnson holds open the Sacred Heart record book.

Photos: Ruth Routten CoL

Loretto continues efforts to heal Earth

Loretto Motherhouse Community members and staff continually look at how to further reduce Loretto's carbon footprint and protect Earth. Josh Ballard, Loretto Motherhouse director of operations, shares steps recently taken:

- **Installing solar panels at the Old Tobacco Barn**
The barn was renovated and is now a multi-use building where a variety of events can be held. We were able to partner with a solar company in Missouri to install a solar array to power the building.
- **Composting dining room waste**
All non-plastic waste from the Motherhouse dining room is now being composted. This includes paper towels, drinks and food. This waste is mixed with manure and spread as fertilizer at the farm.
- **Recycling, including electronics, styrofoam and glass**
We partner with Marion County to provide recycling to our residents. Glass is sent to Maker's Mark Distillery where it is pulverized into sand and used for walkways. Every year we hold an electronic recycling

week; employees and staff are encouraged to donate old electronics.

- **Upgrading lights to LED bulbs**
All lights on campus have been upgraded to LED. This technology can reduce our power consumption by up to 90%.
- **Updating mowing practices to allow for pollinator habitats**
We have minimized the areas we mow and planted pollinator habitats in the open fields.
- **Limiting use of plastic cups, plates and utensils**
We encourage the use of reusable items instead of plastic during events and meetings.
- **Installing and encouraging use of an EV charging station**
A dual charger is available free of charge for anyone to use.
- **Creating a conservation easement**
The easement, established in 2023, protects Loretto Motherhouse land from future development.



Cedars of Peace cabin refurbished, ready for visitors

In keeping with the tradition of repurposing wood and other materials at the Loretto Motherhouse retreat centers, a recently-refurbished cabin at Cedars of Peace now boasts a stunning floor made of wood whose many knots led it to be rejected for another Motherhouse project. Susan Classen CoL, director of Cedars of Peace, shares, "We had to cut each piece into 2 1/2" strips and save what was usable. I think the knots are part of the beauty, so it was worth it to me to do all the work of salvaging what we could." Turns out, knotty is beautiful!

The cabin's name, Joy, is fitting; visitors surely will experience joy here for years to come.

See the [winter 2022-2023 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine* for more about Loretto's retreat centers.

Above right, long-term Cedars of Peace retreatant and volunteer Aaron Cassada completed most of the work on this gorgeous repurposed floor.



Photos: Susan Classen CoL



For the beauty of the Earth ... planting trees, fostering healing

Loretto treasures the beauty of trees, in addition to the immense benefits they bestow on humanity and all life. Trees are often called the "lungs" of our planet, and planting them is one of the most beneficial actions we can take to heal Earth and mitigate climate change. The value of a tree is beyond calculation. Japanese tree doctors say trees have spirits. Indigenous people around the world see them as co-beings, not as expendable material. Cherokee peoples have called them "standing people." And trees help us heal. Studies show that patients in hospitals recover more quickly when a tree is visible through a window. We all know how time spent forest bathing is restorative for the soul.

One action Loretto took at its various properties and schools was planting trees and tending them with love — many are now 100 years old or older and thriving. Loretto continually adds trees at the Motherhouse. Last November, a new grove of dogwoods and redbuds went in, thanks to a donation, and just this past April, 100 oak trees were added to the property.

The extreme weather patterns we experience today are leading to greater loss of trees, and it is vital we plant replacements. Loretto's Native Tree and Plant Fund offers a wonderful opportunity to show your love for someone you care about, and for Earth. For those interested in donating to this fund, mail in your donation, or [donate online](#), choosing "Other Ministries." In the comment box type "Native Tree and Plant Fund." Thank you for co-caring for Earth with us!



Aaron Cassada plants one of six trees donated in honor of the outgoing Loretto leadership team. *Photo: Susan Classen CoL*

Above and below, this painting of trees and plantings by artist Gabriel Mary Hoare SL is currently part of a Loretto Heritage Center exhibit at Loretto Motherhouse.



Loretto Motherhouse



Cody Rakes, Loretto Motherhouse Farm director, teaches Nerinx Hall High School Outdoor Explorers Club members all about healthy soil. Photo: courtesy Angela Rakes

By Angela Rakes

From intensively rotating cattle, to restoring native habitat, to using no-till practices and cover crops, the Loretto Motherhouse Farm strives to regenerate the soil, leaving this land healthier than we found it. Under the care of Farm Director Cody Rakes are nearly 800 acres, including land in grain crops, cattle pastures, native plantings for pollinators and wildlife, managed woodlands and numerous lakes, ponds, streams and creeks.

At the 2024 Loretto Assembly the Community resolved the following: “That the Loretto Motherhouse Farm further Loretto’s mission by using the Loretto Land Ethic and *Laudato Si’* as guiding principles.” These principles guide

the care of the Motherhouse land with the core views “that careful consideration be given to the long- and short-term interests of the following: the life-enhancement of the immediate users, the local community, future generations of humans, the local bioregion and the planetary community.” With these principles in mind and the need for ongoing education for ourselves and others in regenerative Earth-centered practices, we are committed to spreading our work’s message through events like farmer field days, hayrides for visitors and annual events like Ag Bash. These events bring local farmers and others onto the property to look at real-world examples of the innovative practices we

use Farm educates for Earth's future



tucky Organic Conference sharing on “Grazing Our Way to Conservation”; he spoke about how we use environmentally-friendlier methods to raise our cattle.

This summer, for the first time, the Motherhouse is partnering with New Pioneers for a Sustainable Future to host a weeklong environmental summer camp, linking 50 elementary-aged kids with nature and the land. In keeping with the theme “Where the Wild Things Are,” students will learn about everything from aquatic animals to soil life.

Our busy summer includes adding native grass plantings, silvopasture and spreading bio-char as part of new grant projects. Through these practices, combined with educational events, we are renewed in our commitment to continue protecting Earth by implementing the values of Loretto’s Land Ethic and *Laudato Si’* and working with others to expand our impact to farmers in our area and beyond.


Angela Rakes serves as Loretto Motherhouse education and outreach coordinator. She is married to Cody Rakes, Loretto Farm director.



Angela Rakes teaches a roomful of kids about farm equipment safety. Photo: courtesy Angela Rakes

use to further our core values. As Cody has said many times, “The work we do on this land is important, but what is even more important is the impact we can have on thousands of other acres by hosting educational events and working with other farmers to implement these practices.”

