WE BELIEVE...

that we create the future
As we move with the Spirit
in giving full expression
to our giftedness as women in the Church
Sharing equally in its mission—
In living a life that is simple
prayerful
Courageous and
Compassionate—
in proclaiming with prophetic voice
the Gospel to all people—
in strengthening our corporateness
as women in community—
in demonstrating our belief
in the dignity of the human person
and the call to secure this dignity
for all women and men—
in expressing our solidarity
with the poor and oppressed.

IN FAITH AND HOPE
WE ACCEPT
THE CHALLENGES
THOSE BELIEFS IMPLY.

Sisters of St. Joseph • Brentwood, NY
— Vision Statement

Pictured right: Newly elected members of the 2016-21 Leadership Team are (l. to r.) Sisters Joan Gallagher, Elizabeth Hill, President Helen Kearney, Kathleen McKinney and Teresa Fitzgerald
Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

We welcome the new life this Spring season brings. It is so obvious in the warmth of the sun, the bursting forth of flowers surrounded by endless shades of green. Each year we experience this newness in a different way. As you enjoy this issue of Focusing, I invite you to see “new ways of being” as we discover God’s presence in all created life and live out the mission of the Sisters of Saint Joseph to bring all into union with God and one another.

All life stems from the creator and you will read of how Faith, Spirit and Community call us to nurture and protect life where it is diminished. Our actions must be deeply rooted in an awareness of God present and alive in all of us. We discover God as we listen attentively to the stories of others as well as our own and respond.

Empowered by God’s transforming presence in our lives you will read of the powerful influence our sisters, associates and co-ministers have had on the needs in our world. Historically we have stood with the excluded, advocated for prison reform, empowered the poor in Appalachia, nurtured the faith of mothers, advocated for peace, justice and the empowerment of the marginalized and worked for a more just and compassionate legal system. Confident that God continues to draw all into union we continue to respond to need through the service and involvement of our CSJ students who work for human rights at the UN, walk for Epilepsy and Breast Cancer and participate in the NYC Million Trees project. Providing opportunities for spiritual development for young adults encourages their commitment to service and deepens their understanding of our CSJ mission. We look to the future and our St. Joseph Worker Volunteer Program to enable young women to experience community, engage in service to those on the margins and deepen their spirituality.

Our own sisters continue to find “new ways of being” by using their voices in public leadership and establishing Sisters’ credibility and moral voice. We use our voice and influence as shareholders to hold corporations accountable to social and environmental concerns. Committed to live out our Land Ethic and collaborating with others, we look to conserve our land, utilize solar energy and investigate alternatives to septic systems and sewage treatment, farmland preservation and responsible energy sources using the gift of the sun for our energy needs and the needs of our dear neighbor.

This Spirit of God has led us in the past and leads us still to courageously acknowledge the mandate of our mission to heal, redeem and liberate, welcoming each precious miracle of life, realizing the gift, heeding the call, reverencing the mystery within this mission of love as we pray with Hildegard of Bingen:

The Spirit of God is a life that bestows life, Root of world tree and wind in its boughs. Scrubbing out sin, she rubs oil on wounds. She is glistening life, assuring all praise, All-awakening, all-resurrecting.

Our mission to heal, redeem and liberate has never been undertaken in isolation. Community as a revelation of divinity is the life blood flowing through and nourishing the body of the universe which is One. We can do nothing creative or sanctifying separated from this divine source of life, the community of all beings. We have been called to nurture, protect and preserve the sacred land in our care as faith-filled, Spirit-filled treatments, farmland preservation and responsible energy sources using the gift of the sun for our energy needs and the needs of our dear neighbor. Our mission continues in the community of all beings.

We respond to the promptings of the Spirit in our exploration of alternative septic systems and sewage treatments, farmland preservation and responsible energy sources using the gift of the sun for our energy needs and the needs of our dear neighbor.

This Spirit of God, this culmination of time, events and soul-infused purpose for the task at hand is now surrounding us, crying out with an urgent mandate for commitment to action.

The hunger of the world, the torture of innocents, the degradation of our planet, violence against all who deserve protection are crimes that beg for the faith that unites and rises in one overwhelming tide demanding justice and responsible action.

This faith, our mission when put to the test, endures from a personal conviction arising within a relationship with God, our neighbor and the earth itself. This is the source of our nourishment strengthening us to seize the initiative in righting wrongs on every side.

And so it is within this relationship and in the prayer of our deepest contemplation that the Spirit of God transforms faith into action as we have done in committing ourselves to “preserve, protect, restore and cherish the integrity, biodiversity, balance and beauty of the land and all the species with whom we share it.” (CSJ Brentwood Land Ethic)

As we explore the desperate needs of our own Long Island bioregion and the life communities dying from the pollution of overdevelopment, the poisoning of well water and the compromised rivers and sea we hear the warning alarms that our living earth is sounding and we must heed the call to tend and preserve the gift of Brentwood land entrusted to our care.

Looking behind I am filled with gratitude.
Looking forward I am filled with vision.
Looking upwards I am filled with strength.
Looking within I discover peace.

