

# Loretto

MAGAZINE

Winter 2026 Volume 67, No. 1

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Loretto Jubilarians celebrate 75-plus years

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... and more

Happy  
Birthday



Bridge  
Community!



Alive with

LOVE

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**Front cover:**

Gathering for a photo at Bridge Community in the 1990s are, back row: Theresa, Maria, Linda and Shirleen; in front are Donna, Lisa, Kate and Mary.

Photo: Bridge Community



**Back cover:**

Bridge Community staff and residents prepare to visit the National Western Stock Show in Denver. From left, Marci, Lydia Peña SL, Melissa, Theresa, Mary Kay Widger SL and the Rev. Roland Freeman, holding Houston.

Photo: Bridge Community



Loretto  
COMMUNITY

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 a congregation 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:  
[www.lorettocommunity.org/join-us/co-members](http://www.lorettocommunity.org/join-us/co-members)

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*Dear Reader,*

I have a small poster in my house that reads, “Take time to wonder, to give thanks and to praise!” As I walk into 2026 with you, I wonder about so many things.

I wonder what our world would look like without war, strife, poverty and so much suffering. Am I doing enough to help create a more peaceful, sane and caring world — both individually and communally? Still, I give thanks and praise for the small gains we see as we work toward a world where people are cared for and have what they need.

I also wonder about our Loretto life together. I wonder where we would be without these 214 years of history and what the world would be like had we not been given the wonderful opportunities to share our lives in service and praise of God.

After Vatican II, we took on ministries we had not traditionally done. Many continued to teach, and others began to work with the other compelling needs we saw around us. One of those paths was the Bridge Community in Denver. I wonder what life would have been like for those young women had they not been able to grow old within the Bridge Community? These women, with differing degrees of physical, emotional and mental needs, have been nurtured, loved and enabled to flourish through the vision and dedication of Sister Mary Catherine Widger and many others. I think of all the Sisters, Co-Members and friends who have walked with this community. I give thanks and praise for this true bridge. I wonder what part of our own lives would be missing had the Bridge Community not

been part of Loretto? I know that my life is enriched by this steady, quiet, peaceful and life-giving work.

I also wonder what life would be like without the work of our archivists and historians. Over time, they have helped us see the areas where we have succeeded and the areas where we fell short. The work we do together is guided by the gifts we have been given and by how we have responded to and used those gifts. Sister Eleanor Craig and others called us to recognize our role in the enslavement of individuals of African descent more than 200 years ago. I wonder if there are other areas in our more recent history where we are called to make atonement.

I wonder what my life — and the lives of so many of us — would have been like had we not been given the opportunity to continue our ministry of education in our schools. I am always heartened when I meet an alum from one of our schools and have a chance to catch up. I am also heartened by the notes of appreciation we receive from so many who were once our students. Their memories of so many Sisters cheer me. One day around Christmas, I noticed that gifts to Loretto had been made in memory of and in honor of many Sisters of Loretto. What an impact these, and thousands of other Sisters of Loretto, have made on us all.

I wonder how our world would look if we, as a Community and as individuals, had not been called to be members of Loretto? I wonder where we would be without our faithful friends, families and supporters? “We give you glory thanks and praise. Oh, bless our works and guide our ways.”

God bless each of you in 2026.

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

*God cuts off every branch in me  
that bears no fruit, while  
every branch that bears fruit  
God prunes so that it will  
be even more fruitful.*

**John 15:2**



Photo: Mary Louise Denny SL

# Loretto legacy of excellence continues at schools

## Escuela de Guadalupe



Photo: Escuela de Guadalupe

Susan Swain SL and Joy Gerity CoL, who had been principals at St. Mary's Academy in Denver, were members of **Escuela de Guadalupe's** founding group in 1999. Teacher retention often reflects a school's health and vitality. At Escuela, a fully bilingual and bicultural school,

more than half of the teachers have been at the school for more than a decade. Several have been teaching at Escuela for nearly 20 years. Read about Escuela in the [spring 2022 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine*.

## Havern School



Photo: Havern School

**Havern School** was named Colorado Parent Magazine's 2025 Family Favorite for its Special Needs Education Program. The school shares, "This honor, voted on by families across Colorado, reflects the incredible impact of our programs and the community of support that surrounds our students." Havern was founded in 1966 by Sisters of Loretto under the expert guidance of Barbara Schulte SL and Dorothy Hurley SL and was a groundbreaker in the country, serving kids with learning disabilities in a time when the field was just emerging. Read about Havern in the [winter 2020 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine*.

## Marian Middle School



Photo: Marian Middle School

Under the initial leadership of Nancy Wittwer SL and Madonna O'Hara OSU, in 2000, seven congregations of women religious came together and opened **Marian Middle School**, a school for girls in St. Louis.

In addition to providing a quality education, Marian's values include faith, family, community and fostering justice, peace and equality. The school is committed to serving families from lower-income backgrounds.

In their fall 2025 newsletter, the school shared, "Through a partnership with the Marine Advanced Technology Education Center, Marian Girls designed underwater drones last school year in an effort to solve real world challenges. The curriculum focused on the engineering design process, circuits, buoyancy, fluid mechanics and safety. One student, Phoenix, attended the underwater robotics competition." Phoenix dreams of one day becoming a mechanical engineer. Read about Marian Middle School in the [fall 2023 issue](#) of *Loretto Magazine*.

## St. Mary's Academy

**St. Mary's Academy** was opened in Denver by the Sisters of Loretto in 1864, before Colorado was a state. The first diploma in the territory was awarded to a St. Mary's grad.

Iswari Natarajan, school president, shared in her fall 2025 letter to the St. Mary's community that she is "inspired to draw on the heart and soul of our founders ... with humility purpose and devotion." She writes, "The Sisters of Loretto were forever forward-thinking and strategic in their decisions on behalf of our students. Loretto School Values will continue to shape every decision we make on campus, large or small." Learn more about St. Mary's in the following pages.

# The Bridge Community in Denver celebrates life and love as a family



Mary Catherine Widger SL lives with and serves intellectually disabled women in Denver.

Photo: Christina Manweller

**M**ary Catherine Widger SL has served those with intellectual disabilities for 50-plus years. In this issue, [read about](#) the community she cofounded with the Rev. Larry Freeman and Sue Rogers SL more than 40 years ago to serve intellectually-disabled women. As Bridge has aged, so have the women who live within the community, all the while celebrating birthdays and milestones with their second family. We wish Bridge a very happy 41<sup>st</sup> birthday this coming April. And many more ...

Watch a short video of Mary Catherine talking about the Bridge Community. Check out our Spotlight Video page here: [www.lorettocommunity.org/spotlight](http://www.lorettocommunity.org/spotlight).

*It's a community of joy.*

Mary Catherine Widger SL



**See our most recent Loretto Spotlight video:**  
[www.lorettocommunity.org/spotlight](http://www.lorettocommunity.org/spotlight)

Vector World Maps



Christina Garcia CoL teaches at St. Mary's Academy in Denver.  
Photo courtesy of Christina Garcia

# Living Loretto:

## Meet St. Mary's educator & Loretto Co-Member Christina Garcia

**'The Loretto Community aligns closely to my heart and the way I grew up seeing the world. There is something very special about this Community.'**

Christina Garcia CoL

By Christina Manweller

"It is important that nothing in our lives cuts us off from other human beings. Rather, we try to live so that everything about us, our words and works and manner of living, promotes understanding and peace among ourselves and others."\* Christina Garcia CoL recites a paragraph from the Loretto Constitutions, a quote she uses in a six-week class for eighth graders appropriately called Living Loretto — a quote she lives out daily.

Christina, who holds a master's in communication with an emphasis in social justice in education and a bachelor's in modern languages with an emphasis in Spanish, felt called to work in education, but for years she heard, and

heeded, warnings that she should not become a teacher because she'd always be poor. She gravitated toward educational nonprofits and found the work fulfilling. Working for a scholarship foundation — a job that took her into schools all across the Denver metro area — she enjoyed interacting with students; she even taught a bit. But the warning echoed: *You'll be poor ....*

Why rock a boat that was sailing smoothly? Then one day, she found her schedule taking her to St. Mary's Academy to deliver a presentation. And a few weeks after that, the Spanish teacher called to say she would soon be leaving her position. She wondered if Christina might be interested

in applying. Christina's one-time experience at St. Mary's had been uplifting, compelling. What if teaching really was for her? *What if...*? Yielding to a strong pull, she turned straight into the wind; she submitted an application.

Now in her 18th year at the school, Christina teaches Spanish and serves as co-director, with Regina Drey SL, of Loretto Projects and Community Engagement. She loves her work, the students, St. Mary's, Loretto. What could be more satisfying? There is no doubt: Taking a risk filled her sails with the wind that carried her to her life's calling. Sometimes a smoothly sailing vessel needs a nudge, perhaps from a Divine breeze, to get out into deeper, life-giving seas.

