



2025 **IMPACT** REPORT  
LEGACY OF LOVE

MISSION &  
MINISTRIES  
FOUNDATION

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH  
OF NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

## A MESSAGE OF GRATITUDE FROM SR. MARY DREXLER, PRESIDENT:



**OUR SSJ LEGACY OF LOVE**, the yearlong celebration of our 375th anniversary of our beginnings in France and our 165th anniversary in the Diocese of Erie, has come to a close. We energetically move into 2026 on the coattails of such a wonderful year of celebration, prayer, change, and new beginnings.

Of significance in the past year was the sale of our properties (the SSJ Living Center, the Administration Building, and Saint Mary's Home) to LECOM Medical Center. While this is all still very new to us, we are eager and optimistic to see how things will unfold.

But...we know we could not be where we are today without you, our loyal donors and friends. You keep our mission alive by your words, your actions, and your faithful giving. Thinking about our loyal donors draws me to reflect on a Scripture story familiar to all of us, the story of the Good Samaritan. You are our "good Samaritans." You reach out to help:

- because you want to see change happen;
- because you see the need and desire to make a difference;
- because you love the dear neighbor, and...

...like the Good Samaritan, you are willing to help repeatedly until the needs of God's people are taken care of. For this we are so grateful.

These pages reveal your kindnesses to further our mission of loving God and neighbor without distinction. Thank you for all you do for and with us. We could not do it without you.

*Sr. Mary Drexler, SSJ*

Mary Drexler, SSJ  
President, Sisters of St. Joseph

*The Samaritan took the man to a nearby inn, took out two pieces of silver, and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "If this is not enough, I will pay you on my way back." The one who showed compassion was the one who was a neighbor. Go and do the same, says Jesus. Luke 10*



**SSJ and Cathedral Prep Leadership**



## Your Legacy Lives On With Us

Please join other visionaries who have chosen to leave a lasting impact through their will.

This shared commitment speaks volumes about the strength, love, and unity of caring for our neighbors.

[Discover the Benefits of Giving Wisely | The Sisters of St. Joseph Mission & Ministries Foundation](#)



## TO ALL WHO SHARE IN THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH LEGACY OF LOVE:

When we speak about the Sisters of St. Joseph, we often talk about what they do: their missions, their ministries, their tireless service throughout Erie and beyond. For seven generations, they have shaped the heart and soul of the Erie Diocese. You have seen them everywhere: in classrooms, parishes, hospitals, and in the quiet corners where love is most needed. But for me, and no doubt for you, their legacy is profoundly personal.

Their influence on Catholic education is immeasurable, and it is with deep gratitude that I reflect on the Sisters' unwavering commitment to education. As I round out my 18th year in the field, most of those spent in Catholic education, I see quiet and beautiful strings woven into the foundation they built at Villa Maria Academy and the values they continue to inspire at Cathedral Prep. Their belief in the transformative power of education has shaped generations of teachers, leaders, and learners, me included.

The Sisters have filled my faith cup in ways I struggle to put into words. In moments when I felt depleted, uncertain, or searching, they have been the face of God for me, steady, compassionate, and unwavering. Whether it was a moment of kindness, a word of encouragement, or quietly changing my life, I tell every story with a smile, because the love I experience is real and has had a lasting impact. Their love is not abstract or symbolic; it is lived. It shows up and it stays.

What makes their legacy so powerful is not just its longevity, but its consistency. Through changing times and challenges, the Sisters have remained rooted in love: love of God, love of neighbor, and love of community. That love has been passed down, multiplied, and entrusted to all of us who now carry their mission forward.

As Trustee Chair, I am grateful for your partnership in sustaining this legacy of love. Your generosity ensures that the charism of the Sisters of St. Joseph continues to touch lives for generations to come.

Thank you for believing in this mission. Thank you for loving as the Sisters have loved. And thank you for helping ensure that this legacy, born of faith and sustained by love, endures for generations to come.



Meghan Fuhrman  
Chair, SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Sisters and the Foundation staff are grateful to the following Trustees for their mission-driven focus. Their emphasis on respecting each donor and their wishes is furthestmost in their work.



TINA MENGINE



JIM BIRD

A special thank you to Tina Mengine for agreeing to be one of the very first Trustees (2015) and a continuous member of the Granting Committee. Our gratitude to Jim Bird, Chair and Past Chair (2019-2025) for stepping up. Tina and Jim were instrumental during their tenure and we will miss them. Thank you both for your time, energy, and sense of what is right and good! We will continue to honor your good work with ours.

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*Please share this report with friends and family by going to the electronic copy at our website, [www.ssjmmf.org](http://www.ssjmmf.org).*

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## TO ALL WHO ARE BLESSED TO BE ON THE EARTH AT THIS TIME AND IN THIS PLACE:

2025 was an amazing year filled with celebratory and prayerful experiences acknowledging the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania. What an honor to convey our gratitude on the Sisters past and present, all distinctive and singular women.

Picture a small, French village in the year 1650...Le Puy, France...where the Sisters' beginnings were unassuming. The first six Sisters and their priest, Jean-Pierre Medaille, devised unconventional approaches to serving women and children. The Sisters dressed in black like widows and heading outside, unaccompanied, would teach women how to support their families by tatting lace.

Moving past the late 18th Century and the French Revolution...Sisters continued to fight for the marginalized, at times with their own lives. Jump now to the 1800's, when six Sisters traversed the Atlantic Ocean, making their way to Carondelet, Missouri, and establishing their first 'house' in the United States. And, in 1860, with the grace of God, the Sisters were called to the Erie Catholic Diocese, where they collectively built hospitals, schools, orphanages, and homes for the elderly, all the while shaping their own personal ministries.

Today, these devoutly, committed women continue to look toward the future with prayer, work, and kindness. Thank you for doing the same with your prayers, loyalty, and giving.