(QUERI APACHE PRAYER)
IN RESPONSE TO OUR LAND ETHIC: PARTNERING FOR SACRED GROUNDS

Karen Burke, CSJ

A t the same time they are experiencing change in membership and financial resources many Religious congregations have come to feel a growing responsibility to initiate a new relationship with their lands. As one of these congregations, the Sisters of St. Joseph affirmed a Land Ethic Statement on March 21, 2015. In response to that statement, members of the congregation have formed new partnerships on Long Island, gathered information about our bioregion, implemented new initiatives, and continued ecological projects that were already in place. The purpose of this article is to share information on our initiatives related to land conservation, solar energy, landscape options, and wastewater management.

Land Conversation

We commit ourselves... To research options such as land trusts, easements, deed restrictions, and the transfer or selling of development rights in order to determine the best way to preserve the land that we hold in sacred trust.

—Sisters of St. Joseph Land Ethic Statement

Land protection groups are realizing that the sacred lands of religious congregations constitute an outstanding collection of unprotected natural areas and open spaces. Our Brentwood property is a 211-acre parcel that contains significant natural and community resources. Land trusts are in a unique position to help faith-based organizations understand their options regarding the lands that have been integral to their mission and ministry. The Sisters of St. Joseph chose to collaborate with Peconic Land Trust as we endeavor to protect the land that we hold in sacred trust. The Peconic Land Trust staff conducted an analysis of the land based on the soils, vegetation, built structures, and historical land uses. As they evaluated the special features of the property they strategized about what conservation tools could be utilized to protect the unique features of the property in the context of our Land Ethic Statement. The long-term recommendations being considered include possible conservation easement options and suggestions for land management that concentrate on the shared sense of mission, obligation, sacrifice, and perpetual care for the land.

Solar Energy

We commit ourselves... To monitor the ways in which we use and consume necessary products and to consider options for obtaining products that are not harmful to the land, the inhabitants, or the bioregion.

—Sisters of St. Joseph Land Ethic Statement

The Sisters of St. Joseph recognize that solar energy is an alternative for fossil fuels as it is a non-polluting, clean, reliable and renewable source of energy. In response to our Land Ethic, the congregation partnered with organizations interested in promoting clean, sustainable energy use and generation on Long Island. In particular, we investigated the use of solar energy to generate electricity on the Brentwood property. It is our desire to control energy costs, reduce our environmental footprint, and move toward energy independence. In this spirit, we have contracted with a Long Island based solar energy company to initiate the process for installation of a ground mounted solar array system on the Brentwood property.

Landscape Options

We commit ourselves... To research options such as land trusts, easements, deed restrictions, and the transfer or selling of development rights in order to determine the best way to preserve the land that we hold in sacred trust.

—Sisters of St. Joseph Land Ethic Statement

Long Island is a diverse mosaic of maritime grasslands, pitch pine, oak and beech forests, rivers, streams, tidal marshes, bluffs and beaches that have been fragmented by human development. As natural habitats are further encroached upon by more development and invasive species, a decline in local biodiversity continues. We invited a consultant to tour the Brentwood property with members of the Land Ethic and Earth Matters committees to gain some initial recommendations regarding retention of natural features, environmental restoration, naturalistic plantings, and creative storm water management. The popularity of native grass and wildflower meadows is growing on Long Island. We investigated strategies for creating these drought-tolerant natural areas that offer habitat for wildlife, attract insects and pollinators and increase overall biodiversity, while also building something that is both unique and aesthetically pleasing on our Brentwood landscape. One strategy that we continue to investigate is the use of rain gardens. These shallow depressions dug in a lawn and planted with native plants and flowers allow rainwater to slowly percolate into the ground instead of becoming storm water runoff. Compared with conventional lawns, a rain garden recharges 30% more water into an aquifer. This is especially important here in Suffolk County, where we rely on aquifers for our water supply.

Peconic Land Trust staff explore CSJ woodlands
IN RESPONSE TO OUR LAND ETHIC: PARTNERING FOR SACRED GROUNDS

Wastewater Management

We commit ourselves... To advocate for ethical principles in the treatment of our bioregion and to collaborate with individuals and groups who are committed to these principles.

—SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH LAND ETHIC STATEMENT

Suffolk County has recently published its final “Suffolk County Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan” (Suffolk County Department of Health). The plan indicates that many of the county’s rivers, estuaries, and bays are impaired as a result of high levels of nitrogen, which primarily emanates from residential septic systems and cesspools. Nitrogen is the principal culprit causing harmful algal blooms, the degradation of the county’s wetlands, and a threat to the public water supply that comes from underground aquifers. Utilizing the $15,000 grant we received from the Long Island Community Foundation, the Sisters of St. Joseph are initiating a study of alternative sewage treatment options for our Brentwood complex. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the various options for sewage disposal as an alternative to the on-site septic system we presently have, and provide a road map for future decisions about sewage disposal for the property. The proposed project will address a threatening environmental issue prevalent in Suffolk County and the Long Island bioregion.

Our Sacred Land

We acknowledge our responsibility to balance our communal needs and the needs of Earth now and into the future.

—SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH LAND ETHIC STATEMENT

Congregations of Women Religious hold lands that they have traditionally used in their mission of service and have a long tradition of ministering wherever they are needed. The motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph includes 211 acres of land, some still pristine, acquired more than 100 years ago within the bioregion of Long Island. As we look to the future, we are actively managing our 211-acre facility located in Brentwood in a sustainable manner. Various programs such as the CSJ Organic Garden, Ecology Center, and the St. Joseph Farm of the Sisters of St. Joseph include 211 acres of land, some still pristine, acquired more than 100 years ago within the bioregion of Long Island. As we look to the future, we are actively managing our 211-acre facility located in Brentwood in a sustainable manner.

