



# MISSION

*as a sacred trust*



*Sisters of Charity*  
of Cincinnati

## Mission Statement

Urged by the love of Christ, and in the spirit of our founder, Elizabeth Ann Seton, we Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati strive to live Gospel values. We choose to act justly, to build loving relationships, to share our resources with those in need, and to care for all creation.

## Sisters of Charity Sponsored Ministries

**Bayley** – a continuing care retirement community that offers a full spectrum of health and wellness lifestyle options.

**Mount St. Joseph University** – a coeducational, Catholic liberal arts university.

**DePaul Cristo Rey High School** – a Catholic, college preparatory high school for young adults with economic need.

**Seton High School** – a comprehensive, Catholic high school for girls.

**St. Joseph Home of Cincinnati** – a residential and respite center for children and adults with severe developmental disabilities.

## The Charity Family

By Erin Reder

It doesn't take but a short tour of the Intermediate Care Facility (ICF) at St. Joseph Home in Sharonville, Ohio, to see God's work in action. The caring touches, the loving words, the compassionate care and empowering staff help you experience firsthand what acceptance and pure joy are about.

Valuing the life and dignity of all persons and serving the marginalized are hallmark traits of the mission and charism of the Sisters of Charity. As a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity, St. Joseph Home has embraced that mission and carried it forward for the last 150 years. As the organization prepares for its transition from sponsorship, we honor the mission begun more than one century ago and celebrate the deep relationships built and its evolving future.

In 1873 St. Joseph Infant Asylum was founded by the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. Originally established as a maternity home for young, unwed mothers, through the years the organization has evolved to best address the most pressing issues of the time. Today, the nonprofit organization provides much-needed support services for individuals with complex disabilities and their families. Through its residential, respite and day programs, St. Joseph Home fills a variety of unmet needs.

Operating from its 33-acre main campus in Sharonville, Ohio, St. Joseph Home (SJH) ensures each and every child or adult in its care knows that they are deeply valued and cared for in this loving community. SJH strives to provide individuals with the best quality of life to reach their individual personal goals; with an optimum level of care and support through highly trained staff; and with opportunities for continual personal growth and diverse interactions.

Sisters Marianne Van Vurst and Lynn Heper ministered at SJH as president/CEO and director of nursing/assistant administrator when the organization closed its maternity home and solely began to focus on serving the growing population of infants, children and adults with complex disabilities. At the time they realized the original mission of the Home had been accomplished. Society was changing and unwed mothers were being more accepted; needs changed and new needs were being underserved.





What they lacked in experience serving individuals with complex disabilities, they more than made up for in their loving, compassionate service that spilled over to not only their residents but also to the staff that served the Home.

Sisters Marianne and Lynn beam as they remember the individuals, families and staff members they worked with during those 25 years at SJH. “It was a special gift from God to be able to take care of them,” says S. Marianne. “We never looked at them as different, but as special. We didn’t look at them as having disabilities but rather different abilities – even if it was just a smile.”

Adds S. Lynn, “People would ask, ‘How can you do what you do every day?’ My response: How can I not? They only knew love and affection; there was no hatred. I think that’s why so many lived for so long. They didn’t know they were different or had limitations. Our job was to make them feel as individual and unique in their own way.”

Current President and CEO Dan Connors joined St. Joseph Home in August 2012 saying one of the opportunities he most cherishes in his position is connecting personally with the individuals served as well as their families. “They are absolutely beautiful people in my opinion. While they don’t embody cultural values (wealth, power, etc.) in America and most of the world, they embody gospel values. The one thing that I learned very quickly from the people we service is that they most enjoy just being together. There isn’t this sense to which I have to perform or impress, all they want is for you to spend time with them. I think what you quickly learn to realize is there is a whole other connection to a human being that you can make outside of your words. I believe it taught me how shallow some of the relationships in my life are. Every relationship in life you expect something out of it, but some people aren’t able to do that. I have to let go of my need to control the nature of a relationship and rather let it happen. The people we serve are teachers of different kinds of models of interaction. The lessons only come from interaction with them.”

The staff today are a true testament to the dedication, compassion and continuation of the SC charism. Melissa Rogers, director of nursing, speaks on the level of care. “Many of those we care for have intense medical needs. In the ICF (Intermediate Care Facility) none of our residents can walk, only one can use words. A lot of times it’s trying to connect with someone in a way that they are able to interpret what the resident is saying without actually saying the words; it takes a lot of relationship building. ... As caregivers we have to be open-minded and know that what one individual wants could be, should be, and will be different than the next. Just because they have a commonality of developmental disabilities doesn’t mean all needs are the same. You have to be willing to let your walls down in order to connect with someone in a way that’s different than you connect with an individual without disabilities. If you don’t allow that wall to come down, then you’ll never be able to fully receive what is being offered.”





In addition to the ICF, which is located on the Sharonville campus with the Harold C. Schott Respite Center, SJH provides a variety of opportunities for individuals to receive the care level they need while also living a fulfilling life. Adult day programs, with locations in Sharonville and Blue Ash, support the pursuit of personal goals and diverse interactions. Experiences in the community, volunteering and potential employment are all in the realm of possibilities and offer individuals the opportunity to focus on enjoyment, engagement and growth. More recently Community Homes have been developed, offering greater independence to adults who are able to live with less intensive medical staffing. Once again this opportunity enables residents to receive the level of support they need to live a fulfilled life.



Each individual that takes part in one of the many opportunities offered through St. Joseph Home is loved, valued and assisted to achieve their best. Rogers says, “Our mission will always be to continue to help those people that often are not seen as having value in society. I hate saying it out loud, but people don’t find the individuals we support as being able to be productive members of society. It’s not true. We have to continue to support them, and also help others realize life is so much bigger than the money you make, the job you hold, or the house you live in. We need to change perceptions and help others to see the value our folks bring to everyone who comes into contact with them. They are filled with love and goodness.”

