Dear Friends,

Wow! This has been quite a season of celebrating all God’s gracious gifts. In this magazine issue, you can share in

• memories of the June celebration of the 150th anniversary of our Tiffin Franciscan Community
• the August celebration of the Sisters’ 50th anniversary serving in Chiapas Mexico, along with Sister Lourdes Toribio’s renewal of vows
• the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center’s 25th anniversary celebration at the August Summer Harvest Gala
• the September Resilient Veteran retreat at St. Francis Spirituality Center
• and last but not least, our September Benefactor Appreciation of all you friends and benefactors of St. Francis Community.

We are very blest and joyous to have all of you in our lives and ministries. We ask God to bless you and guard your journey into the future and to strengthen you in your commitments to serve God and God’s people.

Gratefully,

Sister Sara Aldridge
Community Minister

We appreciate our benefactors!

St. Francis Community recognizes our benefactors annually at the Benefactor Appreciation service and reception. This year, we celebrated our benefactors on Sunday, September 29, 2019.
Heritage Festival Parade includes Anniversary Floats

This year the Sisters of St. Francis are celebrating their 150th Anniversary while the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center celebrates their 25th Anniversary. On Saturday, September 21st they both participated in the Heritage Festival Parade in downtown Tiffin.

Include St. Francis Community in Your Future Plans

By including a gift to St. Francis Community in your estate plans, you create a legacy of support at Sisters of St. Francis. We can help you get started. Contact Sister Joanne Lammers at jlammers@tiffinfranciscans.org or 419-447-0435, Ext. 131 for help finding the right gift for you.

This information is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor.
On August 10, 2019, three Ohio Sisters traveled to Chiapas, Mexico to support and celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the Sisters of St. Francis serving in Mexico. Community Minister Sister Sara Aldridge, Sister Leanne Kerschner and Sister Yvonne Fischer joined Sister Linda Scheckelhoff and Sister Lourdes Toribio who currently serve in the Diocese of San Cristóbal.

Sister Linda offered guests including Bishop Rodrigo, priests, sisters, brothers and friends a very cordial welcome to the celebration. “In this year of 2019, our congregation of the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Charity of Tiffin, Ohio are celebrating 50 years of service in the Diocese of San Cristóbal de las Casas. In 1969, two of our Sisters met Bishop Samuel Ruiz García at a meeting in New York City, and he invited our congregation to visit his diocese in Chiapas, Mexico. After a few visits to the diocese in 1969, the leadership of the congregation made the decision to send two Sisters to serve in the Diocese of San Cristóbal,” said Sister Linda.

The Sisters of St. Francis have served in two zones of the diocese: in the South Zone, principally in Nicolás Ruiz and Villa Las Rosas, and in the Southeast Zone in La Trinitaria. During these 50 years, nine Sisters have served in the Diocese of San Cristóbal. All of them are still living except for Sister Anna Marie Mangette who died in 2018 after serving a total of 15 years in the diocese.

Sr. Linda continued, “We are here to thank God, the Diocese and all of you to have had the privilege to live and serve in this diocese for 50 years. It has been an enriching experience for our congregation to be able to accompany the people in their poverty and suffering. We have received so much more than we have given!”

The Sisters chose the date of August 2nd for the celebration of their 50 years of service in the diocese because it is a very significant feast in the Franciscan family. It is the feast of a very small chapel named Mary of the Angels of the Portiuncula or Little Portion. Today this tiny chapel can be found in a huge basilica on the outskirts of Assisi, Italy. This small chapel is very significant for all Franciscans for three reasons: first, in this tiny chapel the Franciscan Order had its origin. (In the early years of the Order the friars lived in small huts built around this chapel.) Second, on Palm Sunday night in 1211, St. Clare was received into the Franciscan Order in this Chapel. And third, in 1226 St. Francis died in the Chapel of Mary of the Angels.

According to Sr. Linda, beef that was served at the celebration was donated by a family that lives in one of our communities. The day
“Being a Tiffin Franciscan sister is a blessing. I keep searching for my dream to make final vows as a Sister of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio,” said Sister Lourdes Toribio. The renewal of temporary vows for Sister Lourdes took place during a parish liturgy on August 4, 2019. Sister Sara Aldridge, the Community Minister accepted her vows during the parish liturgy at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in La Trinitaria, Mexico.

The Sisters’ Leadership Team appointed Sister Yvonne Fischer as formator to companion Sister Lourdes since she began this process in 2010. Sister Yvonne and other Tiffin Sisters have periodically spent time with Sister Lourdes in La Trinitaria to study, pray and prepare to make and live the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. “Sometimes we use SKYPE for 1-1/2 hours to communicate face to face. We discuss the missionary context in Mexico and how she lives the vows today,” explained Sister Yvonne.

Sister Lourdes continued, “Renewing my vows reminds me of when I became a candidate with the Tiffin Franciscans singing, ‘Here I am Lord.’ That was 10 years ago. It’s a joy to be part of the Tiffin Franciscan Congregation, to share the Franciscan charism and see the joy and hope that people get when I share with them who we are and what we do.

