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HAPPENINGS

August 2022
Vol. 32, No. 3

News & Notes from St. Margaret's House ~ Improving the Lives of Women and Children

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me.

~ Matthew 25:35-36

Weaving together a new idea

Next month, we are excited to present a brand-new St. Margaret's House event:
A Common Thread: Stories of Connection & Community at St. Margaret's House!

This evening of storytelling will feature women from St. Margaret's House: guests, volunteers, staff members, and students who will share their experiences, showcasing the healing power of community. Each vignette will celebrate the grace and resilience we see every day at St. Margaret's House.

We are very grateful to Indiana University South Bend, our 2022 Community Partner of the Year, for generously hosting this evening at the IUSB Main Campus Auditorium. A reception will follow the performance.

Tomika McLeod is one of the guests preparing to tell her story. In talking about the performance, she said, "I hope that people can come and experience different walks in life. Nobody has the same path, but we somehow meet together."

In looking at the stitched artwork design promoting the event, Tomika pointed to the spaces between the stitches. "That's not a missing stitch. There's a gap but the stitch is still there—it's just on the back." This is similar to the way that St. Margaret's House has been present to her and others through the years.

When Tomika needed to "get back on the right track," she returned to St. Margaret's House, a place she said helped her regain her sense of worth. "I don't *like* St. Margaret's House. I *love* it!" she says, smiling.

Please join us for *A Common Thread* to hear the stories of lives interwoven and transformed at St. Margaret's House.



Doni Funkhouser, St. Margaret's House Director of Art Programming, takes portraits of guests Heidi Brown (top) and Erica Parr (bottom) in preparation for A Common Thread. Photos by Mary K Kagel.

a common thread



*Stories of Connection
& Community at
St. Margaret's House*

Thursday, September 29 7pm

followed by reception

Indiana University South Bend
Main Campus Auditorium

Tickets available at
stmargarethouse.org



Remembering two of our founders

Margaret Kenney and Mary Pyles, two members of the founding circle of St. Margaret's House, recently passed away. Margaret died in June and Mary died this past December. Both women were 93 years old.

Former Executive Director Kathy Schneider said, "Both Margaret and Mary fundamentally believed in the dignity of each person." This strong conviction guided their involvement and commitment—from the founding of the organization and throughout the years that followed.

Beginning in 1988, they worked with founder Deacon Sarah Shrewder Tracy to bring the dream of St. Margaret's House to life. As part of that process, Bishop Frank Gray asked Margaret and Mary to go to Chicago to take a grant writing class. Together, Margaret and Mary wrote the initial grants to renovate the building so that the doors could open in June 1990.

Over the years, both women worked as volunteers and served on the Board of Directors in various capacities. Mary set up the first budget, undertook the process to

gain not-for-profit status, and established the Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County. Margaret created the newsletter, served as a mentor to the Executive Director, and became an informal counselor to guests.

"They always said yes to whatever needed to be done to move St. Margaret's House forward," said Kathy. "Both women embodied all that everyone hoped St. Margaret's House could be: hospitable, constant, loving, and generous." We are deeply grateful for the gift of their lives.

Above, Margaret Kenney behind the front desk at St. Margaret's House in 1997. At right, Mary Pyles (left) receives flowers from former Executive Director Kathy Schneider in 1996.



Filling summer days with fun memories

Summer at St. Margaret's House includes extra fun for our guests and their children, including the Guest Picnic (above) and a trip to the South Bend Cubs' game (above right). We are so grateful to Emily Patterson and Mackenzie Mencias, students from Notre Dame's Summer Service Learning Program, for their hard work running the Summer Children's Program (right).





Come see us at ArtBeat!

After a three-year hiatus, our St. Margaret's House Silk Creations artists will be back at South Bend's ArtBeat with gorgeous new inventory of scarves, silk cards, pendants, and key chains.

Saturday, August 20 11am – 7pm
Downtown South Bend

*The beauty of nature has always
 been a part of my life. When I paint,
 I'm in a zone. I love the peace.*

~Alma Nicholson, Silk Creations artist, on her scarf designs
 (detail of her work, above and below)



Crossing the finish line with a big victory

Our community's response to the Undie 500 event in May was phenomenal: we collected 2,960 pairs of brand-new women's and children's underwear, blowing past our goal of collecting 500 pairs! Thank you for helping us to serve our guests with dignity and respect by providing these essential items.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

An exquisite and messy tapestry



Our new fall event, *A Common Thread*, reminds me of the late theologian Romano Guardini who wrote that our lives are like a tapestry that we co-create with each other and God.* In a tapestry, each thread supports other threads and—at the same time—is supported by them. What an apt description of the St. Margaret's House community! A member of our community supports others as she—at the same time—is supported by the community. Perhaps this is why my reflexive response to the question of why I work at St. Margaret's House is always, “because I need it.” I am more fully alive and connected to the realities of our world because of St. Margaret's House.

Guardini explained that during our lifetimes we cannot see the front side of the tapestry we are weaving, only its reverse. The front side will be revealed to us only at the end of time, when we are fully reunited with God. Until then, we can't determine the entirety of the beauty or design of our tapestry. All we see is its messy reverse side: short spans of thread of which we quickly lose track, and knots and unsightly tangles. Once again, a fitting description of community life at St. Margaret's House! Some of our women are here for a short burst of time until they disappear as suddenly as they appeared, only to show up months or years later when they need us once again. And the injustices of poverty cause many knots in the lives of our women. Navigating community life amid such messiness is challenging.

But we are a community of hope, sustained by the knowledge that we are co-weavers with God. I have no doubt that the front side of the tapestry we are weaving as St. Margaret's House is particularly exquisite. I am confident of this because God is so close to our women and our community, our tapestry can't help but transmit beauty and goodness. Our fall event, *A Common Thread*, is our invitation to you, our faithful supporters, to join us as we attempt to put our tapestry into words.

*Romano Guardini: *Spiritual Writings* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005) 84-5.

~Katie Elliot, M.Div., Ph.D., Executive Director

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The scarf used in the design of this newsletter was created by St. Margaret's House Silk Creations artist Teresa Anderson.



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