



# Stewardship Report 2022

School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest Province



TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

# Keeping Our Focus



**Sister Limeteze Pierre-Gilles, SSND, a native of Haiti, speaks at the Academy of the Holy Angels about her work at Beyond Borders, with whom the province shares a productive partnership. Holy Angels holds annual “fun-raisers” like Hats for Haiti to help raise money for this work.**

**Students at the Notre Dame Learning Center in Rochester, NY learn about care of creation through a visit from residents of the local zoo. Connecting them with the animals can lead to discussions about how they might fight to protect the environments in which the creatures live from the ravages of climate change.**



*The mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame is to proclaim the good news, directing their entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. The Sisters make Christ visible through their very being and by their sharing of love, faith and hope. The Sisters express their mission through ministry directed towards education.*

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**ON THE COVER:**  
Provincial Leader Sister Charmaine Krohe visited Haiti to see first-hand the kind of work being done there with the support of our province.



October 2023 will mark the beginning of the 190th year of the founding of our congregation and the opening of our 25th General Chapter. Every six years, our congregation holds an international meeting to articulate a direction on how God is calling SSND to live and serve at this time in history and to elect leadership who will facilitate the implementation of our directional statement. This meeting will look at what commitments our congregation will make — to community, to education, to climate change, to ministries and to the care of each other. Each province focuses on the parts of the Directional Statement they feel most called to follow.

Following our last General Chapter in 2017, our province primarily focused on four broad commitments — Water, Immigration, Human Trafficking and Haiti. As the work of our Sisters and Associates expanded, the scope of work in support of these commitments grew to include sustainable development in Haiti (in partnership with Beyond Borders); embracing all climate change concerns rather than focusing only on water; helping care for survivors of human trafficking and providing educational resources so that others might not be taken in; and promoting justice for immigrants. As events of consequence such as the George Floyd murder highlighted yet again the racial inequality in our society, we determined the importance of adding dismantling racism to our commitments. Through these five areas of focus we live out our congregational Directional Statement, *Love Gives Everything*.

This issue of our annual stewardship report highlights each of these focus areas and the work the province has been doing in support of them. It also shows how our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries are living out our SSND charism, joining with us in making a difference in our world through the actions that impact these focus areas. We revel in the knowledge of how the smallest act of kindness can overcome insurmountable obstacles.

We thank you for your support of our Five Areas of Focus and of our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries. We also express our deepest gratitude to you for your continued support of our Sisters, whose lives have been entirely dedicated to creating ministries and educational opportunities that raise up people who benefit most from their challenging work and commitment in these life-changing ministries. We hope you will consider honoring our sisters by striving to continue in your own lives the work you will read about in the following pages. Thank you for your ongoing generosity and support.

Yours in Notre Dame,

*Charmaine Krohe, SSND*

**S. Charmaine Krohe**  
Provincial Leader, School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest Province



# Establishing a Just Society



The Catholic Church teaches that our active engagement in the making of Justice and Peace in our world, as well as sustaining the Integrity of God's Creation, is integral to the faithful following of Jesus and the proclamation of the Gospel. In keeping with this tradition, the School Sisters of Notre Dame state in the General Directory of their Constitution "a particular concern in all our ministries is the establishment of a just society." (*You Are Sent* GD33).

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Department of The Atlantic-Midwest Province of SSND promotes this vision, as well as provides opportunities for engagement in the work of justice and peace-making throughout the province and the wider AMSSND network. In responding to the Directional Statement of the General Chapter of 2017, the Atlantic-Midwest Province members decided that the primary social and ecological issues of concern for the province would be visible in province commitments to "the dignity of life and the care of all creation."

Providing education as well as opportunities for engagement with these social and environmental commitments of the province, are overseen by province committees under the leadership of the AMSSND JPIC Director, and with the full assistance of the Mission and Ministry team, which includes Associates, Communications, Development, and Ministry Services.

## Our Province's Five Areas of Focus

### ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

**At this critical turning point in the sacred history of creation and humanity, we have heard our deep desire to trust and dare** (YAS, C4).

Pope Francis points out in *Laudato Si'* that Earth, our common home, is in crisis.

