



*Associates have fun expressing their artistic side with coloring pages at the "Women's Christmas Experience" weekend. Clockwise from left: Gloria Vrostek, Peggy Huwe, Julia Lynn, Denise Champe, Shelley Johnsen, Maryann D'Alessandro, Erin Middleton, and Colleen Higbee.*

## A Very Merry "Little Christmas" Weekend

by Erin Middleton

As a child, I wanted the Christmas holiday to last and last. As a grown-up providing holiday memories for five children, I was ready for it to be done after January 1! The tree came down and it was "onward and upward" to get ready for my oldest daughter's January 3 birthday celebration.

But this year I was overwhelmed by the joyful celebration of Epiphany with the Sisters and Associates. It was our first ever "Women's Christmas Experience" weekend, culminating in a beautifully reverent Three Kings Day. The brain-child of Srs. Michele Bisbey, Kathleen Matz, and Lisa Paffrath, the weekend of January 4-6, 2019 was a lovely spiritual celebration of all things good about community—"Emmanuel, God with us." It was a time of just being together with those we love, with no agenda but to enjoy one another, play, dance, sing, eat, drink, share memories, laugh, pray, and refresh ourselves.

The weekend's activities included Lectio Divina, good rest at Kearns Spirituality Center, homemade food in abundance, and relaxing activities of all kinds. It is hard to pin down just one highlight, but certainly the lovely Epiphany liturgy

*(Continued on page 3)*



*Srs. Clara Kreis, Kathleen Matz, Donna Marie Gribshaw, and Marilyn Seidel share a glass of wine and a joyful wave at the wine and cheese party.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- *Memories of Women's Christmas Experience*
- *Baby Shower in Kingston*
- *New Associate Faith-Sharing Group*
- *Finance Committee Update*

### Mission Statement

We, as Associates, proclaim to be a part of the international Community of Divine Providence (CDP). Our participation calls us to live in a spirit of unbounded trust in, and openness to, the Providence of God. We challenge ourselves to an ongoing discovery of the richness of the charism entrusted to us by Mother Marie and Bishop Ketteler. We support each other in our diversity of lifestyles while we strive to creatively confront the problems and issues of our time. As prophetic witnesses, we respond in compassion, holding all life sacred.



**From the  
Director  
Erin Middleton**

I LOVE February! As a child, I loved exchanging classroom valentines and sharing candy conversation hearts. As a parent, I loved helping my kids create homemade valentines and bake cupcakes for classroom parties. Today, I love to go into the stores and see the bright red and pink hues that can light up a cold gray February day.

As the Director of Associates, February is the month I collaborate with our Finance Committee to prepare our Financial Appeal to Associates. We ask that you pray and discern to give whatever you can to this appeal so we can continue to be a vital presence in our world. I am always encouraged by the ways our Associates live and share Providence with those around you — in your dedicated friendships, your caring ways as a child to an aging parent, a spouse, a parent, an employee, a volunteer.

This year I have even seen Providence displayed by one of our Associates who is a very “patient patient.” Carol Marsiglio, a long-time friend of the community, became an Associate in August 2018. In the fall, Carol had a bad fall and broke her leg in so many places that she now has, to quote her, “quite a collection of metal” holding her leg together. She is still waiting to be able to walk after surgery and therapy and plenty of doctoring. But to visit her at Room 114A in Rebecca Residence is to be encouraged by her smile and sense of humor and indefatigable spirit.

Carol has not been an Associate very long, but her loving faithfulness to Providence has been an example to me these last few months. Will she walk again? Will she return to her home? She is not sure, but still she trusts our Provident God for her next step. She is a faithful witness to the charism of the congregation she loves. Thank you, Carol!

Thank you, too, because you are a faithful witness as well, wherever you live. The Finance Committee will be doing something new this year. **Besides a letter campaign, we will be calling all Associates in February and March to say thank you for being a part of the Associate Relationship. We will also answer any questions you might have and take any suggestions on what we can do to improve the Associate Relationship.** Along with the Sisters, it is your loving presence that makes the Associate Relationship the beautiful gift this community offers to the world.



*Paula Gilchrist and Maryann D'Alessandro*

**Meet an Associate — Paula Gilchrist**

Paula Lizak was a Pittsburgh girl from day one, raised in a very Polish family. One of her favorite memories is of being a “Polish Falcon” since the age of 8, and attending a camp where she learned the language and culture and made friends. She also learned to enjoy Polish foods, and is a fine cook of Polish fare today. At Mt. Alvernia High School she played field hockey and honed her academic skills, displaying an early passion for science. She had quite the reputation for loving it—her teacher even named the rat lab “Lizak's Rat Room,” as Paula enthusiastically cared for the 200 creatures within.

