



Ursulines *Alive*

Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph

*Proclaiming Jesus through Education
and Christian Formation*

Spring 2026

Issue No. 69

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*Legacy of the Ursuline Sisters
will live on in Kansas...*



- **Ursulines elect new Leadership**
- **Sister Carol receives Brescia Alumni Award**

From Our Congregational Leader



Dear Friends,

As this Octave of Easter draws to a close, I'm reminded of so many "firsts" that happened in the days between Easter and Pentecost. Firsts that were followed by seconds, thirds, fourths, and legions of others until their actions, statements, and beliefs changed the face of the world.

There were those who brought the news of the empty tomb, the first to see the risen Lord, the first to have their doubts stripped away, the first to share the word among the gentiles, the first to . . . But how do these firsts get seconds? Become agents of change?

I ask you to consider Kansas. The state is crossed by the Santa Fe Trail and in many places you can still see where the shape of the land has been altered – not by the world's largest shovel or other massive industrial intrusions – but by one brave pioneer family at a time, followed by another family, by one Conestoga, by one wagon train at a time. And slowly, slowly ruts formed, marking the trail enough to guide the questing families, and eventually deep enough to swallow the wheels of the unwary wagon. One wagon at a time.

In this issue you will read of the Ursuline Sisters of Paola, Kansas, who dared to follow a few into the unknown of late 19th century Kansas to spread the love of God. Their presence and expansion to missions

throughout eastern Kansas and into Oklahoma changed the face of Kansas for so many. These Ursulines have now come home to Mount Saint Joseph in Kentucky and have brought with them the same daring spirit that marked their Ursuline ancestors.



Oklahoma

So, I ask myself – and you as well – as I read these stories, can I recognize my own daring spirit that will permit me to be an early follower of one who dares to reach out in faith and hope to blaze a new way of sharing God's love with others? Or perhaps I – or you – might even be one of the "first." Blessings for each step you might take this Easter season.

In Angela,

Sister Sharon Sullivan, OSU

Read more about Paola Sisters: ursulinesmsj.org/ursuline-sisters-of-paola

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EDITORS: Director of Mission Advancement/Communications Dan Heckel, OSUA
 Communications Specialist/Graphic Design Jennifer Kaminski, OSUA

MISSION ADVANCEMENT STAFF:

Director of Development Carol Braden-Clarke
 Coordinator of Ursuline Partnerships Doreen Abbott, OSUA
 Mission Advancement Assistant Sister Mary McDermott, OSU
 Contributing Writer Sister Ruth Gehres, OSU

COVER: *The Ursuline Legacy Park in Paola, Kansas, is a work in progress. Its dedication will happen later in 2026. SUNFLOWERS:* *The Ursuline Sisters of Paola visited the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph in Maple Mount, Ky., 20 years ago in July 2006. Standing in the back, from left: Sisters Pat Lynch, Jane Falke, Dee Long, and Helen Smith, along with former Sister Beth Akins; in the second row from the top, from left: Sisters Marcella Schrant, Emerentia Wiesner, Martina Rockers, Celine Leeker, Grace Swift, Susanne Bauer, and Rita Redmond; the rest, standing from left: Sisters Marie William Blyth, Ann Marie Scherman, Adelaide Bowman, Kathleen Dueber, Raymond Dieckman, Angela Fitzpatrick, Rita Lavigne, and Kathleen Condry. Seated is Sister Hildegarde Kocher.*

INDEX

Legacy of Paola, Kansas Ursulines.....3
 New Leadership Council Elected9
 Soli Deo Gloria10
 Sister Spotlight11
 Development12
 Powerhouse of Prayer14
 Obituaries.....15
 2026 Jubilarians16



Ursuline Sisters
 of Mount Saint Joseph

OUR MISSION

We, the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph, sustained by prayer and vowed life in community, proclaim Jesus through education and Christian formation in the spirit of our founder, Saint Angela Merici.

OUR CORE VALUES

- Prayer
 - Service
 - Empowerment
 - Justice
 - Contemplative Presence
- ... In the spirit of Saint Angela Merici

CONTACT US

Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph
 8001 Cummings Road
 Maple Mount, Kentucky 42356
 270-229-4103
 Fax: 270-229-4953
 Email: info.ms@maplemount.org
www.ursulinesmsj.org

Ursuline legacy continues in Kansas with those inspired by the Sisters

The former Ursuline Sisters of Paola, Kansas, are, seated from left, Sister Grace Swift and Sister Kathleen Dueber; standing from left, Sister Pat Lynch, Sister Angela Fitzpatrick, and Sister Jane Falke.



By Dan Heckel, Mount Saint Joseph Staff

Sister Angela Fitzpatrick’s move from Mission, Kan., to Maple Mount, Ky., on Jan. 12, 2026, was nothing out of the ordinary, except for what it signified – for the first time in 131 years, there were no Ursuline Sisters serving in Kansas.

The Ursuline Sisters of Paola, Kan., merged with Mount Saint Joseph in 2008. While some of the Sisters moved to Maple Mount the following year, several have continued to serve in the Sunflower State, where Ursulines first arrived in 1895.



While a physical Ursuline presence is no longer in Kansas, the five remaining Paola Sisters

Sister Marcella Schrant (known then as Sister Mary James) stands with twin girls making their First Holy Communion at Holy Name School in Kansas City, Kansas.

and some prominent Kansans all agree that the Ursuline legacy will live on for many years.