This year the farm will be working with the University of Kentucky and the Organic Association of Kentucky to host at least two farmer field days on the property. These events will focus on our regenerative cropping systems, and include hands-on work with cattle for farmers. This past January, Cody was a featured speaker at the Ken-

A photograph of a lush green cornfield at sunset. The corn plants are tall and vibrant green, with their tassels visible against a sky transitioning from orange to blue. The perspective is from within the field, looking down a row of plants.

Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations.

Pope Francis
From [*Laudato Si'*](#). Click the link for the full text of the encyclical.

Background photo: A healthy corn crop grows at Loretto Motherhouse. Photo: Neil Tucker CoL

Loretto Land Ethic

As Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross, we are called to care for Earth in its pain, to celebrate its beauty and to create space for its healing. Land is our common heritage, owned by no one, responsibly tended and cared for by multiple generations of diverse peoples. Those responsible for land at any particular time should regard it as a sacred trust received with gratitude, tended with care for its integrity, long-term sustainability and historic connections with peoples now systemically dispossessed from lands.

We in the Loretto Community understand that our mission to work for justice and act for peace must include care of the land, including its many human relationships which are entrusted to us. We therefore commit ourselves to tend the land with respect for its integrity, conscious of:

- The capacity of land to be a sacrament of God's beauty and goodness, reflecting God's creativity and bounty in myriad, interdependent life forms.
- The necessity to recognize our human dependence upon the larger whole, and to tend the land in such a way that all life is enhanced and protected.

“When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered.” *Laudato Si* 70. (Also see 129: “To claim economic freedom while real conditions bar many people from actual access to it ... is to practice doublespeak. ...”)

It is our mission to continue to educate ourselves, both individually and communally, about Earth and its creatures, knowing that humans and the rest of nature are inextricably

connected. We commit ourselves to raise our bioregional consciousness and continue restorative processes on the land in our care, including its historic relationships with human communities, so as to maintain healthy and diverse communities of life.

Within this context, any use of the land will be guided by the following principles:

- I. That careful consideration be given to the long- and short-term interests and life-enhancement of the immediate users, the local community, past and future generations of human occupants, the local bioregion and the planetary community.
- II. That ecosystems and topsoil be restored and preserved.
- III. That renewable energy sources be given primary consideration, and that, when necessary, non-renewable resources be used efficiently and for long-term beneficial purposes.
- IV. That food scarcity and local food production and availability be a focus of future planning.
- V. That we commit to empowering human communities who, to our advantage, have been dispossessed from their historic connection to land; that we ally ourselves with their efforts to regain long-term agency over and access to land, consistent with this Land Ethic.



Cody Rakes discusses Loretto Motherhouse Farm conservation practices during a farmer field day.

Photo: Angela Rakes

Loretto Motherhouse a bird haven

Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself in which she sets her young at your altars, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.

Psalm 84:3

By Agnes Hoormann RSCJ

One evening during the 1990s when I was in my retreat cabin at Cedars of Peace on the Motherhouse grounds, I heard an unusual noise, like a whinny, at my window. I turned to look and saw an Eastern screech owl sitting on my window sill staring in at me with unblinking large yellow eyes. Then it made its quavering whistle again and I was mesmerized by this 8 ½-inch gray bird who soon flew away on wings designed to muffle any sound. That visitor sparked the beginning of my interest in knowing more about birds, as well as the observation of Thomas Merton that he felt he should get to know all his neighbors and call them by name since they shared the same air and space around his hermitage.

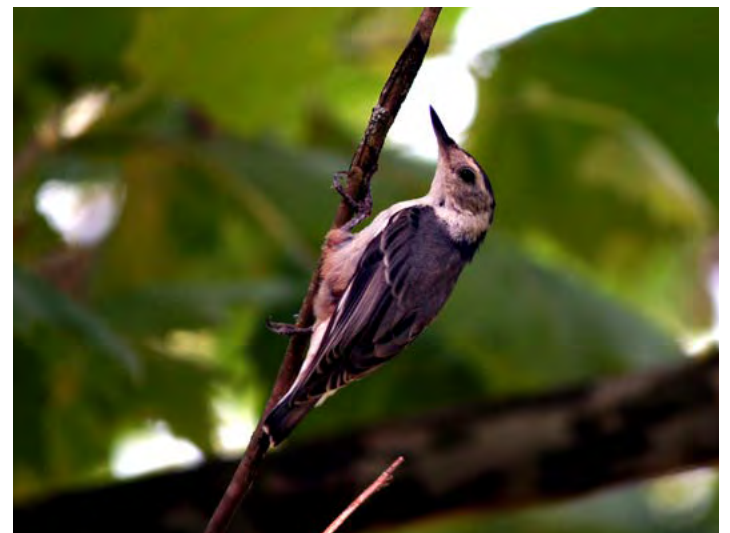
I am not a habitual birder, but in the spring of 2022, I thought that it would be interesting for the Motherhouse Community to know how many species of birds were actually close to the buildings, so I took my binoculars and began to consistently observe the trees and lawns. Within a couple of weeks I had identified over 60 bird species that could be seen and heard if you were listening and watching. In the spring of 2024, with my binoculars and the confirmation of the Cornell University bird-identification app, Merlin, I found that they were still here, along with others that I hadn't previously identified. For the Motherhouse Community and visitors who care about the environment, knowing that so many birds and other forms of wildlife thrive on this property is a source of joy and responsibility.

Besides the thrill of discovery, birdwatching is a contemplative practice. It draws a person into quietness and awareness, expectant waiting, hopefulness that something will reveal itself, a sense of peace and oneness with the universe in the fullness of the moment and deep gratitude for the abundant gifts of God's creation.

Agnes Hoormann RSCJ is a Religious of the Sacred Heart who was co-director of Cedars of Peace in the 1990s; she spends her time serving her Community and the Loretto Motherhouse Community, and lives part of each year at the Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky.



An American robin warms her nest on a Seven Dolor Station leading to the Motherhouse cemetery. Photo: Aggie Hoormann RSCJ



A juvenile white-breasted nuthatch climbs up a branch. Photo: Peg Jacobs CoL



A red-tailed hawk keeps a keen eye on the surroundings. *Photo: Donna Mattingly SL*

For the Motherhouse Community and the visitors who care about the environment, knowing that so many birds and other forms of wildlife thrive on this property is a source of joy and responsibility.

Agnes Hoormann RSCJ



Young robins clamor for food in a nest in a tree overlooking Badin Pond.
Photo: Aggie Hoormann RSCJ



A Northern cardinal perches in a tree during a winter storm. *Photo: Earna Volk CoL*

One spring morning at Loretto Motherhouse



Enjoy an auditory visit to Loretto Motherhouse! Listen to a short sound recording of bird calls recorded on site: www.lorettocommunity.org/bird-song

Within a couple of weeks I had identified over 60 bird species that could be seen and heard if you were listening and watching.

