

“Hearts afire
with
compassion”



Blauvelt CONNECTIONS

The Official Newsletter of The Sisters of St. Dominic

Winter 2011

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Hearts Afire El Shaddai

The Blauvelt Dominican Sisters have many ways of serving people in need. They reach out to children and families through education, health care and social services, but Sister James Bridget Hanley had a dream of using art and prayer as an additional support and invitation for people to “come and see...for the storehouse of treasure is contained within.” El Shaddai, a therapeutic art center, is the result of years of hard work, prayer, and determination. In the center’s brochure, El Shaddai is described as a “prayerful art center that uses art and music as a means of prayer in creating a retreat atmosphere for workshops and days of prayer.” The center is located in a 200 year old building on the grounds of the Blauvelt Motherhouse. From this wonderful space, Sister James Bridget draws in those seeking greater self-realization and awareness. A registered Art Therapist, Sister “Bridge” uses her artistic talent and therapeutic training to facilitate workshops designed to promote spiritual and emotional healing. Some participants are involved in Twelve Step Programs, some are referred by primary therapists. All those who come are given the opportunity to create something from within themselves. Although the art is

meant to be therapeutic, it is not conventional treatment and it is certainly not a conventional retreat house. El Shaddai, which translates, “The God who is more than



*A Dream Catcher, one of
Sister James Bridget's
creations*



*Sister James Bridget at the El Shaddai
Therapeutic Art Center.*

enough”, is more than just an art center, it is a place of renewal and rejuvenation.

The road to opening El Shaddai was a long and difficult one. Sister “Bridge”, originally a Math teacher with no background in art, began her journey to El Shaddai when she determined that teaching was not God’s path for her. “I loved the children”, she says, “but I knew I was not fulfilling my mission.” It was eleven years from the time she first got permission to leave teaching until she was able to open El Shaddai as a full-time venture. During those years, she became trained as an Art Therapist, identified a location for the center, attracted donors and volunteers to the project and was finally able to open in September of 1989. The house itself needed major renovation, including a new roof, boiler, windows, and electrical upgrades. All this was accomplished with Sister James Bridget’s talent, enthusiasm and the help of donors and enthusiastic volunteers.

Today, El Shaddai provides wonderful workshops that are offered in four week series, as well as monthly offerings of Days of Prayer and Silent Retreat Days. The

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SISTERS OF ST. DOMINIC

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Letter from the PRESIDENT

*Our Charism,
to be conscious
of and present
to people who
are poor and
marginalized,
is rooted in
the gospel of
Jesus Christ
and is expressed
in our
ministries through
compassion,
justice, hope,
and healing.*

Dear Friends,

It is a great pleasure to write to you about our forthcoming annual Gala. The 2011 Hearts Afire Gala will be held on Sunday, April 3rd and promises to be a wonderful day. Our honorees this year are two of our dearest friends and well-known to many of you as well. Father John Dwyer, recently retired pastor of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Parish in Tappan, New York, has been known to our community since his school days at St. Luke's School in the Bronx. The strong faith and example of the Dwyer family germinated two vocations to religious life. Mary Dwyer, John's sister, joined our Congregation and became Sister Noel. After his ordination, Father Dwyer served at Corpus Christi Parish in Manhattan and also ministered as Chaplain in the United States Air Force. Father has served the people of God for 55 years as priest and chaplain and has been a wonderful friend to our Congregation.



Our other honoree, Mr. Keith Taylor, is the proprietor of Hannemann's Funeral Home in Nyack, New York. As an active member of St. Ann's Parish in Nyack, Mr. Taylor has devoted himself to his faith, his family and his community. By doing so, he has touched the lives of many people including his own co-workers. Mr. Taylor has been a Parish Council Member, a volunteer fire worker, and a faithful participant of the Meals on Wheels program in Nyack. In addition to his parish and community services, Mr. Taylor has been a true friend to our Congregation and has duplicated the mission and ministry of our foundress by helping the less fortunate. We hope you join us on April 3rd as we honor these two wonderful men, who are such fine examples of compassion and service.

It is also a joy to tell you the story of Sister James Bridget and the El Shaddai Art Center. At El Shaddai, workshop participants find a therapeutic yet artistic environment that fosters both self-awareness and creativity. Using her talent and training, Sister James Bridget not only creates objects of great beauty, but provides those in pain with a safe and healing environment.

