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Our Mission Statement

The SSJ Neighborhood Network sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania provides leadership, advocates for local residents and partners with the broader community to develop opportunities for both personal growth and neighborhood revitalization.



On the Cover

On the front cover is the bright and beautiful stained glass window and lantern in the main entrance of St. Paul's Church at 16th & Walnut. The theme of this year's annual report is *What Light Lends To* - spotlighting sources of light that that lead to hope and change.

Photo by local photographer Andrea Sprickman

Revitalizing a Neighborhood Empowering its People



Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

Isift my samp beside the golden door!

-Emma Lazarus, The New Colossus



We chose our theme of this year's Annual Report based on the wonderful poem written at the base of the Statue of Liberty (The New Colossus) and composed by Emma Lazarus. It reminded us of the vision and compassion of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in providing light to those in darkness. When we researched Emma Lazarus, we found that she too was a visionary, compassionate woman who wanted to make positive changes in the world. Lazarus spent much of her short life advocating and starting programs for impoverished refugees immigrating to the United States which gave her the inspiration to create The New Colossus. Emma Lazarus spoke to us not only through her wonderful poem but because, like the Sisters of Saint Joseph, she lifted her lamp.

This year the Sisters expanded the services of the SSJ Neighborhood Network to include an east side location. This location was chosen based on the incredible need in the area such as high crime, poverty and overall neighborhood decay. These are the same reasons they founded our organization in 2000. The doors opened May 1, 2014 and by June 30, 2014 we had managed to visit over 100 households in our door to door outreach. Our new neighbors are thrilled to have the SSJ Neighborhood Network in their community and are working with us to design our programs and services dedicated to meeting their needs.

Some highlights:

114 children received programming

5,500 hot meals served to the hungry

3 community gardens continue to flourish

3 properties purchased and rehabilitated

4 families were provided affordable housing weekly farmers' market that accepts SNAP

5 new murals created sidewalks replaced on West 18th Street 12 youth in work readiness programs 7 women in Time Out for Moms 900 families received budget counseling

900 families received budget counseling, case management and referrals 100+ surveys completed and relationships made at eastside location

Thanks to your support, we have been able to provide much light to those in need in our communities. We would not be able to do this without you helping us to lift our lantern.

Sincerely,

Those you have helped and the staff of the SSJNN

ROOTS & REVITALIZATION

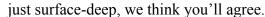


Revitalization requires those in the community to become rooted in their neighborhoods and greater good of the city. "If you can identify where you came from, a lot of time that informs the direction that you're moving in," said local artist Ehren Knapp, the creator of three murals in Little Italy. Through this form of art and revitalization, Knapp intertwined his own love of history with a family's roots.

The DeSantis Signs building at 540 W. 18th Street now dons a portrait of the late John R. Orlando. Looking for inspiration in old photographs, Knapp, who has a long time interest in aviation, immediately connected to those showing Orlando and his "Torrid Tina" plane. "I definitely felt it was a good place to go," he said of choosing to portray and honor the veteran and businessman of Erie. Orlando served six years as a pilot in WWII and opened the Orlando Funeral Home in 1949, which is still in operation today.

Eleven murals are now here to stay in the neighborhood. The five from 2014 were able to grace the scene due to funds from NAP (Neighborhood Assistance Program) tax credit donors (Erie Insurance, Marquette Savings Bank, PNC) and Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority. "What I think is great is when I'm driving down through the neighborhood now, I feel like something's going on - this unifying and interconnected activity," said Knapp. Not only opportunities for artists, murals also add to the Erie community by creating a sense of place or a face lift to once vividly defined cultural neighborhoods. Knapp said the works have created a destination and a kind of movement. "The murals are a highly visible sign of good things happening in this neighborhood," he added. Once you

spot the paintings and delve into their hopeful stories and roots that aren't









Other murals completed in 2014 include Ehren Knapp's on Morrocco Motors, Steve Mik's on St. Paul Community Center, and Kris Risto's on Majestic Bakery. Finished on polytab nonwoven (nicknamed "parachute cloth") by Ehren Knapp and soon to be transferred onto Mayer Brothers Construction Company is the laborer at right. The proverb "Il fin loda lópera" is fittingly emblazened on it, meaning "The end crowns the work."

SHOVELS READY

What was your first job? What did you take away from it? We bet you can conjure up memories, lessons and laughs about it.

This year eight teens from the neighborhood learned all that it takes to garden - from the urban farm plot to the table and market. But they aren't just

learning how to grow vegetables, they're learning life skills and growing their own work histories too.

One girl and three boys from the neighborhood interviewed and were chosen as paid workers for the community garden on W. 18th. Four other boys stayed on as unpaid urban gardeners with encouragment from neighborhood residents - volunteers/mentors Gary McEnery and Jordan Abbott. Their plot was at 19th & Myrtle. For the latter four, their payment came in what they sold at the farmers'market in summer and fall at the St. Paul Community Center parking lot.