Holding you up in prayer today and always,



Almitra Clerkin  
Executive Director



The Foundation Team

## 2025 DONORS

The SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation is proud to share the 2025 Donor Roll for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern PA. By their gifts, over 1,000 individuals, grantors, and businesses made a significant impact in the lives of the Sisters and those they serve. Many donors honored and remembered family, friends, SSJ, classmates, and more. As you take time to read the names, remember our thanks and the Sisters' prayerful gratitude for your continuing generosity.

### Estates, Grants & Foundations



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*In memory of Charles Donnelly*

**Anonymous (65)**

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Charles Donnelly*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of deceased members of the Burke Family*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Pat Moyer*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Patricia Tellers*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Pope Francis*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Sr. Bernadine Gehringer, SSJ and Sr. Marilyn Zimmerman, SSJ*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Sr. Marie Paul Ashworth, SSJ*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Louise Weaver, SSJ*

## ST. JAMES HAVEN, MEADVILLE, PA

“The Sisters’ impact on St. James Haven can hardly be captured in just a few sentences. For nearly 30 years, they have believed in us and in the men we serve, even when many felt forgotten. Because of them, our shelter has been a place where men are truly seen, deeply valued, and reminded that they are never alone. The Sisters’ leadership and love—without limits—reach far beyond walls and programs. Their presence in the Erie Catholic Diocese has been a living expression of God’s grace, mercy, and hope, touching not only the men we serve, but everyone who has had the privilege of crossing their path. It has been both an honor and a blessing to learn from and walk alongside the Sisters.” *Samantha Stump, Executive Director*



### 2025 Major Accomplishments:

- Hosting a community dinner on the third Thursday of each month. This ongoing fundraiser has helped us become more visible in the community and, more importantly, has allowed us to build meaningful connections with our neighbors.
- Holding our fourth annual *Sound Off for St. James Haven* worship fundraiser uniting five local churches in one powerful gathering, strengthening community ties while supporting the mission of St. James Haven.
- Building a vision for a Transitional Living Center for men seeking recovery from substance use—a place where they can continue working with Drug & Alcohol services while living in a supportive, group-home atmosphere alongside others committed to healing and growth. Our goal is to be operational by the last quarter of 2026.

The Foundation was happy to grant St. James Haven with \$36,122 in 2025. The funds provided continuity of services in support of an unexpected revenue loss from a primary fundraiser. In addition, we assisted in the purchase of essential nighttime items for guests, and the purchase of a new dining room table for communal dining and fellowship. Finally, the funds provided support for annual staff salaries (22%) and utilities (50%).



**Anonymous**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Thomas Downing, SSJ*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of the deceased members of the Krebs Family*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Theresa Marino Baniszewski*

**Anonymous**

*In memory of Valerie Susan Shaffer*

**Anonymous**

*In honor of Sr. Mary Drexler, SSJ*

**Anonymous**

*In honor of all the Sisters who worked at Saint Vincent Hospital as we celebrate 150 years at the hospital*

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*In honor of the Sisters of St. Joseph*

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*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ*

## SSJ NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK

"Life often feels like it's moving quickly here at the SSJ Neighborhood Network, as we celebrate 25 years of service and continue the SSJ mission of ministering with our 'feet in the street' to the needs of the 'dear neighbors' suffering from unemployment, poverty, illness, and social disparity. As our modern world too often falls short in honoring basic human needs—food, warmth, health, beauty, and fresh air—SSJNN feels uniquely blessed to pass on the love and gifts generously shared by neighbors, volunteers, community partners, and from donors large and small who feel called to help our mission of hope." *Heather Caspar, Executive Director*



### 2025 Major Accomplishments:

- Creating four first-time homeowners, moving four families into single-family homes within our neighborhood's footprint. All homes were rescued from blight and vacancies, and fully renovated by us.
- Providing \$12,000 in SNAP-match at the Little Italy Farmers Market, welcoming 4,300 patrons from over 30 zip codes who shopped 10 local farm stands, including our own SSJNN Urban Farm Stand, whose teens sold 2,580 lbs. of produce they farmed and harvested right in the Little Italy neighborhood. We also provided 433 lbs. of produce as well as collecting 580 lbs. from other local producers to redistribute to the City-Wide Pay-What-You-Can Markets.
- Serving 4,380 hot meals to neighbors in need at the St. Paul's weekly soup kitchen.

The SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation awarded a \$40,000 grant to the SSJNN for their 2025 *Youth Work Experience: Operation Uplift* - 13 young people from the neighborhood footprint, ages 14 to 17, received education and employment. In addition, their curiosity was sparked and their pre-vocational skills developed while encouraging positive working relationships with customers, and strengthening employability, self-sufficiency, and economic mobility.



**Blackbaud Giving Fund**

**Janet and John Blakeslee<sup>^</sup>**  
*In memory of Charles Donnelly*

**Philip Blasco Trust**

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## SAINT PATRICK'S HAVEN

“The Sisters’ impact on St. Patrick’s Haven is woven into everything we do. Their belief in serving with dignity and compassion reminds us daily that our guests are our neighbors, deserving of trust, respect, safety, and empathy. Because of their support, we are not just providing shelter, we are building a stronger, more caring community - a ministry of presence.”  
*Shelby Folga, Executive Director*



### 2025 Major Accomplishments:

- Launching our first-ever fundraising event, *Shamrock Showdown*, bringing the community together in a powerful and fun way to support our mission.
- Introducing a summer cookout at the shelter that created connection, joy, and a sense of community for our guests and neighbors.
- Organizing Christmas blessing bags and a Christmas party to ensure our guests felt remembered, valued, and cared for during the holidays.

In 2025, the SSJ Foundation was pleased to grant \$50,000 to St. Patrick’s Haven in support of long-term stability in leadership, staffing, and infrastructure costs. This funding was instrumental in serving empathy, kindness, and care to 240 unique men experiencing homelessness. Consistent trauma-informed care, a safe environment, and connection to community resources and each other were guaranteed for guests of the haven.



**Valerie Carlson**

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**Elizabeth Dymski**

**Carrie Dzikowski**

**Mary L. Eckert**

1st gift ^  
Deceased +



## 14<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL ERIE GIVES DAY

Thank you to **326 donors\*** who gave **\$52,508** to the SSJ Mission & Ministries in support of our Sisters and Ministries.

