St. Francis Foundation Honors the Memory of Sister Sylvianne Mattern

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pictured: Sister Sylvianne Mattern

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Dear Friends,

We dedicate this issue to the spirit of renewal, in tribute to the extraordinary work of Sister Sylvianne Mattern. Sister Sylvianne passed on this January, leaving with us a legacy of success, spiritual strength and the highest standards of service for St. Francis Foundation and all of our stakeholders to aspire to. Sister Sylvianne’s leadership at St. Francis Medical Center set the path for the Foundation to reach our entire community.

For those of you who knew Sister Sylvianne, please join us in honoring her endless compassion and strength. For those who did not have the chance to know her, we welcome you to experience the impact of her dedication through memories shared by those who were close to her.

As Spring arrives we renew our appreciation of the wonderful surroundings in which we live. We are pleased to share some inspiring stories of the Parish Nurses and Parish Nursing programs, helping those in need access the health care and education that enable them to enjoy and participate in our community.

We are also introducing a new Health Tips column. While our work focuses on improving the health of our community’s most vulnerable, we can all benefit from reminders to take good care of ourselves and our loved ones!

While the skies are clearing, sadly these times continue to be very hard for the families, seniors and people with special needs we work with. We look forward to setting even higher goals to give of ourselves to create this access to vital health services our neighbors need now more than ever.

With this Spring newsletter, we also offer our deepest appreciation to you – for your continuing support of life-improving and life-saving work made possible by St. Francis Foundation through Parish Nursing Community Outreach and the community-based programs we are able to strengthen.

Andrew Ochsner
Board President

Thank You!
For Parish Nurse Sharon Troll, no two days are alike. Today she may be out in the community making home and hospital visits, and tomorrow she might be running a hypertension screening or providing flu immunizations on-site at a low income housing complex. Sharon mainly cares for seniors in our community. She has a special bond with them and works tirelessly to ensure their well-being. She teaches fall prevention classes and even a Tai Chi technique that helps seniors keep their balance and strength, which in turn helps them to maintain their independence in their homes and educates them on what to do if they do have a fall.

“As a Parish Nurse, I understand that health is a continuum that includes physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health,” Sharon said. “Supporting and helping clients access their spiritual resources is central to healing.”

Sharon touches the lives of seniors and others in many situations: she runs groups for grief support and caregiver support, serves as a CPR instructor, and each November assists with Project Healthy Neighbors, a unique three-day health fair for the homeless population in Santa Barbara.

“Life is a sacred gift, and each person is treated by the Parish Nurse with respect, dignity and compassion.”

Sharon joined the Parish Nursing program 12 years ago. She began her nursing career nearly 30 years ago at UCLA Medical Center and brings her experience from a full range of settings including hospitals, clinics, public health, managed care, case management, hospice care, and as the director of a personal care agency.

“The human body has always fascinated me, especially our brains,” Sharon said. “Today's cutting edge neuroscience research is unlocking the doors to dementia, attention deficit disorder, and brain injury. Our brains are involved in everything we do – how we think, how we feel, our memories, our hopes and our dreams.”

Sharon recalls her experience with a client in his late-50's who, as a result of a major stroke, had lost his job, his income, his speech and some cognitive processing abilities. Despite these immense struggles, he has continued to overcome staggering odds to create a new life for himself with very little family support, thanks to the work of Parish Nurses like Sharon. She followed him through his recovery and helped connect him to the proper resources in the community to aid in his recovery.

“My clients and seniors have been my life teachers.”

“In serving, caring, and giving to our elders, I am blessed with the fruits of their wisdom,” Sharon said. “We laugh, we weep, we pray, we celebrate – we are a family, and as in all families, we take one day at a time, breathing in the fresh air and rejoicing our togetherness.”

Parish Nurse Sharon Troll demonstrates safety techniques to 103-year-old Santa Barbara resident Edythe Kirchmaier during a fall prevention class for seniors at First Presbyterian Church in Santa Barbara. Injuries related to falls are a leading cause of loss of independence, hospitalization and even death among older adults, and cost the U.S. healthcare system nearly $20 billion a year.
Sister Sylvianne Mattern
1916-2011

Sister M. Sylvianne Mattern, Ordinis Sancti Francisci, passed away on January 21, 2011 at the Provena Sacred Heart Home in Avilla, Indiana. Sister Sylvianne was born in Whitefield, Illinois on July 6, 1916, and she entered the Order of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart on March 29, 1942. She began her ministry at St. Elizabeth’s Hospital in Danville, Illinois, where she served for 12 years in the business office. She then served for six years at St. Joseph Hospital in San Francisco.