Christina's family grounded her in the values — community, compassion, forgiveness and gratitude — that she also encountered upon joining the staff at St. Mary's, "and became," she says, "completely immersed in Loretto." When she learned the history of Loretto," she says, "I realized I was working at a place that was an extension of my life. I get to go to work, and I get to live out those values. Then I go home and live the same values. How blessed am I to work at a place that has these same values?"

"Living Loretto," Christina says, "comes out in the way that I teach." She approaches her day-to-day service in the classroom by asking, "How can I make your day a little better?" She says, "Connection is everything — building a relationship built on respect and trust and humor." Anchored in Loretto, with its 214-year history of educating and nourishing students, brings inspiration and guides her on her life-course of connection and compassion.

### **'At the end of the day, we're in this together; let's learn from each other.'**

Before encountering Loretto, while employed in her previous position, Christina had been asked to step in and teach a class for a few weeks at a juvenile detention facility west of Denver. She did not relish the assignment; in truth, it terrified her. She arrived on her first day burdened with fear; the facility was like a prison, including barbed wire and heavy doors clanging shut behind her. The fear felt overwhelming, but she had committed to do this job.

Unexpectedly, and in spite of the fear, she soon found that she and the teens truly and deeply connected. Christina now sees that class as one of the very best of her life. It was their stories that opened a channel through fear's roiling waters. "We would laugh," she says. "We were able to create trust." She adds, "I learned as much from them as they learned from me. At the end of the day, we're in this together; let's learn from each other." This experience brought home an important truth: Fear is a root cause of injustice. "We judge what we don't know," she says, adding, "There is a connection somewhere with everybody. We're not so different. We have a shared humanity. Fear separates



Regina Drey SL and Christina Garcia CoL pause for a photo during Christina's Co-Membership celebration in 2023. Regina and Christina are co-directors of Loretto Projects at St. Mary's. *Loretto staff photo*



Christina Garcia CoL, far right, spends time with students in her middle school advisory group. *Photo courtesy St. Mary's Academy*



The school's annual Latino Heritage Night is a festive celebration. Christina Garcia CoL poses with a student wearing a Mexican-style embroidered blouse. *Photo courtesy St. Mary's Academy*

us.” With personal experience underscoring this truth, she daily carries the lessons learned alongside the teens at the detention facility into St. Mary’s Academy.

Helping newly-arriving teachers at the school learn about Loretto is one of many aspects of her work that she values. Along with Regina, Christina dispenses lessons in “all things Loretto.” If you are a teacher at the school, she says, “you want to be immersed, to know what Loretto is all about.” Each year, teachers have an opportunity to travel to Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky., for a Loretto Experience led by Regina, for which they overwhelmingly express gratitude. They, too, learn what it means to anchor in Loretto and its tradition of lived values.

Christina's deep affinity with Loretto led her to pursue membership in the Community. In March 2023, her Co-Member process was finalized, and she was formally accepted into the Community. Christina says that living Loretto includes “a commitment to uphold our mission, to build community and be surrounded by people who make a difference ... just showing up and doing the work.”

**'There's more to riches than money. I am actually so rich.'**

Of her teaching life, she now says, “Those people were wrong who said I'd be poor — I didn't realize how incredibly wrong they were. There's more to riches than money. I am actually so rich.” Instead of fighting the wind that would bring her home, Christina tacked. Occasional choppy winds and challenging currents notwithstanding, one whose life is steered by the soul's deep purpose remains on course.

\*Quote on page 6 from *I Am the Way*, Loretto Constitutions, paragraph 22



Christina Garcia CoL enjoys a smile with Michele Stimac CoL at a Seder celebrated by Loretto in Denver in 2023.  
Photo: Christina Manweller

## St. Mary's teachers experience Motherhouse



Denise Ann Clifford SL, longtime development director at St. Mary's, enjoys a visit with Emma Von Tschanner. Photo: Regina Drey SL

**“I will always strive to model the search for truth, beauty and the ways of peace that I observed at Loretto Motherhouse.”**

Emma Von Tschanner  
Teacher, St. Mary's Academy



Mike Lantagne tours the Heritage Center. Photo: Regina Drey SL

**“The immersion was a chance to delve deeply into what it means to be a teacher in the Loretto tradition. It happened in a multitude of beautiful ways: experiencing the history of Loretto firsthand; engaging with the Community; being invited into the discussion about what the future of Loretto holds; learning about the initiatives of the Motherhouse, from retreats and compassionate care for aging Loretto members to the inspiring regenerative ethos of the Loretto Motherhouse Farm; delving bravely into Loretto’s history of slavery and boarding schools and considering how to face those difficult truths; exploring spirituality with Loretto Sisters and with their neighbors, the Trappists at the Abbey of Gethsemani; spending quality time with the Community and simply enjoying our colleagues.”**

Mike Lantagne  
Teacher, St. Mary's Academy

# St. Mary's Academy's vibrant Loretto beginnings

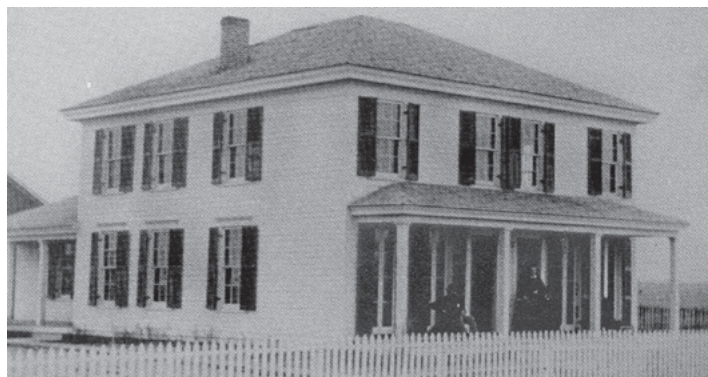
Excerpts from [an article by Regina Drey SL](#) on the school's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, *Loretto Magazine*, fall-winter 2014

"Amid tearful farewells and prayers for a safe journey, three travelers left Santa Fe, N.M., on June 22, 1864, for a five-day journey by mail coach that would change dusty Denver City forever. Sisters of Loretto Joanna Walsh, Ignatia Mora and Beatriz Maes-Torres would make history at a time when education was taking hold and Catholic Sisters were an anomaly in the Colorado Territory. They would found St. Mary's Academy, which has continuously educated Denver students for 150 years [now — in 2026 — 162 years].

"An advertisement in the Rocky Mountain News in 1864 announced a 'healthy and pleasant' location and a comprehensive academic curriculum enhanced by piano or guitar, French or Spanish, and drawing, painting, embroidery and other fancy work. ... Under the 'mild and efficient care of the Sisters of Loretto,' St. Mary's Academy, like other Loretto schools, welcomed students of all faiths."



St. Mary's teachers and friends enjoy an outing in Morrison, Colo., in this photo from the 1880s. *Photo: Loretto Archives*



St. Mary's Academy opened in 1864 at what is now 14th and California Streets in downtown Denver. The school moved to Pennsylvania Street in 1911, and then to its current location at 4545 S. University Blvd. in 1951. *Photo: St. Mary's Academy*

"Through all the years, the moves, the growth and the challenges, generations of children have attended and graduated from St. Mary's Academy. What started as a dream of a few people in the nascent city of Denver is today a thriving, vibrant school community. What was once a small, two-story 'White House' is today five buildings on 24 acres of land south of the original downtown campus."

[Visit our website](#) to read Regina's original 2014 article on St. Mary's.

"St. Mary's Academy opened on Aug. 1, 1864, 12 years to the day before Colorado became the 38th state. And its first educational milestone came in 1875. Eleven years after it opened, St. Mary's Academy awarded the Colorado Territory's first diploma — high school or college — to Jessie Forshee. Some time after graduation Jessie joined the Sisters of Loretto, taking the name Sister Vitalis. She earned advanced degrees, helped establish a teachers' college for Sisters, served as dean at Webster College in St. Louis, and taught nearly every academic subject. In later years, her colleagues sometimes referred to her as a 'walking encyclopedia.'"

ST MARY'S  
ACADEMY



Loretto teachers at St. Mary's Academy posed for this photo circa 1890. Educational excellence was and is a hallmark of the school. *Photo: Loretto Archives*

# Loretto educates for the times

Loretto has a heart for education. The first Sisters of Loretto taught children on the frontier in Kentucky starting in 1812. As the order moved across the country over the next century and a half, and then into South America and China, opening and running schools and teaching in many others, thousands of children and families benefited from the Sisters' commitment to compassion, academic excellence and religion. Today, this might mean teaching in a classroom, or it might be reflected in other ways to touch and teach others. Over the next few issues, we'll share stories of Loretto members who continue to educate. Some are in the heyday of their careers, while others, perhaps officially retired, remain lifelong teachers, in or out of the classroom.

## Donna Day SL: Learning along the way

By Christina Manweller

"The best teachers are the ones who show you how to use your heart."\* Donna Day SL shares this quote that reflects her deepest belief about teaching.