Since **2012**, the Sisters of St. Joseph and their Foundation have received **2,258 gifts** from **904 donors**, totaling an amazing **\$335,974**.

We look forward to the **2026 Erie Gives Day on August 15**.

\*Donors for the 2025 Erie Gives Day appear in the printed alpha list.



**Maria and Christopher Ehrman**

*In honor of Sr. Claudia Dombrowski, SSJ*

*In memory of deceased Family and Friends*

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*In memory of David Eichelsdorfer*

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**Silvia Ferretti**

**Cassandra Fetzner**

**Sr. André Feulner, SSJ**

**Rev. Thomas M. Fialkowski**

*In memory of deceased Sisters and Priests*

**Michelle M. Firman^**

**Cynthia and Gerald First**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Kay McNelis, SSJ*

**Charles Fischer**

**Barbara and Gregory T. Fischer**

**Cynthia and John Fitzgerald**

**Susan Latimer Flanagan**

**Penelope and Lawrence Fledderman**

**Cynthia Fleischer**

**Annelle Fletcher**

**Rebecca and James Flynn**

**Ellen and Daniel Ford**

*In honor of Sr. Dorothy Wilwohl, SSJ*

**Mary and Stephen Forgenie**

**Maureen and Mark Formanski**

*In honor of Sr. André Feulner, SSJ  
In memory of Sr. Mary Ellen Dwyer, SSJ and Betty Rowand*

**Susan and Russell Forquer**

*In memory of Patricia Tellers*

**Karen Fortebraccio**

**Gary A. Fracassi**

**Anne and Sandro Francani^**

*In memory of Judy Glennon*

**Conrad R. Franz**

*In memory of Mary A. Franz*

**Cathy Fratalia**

**Jeanette Frazier**

*In memory of Henry Kupper*

**Michelle and John Frego**

**Cathy and David Fresch**

*In honor of Marie Spaeder Haas*

**Kathy and Pete Frisina**

**Theresa and Robert Fromknecht**

**Deacon Ron Fronzaglia**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Arnold Tamm, SSJ and Sr. Maria Onuffer, SSJ*

**Kathleen and Douglas Fugate**

**Alice Fuhrman**

*In honor of my 10 great grandchildren*

*In memory of Antoinette Kaliszak and Frances Konkol*

**Meghan Fuhrman and Michael DeAntonio**

**Ginny and Timothy Fuhrman**

**Linda Jares Fullerton**

**Rita M. Furno**

**Florence Fusco**

**Heidi and Guy Fustine**

**Nathan Gainer**

**Roseanne Galeza**

**Rev. Leo J. Gallina**

**Marion and Robert Gallivan, Jr.**

**Kelli Gambill**

**Lecia Gannon**

*In honor of Sr. Phyllis Hilbert, SSJ  
In memory of Brenda Smith*

**Margaret Gardner**

**Anita Garr**

**Dolores and James Garvey**

**Kenneth Gaspar^**

*In memory of Sr. Maria Onuffer, SSJ*

**Laura L. Gates^**

*In memory of Sr. Marilynn Zimmerman, SSJ*



**GAMESts' Lee Steadman, artist, with the Sisters of St. Joseph mosaic**

# In Memorium

*Let your light shine before others, so that they may see  
your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:16*

In 2025, nine Sisters of St. Joseph were born to eternal life. These prayerful, hard-working, fun, and dedicated women were exemplary in the instruction Jesus gave us...do not hide your light under a bushel; do good work and share your many God-given gifts with every person.

Our thoughts and prayers are with their dear Sisters, family, and friends.

Combined, the following Sisters spent 622 years serving others. May they be remembered and rest in God's love.



## **Ann Patrice Murnock, SSJ**

Born in Forest City, PA, on December 13, 1924  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Michael, Forest City, PA, on March 16, 1953



Professed her final vows on August 15, 1958  
72 years of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 100, on January 8, 2025

## **Maria Onuffer, SSJ**

Born in Lewis Run, PA, on September 17, 1933  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from Our Mother of Perpetual Help, Lewis Run, PA, on August 31, 1951



Professed her final vows on August 15, 1957  
74 years of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 91, on April 12, 2025

## **Marilyn Zimmerman, SSJ**

Born in Erie, PA, on May 17, 1935  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from Holy Rosary, Erie, PA, on August 30, 1953



Professed her final vows on August 30, 1953  
72 year of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 90, on June 9, 2025

## **Barbara Ann Vavreck, SSJ**

Born in Philipsburg, PA, on December 11, 1937  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from Saints Peter and Paul, Hawk Run, PA, on August 31, 1955



Professed her final vows on August 15, 1961  
70 years of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 87, on January 15, 2025

## **Mary Arnold Tann, SSJ**

Born in Hamilton, OH, on October 15, 1931  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Andrew, Erie, PA, in 1952



Professed her final vows on August 15, 1958  
73 years of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 93, on May 5, 2025

## **Bernadine Gehringer, SSJ**

Born in Erie, PA, on September 15, 1937  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. John the Baptist, Erie, PA, on August 31, 1955



Professed her final vows on August 15, 1961  
70 years of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 87, on June 19, 2025

## **Rose Marie Chisholm, SSJ**

Born in Cambridge, MA, on August 30, 1925  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from Sacred Heart, Watertown, MA, in 1947



Professed her final vows on August 15, 1953  
78 years of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 99, on April 1, 2025

## **Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ**

Born in Erie, PA, on November 24, 1928  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Joseph, Erie, PA, in 1951



Professed her final vows on August 15, 1956  
75 years of religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 96, on May 23, 2025

## **Sally Villa, SSJ**

Born in Rochester, NY, on July 19, 1944  
Entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Joseph, Erie, PA, on August 8, 1988



Professed her final vows on October 8, 1994  
38 years of her religious life  
Born to eternal life, at the age of 81, on November 17, 2025

## THE FOUNDATION IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE SISTERS IN THEIR 165TH YEAR

The funding provided for the Sisters in 2025 ran the gamut. Each project ensured a positive effect on the Sisters' quality of life.

