



Sisters of Mercy Celebrate 110 Years of Service in Laredo

In 1894, the Sisters of Mercy first arrived in Laredo, Texas, by horse-drawn carriages and trains to live among the poor and serve people in need, a mission that continues today. Recently, a new generation of sisters, along with community volunteers and Mercy Ministries of Laredo co-workers, commemorated the 110th anniversary of the Sisters of Mercy's service in the Laredo community.

The week-long celebration officially began on September 24 with a special mass for co-workers and individuals served by Mercy Ministries of Laredo. The date coincided with Mercy Day, the anniversary of the opening of the first House of Mercy in Dublin, Ireland, by Sisters of Mercy foundress Catherine McAuley. Another



Mercy Ministries of Laredo co-workers and patients celebrate a Mercy Day Mass on the grounds of the Primary Healthcare Clinic.

mass later in the day marked the golden jubilee of the entrance into religious life of Sisters Olivia Obregon and Bernard Mary Obregon, blood sisters who are both also Sisters of Mercy ministering in Laredo.

On Saturday, September 25, the Diabetes Olympics were held locally to help raise awareness among youth of this prevalent disease. Area children participated in Olympic-style games such as water balloon shot put and hula-hoop and jump-rope contests to highlight the importance of exercise in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and preventing diabetes. They also competed in educational diabetes essay, poster and trivia contests sponsored by the local Health Occupation Students of America chapter.

On Saturday, September 25, the Diabetes Olympics

Tuesday, September 28, marked a high point in the celebration when the new Casa de Misericordia Education Center was dedicated. The center will provide life skills education to victims of domestic abuse, including GED training, computer skills, culinary arts and English as a second language classes. The building was constructed with help from an \$850,000 grant from the Lamar Bruni Vergara Trust and furnished by funds raised from local individual and corporate sponsors, including Mercy Health Plans (MHP). In appreciation for these donations, two of the rooms in the Education Center have been named after Sister Mary Ellen Greeley, RSM, director of mission services at MHP, and her blood sister, Sister Delores Greeley, RSM, a retired professor from St. Louis.

The anniversary festivities culminated with a city-wide mass of thanksgiving celebrated by Diocese of Laredo Bishop James Tamayo on September 30, and a special co-worker celebration at Mercy Ministries of Laredo on October 1.

Local media provided ample coverage of the anniversary both before and after celebration events. For two weeks before the anniversary, the three major television stations ran public service announcements about Mercy Ministries of Laredo and representatives appeared on television and radio talk shows to spread awareness of the continued presence of the Sisters of Mercy in Laredo. The *Laredo Morning Times*, a local daily newspaper, ran a series of weekly profiles on the Sisters of Mercy leading up to the celebration, published a full-page feature honoring the sisters on the September 20, and produced an eight-page tabloid documenting the sisters' history and Mercy Ministries of Laredo. In addition, a monthly newspaper, *LareDOS: A Journal of the Borderlands*, published an 18-page tabloid on the sisters and the history of their work in Laredo and the surrounding rural communities and colonias along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"We are proud to be celebrating such an important milestone in the history the Sisters of Mercy and the Laredo community," said Daniel Guevara, president and CEO of Mercy Ministries of Laredo. "We are even more honored to be doing so with the support of the local community. Generations have benefited from the sisters' aid and compassion, so it is appropriate that we celebrate this occasion by carrying on their mission through education and expansion aimed to benefit those most in need." •

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"Future state" recommendations have been completed for the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) track of the Genesis Project, relating to new work processes for financial reporting, accounts payable, human resources and payroll. The Genesis Project is the Sisters of Mercy Health

System's (Mercy) multi-year transformation effort to enhance patient care and service while improving the work environment for Mercy physicians and co-workers. Changes in work processes will be supported by improved information technology in clinical and business areas throughout Mercy.

The ERP track has been working on a compressed timeline since the project was launched late in 2003, since these areas form a basis for all other operations. Genesis Project ERP team members, in conjunction with representatives from each Strategic Service Unit (SSU), first completed a "current state" analysis and then began developing a series of "future state" recommendations. These recommendations have been reviewed and discussed with a wide range of leaders throughout Mercy, and now are in the process of being finalized with regard to timing and budget issues. Initial deployment of ERP-related changes is scheduled to take place at St. John's Mercy Health Care in St. Louis and Washington in the summer of 2005. This will be the first aspect of the Genesis Project to "go live," with subsequent deployments at other SSUs to follow.

"The teamwork and positive attitude displayed by all those involved in the completion of this first major phase of the project has been very consistent with our Mercy values and standards," said Steve Mattachione, vice president-ERP for the Genesis Project. "Our interactions among the core team members, Subject Matter Experts and members of the other teams have come together well to produce good results."