To Donna, teaching and learning are intertwined. Like other teachers, she knows that she has received as much or more than she's given. She says that while she taught in a formal classroom setting for just two years, "along the road of various missions I became a lifelong learner as director of religious education programs in several cities and towns. The Hispanic communities in Illinois, Wyoming and Colorado opened my heart and urged me on in spiritual growth and personal development. The Loretto and BVM Sisters I lived with taught me about service, new cultures and ways to use my talents. They taught me how to use my heart."

Donna also served on Loretto staff in healthcare for many years, service she treasured, as she loved the contact with so many in the Community.

But it was as director of intercommunity housing at Pillar Place that she was really stretched. "Working in a new culture — in the African American community," Donna says, "I learned about my own prejudice, people's joblessness and real poverty. It was eight years of struggle, growth and joy."

Donna shares a list of those from whom she's felt blessed to learn:

- *Every person I met in every parish I worked in fed me bread in Jesus' name*
- *Every member on Loretto's Executive Committee, staff and the Communications Team who urged me on*
- *Every kid who asked for a book, every parent who cried with joy*
- *Every Scripture and Sacramental Theology class I taught*



Donna Day SL is a lifelong educator and learner.  
Photo: Jean M. Schildz

- *Every Sister and all teammates who were a model of Christ for me*
- *Every friend from 68 years on mission*

Like all great teachers, Donna says, "I am still learning."

\*Quote from Gabriel Andreas of Story People

From 2004 to 2012, Donna served on Loretto's Executive Committee. Today, she serves as an adviser to Loretto's Communications Team. She not only influences the team's output with her wisdom and practical advice, but her insightful writing may be found on Loretto's website, in social media posts and elsewhere.

# Pillar Place served as a safe haven

tion that ran the organization. Pillar Place welcomed its first residents in 1993.

Donna shares a story about her work at Pillar Place:

"The very first meeting I had with the teenagers at Pillar Place, I said, 'No one will drop out of high school, no teens will have babies to raise ... your job is to stay in school and learn, no one will sell drugs on this property. If I find this happening, I will evict your family.'

"Was I harsh? Never. Was I clear on the purpose of Pillar Place? Yes. Did I have unconditional love for these kids? Always. Did anyone drop out of school? No."

An on-site social worker assisted residents in securing daycare, jobs and education. Loretto Volunteers helped kids with computers, crafts, reading aloud and gardening. Parents were grateful for safe, affordable housing, and kids loved the on-site library, playgrounds, summer camp, homework assistance, Easter egg hunts and Santa Claus visits. Classes for adults included parenting, obtaining economic stability through gainful employment and budgeting.

In 2009, Pillar Place was forced to close after losing funding from institutions affected by the economic recession.



Donna Day SL, wearing a Santa hat, celebrates Christmas with families at Pillar Place in St. Louis. *Loretto staff photo*

By Christina Manweller

**D**onna Day SL served for eight years as director of Intercommunity Housing at Pillar Place, located in the former Loretto Academy building in St. Louis. Pillar Place brought critically-needed housing and services to the local mostly-Black community.

While Loretto supplied the property and the building, leading the transformation of the former Academy building, built in 1908, into low-income housing and supportive services, many local religious congregations came together to sponsor the renovation, transforming the former high school into 19 affordable units. Members of local religious orders also formed the Intercommunity Housing Associa-



Donna Day SL, Pillar Place's director of Intercommunity Housing helps Blessing celebrate her first Christmas at Pillar Place. *Loretto staff photo*

# A bridge to love



Mary Catherine Widger SL enjoys time with Bridge Community residents Melissa and Lisa in this 2019 photo.

*Photo: Loretto Archives*

*By Christina Manweller*

**M**ary Catherine Widger SL tells the story of a child with an intellectual disability whose parents hoped would make his First Communion. This was in the late 1970s. Mary Catherine served in the special education office for the Archdiocese of Denver, creating programs to bring religious instruction and sacraments to kids with developmental disabilities. In response to the parents' request, a naysayer in the diocese rejoined that those who could not understand the sacraments should not participate. The Rev. Larry Freeman, with whom Mary Catherine served in the special ed office, asked, "Are you saying that Jesus doesn't want to be part of this person's life?"

Helping to open eyes, hearts and minds comes with the territory in special ed work. Since that day in the 1970s, many young parishioners with developmental disabilities have made their First Communion, including the child in this story.

Mary Catherine has spent the majority of her life loving, serving, teaching and being taught by those with disabilities. She has now served in the special ed office for 50 years and knows well the profound effect her young mentees can have on those who connect with them. She tells of a parishioner at a local church who volunteered to help at a program run by the special ed office. At one point, Mary Catherine found him sitting on the floor with a child, tears running down his face. He told her, "I'm a wealthy man. I have a wonderful wife. I have wonderful children. We lack nothing. But I have never experienced being loved completely for who I am and nothing else."

It sometimes happens that only upon reviewing our lives do we discern the moment when the seed of our vocation

was planted. For Mary Catherine, that moment came when she was a young student at St. John the Evangelist School in Denver, a school started by Sisters of Loretto in 1924. She was asked to assist a classmate who needed special help because, as Mary Catherine says, "she was a little slower at learning." She was, Mary Catherine now knows, a lot like many of the young people she has since come to serve. Thirty-two years later, long after Mary Catherine had entered Loretto, she ran into the student she'd once helped. Even after so much time, her former classmate remembered her.

After attending the Loretto novitiate in Kentucky, Mary Catherine initially taught first grade at St. John's, the school she'd attended as a child. It was in 1976 that the seed planted all those years before stirred into life as she went to work full time in the archdiocesan special education office. She and the other special ed staff members, including Sue Rogers SL and Father Larry, served those with developmental disabilities by training teachers and forming programs in Denver parishes. In those days, they created and oversaw 23 parish programs, with Sue commenting, "Our kids don't fit into categories. ... We have to look at each individual and design a program. There are as many different approaches as there are individuals."

Mary Catherine had worked in the special ed program for nearly 10 years when, along with Sue and Father Larry, she was called to embark on a new, all-encompassing ministry, one that would more concretely impact lives and pull deeply from her own well of compassion and love. They would open a group home for young women and teens with intellectual disabilities, and the two Loretto Sisters would live in community with them. Veronica Saykally, who now serves as house manager, says, "Everything that Father



The Rev. Larry Freeman, Sue Rogers SL and Mary Catherine Widger SL share camaraderie in their work together in the Archdiocese of Denver's special education program prior to Bridge Community's founding. *Photo: Bridge Community*

'They give me an example — a profound example of Christian values. I forgive but I don't forget. They forgive and forget immediately. Who is the teacher, and who is the student? I get back a lot more than I give.'

The Rev. Larry Freeman, cofounder, Bridge Community



The Bridge Community family occupies a former convent building in west Denver. *Photo: Christina Manweller*

Larry, Sue and Mary Catherine were experiencing out there led to this home."

As they set about planning, Mary Catherine remembers Father Larry saying, "We don't want people to think this is just a good thing for priests and Sisters to do, because it's so much more than that. It's the Christian community saying that these people are valued as much as you are, or we are, and when you really love somebody, most people choose to live with them." Mary Catherine adds, "And so that's why we started a group home. We love and value these people who are a bit different from some of us."

The trio received helpful advice from the Jewish Community Center in Denver — they had established a group home for developmentally disabled persons and were happy to share details about their process as the home was launched.

Plans were budding into reality, and, as has so often been the case with Sisters of Loretto undertakings, it became clear that Divine Providence was at work fertilizing the nascent seedling. The former convent across from All Saints Church in west Denver had been vacated and would be a perfect fit, with generous-sized kitchen and dining areas, a cozy living room and small, comfortable bedrooms that could be decorated to suit individual personalities. The backyard was spacious and would turn out to be ideal for gatherings and meals. This would make a perfect family home — albeit for a large family! The seedling was sending out healthy new growth.

Before the home officially opened, Mary Catherine and Sue invited Loretto Community members to come live with them as Bridge was becoming established. In addition to Mary Catherine and Sue, five Sisters moved in. Four briefly resided at Bridge, while Lydia Peña SL stayed until her retirement to Loretto Motherhouse in April 2025.

On April 1, 1985, 173 years after the founding of the Sisters of Loretto, five young women with developmental disabilities moved into a new kind of home. Three months later, three more joined the first five. Most of these original residents were known to Mary Catherine, Sue and Father Larry from the archdiocesan special ed program. With the nurtur-

ance of the Sisters and staff, the residents would be able to become more independent and live full and fulfilling lives.

Those invited to live at Bridge would require moderate supervision and learn basic self-care tasks and chores. Eventually they would work outside of the community. And Christian instruction would be available.