The Long Island Community Foundation (LICF) recently granted $15,000 to the Sisters of St. Joseph Brentwood. This grant will be used to evaluate environmentally responsible alternatives for the treatment of wastewater at the Sisters’ 211-acre Brentwood Campus. This project is part of the Sisters’ overall commitment to ecological conservation and care for all creation.

Two years ago, we as a Congregation engaged TRI-CRI staff to exercise our proxy vote with corporations of which we are shareholders. The value of this arrangement is that someone with critical knowledge is able to vote the issues aligning our votes with other members of TRI-CRI thereby multiplying our influence. This can only be done if we own shares in a company. There are times when we deliberately hold stock in companies with mixed records to be able to advocate for change. One example is Wells Fargo that has a questionable record regarding minority mortgages. Our holdings allowed us to send a number of advocates to an important meeting with high-level company officers with very positive outcomes for minority neighborhoods. The membership in TRI-CRI enables us to be part of a larger effort for social justice.

The Long Island Community Foundation is the Island’s community foundation, making grants to improve our region and helping donors with their philanthropy since 1978. To learn more visit www.licf.org.

POWER AS SHAREHOLDERS

Marie Lenihan, CSJ

The Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment, or TRI-CRI, is an alliance of Roman Catholic institutional investors primarily located throughout the metropolitan area of which we as a Congregation are a member represented by S. Patricia Mahoney on their Executive Board and S. Marie Lenihan. The members of TRI-CRI are primarily religious women’s congregations in addition to some men’s congregations and a few dioceses. The members utilize their power as shareholders to hold corporations accountable to social and environmental concerns. In making decisions about managing resources and investments, coalition members view local and global economies not only in terms of production and distribution but also by the effects on the environment and the dignity of the human person. As religious investor coalition members take seriously their responsibilities as shareholders to engage companies on a number of issues including global climate change, food commodities and the source of the food supply, sustainable water concerns, access to health care, human trafficking and environmental justice.

At this time of planetary degradation and of the county’s wetlands, and a threat to the public water supply that comes from underground aquifers. Utilizing the $15,000 grant we received from the Long Island Community Foundation, the Sisters of St. Joseph are initiating a study of alternative sewage treatment options for our Brentwood complex. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the various options for sewage disposal as an alternative to the on-site septic system we presently have, and provide a road map for future decisions about sewage disposal for the property. The proposed project will address a threatening environmental issue prevalent in Suffolk County and the Long Island bioregion.

Sisters Marie Lenihan (center) and Pat Mahoney (right) partner with members of the TRI-CRI staff, S. Patricia Daly, OP, Atid Kimelman and MaryBeth Gallagher.

THE GREATES GIFT

Donna Zaino

St. Edward the Confessor Parish

I joined the MOMS ministry 16 years ago, a mom with two preschool children. The notice in the bulletin was calling me to join but I was hesitant even though the notice said babysitting available. I waited until my son was in preschool. My only regret is missing the first 2 years. I was looking for a group of “like” moms who wanted to raise their children with faith. Not only did I find the “like” moms, I found Sister Marie Sullivan. S. Marie was a quiet, patient, loving woman who made all of us feel like we were the best moms in Syosset or better yet in the whole world. She would often tell us to “Do your best and let God do the rest.” She helped us not only to believe in ourselves as moms but more importantly as women ready to conquer the world.

S. Marie, as our spiritual leader, took us on a faith filled journey teaching us many ways to pray and to live a life which is God centered. Having learned how to put God in the center of our lives, we helped all of us to support each other through the dark days of illnesses and losses. Unfortunately, as a group each of us had many dark days of our lives, but we had S. Marie and God to see us through. Each month when we would meet, Sister would greet us with a smile, share a funny story, read to us when we just didn’t get a chance to read the chapter but most important just be present to us. She would listen to each of us with her fullest attention. What we had to say mattered to her. Many times she would just have us sit quietly and learn the value of stillness.

When I looked back over all the books she had us read and talk about I smile and realize she knew to start with books from a Mom series of simple stories which included minute meditations, instant inspirations, and quiet contemplations. She knew where to begin the journey. One of the books I enjoyed was “Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World.” To this day I still struggle with being more like Martha than Mary but I have learned to take time for myself to be with God. There was one book that most of us just found too deep and profound. Sister would guide us through helping us to deepen our spiritual life.

Sister Marie, a brilliant woman who shared her time and talents with us moms, has been the greatest gift from God to me. She taught us to see God in the world but to all of us we saw God in her.

Thank you Sister Marie Sullivan for being a gift from God to me!
SISTERS IN PUBLIC LEADERSHIP

Janet Kinney, CSJ

For two days in early March I had an experience of a lifetime – to participate with other sisters from across the country who were chosen to be part of the first ‘Sisters in Public Leadership Project’ held in Washington, D.C.

Approximately 10 years ago a group of committed Christians recognized the importance of the Christian moral voice in the public forum, and the need for a support and strategy center where the faith community could find assistance in advancing the faith in civic arenas and be a powerful force for justice, compassion and the common good. Their im-petus created Faith in Public Life (FPL) designed to provide faith leaders across the country with the tools to assist them in being part of the public debate forum. Up until this year, specialized training for religious sisters had never been offered.

