



News



Winter 2026

URSULINE SISTERS OF CLEVELAND



2025 Alleluia Award
Sculpture by Sister Diane Pinchot

Transforming lives through contemplation, justice and compassion



URSULINE SISTERS OF CLEVELAND

WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER

The *Ursuline Sisters News* is published three times a year for friends and supporters of the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland.

WOULD YOU RATHER RECEIVE THE NEWSLETTERS ELECTRONICALLY?

Contact Mary Moran at the number or email below.

Michele Fusco Scoccola

Director of Philanthropy and Engagement
mscoccola@ursulinesisters.org
(440) 229-5634

Mary Moran

Editor/Director of Marketing and Communications
mmoran@ursulinesisters.org
(440) 229-5607

Sue Angell

Philanthropy Associate and Grants Manager
sangell@ursulinesisters.org
(440) 229-5603

Kathy Pestotnik

Fundraising Operations and Database Administrator
kpestotnik@ursulinesisters.org
(440) 229-5624

Celebrate our 175th Anniversary all year long!

Visit our website to read testimonials and find the latest updates on events and gatherings throughout the year!



[www.ursulinesisters.org/
175th-anniversary](http://www.ursulinesisters.org/175th-anniversary)

LEAVE A LEGACY. Remember the Ursuline Sisters in your will. For more information about planned giving, contact Michele Fusco Scoccola, Director of Philanthropy and Engagement at mscoccola@ursulinesisters.org.

Message from Leadership

Dear Friends,

I remember from almost fifty years ago a song our novice director, Sister Rosemarie Carfagna, taught us which included the words, "Long is our winter; dark is our night." Since winter came early with unanticipated heavy snow in December, this has been running through my head as I long for sunshine and warmth into January and beyond.



Sister Laura Bregar

Ah...and then I recalled that in the northern hemisphere amidst all this bleak scenery, we recently celebrated the coming of the Light into the world centuries ago – and even unto this very day in so many graced ways. Both dimness and brilliance have their place in our lives, for how would we ever recognize the glimmers and sparkle if it weren't for the shadow?

Surely, savvy readers, you can anticipate where this is taking me. You are the twinkling stars and other heavenly bodies that reflect the light of the sun and the Son in this 175th anniversary year and always.

This was so evident when we joyfully celebrated Mary Stevenson with the Sister Dorothy Kazel Alleluia Award on the 45th anniversary of the martyrdom of Dorothy and the churchwomen. Mary is a shining example of what love in action looks like, love freely and fiercely bestowed. Hear her own words in this issue and join us in our gratitude to Mary for her work with COAR for over two decades.

Sister Lois Buck brings warmth into these cold days with her Stitching Ministry. Faces light up with delight when she offers quilts for fundraisers that support those who are in need across our diocese and beyond. Selecting colors and patterns carefully, Sister Lois crafts each piece she creates with organizations and recipients in mind. And, yes, you can contact her for detailed information about how to support your loved ones with a unique creation from her hands that will brighten their days.

Truly, relatives and friends add a glint of light and color to our dismal winter days. Read about Tim Ryan whose recent sharing at the launch of *Bonds of Charity* included tales about his aunts, Ursuline Sisters St. Vincent DePaul and Marcia. Indeed, as we mark 175 years, we recall each sister, her family and friends, and every one of you who are a part of our celebration and community.

We now embark on a new year of life and commit ourselves to both recognizing and being God's grace in the world. May we do so with abiding faith, lavish love and undying hope. Even as we shiver, may we shimmer! And may we do so in the spirit that Sister Irene Charette shared in her recent Christmas poem, "Let us rejoice! Hope has made bright our nights."

In great hope and always with love from your sisters,

Sister Laura Bregar
Sister Laura Bregar, OSU

PLEASE HELP US keep our records current with your new or changed email address.

Call Mary Moran at (440) 229-5607 or email her at mmoran@ursulinesisters.org.

A WELL DESERVED HONOR

Mary Stevenson presented with the 2025 Alleluia Award

The Alleluia Award has been given every 5 years since Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke, and lay missionary Jean Donovan were martyred in El Salvador. This award commemorates the light and service of Sister Dorothy by honoring someone else who personifies her conviction that a just world is possible through perseverance and struggle. The award recipient must be a person whose life reflects the alleluia joy of Dorothy and manifests her optimistic and courageous spirit in actively pursuing peace and justice.