At the heart of the crisis is a fractured relationship between the human species and the rest of the Earth community. God did not design human beings to be apart from creation; rather, we are created as part of creation — interdependent members of the total community of life. This sense of oneness with creation is emphasized in the SSND Constitution, *You Are Sent* (YAS), which reads in part, "our mission is to proclaim the Good News as School Sisters of Notre Dame, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent." (YAS 4)

As a result, we are compelled to promote God's vision of oneness while helping others to recover and witness right-relationship with each other and Earth through a conversion of attitudes and behaviors. As the Directional Statement of the SSND 24th General Chapter illustrates, promoting oneness through educating, advocating, and acting is a necessary and critical contribution to the flourishing of human beings and planet Earth.



Recently, the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) have committed themselves to embrace a vision of integral

ecology and to take a seven-year journey to become a *Laudato Si'* Congregation. This decision, framed by the Seven Goals of the *Laudato Si'* Platform for Action (<https://laudatosiplatform.org>), holds profound implications and possibilities for the life and mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the wider SSND network.

As a *Laudato Si'* congregation, SSNDs are inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical to live in such a way

that our lifestyles and our spirituality reduce and eliminate greenhouse gases, while promoting the health and sustainability of all of creation. We understand that our greatest contribution to address climate change is to educate, advocate, and act in ways that lead to personal conversion and social transformation. Guided by the SSND mission of making one, we believe "integral ecology" can be achieved through sustained collaborative efforts among Sisters, Associates, and staff across the SSND network.



### DISMANTLING RACISM

**"We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life."** – Pope Francis

As the Catholic Church is clear on the sinfulness of racism, the Church is gradually awakening to the many ways it has promoted slavery, segregation, and racism throughout its own history. Women religious are also beginning to address their own personal and institutional complicity in racism. Acknowledging the history of racism and our participation in it as individuals and as members of groups; discovering ways that we can act to rectify it; and inviting others to this dialogue, is the work of dismantling racism. Our Dismantling Racism committee, pictured here, is helping us with this difficult work.

We are also guided in this work by the vision of *You Are Sent*, the constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, especially GD 33: "We call ourselves to embody Gospel values and to live the social teachings of the Church. Working toward the enablement of persons and the promotion of human dignity, we contribute to positive systemic change in society."

## ENDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING



*“Modern slavery,” “trafficking in persons,” and “human trafficking” have been used as umbrella terms for the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing,*

*or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.*

Human trafficking can include but does not require movement. People may be considered trafficking victims regardless of whether they were born into a state of servitude, were exploited in their hometown, were transported to the exploitative situation, previously consented to work for a trafficker, or participated in a crime as a direct result of being trafficked. At the heart of this phenomenon is the traffickers’ goal of exploiting and enslaving their victims and the myriad coercive and deceptive practices they use to do so.

Trafficking should not be confused with smuggling, which is the illegal movement of a person across a border with their consent.

Because of the clandestine nature of the crime it is difficult to estimate how many victims of slavery exist at any one time in the world. However, by modest estimates, we can assume that there are 20-30 million human beings who are enslaved in our world today. The International Labor Organization states that human trafficking is a 150 billion dollar industry. Human Trafficking is not a crime that happens “somewhere else.” Thousands of victims are trafficked within and through Canada and the United States annually.

Many people still think human trafficking and child sex trafficking are issues that happen in other countries and to other people, but they couldn’t be more wrong. Eighty-three percent of sex trafficking victims in the U.S. are United States citizens. Similarly, almost all the victims in Canada are Canadian-born. Trafficking can happen anywhere to anyone.

## PROMOTING JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS

*“We, the members of the Atlantic Midwest Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, compelled by the Directional Statement of our 23rd General Chapter, which commits us “to intensify our efforts to witness to unity in a divided world while addressing these divisions with audacity and hope,” support a comprehensive immigration reform for the United States.*

— AM Province Corporate Stance on Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Globally there are as many as 244 million people ‘on the move.’ People migrate for a variety of reasons. Some people are voluntary migrants who leave their home for reasons of employment or reunification with family and friends. Other people experience forced migration. They are often forced to leave their homes in search of safety, chased by factors including war, natural disaster, political violence, social oppression, and economic insecurity. Depending upon the reasons for their decision to leave their homeland, most migrating people fall into one of three descriptive categories: Immigrant, Refugee, or Migrant.