We are all well aware that in recent years, religious sisters were highlighted in the press due to targeted scrutiny by the Vatican of the life of women religious (Apostolic Visitation and LCWR investigation). To our utter surprise, American Catholics quickly came to the defense of “their sisters” and accolades for the incredible work for justice and compassion that religious sisters had done for decades came pouring out in the media and public press. More recently, we have also seen the “Francis Effect” and how this has grown across the American landscape. With both of these groundswells - American Catholics and non-Catholics alike supporting us, Faith in Public Life felt it was the time to assist religious sisters with intensive training in media skills, messaging, public policy advocacy and strategy so that the stories of the work women religious do day in and day out – welcoming the migrant, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless and caring for children – could be amplified and put a light on sisters’ witness to the Gospel as demonstrated through their very lives. Thus the idea for offering this training came about, with the ultimate goal to create a cadre of Women Religious who could draw on their ministerial experiences to make an impact in the media at key moments of opportunity in the public debate forum.

Religious congregations across the country were asked to nominate sisters who they felt would be energized to be advocates for the common good and who might benefit from this training. I was privileged to be nominated by the Justice Committee of the Congregation and subsequently was one of 15 sisters chosen out of over 250 applicants who had been nominated and then completed an application process.

For two full days in Washington DC we gathered with experts who gave us training in storytelling, messaging, interviewing skills, op-ed writing, and lobbying. S. Simone Campbell, Executive Director of NETWORK, the Catholic social justice lobbying organization was one of the trainers and she spoke about the im-

S. Simone Campbell, Executive Director of Network, with S. Janet Kinney

portance of storytelling, and how it is crucial in lifting up sisters’ ministries, establishing our credibility and moral voice. Through sharing our stories, we can create a clear picture that can change people’s thinking. Practical guidance was given as how to shape the telling of these stories so that the stories in her words “become icons through which the people we serve are lifted up and touch others’ hearts.”

What came out loud and clear and over and over is how the moral voice of sisters is not only needed in American discourse today, but how much leaders in Washington DC respect and appreciate it.

Dan Negfelt led us through Messaging and Interviewing Skills. He also emphasized the moral authority of religious women and how we need to harness our passion in our core messages, making them concise, clear, and compelling. We learned tricks of the trade – for instance, “the art of the pivot – changing the subject” when interviewers might try to go off topic and get the interviewee to discuss something that either they are unprepared for or a nonrelated hot button issue. Each of the participants had the opportunity to be videotaped in a ‘mock’ interview on one of three social policies currently in the public forum: immigration reform, the death penalty, and the economic justice of a living wage. We were then critiqued by Dan and the group – a humbling experience!

The second day began with writing skills (Op Ed) and the use of Social Media. Laura Peralta-Schulte, a skilled Lobbyist from Network gave us many tips to include when lobbying “on the Hill.” Washington was preferred over meetings in one’s local district. The training ended with two sisters skilled in lobbying – Michelle Friedman, PBVM and Marge Clark, BVM, who shared stories of their lobbying experiences. Both felt that it is was through the relationships they have fostered over the years with lawmakers that have enabled tremendous trust between them and they are relied upon time and time again to give their moral credibility to the particular issue at hand. As Marge succinctly put it “sisters stand for principles, and we do the right thing.”

Post-training, a smaller subset of the group were asked to take part in a videotaped roundtable on Immigration Reform. Because our Congregation has for many years taken a stand on this issue, I was asked to participate. With the help and support of the CSJ Justice Committee I came prepared to share our Congregation’s commitment to be a public voice for our brothers and sisters who come to our country because of violence and oppression in their homelands. Via video conferencing, members of the staff of NCR and Global Sisters Report volleyed questions back and forth from Kansas City to us in our conference room in Washington.

The days were packed but were a great opportunity to meet committed sisters across the country dedicated to the work of social justice. Should the experience be replicated I would recommend it to anyone who would like to hone skills and become a better prepared voice for the sake of the Gospel.

FAITH IN PUBLIC LIFE

Participants gathered in Washington DC for an intensive two-day workshop.

S. Simone Campbell stressed the importance of establishing Sisters’ credibility and moral voice.
In the world of spiritual direction, a spiritual director does more than partner someone on the spiritual journey. In spiritual direction the director receives the prayer experience of someone’s relationship with God, others and the world. In the conversation although not mutual, God is present and working within the exchange.

For the past almost twenty years, I have been training men and women from all walks of life and across religious traditions to walk in the spirit of our charism. To bring men and women together knowing all are welcome without distinction is the center and core of the call to be with others on the spiritual journey as spiritual directors. It doesn’t seem possible that the ordinary in this ministry moves hand in hand with our charism of unity, reconciliation and love.

Suzanne Parry writes “I entered into partnership with the Sisters of St. Joseph almost four years ago. As a Presbyterian woman seeking a deeper relationship with God, I was embraced by the Sisters and invited to begin the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. This life transforming experience led me to completing the three years of intensive preparation in becoming a spiritual director. The acceptance, compassion and dedication of the Sisters allowed me to embrace my deeper relationship with God and to dedicate my life to service.”