“Our legacy is certainly education,” Sister Pat Lynch said. “That was the main ministry. We taught in a lot of Catholic schools, but also in some public schools in Scipio and Wea. You can’t go anywhere in a Catholic parish without being told, ‘My aunt had Ursuline Sisters in school.’”

“The pioneer spirit is what comes to mind about our legacy,” Sister Kathleen Dueber said. “We started Lakemary Center. We started the cultural center in Paola. We were always looking ahead to see what could be done.”

“I feel that the most important part of the legacy of the Paola Ursulines is 120 years of providing faith formation for Catholic school children and vacation bible classes,” Sister Jane Falke said. “We

taught them the Catholic faith and prepared them for the sacraments. Along with that we taught them the regular school classes so that they could become productive members of society.”



For Sister Grace Swift, the longest serving former Paola Sister who will turn 99 this August, the legacy is the education the Sisters provided in both small-town and urban elementary schools, and in high school.

“We certainly had a lot of grade schools in little rural Kansas towns,” she said. “I taught a lot of kids in Paola and Garnett over several years.”

Sister Angela believes the people of Kansas – especially the Ursuline Associates with whom she stays

Continued on page 4



KANSAS

From page 3

Sister Celine Leeker stands beside her 5th grade class at Queen of the Holy Rosary School in Overland Park, Kansas, in 1970.

RIGHT: Sister Martina Rockers helps a Bishop Miege High School (Roeland Park, Kansas) student in her AP biology class in 2011.

connected with – will help to keep the Ursuline legacy alive.

“I’m sure the Ursuline Sisters won’t be forgotten.”

BISHOP MIEGE KEEPS URSULINE FOCUS

The Ursuline Sisters arrived in Kansas in 1895 at the invitation of Bishop Louis Mary Fink, of the Diocese of Leavenworth, and opened Ursuline Academy the following year. In 1902, Holy Trinity Church in Paola completed a school named St. Patrick, and the following year, Ursuline Sisters of Paola began teaching there, which they continued to do until 1999. In the 1950s the name was changed to Holy Trinity School.



Throughout the 20th century, Paola Sisters served in rural schools and those in the suburbs of Kansas City, and several of those schools are still in operation. In 1929, they began serving at St. Agnes School in the suburb of Roeland Park and taught there for 63 years. The Sisters began St. Agnes High School in 1947, which remained open until

the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kan., opened Bishop Miege High School in 1958. As an homage to St. Agnes – which is next door – the nickname for the Bishop Miege sports teams is Stags, an acronym of “St. Ag.”

There is no school in Kansas doing more to keep the Ursuline legacy alive than Bishop Miege. Joe Passantino served 29 years as principal and then president at Bishop Miege before retiring in 2016.

“The Ursulines whom I had the privilege to work with had such grace, such a spirituality that

you wanted to follow,” Passantino said. “The biggest challenge we face with our lay people is, ‘How do you keep that going?’ Probably half of our staff never worked with an Ursuline. But for those who did, the lay people have the witness of the Ursulines and want to carry that on.”

When Passantino arrived at the school in 1987, he worked with three Ursuline Sisters – Sister Martina Rockers, Sister Mildred “Millie” Berdelle, and Sister Johanna Huettenmueller.

“When we renovated the school in 2004-05, we named the chapel Saint Angela Merici Chapel,” Passantino said. “There is a beautiful statue of Saint Angela outside the chapel. The Ursuline Award is the highest award students can get after four years.”

Bill Creach is one of the staff whose job is to keep that Ursuline



This statue of Saint Angela Merici, founder of the Ursuline Sisters, welcomes visitors to the Saint Angela Merici Chapel at Bishop Miege High School. A photo of the late Sister Martina Rockers hangs at left.



**Sister Mildred
"Millie" Berdelle**



**Sister Johanna
Huettenmueller**

legacy going. A 1983 graduate of the school, Creach returned in 1988 as a theology teacher, and now serves as director of Campus Ministry.

"Four to five years ago, the administration team created the Angela Merici Core Values Awards," Creach said. "The faculty and staff select from their colleagues who should receive it. It's a great day to celebrate with the faculty and staff."

Those core values are:

- *Emphasis on the individual*
- *Academic excellence*
- *Leadership*
- *Community*
- *Positive attitude toward change*
- *Spirituality*
- *Service*

"We selected eight legends, and Sister Millie and Sister Martina are two of the legends," Creach said. He wrote short biographies of each legend, and the students are broken down into "herds" – like the houses in Harry Potter books. The students for each herd were responsible for developing the crests for each legend based on the bios.

"These plaques are 6-foot high, it's a great visual

The eight "herd legends" of Bishop Miega High School are honored with 6-foot plaques as well as candles.



reminder," Creach said. "Students compete for the Ursuline Cup. We have sporting events, video games, and charity drives."

Sister Millie served at Bishop Miega for 40 years (1965-2005), teaching all levels of Spanish, and served as chairwoman of the World Language Department. She created the Kansas City chapter of the Amigos de las Americas program in 1973, preparing high school students to travel to Latin America to help improve communities there. She was the moderator of the Service Committee decades before there was an official Campus Ministry program.

"We give the Sister Millie Award to an exchange student," Creach said.

The best leader in the school is given the "Sister Martina Above and Beyond Award," Creach said.

Sister Martina served at Bishop Miega for 60 years, from the day the doors opened in 1958 until her death in 2018. She was chairwoman of the Science Department, Student Council moderator, Dean of Girl Students,

St. Teresa of Avila, pray for us.

