



# MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

## SISTERS & ASSOCIATES



## MARCH 2019

### **Radical Hospitality!**

*by Sister Beth Driscoll*

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,  
for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it.”

*Hebrews 13:2*

This quote is a favorite of mine because it illustrates the significance of mutuality in gestures of hospitality. I'd like to introduce you to three Omaha friends with whom this mutuality of hospitality is embodied.

Kathy and I are members of the Social Justice Committee at St. John's Parish. When there are evening meetings, I offer Kathy a ride, since I know she doesn't like to drive downtown at night. These short drives provide opportunities for us to share a bit of our lives. I recently learned that Kathy's sister, Maureen, who lives in New Orleans, volunteers at Hotel Hope. Kathy now knows the story of Nano Nagle and how Nano's legacy continues through the ministry of Sisters Mary Lou Specha, Julie Marsh and all who serve the guests of Hotel Hope.



*Sister Beth Driscoll*

I had the opportunity to work with Paul last week when we served dinner at Josie Harper Hospice House. Though quiet and unassuming, Paul graciously responded to my inquiries about his life. I learned that he is organizing Eucharistic ministers who will lead Word and Communion Services for residents of Lasting Hope Recovery Center. Discovering that I had been a teacher, Paul asked if I'd be willing to help plan the orientation session and to take a turn leading a service.

Doug, a juvenile court judge, often attends Mass at St. John's. In conversations we've had walking to the parking lot after Mass, I sense that Doug has a heart of compassion for families, often initiating "off-the-record meetings" among parents, lawyers and social workers as a way to solve family problems faster and reunite parents with children. I look forward to accepting Doug's invitation to visit juvenile court where families are treated with welcome, care and compassion.

A very practical way that I practice hospitality is by writing personal notes. I attach a Post-it note to my monthly rent check, expressing thanks to the Pacific Gardens staff (this month for plowing so much snow!). I ask about how the grandbabies are doing whenever I send an e-mail request to Jean Lange, house coordinator for Mount Loretto. Bills sent to the Finance for Mission Office include a note to Chris

Jackson and Sister Julia Wingert wishing them a peace-filled day. I'm mindful, too, that people appreciate receiving a note on the anniversary (especially the *first* anniversary) of their loved one's death. I believe this simple gesture of note-writing has the power to bring the gift of hospitality into someone's day.

## How This Work Breaks My Heart (and Why That Is Good)

By Associate Billie Greenwood

*Billie Greenwood has volunteered for Humility Homes and Services assisting persons experiencing homelessness for over a decade. And, each winter, she and her husband help in a migrant assistance center in Nogales, Sonora – next to the US-Mexico border wall. She was asked: How is combatting homelessness in Iowa like providing humanitarian relief on the border?*



Billie Greenwood

People with no base – with no home – are the world's most vulnerable people. "Home base" names the importance of a site you can safely live and work from. Without a home – whether living homeless in the Quad Cities or fleeing far from home searching for a new one in migration support structures vanish.

A decade of volunteering with these populations of people has broken my heart. And that's a good thing. Because, if I pay attention, it teaches me every day. Here on the border, I experience:

### *Grace under pressure:*

- I overhear a deported husband reassure his U.S. wife on the cellphone I provide "they're treating me very well here" at the migrant assistance center. He's lonely and facing the unknown. But, through his reassurances, he tries to shield her from worry. When he returns the phone after his call, his eyes are wet as he thanks me.

### *Reality from insider sources:*

- After giving young deported women used clothing to supplement the little they have, I inquire about the conditions in immigration detention. My nation fed them food that gave them upset stomachs and allowed no medical treatment for their issues.

### *Endurance:*

- A woman asks for a pair of shoes because hers are "smelly." While exchanging them for one of our donated pairs, I discover she'd been walking in shoes two sizes too small. She'll lose her toenail soon to a painful toe blister. Yet she didn't complain that her shoes didn't fit.

### *Raw Courage:*

- An indigenous woman in traditional garb is four feet tall, looks 80 years old, and can't speak Spanish let alone English. She carries one Guatemalan baby on her back and leads another toddler by the hand. Criminals assassinated the children's mother. So this tiny heroine stepped in to get the kids to safety. They'll plead for U.S. asylum.

Ask the Humility Homes service providers what they learn on the job. They'll tell you similar, Midwest-flavored stories. Assisting people without homes in the Quad Cities of Iowa/Illinois:

- You're inspired by kindness and generosity when someone with nothing shares what little they have.
- You see true grit when a child living in temporary housing or in a motel room still manages to succeed at school.

- You note the patience it takes to live in close quarters with someone who's suffering from a psychosis.
- You realize: Six unrelated adults bunking together in one tiny room defines tolerance.

Search "homeless" on Twitter and you quickly see that people's attitudes toward those who lack homes range from distaste through dismay to derision. Scan the news and quickly see that migrants are feared and hated. But across the last decade my experience has been the opposite.

Whether volunteering in homelessness issues in Iowa or migration issues in Mexico, the situations I see break my heart. Every person deserves a home base and no one should be forced to migrate.

Whether in Iowa or in Mexico, I'm blessed by the humble teachers I try to help – if I get over myself, listen and learn from them.

Sister Paula Schwendinger received this e-mail from the couple in Florida who organized, formatted and paid for the publishing of her book, *Silent Voices in the Shadows: Stories of Undocumented Immigrants*. May our prayers increase compassion in our country.