In Her Own Words

by Mary Stevenson

When I was told I would receive the Alleluia Award, my first reaction was, "I'm not worthy." But then I realized the gift it gave me: a moment to thank the Ursulines for all they have done for me, my family, my classmates and friends, and for countless vulnerable children and families in Northeast Ohio and El Salvador.

This award also comes at a time of major life transition. Women's lives, especially, seem to be marked by passages, and this feels like one of mine.

This year I retired after 23 years as Executive Director of COAR, the Community of Oscar A. Romero, a school and foster care program in Zaragoza, El Salvador. From our Cleveland office—officially COAR Peace Mission—I managed fundraising and outreach. In El Salvador, I was literally walking in the footsteps of Sr. Dorothy Kazel and the many Ursulines who served there before me.

COAR was founded in the summer of 1980, at the start of El Salvador's civil war, between the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero in March and the murder of Sr. Dorothy and her companions in December. I worked daily with people who remembered Sr. Dorothy and her work with refugee children, many of whom became COAR's first residents. From them I learned about structural inequality—not only in theory, but through lived experience. The war was still present in broken families, traumatized communities, and limited opportunities. Yet people spoke with hope about education, healthcare, and the role of the Church in building a better future.

Retirement from that kind of work can be difficult, but I learned from the Ursulines to trust institutional strength



Mary Stevenson presented with the 2025 Alleluia Award

and commitment. I was only one caretaker among many. COAR is financially stable, professionally staffed, and transparent in its work. I have no worries about its future.

What I will miss are the children—about 1,000 students from pre-K through high school, and the younger ones in the small foster homes across the campus. I remember them through every stage: diapers, missing teeth, learning to read, and those high school years when they grow strong and start testing boundaries. I am especially proud of COAR's work with the Archdiocese of San Salvador to address urgent needs among girls, many between the ages of 10 and 16, recovering from trauma and sexual abuse. They receive food, education, healthcare, dental care—often for the first time—and, just as importantly, time and support to heal. Caring housemothers, psychologists, and social workers help them grow into strong young women.

Continued >

Continued from page 2

Of course, the children are helped most by the adults who are with them every day: teachers, housemothers, counselors. Those adults depend on maintenance workers, accountants, and IT staff. All of these people need salaries. That was my job. I may have shared smiles and hugs with the children, but my days were spent talking with donors, churches, and thousands of people across the U.S. and Canada who sacrificed their time, talent, and resources to support them.

Every child educated and healed is a child saved from poverty. Every salary paid is a family lifted from poverty. Poverty robs people of dignity and weakens entire societies. The Ursulines have understood this for 500 years: educating children, strengthening society. That is the foundation of social justice.

Another life passage came in 2003, when Sr. Sheila Marie Tobbe invited me to join the COAR Peace Mission Board. After 20 years working in the chemical industry and software design, I had started an MBA to explore a new path. When the Executive Director position opened, I agreed to fill in for six months. Twenty-three years later, here I am.

Sr. Sheila Marie had first introduced me to COAR in 1991. Three years earlier, in 1988, I entered another passage: recovering from a spinal injury caused by a gunshot wound to my neck in Cleveland. After I learned to walk again, she invited me to visit her mission in Zaragoza. Each evening we went to COAR, and I saw extraordinary work being done with vulnerable children. It felt like a continuation of everything I had already seen in her ministry.

After I was shot, Sr. Sheila Marie struggled to hide her distress from her students in a Cleveland inner-city school. The children gently drew the story out of her and responded with remarkable compassion, embracing her with the solidarity of those who also lived with violence. She carried that lesson with her to El Salvador.

During my 1991 visit, we went to see an elderly woman living in a three-sided shack. On the wall was a single photograph of her only child, killed in the war. When she realized who I was, she said, "You're the one. I think of you all the time. I think, 'your mother still has her daughter.'" I, too, was embraced by people who understood violence and loss.