MILLIE

Sister Mildred Berdelle, O.S.U.
Years at Miega: 1965-2005

Roles:
World Language Department Chair, Founder of KC Chapter of Amigos de las Americas, Service Committee Moderator

Legacy:
Sister Mildred Berdelle taught all levels of Spanish, including the AP/College Now courses, and she served as the Department Chair of the World Language Department. Living out the values of the Ursulines, Sister Millie founded the Kansas City chapter of the Amigos de las Americas in 1973, preparing high school students to travel abroad to help improve communities in Latin American countries. She was the moderator of the Service Committee decades before there was an official Campus Ministry program.

Crest Motto:
"Servamos" means "we serve," which was exemplified by Sister Millie providing students with avenues to serve locally and abroad.

Crest Symbols:
The Amigos symbol represents fostering connections in Latin America, and the Ursuline Order's symbol is a sign of the values of community Sister Millie embodied.

Patron Saint: St. Teresa of Avila
St. Teresa of Avila was chosen because her courage, wisdom, and vision were rooted in a special relationship with God and evident to everyone she encountered.

St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us.

MARTINA

Sister Martina Rockers, O.S.U.
Years at Miega: 1958-2018

Roles:
Science Department Chair, Student Council Moderator, Dean of Girl Students, Stag Shop Manager, Development Office Assistant

Legacy:
Sister Martina Rockers gave every bit of her knowledge and love to enable others to grow. She was a founding teacher of Bishop Miega, coming from St. Agnes High School. As a member of the Ursuline Order, she had a glow of warmth and charisma about her that lifted others. Sister Martina launched the student government program, which lives on in our Herd Council. To work closely with her was to be inspired because her love for our school was unparalleled. She gave everything she had to Miega for 60 years.

Crest Motto:
"Charity, Honesty, Love" sums up the core of Sister Martina's beliefs, words, actions. Her legacy continues to guide the Miega community.

Crest Symbols:
The sunflower represents her ability to grow all things – plants, faith, knowledge, and character. The Ursuline Order's symbol is a sign of the values of community Sister Martina embodied.

Patron Saint: St. Teresa of Calcutta
St. Teresa of Calcutta was chosen because she is widely recognized as a living emblem of God's love through her simplicity, generosity, and compassion for all.

The Bishop Miega herd legend plaques for Sister Mildred "Millie" Berdelle, whose crest motto is "Servamos," meaning "We serve," and Sister Martina Rockers, whose motto is "Charity, Honesty, Love."

the Stag Shop manager and an assistant in the Development Office.

"Sister Martina was still working in the school when we created the legends," Creach said. "She was the living legend in the building. In 2008 we celebrated our 50th year. We took the time capsule that was buried then and had Sister Martina pull out the items. Seeing her face was wonderful."

The courtyard at the school was dedicated in Sister Martina's honor in 2006, and her picture is on the wall outside the Saint Angela Merici Chapel.

Although she died eight years ago, Creach said Sister Martina is still helping at Miega.

"She donated her yearbook collection to the school," Creach said. "She would cut out clippings of



Sister Martina Rockers waits on a couple of Bishop Miege students in the Stag Shop in 2011. After her full-time teaching days were over, Sister Martina ran the Stag Shop during lunch periods so students could buy school-related clothing or items. RIGHT: When the school was renovated in 2006, the courtyard was named in Sister Martina's honor. She served 60 years at Bishop Miege.



KANSAS

From page 5

weddings, graduations, etc. We are still using this to find alums.”

LAKEMARY CENTER CONTINUES LEGACY

In 1969, Mother Charles McGrath, superior of the Ursulines of Paola, was looking for a new ministry that supported the Ursuline mission. She found it in response to the parents who wanted education and training for their children with developmental disabilities – programs that were practically nonexistent anywhere in the country.

That year the Ursulines opened the Lakemary Center on 35 acres of property the Sisters owned in Paola. In those early days, to find the money for monthly bond payments, the half dozen Sisters working at Lakemary endorsed their paychecks and then deposited them in the Lakemary account.

“In the early days, many of the kids were placed in our care due

to abuse and neglect,” said Kirk Davis, the former president and chief executive officer of Lakemary. “If you accept a child at 5, it means that child is living there until 18. When they were adults, there was no place for them to go. That’s why the Ursulines wanted to start the adult services program, so it could be the students’ forever home. It was

for many of them.”

In 1983, when Davis was barely 25 years old, he was hired to develop the adult services program at Lakemary. He stayed at Lakemary for 42 years, until retiring at the end of December 2024. He credits the Ursuline Sisters with the success of Lakemary, which is still going strong today.



Former Ursuline Sisters of Paola were honored Sept. 25, 2009, at the 40th anniversary celebration of the Lakemary Center in Paola, Kan. Here they gather in front of the banner that thanks the Ursulines and L.M. “Mike” Schwartz. From left: Sisters Martina Rockers, Kathleen Condry, Rita Lavigne, Dee Long, Ann Marie Scherman, Kathleen Dueber (seated), Pat Lynch (back row), Susanne Bauer, Jane Falke, Marcella Schrant and Helen Smith.

“They applied for the first community-based group homes anywhere,” Davis said. “The Sisters were so progressive. They found a way to build community-based group housing that people could afford. It was Section 8 housing, which meant your rent was one-third of your income, and HUD (the Department of Housing and Urban Development) picked up the rest. The only income these residents had was Social Security, so they were living here for \$100 a month. The Ursulines covered the rest of the costs of operations and overhead. It became a mission right away. The Sisters cared so much

about people with disabilities.”

