

## Volunteer Spotlight

**Marilyn T. Hart** has been a long-time volunteer and supporter of Circles of Mercy. At our recent gala she was the recipient of the *Sister Gail Rieth, RSM Volunteer Service Award*.

A life long resident of Rensselaer, Marilyn spent over thirty years working for New York Telephone Company. Since retiring she has been involved in many community activities. She served as a trustee and parish council member at St. Joseph's Parish, volunteered at St. Joseph-St. John's Academy, is an active Mercy Associate and currently serves on the board of CoNSERNS-U.

When Marilyn accepted **Sister Kathleen Pritty's** invitation to help with the VITA tax program she had no idea where it would lead. She has almost single handedly brought this program from birth to full maturity, and has often gone beyond the VITA requirements in giving people the assistance they needed. Marilyn has also served as a guide and mentor to all of the other volunteers involved with tax preparation.

We are grateful to Marilyn for her hundreds of hours of service to Circles of Mercy and our clients. •



*Circles Director Richard Zazycki and Board Chair Catherine Owens Arduini present Marilyn Hart with the Sister Gail Rieth Volunteer Service Award.*

## Save The Dates!

**August 29**

Back to School Supplies Due

**September 20**

Macy's "Shop for a Cause"

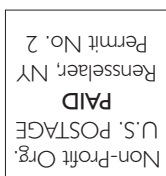
**October 18**

"Irish Nite" at Mercy Center,  
Albany at 7:00 p.m.

## Back to School Program

It's back to school time. So once again we need you! Circles of Mercy is helping to prepare the local Rensselaer school children who are in need of the usual school supplies and clothing for their return to the classroom.

To make a donation of or to help with distribution, please contact **Richard** or **Debby** at Circles by calling 518-462-0899. Thanks for your giving Mercy spirit!





SPONSORED BY  
THE SISTERS OF MERCY  
NORTHEAST COMMUNITY

**Mission Statement:**

Circles of Mercy honors the dignity of each person, offers hospitality and provides services to instill hope and empower individuals to reach their full potential.

SUMMER 2008

VOLUME 7

Number 2

**Director:**

Richard Zazycki

**Hours:**

M-F, 9 a.m.– 4 p.m.

**Programs:**

- Mentoring
- Tutoring
- Computer Training
- Support Groups
- Parenting Classes
- Self Enhancement Groups
- Professional Clothing
- Advocacy
- Catherine's Closet

• • • A 10-year tradition of providing hope, hospitality and empowerment • • •  
to individuals in the Rensselaer Community, especially women and women with children.

# Connections

## Gala 2008

On June 12, 2008 Casey's Banquet House in Rensselaer was the venue for our 2008 *Taste of Mercy* gala. About 200 guests feasted at a delicious pasta bar, carving station, appetizer, and dessert table that included fresh fruit with a chocolate fountain. The musician, **Mr. Tony Toscano**, did an excellent job entertaining us. Guests were very pleased with the Banquet House because they were able to sit down while they were visiting and having something to eat.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Hope and Hospitality Award to **Sister Phyllis Herbert** for her outstanding service to those in need. Sister Phyllis was a member of the first Advisory Board of Circles. Additionally, one of her significant accomplishments is her involvement in Honor Court, which is an alternative to incarceration program for those who are recovering from an addiction to drugs or alcohol. The *Sister Gail Rieth Volunteer Service Award* was presented to **Holy Spirit Church** in recognition of the numerous volunteers from this parish that serve in Catherine's Closet, our thrift shop. Additionally, **Marilyn Hart** was recognized for her tireless efforts in overseeing the VITA Program. This service provides free income tax preparation for people with low incomes.

**Barbara Guerin** and **Marilyn Hart** were the winners of the raffles for the Waterford crystal bowl and lamp.

Thank you to all of our corporate sponsors and guests who made our primary fundraiser a great success. We realized a profit of \$17,645.00. These funds will help us to continue to provide needed services to our clients. •



Sisters Helen Yonkers and Mary Amata (above) and Sister Kathleen Turley (right) all enjoyed the gala evening.