*(Pictured: Holy Angels students at the Texas/Mexico border sorting necessities for arriving immigrants.)*

**Immigrant:** An immigrant is a person who is a non-native in a country where they reside; they do not possess birth-citizenship. An immigrant settles or resides there, especially as a permanent resident or naturalized citizen, in order to take up permanent employment as a migrant worker or temporarily as a foreign worker.

**Migrant:** Anyone moving from one country to another is considered a migrant unless they are specifically fleeing a proven situation of war or persecution, in which case they can be considered a **Refugee**.

While people voluntarily migrate for a variety of reasons every day, forced migration and displacement is a growing global reality. According to the United Nations, the recent uptick in human migration represents a huge surge since the year 2000. At the beginning of 2016, more than 60 million, or nearly 1 out of every 100 people worldwide, have been forcibly displaced from their homes. This represents the highest number of migrants since World War II. Migrants, Refugees, and Immigrants all face danger, prejudice and fears as they seek safety and their human rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of their dreams. People on the move, such as migrants, refugees, and immigrants, are frequently exploited. Absent clear and practical policies in countries where they seek safety, they become vulnerable to many forms of abuse, especially human trafficking.

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HAITI

When people talk about Haiti, the first thing that comes to mind is that it is the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere. But that is not how the Haitian people think of themselves. Haiti has rich culture which, in part, embodies the characteristics of resilience, creativity, ingenuity and faith. Haiti became the world’s first independent black republic and second independent nation in the hemisphere when it successfully conducted a slave rebellion, overthrowing their French colonial masters in 1804.

Since February 2017, the Atlantic-Midwest Province of SSND has been engaged in a partnership in Haiti with Beyond Borders, a non-profit organization working in Haiti for over 20 years. Initially, this collaboration in Haiti focused on developing two Model Community Initiatives (MCIs) in the communities of Ti Palmis and Nan Mango on the island of Lagonav, off the western coast of Haiti.

Today, as we enter into a new phase of the partnership, the MCI’s will extend beyond the initial two communities and into Lagonav’s communal section of Ansaale. The collaboration between SSND and Beyond Borders is focused on ending violence against women and girls in Haiti

and preventing parents who are poor from sending their children into domestic servitude as *restaveks*. The Model Community Initiative seeks to provide holistic community-based support to address the root causes of violence and *restavek*.



As the province’s engagement in Haiti has evolved in partnership with Beyond Borders, SSND Sisters, Associates and mission colleagues have learned about the urgent needs of the people of Lagonav, Haiti. Our Sisters have visited the island and felt compelled to identify further ways that SSND can help support the well-being of the citizens of Haiti in the future. Separate from the Beyond Borders partnership, Sisters and Associates are assisting with a Teacher Training program where teachers in Haiti learn via video training techniques from faculty at Notre Dame of Maryland University.

# How Our Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Ministries Are Sharing Our Focus

## TUITION-FREE SCHOOLS

### Mother Seton Academy, Baltimore, MD *Co-sponsored ministry established in 1993*



In this picture, one of Mother Seton Academy's 8th-grade students from last year is giving a speech on the impact of racism on children. Every year eighth-grade students research a topic that's important to them. They research their topic extensively, and in addition to writing a detailed report on their findings they are also required to give a speech about their topic area and answer questions from the audience. Kevin M. chose to research the impact of racism on students and gave an empowered presentation on the detrimental effects this has on children's mental health and the importance of addressing and getting rid of racism and racist behaviors. We felt that this fit in perfectly with the Atlantic-Midwest Province's focus on dismantling racism.

### Sisters Academy of Baltimore, Baltimore, MD *Co-sponsored ministry established in 2008*



Mecca "MeccaMorphosis" Verdell empowered the students at Sisters Academy of Baltimore during a week-long poetry residency, where students were challenged to embrace their own unique struggles, talents, and cultures. Teaching young women to use the power of the spoken word is a powerful way to enable them to find their own voices as they focus on the issues that mean the most to them.

## COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOLS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

### Academy of the Holy Angels, Demarest, NJ *Sponsored ministry established in 1879*



Students at the middle and high schools at AHA learn all about the Five Focus Areas from Sisters and Associates working at the school or visiting to expand the students' horizons. A popular immersion experience is the chance to go to the border of Mexico and Texas to spend time with SSNDs living and working there, learning more about the immigrant experience from the immigrants themselves. In this photo, students pray at one of the border walls for the lives lost there and for the safety of those who make it past.

### Notre Dame Preparatory School, Towson, MD *Sponsored ministry established in 1873*



New this year, Notre Dame Preparatory School launched the Advanced Placement (AP) Environmental Science Service Learning Course. On multiple levels, this course supports the identity and mission imperative to Notre Dame: it ties the school's service tenet directly to the tenet of academic excellence; it upholds the School Sisters of Notre Dame mandate to care for the earth; and it directly addresses

Pope Francis' call in *Laudato Si* to work to protect and sustain our common home, planet Earth. Pictured, NDP students visit Cromwell Valley Park in Baltimore County quarterly for stream health and invasive species studies, two current target areas for park preservation. *(Photo credit: Mia Walsh for Notre Dame Preparatory School)*

## UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS

### Notre Dame of Maryland University (NDMU), Baltimore, MD *Sponsored ministry established in 1895*



Notre Dame of Maryland University announced in April that this fall it would provide two full-tuition scholarships for refugees from Afghanistan to earn a bachelor's degree in what is currently the Women's College, in partnership with the Rotary Action Group for Refugees, Forced Displacement, and Migration.

NDMU's Afghan Refugee Scholarship covers the full tuition and on-campus housing for up to four years for two undergraduate students. The University also encourages other Afghan refugees who meet the admissions requirements to apply to the Women's

College to be considered for additional NDMU scholarships and grants. Sisters Nowrasta and Nastaran, whose family fled Afghanistan when the Taliban took over in August 2021, were the first recipients. "When we heard we got the scholarships, it was the best news we had since we have been in the United States," Nastaran said. "We were so excited — it was just a great day."

## LEARNING AND CAREER CENTERS

### Caroline Friess Center, Baltimore, MD *Sponsored ministry established in 1996*



Women determined to create better futures for themselves are also embracing the chance to lift up the lives of women in Haiti whom they will never meet. The School Sisters of Notre Dame's Atlantic-Midwest Province sponsors Caroline Center, which offers 15-weeks of tuition-free training to women in Baltimore City interested

in earning their Certified Nursing Assistant or Geriatric Nursing Assistant certifications or Pharmacy Technician certification. During their training, the women learn more about the SSNDs and their ministries, including the Province's partnership with Beyond Borders in Haiti.

The students could relate to the stories of the people in Haiti struggling to create better lives for themselves and their families. They started doing small fundraisers like bake sales to make what they could to donate to Haiti. Since the first Caroline Center class started donating in 2018, they have raised over \$3,000! These women thought they had little to give financially, but together they have learned just how little it takes to make an impact on others.

### Caroline House, Bridgeport, CT *Sponsored ministry established in 1996*



When immigrants come to the United States, many try to learn English so they can compete for better jobs or communicate with their children's schools or medical providers. Caroline House offers an intensive English as a Second Language program with various levels of instruction. Classes meet Monday through Thursday from 9 AM to 1:30 PM and follow the Bridgeport Public Schools calendar. Lessons help women learn to read, write, and speak English in a supportive classroom