Davis was moved by the personal connections he was able to build with the Ursulines he worked with. They invited him over for dinner on Friday nights or stopped by his office with encouraging words and a hug.

“They had an educational background,” he said. “They were so intelligent and forward thinking, I knew I could learn a lot from each of them. And I did.”

Davis worked with Ursuline Sisters for 10 to 15 years, but when the last Sister left Lakemary, he



The Lakemary Center in Paola, Kansas

Lakemary board named the facility the Kirk Davis Center.

There was one more project Davis had in mind before he left.

From his office, Davis could look out on Lake Mary, the three-acre pond where

the Ursulines once watered their cattle. One day during the bitter cold winter in 2022, Davis received a report that a child was in the lake. Two employees jumped in to rescue the child, and they all survived, but they ended up in the emergency room.

“I called in my staff and said I can’t bear the thought of that happening again. I decided to drain that pond,” Davis said. “It was hard to do. I consider it on sacred ground.



Sister Kathleen Dueber chats with Melissa King at the 40th anniversary celebration of the Lakemary Center on Sept. 25, 2009.



Sister Pat Lynch and Bill Ericson, a Lakemary resident, during the 40th anniversary celebration of the Lakemary Center. Sister Pat ministered at Lakemary for 13 years and served on the Lakemary board.

vowed not to let their legacy die.

“When we were making decisions, we would ask how the Ursulines would feel about it,” Davis said. “Their legacy gave us the opportunity to continue fundraising. The people who worked alongside the Ursulines never quit talking about them. They would ask, ‘What would Sister Pat think?’ I’d tell them, ‘I know what she would think – do the right thing.’”

Sister Pat Lynch worked at Lakemary as a speech therapy aide and speech pathologist for eight years, then education coordinator for another five years. She later served on the board of directors.

“Lakemary was on the cutting edge of special education,” Sister Pat said. Initially, the Paola city manager and a local physician met with Mother Charles about enlisting the Ursulines to start a mental health facility, but Mother Charles had other ideas.

“Mother Charles followed Saint Angela’s adaptability, and switched gears to come up with a dream,” Sister Pat said. “I’m so proud of that, it’s grown into such a special place.”

As he neared retirement, Davis wanted to replace the dormitories that were built in 1969 with a 40-bed residence hall and treatment facility for residents age 6 to 21.

“We began a campaign to raise \$14 million to \$16 million over five years,” Davis said. “We raised the money in less than a year. The Ursulines taught me, ‘Tell your story and people will step up.’” The



The late Sister Rita Lavigne, left, visited with her friend Jenine Brown during the 40th anniversary celebration of the Lakemary Center. Sister Rita ministered at Lakemary for 18 years as the business manager.

Something didn’t sit right with me. By then, I knew I would be retiring in a few years. I said, ‘The Ursulines are gone, I want to build a park in their legacy.’ I knew it would help a lot of people heal.”

The Ursuline Legacy Park has faced numerous delays, but there is hope that it will be dedicated

later this year. It will feature walking paths, a water feature, an iron gate, benches, a bronze plaque that explains the Ursuline history, and lots of trees.

“I want people to know and feel the incredible love and passion the Ursulines had for the children with developmental disabilities,” Davis said. “They accepted everyone. Without their sacrifices early on, I’m not convinced we would have made it. I could feel God’s presence in the building.”

“The community of Paola loves the Ursulines,” Davis said. “When the (former motherhouse) sold, we all had a heavy heart. I wanted to bring the good feeling back. This park will be open to the public. A lot of people will find comfort in that,” he said. “The Ursuline Sisters’ legacy will continue to give love and hope to the Paola community forever.”

Ursuline Sisters and Associates arrive for a tour at Arista Recovery on June 4, 2022, in what once was the rotunda of the Paola convent.



PHYSICAL LEGACIES

When the Paola Ursuline community started growing smaller and their buildings were aging, the Sisters followed Jesus’ command to “let nothing be wasted” by repurposing their property to benefit the community.

In 1986, the Sisters donated a building to the city that included their auditorium, which became the Paola Community Center. It housed the Senior Citizens Center – begun by Mother Charles – and the Paola Cultural Center, where concerts, movies and theater shows were available, as well as space for artists.

Both Sister Pat and Sister Kathleen were involved in the Paola Civic Theatre, which was started with townspeople.

“We did variety shows as a fundraiser for Lakemary,” Sister Pat said. “We decided to do ‘The Sound of Music.’ I was Maria. Several Sisters were in the nun choir. It was a big hit.”

“We did ecumenical work by joining with the Paola churches to provide for the needy,” Sister Jane said. PACA – Paola

Association for Church Action – operated a food pantry in the Paola Motherhouse. It was organized for many years by the late Sister Rita Lavigne.

The former Paola Motherhouse is now owned and operated by Arista Recovery, an in-patient addiction treatment center. The Ursuline cemetery remains on the property and will be maintained in perpetuity. Ursuline Associates still visit the cemetery on Memorial Day weekend to decorate the graves and have a service.

The current owners vowed to honor the history of the Sisters.

“Arista Recovery still treasures us, they haven’t forgotten us,” Sister Angela said. “The cemetery is still there, with all the Sisters who gave their lives as Ursulines. When people pass by there, they’ll still think of the Ursuline Sisters.” ■



In August 2008, Sister Rita Lavigne, left, and kitchen employee Linda Shaffer gathered food for a family in need who were about to visit the food pantry sponsored by the Paola Association For Church Action. The food pantry was in the Paola Motherhouse.