As a coed at the University of Pittsburgh, Paula joined the college choir, which practiced in Heinz Chapel. Paula's alto voice — as well as her gorgeous smile — caught the attention of tenor Joseph Anthony Gilchrist, and the rest is history. They married in that same chapel in 1979 and together raised two daughters, Lauren Mary and Bethany Lynn, who now reside in Philadelphia and DC respectively. Paula is now widowed.

Paula accumulated a complete alphabet of degrees and certifications, and she has worked as a podiatrist, physical therapist, massage therapist, podiatric surgeon, and professor, and is past president of the American Academy of Pain Management. She is even a published author of chapters in medical textbooks. She recently closed her private practice in podiatry and physical therapy and now works at the Butler Veteran's Administration Hospital as a Doctor of Podiatry.

Of the many sets of letters after her name, one brings Paula continual joy and spiritual consolation—that of being an Associate of the CDP community. She is passionate about this

*(Continued on page 6)*

## **“Little Christmas” Weekend** *(Continued from page 1)*

celebration and banquet at Providence Heights made us feel the warmth and love of our Provident God and our CDP family.

It was a true gift to be able to attend, and I don't think I am the only one who thought so. I have asked our editor, Karen Snyder, to gather the comments of those in attendance, so you don't just have to take my word for it. All I can say is, reserve the weekend after New Year's Day 2020 for the Second Annual Women's Christmas Experience, and you will be very glad you did. Be sure to pack a red outfit to wear!



**Srs. Carolyn Winschel, Patricia Ann Moffett, Veronica Kim, Carol Stenger, and others enjoy a lively game of dominoes.**



**Associate Ellie Field, Sr. Michele Bisbey with Amanda, Associates Maryann D'Alessandro and Denise Champe, Sr. Donna Marie Gribshaw, and Associate Julia Lynn enjoy the party.**

### **Here's what attendees had to say about the weekend:**

I loved and enjoyed the weekend. The atmosphere was relaxed and everyone seemed happy. Spiritually it renewed my commitment to community — a strong, wonderful group of women that can enjoy, bless, and be with each other. Please do this again. I will help in any way.

**— Sr. Kathy Hoerster**

I enjoyed connecting with Sisters and Associates in the relaxing social atmosphere at Kearns, sharing deeply, praying, and also having fun just letting our hair down — enjoying dancing to the Macarena, chatting while coloring mandalas, laughing while playing spoons, just being. It was a wonderful experience of strengthening communal relationships! I hope to participate in this event for years to come. Outstanding grass roots event, Sr. Michele, Sr. Lisa, and Sr. Kathleen!

**— Maryann D'Alessandro**

The wine and cheese reception on Friday evening was welcoming and soooo enjoyable. The company was great and the snacks and wine were delicious. Just spending time sharing stories and getting to know Sisters I had not known that well before made me feel even more a part of this community. The warm, comfortable setting at Kearns at breakfast on Saturday and throughout the weekend really made for a peaceful and relaxed atmosphere in which to enjoy each other's company. Srs. Kathy Matz, Lisa Paffrath, and Michele Bisbey were the perfect hostesses. Thanks for this opportunity. **— Julia Lynn**

The game of spoons was very much fun, and I got to know everyone involved in deeper ways through the competition and sisterliness that was experienced. I also loved dancing with scarves with Sr. Marie Dolores and Sr. Kathy Matz. I came to know how much Marie Dolores loves to dance! And I especially appreciated getting to know more Associates through informal conversations and coloring times together.

**— Sr. Janet Folkl**

It was a wonderful experience of community. I met a lot of new people, and I enjoyed playing games. **— Sr. Patricia Ann Moffett**

I found that just being in the presence of Sisters and Associates on the Women's Christmas weekend, all there to share and enjoy one another's presence in an unhurried, peaceful setting, was reward aplenty. The entire experience was spiritually enriching, but the prayers and singing in the inspiring chapel with time to tarry was special blessing for me. Next year, I plan to engage a piano player for a group sing-song of oldies and Broadway tunes. **— Pat Montgomery**



## “Little Christmas” Weekend *(continued from page 3)*

I thought the Sunday liturgy was extremely powerful. I truly appreciated the homily, the dancing and all the special features that were planned within this liturgy. MANY THANKS!

— **Sr. Bernie Duman**

The liturgy with Michelle doing the homily and with the liturgical dance was so enriching. I especially appreciated the intentional figures of women as Magi on the cover of the program. It broadened my thinking about the Epiphany. I also enjoyed getting to know Sisters from Michigan who are not usually present at Kearns events. Hope to have it again next year!

