



# Keep in Touch

*Sisters of Charity Newsletter - Partners in Mission*

Vol. 2 No. 2<sup>1</sup> June 2001

## Editorial

In his letter to Timothy, St Paul says "Command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others" (1Tim 6:18).

We think of those who heed these words and give so generously of their time as Volunteers - carers, missionaries, those who work on hospital auxiliaries with St Vincent de Paul Society, Outreach, Country Volunteer Firefighters, Volunteer Carers, or P&F helpers and so the list could go on.

To honour and increase the efforts of Volunteers the United Nations General Assembly declared, 2001 to be the International Year of Volunteers.

In this edition of KIT there is a brief account of the International Volunteers Conference held in Amsterdam in January 2001, as well as the St Vincents Mater Health Sydney Mass and Luncheon held to acknowledge the contribution of volunteers.

There is also an introduction to the new co-ordinator of Volunteers at SVPH Sydney.

We thank all Volunteers and pray in gratitude for the generosity. We especially acknowledge the contribution for those associated with the mission of the Sisters of Charity both in and outside RSC facilities.

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of one who brings good news, who heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation". (Is 52:7).

*Maria Wheeler RSC*

*Sisters of Charity*  
1838-2001

**Exhibition at the Australian Museum**  
**30th June → 14th October 2001**  
**9.30am - 5.00pm**

### CONTRIBUTORS:

Sr Dorothy Maher RSC  
Ms Christine Mönch  
Sr Margaret Guy RSC  
Sr Kerry Barrass RSC  
Sr Suzette Clark RSC  
Mrs Guilaine Buckley



# Sister Ursula Smith

Mary Smith (Auntie Molly to her family) was born in 1909 and attended St Thomas' 'Superior School' at Lewisham.

She entered the Sisters of Charity Novitiate in 1928 aged 18 and was professed in 1930.

In 1931 she commenced her ministry in education which was to span nearly fifty years.



Recently a gentleman from Leeton sent to the Congregational Offices the attached photographs of Ursula along with her 'self introduction' to the Australian Photographic Society that she joined in the early 1980's. In her 'self introduction' to Landscape/Seascape 4 group she says,

*My forte has been education and I have had a long and happy life of involvement with youth ... even though 2/3 of my life has been in administration.*

She was indeed a gifted educationalist and an outstanding administrator. She organised parents, fellow teachers and students with enthusiasm, directness and a keen eye to utilising individual talent. One ex-student wrote, 'Things moved fast, buildings went up, academic and other performances thrived, and the school's formidable reputation grew'.

Ursula was a woman of broad vision and tenacity. Many will remember the building programs that she supervised at Sandy Bay and Eltham, the magnificent choirs, the wonderful concerts she directed, eisteddfod items she prepared and the famous Sisters of Charity Combined Sports that she started and continued to organise from 1951 to 1960.

Scanning the list of Ursula's appointments it is easy to see that her flexibility and her qualities of leadership were recognised very early in her religious life.

She moved readily from teaching the Intermediate (Year 9) class down to kindergarten then to upper primary, back to secondary, down to grade 3. She was a principal of a number of schools and colleges Tasmania and New South Wales commencing in 1935 in Tasmania. She served numerous terms, as Superior of the community and for six years was Vicar general of the Congregation.

As Michelle Turner wrote, *'Mother Ursula told us clearly she cared how we behaved. Some of her injunctions reflected the mores of the day (wearing gloves and not eating in public), but others, to distrust unthought-out conformity, and to lead not follow, have resonated through my life. She made us value ourselves because she valued us. .... Her operating principles, warmth, determination and love meant the privilege of a hug from Ursula to give such reassurance.'*

*A former student, Michelle Turner, wrote to Sister, "For me, the name URSULA inspires me. Few people in my life have made so deep an impression that thought of them comes with a vivid intensity."*

After her retirement from the education ministry in the late 1970's Ursula enrolled in a photography course with International Correspondence Schools and in 1979 joined the landscape/seascape 4 group in order to talk with other people involved in photography. The breathtaking beauty she captured on slide was evidence of her photographic skills. It was arthritis that hampered Ursula in the latter years of her life and forced her to give up photography and finally move into nursing care.