TRACK UPDATES

Brief updates on the major activities of the other Genesis Project tracks follow. Each project track's activities continue to be supported by the Information Services Division.

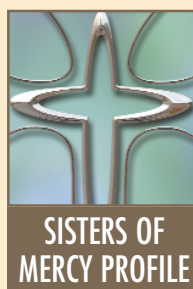
Revenue – The Revenue track, which encompasses scheduling, admitting/registration, charge capture, medical records, billing and accounts receivable, has identified Subject Matter Experts (Experts) drawn from each SSU. These Experts are conferring with the Genesis Project Revenue team members in a series of future state design consultations which will take place through the end of 2004. The outcome of this process will be to identify process improvements and best practices which can be implemented in tandem with updated technology, which ultimately will be standardized across Mercy.

Clinical – This track covers processes related to nursing, computerized physician order entry, radiology, laboratory, pharmacy, emergency, surgery, cardiology and ICU. After validation of current state processes in conjunction with the SSUs, the Clinical track is conducting research and best practice review, both from within and outside of Mercy. Clinical Subject Matter Experts will be identified this fall, with orientation and consultations in early 2005.

Supply Chain – The Supply Chain track, responsible for processes related to purchasing and management of supplies and equipment including capital projects, has two primary areas of focus: 1) supporting the other Genesis Project tracks, as supply chain processes are interwoven throughout all areas, and 2) preparing to convert the Pathways Materials Management (PMM) system to a Lawson system. A number of process improvements already have been identified during site visits to the SSUs in support of both focus areas. Subject Matter Experts will be named to assist in Supply Chain future state design work before year-end. Jerry Ledlow, Ph.D., CHE, joined the Genesis Project in mid-September as Vice President – Supply Chain. He brings significant healthcare administration and supply chain experience to the project.



Jerry Ledlow



Sister of Mercy Profile: Sister Rosemary Welsh, RSM

"Being a nurse is about caring for people's health, and being healthy is more than just not being in a hospital. Nursing also means educating people to take care of themselves."

This is the vision Sister Rosemary Welsh, RSM, has of her life's work as a nurse, social worker and health education advocate.

Currently, Sr. Rosemary fulfills this vision in her many roles at Mercy Ministries of Laredo. She serves as executive director of Casa de Misericordia, a domestic violence shelter for abused women and their children. She also is outreach education coordinator for Primary Healthcare programs, works with the mobile medical van program, helps with the *promotores* education outreach program, and serves on several committees dedicated to promoting access to healthcare.

To Sr. Rosemary, all of these responsibilities are part of a shared area of focus: ensuring the continued presence of the Sisters of Mercy in Laredo. Mercy Ministries of

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Laredo became the catalyst for the sisters' service in Laredo following the sale of Mercy Health Center in 2003.

"Even though the vehicle of our ministry has changed, our mission of caring for others has not," she emphasized. "Part of our message is that each person deserves

respect and dignity, regardless of their social or economic status."

Sr. Rosemary is frequently called on to be a voice for the people to whom she ministers. However, she says she often finds that "they don't really need you to speak up for them; they simply need help getting to the table."

To illustrate this point, she told the story of a presentation she was asked to give on the need for clean water in the colonias, low-income unincorporated communities along the U.S.-Mexico International Boundary. After meeting some of the colonia residents, it was decided that several of the residents would accompany Sr. Rosemary to the meeting. Once there, Sr. Rosemary said that she did not feel she was qualified to speak on the topic, but had brought a few experts who could speak from personal experience. Her bold move of allowing the colonia residents to tell their own story shocked many at the time, but it had an overwhelmingly positive effect.

Sr. Rosemary's deep connection to south Texas began in the early 1970s. After serving for a brief time in Brownsville, Texas, the young nun from Springfield, Missouri, moved to St. Louis to obtain a bachelor's degree in nursing. Having received her degree from St. Louis University in 1973, she served for several years at Mercy Hospital in New Orleans. In 1976, she moved to Laredo and joined the nursing staff at that community's Mercy Hospital. Seeing a need for doctors and nurses to bring healthcare into the community, Sr. Rosemary led the development of a patient education program that included hospital-based care and follow-up home visits.

In 1981, Sr. Rosemary left clinical care, traveling to Guatemala and other Central American countries as part of an outreach ministry. Although greatly enriched by these experiences, Sr. Rosemary's heart always remained with the people of south Texas. She returned in 1992 to the area where her ministry began, to work in Laredo with the Hispanic people she had grown to love.

"I am blessed to be doing something that I truly love," Sr. Rosemary said. "Following your vocation is more than simply living the religious life. It is being faithful to what you have been called to do." •



Sr. Rosemary Welsh, RSM