— **Tish Donze**



**Kitchen crew: Srs. Carolyn Winschel, Marilyn Seidel, Janet Folkl; Associate MaryAnn D’Alessandro; Srs. Mary Jane Beatty, Judy Connor, Lisa Paffrath, and Joan Marie Harper.**

I was unable to participate in the events at Providence Heights because I was in Rhode Island. However, I have been receiving Jan Richardson’s Christmas Retreat for Women, which is different each year, by email for the last four or five years. I decided to do it again this year, to somehow be in unison with the Sisters and Associates of the Marie de la Roche Province. I was particularly moved by the title, *By Way of the Heart*. I used it over a week for my personal prayer. I thought Jan achieved what she set out to do this year, to move us to a deeper place in our hearts, to a greater place of love for God, which drives everything else—acting from love for our Congregation, for the members of our Global Community, for all peoples of the world, and for all of creation. I especially liked the last phrase of her blessing. Jan says it this way:

*Every heart is on its own voyage, sending its vessels out, drawing them back again, never by the same way they went, but still somehow making for home, the place that shimmers now in welcome with all the gathered light you had thought you could not see.*

I am eager to hear how the experience went for those who were physically together for the days.

— **Sr. Maria Fest**

### **Save the Date for 2020!**

**As you make your holiday plans for the end of this year, be sure to save the weekend of January 3-5, 2020 for the second annual “Women’s Christmas Experience”!**



**Sr. Donna Marie Gribschaw stirs her delicious homemade turkey soup, and Sr. Alice Marie Lyon stands ready to help.**



**Sr. Margaretta Nussbaumer, Associate Denise Champe, and Sr. Lisa Paffrath share a relaxing moment.**

## Kvell & Tell



← **Sr. Stephanie Turck**, who has been serving as a Local Coordinator for the St. Louis area, has chosen to step down at this time. She will continue to serve on Associate Committees. We thank you, Sr. Stephanie, for your years of service, and we wish you well in your ministries!



*“Kvell” is an ancient Yiddish word that describes how one feels when someone she loves achieves success in an important endeavor.*

—*Sr. Mary Ellen Rufft*



**Ruthanne Curran's** granddaughter, River, is now 10 months old and scooting all around in her walker... and soon will be walking on her own! Once again, Ruthy thanks everyone for their prayers. →



← Please pray for new Associate **Carol Marsiglio**, who broke her leg in several places in the fall. She is currently in rehab after surgery. Let's let Carol know we are thinking about her. You can send cards to her at **Concordia at Rebecca Residence, 3746 Cedar Ridge Road, Room 14A, Allison Park, PA 15101.**



← Congratulations to **Erin Middleton** on the birth of her grandson, Oliver William, on February 2. Oliver is the son of Erin's son Nate and his wife, Holly.



← **Sr. Hilary Hooks** with refugee child from Democratic Republic of Congo. CDPs in Pittsburgh are assisting refugees seeking asylum in the U.S. Associates have helped with donations of clothing, baby items, toys, transportation to appointments, and other services.



↑ Associates **Gil Weyhaupt, Linda Hoefflin, and Annette Ray** at the Three Kings' Party held at **Sr. Linda Hylla's** home on January 6 for the Sisters and Associates in the St. Louis area. They enjoyed a wide array of treats, including Italian beef, chicken salad, and homemade Christmas cookies. They exchanged “Secret Santa” gifts and had a wonderful time visiting with each other.

**Please send your news—births, weddings, growth, new positions or places—to Karen Snyder at [ksnyder@cdpsisters.org](mailto:ksnyder@cdpsisters.org)**



## Annual Baby Shower in Kingston

by Sr. Emma Jean Middendorf

Kingston area Associates, Sisters, and Friends hosted their annual Baby Shower in January to support needy single homeless mothers. This event coincides with the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court tragic legalization of abortion in Roe v. Wade.

Sacred Heart School's efforts to teach the sanctity of life inspire some students to join the thousands who March for Life in Washington, DC.

Ketteler medals for Wisdom Associates were also conferred on this occasion.



**Mary Ann Wusenich, a Local Coordinator for the Kingston Associates, holds up one of the three dozen beautiful handmade baby items donated for the annual Baby Shower by the Needlers at the Kingston Council for the Aged.**

## Meet an Associate *(continued from page 2)*

community and the lifestyle of living in community, and she is now actively looking at forms of non-canonical membership in the CDP congregation with a group of others under the guidance of our Provincial Michele Bisbey. She has resided at Assumption Convent since 2013 and says "the community here is how I would like to live my life — sharing our stuff, support, and spirituality. It takes you where you are and helps you go further."