Most residents have come from Catholic families. Other families, Mary Catherine shares, "were just grateful that their daughters would get the Christian education. We wanted Bridge to mean independence for them, and also to be Christian-based, Catholic-based, wherever we could do that. You don't have to be Catholic to live or work here — but you have to be okay with our celebrations and daily Masses." Residents have participated as they are able. One young woman was paying close attention during Mass; when the priest reached the Liturgy of the Eucharist, at the words "Body of Christ," she loudly exclaimed, "Oh! WOW!"

Religious training is, of course, one aspect of the healthy, affirming life Bridge offers. On the practical side, the community has been able to offer day-to-day care, education and opportunities that birth families may not be able to provide. Birth families have been relieved and grateful that their loved ones are happy and safe.

Bridge's philosophy has always been simple, and remains unchanged. This would be a family. They would experience life's joys and hardships together, supporting one another through all of it. This home was not meant to be a short-term living arrangement; as long it was a fit for all, as long as Bridge was in place, each individual would be welcome to stay and live as family.

Love flourishes at the heart of the family. Even so, family life isn't always easy, and the women's particular needs can prove challenging. Routine is important, and patience is imperative. When she cofounded Bridge, Sue was an occupational therapist with a lot of experience working with those with special needs. "We couldn't have done it without Sue," Mary Catherine says. Sue created step-by-step instructions tailored to each resident. These set out how to perform hygiene tasks, do laundry, clean a bedroom, ride



Bridge residents Theresa and Lisa enjoy Bridge's Annual Appreciation Party to celebrate the many teachers and supporters of the community's ministries.

Photo: Bridge Community



Holidays have always been festive occasions. In this early photo, residents and staff enjoy music during the Christmas season. Sue Rogers SL is in white at top right.

Photo: Bridge Community



The Rev. Roland Freeman, twin brother of Father Larry Freeman, offers the Host to Mary Catherine Widger SL during the Loretto Community Assembly at the Motherhouse in 2010. Mary Catherine was celebrating her 50th jubilee. *Photo: Peg Jacobs CoL*

'People who have limitations and need extra care and aid have a right to have as much normality in their lives as possible, to be able to go places and do things and learn.'

Mary Catherine Widger SL, cofounder of Bridge Community and resident



Residents Theresa, left foreground, and Linda, in pink, finish up lunch. Stopping in to say hello are, standing on the left, Veronica Saykally, house manager; her sister Theresa, seated; Mary Catherine Widger SL; and Steve Saykally. *Photo: Christina Manweller*

the bus, etc. She created programs for staff that outlined each step involved in the tasks an intellectually-disabled person would learn. These are still in use. Mary Catherine says, "They needed help in critical areas in order to gain more independence. That was part of our job, to do that in a home atmosphere with friends — we did become good friends." The women learned how to complete chores around the house: helping with dinner, cleaning up after a meal, watering plants. Everyone was learning "the everyday stuff," Mary Catherine explains, "all the mom things." Remembering it all, though, can be tricky. "We still work on it," she says.

Sue shares that early on she, Mary Catherine and Father Larry learned that people with intellectual disabilities "have meaningful lives." Many of us think of special needs individuals as recipients of others' gifts; as Sue says, they, too, have "gifts they want to share."

Sue says that celebrations were significant in the community from the start. "We celebrated a lot. Life needs more celebration than we can imagine." Commemorating the little things is important, since the residents do not experience many of the usual societal milestones.

Starting Bridge with Mary Kay and Father Larry, Sue says, "was one of the most exciting things we ever did." Sue lived at Bridge for more than 20 years and then moved to Loretto Motherhouse and opened an occupational therapy practice in Kentucky, working with infants and young children, service she loved. She is now retired.

Of course, Bridge has known all the ups and downs of family life: together time, vacations, disagreements, parties, funerals. Looking back, the greatest challenge was the growing up process, "for the women, and for ourselves," Mary Catherine shares. Now they're experiencing the aging process together. Mary Catherine says, "We've had lots of adventures, lots of sadness. Lots of death." Developmentally-disabled individuals age more rapidly than the general population, and recently, Bridge has mourned the loss of several longtime family members.

The community experienced an early, significant loss with the death of Father Larry in 1998. His twin brother, the Rev. Roland Freeman, stepped in and became a beloved friend and pastor to Bridge as his brother had been. He, too, served in the archdiocesan special ed program.

In Jan. 2025, Fr. Roland died, and grief again descended on the community. He had served as a parish priest at All Saints Church across the street, where he lived in residence, and had always been available to Bridge residents and staff. During the recent pandemic, he'd begun holding Mass in the Bridge chapel every day.

The coronavirus years, starting in March 2020, proved difficult for the community. Suddenly, life irrevocably changed. The women could not go to work. Family members were not able to visit. In addition, "when Covid hit, all the day programs closed," Mary Catherine says. "The women had been going out to workshops and community

centers. That all stopped immediately because of the contagion." Longstanding routines were thrown to the wind as a maelstrom of uncertainty swirled around the strong tree that Bridge had become. Residents missed birthdays and holidays with their birth families — though the families rallied, organizing drive-bys, honking horns and waving from cars festooned with balloons.

Prior to the pandemic, employment had been an important aspect of the women's independence. Veronica, Bridge's house manager, says, "Every day, they were faithful. They wanted to go to work, to go out into the community. They got up every morning, they would make their breakfast, they would make sure their lunch was made the night before and their clothes were ready."

Their employment varied. Mary was a janitor at a daycare center. She got on the bus, Veronica says, "winter, summer — she would get on that bus and go to work. She loved it." A couple of the women worked at the Denver Zoo. Another was employed at a bindery. One worked at the Westin Hotel in downtown Denver helping to clean rooms, and another at a grocery store. The women have not returned to work.

Over the years, Bridge has been home to around 20 residents, each one a precious gift. Many have lived their entire adult lives within the loving arms of the community. Currently, three women — ages 67, 62, 57 — reside at Bridge, assisted, cared for and loved by Mary Kay and Veronica, with a total of nine staff. Two of the residents have been members of the Bridge family for more than 30 years, and the other for 21 years.

As memories slip, and they must relearn many of the tasks they'd previously mastered, Veronica says, "Staff has to do more for them." During the past six years, since the



Veronica Saykally and Mary Catherine Widger SL at Bridge's front door. Veronica serves as house manager, having started at Bridge as a volunteer many years ago. Her husband, Steve, takes care of accounting and maintenance for the community. Their children grew up with the residents. "They're family," she says of the Bridge women. *Photo: Christina Manweller*

## Vacation time! Fun for all!

Early on, Sisters Mary Catherine Widger and Sue Rogers felt that the archdiocesan special ed staff should get to know their students apart from a classroom, and that the students should experience vacations, summer camp, eating out.

Disneyland here we come! For nine years all those in the special ed program who were able to travel were treated to a Disneyland vacation. This amounted to 53 travelers and counselors per trip. All the money was raised through bingo so parents did not have to pay.

Summer camp was another treat. For 38 years, the kids got to spend time in the Colorado mountains where they experienced the joys of nature and camp life.

Of the many trips and vacations, Mary Catherine says, "It was fun!" "And ... "she wonders, "where did we get that energy? Those things were fun and exhausting, and looking back, I think, I don't have any idea how we got through all that. We were tired but happy."

Early on, the Rev. Larry Freeman and Mary Catherine attended the annual meeting of a Catholic organization active at the time, the National Apostolate for Mentally Retarded Persons. "One year," Mary Catherine shares, "they said we could bring a couple of our residents and they would provide activities for them. The women met the Green Bay Packers football team; Donna called them the Green Bay Crackers."



Mary Catherine Widger SL and Sue Rogers SL wanted the archdiocesan staff to get to know the kids they were teaching outside of the teacher-pupil relationship. Summer camp was a favorite annual activity. *Photo: Bridge Community*



Shannon, left, Bridge staff member, and Linda, resident, enjoy dancing at a community party. *Photo: Bridge Community*



Mary Catherine Widger SL relaxes with Houston, the Bridge Community's current home pet. *Photo: Veronica Saykally*

start of the coronavirus pandemic, Bridge residents have experienced significant decline, the primary reason they have not returned to work.

The women still enjoy going out to movies, and they love shopping. Recently, along with Mary Catherine and staff, they enjoyed a three-day vacation to Colorado Springs, Colo. Birthdays and holidays remain vital celebratory occasions.

Through the last four decades, through the ups and downs and tears and laughter, love has sustained the community. The seed that was planted more than 40 years ago has grown into a healthy flowering tree with strong, deep roots, and it has weathered the storms. Mary Catherine's life has been immeasurably blessed by all those with whom she has lived and served. They have taught love, trust, patience. She has given so much of her life, and has received as much in return.

All these years, Mary Catherine has continued the special education work for the archdiocese alongside her service at Bridge. She lights up telling Julie's story. She first met Julie, a young woman who was completely paralyzed, in 1995. Julie attended church every week, her parents toting along all of her medical equipment. Mary Catherine took Julie under her wing, working with her until she made her First Communion two years later. She still visits Julie, who is now 50 and kept alive by machines, every Friday. "You walk in the room," Mary Catherine shares, "and she says 'I love you' with eye blinks and a huge smile."

