

Mercy Caritas Recipients Named for 2004

A total of 19 programs, serving families and communities throughout the Sisters of Mercy—St. Louis Regional Community and one third-world country, will receive grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 as 2004 recipients of the Mercy Caritas program. Mercy Caritas was established by the Sisters of Mercy Health System in 1987 to provide funds to health and human services programs that meet unique community needs. Now in its 17th year of operation, Mercy Caritas is providing \$490,000 in grants to the recipients listed below.

MERCY CENTRE—MANKESSIM, FISTULA HOSPITAL
Ghana, West Africa
Treats economically poor women with childbirth trauma-induced fistulae in Cape Coast, Ghana.

DIABETES OUTREACH PROGRAM
Fort Smith, Arkansas
Provides diabetic outreach services and education to persons who are economically disadvantaged and underserved in the community served by Mercy Northside Clinic.

INTER-FAITH COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL
Fort Smith, Arkansas
Provides a structured educational

program designed as an early intervention for at-risk, low-income children in the Fort Smith area.

MERCY CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
Hot Springs, Arkansas
Provides a multidisciplinary team response to allegations of child abuse in the Hot Springs area.

SOPHIA'S CENTER
Little Rock, Arkansas
Provides a mentoring program for women incarcerated in the Pulaski County Detention Facility.

POPLAR HOUSE CLINIC
Rogers, Arkansas

Serves the uninsured, economically poor of northwest Arkansas by providing primary healthcare and social support services.

MERCY INDIGENT DRUG PROGRAM
Fort Scott, Kansas
Provides prescription medication for low income persons, especially older adults and children.

NARROWING THE GAP
Springfield, Missouri
Assists mentally ill, economically poor individuals by supplying their first month's prescription medications.

BRIDGES TO UNDERSTANDING
St. Louis, Missouri
Provides a multilingual refugee community health worker to work to eliminate communication barriers between patients and health workers at Mercy's Neighborhood Health Center.

SAFE BEGINNINGS
St. Louis, Missouri
Serves physically/mentally challenged or mentally ill pregnant women and new mothers until the infant reaches 24 months of age.

CARING TOUCH
St. Louis, Missouri
Offers acute and long-term counseling

for pregnant, homeless women facing crises.

HEALTHY SMILES
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Provides economically poor children and their families with dental care, education and supplies.

FOOD 4 KIDS
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Provides food to low-income children who are chronically hungry.

MOUNT ST. MARY HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY OUTREACH
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Provides low-income, Hispanic families

with language training, education and health information classes.

MEDICATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
Laredo, Texas
Improves prescription medication access to financially disadvantaged patients.

HOPE MEDICAL CLINIC
McAllen, Texas
Provides episodic medical care to adults and children without health or medical insurance.

MERCY DELTA EXPRESS
Vicksburg, Mississippi
Aids economically poor women and

children living in underserved communities in the Mississippi Delta by providing mobile access to healthcare services.

PARENT AS TEACHER PROGRAM
Mound Bayou, Mississippi
An education program for economically poor parents and their preschool children of Bolivar County.

SENIOR OUTREACH—HEALTHY LIVING PROGRAM
Mound Bayou, Mississippi
Provides daytime activities and addresses the social, psychological and spiritual needs of elderly people in the Mississippi Delta who are economically poor.

2004 Advocacy Agenda Focuses on People

Driven by increased numbers of uninsured individuals, healthcare is moving from an agenda item to a national crisis, according to Roy Mitchell, director of advocacy for the Sisters of Mercy Health System (Mercy). The issue has emerged as one of the major policy concerns in the 2004 presidential election. In response, both Republicans and Democrats have advanced proposals to expand health insurance coverage and improve the affordability of care.

"In support of our mission to advocate for improved health policies in our communities, Mercy will continue to support efforts that address the plight of the 44 million Americans without health insurance," said Mitchell. For example, Mercy supports the American Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association's legislative initiative that would ensure healthcare coverage for all children through age 18 and assist others in paying for coverage. The plan would allow small employers to use tax credits to purchase insurance for their employees or allow low-income people to use tax credits to purchase insurance, either through the workplace or independently.

Also topping Mercy's 2004 advocacy agenda are quality and patient safety issues. Mercy supports legislative initiatives that revamp payment strategies to promote "best practices" in the provision of healthcare. Specific areas of legislative focus will include:

- **Disease management** – promoting payment structures that appropriately reward disease management programs.
- **New technologies** – balancing access to services and financial sustainability for hospitals providing new technology.

- **Medical event reporting** – supporting a national and uniform medical event reporting system.
- **Pay for performance** – supporting the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act by working with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to help shape indicators and reasonable deadlines for submitting data. Other priority advocacy issues for 2004 are:
- **Trauma center funding** – supporting initiatives and legislation that meet the challenges of trauma care/bioterrorism.
- **Medicaid** – ensuring that our nation's healthcare safety net is protected and safeguarded.
- **FQHC qualification** – permitting Catholic healthcare clinics to qualify as Federally Qualified Health Clinics.
- **Mental health parity** – supporting legislation that would expand insurance coverage to those suffering from mental illness.
- **Tort reform** – supporting a federal solution to curb the cost of malpractice coverage.