In November 2018, Paula began her first term of service as a Pittsburgh Area Local Coordinator. She will serve alongside Maryann D'Alessandro and Sr. Elena Almendárez. We are very fortunate to have her talents dedicated to our Associate Relationship.

And, if you attend Assembly this year, Paula plans to wow us all with her finely honed hospitality skills at a cocktail party she states will be "fantastic" — and you can be her honored guests.

— Erin Middleton



**Provident Peers faith-sharing group, left to right: Ann Vinski, Colleen Higbee, Sr. Veronica Kim, Maryann D'Alessandro, Sr. Elena Almendárez, Sandy Stevenson, Peggy Schramm, Lisa Toomey. Not pictured: Terri Liberto, Katherine Yoon, Claire Kim, Mary Seljak, and Carol Marsiglio.**

## New Faith-Sharing Group in Pittsburgh

by Ann Vinski

In October 2018, Local Coordinator Sr. Elena Almendárez initiated a new small faith-sharing group of CDP Sisters and Associates. The group selected the name "Provident Peers." The word "provident" indicates both our affiliation with the Sisters of Divine Providence and our belief that our coming together is a provident event. We see God's providence active in our relationships with each other, and we are supported as we strive to make God's providence visible in the world. "Peers" reflects the value that each person brings to the group. "Peers" is also a play on words, as one of our members has a beautiful service dog named Piers — we love his presence in the group, and we got a chuckle out of the pun!

Provident Peers currently has 13 members and meets on the fourth Sunday of each month. Most members meet for Mass and brunch at Providence Heights, followed by our meeting. We are currently discussing "Living the Questions: Reflection Questions to Guide Discernment on the Evolution of the Associate Way of Life" and have found the topics in the booklet to be very rich.

When asked to describe their experience as part of the Provident Peers group, members used these words: inclusive, connected, and relationship-building; laughter, openness, and friendliness; mutuality, support, and welcoming. One member mentioned that if she had something major going on in her life, she felt she could bring it to the group for support. We look forward to journeying together in faith, as peers in the hands of Providence.

## Committee Update



**Finance**  
Tish Donze

The Associate Finance Committee, which includes Cathy Cassy, Paula Gilchrist, Colleen Higbee, Linda Hoefflin, Erin Middleton, Sr. Stephanie Turck, and me, would like to share with you the tasks for which we have determined this committee is responsible:

**1. The Associate Finance Committee will work closely, on budget matters, with Director of Associates and the PLT Associate Liaison, who will in turn, work closely with the department of Mission Advancement and Finance.**

**2. Develop an annual Associate budget (expenses and income).**

*Note:* Members of the Self-Governance Committee see this as a potentially daunting task. The expense side has been done for years, giving a pretty good handle on that side of the ledger, but we've never had to do an income side before.

It seems like the income side would look like line items for various income streams, maybe, appeals, donations, funding activities, etc. plus a line for "CDP Contributions." (That is the line that we will try to make go to \$0 in near future.) Itemizing this line item makes the Sisters and Associates aware of the cost and also gives the Sisters a number to include in their overall budget planning.

On the expense side, there are province-wide expenses (like running the Associate Director's office) and local expenses (like area Associate renewal receptions, etc.). These expenses will have to be divided up fairly.

**3. Develop a funding plan to include a Fundraising Subcommittee.**

This subcommittee will design and implement a few events each year. A member of this committee will sit on the Finance Committee to keep members informed of activities and funds raised.

**4. Monitor income and expense performance and report to Director of Associates.**

This Committee will receive quarterly reports issued from the CDP Finance Office. These will be the major tools for monitoring along with reports from the Fundraising Subcommittee. Feedback should be given to the Director and Provincial Liaison.

**REMINDER: As I mentioned in the last newsletter, the Associates Annual Appeal will be going out to everyone through the mail, and members of the committee will be calling sometime in March just to touch base and answer any questions you may have.**

— Tish Donze

**Note:** The Finance Committee is always happy to welcome new members.

### Mark Your Calendar

#### March

**2** — Associate Mardi Gras Party  
**Providence Heights**

**9** — Associate Retreat Day  
**St. Louis**

#### April

**6** — *Fostering Communal Relations* —  
Presentation  
**Providence Heights**

**11** — *True Partnership* — Book Discussion  
**Kearns Spirituality Center**

#### September

**17-20** — WPC Associate Leadership Gathering  
**Melbourne, Kentucky**

#### November

**16-18** — Associate Retreat  
**Kearns Spirituality Center**

#### Please Note:

Associates no longer have a drop-file mailbox in the Providence Heights lobby. All mail and messages will be in the Associate mail cubbyhole.

#### Special Thanks

**Layout Assistance:** Mary Seljak

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