My interest in El Salvador began even earlier. In 1979, after my first year of college, I wanted to do a year of service—something uncommon at the time. I felt I needed to see poverty firsthand and understand how the Church



Since retirement, it's the children that Mary misses most.

Thank you to Sr. Dorothy and to all the Ursulines who formed me, taught me, and trusted me to serve something far larger than myself—something that will continue to give me joy for the rest of my life.

responded. I asked the Ursulines about serving in El Salvador, but by then it was too dangerous. Still, it was an Ursuline—Sr. Ann Winters—who helped me find a place to serve. That year changed me, and I returned to college with renewed purpose.

My education at Beaumont, shaped by countless Ursulines, gave me not only professional opportunities but a deep grounding in social justice. Poverty and human suffering are complex. Who is "deserving"? I know I was not inherently deserving of my own education—it was all grace, generosity, and the legacy of donors who supported Ursuline schools for generations. That grace allowed me to pay it back and pay it forward.

My first lesson in social justice came from my mother: "There but for the grace of God go I." It continued in first grade, when Sr. Ann Letitia taught us about helping poor children. I collected pennies in a milk carton, accepting only one cent from each neighbor. Childhood lessons stay with us.

Sr. Dorothy once wrote that she wanted to be remembered as "an alleluia from head to toe." She was 41 when she was killed, forever young in our memories. I am 65 now, a bit worn. The alleluia lives deeper within me—because happiness fades, but joy endures.

Thank you to Sr. Dorothy and to all the Ursulines who formed me, taught me, and trusted me to serve something far larger than myself—something that will continue to give me joy for the rest of my life.

A PRAYER IN EVERY STITCH

Sister Lois Buck spreads joy through her sewing ministry

By Mary Moran

From the moment her mother taught her to sew as a child, Sister Lois Buck learned that stitching fabric together could also stitch hearts. That early lesson would later become a meaningful ministry—one rooted in faith, creativity, and love.

Sister Lois entered the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland in 1981 and dedicated many years to the ministry of education. She began her career as a special education teacher, where her patience and compassion helped children thrive. Her passion for serving families led her to create the Cardinal's Nest, a respite ministry offering support and care for families of children with special needs.



Sister Lois and Willow at a local craft show.

In 2010, Sister Lois began teaching and mentoring educators in Ursuline College's Master Apprenticeship Program, guiding teachers through the requirements and regulations necessary for accreditation. A few years later, in 2016, she was invited to serve as director of the preschool at St. Aloysius School in Cleveland. There, she worked with three- to five-year-olds, nurturing early language and math skills and opening young minds to the joy of reading. She later continued her educational leadership as assistant principal at Saint Anselm School.

After many fulfilling years in education, Sister Lois discovered a new way to serve God and others—through sewing. "I find the time I spend in the studio stitching to be very peaceful," she shares. "The time flies by without my noticing it."

She was delighted when the Bratenahl Community Center welcomed her and provided space for what she affectionately calls her "home away from home"—her studio. With the help of a grant, Sister Lois was able to purchase a long-arm quilting machine, allowing her to create larger quilts more efficiently and reach even more people through her ministry.

Sister Lois doesn't just make quilts. She sews playing-card holders for small or arthritic hands, creates sturdy bags from old jeans and fabric scraps, and continually recycles and reimagines materials—turning what might be overlooked into meaningful gifts. "When I create something that no one else will ever create, and in the end it brings joy to someone," she says, "I feel proud and fulfilled."

Each personal, custom-made quilt is truly a work of art, and every piece is sent to its new owner infused with love and prayer—quite literally a prayer in every stitch. Reflecting on her journey, Sister Lois shares, "I am so grateful to my community for supporting me in this ministry. I know that I am right where the Lord wants me to be."

Through her hands, her heart, and her faith, Sister Lois Buck continues to spread joy—one stitched prayer at a time.