Of the many other happy events we have to share with you, none is happier than the story of Sister Venentia, who returned to her native land in South Africa last December. After becoming the first member of her community to earn a doctoral degree, Sister Venentia has returned to Montebello, South Africa as a trained and licensed Physical Therapist. We wish her well in her future endeavors and know that she carries with her the prayers and good wishes of all of us who came to know her.

Although the winter of 2011 was a difficult one, it still brought us many joys. In this issue of Blauvelt Connections, we bring those joys to you with the knowledge that it is your prayers, friendship, and generosity that enable us to touch the lives of others in such wonderful ways. We are indeed blessed to have you as part of the Blauvelt Dominican family.

Wishing you all God's blessings,

Sister Mary Malone, O.P.
President

Farewell & Welcome

Early in December of 2010, Sister Venentia Mthembu returned to her home in Montebello, South Africa. Since 2002, Sister Venentia had been living with the Blauvelt Dominican Sisters and studying at Dominican College where she completed a Doctoral Degree in Physical Therapy. Following a required internship, Sister Venentia was ready to return home as a licensed professional and the first member of her Congregation to earn a doctorate. This wonderful achievement is the result of a working agreement between the Blauvelt Dominican Sisters and the Dominican Sisters of Montebello.

At a Dominican Sisters International meeting held in Caluerega in 2001, Sister Mary Ann Collins, president of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt at that time, met Sister Michael Mdule, Superior of the Dominican Sisters of Montebello. Sister Michael spoke "of the needs of the Sisters for education in the areas of social work and health care." Through the persistence and interaction of these two women of vision and the involvement of Dominican College, the opportunity for advanced education became a reality for the Montebello Sisters. Sister Venentia is the most recent success story.

Shortly after Sister Venentia returned to South Africa, two new Montebello Sisters arrived to begin their studies. Sister Thobile and Sister Nokwanda will be studying Clinical

Psychology and Social Work. Like those who came before them, these Dominican Sisters were warmly received by the Blauvelt Community. As part of the agreement between the two Dominican Congregations, the physical, spiritual and educational needs of the Montebello Sisters are provided by the Blauvelt Dominicans in cooperation with Dominican College. As part of the "new beginnings", the Congregation also provides "tutoring" for the new arrivals as they adjust to a new language, climate and customs.

To further the cooperative nature of this venture, Blauvelt Dominicans have traveled to South Africa to provide services to the Montebello Congregation. Sister Mary Ann Collins and Sister Theresa Rickard conducted workshops in Spiritual Direction to prepare the Sisters for their Chapter. Sister Patricia Ginty, a registered nurse and social worker, spent six weeks ministering at Vianney House and the Chronic Sick Home where there were critical needs. Sister Mary Flood spent two weeks in Montebello teaching HIV awareness and prevention and Sister Pat Horan spent a year teaching English as a Second Language.

As Sister Venentia left for home, her goal was to help bring about better living and working conditions for the people of South Africa. We wish her well as we welcome Sister Thobile and Sister Nokwanda.



Sister Venentia accepts the good wishes of Sister Mary Malone and the rest of the Blauvelt community.



Despite the snow, Sister Thobile and Sister Nokwanda received a warm reception in Blauvelt.



Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan entering the Most Holy Rosary Chapel to celebrate Mass.



Archbishop Dolan accepting the altar offerings from Sister Francis McLean and Mrs. Dorothy Filoramo.

On November 5, 2010 Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan came to Blauvelt to celebrate the 132nd anniversary of Mother Mary Ann Sammon's Founding Mission. In 1878, the Blauvelt Dominican Sisters officially opened their doors to care for the orphaned and neglected children of New York City. In honor of the occasion, Archbishop Dolan came to the Blauvelt Motherhouse to celebrate Mass and join the Sisters, their friends, family and staff in marking this very special anniversary.



Sister Mary Malone (right) accompanying Archbishop Dolan while he visits some of the Sisters.



Sister Mary Malone (left) and Sister Roseann Flynn (right) with the Archbishop after Mass.

