In August, 1963, I was missioned to Saint Marys Hospital. At that time, there were 120 Sisters living at the hospital convent, with a Sister Supervisor assigned to each hospital floor. People often ask “Where is the convent located?” It is tucked behind the Domitilla building; the fourth addition to the original hospital, and is also referred to as the 1912 building.

Over the years, the number of Sisters residing here has decreased. Many became involved in vocations outside of health care, taking new positions in the local community and throughout the country.

Currently, the Saint Marys Hospital Convent is home to nineteen Sisters of Saint Francis. Some things remain the same (we all have cleaning responsibilities and chores) but, thankfully, our daily schedule has changed in the last 30 years. There was a time when a rising bell was rung at 4:55 AM. When I first heard the time I thought, “Why couldn’t Sister say the bell will ring at 5 minutes to 5 instead of 4:55 AM?” Yes, it is the same time, but in my mind, referencing 5 AM instead of 4 AM made it sound later!

Those of us currently living and volunteering at Saint Marys Hospital are engaged in activities such as: visiting patients, working in the gift shop and the library, serving as surgical messengers, as well as communion ministers and lectors at Mass at Saint Marys Chapel and Lourdes Chapel, Assisi Heights. We hold rummage sales and the annual Sisters’ Bazaar in November to benefit the Poverello Fund, which provides financial assistance to patients in need. During the holiday season, we gather together to sing Christmas carols to patients at Saint Marys Hospital. One advantage is that we never have to drive in bad weather to get to work!

Other Sisters residing at Saint Marys Convent volunteer outside the hospital providing service to various organizations, including Hope Lodge, Channel One Food Bank, Ronald McDonald House, Rochester Public Library, and more. Two Sisters salvage leftover food daily for various shelters in Rochester. Many of us also serve as Community Hosts to downtown Rochester visitors, and usher at plays and concerts in town. Some of us perform with the Rochester Symphony Chorale, the Pilgrim Choir, and the newly formed Clare Troubadours.

All of us are aware of being hospitable to Sisters, Priests and others who stay in the guest section of the hospital while going through the Mayo Clinic. We try to make them as comfortable as possible and invite them to join us in our dining room for meals.

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We must note that those living at Saint Mary’s Hospital Convent have been a prolific group! They have published cookbooks, poetry books, and the history of the Rochester Franciscans. The latter was the impetus for theatrical performances and DVDs shown during Mayo Clinic’s annual Heritage Week festivities.

Despite all this activity, we do manage to find some time for recreation. Many Sisters gather to play cards in the evening, while others are big fans of MN Twins baseball and Vikings football!

Yes, our home is uniquely situated, but it provides so many opportunities to stay involved and help others, as we live out our mission “to be a compassionate presence for peace in our world, striving for justice and reverence for all creation.”

Front:
Residents of Saint Mary’s Convent

Back row, L to R: Ss. Claudia Laliberte, Germaine Hullerman, Lauren Weinandt, Valerie Olson,* Bernadette Novack, and Corona Malis.

Center row, left: Ss. Moira Tighe and Rose Gillespie; far right: S. Mary Lynch.


Not present: Ss. Antoine Murphy, Cashel Weiler, Charlotte Dusbabek, Ellen Whelan, Kathleen Welscher and Neal Logan and Lorraine Doherty.

*Now residing at Assisi Heights.

This page:
Top
Resident Sisters in earlier years discussing their hobbies. L to R: Ss. Lillian Silvers, Manette Tisdale, Ann Marie Baumgartner and Victorine Honermann.

Center
S. Lauren Weinandt selling cookbooks at the annual Sisters’ Bazaar.

Bottom