### SAFETY...

- Replaced Marycrest buckling hallway and dining-room floor
- Updated five Sisters' private rooms due to unwanted moisture; removed wallpaper and carpet; sealed and laid new flooring; and painted

### AESTHETICS AND COMFORT...

- Granted partial funds to purchase 72 new dining room chairs, replacing the 1993 chairs
- Emergency repair of the Community Living Center Furnace

### PRAYER...

- Worked with Sr. André Fuelner, Sr. Mary Helen Forney, and Cass Shimek, Leadership Executive Assistant, to enhance the Labyrinth outdoor-garden space with new plants and flowers, and a new fountain

### WORK...

- Updated audio-visual equipment, complementary electric improvements, and a new computer for the Sisters' Board Room housed in the Community Living Center

### COMMUNITY...

- Beautified the Sisters' plots and surrounding landscape at Trinity and Calvary Cemeteries for the Sisters' May Pilgrimage in honor of the those whose shoulders we stand on
- Catered luncheon for the Benedictines, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and the Sisters of Mercy following Bishop Persico's Liturgy for Consecrated Life
- Partnered with Cathedral Prep to install the Villa Maria Academy Mary Medallion, proudly seen on the 2403 West 8th school facade from 1953 to 2022, and now respectfully displayed on a pedestal near the Cathedral Prep front doors to welcome all



**Shirley J. Gatto**

**Michele and Paul Gausman**

**Thomas Gausman**

**Mary Anne Geary^**

**Anna and Joseph Gehringer**  
*In memory of Sr. Bernadine Gehringer, SSJ*

**Joan and James Gehrlein**  
*In memory of Charles Donnelly*

**Donna Geiger and Norman Stark**

**Marie Gemelli-Carroll**  
*In memory of Sr. Virginia Ann Gardner, SSJ*

**Flora Genevro**

**Renee and David German**

**Kirsti and James Geronimo**

**Marilyn Gerrell**

**Jane and Peter Gilewicz**

**Rose Marie and John Girard^**  
*In memory of Richard and Callista Zimmerman*

**Kathleen Gladden-Knouse**

**Friends and Family of Judy Glennon**  
*In memory of Judy Glennon*

**Shannon and Lily Glennon^**  
*In memory of Judy Glennon*

**Ellen Gloekler^**

**Gloria and John T. Campbell**  
*In memory of Sr. Ann Patrice Murnock, SSJ*

**Dorothy and Charles Glover**

**Tina and Gary Glover**  
*In memory of Sr. Mary Ellen Dwyer, SSJ*

**Mary and Robert Glowacki**  
*In memory of Patricia Tellers*

**Barbara and Paul Gmuer**

**Donna and William Gocella**  
*In honor of Sr. Josette (Barbara A.) Gocella, SSJ*

**Joann and Peter J. Goergen**

**Olga and Peter Goncharova**

**Sandra and Gregory Gorniak**  
*In honor of John Hauser*  
*In memory of Ed and Irene Gorniak*

**Barbara Grabowski and Kenneth Gray**

**Rev. Raymond C. Gramata**

**Patricia and Patrick Gray**

**Alice E. Grealy**

**Karen Greer**

**Kathryn and Joseph Greulich**

**Maurita and James Griffin**

**Desiree and Monte Griffith**  
*In honor of Sr. Catherine Manning, SSJ*

**Marilyn and Charles Grimm^**  
*In memory of Sr. Ann Patrice Murnock, SSJ*

**Allene Grise**

**Kathryn Ann and Douglas Grisier**

**Carol and Francis Grolemond**

**Julie Grosinski**

**Karen and Harold Grove**

**Cynthia and David Gruzca**

**Linda and John Guenther**  
*In honor of St. Joseph Day*

**Rev. James G. Gutting**

**Rose Ann and John Gutting**

**Teresa S. Guyton**

## TWO REGIONAL FOUNDATIONS ENHANCE ACTIVE COMMUNITY LIFE FOR THE SISTERS



### HARDNER FOUNDATION – Austin, Texas

In 2023, the caregivers of the Sisters of St. Joseph met, discussed, and created a year-round activities program based on the Sisters' interests. Our goal was to engage the Sisters in physical, mental, and spiritual creativity over a longer, consistent period. Together, we built **GAMESts - Gardening, Art, Music, and Exercise for the Sisters**.

Funding for the first two years came from a SOAR! Grant (Supporting Our Aging Religious), along with additional funding from Del and Bill Becker, and the SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation. Thanks to the Becker's and the Foundation, the Sisters' popular program ran through 2025.

**We are enthusiastically grateful to the Norbert H. Hardner Foundation for the \$32,000 grant in support of years four and five for GAMESts. This means fun and exercise through 2027!**



### SOAR! – SUPPORTING OUR AGING RELIGIOUS – Washington, D.C.

In 1993, the Sisters of St. Joseph moved from their 100+ year-old Motherhouse to their new Community Living Center home. Three decades later, we identified a project that SOAR! could potentially support – new Dining Room chairs to keep our Sisters safe, comfortable, and engaged.



The chair choice was whittled down to the top two which the Sisters tried out and then picked their favorite. They selected the chair that provided the best back support and cushioned seat, a heavy frame, and, most importantly, a chair that had the least movement when adjusting from standing to sitting and sitting to standing.

Engagement was another positive result of getting new chairs. Our priority is finding ways forward to support the Sisters' active, communal life as the years pass. Extending time and conversation over wonderful meals with the Sisters, family, friends, and donors is a genuine bonus!

**Thank you, SOAR!, for \$40,000 in support of new dining room chairs to enhance the Sisters' comfort and lives together!**



# Legacy of Love

## Celebrating the Sisters of St. Joseph in Northwestern Pennsylvania ~ 165th Anniversary ~

*For we are God's handiwork created in Christ Jesus to do good works,  
which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

The SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation was pleased to participate in several events honoring the Sisters for their love of God and neighbor.