URSULINE CONNECTIONS:

Tim Ryan's Story

By Sister Susan Mary Rathbun

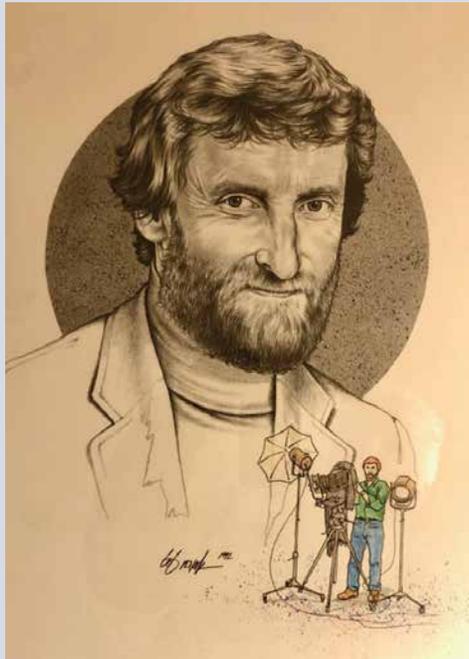
Over the past 175 years, Ursuline connections have taken many forms, and few are as rich and personal as the story of Tim Ryan.

Tim is a nationally known photographer and the nephew of two Ursuline Sisters, Sisters Marcia and Vincent de Paul (born Mary and Dorothy Witchner). He's been named one of Cleveland Magazine's Most Interesting People and has earned national awards for his magazine cover photography. Yet when Tim talks about his career, he keeps it simple: "It's the only thing I know," he says with a smile. "I really love it." After 56 years in his studio, he adds, "I never felt like I was going to work."

Photography was something Tim was encouraged to pursue from the very beginning. His mother, Alma, and his aunts—Mary, Dorothy, his mother's twin Ruth (Sister Camilla, a Humility of Mary Sister), and Madelyn—were all behind him. It was Aunt Madelyn, the youngest, who bought him his very first developing kit and camera. His mother and Aunt Madelyn were Villa Angela alumnae, and Tim himself graduated from St. Joseph High School (now VASJ).

It was through Ursuline connections that Tim met his wife, Gretta Gowan, an alumna of Ursuline Sacred Heart Academy and Ursuline College. They were married on August 8, 1970. Their daughter, Mary, is a Beaumont alumna, and their sons, Michael, a graduate of VASJ, and Patrick, the turncoat, a graduate of St. Ignatius.

The Ursulines were truly part of Tim's family life. Between the Ryans and their cousins, the Davidsons, there were seven



Sketch of Tim from St Joe's High School Hall of Fame program.

Ursuline Sisters. A Willoughby native, Tim attended Immaculate Conception Church and School, where Ursuline Sisters were his teachers year after year. He especially remembers Sister Theophane, who taught him in three different grades. Tim and his brothers received their sacraments at "the Mac" and served as altar boys. One of his favorite memories is spotting his Ursuline aunts sitting proudly in the pews at the first Mass he served.

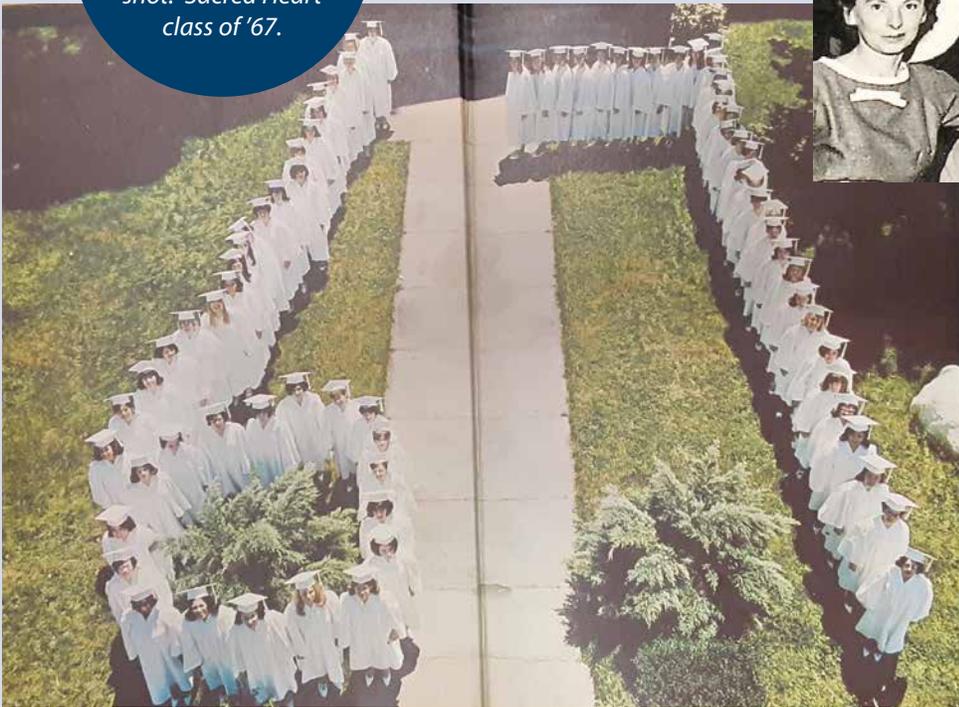
Family support extended beyond the classroom. Tim's father often drove the Sisters to events—and later welcomed them into the family home when visiting was permitted. In time, Tim took over driving duties himself.