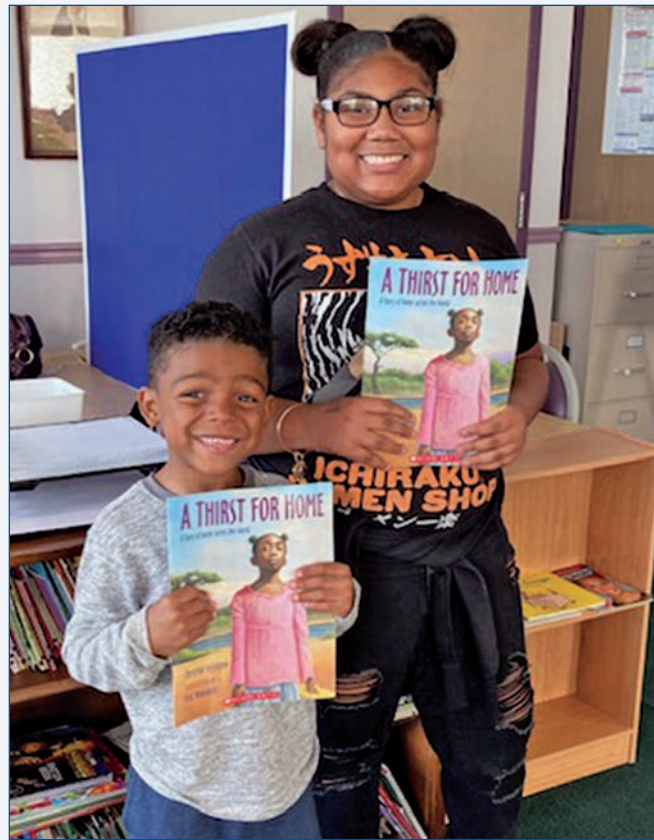
environment. Each day includes one hour of computer instruction when students learn typing, basic word processing and use of English-language learning programs. Caroline House also has a pre-school program and after-school tutoring available for the children of students

### Corazón a Corazón, Blue Island, IL *Sponsored ministry established in 2002*



Corazón a Corazón provides a supportive one-on-one environment which enables and assists Hispanic women and children in their personal and educational development by bolstering basic language skills through ESL tutoring; advancing these skills through a conversation group; providing an after-school Youth Educational Program to assist at-risk students with homework help and development of reading and math skills; and empowering clients to participate fully in their families and community.

**Notre Dame Learning Center, Rochester, NY** *Sponsored ministry established in 2004*



Children at Notre Dame Learning Center in Rochester, NY are reading "A Thirst for Home: A Story of Water across the World" as part of their learning and exploration of ways to preserve water.

Staff from the local zoo also come for interactive visits, where they show the children at NDLC how their actions can have widespread effect on the animals and the entire eco-system.



**School Sisters of Notre Dame Educational Center, Woodhaven, NY**  
*Sponsored ministry established in 2004*



To improve our English was one of the first goals that we set for ourselves when we arrived in this country because it is hard not to be able to connect and communicate with other people. We thank God for giving us the opportunity to belong to the SSND Education Center family. Truly it is a great privilege and a great opportunity that we will not waste. Thank you, Sisters for taking

us in, in such a generous way regardless of our origin, religion, culture, or status. Having as the sole requirement our desire to better ourselves. With your support, we have decided to move forward, and we are moving. Not only in our knowledge, but also in improving our self-esteem and confidence. Step by step, we are becoming part of this society, learning its customs, its rules, and its opportunities. — Lucia Abreu, Level 3 & 4 Graduate

**TEMPORARY HOMES FOR WOMEN IN RECOVERY**

**Marian House, Baltimore, MD** *Co-sponsored ministry established in 1982*



An important part of dismantling racism is to offer equal opportunities to all, no matter what their race or circumstances. Marian House values the innate dignity of each human being. Within a culture of respect and understanding of the human condition, the values of patience, trust, honesty, and integrity direct all of our interactions and endeavors. Marian House is committed to equity and inclusion. We value diversity of thought and honor individual identity, which includes race, color, national origin, gender identity, sexuality, class, and religion.