Welcoming “all” within the spirit of inclusivity creates an environment of safety and security. When someone feels safe, the director is free to move among the pieces of one’s story into union. Inner freedom happens when the man or woman of prayer, the directee, feels safe and at home in God’s gaze.

Our giftedness as Sisters of St. Joseph is what brings to this ministry openness and an experience of God that moves one to inner freedom. Our Founder, Father Medaille, SJ in the spirit of St. Ignatius of Loyola has handed down the invitation to seek to struggle, to grow aware and to surrender to the unconditional love of God. In this manner we walk one with others as brothers and sisters.

When asked what does it mean to partner; to walk with the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Joan Vessio shares with us her reflection. “The words in the mission statement of the Sisters of St. Joseph that stand out are ‘bringing neighbor together with neighbor, without distinction.’ These words speak to me of the work God calls us to. To live out this charism requires diligence and attention to the inner journey. Seeking God’s grace and looking within with the eyes of love and faith we journey to acknowledge and accept our own inner contradictions, for only then can we journey with another ‘without distinction.’ To partner with the Sisters of St. Joseph is to welcome all God’s people with an open heart and a listening attentive ear. This is the center of our ministry as spiritual directors. Listening we experience the sacredness of the journey as we discover together God’s presence in the other’s story as well as our own. In the midst of the story; the brokenness of our shared human condition comes to the forefront to be accepted and revered. All is held before the Mystery! A conversation shared opens our hearts bringing about understanding and compassion breaking down walls of division and differences. In the Presence of God we walk together on the road that leads to wholeness in God.” All are welcome!

S. Josephine Dapro (middle standing) welcomes the Spiritual Directors Class of 2015.
Saturday, March 12, 2016 was a special day for the Sisters of St. Joseph as we focused on the mission of our congregation during the celebration of National Catholic Sisters Week 2016. NCWS is an annual event begun in 2014 as a way of “honoring women religious in a series of events that instruct, enlighten and bring greater focus to the lives of these incredible women.” NCWS is supported by a $3.3 million grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and held in conjunction with National Women’s History Month.

This year, the St. Joseph Worker Committee designed an event in the name of the Congregation and applied for one of the fifty $1,000 grants offered by NCWS. The grant was awarded to those who created an event which would continue the momentum of engaging many to learn about the continued ministries of the sisters and would inspire others to live their Christian commitment in similar ways. More than 230 events were held this year and our event, “Mission Possible” received a $1,000 award.

The members of the committee are: S. Miriam Blake, S. Tesa Fitzgerald, S. Suzanne Franck, S. Elizabeth Myles, S. Linda Pero and S. Theresa Scanlon. “Mission Possible” had a two-fold purpose: to honor sisters who ministered in public service and to introduce a new venture which would provide a means to continue the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph: “Uniting All in God’s Love.” The day was planned by the committee and involved honoring five of our sisters and telling their stories. The second part was to introduce the St. Joseph Worker Program to a wider audience and to bless the living space where our potential SJWs would connect, pray, share their stories and envision a society where the inclusive love of God and neighbor without distinction was evident.

The five sisters honored on this day have been involved in public service and advocacy work. A brief biography of each sister’s life contained details of their ministry and was read by members of the SJW committee.

- **SISTERS KATHY BRITT AND NANCY FACKNER** were honored for the many years spent accompanying and empowering the people of Appalachia in Clay, West Virginia. Spiritually, housing, homemaking, education, healthcare were the areas in which they worked side by side with the people. Kathy was the Director of “Hammering in the Hills,” an organization which built homes with the people. The project depended on many volunteers from colleges and churches throughout the United States and Kathy organized this critical aspect, but also did much of the “hammering” as well! As a nurse, Nancy ministered to those in need of medical attention, traveling far and wide through the mountain trails.

- **S. EILEEN MCCANN’S** story spoke of enthusiasm as an educator; forming minds and hearts at all levels, always recognizing the potential of each person. Her work in peace and justice and active involvement in the CSJ Non-Violence Committee propelled her to study law so that she would more directly assist in alleviating the injustices of so many due to oppressive systems in our society. She has continually acted as an advocate for peace, justice and the empowerment of the marginalized. Using the legal system to effect justice for women, Eileen has been a voice in legislative efforts at the State and Federal levels to improve the lives of those at the edge and transfer military spending to the service of human needs.

- **S. PEGGY WALSH** has served for 60 years as an educator, social worker, spiritual leader, a partner and friend to those living in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. In the 1970’s she became the director of the Immigration Office of Transfiguration Parish where she assisted thousands in gaining legal status. She received immigration training and was accredited to represent clients at hearings, draft petitions, and in many other circumstances. Her presence and support to the people of the neighborhood has been unwavering and continues to the present day.

- **S. MARY ROSS** lived in Providence House and served as Executive Director before studying law to be able to more directly assist those who had minimum resources and no voice in legal matters. More recently, as a judge in the NYS Parole System, Mary hears the cases, determines the path to parole and with a discerning heart studies and examines ways in which the judicial system can be more just and compassionate.

All present expressed their gratitude for these five women who have advanced our CSJ mission.

As a committee, we believe that the SJW Brentwood Program will enable young women to experience “first hand” living in a community with a commitment to those on the margins and ministering at a variety of sites where the Brentwood CSJs are ministering. They will have the opportunity to be mentored, to receive spiritual direction and broaden their understanding of social justice in light of our CSJ mission to bring all people into unity and reconciliation.