The future Ursuline Legacy Park in progress...

SISTERS ELECT NEW LEADERSHIP COUNCIL TO SERVE UNTIL 2030



special education, and Academic Dean. When she completes her upcoming term, she will have led the community longer than any Sister in history – 14

years – which surpasses the 12 years that Mother Teresita Thompson served as superior.

Sister Alicia Coomes is in her 47th year of religious life. All of the Henderson, Ky., native's ministry has been in Kentucky. Since 2022 she has served as pastoral care associate at both St. Peter of Alcantara Church in Stanley, and St. Augustine in Reed. From 2010-18, she was pastoral associate for St. William Parish, Marion; St. Francis Borgia Parish, Sturgis; and St. Ambrose Parish, Henshaw. She also served elsewhere in parish ministry in Bowling Green, LaCenter and Owensboro. She has used her nursing training to serve the Sisters at Maple Mount many times through the years and also served the community as director of Vocation Ministry (2007-10), director of the Temporary Professed (2009-12), director of Local Community Life and coordinator of pastoral care (2021-22). This is her first elected office.

Sister Judith Nell Riney is serving in her 59th year as an Ursuline. The Daviess County native previously served as an elected councilor from

Continued on page 11

The Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph have elected their Leadership Council that will serve from 2026-2030.

During meetings from March 12-14, 2026, delegates chose Sister Sharon Sullivan to return as congregational leader. Three new members of the Council will join her. Sister Alicia Coomes was chosen as assistant congregational leader, while Sister Judith Nell Riney and Sister Lorraine Lauter were each elected as councilors. The new Council

will be installed during a ceremony on July 19, 2026.

Sister Sharon Sullivan served as congregational leader from 2010-16. She was re-elected to the same position in 2022, after the community changed the term to four years, with the possibility of serving an additional four-year term. The native Texan is in her 44th year as an Ursuline Sister, with most of her time spent in ministry at Brescia University, where she was a professor and coordinator of



Sister Alicia Coomes is pictured attending the 2025 Jubilarian celebration at Mount Saint Joseph. She will become assistant congregational leader.



Sister Sharon Sullivan, left, attended a Water By Women event in Louisville along with Sister Lorraine Lauter on June 24, 2025. Sister Sharon was re-elected to the Council, while Sister Lorraine will be serving her first term.



Sister Judith Nell Riney, who received an Outstanding Alumna award from Brescia University in 2025, will serve for the second time on the Leadership Council.

Soli Deo Gloria*We rejoice in the gifts of our Sisters, given for the Kingdom of God*

Sister Carol Shively named one of Brescia University's Distinguished Alumni



Sister Carol Shively

Ursuline Sister Carol Shively, who has served as superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Shreveport, La., for 27 years, was named one of three Distinguished Alumni of Brescia University during the annual Laurel Awards on April 18, 2026.

Sister Carol graduated in 1983 with a Bachelor of Science degree in early elementary education from the Owensboro, Ky., college that was founded by the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph. She earned a Master of Arts degree in Catholic school administration and curriculum from the University of Saint Thomas in 1991.

Sister Carol is active in numerous professional organizations, including the National Catholic Education Association and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. She also serves on the Brescia University Board of Trustees.

“Sister Carol remains at the forefront of educational innovation while staying deeply rooted in the mission of Catholic education,” according to a news release from Brescia. “She is widely recognized for her ability to integrate rigorous academic standards and classroom strategies that foster both student achievement and character formation.”

Sister Carol grew up in Marion County, Ky., where she met the Ursuline Sisters as her teachers when she began the second grade. She joined the community in 1978 and has served solely in education ministry since 1982. She served as a teacher in Kentucky at Hardinsburg, Leitchfield, and Owensboro; as a principal in Missouri at Glennonville, New Madrid and Poplar Bluff; and as a superintendent of Catholic schools in Beaumont, Texas, for three years before moving to Shreveport in 1999.

The Shreveport Diocese has two elementary schools and one high school in Shreveport and the same structure 90 minutes away in Monroe. Many cultures are represented in the schools.

The Distinguished Alumni award was created to honor graduates who exemplify the elements that encompass “The Brescia Difference: Respect for the Sacred, Devotion to Learning, Commitment to Growth in Virtue, and Promotion of Servant Leadership.” Also receiving the honor with Sister Carol were Dr. M. Edward Jones, class of 1966, and Dr. A. Gayle Rhodes, class of 1983.

Sister Carol is the 12th Ursuline Sister to receive the honor. She joins current Sisters Cheryl Clemons, Sharon Sullivan, Mary Matthias Ward, Lorraine Lauter, Vivian Bowles, Ruth Gehres and Michele Morek. Four Ursulines who are now deceased also received the award – Sisters Joseph Angela Boone, Rose Marita O’Byran, Dianna Ortiz, and Amelia Stenger. Ursuline Associate Mary Danhauer also received the honor.



Sister Carol Shively, center, was presented with a Brescia University Alumni Award on April 18 in Owensboro, Ky. She is surrounded by other Ursuline Sisters who came to the ceremony.



Superintendent Sister Carol Shively visits with a sixth-grade student at St. John Berchmans School in Shreveport, La., in 2018.



Sister Spotlight: Sister Rebecca White

Meet Sister Rebecca, a lady who is awed by lakes and lava!