**SisterHouse, Oak Park, IL** *Sponsored ministry since 1982*

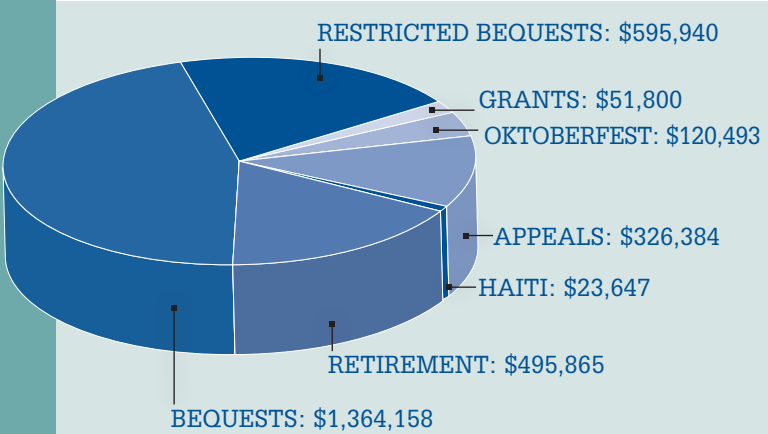


"For me, SisterHouse's Mission and Vision resonates with the Mission, Ministry and Charism of SSND. We Educate for Transformation. Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger founded the congregation to help women and girls use their gifts to create a better world. SisterHouse seeks to help women break the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, unemployment, hopelessness, and poverty by enabling them to become psychologically and economically self-sufficient, while at the same time finding their spiritual center, so that they may become contributing members of society. They are gifted with the opportunity to change their lives and move toward the fulfillment of their God-given potential." — Sister Carol Dwyer, SSND, SisterHouse Counselor and Board Member

# JOIN US IN TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

The Atlantic-Midwest Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame raises funds each year to keep our educational ministries vibrant, keep our global network strong, support our apostolic way of life and provide quality care for our retired and senior Sisters. Each year we rely on your support in our mission to respond to urgent local and global needs, to sustain the SSND mission and ministries, and to advance the vision of a more unified world. You, our generous and faithful supporters, continue to partner with us in this endeavor.

From July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022 your gifts to our appeals, retirement, Oktoberfest, special funds for Haiti and Ukraine reached \$2,978,86, and our expenses came in 23% below budget.



Did you know there are creative ways to support Atlantic-Midwest Province School Sisters of Notre Dame? Ways in which AMSSND, you, and your loved ones all benefit at the same time? Planning your estate and legacy for future generations, including your charitable interests, takes careful evaluation. Such giving techniques are called "planned gifts," because with thoughtful planning, you create win-win solutions for you and AMSSND.

- Name AMSSND in your will or trust
- Designate and donate stocks and investment accounts
- Give through retirement plan assets: IRA, Donor Advised Funds, 401K, and 403B
- Donate tax free through a QCD-qualified charitable distribution

To learn more please visit our website: [www.atlanticmidwest.plannedgiving.org](http://www.atlanticmidwest.plannedgiving.org).

Or contact Jamie Shannon at [jshannon@amssnd.org](mailto:jshannon@amssnd.org) or 203-761-9732 x3207.

## ALUMNAE/I OUTREACH PROGRAM

In 2021 the Development Office launched our new Alumnae/i Outreach Program to update our database with SSND school information, the Sisters who taught at our schools, and our alumnae/i who attended. We invited you to share yearbooks, pictures, and stories and you continue to do so! Here is one of these stories.

James Thompson, Class of '68, St. Philip Neri School, in Rochester, NY, visited with Associate Director of Development, Laurie Molner and Sr. Leonora Tucker in Wilton, CT recently to talk about his wonderful experiences with the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Jim grew up in Rochester, NY. He shared how he became close friends with many Sisters over the years, but especially Sr. Mary Lucine Knapp, Sr. Vincenza Gagliostro, and Sr. Mary Albino.

"These Sisters were fantastic teachers and were the major reason I went into teaching. I recently retired from the NYC public schools in Queens, NY and there wasn't a day that went by that I didn't think of them." Jim was also taught by Sr. Robert Moser in his early years, and he has such fond memories of her sense of humor. His memory of so many SSNDs and their kindness has stayed with him to this day.

School slide shows have been created to help you take a trip down memory lane. Please visit <https://atlanticmidwest.org/posts/school-sisters-notre-dame-alumni>.

If you would like to share your story or connect with a Sister please contact Laurie Molner at [lmolner@amssnd.org](mailto:lmolner@amssnd.org) or 203-761-9732 x3201.

# The Year in Photos



Celebrating Foundation Day  
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