(Above) Circles Director Richard Zazycki presents Sister Phyllis Herbert with the Hope and Hospitality Award.



(Left) Rocco Acquilano accepts the Sister Gail Rieth Volunteer Service Award from Richard Zazycki for the Parish of Holy Spirit.

## Circles of Mercy Board Members

Catherine Owens Arduini  
Rose Barba  
Sister Eleanor Guerin, RSM  
Nancy LaRow  
Anthony S. Maney, Esq.  
Kathleen G. Pingelski  
Sister Rosemary Sgroi, RSM  
Sister Jane Somerville, RSM  
John Sweeney

## Corporate Sponsors

Polsinello Fuels, Inc.  
Sisters of Mercy Northeast Community  
St. Peter's Health Care Services  
W.J. Lyons, Jr. Funeral Home, Inc.

## CATHERINE'S CLOSET

### THRIFT SHOP

11 Washington Street  
Rensselaer

Open Monday - Friday  
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Tuesdays only, until 5 p.m.  
Clothes & Household Goods

## Connections

A newsletter to promote the mission and values of Circles of Mercy, a program sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

Eleanor Guerin, RSM, Editor  
Joanne Scheibly, Editor

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

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Rensselaer, NY 12144  
518-462-0899 • FAX: 518-462-2892  
www.circlesofmercy.org

## In Honor of Gifts and Memorial Donations

Circles of Mercy would like to gratefully acknowledge the following gifts and donations made.

### In Memory of:

*Theresa Graves (Mother of Sr. Gloria Graves, RSM)*  
– by Circles of Mercy Staff and Volunteers  
*Rose S. (Kunik) Lindemann* – by Richard S. Zazycki  
*Josephine DiDomenicantonio* –  
by Mario E. DiDomenicantonio  
*John J. Chenette* – by Diane Chenette Cleveland  
*Jasmine Blaize* – by Betty Bellino  
*Herbie W. Ganance* –  
by Penny Hill and Richard Zazycki  
*C.J. Joe Fox* – by Penny Hill and Richard Zazycki  
*Alice Acquilano* – by Mary A. Linton  
*Francis, Catherine and Patricia Kelly* –  
by William C. Kelly  
*Theodore and Ethel Matthews, William and  
Kathleen Matthews* –  
by Sister Marie Matthews, RSM  
*Sister Elizabeth Clements, RSM* –  
by the Staff and Volunteers of Circles of Mercy  
*Sister Mary C. Coons, RSM* –  
by Richard S. Zazycki and Sister Lois Carr, RSM  
*Rosemary Graham* – by Loraine M. Graham  
*Agnes C. "Aggie" Stillman* – by Richard S. Zazycki  
*William Lape* – by Joan C. Garrigan

*Catherine and Armand Guerin* –  
by Sister Eleanor Guerin, RSM

### In Honor of:

*Nancy LaRow* – by Marian L. Beckett  
*Rose A. Barba* – by Marian L. Beckett  
*Sr. Aloise Almond, RSM* –  
by the Staff of Circles of Mercy  
*Hilda Talantino* –  
by Ned Pitcher and Doris Treadway  
*Quy Vo (newly ordained Deacon)* –  
by Sister Peg Sullivan, RSM  
*James Ebert (newly ordained Deacon)* –  
by Sister Peg Sullivan, RSM  
*First Commitment as Mercy Associates: Regina  
Boyce, Patricia Bruno, Joan Garrigan, Betty  
Livingston, Rev. John Schopfer and Suzanne Waltz*  
– by Richard S. Zazycki, Mercy Associate  
*Sister Marian Zimmerman, RSM (Celebration of  
Silver Jubilee)* – by Richard S. Zazycki  
*Rev. C.B. Marbury (Celebration of 75th Birthday)* –  
by Penny Hill and Richard Zazycki •

To Make and Honorary or Memorial  
donation please contact  
Circles of Mercy at 462-0899

## The 2008 VITA Tax Program

This year eleven volunteers prepared tax returns at Circles of Mercy under the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. Marilyn Hart was the Site Coordinator for the program. Some of her volunteers included students from Catholic Central High School in Troy (shown at right).