Agnes Hoormann RSCJ

Badin Pond at Loretto Motherhouse is a wonderful place to rejuvenate, listening to and watching the birdlife. *Photo: Aggie Hoormann RSCJ*



A great blue heron wades at Badin Pond. *Photo: Loretto Archives*



A red buckeye (*Aesculus pavia*) blooms at Badin Pond at Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky. *Photo: Christina Manweller*



In 2019, a study with results called "staggering" by scientists was published in Science magazine showing a precipitous decline in bird populations in North America: 2.9 billion breeding adults lost since 1970. [A 2025 study](#) shows the alarming decline continuing. Primary causes are habitat loss, environmental degradation and extreme weather events.

Help birds by: making windows safer, day and night; keeping cats indoors; reducing lawn by adding native plantings; avoiding use of pesticides; drinking coffee that's grown in shade; reducing use of plastics; growing your love of birds by watching and sharing with others.

- The study information and suggestions are from [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#).

A natural flyway for neotropical migratory birds

By Joy Jensen SL

Did you ever spot a Kentucky warbler or a yellow-breasted chat? They fly freely in the Loretto Motherhouse forests. They are neotropical migratory birds protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Neotropical migratory birds serve as an early warning system for alterations in ecosystems and their functions. Many neotropical songbird populations are declining because of environmental damage and the loss of deep interior forests, which are necessary for the birds to breed. The Motherhouse farm is blessed with large tracts of deep interior forests. Large forest tracts are unusual on private lands because of environmental harm and forest fragmentation.

The Motherhouse is in the Central Hardwoods Bird Conservation Region. We are located on the Mississippi Alluvial Valley bird flyway, and we are close to the Atlantic flyway. About 200 species of neotropical birds have been spotted in Kentucky.

Of the hundreds of birds on the Smithsonian Institution's conservation list of neotropical migratory birds, the following have been spotted in the Motherhouse forests: red-headed woodpecker, wood thrush, Kentucky warbler, American kestrel, Northern bobwhite, yellow-breasted chat and the chipping sparrow. The birds on the Kentucky conservation list that have been spotted are blue-gray gnatcatcher, Eastern kingbird, indigo bunting, purple martin, scarlet tanager, summer tanager and the wood thrush.



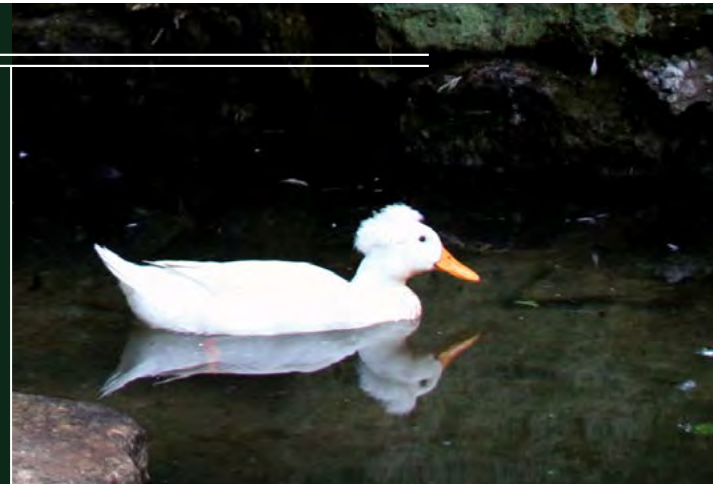
The abundant, healthy woods at Loretto Motherhouse are populated with birds. Photo: Christina Manweller

Our oak-hickory central hardwood forests are precious ecosystems that provide breeding grounds and abundant food for all these neotropical migratory birds. We are mindful of our Loretto Land Ethic as we preserve these deep interior forests. We are faithful to our mission to preserve the forests and care for the plants, birds and animals that live in this ecosystem with us.

This is an excerpt from an article that appeared in Loretto's internal newsletter in May 2018.

And so it happened: God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves ... and all kinds of winged birds; and God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, 'Be fertile, multiply and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth.'

Genesis 1: 21-22



A white crested duck paddles in the grotto near Badin Pond at Loretto Motherhouse. Photo: Loretto Archives

Celebrating Loretto's

Sharon Palma CoL

Mary Jean Friel CoL



When I joined Loretto, part of our group went to Denver, to the newly established novitiate. This is where I was first introduced to migrants. With the encouragement of many sisters, I was able to become an organizer with the United Farm Workers, Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Worker Ministry. These experiences and work on Loretto Community committees are with me today.

In 1975, my life changed from vowed to co-membership, and my life continued in Loretto. My life in the Community has been a joyous journey. Community is so important for our mission.

Loretto has supported me and my family my whole life. Our Community, our Spirit-filled life, our friends far and near are so precious and empower us to keep on trekking through each day.

Since joining Loretto, the unfolding of my life has been full of surprise and expansion. Loretto offered and supported service work as it was impossible to dream of as a 21-year-old: attending the U.N. with Betty Obal SL, going to Chiapas, Mexico, with Mary Peter Bruce SL, attending another year at the U.N. where we witnessed Japanese victims of the bombing of Hiroshima forgiving us, their perpetrators; later, welcoming and bandaging immigrants finding their way through the scorching desert at Nogales, Ariz. The experience of Susan Carol McDonald SL and Mary Nelle Gage SL in Vietnam impacted me so much that I found myself with my first child, a baby boy from a Saigon orphanage, and two teenage girls, Hua and Thuan, who joined us and became family!

There is more ... including 30 years in the Jemez Mountains of New Mexico working with and learning from the Jemez Native American Pueblo peoples — but the lasting truth is that I have been exposed to love, prayer in many forms and to service throughout my life in Loretto. The God I thought I knew as a young 21-year-old has exploded into a God of all nationalities, all faiths, all colors, all faces, all possibilities, all parts of the world. For my life, and all of the lives lived in Loretto, I am eternally grateful.

golden jubilarians!

“Our Community, our Spirit-filled life, our friends far and near are so precious and empower us to keep on trekking through each day.”

Mary Jean Friel CoL

Marcella Shields CoL



“The God I thought I knew as a young 21-year-old has exploded into a God of all nationalities, all faiths, all colors, all faces, all possibilities, all parts of the world. For my life, and all of the lives lived in Loretto, I am eternally grateful.”