When Ursula died her community wrote, *'Sister Ursula was a great lady - one of those women who surface in our Congregation from time to time. She was very gifted and had a great zest for living'.*

*Michelle Turner*

*former pupil Mt Carmel, Sandy Bay  
& CLC Melbourne*



# PARTNERS IN MISSION

## at Liverpool

This group, now numbering twelve, has met three times at 17 Medley Ave, since our last report, on 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2<sup>nd</sup> May and 16<sup>th</sup> June. At the March meeting, in an attempt to discover how we can deepen our experience of finding God in all things, we touched not only on what has been life giving for us in the time since our last meeting, but also at what has been life draining. Even in these more seemingly negative experiences we could see God's grace inviting us to growth and to change which would mean life for us.

An extract from Letters to a Scattered Brotherhood led us to reflect on the 'star and the nettle' experiences of our daily living.

The statement 'much of this is steam rising from you and you create your own fog' helped us.

At the May meeting we reflected on the Easter and Resurrection experience in our own lives. The Flying Rodleights, a story by Henri Nouwen, was used to explore the concept of trust as we experience it and to exercise it in our daily lives - the challenge of letting go and letting God.

At the most recent meeting the group were pleased to welcome Sr Annette Cunliffe. The topic of the sharing centred around Pentecost and the life of the Spirit in us, and in our world. From the stories we read we were able to relate to incidents from our own life experience. We went off encouraged by a new hope and a trust in the work of the Spirit within each of us.

## RSC's Relax Together

**Come to Shellharbour to Pray, Play, Walk, Swim, Eat, Talk**

was the invitation extended to all RSC's for a day together on 31<sup>st</sup> March and that is just what we did, making it a very relaxing, enjoyable day in the sun.

Jean Marie Brennan organised the day and arrived early to join Kate Fitzpatrick who had gone down the previous evening to make preparation for us. Morning tea stretched out with the arrival of each contingent of sisters, some bringing delicious goodies to share.



Back row: (L to R) Margaret Valentine, Christine Mudden, Jean Montgomery, Dorothy Barden, Margaret Mines

Front Row: Jean Marie Brennan, Brenda Jordon, Edith King, Enid Doherty

Absent from photo Dorothy Maher, Eileen Browne, Kate Fitzpatrick, Margaret Guy.

The prayer, prepared by Jean Marie, centred on the theme of forgiveness and the story of the woman taken in adultery. We were all invited to share and then to ritualise 'Has no one condemned you?' 'Neither do I'.

Following on from the prayer time was the tradition lunch for most of us fish 'n chips. Some of us chose to spend the afternoon walking on the beach others lazing in the sun and chatting.

It was good to be together in such an informal atmosphere and we thank Jean Marie for organising the day.

*Margaret Guy RSC*

## Farewell Farewell

**Mrs Narelle Mullins**

who will finish her term as Principal at Mt St Michael's Ashgrove at the end of this term.

**Dr Dennis Campbell**

who leaves the position of Executive Director at St Vincent's Hospital Toowoomba.

**We wish Narelle and Dennis every blessing and happiness for the future.**

## Congratulations

**Sr Adele Cottrell-Dormer RSC**

who has been awarded the Humanitarian Overseas Aid Medal for working in Kosova and Rwanda.

The medal is awarded to civilians who have worked in war areas where their lives have been in danger.



# 2001 The International Year of the Volunteer

Volunteers make an invaluable contribution to the community. We are all familiar with Volunteer Organisations such as Meals-on-Wheels, Red Cross, Volunteer Fire Fighters and all kinds of people involved in voluntary church and fund-raising activities. Most of us have been involved in volunteering in some form or other. For many people it is a way of life.



