Greetings
From the Community Minister

Dear Friends,

This issue of our magazine includes how our Sisters and co-workers are living out the Works of Mercy in their ministries since Pope Francis has declared this the “Holy Year of Mercy.” As I pondered what to write for this article, I immediately brought to mind all the ways that St. Francis Community responds to the call of these works through service, both individually and corporately, with your prayerful and financial support. Our ministries are focused on living out the Corporal Works of Mercy, helping our neighbors with their material and physical needs…and sharing compassion with those needing emotional and spiritual support through those Spiritual Works of Mercy.

During this Year of Mercy Pope Francis has encouraged us to practice the Works of Mercy with new enthusiasm. We are so blessed to have multiple opportunities each day to practice mercy, such as serving meals to the hungry, bathing and dressing those who need assistance, comforting those who are sad or lonely, keeping vigil with the dying and accompanying them all the way to heaven’s embrace.

Together with your prayerful support, all at St. Francis are, as Pope Francis says, “ready for any good work.”

I invite you to visit our sfctiffin.org website to learn more about our ministries and to confide your needs and intentions to us by submitting a prayer request.

May you know God’s merciful embrace,

Sister Sara Aldridge
Community Minister

The Gift That Keeps Giving

Your support for the St. Francis Community is of great value to us, and it is our goal to make it rewarding for you as well. That’s why we want you to know about the financial tools you can use to plan a gift to us so that it can return benefits to you:

- You can make a gift as a cash donation which can be designated for special needs.
- You can make a gift that insures your family and the St. Francis Community are remembered through a bequest.
- You can give a gift of real estate, which can be more beneficial than giving cash.
- You can turn surplus life insurance coverage into a gift.
- You can make a gift through company sponsored pension and profit sharing plans.

Please see “Plan a Gift” at tiffinfranciscans.org or contact Sister Joanne Lammers at (419) 447-0435 and she will be glad to answer any questions.
Jerry Schmidt has attended the Mercy DVD Series offered by St. Francis Spirituality Center during the months of September and October. In 2015 his wife Judy, a resident at St. Francis Home, passed away. Prior to her death she was fortunate to have found the spiritual path that she had been searching for, thanks to Sister Beatrice Koerper. Since then, Jerry has been trying to deal with her passing and has been on his own spiritual quest. “The Sisters have been instrumental in my journey,” said Jerry.

Throughout the Mercy program, participants like Jerry were able to explore methods for living a life of mercy in our modern world—a world that too often over-emphasizes cold, calculating justice. The sessions offer insight, peace, transformation, and renewal. Fr. Dan Crosby, OFM Cap. shares his reflections on the meaning of mercy in Scripture, Church teaching and contemporary culture throughout the weekly DVD series.

“These programs give me the opportunity to share my experience, learn from others and then share what I have picked up with other people,” said Jerry. “This place is a safe place where I can be openly Catholic, be accepted for who I am. He added, “And I can meet others on the spiritual journey.”

This year we wanted to have a special celebration of the Stigmata of St. Francis in order to highlight the significance of the San Damiano Cross in St. Francis Home Chapel and to remember in a special way the life and death of St. Francis. In an effort to spread the Franciscan story, the Sisters participated in a prayer service sponsored by St. Francis Home in September. Using the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis as the chosen feast, and the San Damiano cross as a teaching tool, Sister Patricia Froning created a prayer service consisting of Franciscan readings and music. Sister Marie Reinhart agreed to be the organist and Sister Carolette Grote offered to direct the rehearsals. Men and women from the surrounding area joined the Sisters to become the inspiring choir.

Visit www.tiffinfranciscans.org to watch a video clip.

The Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy

† To share knowledge
† To give advice to those who need it
† To comfort the suffering
† To be patient with others
† To forgive those who hurt you
† To give correction to those who need it
† To pray for the living and the dead
Sister Bea Herman had a vision which led to the formation of the local food pantry in Tiffin. She invited people from eight local churches to meet with her. “It was very ecumenical,” recalls Sister Bea. “The program was already in place in Lima, Ohio, so I had a man come to speak to us about it and it was soon after that we formed a steering committee,” she added.