Sharon Palma CoL

I am deeply grateful to the Loretto Community for the many opportunities and encouragement I was given in my work in a maximum security prison hospital, in the founding of the Toronto Children's Peace Theatre — still a beacon of hope in our violent world — and the opportunity to work with our Loretto office at the U.N. on a disarmament, peace and security committee.

My life has truly been enriched beyond words for being invited and encouraged “to work for justice and act for peace because the Gospel urges us.”



“My life has truly been enriched beyond words for being invited and encouraged 'to work for justice and act for peace because the Gospel urges us.'”

Marcella Shields CoL



We also extend hearty congratulations to Linda Gonzalez CoL.



Photo: Vision Photography Studio

Carrying forward Mary Luke Tobin SL's passion for social justice

We cannot look at the immense suffering in our world and say 'Wow, that is sad,' but should go out and make an actual difference.

Katherine Philipsen

By Katherine Philipsen
2025 Mary Luke Tobin Social Justice Award recipient

Catholic social justice plays a crucial influence in the role I hope to take on in serving my community as a woman, student and follower of Christ. For the past six years, I've held leadership roles in the National Charity League of Boulder County, Colo. This mother/daughter volunteer organization serves causes close to my heart. Our philanthropic activities have included writing cheer cards for Children's Hospital, cleaning the streets at a local art fair, volunteering at the Children's Museum, making sandwiches for homeless youth and welcoming home veterans at Denver International Airport who had been on an Honor Flight. As part of the apostolic ministry group at Holy Family High School, I've volunteered in the community for organizations such as Christ in the City, which serves the homeless population in Denver. 1 John 4 tells us that we cannot love God without loving our neighbor and that God is with us when we are with them. Without kinship among people we cannot have justice. We must remember that humanity was made to live in harmony, and we Catholics should strive to be role models of harmony with all of God's creation. Service allows me to bring my whole self to any situation or group, and I am grateful for any opportunity that may come my way.

People of different backgrounds, cultures and social status can give us important insight, worldviews and lessons that shape the world for the better. Diversity and solidarity can go hand in hand. A very meaningful experience for me was when I attended the Fundamentals of Engineering Program with Summer Springboard at U.C. San Diego in

the summer of 2024. I worked on projects with students my age from all around the world. Our different strengths, perspectives, knowledge and skill levels came together to fit like a puzzle. Cultural diversity can have great advantages in solving real world problems and/or injustices. Furthermore, working with people more or less fortunate than you is crucial to solving social justice issues.

This idea connects to a lesson I learned in my faith and action class during the fall of 2024. My class was visiting the Refuge in Broomfield, Colo., and encountered a man who had previously been homeless. Something that he said has stuck with me to this day. He told us to be "proactive and not reactive." We cannot look at the immense suffering in our world and say "Wow, that is sad," but should go out and make an actual difference. As suburban teenagers, we usually hear of injustices in the world, but have little exposure to it in day-to-day life. We must actively work to change this situation.

I plan on attending the University of Colorado at Boulder, and was accepted into the biological engineering program. After college I hope to work as an engineering manager or biological engineer. I anticipate continuing my social justice concerns/activities through the Fellowship of Catholic University Students as well as community service clubs in college. I want to pursue math and science to solve human problems. 1 Peter inspires me to use my talents and gifts to serve others. My college education will foster growth and provide opportunities to put these gifts into practice.



The Mary Luke Tobin Social Justice Award Ceremony on March 31 was inspiring. Seen from left to right are, Ken Fitch, Anna Koop SL, Joan Spero SL, Mary Vulcani, principal of Holy Family High School, Katherine Philipsen, the Rev. John Stapleton, the Rev. Marty Lally CoL and Gwen Berens-Gabriel. *Photo courtesy Ken Fitch*



Katherine Philipsen, front, serves at a lunch and clothing drive at Christ in the City, an organization serving homeless individuals in Denver, while taking a faith and action theology class last fall. Katherine and her peers supplied the lunch. She and fellow students took part in similar drives throughout the semester. *Photo: Joshua Havey*

The senior recipients, in their years at Holy Family, have consistently echoed the cry of the poorest of our society for dignity and labored in their own way for justice and peace — both inside and outside the Church.

Ken Fitch
Mary Luke Tobin Award co-founder

Pursuing justice

"Action for justice is a constituent element of the Gospel," wrote Mary Luke Tobin SL. Ken Fitch, teacher at Holy Family High School in Broomfield, Colo., was inspired by Mary Luke's commitment to social justice to create a scholarship for seniors who demonstrate a commitment to social justice. The first Mary Luke Tobin Social Justice Award was presented in 2012. Recipients of the award plan to continue their social justice actions beyond high school.

Learn more about Mary Luke Tobin SL in the [fall 2023 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine*.



Mary Luke Tobin SL lived a life committed to social justice. *Photo: Loretto Archives*

Rita Bruegenhagen

Feb. 25, 1937 – March 22, 2025

Rita Bruegenhagen grew up in St. Louis and loved living in the city. She met the Sisters of Loretto at DeAndreis High School and joined Loretto in 1956. She worked with Loretto Treasurer Ellen Mary Godfrey and later as treasurer for Loretto's Southern Province with an office in El Paso, Texas. Rita liked El Paso and accepted the bookkeeper job for the school and convent at Loretto Academy, positions she filled for five years. She worked in finance at Loretto in Kansas City, Mo., and later for the Archdiocese of Denver. She acted as finance manager at Incarnate Word Academy in St. Louis for 10 years and at St. Peter Parish in Kirkwood, Mo., for 15 years. Retiring from professional financial work in 2012, Rita served as a volunteer. In 2020, she moved to Loretto Motherhouse, gracefully accepting rural life.



Marie Ego

April 24, 1938 – Jan. 23, 2025

Marie Ego was born in Buffalo, N.Y. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in special education before joining Loretto in 1966. She completed a doctorate in psychology in Colorado where she taught college courses and worked as a psychologist. In 1988, she traveled to Ghana, West Africa, leading workshops on leadership development and interpersonal communication, especially focusing on serving those with HIV/AIDS. She moved to Ghana the next year, staying until 2005. Returning to Denver, Marie served from 2006 through 2010 as Loretto's justice and peace coordinator. Among other Community roles, she served on Loretto's health care staff, co-membership team, vowed membership team and Sister Community committees. Marie moved to the Motherhouse in 2013 where she served on the pastoral care team in the Infirmary, on the Motherhouse Peace Committee, wrote a book of poetry and enjoyed life at the Motherhouse.