As we continue to seek young women who will accept the challenge of completing a volunteer year as a SJW, we hope that the events of the day and the inspiration of the honorees will encourage a sharing in our mission and charism.

For more information, please go to our website and follow the links to learn more about the SJW Program and the four pillars of Leadership, Spirituality, Social Justice, and Community. Come and See.
Executive Director

As we look back at the past year, we are amazed at all the growth and blessings bestowed upon our young organization. Through the dedication and hard work of our strategic board members, staff, volunteers, and interns, NEW HOUR is now a robust non-profit organization that has attained a solid reputation in Suffolk County, and in particular in the Riverhead Correctional Facility. We earned that reputation with our exceptional educational programming offered to over 200 women in the jail in the areas of parenting, health and wellness, and reintegration planning into the Long Island community. We have also offered an array of support services to our growing member base of over forty women and their children and families of the incarcerated. These services include basic immediate needed items like clothing, food, and toiletries, as well as monthly support group sessions for the formerly incarcerated women and for the caregivers and families of the women in the jail.

This past year we have held seven children to create safe spaces and a loving environment that help break the cycle of incarceration and foster family unity and community. The children have participated in back to school, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and holiday events filled with creative activities that have involved reading, arts, singing, and dancing creating joyful memories in the life of each child we touch.

Family fun fosters unity and community.

I find this advice coming back to me frequently as I move (too quickly) through life. As I braded the Easter bread, anxious to have enough time for it to rise once more before baking, I reminded myself, “slow down;” and I actually felt the smooth elasticity of the dough between my fingers, smelling its sweetness. As I filled the goats’ bowls with their afternoon grain worrying that I would be late getting home, I remembered, “slow down,” and encountered the goats as they ate, enjoying their tongues darting out to finish every last crumb. As I listen to a long story, read a lengthy email, meet an unexpected visitor, answer a surprise phone call, all the while eager to move onto the next thing, “slow down” resonates, and I hear a profound truth, read a bit of wisdom, encounter God in my neighbor, share a moment with a friend. As I sit in prayer, available to God and accomplishing none of my “important” tasks, I am reminded again, “slow down.” It is only when I slow down my mind and focus that I can begin to notice God in each moment.

I had a dream last night. I remember it only vaguely, but this part is clear. Two sisters who recently lost their mother were speaking to me of their loss. One said to me, “I am filled with grief over the time we didn’t spend— that work was more important to me than relationship.” My unconscious shouting at me in dreams— “slow down!” Notice how the rye grows, discern each forkful, turn the soil with intention, mend the pieces I miss. “Slow down!” Notice relationships, discern each step, turn to God with intention, mend and reconcile when I err. Slow down. Pay attention. There is no need to mindlessly rush. Live slowly, live fully, and listen to Mary Lou’s advice.
A
bout five years ago, a group of twenty-five students and faculty from The Mary Louis Academy’s Service Learning & Leadership Program lined up for work gloves, shovels, and mulch, and headed into the forest as volunteers at an event hosted by Million Trees NYC. We were planting tiny trees in a remote area of Cunningham Park in Queens, helping the city reach its goal of planting a million trees in the five boroughs by 2017. As we were digging into the ground, wrestling with thorn-covered brush, and lug ging heavy buckets of mulch to our planting spot, little did we know we were cultivating a wonderful relationship and partnership between our program and Million Trees NYC.

Since our very first planting event, we have participated in Million Trees NYC events each fall and spring, planting and tending to trees in our urban forest. We have learned to identify trees and invasive species that threaten them, as well as methods of protecting the most vulnerable trees in our neighborhoods. Last year, four Service Learning & Leadership members were protecting the most vulnerable trees in our neighborhoods. We have been trained and supported by passionate arborists, whose enthusiasm is contagious and knowledge seems limitless. It is clear that planting trees is not only an environmental issue, but also an issue of health and of justice. Trees directly affect our health, our air quality, even the value of homes and neighborhoods. The students in the Service Learning & Leadership program see their work with Million Trees NYC as more than digging in the dirt; we have come to look forward to each event, to getting our hands dirty, and working hard for this important cause.

The partnership is mutually beneficial and then some, as we benefit from the support and resources of an established organization, and Million Trees NYC gains the woman-power of the hundreds of students and graduates who have been a part of the Service Learning & Leadership Program. However, most valuable perhaps, is knowing that there are a lot of young women out in the world now who can’t walk past a tree bed without checking for trash or weeds, who somehow love the smell of mulch, and who smile with satisfaction at identifying a Kentucky Coffee tree on Hillside Ave, on their way to the train. The partnership is a gift for which we are most grateful, and as Million Trees NYC reaches its goal of planting one million trees, we join in the celebration!

TMLA SERVICE LEARNING & LEADERSHIP PROGRAM PARTNERS WITH MILLION TREES NYC

ALISSON GUTIERREZ
Moderator of Service Learning and Leadership Program

ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL REPRESENTS AT THE UN

Amber Edwards, president of the Girls v Trafficking Club, speaks at ECPAT, an NGO at the UN.