- ✦ **Favorite color:** I am absolutely daffy about pink, especially bright pink.
- ✦ **Skill I would like to learn:** I would like to be more skilled in watercolor. It is a very calming medium.
- ✦ **Favorite subject:** In high school, I loved math and even once participated in a geometry and algebra contest.
- ✦ **Favorite place to visit:** After completing graduate school, I got to visit my sister in Hawaii. There were many marvels to see and experience, even standing near flowing lava.
- ✦ **Favorite spot at Mount Saint Joseph:** I am awfully partial to being near our little lake. The entire area is beautiful!

The Ursuline Sisters named Lake Garda, a lake in their park, after the lake in Italy that is close to where their founder Saint Angela Merici lived.



Women's group places flags on several graves

As part of its efforts to highlight Women's History Month, four members of the Owensboro American Association of University Women (AAUW) visited the Mount cemetery on March 20 to place small flags that read "Honoring Women's Stories" on several gravesites of Ursuline Sisters. Sister Elaine Burke joined them to provide assistance in locating the graves. The following Sisters were recognized for their achievements regarding education, leadership, human rights and women's rights:

- Sister Emma Cecilia Busam • Sister Francesca Hazel • Sister Joan Marie Lechner • Sister Rose Marita O'Bryan (grave pictured at left)
- Sister Carolyn Marie O'Harrow • Sister Dianna Ortiz • Sister Anne Louise Ramold • Sister Fran Wilhelm • Mother Aloysius Willett



LEADERSHIP From page 9

2016-22. She retired in 2025 as director of Library Services at Brescia University after 45 years in the role. On April 26, 2025, she was honored with the Outstanding Alumna award from the Brescia Alumni Association for "Outstanding service to the Alumni Association and/or Brescia University." She has been serving where needed in Owensboro while discerning her next ministry.

Sister Lorraine Lauter is serving in her 47th year as an Ursuline. She is a native of St. Petersburg, Fla., but grew up in Louisville, where Ursuline

Sisters were her teachers. She served as executive director of Water By Women (previously Water With Blessings) in Louisville from 2012-25 and continues as its co-executive director now. Water By Women works to provide filters and training to women across the globe so they can bring clean drinking water to their areas. Sister Lorraine has also served as a teacher, and a parish minister, and was executive director of Migrant Immigrant Shelter and Support in Owensboro from 2002-2006. This is her first elected office. ■

A second chance at success led to years of support for Ursuline Sisters

By Dan Heckel, Mount Saint Joseph Staff

Rob Mitchell's first semester of college did not go as he intended. But the backup plan that involved the Ursuline Sisters ended up leading him to a successful career.

After graduating from Henderson County (Ky.) High School in the mid-1980s, Mitchell attended the University of Kentucky.

"My first semester didn't go well. I got mononucleosis and missed a lot of school," he said. "By the time I returned I had missed the date to drop classes. I lost my scholarship. I came home to attend the community college."

That December he went to a fundraiser at Brescia College with his dad, Bob Mitchell, a Brescia alum who remained good friends with his classmate Sister Vivian Bowles, who would later become Brescia president.



Sister Vivian Bowles

Brescia was a part of who he was growing up, Rob Mitchell said.

"I don't remember which Sister it was, but we talked about my situation," Mitchell said. "Brescia gave me a second chance. They said they would look at my high school transcripts. Brescia ended up giving me the William M. Elmer Business Scholarship. I graduated in three years with a bachelor's degree in accounting. It was the best and right decision for me."

Today, Mitchell is a certified



April and Rob Mitchell

public accountant who owns Mitchell and Associates, PLCC, in Henderson, Ky., where his wife

April works with him. They have been supporters of the Ursuline Sisters for more than 20 years.

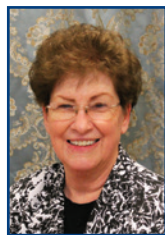
"I've just had a strong tie to the Sisters ever since. I believe in what they do," Mitchell said. "We don't think we're special. We think the Sisters are special."

The Mitchells attend St. Augustine Parish in Reed, Ky., where Ursuline Sister Alicia Coomes serves as pastoral associate.

"Our five children all attended Holy Name School in Henderson, they all had Sister Laurita Spalding," he said. Sister Laurita taught at Holy Name from 2000-2022 and still volunteers there.

Mitchell has been heavily

"All of the Sisters have been incredible. I'm really proud to be a product of what they stand for at Brescia."



Sister Laurita Spalding

involved in his community, his church, the Owensboro Catholic Schools, and especially at Brescia, where he graduated in 1989. He's served on the finance, audit and investment committees at Brescia, and the Presidential Advisory Board under both Sister Vivian and Father Larry Hostetter. In March 2025, he achieved what he called a "lifetime goal" of being named to the Brescia Board of Trustees.

He has had a longstanding friendship with Father Larry, an Ursuline Associate, who stepped down in 2025 after 18 years

as Brescia president.

"One of the first classes Father Larry taught at Brescia was one of the last that I

took," Mitchell said. "He married April and me and baptized all of our children. April went through RCIA under Father Larry's leadership."

Ongoing financial support of the Ursuline Sisters and their mission continues to be important to the Mitchells.

"All the Sisters have been incredible," Mitchell said. "I'm really proud to be a product of what they stand for at Brescia."

Have the Ursuline Sisters influenced your life? If you would like to learn more about ways you can support the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph, contact Dan Heckel, director of Mission Advancement, at 270-229-2007, or dan.heckel@maplemount.org. ■

Tribute to an MSJ icon: Sister Amelia Stenger

My favorite day of the work year was the day I had the privilege of delivering cookie/candy trays with Sister Amelia to local vendors and donors to show our appreciation for their support of the Ursuline Sisters. Sister Amelia always called it, “The day we get to make people happy.”