One of the things that touches my heart is the Sisters’ simplicity and hospitality. This hospitality is very important as we are work with poor people that need a hug, a listening ear, a place to rest and feel at home, a place to feel like family and where someone can give them hope as they go through their challenges. When the people say to me, ‘Whenever you enter my house, I feel a peace,’ I feel so happy.”

before the celebration various people came from the nearby communities to slaughter the cow and process the meat that was later prepared into a tasty barbeque by one on the women in the parish. The meal was served with rice and handmade corn tortillas on August 2nd. This was quite a task since there were between 400-500 people who attended the dinner.

Sister Lourdes added, “The celebration was not so much a celebration of the congregation as it was a celebration of the people in the parish and the entire Diocese of San Cristobal. The people made it possible. They were so thrilled as we worked together on all the preparations.”

Visit our website to see more pictures of the 50th Anniversary Celebration and to watch some videos at http://tiffinfranciscans.org/mexico-ministries/chiapas/
In mid-June, Trey Masterson of the BSA Scout Troop 444 renovated the FELC farm stand as his Eagle Scout Project. The farm stand, now named Eagle Crest Pavilion, was transformed into a multi-purpose facility that is open and accessible. According to Trey, who headed the project, a lot of preparation was needed before the structure could be moved off the concrete pad and renovated.

“In the early stages of the project, I encountered many obstacles that kept the project from moving forward and making it very hard to even tell if I would be able to complete it. Then after the planning stage challenges came the actual construction problems,” explained Trey.

After removing the carport structure, gravel was placed on top of the old cement pad, trenches were dug to create new walkways, and forms were placed. Concrete was poured on top, making the surface of the two pads one whole floor. The carport structure was then moved back into position.

“For the most part, it went pretty well except when I discovered I had not ordered the correct amount of materials for the first day,” said Trey. He added, “Despite the beginning difficulties, the main project was completed with just a few improvements left to do.”

Electrical work was completed to provide power for the vegetable coolers, and new rolling storage carts were added. The Eagle Crest Pavilion is now handicap accessible because of extending new black top from the road.

According to local Eagle Scout Advancement Chair for Troop 444 Mike Longanbach, who has been with scouts for the last 13 years, 8 of those being Scoutmaster, there are 8 ranks in the scouting program and boys usually enter the program at 11 or 12 years-old. There are many tasks, service hours and testing with each rank. It usually takes 4-5 years before a scout reaches his eagle rank and a small percentage reach that rank. Eagle requirement includes addition merit badges, service hours and positions of leadership. Once a scout has completed the Life Scout rank, they pick a project with guidance from adult leaders. A considerable amount of planning goes into these projects and must complete numerous steps from the planning stage to completion. Part of the process is raising money.

“Trey made numerous presentations to local groups and raised nearly $6000. He planned the project from the start and consulted numerous professionals for advice and help with the project,” explained Mike. “One of the requirements...
FELC Celebrates 25th Anniversary and New Staff

The Sisters of St. Francis welcomed Mimi Lange Johnston in June as their new director of the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center. After growing up in Tiffin, Mimi spent the past three decades in Chicago and Nashville where she made her mark in music, theatre, advertising, education, and nonprofit management. Mimi spent the last seven years as the head of the arts and production at Franklin Christian Academy in Franklin, Tennessee. Mimi is thrilled to be back home in Tiffin and is looking forward to working with volunteers and putting their talents and passions to work at FELC.

Mimi can be reached Monday-Thursday by phone (419) 448.7485 or by email mjohnston@felctiffin.org. Feel free to stop by FELC and introduce yourself. Visitors are always welcome and encouraged!

“Thealthough I have been here less than half a year, I can confidently say that we have an incredibly strong team at FELC. Sister Shirley Shafranek’s deep knowledge base of farming, science, education, FELC, and the Sisters of St. Francis, along with a love for children, has made her a loved and respected member of the community for well over a decade,” said Mimi.

“I bring experience in the arts, education, and nonprofit management, and a history of bringing people together to achieve great, lasting things on behalf of children and community. And, Sam—well, you’ll just have to come out and meet her. She is young, smart, well-educated, friendly, and connects instantly with kids. We love working together and can’t wait to see what the coming year brings!” added Mimi.

The Franciscan Earth Literacy Center would also like to welcome Samantha Busack into the St. Francis Community. In September, Samantha (who likes to be called Sam) joined the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center as environmental educator. She, her husband Paul, and their two children are residents of Bettsville.

Sam grew up on a farm outside Bascom, so she feels right at home in Seneca County. She was most recently employed as a preK-12 substitute teacher, and is also the owner of Paint Party, where she instructs painting classes for individuals and groups, along with team-building exercises. Sam is a Bowling Green State University graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Environmental Science Education. She also has an Associate of Science degree in Biology from Terra State Community College. A member of the American Institute of Professional Geologists, she has published work, research, teaching and management experience under her belt, and FELC is blessed to have her on the education team!
Sixteen veterans gathered at St. Francis Spirituality Center September 13-15 for the Resilient Veteran retreat led by fellow veterans, Fr. Conrad Targonski, OFM (Marine chaplain, Iraq) and Rev. Bill Reese (Lutheran chaplain, Vietnam) from LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Presentations helped vets discover St. Francis of Assisi himself as a prisoner of war, who suffered from PTSD, and how he made his journey to recovery.