Adds Connors, “At St. Joseph Home we don’t want the intense care we give to them to be the end goal. We want that support to be so that they can go out into the world and share their gifts. We want to expose them to their community and allow their community to see that it’s not a good idea to marginalize them. They have the answers to questions, they bring enrichment to families. Our job is to change a narrative.”





Debbie Kaegi, an employee at St. Joseph Home for almost 42 years, embodies the mission of the Sisters of Charity and SJH. “I bought into the mission from the very beginning,” she says. “I started studying the history of the Sisters of Charity Community, and I admire the Sisters and what they overcame. I have been to the archives and read the scathing letters about the maternity home. The Sisters laid a solid foundation and didn’t compromise when it came to resident care. And I feel that way still. We continue to do the work; it may not be the same work, but we have continued to transition through the years and meet the unmet needs.”

Kaegi says that the individuals she serves teach her and all who encounter them every single day. “God put them here for a reason, and I truly believe it was to teach us to humble ourselves and persevere.”

The deep respect and level of care provided by staff members is a comfort and most appreciated by the family members. Making the decision to bring a loved one to SJH can be extremely difficult. Kaegi says it doesn’t take long, however, before they begin to understand that their role as parent is better filled when they have a designated caregiver to help. It frees them to love their child and enjoy the moments they have together even more.

Having the opportunity to speak with family members of a St. Joseph resident furthers this perspective. Kevin and Jeana Kelly made the decision to bring their 19-year-old daughter, Taylor, to St. Joseph Home in March 2022. After years of around-the-clock care in their home, they found that once the pandemic hit in 2020 the inconsistencies and stresses of home health nursing began to increase. Struggling like so many SJH parents and families with making the decision, Jeana turned to her faith. The Seton High School alumnae recalls that years ago after Taylor was born, the late S. Jeanine Marie Holthouse (a teacher at Seton) suggested the family visit St. Joseph Home and consider using its respite



services, which they did throughout the years. Fast forward to 2021, as Kevin and Jeana were considering their options, and Jeana’s mom suggested they once again call on her former teacher. “My mom suggested we pray to S. Jeanine, saying that if it was supposed to be that Taylor goes to St. Joe’s, Sister would be the one to make an opening happen for her.” A week after they prayed to S. Jeanine Marie, the family got the call that there was an opening and it was Taylor’s if they wished. “I think S. Jeanine had a hand in that one,” Jeana says with





tears in her eyes. “It was wonderful how it all played out. They gave us a couple months to get things situated, and the transition was easy on us and Taylor.”

The family, which includes Taylor’s four brothers, raves about the services offered and the stimulation she is able to receive at SJH. They know that the therapies, consistencies in care, day program opportunities and outings all add to their reassurance that Taylor is receiving the best care she possibly can receive.

And, after 20 years of being a caregiver, Jeana and Kevin can now be Taylor’s parents. “When I go out to be with her, I’m with her,” Jeana says. “We are part of a family. They put our minds at ease; there’s complete reassurance that Taylor is well cared for. You can see in every person who is there; they feel it is a privilege to work there.”

Kevin also praises the staff and leaders for their ability to draw on Elizabeth Seton’s spirit to ‘hazard yet forward.’ He explains that there was a time when Taylor was unable to go to SJH because she was on a ventilator, and the staff didn’t feel prepared to care for individuals on vents. Connors, who was new to the organization at the time, embraced Elizabeth’s call and encouraged his staff to learn. SJH sent nurses out to the Kelly home to train with their nurses until they became more comfortable. Says Kevin, “Dan came in and asked the questions: Who is being turned away? Why? What can we do to help them? It takes somebody with a little bit of guts and vision to see the obstacle and come up with a solution.”

Currently, St. Joseph Home has the highest percentage population with vents in the state. “We continue to evolve,” says Connors. “All decisions we make today still tie to the spirit started in 1873. You may not know everything you need to know, you just have to see a human being made in God’s image who has a need, see that no one is stepping up, and ask yourself why can’t that be us?”

S. Franette Hyc, current liaison for SJH to the Corporation Board for Sponsored Ministries, says, “I am confident that the mission of the Sisters of Charity will continue to be evident through the dedicated leadership and staff of St. Joseph Home. ‘Daring to risk a caring response’ is a hallmark of SJH as needs





constantly change for the current and future infants, children and adults who are served through various existing and new services and programs.”

Heritage, servant leadership, community and gentle presence are the guiding principles for all staff and caregivers. The community built is one of family, love and devotion. Embedded in its core is the Sisters of Charity charism. Says S. Mary Catherine Faller, who worked at SJH from 1999-2011, “It is something the staff embodies through their dedication and care. The place radiates charity, and it’s hard to put into words. The halls are filled with saints and angels, and the residents brought that out in the staff, too. It’s a culture of family; a home for everyone.”

Connors adds, “We are celebrating 150 amazing years in 2023, and now it’s our responsibility to carry it forward for the next 150 years. We stand on the shoulders of something much bigger than any one of us. I believe people want to be part of a team that is doing something bigger than themselves. The Sisters who made courageous decisions decades ago motivate us to make those courageous decisions today.

“St. Joseph Home is a place of immense, overwhelming joy. It’s a place where humanity is on display. It makes you think differently about what is power and strength after seeing the challenges these individuals face. They are the strongest people I know.”



*Sisters of Charity*  
of Cincinnati

*Mission* is the electronic newsletter of the Corporation Board for Sponsored Ministries of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. To unsubscribe [click here](#). Visit our website: [www.srcharitycinti.org](http://www.srcharitycinti.org)  
Follow us: [f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [v](#)