



Contact: Jennifer Crusco  
Public Relations Manager  
(201) 768-7822, Ext. 267  
jcrusco@holyanimals.org

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## ***Sister Sharon Slear, Diane Oakley to Be Honored at Angelic Evening***

Demarest, NJ: Spend May 12 at Angelic Evening, a sparkling night of well-deserved accolades for two women who exemplify enduring commitment to the Academy of the Holy Angels. Sister Sharon Slear, SSND, will bring home the Legacy Award for contributions that reflect the charism of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and make a lasting impact on the Academy and the people it serves. Diane Oakley (AHA '71) will receive the Distinguished Alumna Award for her extraordinary loyalty, commitment, dedication, and service to the advancement of AHA.

“Sister Sharon Slear is an innovative educator,” AHA President Melinda Hanlon observed. “Her extraordinary vision and leadership have contributed so much to the growth of the Academy. We are all grateful for her many years of service to the AHA Board of Trustees and I am personally very thankful for her support and friendship.”

President Hanlon added, “At Holy Angels, we often say that ‘Women leaders begin here.’ Diane Oakley’s career and accomplishments, along with her lifelong commitment to serving the interests of others, certainly exemplify this ideal. Her fidelity and loyal support of Holy Angels have truly made a difference for our students and we are delighted to honor her at Angelic Evening.”

Festivities will be held at the Edgewood Country Club in River Vale, New Jersey. Highlights will include the award ceremony, a cocktail hour and sit down dinner, and dancing to a live band. Proceeds will fund long-anticipated renovations to AHA’s auditorium and music wing. This section of the school is original to the building, which was constructed in 1965. Updates will benefit the entire AHA community, as the auditorium is a focal point for gatherings that include Open House programs, liturgies, assemblies, concerts, plays, honor society inductions, and more. Contact [bburklund@holyanimals.org](mailto:bburklund@holyanimals.org) for Angelic Evening tickets and information.

**S. Sharon Slear** grew up in Baltimore with three sisters and two brothers. She and her family were immersed in life at Saint Bernadine’s, and met the School Sisters at Notre Dame Prep. She is currently provost/vice president for academic affairs at Notre Dame of Maryland University. She holds a bachelor’s degree in chemistry/pre-med from Notre Dame of Maryland University and

completed her master's in chemistry at Villanova. In 1988, she received her Ph.D. in educational administration with highest distinction from Boston College.

At one point, S. Sharon was interested in becoming a surgeon, but her career path took a sharp turn when she accepted an opportunity to teach.

"I enjoyed it immensely," S. Sharon said of her time in front of the class. Since then, S. Sharon has been a teacher and administrator in Maryland and Florida. She has also led presentations for audiences in Russia, Spain, Pennsylvania, Chicago, and California.

She is a recognized authority on educational leadership, and shares her expertise with teachers at the Matenwa School on Haiti's Lagonav Island. She has traveled to Haiti twice to assist with teacher training that includes general principles and strategies.

"We teach the teachers in the morning and have the students come in the afternoon," she said of the initiative. A Creole translator works with the SSNDs and the local teachers. Haitian educators test their new skills a few hours after they receive training, and share educational techniques and concepts with their peers.

The Haitian teachers were pleasantly surprised to see the same team of teachers return the following year; this time with suitcases packed with manipulatives. The second round of teacher training included accommodations for students with special needs. The pandemic, natural disasters, and political unrest curtailed in-person visits to Haiti, but S. Sharon and her team have maintained the connection by producing instructional videos.

As member of the Notre Dame of Maryland faculty, S. Sharon developed multiple graduate programs in education, and spearheaded the creation of the university's first doctoral program. She has also overseen the development of additional doctoral programs. She led the NDM Education Department as it became the state's first private higher education institution to earn national accreditation for its graduate and undergraduate programs. When the department became the School of Education in 2011, S. Sharon was appointed founding dean.

She chaired the AHA Board of Trustees for nearly a decade, and served on the boards of the Institute of Notre Dame, College of Notre Dame of Maryland, and the Baltimore Archdiocesan Catholic School Board. She was named to the list of Maryland's Top 100 Women three times, and is a member of the Maryland Circle of Excellence. She received the NCEA Sister Catherine McNamee Award for outstanding leadership in promoting a vision of Catholic education that serves students with diverse needs. She also earned the President's Medal from Notre Dame of Maryland University, and was appointed to the Governor's P-20 Leadership Council in Maryland.

An avid golfer and tennis player, S. Sharon established a tennis team in Hollywood, Florida, and had the opportunity to spend time on the court with Chris Everett. S. Sharon is a four-time Coach of the Year for the Atlantic Women's Colleges Conference.

Honoree **Diane Oakley** distinguished herself as a scholar athlete who played basketball throughout her four years at AHA. She entered Fairfield University in the fall of 1971 as a member of the school's second co-ed class. The university was not prepared to accommodate women athletes. Oakley and her female peers found themselves playing basketball in a convent gym with a ceiling that was too low for players to execute jump shots.

Oakley met with Fairfield's athletic director about the need to establish an official women's basketball team, and she and her teammates became the charter members of the Lady Stags. The squad was inducted into the Fairfield Hall of Fame for becoming the school's only undefeated team. In addition, Oakley was inducted into the Metropolitan Area Athletic Conference Hall of Fame. She received Fairfield's inaugural Stags Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her unwavering support for the university's athletic program.

This pioneer believes her experience at AHA led to her success in Fairfield's predominantly male environment.

"What I did in college I probably couldn't have done without Holy Angels," Oakley said of the confidence she mustered to ask for a women's basketball squad. "In an all-female educational environment," she added, "you never realize that women can't do something. You always have the opportunity to do what is available."

At AHA, those opportunities included in-depth studies of math and science. Oakley noted that AHA fostered her love of learning and no one told her women shouldn't pursue STEM studies. She graduated from Fairfield cum laude with a bachelor's degree in math. She later received an MBA in finance from Fordham.

Initially, Oakley studied to become an actuary, but opted to move into marketing. She invested 28 years at TIAA-CREF, a financial services provider. Over time, she held management, public policy, and technical positions, including vice president for special consulting services and vice president for associations and government relations.

Oakley is known for her service as senior policy adviser to North Dakota Congressman Earl Pomeroy. Her work on Capitol Hill included finding solutions to retirement security issues.

She later joined the National Institute on Retirement Security, a think tank that focuses on women's issues. Oakley recently retired as the institute's executive director.

She is a member of the National Academy of Social Insurance, and served on the AHA Board of Trustees from 2007-2010.

This honoree is a generous, long-time AHA benefactor who has supported many Academy initiatives.

Oakley is also involved with the Order of Malta. Her volunteer activities include assisting single mothers, nursing home residents, and individuals who are reentering society after serving prison terms. She remains physically active by playing competitive tennis with the USTA. She recently spent 20 days walking sections of the famed El Camino de Santiago.

**315 HILLSIDE AVENUE, DEMAREST, NJ 07627**

**201.768.7822 | [HOLYANGELS.ORG](http://HOLYANGELS.ORG)**