2011 Hearts Afire Gala – Order Form

The 2011 Hearts Afire Gala is scheduled for Sunday, April 3, 2011. The liturgy will begin at noon in the Most Holy Rosary Chapel of the Motherhouse. A reception will follow at the Pearl River Hilton. The following giving opportunities are available

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<input type="checkbox"/> Dinner (can be shared by three donors)	\$15,000	<input type="checkbox"/> Back Cover	\$5,000 (SOLD)
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		<input type="checkbox"/> Quarter Page	\$150
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<i>Gala</i> TICKETS	Quantity
_____ Tickets @ \$150	\$ _____
_____ Gala Tables of 10 @ \$1500	\$ _____

RAFFLES	
	Quantity
	_____ Raffle(s) @ \$100
	\$ _____
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Please complete the above Order Form and return to:
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Visa Master Card Card # _____

Security Code _____ Zip Code _____

Name on Card _____ Signature _____

*Tickets must be purchased by March 25, 2011 and Journal Ads must be placed by March 11th.
 For more information, please call Priscilla Ford, Director of Development, at (845) 359-5767*

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LOTTERY CALENDARS STILL AVAILABLE

A few Lottery Calendars are still available for 2011. They are fun, useful, and may bring you good fortune! They also make great gifts. Please contact Sister Thomas Joseph for more details: (845) 359-5600 x 165.

SAVE THE DATE

HEARTS AFIRE GALA
Sunday, April 3, 2009

BLAUVELT CONNECTIONS CONTRIBUTORS

Sister Mary Malone, O.P.
Sister Jane McDermott, O.P.
Sister Judith Campbell, O.P.
Sister Thomas Joseph Durkin, O.P.
Priscilla Ford
Jennifer Schaaf

IN MEMORIAM

Sister Mercedes Hennessey, O.P.
December 1, 2010
Sister Maria Goretti Biggins, O.P.
December 5, 2010

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in your will or consider other gift options of matching gifts, stocks and/or insurance policies.

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(Hearts Afire El Shaddai continued from page 1)



Part of a reflection room at El Shaddai.

modest registration fees cover the costs of supplies and maintaining the site. At El Shaddai, Sister James Bridget is fulfilling her mission as a Sister of St. Dominic by helping to heal and soothe troubled hearts and souls through art and music. If you would like to participate, you may contact Sister James Bridget at (845)359-1842.

Sister Judith Retires as Archivist



Sister Judith at work in the Archives.

On November 24, 2010, Sister Judith Campbell retired as the archivist of the Blauvelt Dominican Sisters. A native of the Bronx, Sister Judith entered the Congregation from St. Luke's Parish and received a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Fordham University as well as a Master's Degree in Religious Studies. Sister Judith taught at a number of schools in both the Bronx and Manhattan

and was principal of Holy Cross School in Manhattan from 1970 to 1986. Sister Judith has been the Congregation archivist since 1988. Although retiring as Archivist, Sister Judith remains a staff member at Gate of Heaven Cemetery.



Sister Judith cuts her cake, while Sister Mary Malone (right) looks on.



Sister Anne Cecile as an Instructor at Dominican College.

Sister Anne Cecile Celebrates Her 100th Birthday

On Christmas Eve 2010, surrounded by family and friends, Sister Anne Cecile Merrill celebrated her 100th birthday. In 1910, the year Sister Anne was born, the average life expectancy for a woman was less than 52 years!

Sr. Anne Cecile entered the Blauvelt Congregation on September 8, 1930 from St. Augustine's Parish in the Bronx. She graduated from Hunter College High School in Manhattan and received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Manhattan College. Later, Sister Anne earned a Master's Degree in Library Science from St. John's University and a Professional Diploma in Curriculum and Teaching from Teachers College in Manhattan. Sister Anne Cecile served at schools in the Bronx including St. Luke's, Our Saviour's, St. Benedict's and St. Anselm's. She also ministered at Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Goshen, New York and St. Paul's in Daytona Beach, Florida. From 1965 to 2000 Sister ministered as a teacher and periodical librarian at Dominican College in Blauvelt, New York. In June 2010, Sister Anne Cecile celebrated her eightieth Jubilee as a Sister of St. Dominic of Blauvelt. **Happy Birthday, Sister Anne!**



Sister Anne Cecile celebrating her 100th birthday with family members.