Thank you, Mary Catherine and the Bridge Community, for the love you live day in and day out. As Loretto President Buffy Boesen SL writes in the opening letter to this magazine, "I know that my life is enriched by this



Margaret Grant, house 'grandmother' and volunteer, enjoys the St. Nick Day celebration in 2008 with Mary Catherine Widger SL. Margaret was a tireless volunteer. Mary Catherine says, 'None of this could have happened without volunteers.' Photo: Bridge Community

steady, quiet, peaceful and life-giving work." So it is for all of us who have experienced the love and joy that lives at the heart of the Bridge Community.

Do you know a woman who might benefit from residing at Bridge? Contact Veronica Saykally at 303-935-4740. Visit [thebridgecommunity.net](http://thebridgecommunity.net).



In this Christmas 2001 photo, Bridge Community residents pose with the Rev. Roland Freeman. Standing are, Linda, Maria, Father Roland and Vicki; in front are Mary, Lisa, Theresa and Melissa. Photo: Bridge Community



Birthdays are important occasions for celebration at Bridge. Here, residents and staff enjoy Maria's birthday party. Standing are Steve Saykally, staff; Lydia Peña SL; Veronica Saykally, staff; Lorraine; and Mary Catherine Widger SL. In front are Marci, staff; Theresa; Linda; Maria; and Melissa in the foreground. *Photo: Bridge Community*

'They don't judge; they love. They are wonderful. They teach you so much.'

Veronica Saykally, Bridge Community house manager



The Bridge Community living room and chapel are comfortable, comforting spaces. *Photos: Christina Manweller*

# Loretto celebrates

## 82 years!

### Kathleen Tighe SL

**K**athleen Tighe SL was received into Loretto on April 25, 1944. Five of the Tighe sisters, daughters of Eugene and Alice (Weir) Tighe, became Sisters of Loretto. Lucina entered in 1932, Alice Eugene in 1933, Ann Virginia in 1934, Carolyn in 1935 and Kathleen in 1944. Another sister, Helen, would join the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Kathleen served in California, Colorado, Illinois and Missouri, teaching in various schools and serving as principal at Loretto Academy High School in Kansas City, Mo., and at Nerinx Hall High School in St. Louis. She earned a bachelor's degree in music with a minor in piano from Webster University in St. Louis and a master's in education from DePaul University in Chicago.

In 1976, Kathleen took part in the Loretto Third World Experience, serving in Majuro in the Marshall Islands. She has served in senior citizen housing and as a creator of the Loretto Spirituality Network. She served on the Loretto staff, retiring in 2000 in Danville, Calif., where she and her housemate, Kay Lane SL, developed an extended Loretto community that prayed and celebrated together. Kathleen and Kay moved to Kentucky in 2013.

Kathleen resides at Loretto Living Center at the Motherhouse where she loves to listen to classical music and read stories, particularly the classics. She says she loves "to hear a good story, and I love telling my stories about Loretto."



'I loved all of my experiences. Everything I did was a great experience, and I never looked back and said I'm not going to do that again. I taught school mostly and loved it.'

Kathleen Tighe SL

# our jubilarians

## 80 years!

### Benedicta (Bernie) Feeney SL

**B**ernie Feeney SL, who turned 99 last November, credits her mothers for her long life: her own mother and the Blessed Mother. “My mom passed along her longevity,” she said, noting that her mother lived into her 90s, as did her two sisters. Her brothers lived into their late 70s and early 80s.

Her affection for the Blessed Mother is especially strong, in part, “because she showed the children at Fatima how to pray the rosary,” Bernie shares. “The rosary became very important in my life, so I try to say it every day.” She recommends the practice to all.

Born in 1926, the year of the U.S. sesquicentennial, Bernie grew up on a farm in the village of Ivesdale, Ill., 19 miles outside of Champaign, and was taught by Benedictines. It wasn’t until she attended Webster College in St. Louis that she met the Sisters of Loretto. She was received into the congregation in 1946.

As a Sister of Loretto, Bernie taught for many years, later serving the Denver Archdiocese as a leasing coordinator for low-income housing and volunteering with Catholic Charities. Whatever she did, she enjoyed. “I had wonderful experiences and have much to be grateful for,” she says.

A resident of Loretto Living Center, Bernie, who enjoys regular exercise and good conversations, says, “It is very pleasant, a very nice place, and the people are very professional and very kind. You could not ask for any place nicer.”

Asked what advice she might give others on how to go about living a long life, Bernie first joked, “I don’t understand it myself, how I came to be 99.” Then she added, “Take every day to be fully alive. Enjoy and be appreciative and involved.”



'Thank you, Loretto, for your giving and loving presence in my life!'

Bernie Feeney SL on the occasion of her 75th jubilee, August 2021

# Congratulations!

## 75 years!

### Beatrice (Bea) Klebba SL



**B**ea Klebba SL was received into Loretto on Dec. 8, 1951. She resides at Loretto Living Center at the Motherhouse. Through her work in schools, hospital ministry and in retirement, she has found joy and meaning in her service. Bea has lived out Loretto's Constitutions as she has "sought compassionate ways to serve the suffering body of Christ."



### God takes our days and makes them holy

Seventy-five, 80, 82 years in Loretto! If walls could talk! They would tell stories of the essence of the Loretto Jubilarians we celebrate — stories of love and service. The stories are still being written as their lives of service continue.

## Claudette LoPorto SL

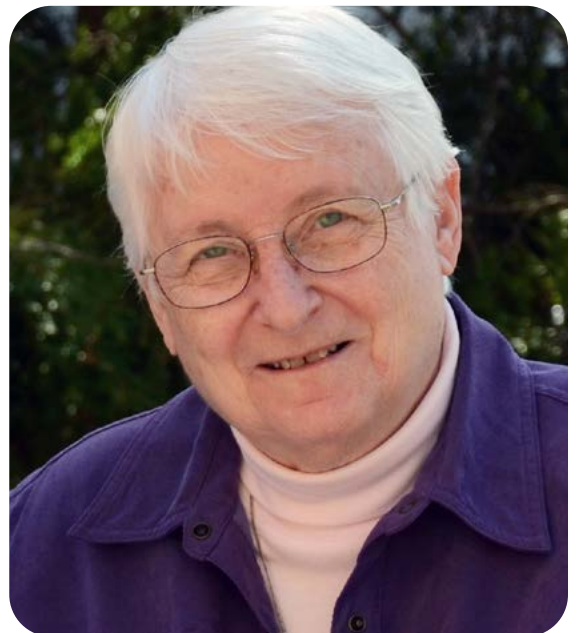


Claudette LoPorto SL was received into Loretto on April 25, 1951. Working at Apple for 16 years, she says, "It was just a happy place, and I loved it." Sister Claudette retired in 2001. She then served as a volunteer for several years. Her home in Danville, Calif., was recognized by many for its spirit of hospitality. In 2011, she moved to Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky., where she continues her service to the Loretto Community. Among her many gifts, she designs and arranges creative displays in celebration of holidays at the Motherhouse. She also enjoys gardening. Through her varied ministries across the years, Claudette has lived out Loretto's Constitutions and "helped many others live according to its spirit and teachings."