*Youth Drummers*

Nearly all the speakers at the World Volunteer Conference held in Amsterdam this year from January 14<sup>th</sup>→18<sup>th</sup> mentioned this "volunteering early in life". Speakers included Gillian Sorensen [Ass. Sec-Gen. for External Relations UN], Astrid N. Heiberg [President International Fellowship Red Cross & Red Crescent] and Carol Bellamy [Executive Director UNICEF] as well as Ken Allen, President of the International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE).

Ruth Van Herk and I represented Sisters of Charity Outreach at this world conference, along with 1,500 participants from 95 nations and numerous organisations; UN, UNICEF, Red Cross/Red Crescent, Volunteer Agencies, Charity Organisations, Universities, Business and Government, Humanistic Societies and Youth Councils.

I.A.V.E. sees 2001 as the year that will change the world through the 5 primary objectives:

*RECOGNITION*

*PROMOTION*

*FACILITATION*

*NETWORKING*

*PARTICIPATION*

and a big emphasis on Youth Volunteering.

Ruth and I felt that we at Outreach compared very favourably with other volunteer organisations and we came back with some new ideas. Certainly our volunteer training program is of a high standard with VETAB accreditation and great emphasis on training our volunteers well. The Training Program runs for eight weeks and includes our philosophy and values, insurance, safe work practices, attitudes, values and communication, the loss process, legal issues and visiting all our services after which there is a probationary time in the chosen service and a graduation ceremony. This year it is from 28<sup>th</sup> May - 18<sup>th</sup> July, and for the first time there are two venues: Darlinghurst and at Casula to cater for the four Liverpool Services.

June 2001

A special celebration to mark the International Year of the Volunteer for the volunteers from St Vincents and Mater Health Sydney and Outreach was held on 17<sup>th</sup> May.

It commenced with a Mass of Thanksgiving at St Mary's Cathedral and was followed by a luncheon at the Sydney Football Stadium for approximately 400 people.



*Sr Margaret Guy RSC & Ms Ruth Van Herk*

Each person received a copy of the Universal Declaration on Volunteering from which the celebrant, Bishop David Cremin quoted during the Mass when he said, "Volunteering, either through individual or group action, is a way in which: human values of community, caring and serving can be sustained and strengthened."

To conclude I would like to quote from the statement made by the Catholic Bishops of Australia on 18<sup>th</sup> May, acknowledging volunteers:

*"At this time it is right that we should draw attention to the massive contribution made to the life of the Church by Volunteers. This applies to the Church's activities at every level-national, diocesan, parochial and within the multitude of our religious institutes and Catholic organisations."*

*"The public become aware of the indispensable role of volunteers when emergencies like bushfires, floods, major accidents and calamities occur.... It is important to recognise the many other less public but constant forms of volunteering.... They do not look for publicity or praise but we should be aware of and appreciate their efforts."*

*Margaret Guy RSC*

**K.I.T.**



# Sisters of Charity Advocacy Network



## **History**

After the 1999 Congregational *Gathering*, we were invited to identify areas of interest. Some of us chose Advocacy, and so the Advocacy Group was formed. The current members are: Mary Byrne, Suzette Clark (Convenor), Maureen Delaney, Linda Ferrington, Pat Lye, Christine Madden, Judy MacWilliams and Cathy Meese.

Members come from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. Because of this geographical spread, regular face-to-face meetings are not possible, so we meet monthly by teleconference. Due to work commitments, the time chosen for our teleconferences is 7.00am on the first Monday of the month. The Advocacy Group has been meeting monthly since March 2000.

## **Monthly meetings of Advocacy Group**

Approximately every two months, a social justice issue is addressed:

For each issue, a one-page fact and information sheet and an action sheet, (e.g., a letter, petition) is formulated; this is sent to interested persons and SCAN Contacts;

One member of the Advocacy Group takes responsibility for each issue, records action taken and continues to monitor the issue.

There is the opportunity for theological reflection alternate months.

Just recently, someone asked if she could join the Advocacy Group. This request alerted me to the fact that there could be others interested in joining the Group. It is not a closed group, and if there is anyone interested, just let me know. Obviously, membership cannot be too elastic, but I am sure we could include a few more.