**Carol
Braden-Clarke**

We would deliver between 40-50 trays. People always looked forward to getting the tray and were so appreciative that the Sisters thought of them. It was a great opportunity to thank people in person and hear their stories about Sisters who meant so much to them. The work to make these trays started about a month ahead. Sister Amelia would organize a team of Sisters, staff, and volunteers to help her make the goodies, assemble the trays, and load the delivery van. She would have the route mapped out so we would efficiently use our time.

We had some great conversations in the car as we were making the deliveries. I was always struck by her love for her community, teaching



children, her family and protecting the environment. I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about the history of the community and her other stories. She never stopped trying to come up with new ideas to generate support for the community, and her passion for preserving its history. She taught me about cover crops and her conviction to do whatever she could to waste nothing, recycle and protect the environment. She loved working in the garden. She didn't just talk about things – she was a doer.

Last year, after our last delivery stop, we were coming down Mulligan Road heading back to the Mount on a gray December day. In the tree was a bald eagle. I pointed it out to Sister Amelia, and as we got closer to it, she stopped the van and we just watched it. As we watched,



Sister Amelia Stenger, left, who was congregational leader at the time, smiles as she and Sister Huyen Vu stir pecans into chocolate during a busy candy-making day on Dec. 9, 2016 at Mount Saint Joseph. (Sister Huyen, a Lover of the Holy Cross from Vietnam, was helping while attending Brescia University.)

ABOVE LEFT: A finished tray of goodies ready to be given away.

a ray of sunshine broke through the clouds and illuminated the eagle. It was absolutely beautiful. We both said that was the highlight of our day and asked, “Was it a sign?”

I have thought a lot over the past few days about the number of lives Sister Amelia impacted and what void that is left without her here.

I know she will always be in my heart.

*–Carol Braden-Clarke,
Director of Development*

We still have Quilt-of-the-Month Club tickets to sell!

If you haven't gotten your ticket(s) yet, it's not too late!

Our drawings began in April, but If you enter by June 4, 2026, you will still get 10 chances to win a beautiful handmade quilt. Drawings occur on the first Friday of each month. Only 2,500 tickets (\$25 each) will

be sold. Contact Dan Heckel: 270-229-2007 • dan.heckel@maplemount.org

Order online: ursulinesmsj.org/quilt-club



Prayer keeps evolving for Sister Mary Matthias



Sister Mary Matthias Ward likes to read books to deepen her prayer life.

From the time she was a little girl in Clementsville, Ky., to today in her 72nd year as an Ursuline Sister, prayer has always been important to Sister Mary Matthias Ward.

“I remember as a child going into church at St. Bernard’s, finding a Sister’s written prayer book and reading her prayers,” she said. “I thought that was the greatest thing possible.”

“As a child we had the nightly rosary. Today, I read Scripture. Isaiah is my favorite along with the Psalms,” she said.

A great change in Sister Mary Matthias’ prayer life occurred when she was introduced to the Examen, a daily prayer of reflection developed by Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

“Early in my life of being a religious, a spiritual director challenged me to each morning think of the people whom I would ordinarily come in contact with that day and decide how I would be Jesus to them,” she said. “So, I spent time doing this each morning until it was just habit. At night I would sit in prayer and ask, ‘how did you do?’ To some I was very loving and

kind, to others I wasn’t Jesus to them. I would ask God’s pardon and resolve to try to do better. This is still my practice today. How will I be like Jesus to people? How did I do and to what do I need to ask for pardon?”

Sister Mary Matthias was an educator from 1956-78, when she began 10 years of retreat work, first in Louisville, then at the new Mount Saint Joseph Retreat Center.

“When I left the world of the school and went into retreat work my prayer took a lift,” she said. “I needed education on retreats and spiritual direction, and I received it through Ursuline Sister of Louisville Martha Buser, who was working at a Jesuit House of Prayer. I spent lots of time in reflection and practice. Listening to another share how God is working in their lives is awesome and humbling. I prayed to be a good listener as I learned.”

In 2003, Sister Mary Matthias returned to retreat work in Gallup, New Mexico, where she believes her prayer life took a “deeper leap.”

“I found myself writing and giving retreats for almost every segment of life,” she said. “I worked slowly with the Navajos whose trust level was very low. I was challenged to write a retreat for sightseers and I did.”

Between her retreat ministries, she served from 1988-96 as the leader of her Ursuline community, then known as major superior. That role includes the duty to be both the spiritual and canonical leader of the Sisters in the community.

“Oh, how I prayed. Every day was a new venture, a new experience,”

she said. “My prayer was Our Ursuline Way of Life. I worked with the Sisters to get us all to know Saint Angela Merici. In the novitiate I had learned trivia, but I knew that the Roman Union Ursulines knew Angela and she was a sister to them. Each month I wrote a letter to the Sisters on a different aspect of Angela Merici. I had the occasion to visit the land of Angela Merici, and I wanted as many of our Sisters who could to go there and pray. Several took the opportunity.”

From 1996-2003, Sister Mary Matthias learned a different facet of prayer serving as campus minister at Murray State University’s Newman Center, and administrator of St. Leo Parish, both in Murray, Ky.

“For the Newman students it seems I was forever putting together prayer nights for different things,” she said. She stayed up to pray with students when classmates died, or when they needed to talk about what was happening in their lives.

“Through all of this I loved working and praying with the college students,” she said. “I could be up at 5 in the morning hearing of someone’s love affair fallen apart, praying as the student cried.”