Dear Paula,

After praying over our copies of your book since we received them, we feel that it is now time to send a copy to each of the four Congressional Leaders encouraging them to initiate immigration reform and to use this information to bring about a just and compassionate immigration plan for our nation. We will be sending that mailing out on Friday after our team has prayed over it at our meeting tomorrow night.

Please ask your congregation to join us in prayer over the next month, that God will act to bring this information into the right hands and that it will make a difference in our system of immigration so that the situation that affects the people like those you wrote about will cease.

Thank you for allowing us to partner with you in this effort. Blessings!

*Pam and Curtis*

[Click here to learn more about her book or purchase a copy.](#)

**Do you have a story to share  
about radical hospitality?**

*We are saving a space  
for your story.*



# ¿QUÉ TAL, BOLIVIA?

[WHAT'S HAPPENING, BOLIVIA?]

## Life can be full of surprises

Sister Suzanne Takes met Antonio, a 56-year-old Guarani man, when he arrived from Timboy by ambulance. The doctors in Entre Ríos recommended that he continue on to Tarija, due to the seriousness of his health. However, there was one legal complication – he had no document to prove his existence.

The next step was to go to the Civil Registry where they discovered that his last name was registered as Manguia. Antonio could not read and write but he knew that his father was Tito Jimenez. After consulting with Antonio and his family, the decision was made to purchase his birth certificate as it was, and later to do the paperwork to correct it.

Antonio was rushed off to Tarija, only to return the following day with the doctor's order to first get his carnet (identity card) so the operation could take place. Sister Suzanne visited with other family members to try to understand why Antonio was registered incorrectly. She discovered that he was the first born, with several siblings by another mother, but no one could help them. His father was deceased, but had gone back to his own family name in Guarani, Yakarenti, so Antonio could not use his father's last name. Wheels were spinning around in Sister Suzanne's head, but there was no way that the court would allow him to correct his last name. She went to the highest official in the office who agreed to help her put his papers in order. The woman asked Sister Suzanne to come back early the following morning with Antonio, thinking that she would send him with his family. She told Sister Suzanne in no uncertain terms that she personally had to come because she was the guarantee for her that the process would be accomplished. So she left the city that afternoon to return the following morning at 5 a.m.

After several days of work and visits to numerous offices, Antonio received his first carnet. Off they went to the hospital to get the necessary papers completed. At 5 p.m. that afternoon they finished. Sister Suzanne left Antonio with his daughter, Jacinta, waiting to see the doctor.

It would seem that around every curve, life is full of surprises and challenges.

*Hermanas Therese Corkery, Suzanne Takes, Mery Cari Paz and Marge Healy*



*Curve on the road to Entre Ríos*



*Jacinta with her father, Antonio*



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## March Update

### The Presentation Lantern Center Staff



Staff including Jess Brown, intern, Megan Ruiz, executive director and Sara Millhouse, business coordinator, crossed the river to Galena to hear Art Cullen, a Pulitzer Prize-winning editor from Storm Lake, Iowa, who writes extensively on immigration, as well as other issues including water quality. Last month, he wrote "Help wanted: Rural America needs immigrants" in the Washington Post.



Nubia, a student from Brazil, brought in an absolutely mouth-watering and gorgeous flan.



Spring is in the air, and the leprechauns are afoot! For St. Patrick's Day, we did a fun activity making leprechauns and making up a story about each leprechaun. One student, from Mexico, said his leprechaun was half-Irish and half-Mexican. Pancho O'Kelly comes in and does tricks on people! The activity was fun and silly, but it's still teaching conversational English skills. When you can tell a joke in a second language, you know you're getting somewhere!



Volunteers and tutors from Wahlert High School, Divine Word College and Wartburg Seminary worked together to update our citizenship cards so that they reflect our most recently-elected officials.



La Luz Hispana brought some warmth and fellowship to a bitter February with a cultural cooking class. This class, the first in a series of four, brought together a chef from Central America and eager students from non-Latino backgrounds. In the first class, the students learned about pupusas, a dish from El Salvador. This tasty and versatile dish starts with a thick handmade tortilla made from corn masa. It is stuffed with any number of delicious ingredients such as cheese, chicharrón (pork rinds), beans or loroco (an edible flower). The instructor, Marilu, guided the students as they found the perfect combination of water and masa – a much trickier task than expected – and showed them how to stuff the tortilla and pat it down into the iconic disk shape. The class also experienced making their own curtido (a spicy cabbage slaw) to accompany the pupusas. Along the way, Marilu showed them the products she uses to give her recipes that extra zing! The class ended by sitting down to enjoy the meal together and take time to get to know one another.



We are excited and encouraged by the success of this first class. Some of the participants have already shared that they have made pupusas at home for their families. It is always a joy to see people learn about other cultures and enjoy a good meal along the way!

La Luz Hispana is pleased to welcome Yecenia Andrade as an intern for the spring semester! Yeci is in her third year at Wartburg College in Waverly, Iowa. Originally from Arizona, she has been braving the snow to come to the office once a week to help with daily tasks and work on projects. As a Spanish and public health double major, Yeci is a wonderful asset to La Luz Hispana. She has been meeting many people in the area and is learning ways she can use her public health knowledge to aid in education and programming for health gaps in the Latino community.



*Yecenia Andrade*

Yeci is a delight to have in the office and all who have met her are immediately taken by her hospitable and energetic charm! We are thrilled to have her with us and look forward to seeing the results of her work throughout the semester.

*Claudia Rivera and Aimee Hanson*