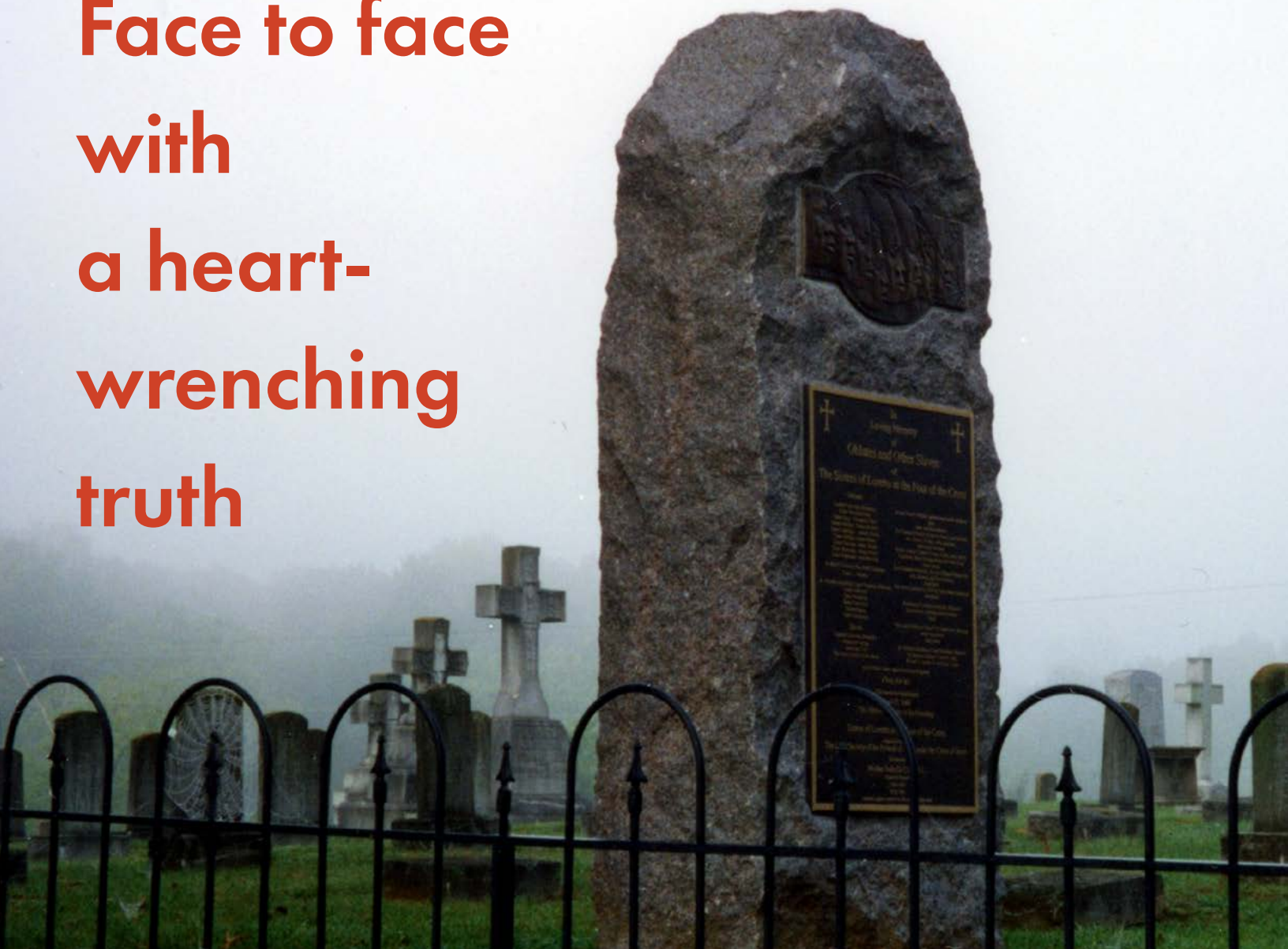


## Nancy Wittwer SL

Nancy Wittwer SL was received into Loretto on Dec. 8, 1951. She grew up in St. Stephen Parish in St. Louis and is a Nerinx Hall alum, class of 1951. Nancy fostered several collaborative projects in the St. Louis Archdiocese, including as cofounder of Marian Middle School in South St. Louis. She also worked with the Women's Build for Habitat for Humanity. She is a founding member of the Intercommunity Ecological Council of Women Religious. Nancy's love and care for the natural world and all life led to dedicated, tireless work on behalf of Earth over many decades. She resides at Loretto Living Center at Loretto Motherhouse.



# Face to face with a heart- wrenching truth



The slave memorial at Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky., stands within the cemetery. *Photo: Loretto Archives*

By Eleanor Craig SL

**B**etween 1812 and 1865, the Sisters of Loretto received, purchased, enslaved and sold individuals of African descent, selling a man named Tom for \$200 to finance the purchase of the Sisters' first land. Loretto benefited from the free labor of perhaps 150-200 persons, in at least 20 locations in four states by 1860. To date, thanks to the research of Community members, especially Joan Campbell SL and Annie Stevens CoL, we know the names of about 80 specific individuals and something about their family relationships. We cannot, however, begin to know the depth and breadth of their contributions to Loretto's mission or the harms they experienced in bondage and through generations that followed.

The Sisters of Loretto were recently honored by a national Catholic research organization, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for telling the truth. The Nov. 13 recognition ceremony, held at Georgetown University, in Washington, D.C., also included Sisters of Charity of Nazareth and Dominican Sisters of Peace. CARA recognized the three communities for careful historical research and honest acknowledgment of slaveholding in which each order was engaged from 1812 to 1865.

The 2025 award came during a Jubilee year, the Church's time to repent the exploitation and mistreatment of the poor, to make restitution and to ask forgiveness. The award recognizes the three communities' concrete actions dur-



The slave memorial at Loretto Motherhouse was dedicated on April 25, 2000, the 188th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of Loretto, which coincided with the Great Jubilee year in the Catholic Church. The 7,000 pound rough-hewn granite tribute was designed by Roberta Hudlow SL, left, posing with Joan Campbell SL, who advanced the idea for a memorial. The enslaved persons' names are listed on the plaque.  
 Photo: Peg Jacobs CoL

**‘The history of enslavement by Catholic bishops and clergy, by religious communities and by large swaths of the Catholic laity from 1619 through the Civil War is not well known and ought to be.’**

**Eleanor Craig SL, CARA award ceremony, Nov. 13, 2025**

ing an earlier Jubilee year, the year 2000, when Loretto, the Sisters of Charity and the Dominicans came together with their Black neighbors at the original Catholic cathedral of Kentucky in Bardstown. In a ceremony acknowledging that each order had systematically benefited from the enslaved labor of individuals of African descent, the Sisters asked forgiveness of their Black neighbors and promised “to resist the sin of racism in every dimension of our lives.” CARA officials praised the Sisters’ persistence since 2000

in a quarter-century of seeking racial healing by continuing to search for the names of each enslaved person and their living descendants.

I accepted the award from CARA on behalf of Loretto, sharing with attendees, “I see in my mind’s eye that day of emancipation, Dec. 6, 1865. I see the backs of perhaps 30 men, women and children as they go slowly down the long hill from Loretto Motherhouse to the public road. The adults carry skills and practical knowledge gained from

years of labor. But their pockets are empty and they carry no tools. All the provisions for their future and their children's future are tied up in the kerchiefs they carry.”

Any reader of this article is bound to ask, why is it so unfamiliar? Why haven't we known and always regretted this Loretto history and sought ways to make it right? Why, indeed, would a professional research institute like CARA find it remarkable that Loretto and the Sisters of Charity and the Dominicans researched and acknowledged this history in 2000, 175 years after it began, 125 years from its ending? How does it happen that three religious orders — each notable for unstinting work for social justice and the highest standards as educators — have only so recently acknowledged their practice of slavery and recognized their share in the multi-generational harm that continues to our own times? Excuses are all too easy and real answers are hard to come by.

One thing we Loretto Sisters know: We must measure the depth and breadth of racial ills by the length of time it has taken us to see our share in its most extreme form.

*Eleanor Craig SL serves as Loretto Community's historian. She served as director of the Loretto Heritage Center Archives and Museum at Loretto Motherhouse in Nerinx, Ky., from 2012 to 2020.*



Eleanor Craig SL speaks to the audience upon receiving the CARA award on behalf of Loretto. Photo: Tim Tomes, Archdiocese of Louisville



Three Kentucky Sisters accept awards for their congregations' work to document their communities' enslavement of persons of African descent. The award, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), 'is for those who have distinguished themselves in the conduct of Church research. Researchers are those who have conducted important Catholic research and spent a significant portion of their work on Church or religious topics.' Attending the ceremony are, the Rev. Thomas Gaunt SJ, CARA executive director; Archbishop Shawn McKnight, CARA board chair; Eleanor Craig SL; Theresa Knabel SCN; and Rosemary Rule OP.

Photo: Tim Tomes, archivist, Archdiocese of Louisville



### **Barbara Beam CoL**

**Feb. 6, 1941 – Nov. 7, 2025**

The Sisters of Loretto who taught Barbara Beam became the first women she saw living outside the boundaries of what society prescribed. Finding in them a freedom, she entered Loretto. Her two years in the convent did not lead to lifelong vows, but they shaped her irrevocably. Barbara earned her degree in special education, where her compassion became her greatest teaching tool. She was married for several years and had two daughters. The Episcopal tradition, with its ritual familiarity and progressive openness, offered her a place where her devotion could freely breathe. She became a priest. Wherever she went, she gave others the gift of being seen. In her last years, even as Alzheimer's wove its fog around her memory, it never dimmed her essence: still kind, still quick to smile.



### **Patricia Frueh SL**

**May 5, 1933 – Nov. 15, 2025**

Pat Frueh grew up on a farm in Iowa. Two Sisters of Loretto came to teach summer school in her hometown, and she found them so friendly and down-to-earth that she decided to join Loretto. She entered in 1953 and taught school and directed religious education for almost 30 years. Pat had wanted to be a nurse when she entered Loretto, so she earned her associate degree in nursing. She nursed for 10 years, beginning at the Motherhouse Infirmary, then moving to home health nursing in Kentucky. She retired at 65 and did volunteer work at Loretto for many more years. Her generous ministries at Loretto included convent nurse, "healing touch," driving, canning and baking. Gradually age kept her from doing as much, but her faithfulness as liturgist and Eucharistic minister continued nearly to the end.