Mercy has also identified the following issues to monitor: a conscience clause that protects faith-based facilities from providing objectionable medical services, and incentives and grants for recruitment and retention of healthcare workers.

Through www.mercy.net, co-workers and others can learn more about Mercy's advocacy activities and reach their elected leaders by e-mail. Web site users also may sign up to receive e-mail updates on key legislative activities and information about how they can help by contacting their Congressional representatives. •



Kansas Hospital Offers "Ladies Night Out"



Fort Scott area women enjoy Ladies Night Out, a women's symposium hosted annually by the Mercy Health Center Foundation and Mercy Health Center.

Mercy Health Center Foundation and Mercy Health Center of Fort Scott, Kansas, have partnered to give back to the community they serve. For the past three years Mercy has hosted "ladies night out," a women's symposium aimed at exploring issues affecting women of all ages. "The community has supported us over the years and this is one way we can give back," explained Sharon Campbell, foundation member.

The theme for ladies night out is "Body, Mind and Spirit," and it is offered as a free community event attracting women from a large area surrounding Fort Scott. This year's event had its

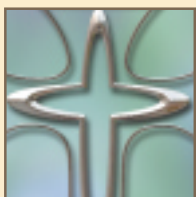
best turnout ever, with more than 400 women coming together to share and learn about the topics that affect them in today's world.

"One of the primary reasons that the women's symposium has been able to reach so many women is that it brings together a wide variety of health professionals in an informal setting, coupled with a fun and entertaining format," said Carla Farmer, director, marketing and development.

The first symposium, held in October 2001, was so well attended that organizers ran short of everything, Farmer recalled. Since that time, ladies night out has gained popularity as an event attended by groups of family members and friends. Issues addressed offer something of interest for women of every age.

Over the years, topics have included ways to cook and eat healthy, interrelationship of faith and disease process, survival tips for the sandwich generation, preparing children for career choices, dealing with the "superwoman syndrome," vitamin therapy, depression, pregnancy and menopause. Discussions are aimed at covering every aspect of a woman's life. Physicians and other health professionals lead the discussions and participate in panel question and answer sessions.

"The symposium has become an event that women look forward to every year," said Farmer. "It's an entertaining and educational way for Mercy to interact with our community." •



Sister Rose Marie Tresp, RSM

Sister Rose Marie Tresp, RSM, was in junior high when her family moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, where she attended the Sisters of Mercy-sponsored Mount St. Mary's school. She entered the convent in 1967, right out of high school, and has never regretted it. Her religious calling was inspired by the sisters and her desire for service, which also was inspired by the civil rights movement.

"I always wanted to help people and the Sisters of Mercy have given me the support that I've needed to do that," said Sr. Rose Marie. "Being a nun has allowed me to develop parts of my personality that I would not have had the chance to if I had gone into another profession."

In 2002, Sr. Rose Marie joined the staff of Mercy Medical Center in Laredo,

Texas (now Laredo Medical Center), working in the ministry of ethics and end-of-life care. She assists families in making decisions about end-of-life issues. The Mercy spirit truly lives in Sr. Rose Marie as she spends her days listening, comforting and facilitating a process to allow families to talk together about the next steps.

"Only 20 percent of the population die suddenly, so that 80 percent will have chronic or degenerative disease," Sr. Rose Marie explained. "Many families are faced with needing to make decisions regarding their loved ones and they often need the support of someone outside the family."

Sr. Rose Marie recently assisted a family who had a difficult decision to make regarding their father. "I just sat with them and let them cry and ask questions. I empathized with how hard their situation was. So many times when you give the family permission to let go without guilt, they are grateful for the assistance," she said.

When Sr. Rose Marie is not spending time with families in need, she is providing education to the hospital staff as well as the community. She also serves on the Institutional Review Board and chairs the ethic committee.

Sr. Rose Marie began her career as a teacher but quickly moved to directing religious education programs in parishes. After obtaining a master's degree in religious studies at Boston College, she directed the religious education program at St. Agnes Cathedral in Springfield, Missouri. While there, she began to lecture on healthcare ethics at St. John's School of Nursing. Sr. Rose Marie's interest in her current ministry continued to grow during graduate studies in ethics at Georgetown University, primarily at the Rose Kennedy Center for Ethics.

"Giving ethics lectures to nurses really got me interested in educating people on end-of-life decisions," said Sr. Rose Marie. "I now see that area expanding more broadly in what is termed palliative care."

After completing her graduate work, Sr. Rose Marie moved to Hot Springs,

Arkansas, and began working at St. Joseph's Mercy Health Center as Director of Ethics. Prior to moving to Laredo, she also served on the Regional Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy—St. Louis Regional Community.

In her spare time, Sr. Rose Marie likes reading, movies, staying abreast of politics and working with volunteers. She also enjoys spending time with her large family – she has seven sisters and one brother.

"I have had so many opportunities afforded me, it's hard to contemplate my life without the Sisters of Mercy," she commented.

"I've been blessed and through my work, I hope that I am helping others." •



Sr. Rose Marie Tresp, RSM