Sister Stella Magers began volunteering at the Tiffin-Seneca United Way FISH Food Pantry around 1982 and has continued since then with the exception of just two years. During that time she worked with several other volunteers, including some Tiffin Franciscans. “As one finished, another would step in to help,” said Sr. Stella.

Other volunteers have included Sister Charlene Young, Sister Rosann Morman and Sister Anna Marie Mangette. “Through these years of volunteering at the FISH food pantry, I have been privileged to interact with many who found themselves in a desperate situation during which they could not afford to buy enough food for their families,” said Sister Stella. She continued, “I have listened to a multitude of sad stories about how discouraged they felt and have seen their tears of sadness and despair. I have often heard some say ‘When I get back on my feet I want to give back to the FISH pantry.’ I realize that this FISH pantry exists only because of the team of loyal board members and volunteers as well as donations from many of the people of Tiffin.”

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Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.  
(Isaiah 55:1)

Participants who attended the recent Peaceful Waters Meditation program were able to rest beside cooling waters at the reflection pond on the St. Francis Campus while Sister Edna led them in a guided meditation centered on healing, refreshing, and nurturing the soul.

Catherine Jesko, of Carey, attended two of the summer morning meditation programs after reading about them in the local newspaper. “I decided it was time to take care of me. I was able to relax and reconnect with God through Sr. Edna’s guided meditation. I’m looking forward to more peaceful times.”

Guided meditations will continue to be offered in the early months of 2017.

Kids attending the “Grow It, Bake It, Eat It, Share It” summer camp enjoyed learning about gardening and spent the morning hours planting and watering vegetables in our campus garden.

Summer camp interns helped distribute reusable water bottles at all of the Summer Camps held at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center. Campers were encouraged to bring a reusable water bottle to camp rather than a disposable bottle throughout the summer.
Sister Theresa Kehres, who serves as the Pastoral Associate at St. Elizabeth Church in Ravenna, KY, sorts through clothes at the Ravenna Appalachian mission’s used clothing shop. Vans deliver donated clothing and Sister Theresa and volunteers sort and display the items for people in need that come to “shop” at the mission.

For over 30 years the outreach ministry at St. Elizabeth Parish has included some kind of "second-hand" or "recycled" furniture and clothing items. Sometimes it has served as more of a used furniture/appliance store and at other times it’s been a used clothing store. But always, it has been serving a real need for people in Estill County.

According to Sister Theresa, there are very few jobs available in the area and no transportation to get to a bigger city to shop. “There were and are still many people who need to shop locally and find cheap and decent clothing. We have been here with the clothing and other small household items folks need,” said Sister Theresa.

Sister Theresa added, “Over the years I have heard many a Grandma say, ’There is no way I could have raised my family without the help of this church, and now I am shopping for my grand and great-grand children as well as myself! We have been blessed!’”

I needed clothes and you clothed me,
I was sick and you looked after me,
I was in prison and you came to visit me.
(Matthew: 25:36)

Sister Betty Lindenberger, Sister Edna Michel and our grant writer Ann Keefe collected boxes which were filled with new socks, hats, gloves and scarves donated by those attending the 2015 Live Nativity held on our campus.

Over $200 was collected and given to the Seneca County Homeless Coalition Fund. The extra scarves were delivered to the Tiffin-Seneca United Way and were used for the Snug-a-Tree project in which scarves are tied to trees in downtown Tiffin for those in need during Winter Fest Victorian Weekend. The socks, gloves and hats for small children were delivered to the Tiffin Firefighters’ Toy Project for their Christmas event and the rest of the items were donated to the local Salvation Army.