Mary Ellen

March 22, 1930 – Feb. 2, 2025

Teaching was Mary Ellen's life ministry. Of her career, she said, "I have taught all ages from age 3 to persons in their 80s. My continuing interest in religion led me to one year of study at Pendle Hill, the Quaker center, and a year of study at Yale Divinity School with Henri Nouwen and Louis Dupre. The study and teaching of Tai Chi, the study of Buddhism and Taoism, the practice of meditation and the study of meditation practices are all part of my life." Mary was married for nearly 20 years, and divorced in 1970. "Since then, our children (Mark, Christopher, Stephen) have grown to adulthood," Mary had stated. On Oct. 23, 1981, she became a Loretto co-member. She shared, "Co-membership confirms and affirms my sense of oneness with Loretto."



Eileen Kersgieter SL

March 1, 1931 – May 11, 2025

Eileen Kersgieter met the Sisters of Loretto when she taught at St. Catherine School in St. Louis. In a few years she decided to join Loretto. Eileen spent over 30 years teaching, including serving as principal for two decades at St. Pius V School, St. Louis. She was service coordinator at Loretto Motherhouse for 11 years. Later she was an administrative assistant in the counseling office at Nerinx Hall High School for 13 years and on the coordinating team at Loretto's St. Louis Center for six years. Eileen said her greatest pleasure and sense of accomplishment had been "hearing about the children I taught as they became adults, mothers, fathers, meeting them out in public and having them recognize me and introduce me to their family as their former teacher or principal."



Bernice Strawn CoL**Jan. 18, 1930 – Apr. 20, 2025**

Bernice Strawn came into the world with a profound sense of curiosity, which she cultivated during her studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She was deeply influenced by anthropology, archaeology, astronomy and art history — disciplines that infused her art with a sense of wonder and historical depth. For more than 60 years, Bernice focused on wood and metal constructions, often repurposing materials to breathe new life into them. Her art was an invitation to engage with the spaces between, the dialogues of materials and the interplay of shapes and planes. In addition to her sculpture, Bernice and artist husband, Mel, raised seven children and were married for nearly seven decades. Bernice's legacy endures through her body of work and in the hearts of all who found inspiration in her vision.

**Rita Vigil CoL****Feb. 5, 1936 – Jan. 20, 2025**

Rita Vigil was received into Loretto as a vowed member on May 24, 1955, taking the name Sister Ann Denise. She was released from vowed membership in April 1970 and became a co-member in May 2004. Rita was a gifted and dedicated artist and teacher who lived for many years with Carolyn Mary Tighe SL in Colorado Springs., Colo. She died in Colorado Springs, the month before her 89th birthday.



Unabridged remembrances are found on the Loretto website:
<https://www.lorettocommunity.org/category/obituaries/>



Photo: Christina Manweiler

Annual Donor Report: 2024




*Our hearts
overflow
with gratitude*

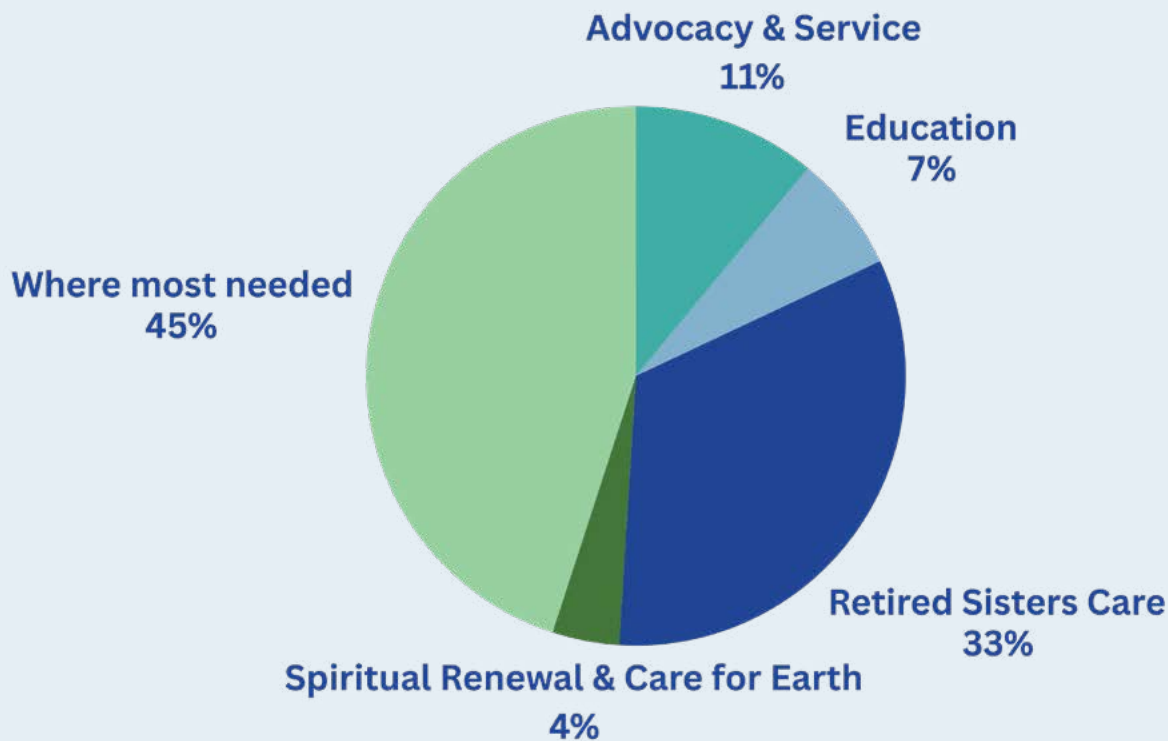


**\$1,356,107 in donations
received from 1,320 donors**

Clockwise from top: Mary Margaret Murphy SL, left, and Liz Deines SL share a smile; Loretto dances! From left, Mary Nelson CoL, Irma Avila SL and Barbara Roche SL boogie at Loretto's 2024 Assembly; Community members share company and smiles in Denver; from left are Theresa Miller CoL, Maureen Flanigan CoL and Anna Koop SL.



2024 Donations



- Advocacy & Service:** Includes gifts to support serving those in need of food, shelter and medical care; supports our work advocating for peace, immigration justice, women's and children's rights and more.
- Education:** Includes gifts that support Loretto's commitment to education for all, including our mission in Pakistan, schools in Haiti and Ghana and Loretto Justice Fellowship.
- Retired Sisters Care:** Includes gifts for the Retirement Fund, the Loretto Living Center, Motherhouse upkeep and more, ensuring that those who spent their lives giving to others are cared for as they age.
- Spiritual Renewal & Care for Earth:** Includes gifts for renewal and healing of ourselves and Earth through the retreat centers, Carbon Reduction Fund, Motherhouse Farm and more.
- Where most needed:** Includes gifts that allow us the flexibility to put funds directly to use where the need is most urgent.