## **The Sisters of Charity Advocacy Network**

For advocacy to work, numbers are needed. The Sisters of Charity Advocacy Network provides these numbers. SCAN is made up of interested persons (Sisters of Charity, Co-workers, family members, friends, etc.) and Contacts.

June 2001

Last year, we worked at establishing the network. State Meetings were held to provide information and to discuss issues. This year, the aim is to have a SCAN Contact in each Sisters of Charity school, Sisters of Charity Healthcare facility, Sisters of Charity ministry and Sisters of Charity community. Along the way, we have attracted several interested persons who are members of SCAN either as individuals or who are SCAN Contacts for their areas of ministry, eg, parishes, or their families, neighbours, friends and associates.

SCAN has a brochure and a website ([www.rscan.org](http://www.rscan.org)) that offers links to both Sisters of Charity and social justice sites.

## **SCAN Contacts**

At present, there are approximately 45 SCAN Contacts in healthcare facilities, schools and other ministries associated with the Sisters of Charity, 3 in parishes and 6 who receive the mailouts on behalf of their families, associates or places of work. This spread has the potential to reach many people. The recent *Poverty Petition* attracted over 1,100 signatures so far.

## **Thank you**

*Thanks to each of you who contribute to the work of the Sisters of Charity Advocacy Network. The sole reason for its existence is to provide the opportunity for us to work together to improve the life of people less fortunate than ourselves. In the process, hopefully we are raising the awareness of others both to the plight of the poor and the marginalised, and of the possibility of joining us in our social justice ministry.*

*Suzette Clarke RSC*

**K.I.T.**



## A New Coordinator

### *Volunteer Department, St Vincent's Private Hospital Sydney*

I became part of the team of SVPH at the beginning of January and had the chance to meet most of the 100 volunteers during my first six weeks in the position. People were so helpful, showing me around, introducing me, familiarising me with the positions they held. I was immediately aware of what a wonderful place SVPH was to work. Everyone was so happy and positive and so many of the volunteers have been here for many, many years. What really impressed me was not only how supportive all the volunteers were of each other, but also of myself.

The volunteers department is always a hive of activity from early in the morning till after lunch. Volunteers come and go, busy about their duties, always willing to help where they are most needed whether it be delivering mail, taking around the shopping or library trolley, chatting with a patient while escorting them to their room or listening to a patient share their worries whilst rearranging the flowers in their room.

Last month the St Vincent's and Mater Health Sydney along with the Sisters of Charity Outreach celebrated International Volunteers Day with a beautiful Mass celebrated by Bishop David Cremin DD.EV at St Mary's Cathedral. Over 350 volunteers accepted the invitation for the day.



*Fiona Jackson*



*Christine Mönch*

After mass a coach transported them to the Sydney Football Stadium for a luncheon where Ms Mary Foley, CEO, St Vincents and Mater Health and Ms Helen Lynch AM, the special guest speaker, addressed them. It was a day to say 'thank you' to the many volunteers who have given so much to the hospitals and services that support the mission of the Sisters of Charity.

To quote from the Universal Declaration on Volunteering, "Volunteering is an essential element of all societies. It turns into practical effective action the declaration of the United Nations

## St Aloysius' School Kingston *First lay principal*

The Director of Catholic Education in Tasmania in conjunction with the Parish Priest Father Chris Hope has announced the appointment from the beginning of 2002 of

***Mrs Janine O'Hea***

as the first lay Principal at St Aloysius. She will replace Sister Kate O'Brien RSC.

Janine is the niece of a Sister of Charity, Sr M. Conrad Direen RIP.

*Congratulations Janine!*

that 'We the people' have the power to change the world." I feel very proud to be working with this group of very special people who contribute so much to our hospital and make it a better place for all of us.

***The Volunteer spirit is very much alive and well at St Vincent's Private Hospital.***

*Christine Mönch*

### ***Keep In Touch (K.I.T.)***

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# Ms Robin Clark RIP

For many years Robin, a social worker, has worked in the Department of Community Services in Victoria, especially in the area of Child Protection. She was for a time an adviser to the Minister in the previous Labor Government. Eulogists at the Mass paid tribute to her vision, her leadership and her outstanding contribution to family services.