Sister Virginia Welsh and volunteers at the Padua Center in Toledo held a rummage sale and give-away during the Annual Chicken Fest that was held in July.
Sisters in Shelter operates The Safe House, donated by Mercy Tiffin Hospital in January of 2015, which houses up to five women. The Safe House became a reality for Sister Mary Kuhlman, Executive Director and founder of Sisters in Shelter, after partnering with others in the area whose mission was also to provide safe emergency housing for adult female survivors of both labor and human trafficking. The house, staffed at all times, gives survivors the opportunity to heal from their past and find wholistic ways to balance their lives.

Nine years ago, the Sisters responded to a need that arrived on their doorstep. Sister Mary said, “It was our introduction to the horror of human trafficking. A month later we were asked to house another woman and her baby boy. Hearing their stories propelled us forward to join with other religious communities in Northwest Ohio and immerse ourselves in learning about and addressing this issue in our own backyard.”

Medical care and counseling are available for all residents, as well as classes for budgeting, fitness, nutrition, cooking and other topics. “This is a place where women can get their lives back together, start to make good choices and get back on their feet,” said Sister Mary.

Since it began, Sisters in Shelter has housed several women from Northwest Ohio. The women are able to stay for up to one year if they complete the program. When completing the program, they move into transitional housing where they are more independent and seek employment.

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. (Matthew 25:35)

Volunteers replace the roof of a house and complete other various home repairs during a mission trip to Boonville, Kentucky. The volunteers are from St. Mary Parish in Bluffton, Ohio where Sister Carol Inkrott serves as Pastoral Leader.
Since 1962, the St. Francis Home Auxiliary has been putting smiles on the faces of St. Francis Home residents. According to Mary Eichorn the group consisted of 1,000 young women. Mary was just out of school and would come with her aunt to the Spring Card Party, which is still held annually. “It was a very formal occasion. And, today those same card tables are still being used,” Mary recalled. Although the size of the group and the age of the women have changed, their mission has remained the same.

“When I was asked to take over in 2004 as co-president, I was not sure what to do,” said Mary. Throughout the next six years, Mary “got things organized,” by updating board members and membership. She also decided that each resident should receive an angel sun catcher when they entered St. Francis Home. She then created a message that is still attached today.

According to Darlene Bloom, Volunteer Coordinator at St. Francis Home, not only do residents get a visit from the Auxiliary and a sun catcher when they arrive, they also receive a birthday card on their birthday. Additionally, when a resident returns from the hospital they get a thinking of you card, too. Millie Lee was an auxiliary volunteer for several years and helped deliver sun catchers and cards to many residents. “It is a wonderful feeling making residents feel happy. They really appreciate the gift or card and especially enjoy the visit,” said Millie.

St. Francis Auxiliary also holds an Annual Christmas Dinner for residents and has an Annual Card Party in the Spring. The proceeds are used to purchase items that enhance the lives of the residents living at St. Francis Home. Over the years, the Auxiliary has been able to purchase many necessary items for the Home such as lifts, whirlpools, air conditioners, tablecloths, items for the physical therapy area, TVs, and electric door openers, to name a few. They also provide $40 every month for the BINGO program for prizes and treats. In addition, they cover the cost of live piano music for the resident Christmas dinner and purchase fresh flowers for the dining room tables each year on Mother’s Day, Father’s Day and Easter.

“We have a lot of participation from the relatives of those who have lived at St. Francis Home over the years,” said Mary, “but we always need more.” For more information about the St. Francis Home Auxiliary and how you can be involved contact Mary Eichhorn 419-447-4743 or Darlene Bloom at 419-447-2723.

The Corporal Work of Mercy, “Care of the Sick,” takes on many forms in hospital ministry. According to Sister Diane Hay, chaplain at Mercy Health-Willard Hospital, “A chaplain extends the healing of Jesus to patients by tending to their needs in body, mind, and spirit. Sometimes it is being there for family members, employees, volunteers and all who enter the doors of the hospital, clinic, or nursing home.”

Sister Diane Hay prays with Jen Saunders.

Sister Lucy Bonifas comforts family members of a patient at Lourdes Hospital in Paducah, Kentucky.