Read about all of the funds to which our generous donors gave in 2024 on the following pages.



Donations were made to these Loretto funds in 2024:

Anna Koop SL Ministry supported Anna's work with the unhoused and the ministry of the Denver Catholic Worker house. Watch a video about Anna's life and work here: <https://tinyurl.com/2s2zvzka>.

Ann Manganaro Fund Supports purchases of medicine and other needs at the clinic Ann Manganaro SL founded in Guarjila, El Salvador. "Give me a Living Love: The Poems of Ann Manganaro SL" was published by Loretto in 2023 on the 30th anniversary of her death and can be ordered here: <https://www.lorettocommunity.org/about/artists-authors/books>. Learn about Ann's life and work in the [spring 2023 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine*.

FST Sisters, Ghana, helps support the school and programs of the Daughters of the Most Blessed Trinity (FST), a Loretto Sister Community that celebrated their 40th anniversary in 2024. Read about Loretto, the FST sisters and Ghana in the [spring/summer 2024 magazine](#).

Jeannine Gramick SL Ministry advocates on behalf of LGBTQ+ rights and acceptance, particularly within the Catholic Church. Jeannine is cofounder of New Ways Ministry. She met with Pope Francis several times. See a photo of Jeannine and Francis in the [spring/summer 2024 issue](#).

Haiti Projects Fund supports the many schools, orphanages and social services of the Little Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus. Barbara Wander CoL leads fundraising for this effort. The recent severe unrest prevented Barbara from traveling to Haiti, though she continues to send much-needed funds. Read more in the [spring 2023 issue](#).



Espacio Migrante, a shelter in Tijuana, Mexico, has received funds from Loretto's Hunger Fund. *Photo courtesy Espacio Migrante*

Hunger Fund distributes aid to various organizations as well as groups served by Loretto Community members (for instance, the Jemez Helping Hands food pantry at the Jemez Pueblo in New Mexico). St. Mary's Academy (Denver) students help raise funds for this program. See the article about this fund in the [spring/summer 2024 issue](#).

Immigrant Support and Advocacy helps to meet the needs of migrants on both sides of the Mexico/U.S. border and in the agricultural fields of the U.S. Funds help with food and shelter, educational trips, presentations and work with groups on the ground advocating for change. Includes the work of the Latin America/Caribbean Committee and Loretto Community members around the country. Donations also include gifts to La Casita in Louisville, Ky., in memory of Guadalupe "Lupe" Arciniega SL who served immigrants' needs throughout her life. See the [winter 2024 issue](#) for more on this work.

Loretto Carbon Reduction Fund supports projects that mitigate carbon emission damage, help heal and balance Earth's ecosystems or provide education. Read about this fund in the magazine's [spring 2023 issue](#).

Loretto Heritage Center Archives and Museum documents and shares Loretto history through the lens of our members. Professional preservation efforts are essential to the work, which includes continuing research initiatives, developing and displaying exhibits and more.

Loretto Justice Fellowship sponsors undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Texas, El Paso, with paid social justice internships at organizations serving immigrants and others in need. The fellowship launched in 2023 with seven fellows and continues to grow. Community



A Loretto Academy student volunteer holds a turtle at the Motherhouse.
Photo: Rachel Brahm



Jessica Garcia, left, 2024 Loretto Justice Fellow, pauses for a photo with Mary Margaret Murphy SL. *Photo: Annie Rosenkranz*



Barbara Roche SL teaches students about Loretto history during Nerinx Hall High School's Foundation Day celebration. *Photo: Jean M. Schildz*

building among the fellows and with Loretto is an essential aspect of the program. Read more in our [winter 2024 issue](#).

Loretto Living Center at Loretto Motherhouse (previously Loretto Motherhouse Infirmary) provides care for Loretto sisters and co-members, former employees and friends and neighbors in need in rural Kentucky. The Living Center consistently receives five-star ratings and is a major employer in Marion County. In 2023 the Living Center added independent living apartments.

Loretto Mission in Pakistan serves communities in Lahore. Loretto Community members in Pakistan have taught children and seminarians, met the needs of neighbors, helped empower women, installed solar panels and provided training in their installation.

Loretto Motherhouse Fund supports care and maintenance of the Motherhouse buildings and grounds in Nerinx, Ky., and provides for appreciation events for residents and staff. Guests to the Motherhouse often remark on the beautiful upkeep of the property and buildings.

Loretto Motherhouse Farm raises grass-fed beef and grows non-GMO grains using conservation practices that keep a significant amount of carbon in the ground and out of the atmosphere. Regenerative farm practices are shared with others through farmer education events, group tours and the annual Ag Bash. Read more about the farm on [pages 12 to 14](#) of this issue and in the magazine's [spring/summer 2020 issue](#).

Loretto Woods Natural Burial Cemetery provides for green burials on three acres of woodland on the Motherhouse grounds.



Loretto sisters Nasreen Daniel SL and Samina Iqbal SL, in white, left to right, are welcomed to a parish school in Lahore where Loretto has entered into a partnership to train teachers. *Photo courtesy Nasreen Daniel SL*



Nerinx Hall High School students from St. Louis volunteered at the Motherhouse, helping with many chores and delighting residents. Here they pose at the Motherhouse entrance. *Photo: Jen Staed CoL*

Loretto Motherhouse Tree and Native Plant Fund

purchases and plants trees and native plants to help mitigate climate change and add beauty at the Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky. Planting trees and native plants is important to helping mitigate climate change. Students from Loretto-affiliated high schools help with gardening during annual visits to the Motherhouse.

Loretto Peace Committee advocates for the abolition of nuclear weapons and reduction of the U.S. military budget. Read about Loretto's work to abolish nuclear weapons in the winter [2021 issue](#).

Loretto at the UN works toward international peace, climate justice and for the rights of women and children. The program hosts college interns and brings high school students to New York City to experience the U.N. The BVM sisters of Dubuque, Iowa, and Sisters Rising Worldwide partnered with Loretto in this work in 2024.



From left, student Emma O'Connor, Beth Blissman CoL, Loretto's representative to the U.N., and student Caroline Mentel experience the United Nations in New York City. *Photo: Emma O'Connor*

Mary Ann Gleason SL's Ministry cares for patients at St. Mary's Hospital Lacor in northern Uganda. Mary Ann has served in Uganda since 2013, primarily in oncology care and with patients with complications of HIV.