### THE STARS WERE OUT AT THE SSJ LEGACY VIDEO PREMIER AND RED-CARPET EVENT

The Sisters celebrated the SSJ Neighborhood Network documentary, *Dear Neighbor: the Legacy of the Sisters of St. Joseph in NWPA* on April 15. At the highly anticipated premier party, hosted by the Neighborhood Network and the Foundation, the stars of the show stepped onto the red carpet, had the best seats in the house, and were treated to Pop Luck popcorn and movie-themed cookies. The Sisters and their guests' true star-quality shined brightly both on and off the screen. MenajErie Studio walked away with the top creative honors. Accepting the best film award were the producers - the Neighborhood Network and the Foundation. Watch and share the following link for the *Dear Neighbor* documentary [Dear Neighbor - The Legacy of the Sisters of St Joseph of NWPA.mov - Dear Neighbor - Frame.io](#)



### MAY PILGRIMAGE

On May 24, Sisters and friends paid homage to the memory of 511 Sisters laid to rest at Trinity and Calvary Cemeteries. Through prayer, song, and laying of wreaths, the spirit of remembrance was profound. Sisters who were unable to travel participated in a morning prayer service at the Community Living Center.





## GANNON UNIVERSITY DEDICATES THEIR NEW ALUMNI HOUSE AND THE SSJ LEGACY ROOM ON THE EVE OF THEIR 2025 HOMECOMING

Gannon's September Homecoming marked a special time for the Sisters. On September 11, a beautiful, late-summer day, SSJ Leadership and the Sisters who served as Gannon faculty and staff were invited to the dedication and blessing of the Gannon Alumni House. Gannon was established in 1925 using the Villa Maria College Charter. The SSJ Foundation Trustees unanimously approved a merited recognition naming a meeting space, the Sisters of St. Joseph Legacy Room. Gannon alumni, employees, and students who visit the SSJ Legacy Room will enjoy a display highlighting the Sisters' history.



## BISHOP LAWRENCE T. PERSICO NAMES ST. LEO CHURCH, RIDGWAY, PA, AS A JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE PILGRIMAGE SITE

On October 1, the Sisters traveled to St. Leo Church greeted by students and Justin Pino, V.F., Pastor of St. Leo Church and school, and Archivist for the Catholic Diocese of Erie. Father led a prayer service in celebration of the Jubilee and presented *The Jubilee Year and the History of the SSJ in Elk County*. All travelers enjoyed a delicious lunch before touring the Church, Rectory, the old Convent, and St. Leo School.



Highlights of the day included spending time with the students and their teachers. On behalf of the Sisters, the Foundation gave the school a gift to support a special educational activity chosen by the student body. Sr. Lucille DeStefano, SSJ, had a special visit at her homestead with her sister, Angela, before leaving Ridgway for the two-hour trip home. A lovely day was had by all!



## NOUS SOMMES UN – WE ARE ONE!

As the end of 2025 was in sight, the Foundation Team continued to celebrate the Sisters through events that embraced our donors and friends and ignited hope for all our neighbors, we hosted our annual Soirée Open House, held October 25 at the Community Living Center.

Highpoints from the event included music by Me and Julio, Cali's West French-themed hors d'oeuvres, and tours of the Community Living Center - decked out with photos from the SSJ history. Thanks to Sr. Stephanie Wagner, SSJ, visitors had a unique opportunity to see a Sisters' private living space. In addition, guests were on hand to participate in the blessing of the St. Joseph Mosaic - 32 one-foot squares painted and pieced together under the creative guidance of artist Lee Steadman in the GAMESts Art class.

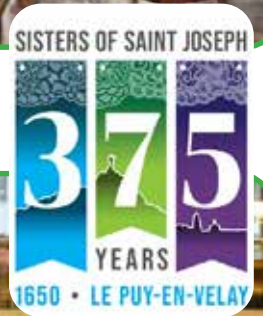


# Celebrating the Sisters of St. Joseph 375th Anniversary



*Be strong and  
courageous...the Lord  
your God will be with you  
wherever you go. Joshua 1:9*

Sisters, Agrégées, Associates, and those of us from the SSJ of NWPA shared in an amazing experience celebrating the 375th milestone of the Sisters of St. Joseph around the globe. We built relationships with others in attendance, guest speakers and artists, students, and staff. The team who created this once-in-a-lifetime event in Kansas City, MO, did so to inspire all attendees in-person and remote. They confirmed, "The roots of the Sisters of St. Joseph charism fuels us today and grows in our spirit together."



# GIVING THANKS ALL AROUND

Thanks to the generosity of our Sisters, donors, sponsors, volunteers, and partners, 2025 marked the most delivered Thanksgiving dinners in the 37 years of serving a holiday meal to our neighbors:

# 1,724

Gannon University's Metz Culinary Management, under the loving eye of General Manager Brittany Travers, who received the 2025 Exemplary Service Award, increased their 2024 capacity by 414 additional meals, an increase of 24%, by giving more time, talent, and turkeys! Gannon Chef, Denise Alexander, and a Baker's dozen of Metz volunteers, filled every refrigerator in the cafeteria with freshly cooked dinners.

Many Sisters, Associates, Agrégées, and volunteers took nearly 500 phone calls from neighbors to reserve meals. They also packed the desserts, and opened 1,700+ delivery bags, filling them with a hand-made holiday card from students at the Erie Catholic School System and Mother Teresa Academy, a prayer card, and the all-important reheating instructions.

Around 7:30 AM on Thanksgiving morning, 17 hearty volunteers showed up at the City of Erie Garage at 7<sup>th</sup> and Peach, packed one meal and sweet treat per bag, and loaded the bags into 30 cars every 10 minutes. These 60+ volunteer drivers delivered the meals starting at 8:30 AM. Barring any issues and with a giving heart, deliveries were completed by noon from Northeast to Lake City.

Regrettably, the winter weather forced us to cancel the anticipated January 25, 2026, Brunch and Check Presentation. Instead, all 56 nonprofits who feed our neighbors year-round received their gift in the mail. The thank-you cards to the Sisters from the nonprofits continue to pour in!