Although she retired in January of 2016, Sister Lucy Bonifas continues her ministry of pastoral care in Paducah, KY. Sister Lucy has shared her compassionate service while working for the last 46 years at Lourdes Hospital in Paducah in medical and pastoral care. “In my retirement, I want to be of service to God’s people, sharing my gifts with others, especially the sick, those with terminal illness, and dying persons,” said Sister Lucy.
Over the past year, Sister Virginia Welsh has been instrumental in helping “Brian” receive the sacrament of Confirmation in order to become Catholic. It was in December of 2015 when Brian approached Toledo’s Bishop Daniel Thomas about becoming Catholic after having his annual mass at the jail. Brian had already been baptized in another Christian church, so Bishop Thomas explained he would return to receive him into the Church and anoint him with the Sacrament of Confirmation if Brian could complete the necessary preparation.

On August 10, 2016, Bishop Thomas welcomed Brian into the Catholic Church after completing the RCIA formation provided by Sister Virginia and Kay Shrewsbery and Sue Nowak, Tiffin Franciscan Associates. Brian’s sponsor, Father Dave Huss from Lima, also came to celebrate.

For over ten years, Sister Virginia has assisted with weekly communion services at the Lucas County Jail in Toledo, Ohio. There is also a monthly mass for the inmates for which Kay and Sue have been playing the guitar for the last 13 years.

There is also a weekly prayer service, one for men and another for women. “We just want to share the scripture and walk with them through their journeys,” explained Kay. “The comradery that has grown with the inmates and the respect they have for us is phenomenal,” she added. “The depth of sharing is powerful.”

I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

(Matthew: 25:36)

Sister Paulette Schroeder recalls when the late Father Ron Kurth, a Toledo Diocesan priest, worked for prison reform. He shared a list of inmates with the Franciscan sisters and encouraged them to write to inmates. “For almost 40 years I have found friendship with both Kenneth and George, one serving time in the Grafton Correctional Institution in Grafton, Ohio and the other at the Richland Correctional Institution in Mansfield,” said Sister Paulette. “I remember being scared to death when I began writing and then visiting both of these men accused of murder. Through the years, however, I understand why Jesus urged us to visit the imprisoned. These two men have truly changed my life: helping me understand my privileged life, helping me understand why we must not judge, helping me see and accept one another as ONE. I see them now as my brothers.”

At the Seneca County Jail in Tiffin, Father Mike Diemer and Father Gary Walters preside at mass twice a month, and Francisco Celestino of Fremont assists at the prayer services. Sister Maureen Studer organizes the services and Sisters Charlene Young and Veronica Nowakowski pray and sing with the inmates, accompanied by Sister Barbara Jean Miller on guitar. For Spanish speaking inmates, Sister Lucy Schmitmeyer provides translation.

In this Year of Mercy, they often include a reflection about God’s mercy. “Mercy requires the forgiveness of anyone who has caused hurt, and compassion only happens if we have a mind and heart willing to forgive,” said Sister Lucy.

Sister Paulette and Ken

Sisters Barbara Jean Miller, Charlene Young, Veronica Nowakowski, Maureen Studer and Lucy Schmitmeyer arrive at the Seneca County Jail for mass.
Adam Gibson has been a familiar face on the St. Francis Campus for the last 24 years. He recently attended the funeral of Sister Margaret Verhoff who passed away in August 2016. "My mother, Mary Ann worked in the convent infirmary with Sister Margaret for several years," explained Adam. “Her presence in my life these past 20+ years has truly been a gift from God.”

Adam added, “My vocation to funeral service has been formed by my own personal experiences with the loss of family/friends, and from the examples of local funeral directors whom I have observed and who have served my family over the years. I’ve been to many of the Sisters’ funerals over the years, and the Traunero family has certainly been an inspiration to me in pursuing funeral service. I remain grateful for their care of my mother many years ago and for their service to the Sisters.”

Sister Mary Ann Luke and Adam Gibson visit the grave of Sister Margaret Verhoff.