Mary Luke Tobin Social Justice Award honors students with partial college scholarships in memory of Mary Luke Tobin SL, renowned for her pursuit of social justice. A committee of Holy Family High School (Denver) staff, Loretto members and friends selects honorees based on demonstrated commitment to social justice. Scholarships have been awarded annually since 2012. Read about the current recipient on [pages 22 and 23](#) of this issue.

Retirement Fund ensures that provision is made for Sisters of Loretto who received little to no compensation for work in service ministries. Retired sisters volunteer as they are able, working on justice and peace issues, pastoral concerns and internal Loretto needs.



St. Mary's Academy students in Denver created pinwheels for peace, some of which were sent to the Motherhouse where they were planted by the peace pole. *Photo: Regina Drey SL*



Nerinx chaperone Samantha Coates (center, in purple) and students take a break from their gardening work on the Motherhouse grounds with Mary Swain SL, far right, and Eleanor Craig SL, wearing black. *Photo: Rachel Brahm*

Retreat Centers: Cedars of Peace and Knobs Haven provide space for rest, beauty and transformation. Cedars offers eight cabins in a wooded area for those seeking solitude. Knobs hosts groups and individuals in two beautiful buildings on the Motherhouse campus. Read about the retreat centers in the winter [2022-2023 issue](#).

Special Needs Fund provides long-range social change grants to organizations whose work reflects Loretto priorities. In addition, the fund assists individuals impacted by emergency events.

Where Funds Are Most Needed supports our mission and gives Loretto's leadership the flexibility to allocate funds as needed. Your confidence in our work is gratifying.



Students at Nerinx Hall High listen to presentations during the Loretto Foundation Day commemoration. *Photo: William Laird*



Teachers from Loretto Academy in El Paso, Nerinx Hall High School in St. Louis and St. Mary's Academy in Denver attended the annual teacher immersion and learned about Loretto history and values so they could return enriched with Loretto life to the Loretto-founded schools. Regina Drey SL led the experience. *Photo courtesy Regina Drey SL*



Annie Rosenkranz, front, joined the March for Human Dignity in El Paso with Loretto Justice Fellows. *Photo: Annie Rosenkranz*

Memorials and Tributes of Honor

January 2025 – April 2025

In Honor of: **Requested by:**

An asterisk (*) following a name identifies a Loretto co-member.

Patti Chipman, student counsel president, Loretto Academy 1965

Eva Antone Ross

Denise Ann Clifford SL

Rosemary Filippone

Donna Day SL

Donald F. Cuddihee Sr.

Jeannine Gramick SL

John M. Le Bedda II

Cristina Noyes

Ryan Ignatius Pratt

Mary Jo Highland

Mary A. Highland

Fr. Marty Lally

Carol Rossi

Loretto

Catholic Sisters Week

Ximena Ferguson

Holy Family class of '60

Regina and Timothy Bowman

Loretto Heights Class of '64

Regina and Timothy Bowman

Sisters of Loretto

Lisa Reynolds*

Mary Ellen McElroy SL

Elizabeth and Bill Mariner

Valerie Novak SL

John Novak

Elaine Marie Prevallet SL

Karen Nicholson

Elfie & Sandro Profaizer

Emma and George Steen

Sandy Richardson

Kathleen Stewart

Eva Marie Salas SL

Ximena Ferguson

Sylvia Sedillo SL

Patricia Drypolcher

Janis Sedillo

Rosina Sedillo

Marlene Spero SL

Margaret Veatch

Marie Lourde Steckler SL

Mary Joe Zeillmann

Mary Swain SL

Elizabeth and Bill Mariner

Mary Ann Thornberry and Family

May Ann Tramutola

Kathleen Tighe SL

James Tighe

Phyllis L. Tighe

In memory of: **Requested by:**

Barbara Ann Barbato SL

Janyce Angel

Gary, Lou, Keith and Kim, F/m
Investments

Donna Marie Campbell

Martha Belke SL

Kevin and Julie Dicken

Rita Bruegenhagen SL

Robert and Rosemary Emnett

Virginia Gerdes

Kathleen Sheehan

Mary Rhodes Buckler SL

Margaret Veatch

Kay Carlew SL

Ellen Castille

Richard Carr

Anne Karl Hemmer

Mary Jane Cella

Patty and Bernie Michalek

Rosemary Chinnici SL

Mei Yuk Kung

Elizabeth Ann "Aunt Sis"

Compton SL

Kaye Strom

Lee Connolly SL

Michael Tevlin

Felicia Corrigan SL

Ann M. Corrigan

Mary Ann Cunningham SL

Virginia Day

Karen Nicholson

Carolyn Luckett Denning

Mary Louise Murphy*

Gina Book and Judith Sanderson

Mary Elizabeth Wathen

Marie Drummond IBVM

Holly Georgell

Marie L. Ego SL

Kay and John Burniston

Cornelia R. Dietz

Donald and Cecilia Lojek

Gail E. Petersdorff

Mary Beth Reese

Carol Rossi

David and Christine Wagner

Mary Clara Eickholtz SL

Raymond Eickholtz

Mary Ellen*

Cliff and Nancy Chenette

Marie Agnes Fobes SL

Bob and Toni Swanson

Ann Francis Gleason SL

Patty Michalek

Father Roland Freeman

Carol Rossi

Mary Lou Gomez-Leon CoL

Edward Tinoco

Gondina Greenwell SL

Elizabeth and Bill Mariner

Agnes Marie Hagan SL

Rose Marie Hayden

Judy Bacon Harding LHC '63

Peggy Jo Dunn

Catherine Henemann

Adele and Bill DeLine

Joseph Highland

Mary A. Highland

Eileen Kersgieter SL

Sr. Mary Schmittgens OP

Cecily Jones SL

Marcia Martinez

Patricia Ann Lewis

Marie Ego SL

Paschalita Linehan SL

Alicia M. Suarez-Marill and Kenneth

B. Larson

Loretto

**My Teachers at Loretto on
Broadway, Louisville, Ky.**

Mary Joe Zeillmann

**In Gratitude to the sisters
of St. Philomena's School**

Sharon Costello

St. Louis Sisters of Loretto

Paul and Debra Schiavo

Carlos Marie Lubeck SL

Regina Lubeck

Peggy Maguire

Christina Hillard

Patrice Rosenkranz

Patricia Jean Manion SL

Patricia Drypolcher

Edwin Mary McBride SL

Margaret Veatch

Sherran Harrington McDonough

Constance and Richard Allen

Denis P. McInerny

Katherine McInerny

Judith McIntire

Terry McIntire

Elizabeth "Betty" McWilliams SL

John Scholz

Sandra J. Wronski

Betty Murphy

Adele and Bill DeLine

Susan Murray

Michael Tevlin

Frances Mary Myers SL

Michael Tevlin

Jeanie Fabac Nelsen

Emma and George Steen

Peggy Nelson

Margarita Covarrubias

Rosalie Marie Phillips SL

Raymond Stevison Jr.

