

Serving the Dear Neighbor

NEWS FROM THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH

Powering Our Future Investing in a greener tomorrow through solar expansion

The Congregation of St. Joseph has a long-standing commitment to care of Earth, sustainability, and to practices that help reduce our carbon footprint at each of our properties.

This summer, the solar array field at Mount St. Mary in Wichita is being expanded to add 400 kW-dc solar panels to the field currently on site. When complete, the expanded arrays will produce an additional 1,079,700 kilowatts per year to power the center which will save approximately \$122,000 in utility costs and avoid 996,000 lbs of CO2 emissions each year.

Luke Sponsel, Center Administrator at Mount St. Mary and a key part of the project, said, “We make decisions out of love for what God has given us, and our every action is praise given to God. The sisters, mindful of their commitment to the environment, have chosen to participate in long-term clean energy.” He went on to explain that the solar expansion also upholds the congregation’s commitment to *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis’ encyclical of 2015 that calls for us to care for our common home through environmental action and responsible use of Earth’s resources.

“By generating more clean energy on-site, we hope to lower utility costs, reduce our reliance on nonrenewable energy sources, and create savings that can be redirected toward supporting our mission and community,” he said. “I am grateful to play a small role in this venture and contribute to an effort that supports environmental stewardship and long-term financial responsibility.” The expanded solar array is projected to be operational in August of this year. ●



Life at

The Mount

As Sisters of St. Joseph, we believe relationship is at the heart of who we are. This philosophy extends to our residential centers, which are vibrant places of activity that offer a warm and friendly community environment, places for gathering and quiet reflection, and activities for mind, body and spirit. There are also opportunities for service to others.

We invite you!

A limited number of apartments on our Wichita campus have recently become available to women and men who are looking for assisted or independent living, or skilled and short-term rehabilitation residence.

If you are interested in a unique kind of living experience and want to learn more, we invite you to consider joining us!

For more information, contact **Luke Sponsel** at **316.686.7171** or **lsponsel@csjinitiatives.org**.



Animals can provide an amazing and uplifting experience for many. In April, sisters including Anne Dolores LaPlante (above) and Irene Regan (right) and lay residents were delighted to visit with Moobelle the cow from local farm, Peachy Farms. The visits are part of the Wichita center's animal therapy program and are opportunities for sisters and residents to experience and interact with different kinds of animals including alpaca, mini horses, donkeys, rabbits, dogs, cats, and more! Many of the therapy animals are rescues and the sisters and residents love getting up close and showing them some love!



Sisters and lay residents who reside at Mount St. Mary get together often for a little friendly competition during game nights!



January is Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention Month, and on January 11th, sisters, associates, staff, and lay residents at Mount St. Mary wore blue in recognition of and to lend their support to National Human Trafficking Awareness Day.



In February, sisters enjoyed a Valentine's Day party complete with lovely flowers and treats. Pictured from left are Sisters Janelle Ann Brittain and Fidel Marie Saucedo, Sister Pat Murphy, Sister Rose Ann Wolke, and Sisters Frances Duos and Doris Vigneaux.



In March, officers from the Wichita Police Department visited sisters and residents at Mount St. Mary to talk about safety and the community. Left and center, Sisters Margaret Nugent and Juli Caron check out a patrolman's vest (which weighs 35 lbs!), and right, Captain Chad Beard with Sister Connie Beiriger.

in Memoriam

We celebrate the lives of all our sisters
who passed away this year.



Sister Janet
Roesener, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on April 18, 2026,
after 73 years of
religious life.



Sister Margaret Ellen
Isenbart, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on March 11, 2026,
after 83 years of
religious life.



Sister Sedonia
Isenbart, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on February 11, 2026,
after 90 years of
religious life.



Sister Jean Louise
Diskin, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on January 28, 2026,
after 80 years of
religious life.



Sister Dehra
Elliot, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on December 20, 2025,
after 76 years of
religious life.