### **Alice Kitchen CoL**

**Aug. 23, 1942 – Nov. 14, 2025**

Alice Kitchen became a Loretto Co-Member in 2004. Reflecting the depth and breadth of her impact on her home community in Kansas City, Mo., Mayor Quinton Lucas released a statement, part of which follows: "In recent years, Alice may be known best for her strong work for gender equity, but her efforts include almost any issue that could help people in our community succeed: gun violence reduction; low-barrier shelter for the unhoused; and human rights here in Kansas City and anywhere in the world. She held us accountable as elected officials and community leaders, nudging us respectfully, but regularly in areas we needed to do better. She was usually right." Alice cared little for titles or, apparently, even pay for her efforts. Throughout her life, she stood up for those who struggle, tirelessly working on their behalf, inspiring others to create change.



### **Mary Louise Murphy CoL**

**April 20, 1938 – Jan. 13, 2026**

Mary Louise Lea Murphy was born in Nashville, Tenn., met the Sisters of Loretto when a high school counselor at Camp Marymount and entered Loretto in 1961. Eight years later she left vowed life. Soon she married Wayne Murphy, who brought five sons to their marriage; they had two more sons together. Mary Louise was a dedicated educator for more than 40 years, specializing in learning disabilities. It was said she could teach anyone to read. In the early 1990s she and Wayne began visiting old friends at Loretto Motherhouse. She entered Loretto co-membership in 1997, celebrating her 25<sup>th</sup> jubilee in March 2026. Known for her beautiful, infectious spirit, Mary Louise was a friend to all, her bright smile lighting up any room. Mary Louise died peacefully at home in Nashville.



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

# Memorials and Tributes of Honor

## September 2025 – December 2025

**In Honor of:**  
**Requested by:**

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

**Janyce W. Angel**

Sandra and Thomas Tokarski  
**Mr. & Mrs. James Blandford**  
Ernestina and James Blandford Jr.

**Buffy Boesen SL**

Mary Schilken

**Paula Stansel Carr**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Katherine Childress**

Sarah Scolari

**Denise Ann Clifford SL**

Rosemary Filippone

Eileen and Jeff Fostey

Nancy and Jacques Leveille

Ershel and Jan Redd Jr.

Mollie and Joseph Romanek

**Susan Classen\***

Mary Zinniel

**Carol Colligan\***

Alice Sargent

**Margie Collignon**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Martha Creek**

Deborah Thompson & Jo Ann Kalb

**Eileen Custy SL**

Eva Antone Ross

**Arri Daian Volk**

Emily Volk

**Donna Day SL**

Dennis Cuddihee

**Elizabeth Couch Dober**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Anne Mejia Downs**

Ophelia Mejia

**Antoinette Doyle SL**

Cynthia Giguere-Unrein

**Regina Drey SL**

Kim Vance

**Jeanne Dueber SL**

Dr. and Mrs. William Fogarty

**Maureen Fiedler SL**

Terrence Mischel and Bradley  
Cameron

**Marianna Finch**

Barbara Brooks Rancour

**Mary Nelle Gage SL**

Kathleen Cronan

Chris Gage

Kathy Woerner

**Gergick Family Members**

Cathy and Don Gergick

**Mary Ann Gleason SL**

Denis Noonan

**Jeannine Gramick SL**

Francis DeBernardo

Donald Hissam

James Jepson

Nancy Krody

**Enfie and Thomas Lawrence**

**Hayden**

Betty Houser

**Anne Karl Hemmer**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Joanne Beyer Hersh**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Mary Jo Highland**

Mary A. Highland

**Roberta Hudlow SL**

Carol Winkler

**Carolyn Jaramillo\***

Virginia and Charles Nesmith

**Katie Jones**

Rebecca Sallee Hanson

**Beatrice Klebba SL**

Colleen Douglas

Justine Douglas

Arnold Nowak

**Kim Klein\***

Catherine Madden\*

**Sally Schaeffer Kopecky**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Loretto**

**All Retired Sisters of Loretto**

Gloria Stolz

**All the Sisters of Loretto**

Rebecca Sallee Hanson

Michele Stimac\*

**All the Sisters who taught  
at Loretto Heights College**

Katherine Martin

**Loretto Heights College class  
of 1960**

Jackie Costanza Koroshetz

**Loretto Heights College faculty  
and staff 1963-'67**

Michele A. Saad

**Loretto High School, Louisville,  
Ky., class of 1964**

Nancy and David Bash

**Postulant class - Sept. 15, 1960**

Ellen Castille

**Sisters of Loretto at St. Cronan  
School, St. Louis**

Paul Schiavo

**Sisters who taught me at St.  
Michael's, Houston**

Walter W. Sullivan III

**Sisters who taught me at St.  
John the Evangelist Elementary  
School, Denver**

Judy Kramer

**Webster College class of 1963**

Carol Hohenberger

**Kitty Madden\***

Ellen McKay

**Pat McCormick SL**

Ximena Ferguson

**Mary Ann McGivern SL**

Rebecca Sallee Hanson

Joan Kidnay

Virginia and Charles Nesmith

**Olivia Montelongo**

Laura O'Dell

**Cathy Mueller SL**

Kathleen Cronan

**Cathy Mueller, 60th Jubilee**

Chris and Sal Molina

**Barbara Nicholas SL**

Mary Vincent Breeck

Ellen Castille

**Valerie Novak SL**

Nancy L. Hillhouse

**Lydia Peña SL**

Dr. Steve Atchley

Katherine Martin

Robert Peña

Carla Peña Gaiser

**Ramon Perez Sr.**

Ruth Perez

**Margie Beck Plunkett**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Elaine Marie Prevallet SL**

Thomas and Peggy Derieg

Catherine Madden\*

**Mary Catherine Rabbitt SL**

Mary Hunt

**Charles Richardson**

Kathleen Stewart

**Carol Sallee**

Rebecca Sallee Hanson

**Helen Santamaria SL**

Barbara and Robert Havira

**Anthony Mary Sartorius SL**

Rebecca Sallee Hanson

Virginia St-Cyr

**Jean Schildz**

Rebecca Sallee Hanson

**Barbara Schulte SL**

Leslie Barth

Lynn and Nick Davis

Carolyn Rossi

**Susan Schulte**

Carolyn Rossi

**Sylvia Sedillo SL**

Orlando and Jeanette

**Ceciliana Skees SL**

Kate Cunningham

**Lisa Smith**

Calvin Moniz

**Marlene Spero SL**

Leslie Barth

Lynn and Nick Davis

Carolyn Rossi

**Marie Lourde Steckler SL**

Jason, Denise and Hanna Steckler

Judy and Sandy Steckler

**Mary Swain SL**

Sam Corbett

Karla Haworth

Margaret E. Keane

Elizabeth Mariner

**Kathleen Tighe SL**

Jackson Bradt

Alfred Frey Jr.

Catherine Madden\*

Joseph Tally

**Carol Thompson**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Mary Ann Tramutola**

Mary Ann Thornberry

**Suzanne Fitzgerald Wallis**

Sue and Bernard Ellert

**Barbara Wander\***

John Kling and Vicki Landis

**Emerson Miles Watkins**

Steve Watkins

**Mary Wentker**

Mari Jo Lynch

**Kathy Wright SL**

Mary Gavin



Loretto Motherhouse is aglow with winter's mysterious beauty during a Christmas season snowstorm. Photo: Will Myers

**In memory of:  
Requested by:**

**Aloysius Adams SL**

John R. Fox

**Pauline Albin SL**

Marshall Bradley, Jr.

**Janet Hensel Ansert**

Michelle Smart

**Guadalupe Arciniega SL**

Fred and Rebecca Kowalewski

Michael Talamantes

**Paz Arciniega**

Fred and Rebecca Kowalewski

**Sandra Ardoyno SL**

Susan D. Evans

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Kathleen O'Malley CSJ

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**Sarah Maureen Concannon SL**

Cathy Ford and Everett Hoffman

**Ann Carita Corbett**

Sam Corbett

**Mary Campbell Moore Coorsen**

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**Mary Ann Coyle SL**

Theresa and Charles Arbogast

Anna C. Miller

**Marge Cozzens CSJ**

Jean King

**Mary Ann Cunningham SL**

Anna C. Miller

Eva Antone Ross

Jane Parr

**Rose Patrick Curran SL**

Kathleen Ronnenberg

**Marilyn Cusick**

Dorothy Cusick

**Nona M. Dailey, Loretto Heights**

**College, 1975**

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**Aline Dalton SL**

Theresa Smith

**Kay DeMarea SL**

Suzanne Reasbeck

**Marian Disch SL**

Daria and Joseph Conran

**Helen Downs**

George Ballard

**Mike Dwyer**

Patricia Dwyer

**Marie Ego SL**

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Martin Ivancic and Dawn Parker

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Charles and Martha Frueh

William and Denise Frueh

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Catherine Madden\*

**Ernie and Gene Glanville**

Ruth Perez

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**Mary Katherine Hammett SL**