Cathy Philpott

Anne Fajardo

Geraldine Piel

Gregory Piel

Marie Catherine Pohndorf SL

Margaret Veatch

Marie Joann Rekart SL

John Rekart

Jane Marie Richardson SL

Jean King

Francis Louise Ritter SL

Katharine Bick Merritt

Mr. and Mrs. Paul M. Schmidt

Regina H. Schmidt

Rose Alma Schuler SL

Donald F. Cuddihee Sr.

Miniata Scott SL

Estate of Rosemary Scott Costello

Olympia Scott SL

Rosemary Scott Costello

Ann Skeffington SL

Deborah Bowers and Family

Mary Frances Soulis

Harriet Mullaney

Roseanne Thornton SL

Barbara and David Thornton

Alice Eugene Tighe SL

Elizabeth and Bill Mariner

Mary Luke Tobin SL

Mary Sue Anderson

Rev. Sharee Johnson

Concetta Torrillo SL

Larry Brunelli

Kathleen Vonderhaar SL

Elizabeth and Bill Mariner

Donate in honor of, or in memory of, a loved one or a cherished Loretto member:

www.lorettocommunity.org/donate



Loretto builds on education tradition, facilitates unique and critical training at Loretto Motherhouse

By Anndavid Naeger SL

Some of us remember the malodorous smells which sometimes drifted in our direction when the nearby Blanford family operated a pig farm. After Loretto bought the house and acreage, the structure was renovated and used as a retreat and vacation house. After many years, the house was spruced up again before I moved in. After five years, Sisters Kay Carlew and Marie Lourde Steckler lived there and finally, Jessie Rathburn CoL with her husband, Andy, and their boys. When they left, the house was appraised and determined to have reached the end of its days.

Fire Chief Bobby Joe Mudd in the nearby city of Loretto, Ky., was contacted and he was immediately interested, saying that it would be an excellent educational tool. Very seldom do their new trainees get to learn from a burning building. Bobby Joe and some friends had to tear off all the metal siding on the structure and remove the roof shingles. Then the areas of study were determined: A: the second floor bedroom, half bath and attic; B: the first floor west two bedrooms; and C: the rest of the house, another bedroom, living and dining rooms, kitchen, bath and basement.

After much texting, phone work and delays, 12 fire departments responded and arrived with 45 fully geared students and 25 instructors ready for a unique learning experience. They had spent the morning in the classroom studying the procedures they would execute at the site.

Starting in the A section where some hay bales and wooden pallets had been ignited, the first of many teams went in to extinguish the flames, then assembled outside to discuss their performance while another team went in for the same drill after the room had been relit. When that area was finally consumed, the program moved to areas B and C. Each of the many teams had 25-30 entrances and exits and was rewarded with pizza and soda between turns. One fellow who had driven three hours to participate said, "I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Some of the house had been constructed with oak logs, which helped to make the event last all afternoon and into the evening. The many fire trucks had to haul in water as there is no fire hydrant in that area.

A very grateful fire chief said, "You just can't duplicate in a classroom the adrenaline rush of entering a burning building. We don't get to practice with a real burning house, so this has been an invaluable teaching/learning session."



Firefighters head toward the burning house in the first phase of the exercise. Photo: Anndavid Naeger SL



The training is nearly completed. Photo: Anndavid Naeger SL

This has been an invaluable teaching/learning session.

City of Loretto Fire Chief Bobby Joe Mudd

Postscript

Dear Loretto Friends,

You don't have to look far these days to read about the benefits of feeling and expressing gratitude. One organization lists 31, starting with how gratitude makes us happier.

Well, we at Loretto are very happy, reflecting with great gratitude on our multitude of donors — 1,320 individuals, alumnae groups and religious communities whose 2,120 donations in 2024 totaled \$1,356,107. We also received proceeds of bequests from seven people who continued their commitment to Loretto through a gift in a will.

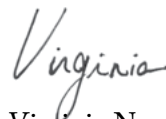
You express with your gifts your gratitude for the Loretto sisters who taught you, cared for you and invited you into their mission to work for justice and act for peace. That work continues. For example, one group at the Motherhouse, undaunted by age, has been standing on street corners protesting cuts in government funds that serve the poor, educating passersby. They are grateful that Community members who can't be with them hold them in prayer. I am grateful to them all.

I am also grateful for Loretto's talented and committed staff members and am particularly thankful for the recent hiring of Lisa Smith as director of advancement, increas-

ing our development office's capacity to serve Loretto. Lisa brings more than 20 years of fundraising experience to this job. As you can see from her words below, she is excited about this work.

"As a Kentucky native, I'm honored to join the Loretto Community as director of advancement. What drew me here is the bold, compassionate mission lived out by the sisters and the broader Community — work that feels especially vital in today's world. Loretto's progressive spirit and deep commitment to justice resonate deeply with my own values. I'm excited to help share this mission and connect with those who believe in its power. Thank you for welcoming me into this extraordinary circle of care, courage and faith."

Our circle of gratitude and joy keeps growing. Thank you all!



Virginia Nesmith
Development Manager

vnsmith@lorettocommunity.org



Silver
Transparency
2025

Candid.

Loretto is delighted to announce that we have joined Candid and proudly achieved the Silver Seal of Transparency. We remain committed to fostering ever greater accountability and transparency as we live out our mission to "work for justice and act for peace because the Gospel urges us."

Candid is a nonprofit transparency organization that evaluates nonprofits based on their shared information.



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Returning to a motherland they don't remember ...



In March and April, Mary Nelle Gage SL and Ruth Routten CoL escorted former Vietnamese adoptees and their families to Vietnam to commemorate Operation Babylift's 50-year anniversary. Both Loretto members had served in orphanages in Vietnam and Cambodia during the Vietnam War. In this photo of the former adoptees at a farewell dinner, the women are wearing their new Vietnamese dresses. Also pictured are the trip guide, Viet, at far left, and three former caregivers: Mary Nelle wearing dark blue and seated in the center, Ruth, seated at far right and Peggy Hammond between Mary Nelle and Ruth. Read about the tour on [pages 7-9](#).

*A special blessing for me was making this journey
with adoptees who had been in our nurseries.*

Mary Nelle Gage SL



Tobi Peters snapped this photo of a water lily and a bee during the Motherland Tour 2025.