D
uring Women’s History Month members of St. Joseph High School Girls v Trafficking Club attended one of the sessions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The students continue to deepen their awareness and heighten that of others on human rights issues, particularly those of women and children. Working with ECPAT-USA, an NGO at the UN, the students are committed to strengthening the voices of young people in becoming outspoken activists. Amber Edwards, ’16, president of the SJHS Girls v Trafficking Club, served on the session’s panel sharing the steps the SJHS community is taking in regards to Human Trafficking.

During the course of the year Girls v Trafficking educates the school community and empowers their peers to take the lead in anti-trafficking efforts using the Y-ACT (Youth Against Child Trafficking) program. This resource involves the larger community in advocating against sexual exploitation and trafficking. In empowering their peers the Girls v Trafficking Club educates others to the facts, misconceptions and risks of trafficking. This education enables young people to identify the warning signs and ways to protect themselves and their peers.

On the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, December 2014, Pope Francis stated: “Every human being, man, woman, boy and girl, is made in God’s image. God is the love and freedom that is given in interpersonal relationships, and every human being is a free person destined to live for the good of others in equality and fraternity. Every person, and all people, are equal and must be accorded the same freedom and the same dignity. Any discriminatory rela-

tionship that does not respect the fundamental conviction that others are equal is a crime, and frequently an abhorrent crime. Therefore, we declare in each and every one of our creeds that modern slavery, in terms of human trafficking, forced labor and prostitution, and organ trafficking, is a crime against human-ity. Its victims are from all walks of life, but are most frequently among the poorest and most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters. On behalf of all of them, our communities of faith are called to reject, without exception, any systematic deprivation of individual freedom for the purposes of personal or commercial exploitation in their name, we make this declaration.”

At St. Joseph High School, the Girls v Trafficking Club is committed to use their voice and take the necessary action to eradicate all forms of slavery.

In November 2015 S. Eileen McCormick, S. Therese Camardella, Marianne Mocarski and S. Elizabeth Hill witnessed at The School of the Americas.
WHY WE WALK

Karen Rienzi
Sacred Heart Academy Alumnae Coordinator

Some of the walks our students participated in this year were particularly meaningful to them and illustrated how the SHA family rallies together when support is needed. Beth Berger ’17 walked in the Manhasset Walk for Breast Cancer and several girls joined her in her journey to honor her mother who was diagnosed with the disease and sadly passed away this year. Colleen Sullivan ’17 participated in a walk for the Epilepsy foundation and her sisters in the SHA Key Club, all familiar with Colleen’s experience with epilepsy, proudly walked alongside her. With encouragement from S. Eileen Brennan, Colleen continues to volunteer with the foundation and has a leadership role.

Rolanda Bell ’05, a professional runner sponsored by New Balance, returned to participate in the SHASK during which she ran for the first time on Sacred Heart Academy’s track—something she only dreamed about when she was a student here. Now, as an athlete training with the Olympic Games in mind, she has connected with Sacred Heart Academy at this annual event that was conceived by alumnae and continues to be organized by a devoted committee.

Every year, the young women of Sacred Heart Academy gather with alumnae, parents and friends at the Making Strides for Breast Cancer Walk at Jones Beach. The annual walk is a powerful and inspiring opportunity that unites the SHA Community to honor breast cancer survivors, many of whom are among us. Once again, the Sacred Heart Academy team raised over $14,000 for the Making Strides for Breast Cancer Walk—to help survivors and families of the deceased get the support they need and to benefit the research that will put an end to the fight against breast cancer. It should not go unnoticed that SHA’s Volleyball Team organized a Dig Pink tournament in October that provided over $3,700 to the Side-Out Foundation, an organization that supports women who truly “Love God and neighbor without distinction.” Aware of the challenges of living out faith and service in our very competitive world, they have asked that we provide them with information and events that will keep them grounded in their faith as well as stretch them to live a Gospel centered life beyond their educational careers.

At this moment in time we are offering the following programs for spiritual development and service:

NDVision: Notre Dame Vision is a Summer Conference for High School students—repeated four times each summer. Held on the campus of the University of Notre Dame this program helps teens discover God’s call in their lives and the many gifts they already possess. As one participant commented, “Vision helped me to deepen my faith life and see God’s presence in the people around me a lot more than I had before. It was more passionate and more genuine in my relationship with God.”

Vision Saints and Scholars Program: Students spend one week at Notre Dame Vision followed by a second week at Holy Cross College where they will explore public engagement through one of four distinctive tracks: Public Health, Media, Immigration, and Sustainability. This dual experience uniquely adds academic study and community engagement to the faith formation focus of Notre Dame Vision.

Notre Dame Vision Young Adults: This is a five-day retreat for those who are post-college age (22+) and up to their early 30’s. Held on the campus of Notre Dame, participants enjoy a prayerful and balanced schedule and engaging retreat sessions on the integration of faith into all aspects of life. Recognizing the importance and urgency of forming character during the twentiesomething years, Vision Y+A supports young people in addressing such broad and important questions as Who am I? Who am I becoming? Who am I called to be? as well as the importance of intentional commit-ments.

CHARI S Retreat Program: The Sisters of St. Joseph have partnered with the Jesuits in providing retreats for young adults in their 20’s and 30’s. These retreats will be held at our Renewal Center in Brentwood and St. Joseph Villa in Hampton Bays. Rooted in Ignatian Spirituality these retreats offer a window into the founding spirituality of the Sisters of St. Joseph and call young men and women to “the More.”