Sister Sylvianne is fondly remembered in the Santa Barbara community for her service at St. Francis Medical Center in Santa Barbara, where she served for 24 years, becoming the Director and Chief Executive Officer. She leaves a legacy of building and renovation projects, fundraising successes and service to the St. Francis Foundation.

During her time at St. Francis Medical Center, Sister Sylvianne’s extraordinary efforts brought the hospital many outstanding additions, including a $5.5 million expansion and modernization project. This brought new emergency services, a two-way communications system linked to paramedic emergency treatment, an X-ray department and patient recovery to the medical center. Sister Sylvianne was also instrumental in the construction of a new convent adjacent to St. Francis Medical Center as well as Villa Riviera, an assisted-living facility for seniors.

Until its closure in 2003, St. Francis Medical Center remained a testament to the generosity of those who gave their time and treasure in the continuance of its mission. Today, the mission of St. Francis Medical Center and the wisdom of Sister Sylvianne continues with the St. Francis Foundation’s commitment to supporting the health, well-being and dignity of our community’s most vulnerable.

Sister Sylvianne will always remain the beacon of light that led St. Francis Medical Center to be a blessing in the Santa Barbara community.
Some of Sister Sylvianne’s closest friends, colleagues and fellow sisters share their memories:

“Sister Sylvianne was an astute businesswoman laced with faithfulness to the Gospel that helped her garner unequaled support in the community for St. Francis Medical Center.”
- Sister Christine Bowman

“Sister Sylvianne was an excellent CEO, and everyone absolutely loved her. She was my supervisor for many years, but I also had the opportunity to get to know her on a personal level. I will fondly remember the times we would meet at night as a group to discuss issues that were important to Sister Sylvianne and to the community.”
- Dana VanderMey, RN
Program Manager of Volunteer Services at Hospice of Santa Barbara and Former St. Francis Medical Center nurse

“Sister Sylvianne was a remarkable person – strong, fierce and tender, with a heart that expressed her commitment to the faith. She was the force behind St. Francis Medical Center that made it the special place that it was. I want to salute Sister Sylvianne’s amazing spirit, and I trust she is resting in the arms of love.”
- Jan Ingram, RN
Cottage Health System Parish Nursing Program Manager and Former St. Francis Medical Center nurse

“Sister Sylvianne was an excellent woman. She was a very powerful administrator, but she was also a very spiritual woman. She treated all people with care and dignity regardless of their faith and economic circumstances. She is most certainly one of the most fascinating people I have ever met. She is one of the true heroes of Santa Barbara who did so much for our community and was way ahead of her time.”
- Reverend Paul Vit
St. Francis Medical Center neighbor and Friend of Sister Sylvianne

“Sister Sylvianne was a woman who was bigger than life and filled a room when she entered. I always saw her with awe as the Lee Iacocca of St. Francis. She was a woman ahead of her time and the main force behind all that St. Francis Medical Center was and what it means to those who miss it.”
- Marilyn Rickard Schafer
St. Francis Foundation Board Secretary
Parish Nursing also provide regular health care and education to people in need through other congregations, including: Trinity Episcopal, Trinity Lutheran, Our Lady of Guadalupe, First Presbyterian, Emanuel Lutheran, Goleta Presbyterian and on occasion, First Baptist and Unity Church of Santa Barbara.

As a Parish Nurse working in a faith-based setting at St. Joseph’s Church, Elly provides non-judgmental advice and referrals, keeping within the Catholic faith, and acting as an advocate for her patients and clients. Many of the people Elly serves are Latino, and have limited proficiency in English. Elly, who is bilingual, helps them navigate the social service and health resources that are available, in addition to providing hands-on care, health screenings and education for them and their families.

For Elly, there are a few patient success stories that especially stand out. One of Elly’s clients is a young woman who needed surgery to remove a tumor, but lacked health insurance. Elly helped connect the woman with resources in the county that would help her to obtain funding for the medical procedure she desperately needed.

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Parish Nurses, like Elly, exemplify the mission of the St. Francis Foundation by bringing health and healing, and most importantly, the human touch to individuals and families dealing with healthcare challenges, and assure that even our community’s most vulnerable are treated with care and dignity.

Parish Nursing in the Community:

Faith-Based Parish Nursing at St. Joseph’s Church in Carpinteria Delivers Health Where People Gather

For Elly Walters Bible, Parish Nursing is a calling. Every first and third Wednesday of the month you can find Elly at St. Joseph’s Church in Carpinteria. Working in partnership with congregations, Parish Nurses are able to provide outreach to many low-income families living in South Santa Barbara County – and identify those congregation members who need more care through hospital and home visits.