Marilyn Montenegro

**Mary Hargadon**

Janyce White Angel

Chris and Mary Fell

**Marianna Harkins SL**

Virginia May

**Eileen Marie Heckman SL**

John and Susan Reuter

**Catherine Hencmann**

Adele DeLine

**Marie Noel Hebert SL**

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**Consuela Huevanos**

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**Charles Joseph (Chuck) Jamail**

Kathy and Jim Jamail

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**Cecily Jones SL**

Martha Alderson\*

Griffith Jones

Marcia Martinez

**Carol Kaiman SL**

Kathleen Kaiman

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**Mary Agnes Seelbach Keane,**

**Loretto High School, 1960**

Margaret E. Keane

**Rosemary Keegan SL**

Margaret and Allen Keegan

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Patricia Kelley

David McCarthy

Craig and Margaret Murphy

**Eileen Kersgieter SL**

Regina & Steven Hermann

**Alice Kitchen\***

Leslee Moore\*

**Louis Marie Kroeger SL (aka:**

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Larry and Mary-Mel Kroeger

**Wilbert Knight**

Janet Gross

**Madeleine Marie Koch SL**

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Isabel Derr

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Suzanne Reasbeck

Joseph Tally

**Anna Mae Leanhart**

Anne Hickey

**Bobby Gomez-Leon**

**Mary Lou Gomez-Leon**

Susan Haisley

Sandy and Bonnie Gomez-Leon

**Loretto**

**All my wonderful teachers,**

**1st grade through college -**

**Loretto Heights, 1967**

Jana Clark

**Sisters of Bishop Toolen High School**

Mariana Finch

**Sisters who taught at St.**

**Ann's, Arlington, Va.**

Kathleen Titterton

**Sisters of St. Ferdinand**

**School, Florissant, Mo.**

Rev. Stephen F. Bauer

**Sisters at St. Michael School,**

**St. Louis, 1945-'60**

Carol Crow

**Mary Fran Lottes SL**

Suzanne Reasbeck

**Mary Ellen Bugas Luttenegger**

Dr. Thomas V. Luttenegger

**Mary Mangan SL**

Barbara and Robert Havira

**Ann Manganaro SL**

Kimberly Schlichter

**Cheryl Mattingly**

Martha Alderson\*

**Patricia Jean Manion SL**

Karen and Mike Loden

**Imelda Therese Marquez SL**

Mary Bannister

Chris and Sal Molina

**Marian McAvoy SL**

Samuel Reid

**Edwin Mary McBride SL**

Margaret Couvillon

**Patricia Singer McCracken,  
Loretto Academy, Webster  
College**

John F. McCracken, Jr.

Colleen Chappellet

**Catherine Alice McCollom**

Cathryn Ulmer

**Quentin Seitz McCarthy**

Lucretia Seitz McCarthy

**Sister Sheila McCarthy**

Kathy and John McCarthy

**Deacon Clarence McDavid**

Margaret Wright

**Mr. and Mrs. G. C. McEvoy**

Patricia A. Kabbler

**Mary Cornelia McNellis SL**

LaVerne G. Saxbury

**Elizabeth "Betty" McWilliams SL**

Sandra J. Wronksi

**Fr. Ben Meyer**

Dennis Cyrier

**Jayne McDonald Mierisch**

Patricia Clark

**Mary Ann Milton**

James T. Milton

**Mary Ann Minnich**

Peggy Schlesinger

**Ann Mueller SL**

**Jane Frances Mueller SL**

Mark Currington

Robert and Linda Mueller

**Mary Martha Mueller**

Martha Alderson\*

**Angela Murphy SL**

Ann Macri

Alfred Frey Jr.

**Betty Murphy**

**Dave Murphy**

Adelle DeLine

**Claire Jean Nix**

Charles Nix

**Mary Naomi O'Meara SL**

Mary E. Jaros

**Rosalie Marie Phillips SL**

Suzanne Stauder

**Carol Ann Pfacek SL**

Kathy and Wesley White

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[www.lorettocommunity.org/donate](http://www.lorettocommunity.org/donate)

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**Margaret Reidy SL**  
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**Jane Marie Richardson SL**  
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Catherine Rock  
**Frances Schwartzman Riley,**  
**Loretto Heights College, '57**  
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Barbara and Arthur Ratkewicz  
**Trinidad Ybarra**  
John Ybarra

# Join the Ann Rhodes Legacy Circle!



Mother Ann Rhodes, the first superior of the Friends of Mary at the Foot of the Cross in 1812, embodied a pioneering spirit that set the stage for more than two centuries of Loretto service. Though her time in leadership was brief, the profound impact of

her vision is still felt today in Loretto's commitment to education, justice and community.

This same enduring spirit lives on in the members of the **Ann Rhodes Legacy Circle**, a special recognition society established last year. The Circle honors and celebrates those dedicated friends who have made a lasting commitment to the Sisters of Loretto by including us in their estate plans through a will, trust or other planned gift.

Loretto has always relied on the foresight and generosity of those who plan ahead. Just as our founders pioneered schools and ministries across the frontier, those who join the Ann Rhodes Legacy Circle are visionaries who sustain Loretto's current work. Their thoughtful planning provides a foundation of support, ensuring that Loretto's vital programs and the ongoing care for our Sisters can continue.

A legacy gift is a transformative act. It secures the continuity of Loretto's values and ministries, ensuring the Community can continue its powerful commitment to make the world a better place. By joining the Circle, you honor Mother Ann Rhodes's original pioneering legacy while establishing your own deep and lasting impact through the Sisters' ongoing service.

If you have already named Loretto in your plans, please let our Advancement Office know so we can welcome you into the Ann Rhodes Legacy Circle. If you would like to explore how to make a lasting difference, we are here to help.

Loretto gathers!

Right, Community members in Denver come together to bestow a blessing on Anna Koop SL as she moves to Loretto Motherhouse, entering a new chapter in her life. Anna, in the foreground left of center, cofounded the Denver Catholic Worker House in 1978 and served that community until her recent retirement. See the [fall 2025 issue](#) for more.

*Photo: Ruth Routten CoL*

Below, Community members wave during a break at Loretto's Assembly in 2024. *Photo: Will Myers*



# Postscript

Dear Loretto Friends,

Welcome to the winter 2026 edition of *Loretto Magazine*, where we celebrate Loretto's profound and enduring commitment to education and learning. This commitment, rooted in our founders' vision, continues to shape our mission and guide our actions today.

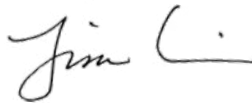
Inside this issue, you'll find inspiring stories of how Loretto's legacy of knowledge lives on. We highlight Sister Mary Catherine Widger's incredible work at the Bridge Community, which provides a stable, supportive and spiritual home for women with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Since the community's founding in 1985, Sister Mary Catherine has lived alongside the residents, embodying Bridge's core mission that everyone is seen, heard and valued, just as they are. We are also proud to share that Loretto Community Historian Eleanor Craig SL recently accepted the prestigious Father Louis J. Luzbetak, SVD, Award from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. This honor recognizes Sister Eleanor's vital research into the history of enslaved peoples within our congregation, a testament to her lifelong passion for bringing historical injustices to light. We also shine a light on the many ways Loretto members — Sisters and Co-Members — and employees continue to teach, mentor and

learn from one another daily, demonstrating that education is a lifelong journey. Finally, we offer a special celebration for our jubilarians celebrating 75-plus years, whose lives embody decades of wisdom, ministry and dedication. Their endurance and wisdom are a lesson in themselves.

This issue also marks an exciting milestone in our shared future: the completion of the first year of the Ann Rhodes Legacy Circle. Named for a beloved Sister of Loretto and dedicated educator, this planned giving recognition society honors those who have committed to supporting Loretto's mission beyond their lifetime. Legacy gifts ensure that the educational foundation and compassionate works of the Sisters of Loretto will continue to thrive for generations to come. Your generosity, whether through an annual gift or a future pledge, is truly transformative.

Thank you for being an indispensable part of the Loretto community and for supporting our mission of justice and peace through education. We wish you peace, joy and the warmth of learning this winter season.

With deep gratitude,



Lisa Smith  
Director of Advancement  
[LSmith@LorettoCommunity.org](mailto:LSmith@LorettoCommunity.org)



Loretto Motherhouse hosted a Christmas open house and invited the local community, with more than 300 neighbors and friends attending. It was a wonderful celebration of the season, topping off an eventful year at the Motherhouse. Here, Sue Rogers SL, far right, reads a story to gathered Loretto Community members and friends in the Motherhouse church. Also on offer were caroling, cookie decorating, a scavenger hunt and photos with Santa *Photo: Will Myers*



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Bridge Community staff and residents prepare for a visit to the National Western Stock Show in Denver. Ready for a good time are Marci, Lydia Peña SL, Melissa, Theresa, Mary Kay Widger SL and the Rev. Roland Freeman, holding Houston, Bridge Community's beloved canine companion. Photo: Bridge Community