Today, Sister Mary Matthias assists with formation of Ursuline Associates and serves in the Powerhouse of Prayer.

“I sit in reflection an hour each morning. Sometimes, it is scripture, sometimes it is praying for the sick, sometimes I sit and listen to God until I hear the tiny wind blow by,” she said. “Prayer and the Eucharist are central to my life.”

Friends can write to Sister Mary Matthias at 8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, KY 42356. ■

In the joy of eternal life



SISTER CATHERINE THERESE BARBER, 93, died March 25 at Mount Saint Joseph, in her 73rd year of religious life. She was a native of Springfield, Ky. Sister Catherine was a welcoming and hospitable presence to all she met. She loved to learn and stay on top of current events, especially those related to justice for others. She was a teacher or principal for 22 years in Kentucky. She served in health care and pastoral care at the Ursuline Motherhouse (1977-86), as a patient representative at Mercy Hospital and Owensboro Mercy Health System (1987-97), and as a receptionist at Brescia University (1999-2002). Her Motherhouse ministries included serving on the archives staff (1997-98), in hospitality at the Conference and Retreat Center (1998-99), information receptionist (2002-04), chapel sacristan (2004-08), and assistant in Mission Advancement (2008-13). Survivors include the members of her religious community and nieces and nephews. Her funeral was March 31, with burial in the convent cemetery.



SISTER AMELIA STENGER, 77, died March 28 at Mount Saint Joseph, in her 58th year of religious life. She was a native of Glennonville, Mo. Sister Amelia had an inexhaustible spirit, always looking forward to her next idea and project. She was passionate about God's creation and loved to work in the flower beds and teach children to be good stewards of the earth. She was a driving force behind the creation of the Memory Meditation Garden and the Rosary Walk at Maple Mount. She loved the history of her community – her last project involved working with the archivist to create the Heritage Room on campus. She was a teacher and principal in Kentucky for 13 years, then became the first female superintendent of schools for the Diocese of Owensboro, Ky., (1984-91) and the Archdiocese of Louisville (1991-97). From 1997-2010, she was director of the Mount Saint Joseph Conference and Retreat Center. She served as director of Development for the Ursuline Sisters (2010-16), then was elected as congregational leader (2016-22). She served as quilting coordinator in Mission Advancement (2022-26), where she was instrumental in starting Quilt Bingo. Survivors include the members of her religious community; siblings Mary Teder, of St. Charles, Mo., John Stenger, of Poplar Bluff, Mo.; and Frank Stenger, Campbell, Mo.; nieces and nephews. The funeral Mass was April 7 at Mount Saint Joseph, with burial in the convent cemetery.



SISTER MARGARET MARIE GREENWELL, 87, died April 7 at Mount Saint Joseph, in her 71st year of religious life. She was a native of New Haven, Ky. Sister Margaret Marie was kind, hospitable and encouraging to all those she met, and tried to see Christ in everyone. She was an educator in Kentucky for 35 years. From 1993 to 2015, she served the poor as the receptionist for the Sister Visitor Center in Louisville. She retired to Maple Mount in 2016, where she remained active in prayer. Survivors include the members of her religious community; her sister Janice Newton of Bardstown, Ky.; nieces and nephews. The funeral Mass was April 14 at Mount Saint Joseph, with burial in the convent cemetery.

Donations in memory of Sister Catherine, Sister Amelia, Sister Margaret Marie or any Sister who has gone to heaven may be made to the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph, 8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, KY 42356.



Sister Amelia Stenger poses for a picture with Director of Archives Edward Wilson on May 8, 2025, during an Open House for the new Heritage Room located in Lourdes Hall at Mount Saint Joseph. ("Father Paul Joseph Volk" can be seen on the right.) The Heritage Room was just one of many ideas that Sister Amelia brought to life. The space contains some of the items that were located in the former Museum in the Mount Saint Joseph Conference and Retreat Center before that building had to be taken down. Sister Amelia worked for weeks to plan the displays and write tags for each item. The Heritage Room may be toured by visitors.



Ursuline Sisters
of Mount Saint Joseph

8001 Cummings Road
Maple Mount, KY 42356-9998
270-229-4103
www.ursulinesmsj.org
info.ms@maplemount.org



Four Ursuline Sisters are celebrating jubilees

Four Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph are celebrating anniversaries of religious life in 2026. Together, they have dedicated 240 years of service to God's people. They will be honored during community days in July. You will learn more about them in our summer issue.

70
Years



Sister George
Mary Hagan

60
Years



Sister Angela
Marie
Fitzpatrick



Sister Rita
Scott

50
Years



Sister Martha
Keller

Save the date!



QUILT BINGO
Sunday, September 13

1-4 p.m.
Maple Hall

Mount Saint Joseph

8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, Ky.

Play bingo to win quilts!

\$25 entry includes lunch

Must be 18 or older to play.



Seating is limited. Sign up online starting in June:

ursulinesmsj.org/quilt-bingo

or mail a check payable to Ursuline Sisters, Development Office, 8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount KY 42356



It's almost time for the Ursuline Sisters' biggest fundraiser - our ANNUAL RAFFLE!

Tickets are still just \$5!

Drawing takes place Sept. 13, 2026.

You could win \$10,000!

• \$5,000 • \$2,000

• **Beautiful Handmade Queen-sized Quilt**

Order tickets online starting in June:
ursulinesmsj.org/mountraffle

This year's Quilt Bingo will be in memory of Sister Amelia Stenger, left, who started the fundraiser.