Sister Consolata
"Connie" Robles, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on October 26, 2025,
after 77 years of
religious life.



Sister Jacklyn
Duncan, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on October 21, 2025,
after 61 years of
religious life.



Sister Zita
Oberle, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on August 14, 2025,
after 70 years of
religious life.



Sister Cecilia
Okada, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on May 31, 2026, after
71 years of religious life.



Sister Rita Marie
Thissen, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on June 29, 2025, after
76 years of religious life.



Sister Genevieve
Nakamuta, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on June 26, 2025, after
48 years of religious life.



Sister Mary Clare
Doebel, CSJ

Entered into eternal life
on June 20, 2025, after
76 years of religious life.

United in Service

The Next Chapter for StepStone and Dear Neighbor Ministries

Last year, with the support of the community and the Congregation of St. Joseph, StepStone and Dear Neighbor Ministries in Wichita helped neighbors in need and survivors of domestic violence and their families take meaningful steps toward stability, healing, and hope through 35,548 acts of care. While statistics can help us understand the need, the true impact is often found in real lives changed through safety, stability, and compassionate care — a truth reflected in this story shared by Tessa, Domestic Violence Program Director:

“Looking out my office window, I see two teenage brothers on our basketball court laughing and taking turns shooting hoops. They’re practicing for high school tryouts. They are focused, determined, and hopeful. To anyone walking



by, this looks like an ordinary afternoon. But just a week ago, it wasn't. One week ago, these boys were homeless, moving between relatives' homes, never staying long enough to feel settled. Some nights, there wasn't even room for their mom. While her sons slept inside, she slept

in her car so they could be safe. Even then, she never let their lives unravel. Every morning, she made sure they got to school on time — ready, prepared, and cared for. She held their routine together when everything else felt uncertain. Now, from my window, I see what stability can do. At StepStone, the boys have their own rooms. A safe place to come home to. A basketball court where they can practice and dream about what's next. Their mom sleeps safely under the same roof.”

Stories like this reflect the heart behind both StepStone and Dear Neighbor Ministries — a mission rooted in compassion, dignity, and walking alongside neighbors during life's most difficult moments.

StepStone was founded through the vision of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Wichita and the Adorers of the Blood of Christ in 1995 to provide safe housing and support for survivors of domestic violence. Then, in 2001, the Sisters of St. Joseph founded Dear Neighbor Ministries after seeing the growing needs of families living in the nearby underserved Hilltop neighborhood. Though each ministry began in response to different community needs, both were rooted in the same call: loving the dear neighbor without distinction.

That shared foundation is what made the recent merger between Dear Neighbor Ministries and StepStone feel like such a natural next step.

Over the past several months, they spent time listening closely to neighbors, staff, donors, community partners, and board members to better define the values and promises that have always guided both organizations. Again and again, one thing became clear: both StepStone and Dear Neighbor Ministries are places where neighbors can find help, hope, and a path forward.

In the coming months, you will see a refreshed look that reflects their shared mission and heart. While the names and visuals may change, the heart of the mission remains the same: loving the dear neighbor without distinction and walking alongside those in need with dignity, hope, and care. ●



IN THE COMMUNITY



In April, sisters in Wichita attended a “Blessing of Hands” ceremony for health care workers and first responders at Ascension Via Christi St. Joseph Hospital to mark the completion of their Emergency Department expansion. Left, Sisters Anne Dolores LaPlante and Connie Beiriger bless the hands of a health care administrator. Center, Sister Catherine Therese Paulie blesses the hands of a first responder while associate Shirley Bessette looks on. Right, the group prays with our sisters.



During the first weekend in May, associates gathered at St. Joseph Retreat and Conference Center in Tipton, Indiana, for their annual spring retreat. Led by Sister Chris Schenk, the theme of this year’s retreat was “Women On Fire: Witnessing to Jesus Yesterday and Today.” The retreat center is the former home of our sisters from the founding community of Tipton, making the gathering extra special.