“Here at St. Francis we witness dying and death time and time again. Each experience is unique and sacred,” said Sister Janet Hay, who ministers in pastoral care on the St. Francis campus. She continued, “We honor and reverence each person who comes to us for care, and we honor and respect each who leaves us in death. The blue memory blanket placed over the body signifies our final touch of love and care for the one who has blessed us with their presence for a few weeks or a few years of their life.”

“Among other bereavement services, St. Francis Senior Ministries gives the family of each resident who dies on our campus a memorial blanket as a keepsake,” said Dow Campbell, Director of Mission and Spiritual Services at St. Francis Home. “Whenever possible our staff places the blanket over the body of our loved one as they are escorted out of the facility by staff as the funeral director receives the body after their passing. These rituals offer much comfort to the families and are another small way that our community continues to honor the life and dignity of each individual,” added Dow.

“Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death...
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will”

(St. Francis’ Canticle of Brother Sun)
Ways that you can exercise the Works of Mercy

Give an Honorary Christmas Gift

Use the enclosed envelope to contribute an item below to one or more of our ministries as a Christmas gift in honor of a loved one. We will send a Christmas gift acknowledgement to the honoree in your name.

SISTERS OF St. Francis

**Assistance for Those in Need**
- $50/trip for transportation
- $400/family for utility bills
- $50/toddler car seat

**Education in Mexico**
- $25/month per child
- $250/per computer

**Living Expense for Missionary**
- $350/month

**Working with Poor**
- $350/workshop on Victims of Human Trafficking
- $350 workshop on Christian Nonviolence

**Sponsor a Workshop**
- $350/workshop on Victims of Human Trafficking
- $350 workshop on Christian Nonviolence

**Support our Sisters**
- $1,100/month - retirement care
- $1,500/month - Living/Working Expense for Sister in Voluntary Ministry

**Sponsor Documented Immigrant**
- $500 for green card
- $10 for citizenship test

Franciscan Earth LITERACY CENTER

- $6,800 riding lawn mower
- $358 each - umbrellas for picnic tables
- $100 each garden tool sets for low income plots
- $800 electric water heater
- $100/per child to attend camp (low income scholarships)
- $50 guest speaker fees for special programs
- $3,000 to sponsor a college student to intern

ST. FRANCIS Senior Ministries

- $1530/each – 15 recliner lift chairs for resident rooms
- $1935/each - 38 electric Beds for resident rooms

ST. FRANCIS Spirituality Center

- $500/each - scholarships for First Responders healing program
- $50/each - retreat for cancer patients, their caregivers or respite workers
- $25 - Healing Arts Seminar patron
- $225/room - painting of 10 guest rooms

Dancing in the streets, feathers, beads & masks
What more do we need to have a blast?

**Mardi Gras**

**Save the Date**

21 & over event

**Friday, February 24, 6:00-10:30 pm**

Elizabeth Schaefer Auditorium
St. Francis Campus, 190 St. Francis Avenue, Tiffin
Tickets $30.00 each ∙ Table reservations call 419-447-0435
Proceeds benefit the ministries of the Sisters of St. Francis

Donations of any amount
THAT ONE DAY ONLY to St. Francis Community
can be eligible for matching contributions of up to $1,000 thru the Toledo Community Foundation. On November 29, St. Francis Community has a goal to raise at least $10,000. Please make a donation online or by check which MUST BE dated “November 29, 2016.” Call Mission Advancement Office for details at 419-447-0435 ext. 132.
Congratulations to our Jubilarians who celebrated 50 years of vowed life and ministry in August. (L to R) Sister Linda Scheckelhoff, Sister Virginia Welsh, Sister Diane Hay and Sister Margaret Ann Seasly.

Guests enjoyed a warm summer evening while attending the 9th Annual Summer Harvest Gourmet Gala which supports the programs at the Franciscan Earth Literacy Center.

Those who attended the 15th Annual Fall BBQ enjoyed a delicious dinner while supporting the St. Francis Spirituality Center on September 10.

Congratulations to Lois Hoover who was selected as the 2016 Outstanding Senior Citizen for Seneca County for the Area Agency on Aging pictured with board member, Kellie Hartsel.