Vocation Ambassadors Program: This new initiative designed by the National Religious Vocation Conference and funded in part by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation intends to create a network of young adults who are skilled in communication and media and are willing to advocate publicly for and to speak on behalf of religious vocations and a particular religious institute. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood were selected for this pilot program and will participate in a four-day intensive workshop with Vocation and Communication personnel as well as young adults at Holy Cross College in Notre Dame June 2016.

For further information on how you may assist or volunteer in this Ministry to Youth and Young Adults please contact S. Marie Mackey, CSJ email: Mackey@csjbrentwood.org

A FUTURE FULL OF HOPE:
YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY PARTNERSHIPS AND OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

Marie Mackey, CSJ

These past eight months have been filled with new partnerships and possibilities for Congregational connections with youth and young adults providing opportunities for spiritual development, service and a deepening of our CSJ mission and charism. Visits to all of our Congregational high schools have provided me with the opportunity to engage with our young women who are excited about the possibilities of our emerging young adult ministry with them and their peers. They are passionate about many issues regarding their faith and how it is to be lived out authentically in the 21st century. They are women who truly “Love God and neighbor without distinction.” Aware of the challenges of living out faith and service in our very competitive world they have asked that we provide them with information and events that will keep them grounded in their faith as well as stretch them to live a Gospel centered life beyond their educational careers.

Sister Regina Coll, CSJ, a former faculty member of Sacred Heart Academy and a participant in the March on Selma. Fifty years ago, the historic March on Selma led to a major advance in human rights for our nation, the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This helped to enfranchise a large segment of our population who were unjustly denied the right to vote. Sacred Heart Academy was represented in this historic march through the participation of S. Regina Coll, a SHA math teacher from 1959-1965. Susan Gordon-Ryan ’87, spoke at the assembly this fall reflecting on being a student at Sacred Heart Academy and hearing S. Regina’s recount of her experience, marching to call for the inclusion of African-Americans in the political process, and her plea for the world to honor God’s inclusive love for all creation. S. Regina’s participation in the march epitomizes Sacred Heart Academy’s mission to inspire and empower young women who are mindful of the call to work for justice and peace.

Sacred Heart Academy strives to instill values of courage, compassion and commitment. Lessons in these values are taught each day not only by faculty but by students. They embody these values by serving others through volunteering their time to causes that are personal and causes that affect many. In every case, they have the support of each other; walking side by side through life’s challenges.

WE NEED YOUR SPONSORSHIP!

Many of the young people attending these programs need financial assistance or scholar-ship. Please consider sponsoring a CHARIS TEAM LEADER or PARTICIPANT for $200.00 for a weekend or Participants for the 5 day and week-long Notre Dame Programs for $450.00. Please make checks payable to the Sisters of St. Joseph and indicate the program you wish to support. Use the attached envelope or send to the Sisters of St. Joseph, Office of Mission Advancement, 1725 Brentwood Road, Building 4, Brentwood, NY 11717.
In 2015 President Obama signed into law a tax extenders package known as the Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes (PATH) Act of 2015, which makes the Charitable IRA Rollover provision permanent. The key charitable IRA provision (The Charitable IRA Rollover) allows taxpayers over 70½ to make donations directly from an IRA and they will not be taxed on the amounts—up to $100,000.

Many people who have an IRA take only the minimum withdrawals after the age of 70½, leaving undiminished balances well into their 80’s. This leaves substantial assets at death that when left to heirs become substantially diminished by the taxation mentioned above. For example, a $100,000 IRA after all these taxes can leave only $40,000 to heirs.

While IRA’s provide attractive tax benefits during your working years, they are subject to significant tax consequences when dealt with at the time of death. They are reduced by federal and state estate taxes, and they are subject to federal and state income tax when transferred to heirs.

An IRA Charitable Rollover to the Sisters of St. Joseph avoids this taxation, while other assets like securities and real estate can be left to heirs. And now, with the passage of the PATH Act of 2015, and the restoration of the IRA Rollover provision, IRA accounts up to $100,000, owned by those age 70½, can be rolled over to the Sisters of St. Joseph without tax implications to the donor. Since no tax is taken out, there is no charitable deduction, but it does lower your estate value and the value used to calculate your Required Minimum Distribution. Previously, if a donor rolled over an IRA to a charity, they still had to pay income tax on the rollover amount.

Another option with the same benefits is to simply name the Sisters of St. Joseph as a beneficiary of an IRA.

And so, making a gift to the Sisters of St. Joseph from your IRA has its tax advantages, and benefits the Sisters of St. Joseph in ways beyond what may normally be possible. For more information please contact James R. Rennert, CFRE, Director of Mission Advancement, at 631-273-1187 x150, e-mail: rennert@csjbrentwood.org. Of course everything will be kept in the strictest confidence.

James R. Rennert, CFRE
Director of Mission Advancement
At the Diocese of Rockville Centre celebration of religious men and women on April 18, S. Mary Lou Buser was honored for her work, especially in the health field. Her teaching in the sciences, her work as a physical therapist and her ecological innovation and healing of the earth were highlighted.

As part of the closing ritual of Chapter, S. Helen Kearney, President, received S. JoAnn Squitieri into the congregation. JoAnn will continue her formation as a novice with the guidance of Director of Formation, S. Mary Walsh.