Vets enjoyed the camaraderie, good food, sharing stories, quiet time and rituals with one another. “We gather as Vets,” as Fr. Conrad said, “whose bodies come home (from war) before our souls, and we need to find ways to help our souls return as well.”

This free self-help program was made possible through Tiffin’s Patriot Day Salute Fund. Participants highly praised the weekend and asked for another next year.

After the retreat, Rev. Bill addressed the veteran participants. “It was an honor for Father Conrad and me to spend precious hours with you this past weekend. We planned it, but God performed it in manifold ways. We hold many memories, celebrated at our final ritual—a summation of a weekend that ignited fires, extinguished hurts, opened opportunities for personal growth. And then there was Fr. Conrad’s Sunday homily on being lost and graciously found.

Sr. Edna is hoping to offer this again next year, God willing. Be evangelists and invite others.”

Visit our website (franciscanretreats.org/veterans) to view video clips from program participants.
St. Francis Spirituality Center kicked off its annual fundraiser—Christmas 365!—on October 1st. There will be raffle drawings for cash prizes on the 25th day of every month in 2020. St. Francis Spirituality Center will be giving away $4000 in cash prizes with each contestant having the possibility of up to 12 chances to win since each winning ticket goes back into the drum for multiple chances to win throughout the year.

Tickets are $10 each or 6 for $50. Tickets can be purchased online by clicking the following link: “Christmas 365” Raffle. Tickets are also on sale at St. Francis Spirituality Center, SpiritSpace Gallery & Gifts, St. Francis Mission Advancement Office and at area church services, businesses, and civic events. Tickets are on sale through September 30, 2020.

Winners will be notified by phone, and names will be posted on our website, www.franciscanretreats.org.

Link to the main raffle page (2020)
Direct link to tickets
150th Anniversary Celebration Continues

On June 28th the Sisters of St. Francis celebrated their 150th Anniversary Mass at St. Joseph Church in Tiffin where Father Joseph Bihn had asked for parishioners for help 150 years ago. Bishop Daniel Thomas of the Diocese of Toledo, presided in celebrating the Holy Eucharist and used the original chalice that belonged to Father Bihn. Descendants of Father Bihn and Elizabeth Schaefer (aka “Mother Francis”) joined in the celebration, followed by a luncheon on the St. Francis Campus.

A special Cemetery Celebration of Thanksgiving honoring “The Ones Who Came Before Us” (as part of our 150th Anniversary) took place on Saturday, August 17, 2019 in the cemetery, located behind the St. Francis Convent. The celebration began with an opening song and prayer in the St. Francis Convent Chapel followed by a procession out to the cemetery.

Following a trumpet call, there was a presentation of flowers in memory of our founders Father Joseph Bihn and Mother Francis Schaefer, singing of “Standing on the Shoulders” and a reading. A brief history of St. Francis Convent Cemetery was also shared.

Portrayals were offered by some of the former members of our Franciscan family which included Orphan Peter Wiot (Brady), Mother Bonaventure (Sr. Gemma Fenbert), Sister Alacoque (Sr. Veronica Nowakowski), Brother Cornelius (George Marsh), Campus Resident Tillie Milligan (Sr. Jackie Doepker) and Convent Employee/Convent Chef Dan Groce (Luke Snyder). We were happy to have four grandchildren of Peter Wiot, the first orphan, in attendance.

After a Litany of Thanks, “For All the Saints” was sung and everyone was given the opportunity to visit the graves of our friends and family.

The program ended with a closing prayer followed by the singing of “Alleluia! Alleluia! Let the Holy Anthem Rise” and a reception under the Portico which even included some cookies that were made using the original cookie cutters made by the first Brothers of St. Francis.

If you were not able to join us in person, you can still view the entire Mass by clicking on the link http://tiffinfranciscans.org/150th-anniversary-mass. Additional information related to our history, a special video and pictures of our anniversary events can also be viewed in the special anniversary section of our website.
On October 3rd, St. Francis Senior Ministries held an Open House at St. Francis Home in honor of their 150th Anniversary. A prayer drama was held in the chapel, followed by a presentation of history of the Sisters of St. Francis led by Sister Patricia Froning in the dining room. Refreshments and displays were also enjoyed by employees, residents and sisters.

The original homestead of Elizabeth Schaefer (aka “Mother Francis”) is located in New Riegel, Ohio. The current owner, Mary Smith, a volunteer at St. Francis Home and first cousin to Sister Mary Charles, is shown holding a picture of the home where she has resided since 1956.

SAVE THE DATE
Live Nativity ~ Sunday, December 1, 2019
The 12th Annual Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala benefiting the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center was a huge success! This year FELC celebrates 25 years of environmental education, so this year’s Gala was especially meaningful. The proceeds make it possible for the staff to provide center and school based programming to approximately 4,500 children and adults each year from across Northwest Ohio. Over 400 guests enjoyed a warm summer evening attending the Gala. Over $25,000 was raised to support our educational programs.