



ASSOCIATING *News*

PHJC ASSOCIATE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

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God Winks

By Libby Riggs, South Associate



Now and then we all have those God winks or nudges that cause us to sit back and say, "What, me? Why me? Surely you aren't serious." Then you go on about you daily duties,

but God just keeps nudging (and sometimes you even elbow back); but God just keeps right on winking.

I have given thought over the past couple years of changing careers after nearly 30 years of working in homes for adults with developmental disabilities. Not sure of what I really wanted to do, I kept an open mind, well really, my job kept me from taking the time to give it much more thought. During that time, I jumped at that last minute chance to sign up for the Spiritual Companionship course, thinking I might be called to spiritual direction. I told the class as it ended, I felt I was being called to something else, but not sure what. Again, I remained open (and again way too busy).

Then came that wink, that nudge. I was sitting in the Gathering for Associate Community at Lindenwood last fall. Sister Connie Bach gave a short presentation on the new volunteer program that they were initiating through the Catholic Volunteer Network. I had received emails about this, but paid little attention, assuming it was for people who volunteered at the many ministries they offer, but knowing I lived far from all of them, shrugged it off. Hearing more about it, immediately, I got that undeniable feeling, I was being nudged. I remember looking around at the crowd, thinking, "Really, out of all these good people,

why are you looking at me?" I couldn't stop thinking about it throughout the day, or God wouldn't leave it alone, I should say. It just so happened the speaker presented on discernment. Sometimes things happen for a reason, and so it seemed was this.

A week or two later, I spoke to Sister Connie, I don't even remember what about, but in the midst of it I mentioned that I had given some thought to the Volunteer Program. I ordered the book, *The Way of Discernment, Spiritual Practices of Decision Making* by Elizabeth Liebert, which the speaker had recommended. I began talking to my spiritual director about how torn I was for many reasons. She was a true blessing during this time. I thought (and lost sleep) over the many life changes this would involve, distance from my young adult children and aging parents, loss of a salary, use of my savings, leaving my parish, moving away from dear friends. Yet, there was that voice within that never stopped nudging. It was an on and off again excitement vs. fear; reality vs. faith battle. I was like a cat being pulled off the couch, a couple nails would come loose and I would think I was certain, then with all ten nails, I'd jump right back onto the couch, and hang on for dear life. I prayed daily for the intercession of Blessed Catherine Kasper to help me have the knowledge and strength to know if and when to untie the boat. I prayed for the intercession of Saint Theodore Guerin, the foundress of my spiritual director's order, who had a similar story of having the faith to jump off the boat when she arrived in America. Shoot, I even asked God to make it simple and just send me a letter, hmm, short of stamps I guess, no letter ever came. Over time, I knew I was being called to this and yet, I could not let go of my fears, the what if's.

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In early January, I attended a retreat on Life Planning with Sister Joetta Huelsmann at John XXIII Retreat Center in Hartford City, hoping it would miraculously answer questions, again, could someone just tell me – it would make things so much better. After the retreat, I had a second meeting with Sisters Connie Bach and Marybeth Martin, who are responsible for the volunteer program. I met with Sisters Deanne Blume and Marlene Ann Lama who I would volunteer with, in addition to the Provincial Team. I left feeling excited.

I wrote my letter of resignation on that Monday in early January, it felt great, yet after nearly 21 years of employment there, I just could not seem to turn it in. In the middle of the week, I was blessed by a call from our Associate Director, Donna Sikorski, we spoke of my discernment, and in general about life. I was in my car driving to the bank and post office for work. She closed the conversation with some general comment about continuing to pray for me and something like, “It might come down to you simply realizing it is something you might regret if you don’t do it, but I will continue to pray for you.” REGRET – I drove the 2 blocks from the bank to the post office, and in that short span of time, I knew, I would always regret this opportunity at a perfect time of my life that I am able to do it.

I immediately went back and pulled together the four people at work I spend most of my days with and announced my resignation among tears and laughter. By the end of the day, I had called and emailed my boss my resignation. A weight was immediately released from my shoulders, faith took over immediately where fears had been, and I have not had a moment of regret.

When it comes to that nudge, that wink, be open, be patient, but above all have faith. I am now officially the first volunteer with the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ Volunteer Program and about to embark on a yearlong adventure. I will be living community in Assumption Hall with Sisters Carleen Wrasman, Eileen Sullivan, Marguerite Niesen, and Roberta Christianson. I will be serving the Sisters and residents of the Catherine Kasper Home, Catherine’s Cottage, and many other ministries at The Center at Donaldson.

I believe this year will give me a sense of direction for where I wish to pursue my career, but more important to me, is it is an opportunity to pay back the many Sisters of the PHJC Community who have molded and shaped my faith and life. I am truly blessed to be given this opportunity.

PHJC Volunteer Program: Advisory Committee Members Share Their Gifts

By Sisters Connie Bach & Marybeth Martin, PHJC Volunteer Program Co-directors



Sister Connie Bach serves as Co-Director of the Volunteer Program. She was a teacher and principal for ten years each and currently has a private practice in music therapy. Sister Connie is a musician and composer and enjoys organizing. She currently serves on the Board of Chicago Area Vocation Association (CAVA) and is Co-coordinator of the Midwest Region of the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC).



Michael Cummings serves as the Parish Site Director at Ss. Monica & Luke Parish in Gary. He assists in adult formation and is dedicated to working for causes.

Michael is detail-oriented. He especially enjoys working to build bridges with minorities.



Sister Michele Dvorak serves as the contact to the Provincial Leadership Team. Her experiences include elementary and higher education teaching and administration. She brings many college level contacts, local community networking, parish networking, international experience, faith formation, leadership development and Catholic Social Teachings.



Pat Dwyer served the Inner City Teaching Corps volunteer program as a volunteer,

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