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Health Tips: Spring Flu Prevention Tips

Flu is often thought of as a “winter-time” illness, but the flu can strike at any time of year. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends you take the following actions to protect yourself and others from the flu:

- **Take time to get a flu vaccine.** The CDC recommends a flu vaccine as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses.

- **Take everyday preventative actions to stop the spread of germs:** Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze; wash your hands often with soap and water; avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth; try to avoid close contact with sick people; and while sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them.

Parish Nurses Jan Ingram (left) and Debbie Anderson (right) administer flu immunizations to agricultural workers in Carpinteria. In December 2010, the Parish Nursing Community Outreach Program provided over 300 free flu immunizations to local workers on-site at farms in the Carpinteria area.
Spotlight on St. Francis Foundation Grantee

This year, the St. Francis Foundation awarded its first-ever grant to the Diabetes Resource Center for the Eastside Childhood Obesity Prevention and Wellness Program at Franklin Elementary School. The Diabetes Resource Center works to reduce the alarming increase in Type 2 Diabetes and other obesity related diseases in children and their families by teaching and promoting healthy behaviors.

About 10 years ago, Dr. Michael Fisher, a nephrologist with the Fisher & Allyn practice in Santa Barbara, co-director of Cottage Health Systems’ Acute Dialysis Unit and an associate professor at the University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine, began noticing an alarming trend among children. Obesity was becoming more common among younger and younger people, and often leading to diabetes. In an effort to preempt this chronic and potentially life-threatening disease, Dr. Fisher founded the Diabetes Resource Center of Santa Barbara County. The program branched out into the community to several area schools, including Franklin Elementary School. Serving mostly low-income students who were at a higher risk of developing diabetes due to obesity, the school was the perfect place to host the program.

“The financial support and the validation from St. Francis Foundation are helping shift our community’s focus to the prevention and education for children and families,” Dr. Fisher said. “This is the key to staving off preventable diabetes and other chronic diseases that are literally killing this country.”

The Resource Center began the first formal physical fitness program at Franklin, and welcomed teachers and parents to join in for their own personal health and to set a positive example for the children. The Center also helped the students start a garden at the school, growing and harvesting their own fresh produce. At the start of the program, nearly 52% of students at the school were classified as overweight or obese based on their body mass index (BMI). Since the program’s inception, students’ BMI has decreased by an average of 15%. The program received a 2009 silver medal and a 2010 gold medal from The Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and was recognized as the School of the Year for its commitment to healthy eating on campus.

In December 2010, the St. Francis Foundation awarded the Diabetes Resource Center of Santa Barbara County’s Eastside Childhood Obesity Prevention and Wellness Program at Franklin Elementary School a grant to continue this life-saving and life-changing work in our community.

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Community Voices

Local Access to Vision Care

The need for vision care among low-income Santa Barbara residents was so great that in 1980, local ophthalmologist and eye surgeon Dr. George B. Primbs and local nonprofit SEE International founded the Santa Barbara Vision Care Program. Last year, the organization assisted 750 community members of all ages with their vision care needs, including providing glasses and performing operations to correct vision loss caused by cataracts, crossed eyes in children and other vision impairments. The St. Francis Foundation salutes Dr. Primbs and SEE International for their tireless work in the community and internationally to restore vision and treat preventable blindness for those in need.
St. Francis Foundation Announces Grants to Local Safety Net Services and Access to Healthcare

With the help of our community donors, the St. Francis Foundation of Santa Barbara was able to award grants totaling $478,000 to 12 local programs and organizations during the first of two 2010-2011 fiscal year granting cycles. A second round of grants will be announced in June.

- Center for Successful Aging
- Diabetes Resource Center
- Doctors Without Walls
- Family Service Agency
- Pacific Pride Foundation
- Cottage Health System Parish Nursing and Liberty Programs
- St. Cecilia Society
- Sarah House
- Teddy Bear Cancer Foundation
- Tri-County Transportation/Blue Dolphin Taxi
- Villa Majella
- Villa Riviera Transportation

Sixty-eight percent of grant funding went to the Parish Nursing Program at Cottage Hospital. This funding enables access to healthcare for the youngest to the eldest among the Santa Barbara South Coast community who are most in need, by channeling support to organizations that form a ‘safety net’ of healing, prevention and health education. With your support, Parish Nurses bring care and healing in the following categories:

- Faith based
- Homeless
- Mental Health
- Seniors
- Health Screenings
- End of Life Care
- Liberty Program

Welcome to our newsletter, In the Spirit of St. Francis. We invite you to learn, through the pages of this newsletter, how we are helping those in need in our community.