While Tim spent some time working in New York City, his first commercial photography job came back home in Cleveland. He helped John Borza, the Cleveland Browns' photographer, filming Sunday games and even the Browns' 1964 Championship Game. No matter how busy his professional life became, Tim never said no when his aunts asked him to take photos for school events or yearbooks.

Tim's loyalty to his alma mater continued well into adulthood. He has served on the Hall of Fame Committee since its beginning and helped photograph and display images of the honorees—one of whom, fittingly, is Tim himself. The committee sneakily surprised him with the honor.

Photography was more than a job; it was a lifelong curiosity. Tim collected antique cameras, explored panoramic photography, and was even invited to speak on the topic

It took stopping traffic and climbing into a cherry picker, but Tim got the shot. Sacred Heart class of '67.



Tim (bottom left) and his family circa 1955.

The Ursulines were truly part of Tim's family life. Between the Ryans and their cousins, the Davidsons, there were seven Ursuline Sisters.

at the Cleveland Museum of Art. He also holds the title of "Funniest Person in Communications," an award he received from the Cleveland Society of Communication Arts.

Just recently, with help from his grandchildren, Tim closed the door on his downtown Cleveland studio after 56 years—a milestone moment.

Photography was more than a job; it was a lifelong curiosity. Tim collected antique cameras, explored panoramic photography, and was even invited to speak on the topic at the Cleveland Museum of Art.

Faith and service have always been part of Tim's life as well. He has served on St. Louis Parish Council. The parish's 50th anniversary book was photographed by Tim and written by Gretta and they both worked with the St. Aloysius 100th anniversary committee. Tim and Gretta have participated in Marriage Encounter Circles for 45 years. Tim now ushers at Communion of Saints Parish.

When Tim looks back, he does so with deep affection for his "Ursuline aunts." One story always makes him laugh. A young woman from Villa Angela once invited him to prom and warned him to behave—after all, the principal was very strict. What she didn't know was that the principal was Tim's Aunt, Sister Vincent de Paul. Imagine her surprise when Tim walked right up to the principal, gave her a big hug, and kissed her on the cheek!

Now 82, Tim and Gretta are enjoying retirement—spending time with their children and grandchildren, sharing memories, and making new ones in a home grounded in faith, love, and plenty of good stories.



DEVELOPMENT OFFICE
URSULINE ACADEMY OF CLEVELAND
6085 Parkland Boulevard, Suite 175
Mayfield Heights, OH 44124



Have a new address? Email? Phone number?

Please help us update your
personal information.

Call Mary Moran at (440) 229-5607

or

(440) 449-1200 ext. 5607

or email

mmoran@ursulinesisters.org.

Thank you!



Save a Stamp! Save Ink! No Muss! No Fuss!
And LOTS OF GRATITUDE!

JUST CLICK ON the secure donation on our website at
<https://www.ursulinesisters.org/support-us/donate>.

Visit www.UrsulineSisters.org to submit prayer requests.



Ursuline Birthday Extravaganza

175th Celebration

A Benefit to Support the Ursuline Sisters



Save the Date!

FRIDAY, MAY 8, 2026

St. Noel's Banquet Center
35200 Chardon Road • Willoughby Hills, OH 44094

Doors Open at 6:00 PM