Her contribution is to be perpetuated with the institution of an annual Robin Clark Award. In the week prior to her death, the Minister for Community Services sent the below letter to Robin.

*Robin* was a member of the Board of Sisters of Charity Community Care, Melbourne and was a former Sister of Charity (1956-1972).



Minister for Community Services

555 Collins Street  
Melbourne, Victoria 3000  
Telephone: (03) 9616 7500  
Facsimile: (03) 9616 8866

Dear Robin

Whilst you are experiencing one of life's greatest challenges, I hope that the thoughts and prayers of those who admire you will be of some comfort and bring you some joy.

So often over the last eighteen months your name has been mentioned – and always in a positive manner. As you would be only too well aware, it is rare within child and family services that a person, their knowledge and their practice is universally acclaimed. To you goes that rare honour.

Robin, with your permission, through the Community Care Division of the Department we will institute an annual Robin Clark Award to acclaim outstanding case practice in child and family service. Both the Department of Human Services and the non-government sector workers will be recognised in the awards. Entrants will be asked to document their work to assist other practitioners in their case work and thus enable workers to learn from their peers. Ultimately I hope those workers will become mentors also.

Be assured your life has been a beacon for many children, families and colleagues. We will ensure it is an enduring light.

Hon Christine Campbell MP  
Minister for Community Services

7-4-2001

*Ms Robin Clarke RIP*



Robin is a sister of the late Ms Ann Clark, Director of Education in the Parramatta Diocese.

Our Lady of the Assumption Church, Cheltenham was packed with Robin's relatives, friends, colleagues from the Department of Community Services as well as large number of Sisters of Charity for the Mass of Thanksgiving for her life celebrated by Fr Terry Curtin.



*Christine Campbell is an Ex-St Columba's girl taught by Robin.*

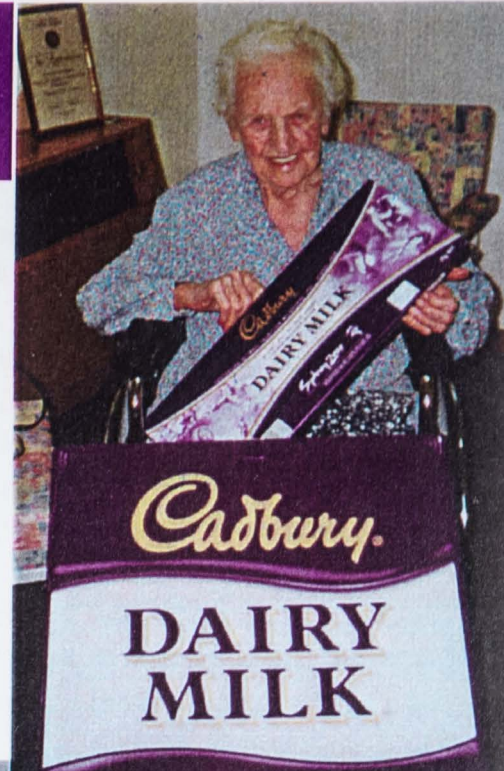


# Mother of the Year Nominee

To mark her 96<sup>th</sup> birthday Sister Kerry Barrass nominated her mother, **Noreen** in the Bernardos Australia 'Mother of the Year' competition and a Cadbury's Chocolate competition.

As the oldest nominee in the 'Mother of the Year' competition the local Auburn paper wrote up the following article and Cadbury's sent her a 10kg box of chocolates.

## Congratulations Noreen!



## 'My mother the magnificent'

"Even though we still argue, I love to speak with my mother and be told the stories of her girlhood and how exciting it was to live as a young woman growing up in Sydney, particularly around the beginning of the last century."

This was the description of how Kerry Barrass summed up her visits with her mother, Noreen Barrass, who is presently a resident at St Joachim's Nursing Home at Lidcombe.