Gratefully, although our donations were down by 10%, the Sisters and the Foundation kept the 2024 check- distribution total of \$71,000 so each nonprofit received the same dollar-amount in 2025. In addition, the following \$500 awards, given annually, were determined - Peter Lyons and Gannon University & Metz Culinary Management choose their recipient. The Sr. Teresa Marie Bohren, SSJ Award is chosen annually by our Thanksgiving volunteers. Congratulations to:

**\$500 Peter Lyons Award**  
SSJ Neighborhood Network

**\$500 Gannon/Metz Award**  
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Food Pantry/  
St. Luke Food Pantry

**\$500 Sr. Teresa Marie Bohren, SSJ Award**  
Mercy Center for Women





## IN-KIND GIFTS

Thank you to our loyal partners who share with the Sisters and those they serve:



- Metz/ Gannon University-Food Service Staff and 800 lbs. of Thanksgiving turkey
- AHN/Saint Vincent-Thanksgiving side dishes: potatoes, corn, gravy & butter for 1,700+
- Wegmans-1,400 holiday cookies
- Mazza Vineyards/Kathie Mazza-Liturgic Altar wine
- Clemence Mershon-WQLN Public Service Messages
- Bomba-1,000 pairs of socks



### SPECIAL DELIVERY SPONSORS

Lawrence Bindseil  
 Patricia Burgoyne  
 Carl and Michele Carlotti  
 Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Erie, Inc.  
 Colleen Downey  
 James & Kristi Geronimo  
 Joan E. Kautsky  
 Scott & Barbara Lee  
 Nancy Shea  
 Mary Lou Stolinski  
 James & Renee Warden  
 Richard & Therese Zamboldi

### SOMETHING SWEET SPONSOR

Wendy & Vincent Cieslewicz  
 Carla Krott  
 Sally Rouch  
 Marleen R. Scully

### ALL-THE-FIXIN'S SPONSOR

Barb L. Brairton  
 Ruthanne Beighley & William Steger

### TURKEY SPONSOR

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph A. Leone III

*Thanksgiving Day Sponsors - Thank you!*

Marie Spaeder Haas

Kathleen and William Hagan

Jennie and Christopher Hagerty

Mary Alice Haibach

*In memory of Sr. Barbara Ann Vavreck, SSJ and Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ*

Mary Hall

*In honor of Sr. Moira Sullivan, SSJ  
 In memory of Msgr. Richard Sullivan*

Elaine D. Hamilton^

*In memory of Ronald Visnoski*

M. Colleen and Larry Hammon

*In memory of Sr. Mary Arnold Tann, SSJ and Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ*

Dotty and William Hanna

Sandra and Daniel Hanstine

Maureen Haraczy

Jeffrey Hardner

*In memory of Trish Hardner*

Patricia A. Hardner

*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ, Sr. Marilyn Zimmerman, SSJ, and Sr. Bernadine Gehringer, SSJ*

Andrea and Brian Hart

*In memory of Francis Hart*

Margaret Hart

Julia and Gerard Hasenhuettl

Rene S. Hayes^

Patricia Heard

Judith and Charles Heid

*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ and Sr. Marilyn Zimmerman, SSJ*

Karen Hein

Henry Mont Salon^

Elizabeth I. Herman^

*In memory of Sr. Maria Onuffer, SSJ*

Kathleen and Keith Herman

*In honor of Sr. Millicent Zimmer, SSJ  
 In memory of the deceased members of the Albert Zimmer Family*

Sandra Herman

*In honor of Sr. Marianne Stuckert, SSJ*

Carol and James Hermann

*In memory of Bernie and Steve Easley and Cathy Miles*

Frank Herrmann

Sharon Herron

Jane Hershberger

Deborah Ann Hess

Rita K. Hessley

Denise A. Hetherington

*In memory of Carol LeCorchick*

Mildred Higgins

Christina and Joseph Hilbert

1st gift ^  
 Deceased +



Thanksgiving Liturgy, Brunch, and Check Presentation



**Martha Hilbert**  
**Becky and William Hilbert, Jr.**  
**Carol Ann Hilbrich**  
*In honor of Sr. Veronica Mittal, SSJ*  
**Jen and John Hilbrich**  
**Marlene and Edward Hilin^**  
**William Hill**  
*In memory of Kristen Hartzell*  
**Kathleen Hixenbaugh**  
*In honor of St. Joseph Day and my son*  
**Carol Hoffman**  
*In memory of Sr. Marilyn Zimmerman, SSJ and Charles Donnelly*  
**Frances K. Hoffman**  
*In memory of Sr. Barbara Ann Vavreck, SSJ and Sr. Bernadine Gehringer, SSJ*  
**Kathleen and James Hoffman**  
**Glenn Holland**  
*In memory of Judy Holland*  
**Diane and Edward Horneman**  
*In memory of Esther Horneman*  
**Sr. Martha Howick, SSJ**  
**Margaret and Norman Howick**  
**Madeline Hromyak**  
**Esther E. Hubert**  
**Susan Hudson**  
**Mary and Ronald Huff**  
**Mary Virginia Hughes**  
*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ and Sr. Marilyn Zimmerman, SSJ*  
**Dania Huie-Pasigan^**  
**Louise and Eugene Humenay**  
**Elizabeth Hutchinson**  
*In memory of Earl and Mary Holland*  
**Maureen and Leonard Huya**  
*In memory of Charles Donnelly*  
**Richard Hymes**  
**I Give Catholic**  
**Nancy and Robin Ingols**