In April, Sister Cecilia Okada (left with flowers) joyfully celebrated her 100th birthday and 70 years of religious life with a special Mass at the Care House in Matsusaka, Japan. Surrounded by fellow sisters, staff, residents, and Father M. Bruce, the gathering reflected a lifetime of faith, service, love, and community. She passed away on May 31, 2026. Our sisters in Wichita were initially invited to Kyoto, Japan, by priests right after World War II to staff a hospital. While that plan didn’t come to fruition, the sisters instead set up a dispensary and clinic for the poor, and were later asked to take over a city hospital for the handicapped. A school was later established in the same building.

Jubilee 2026

The following sisters in Wichita are celebrating Jubilee this year. Jubilee is the anniversary of a sister's entrance into religious life.



Sister Antonella Bayer, CSJ

70 Years



Sister Fidel Marie Saucedo, CSJ

70 Years



Sister Joann Schneider, CSJ

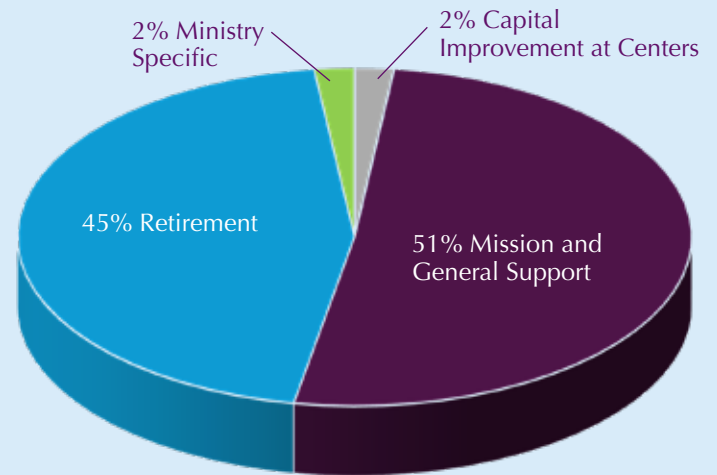
70 Years

To view biographies of all our sisters celebrating Jubilee this year, visit CSJoseph.org

TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank You!

Your gifts of support are a blessing! Thank you for partnering with us in mission and helping us provide for our retired sisters. Here is how we used your charitable contributions July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025:



Other Ways to Give

- **Qualified Charitable Distribution**

Did you know that you can direct unneeded required minimum distributions (RMDs) to us through a qualified charitable distribution (QCD) from your IRA? If you don't need the income, or the taxes it may incur, ask your advisor about a QCD.

- **Donor Advised Fund**

If you have a donor advised fund (DAF), please consider including us in your grant recommendations this year. We welcome DAF gifts!

- **Leave a Legacy of Love**

You can continue to partner with us in our mission of unifying love and service even after your lifetime by including the congregation in your plans. A planned gift may also reduce your estate taxes. Request our Legacy of Love brochure today.

To Learn More, contact Melissa Haley O'Leary at moleary@csjoseph.org or 216-688-3474

The Congregation of St. Joseph cannot give you financial or tax advice, so please consult with a financial or tax advisor before making any financial decisions.



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Spotlight Photo



Sister Doris Vigneaux is ready for her close up, and summer!

If you prefer to receive this newsletter electronically, please email communications@csjoseph.org.

We invite you!

to join us in a truly unique living experience.

If you are looking for a licensed Life Plan Community that offers independent living, assisted living, and long-term care in a warm and friendly community environment for yourself or a loved one, we invite you to consider joining us!

Our residents enjoy:

- Modern, comfortable suites
- Beautiful grounds and walking paths
- Life enrichment and wellness programs
- Volunteer service opportunities
- Mass and prayer offerings

For more information, contact **Luke Sponsel** at 316.686.7171, or lsponsel@csjinitatives.org.

We look forward to hearing from you!