In all, 370 tax returns were prepared at Circles of Mercy, which was 22% of all VITA prepared returns in Rensselaer County. The average adjusted gross income for those served was \$17,628. These clients averaged a federal refund of \$1,087 and one from NY State of about \$260. Circle's totals were impressive, representing 36% of all refunds and tax credits received under the VITA program in Rensselaer County.

Many thanks to the volunteers for the over 3,000 hours they spent in this effort. The staff of Circles of Mercy also deserves recognition for the scheduling, intake, and documentation work they did to make the VITA program run smoothly. This program is one more important way in which Circles of Mercy makes a difference in the lives of an otherwise underserved population. •



## Director's Remarks

It has been almost two years since assuming the role of Director of Circles of Mercy and I am still amazed daily what a wonderful ministry this organization is. I would like to speak briefly about the Mercy charism and spirit.

The hallmark of Catherine McAuley's charism is her preferential option for the poor. She dedicated her life to a generous service to persons in need, especially women and children. As the first Sister of Mercy, Catherine lived with a deep sense of hospitality, justice, compassion, and trust in the providence of God.

As Director, I have the responsibility of providing and integrating the spirit of Mercy, which is accomplished with the support provided by the Sisters of Mercy and Associates, our dedicated staff, volunteers and Trustees, as well as our many donors and benefactors.

The mission of Circles is our collective priority and we strive through our actions, to make the Mercy charism available each day. Anyone involved in any capacity with Circles is a friend of the Mercy Community. Together we have become a part of "Catherine's Circle of Friends".

Our mission statement reflects our commitment to Mercy, its core values and traditions. The statement echoes our spirit of Mercy, our understanding of it and our dedication to our Catholic identity. To be honest with you I grapple with trusting at times, especially during the current economic down turn. I worry too much and should trust more. We try each day to trust in God's providence, because as Catherine McAuley reminds us; "...We should never falter in our confidence that God will make all things turn to the best".

In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we strive to carry out her goal of joining those who need resources with those who can best provide. Empowering disenfranchised individuals, especially women, is one of our main concerns. We accomplish this through the sharing of knowledge, education and skill training, which allows clients to support themselves and be responsible adults and nurturing parents to their families. The Mercy mission is alive and well, permeating all aspects of the ministry. The Circle of Mercy continues to grow; the circle ever widens, is never ending and is always in need of friends. •



Richard Zazycki

## Women's Group

Mary Barry, our Women's Group facilitator, reports that their meetings are getting a great response from the women who attend. She is very excited about the group and her enthusiasm is contagious. It is her observation that Rensselaer is a community that has great services available to women but they are not that well known. Her goal is to bring these services to the attention of our clients. At each monthly meeting a guest gives a presentation and then engages the women in discussion on the topic.

Recent presenters were:

Jane Livingston of Cooperative Extension who treated the women to a cooking demonstration and talk on food safety;

Beverly Hickman, from the Unity House NOEP program, who came to let people know that they did not have to go to Social Services to apply for food stamps. She will meet with people at a convenient location to offer assistance for proper paper work in applying for food stamps;

Pam LaBuda from the Rensselaer County Board of Health who gave enlightening information on lead poisoning;

Tara Pompey who outlined the women's and infant services offered by the Whitney Young Health Center;

Beth Weest from Healthy Women's Partnership who gave important information on cancer screening.

We hope to increase participation through the fall and winter and then continue with small on-going support groups. •

## Freihofer's Community Walk

On May 31, walkers supporting Circles of Mercy participated in the Freihofer's Community Walk to raise funds to support our services and programs. The walk was in memory of Sister Gail Reith who was a good friend and supporter of Circles. The walking team weathered the rain, walked over two miles on a new route and raised over \$2,100 for Circles programs. Thank you to all the walkers and those that made contributions for this year's event. •

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*"It is for God  
we serve the poor  
and not for thanks!"*

— Catherine McAuley