**Jamie Irvine^**  
**Olivia Isil**  
*In honor of St. Joseph Day*  
**June Janson**  
**Leslie Jennings^**  
*In memory of Joseph Sette*  
**Jiffy Print, Inc.**  
**Becky and Gary Johnson^**  
**Jacklyn A. Johnson**  
**M. Judith Johnston**  
*In memory of Sr. Barbara Ann Vavreck, SSJ*  
**Kathleen Joint**  
**Eileen Jolls**  
**Penny Jones**  
*In memory of Mary Jones and Dave Jones*  
**Dawn and Charles Joy**  
*In memory of Sr. Mary Rose Rossiter, SSJ*  
**Carol L. Joyce**  
**Donna M. Juniewicz**  
**Mary Kay and David Kalivoda**  
**Marjorie Kaminsky**  
**Mona and Jay Kang**  
**Irma J. Kapsar**  
*In memory of Paul*  
**Carole Lee Karlein^**  
*In memory of Charles Donnelly*  
**Kathryn M. Kase**  
**Joan E. Kautsky**  
**Msgr. Charles Kaza**  
*In memory of Sr. Mary Arnold Tann, SSJ*  
**Dorothy and Howard Keil**  
**Virginia and Anthony Keim**  
**Elizabeth and Carl Keim^**  
**Michelina Kellems^**  
*In memory of Edward Borgia*  
**Charlene Kellerman and Lisa Locke**

**Sandra and John Kempisty**  
**Phyllis Kempter**  
*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ*  
**Alice Kendziora**  
**Helen Kennedy and Family^**  
*In memory of Daniel F. Borgia*  
**Jon Kennedy Family**  
*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ and Ellen Ryan Kennedy*  
**Jon Kennedy**  
**Mary Jo and John Kennedy**  
**Kathleen Kern**  
**Joan F. Kessler**  
**Janet Kiehlmeier and William Conway**  
**Jennifer M. King**  
*In memory of Loeta L. Derby*  
**Kathy and Bruce King**  
**Noreen Kinney**  
*In memory of Sr. Joseph Marie Fitzgerald, SSJ*  
**Kathleen Kinzig**  
*In memory of Sr. James Francis Mulligan, SSJ*  
**Cindy Kirk-Carpenter^**  
**Marsha and Lawrence Kisielewski**  
*In memory of Joseph Sette*

**Mary and Edward Kissell**  
**Joyce and Mark Kissman^**  
*In memory of Sr. Marilyn Zimmerman, SSJ*  
**Jeanette E. Kitch**  
*In honor of St. Joseph Day*  
**Sandra and Douglas Kitts**  
**Nancy Klaus**  
**Catherine and J. Patrick Kloecker**  
*In memory of the deceased members of the Kloecker and Diefenbach Families*  
**Joseph E. Kloecker**  
**Renee A. Kloecker**  
**Koehler Cousins**  
*In memory of Ronald Visnoski*  
**Carol and Richard Koehler**  
**Koldrock Waters Inc.**  
**Rev. Thad T. Kondzielski**  
**Angie Kontur**  
*In memory of Ray and Patti Fiorelli and Patricia Tellers*  
**Mary and Edward Koster**  
**Dolores A. Kostovick**  
*In honor of John F. Roupp*  
*In memory of Daniel J. Kostovick*  
**Denise Krainski**  
**Ann and Gerald+ Kraus**



**Sr. Mary Drexler and Mother Teresa Academy 4th graders with their homemade Thanksgiving cards.**



**Jacqueline and Robert Kraus**

*In memory of Sr. Dorothy Hartleb, SSJ, her sister Angela, and all the Sisters who taught at St. Peter's School and Erie Prep*

**Elaine and Martin Krepcho**

**Hope and Ambrose Krieg, Jr.**

*In honor of Sr. Susan Herzing, SSJ  
In memory of Sr. Rose Anne Fedorko, SSJ*

**Carla Krott**

**Lynell Krull**

*In memory of Jane Theuerkauf*

**Anna Krupicz**

**Joanne and Howard Kubinski**

**Linda and Stephen Kuhn**

**Kevin Kunick**

*In memory of Ronald Visnoski*

**Mary Ann and Anthony Kushner^**

*In memory of Sr. Barbara Ann Vavreck, SSJ*

**Frank J. Lackovic**

*In memory of Catherine Lackovic*

**Mary Laird**

*In honor of the Sisters' 165th Anniversary*

*In memory of Eileen McLaughlin*

**JoAnne and Stephen Landini**

**Molly and Brandon Lang and Family^**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ*

**Stephanie Langer**

**Nancy D. Langowski**

*In memory of Albert and June DeLoreto*

**Mary and Urban Lariccia**

**Janice L. Larrey**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ and Lola Spencer*

**Becky and John Lascuola**

*In memory of Charles Donnelly*

**Susan and James Latham, Jr.**

**Katherine and Carl Lauer**

**Peggy and Dan Laughlin**

**Christine Laythe**

*In memory of Joseph Laythe*

**Kristin and Joseph Leone**

**Frances and John Letterio**

**Jody Lewis**

*In honor of Fr. Brandon Feikles and Fr. Michael Scanga*

**Patricia Lewis**

**Suzanne M. Lichtenwalter^**

*In memory of Judy Glennon*

**William Lillis**

*In memory of Patricia Tellers*

**Valerie and Jim Lindenberger**

*In memory of Mark DiPlacido and John Leonardis*

**Lisa Linn^**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ*

**Dorothy and Arthur Lippmann**

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**Thomas Loftus**

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**Mary Kay Long**

*In memory of Sr. Rosaleen Hart, SSJ*

**Patricia and Carl Longnecker**

**Lisa Lopez**

**Jenean Lord**

**Barb Lorei**

*In memory of Paul Lorei and Charles Horn*

**Irene and F. Brady Louis**

**Susan and Mark Lucas**

**Barbara and Graham Lund**

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**Mary Riley**

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**Joan Santangelo**

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**Susan Sarver<sup>^</sup>**

**Joyce Savocchio**

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**Rosemarie and William Schaaf**

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**Calvin Schroeck**

**Kathleen and James Schwartz**

**Barbara and Nick Scott**

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**Lisa Scully**

**Marleen R. Scully**

*In memory of Sr. Mary Claire Kennedy, SSJ*

**Thomas A. Scully**

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**Deborah K. Seng**

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**Joseph Sette+**

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**Nancy Shea**

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**Rev. Jerome S. Simmons**

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**JoAnn and William Sipple**

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**Victoria and Mark Sitter**