Also Kerry made the comment that in order to make her 95th birthday special, she decided to nominate her mother as a contestant in the prestigious annual 'Mother of the Year Award' conducted by Barnardos Australia.

Barnardos is one of Australia's leading children's charities operating 50 integrated child welfare programs 24 hours a day.

Their main aim, according to a Barnardos' spokeswoman, being to empower young Australians, helping them realise their true potential so that they can make a meaningful contribution to the Australian community.

Asked how Kerry would describe her mother and her personality, she answered happily.

"Australian women of that era must have been born tough and yet they were thought of as fragile. Mum



Kerry and Noreen Barrass

often tells me of the days she used to go riding around Centennial Park as she owned her own horse. She grew up living in Daceyville, a suburb of Sydney and went to the local Catholic primary school where she developed a great love of Australian poetry and literature and pursued her knowledge about her country in general.

"She was very well read and was so wise, even though she left school in Year Six.

"What I find so interesting about my mother is the fact that she was very beautiful and was employed as a model for Hordern Brothers

Department Store.

Kerry said Norah married her father Edward, (now deceased) a WWI veteran, who was also considered handsome, at the age of 26 years, the couple becoming parents of six children.

"But when it came to raising her family of four sons and two daughters, she was no 'shrinking violet'. She was tough and strong. We moved around the State of NSW as 'railway kids'.

"Mum was a great cook. I can remember our meals always being delicious

"Dad was employed as a station master at various railway stations, mainly on the South Coast line and our

childhood was so carefree, living in the bush.

"Mum always says she just loved being a wife and mother and she said this was the occupation she took most pride in," Kerry said.

But there is one thing that stood out in Kerry's mind about her mother.

"Mum always put herself last and had many times gone without so that we children, could have the best," Kerry said.

"Now it is our time to give time, love, friendship and fun back to Mum, to whom we are eternally grateful for her care of us all. All our family think Mum deserves this award as she is a great lady," her daughter said proudly.

Mrs Noreen Barrass is now the grandmother of 21 grandchildren and 26 great grandchildren.

In summing up why her mother should be nominated, Kerry said her mother, Norah, has lived through a century of change, witnessing two World Wars and the Great Depression, but despite the challenges that have confronted her, she has always remained a role model and an inspiration.

"Family means the world to Mum, she's always interested in everything we do and it's wonderful to see her face light up when we talk," Kerry said.

by Leonie Pullar



# Sisters of Charity Foundation

The Directors are delighted to announce that **Her Excellency, Professor Maria Bashir AC, Governor of New South Wales** has extended Vice Regal Patronage to the Sisters of Charity Foundation Limited. Later in the year the Foundation plans to hold a function at which Her Excellency will be present.

At the end of March Sr Maria Cunningham RSC, Vicar for the Congregation, officially launched the Foundation in Melbourne.

The Chairman, Mr Peter Ferris AM welcomed approximately 70 guests to the Launch and explained the work of the Foundation. He then invited Sr Maria Cunningham to officiate. The Executive Director gave a vote of thanks and briefly referred to projects currently being funded through the Foundation.

Among the guests present were the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Hon Peter Costigan and the Lady Mayoress Ms Suzie Norton, The Executive Director of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, Dr Clive Wellington, Dr Joseph Caddy, Director of Catholic Social Services in Melbourne, as well as a number of friends and Co-workers of the Sisters of Charity in Victoria.

It was pleasing to have Mr Bernard and Mrs Maureen Lee and family in attendance. Bernard's sister, Sister Margaret Lee RSC who died suddenly last year was one of those responsible for setting up the Foundation and at the time of her death was a Director.



*Ms Sarah McCartney, Sr Maria Cunningham & Mr Kevin McCartney*



*Sr Josephine Cannell RSC, Sr Elizabeth Costigan RSC, Lord Mayor Hon. Peter Peter Costigan & Ms Suzie Norton*



*Sr Joan Stapleton RSC, Mrs Patricia Mitcham & Mr John Mitcham*



*Mrs Maureen & Mr Bernard Lee & Family*

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