*In memory of Helen Sitter*



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*In memory of Dr. Richard Stevens*  
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*In honor of the VMC Class of 1977*



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**Patricia Stuckert**  
**Diane and William Stumpf**  
**Thomas Suddes**  
**Christianne and Richard Sukitsch**  
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*In honor of Sr. Moira Sullivan, SSJ*  
*In memory of Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Sullivan*  
**Kathleen C. Sullivan**  
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**Susan Tesore-Cross**  
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*In honor of the VMC Class of 1974*  
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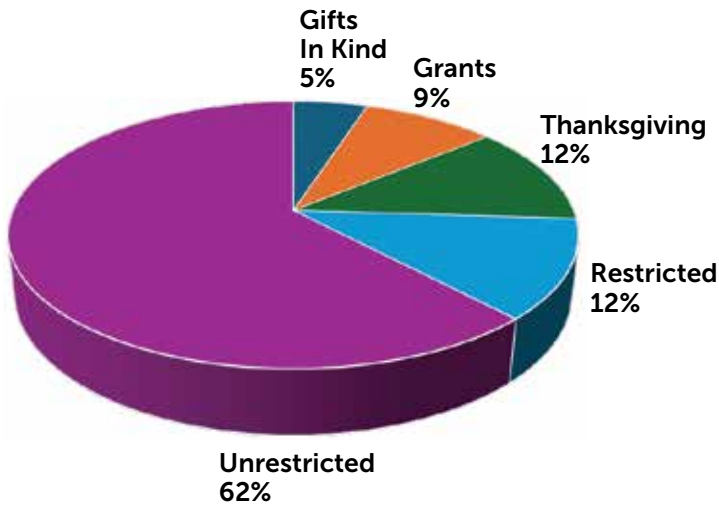
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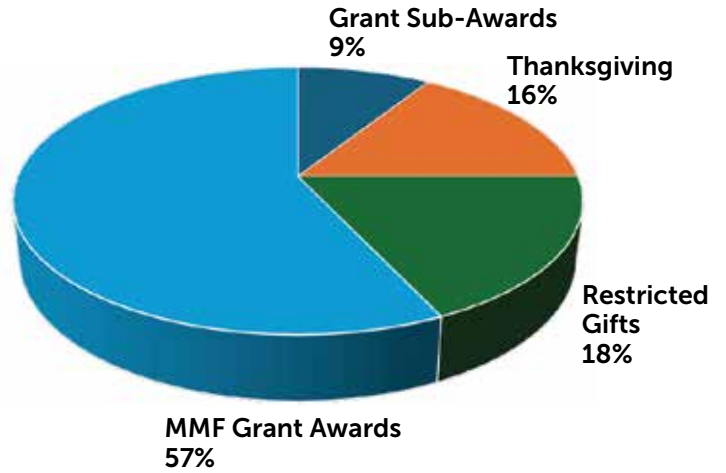
**Spring on the Sisters' Campus**

## 2025 GIFTS AND DISTRIBUTIONS

### % of Total Gifts



### % of Distributions



## PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Cathy Fresch, Chief Vision Officer, is honored to continue the Sisters' Prayer Shawl Ministry. She works with wonderful groups who knit beautiful shawls of different colors, shapes, and sizes. We are deeply affected by the comments from family members and those who receive them.

One of our recipients, Vivienne, her grandfather, Jeffrey, and her mom, Kristen, wanted to share Vivienne's story in pictures and words:



Vivienne in the hospital



Vivienne healing from surgery

Dear Sr. Mary Drexler & the Sisters of St. Joseph Shawl Ministry -  
 A note and heartfelt thank you for the beautiful prayer shawl you made for my daughter, Vivienne, before her latest surgery. It was so lovely and meant so much to know others were thinking about her & praying for her well being and health. The surgery went well and she is in full-on recovery mode. Her December surgery was the 3rd she experienced in 2025, so we are hoping it will be her last for awhile! I've enclosed a picture of Vivienne wearing the shawl while in the hospital - protected, warm & loved. Thank you for your care & kindness.

Mom's letter

### You may be asking, "How can I get a prayer shawl for a loved one?"

Email Cathy, [cathy.fresch@ssjerie.org](mailto:cathy.fresch@ssjerie.org), or share with a Sister. Word-of-mouth from recipients and those who make the shawls help spread the word. Another sure-fire way is going to [www.ssjmmf.org/ministries/](http://www.ssjmmf.org/ministries/) and choose 'prayer shawls.' All requests go directly to Cathy.

A big thank you to the Women of Holy Rosary Church and St. John the Baptist Parish for sharing their prayers through the comfort of a warm, handmade shawl. We are also grateful to Kate Tatter and the knitters of St. Andrew's Church, Debbie Knecht and the Sacred Heart Prayer Shawl Ministry, Joyce Sual and Heartfelt Hands Ministry, St. Joseph Parish Prayer Shawl Ministry, and many others.



Thank you for weaving hope and love with every stitch.



## 2026 Winter Appeal

The needs of the many will never diminish.

The Sisters of St. Joseph  
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They have embodied a vision where all neighbors  
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love ... unity ... and reconciliation,  
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**Join us today in supporting the Sisters and their  
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Contact Cathy Fresch,  
Chief Vision Officer, to learn more:  
\*cathy.fresch@ssjerie.org \*814-836-4253



Or visit [SSJMMF.org](http://SSJMMF.org)



# MISSION & MINISTRIES FOUNDATION

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF NORTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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## 2025 IMPACT REPORT

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*In the future, we will be sending most of our communications electronically. Please let us know if you continue to prefer receiving Foundation news delivered to your mailbox. Email Carol Hermann with your preference: [carol.hermann@ssjerie.org](mailto:carol.hermann@ssjerie.org). Thank you.*



## 2026 FOUNDATION EVENTS



**March 19**

**St. Joseph Day**



**October 24**

**SSJ Soirée  
Open House**



**August 15**

**Erie Gives Day**



**November 26**

**38th Annual  
Thanksgiving Dinner  
and Donor Fund  
Appeal**



**December 1**

**#iGiveCatholic**

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