Programs to teach the many values of work are integral to the youth and to the community and SSJNN hopes to continue these programs each summer. Relationship building that takes place with the youth is

also a proven reducer of violence; violence that continues to rear its head in many neighborhoods and must be met with such remedy. We are hopeful of more lives being touched as residents begin to answer a call and commit to making a difference - starting at the grass root level. We are hopeful the "hand up" for the youth will teach them to garden and work and thus nourish them for a lifetime. If you know someone interested in the gist of that story and not just giving a "hand out", we'd love to hear from you and help you make a difference for the community!

Commitment. Communication skills. Counting back change and seeing how effort relates to what they cultivate - It's safe to say the summer workers learned more than

a few lessons for the journey ahead. We look forward to watching them grow and seeing where the stepping stones take them.



Trimming and clearing the lot.



Another type of take-home: Making spaghetti sauce with mentor Gary McEnery.

Ready for market and "pay day" each Monday with the help of mentors, and sometimes a little red wagon.

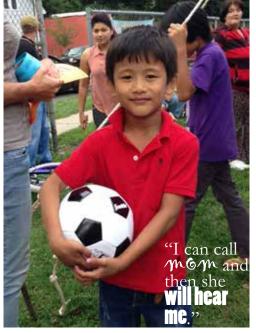
ANEWLEAF

September 9th, 2011 may not ring bells for most of us, but it's a milestone date for the Monger family in Little Italy. Reciting it quickly without the blink of an eye, Sanchi Monger said that's the day she and her extended family of more than ten people arrived in Erie from a refugee camp in Nepal.

Fleeing from their small farming village in the Bhutan, the family lived in the camp for 20 years before calling Erie home. Immigrants graced these streets years ago with their hard work ethic and drive, and the same is often present now with these New Americans. Nine of the family members live under one apartment roof, which they count as a blessing instead of their homemade tent from tarps and makeshift materials in the camp. With the exception of snow, "We like Erie really a lot," said Santa Rai, Sanchi's sister. Women in the family are excellent cooks and are anxious to take sewing classes at the Network, while men in the family are holding down paid employment. "We get freedom here," she says of the U.S., "and our children get a much better education."

One of those children eager to learn is a frequent visitor to SSJNN. Manish Monger, age eight, attends programs nearly every day afterschool and says he especially likes his reading tutor whom he meets with one-on-one each Monday. One of his other favorite experiences so far is going to Camp Notre Dame in the summer through sponsorship. While at camp he experienced his very first time in a pool, but certainly not his last. "I really want to go in the big swimming pool again. I really like this," he said, thinking ahead on a bitter January day.

Despite his young age, Manish acts as the translator for both of his parents and some other family members. He and older brother Ajit both easily switch gears between Nepali, English, and American Sign Language. On top of adjusting to a new country, their parents, Harka and Kumari Monger, were both thought to be deaf and mute. This was until Kumari came to pick up Manish from SSJNN one afternoon. A tutor happened to be walking out with Manish and shouted up to Kumari in the alley way. She instantly turned around. With the discovery of some level of hearing, that tutor, Carol Richardson, along with SSJNN, arranged for Kumari and Harka to have hearing tests. Kumari's results are hopeful and funds are beginning to be raised for molds and used hearing aids which are not covered by insurance. It was found that Harka does not have any hearing





Manish Monger, middle, is shown with his parents Harka and Kumari.

and used hearing aids which are not covered by insurance. It was found that Harka does not have any hearing, but he regularly attends classes at the Multicultural Resource Center to further his knowledge in sign language.

Richardson is excited for Kumari to be able to learn both English and Nepali and have a whole new world opened up to her. She has even offered to personally tutor her in English. "She is very very happy for this," said Manish of his mother's excitement for the opportunity to get a hearing test and hearing aids. He too is very excited for what's ahead, he said with his trademark grin, "I can call mom and then she will hear me."

VOLUNTEER SPO

Marilyn Stern knows what a struggle reading can be for children. Having spent more than 20 years in education, she has walked with countless pupils and guided them to success. Since retiring from Girard School District in 2004, she has been doing just that by tutoring youth of the neighborhood and bringing them up to grade level in reading.

Shortly after retiring Stern met SSJNN's founders, Sr. Mary Herrmann and Sr. Carol Wilcox, through a mutual friend. Such run-ins are what Wilcox refers to as "the God factor" and not mere happenstance. "I was invited to come and check out the facility and I've been here ever since." She began with one child but has helped at least seven in her ten years of volunteering weekly - sometimes working with the same child for a few years if that's what it took.

Whether with our youth or elsewhere, Stern is unscathed in navigating rough waters. She sees the good and perseveres. She lost her father at a young age when his plane was shot down in WWII and empathizes with many of the difficult

situations our youth come from. "You really get a scope of what's on their plates," she said of working with the children. In second grade she and her class grew Victory Gardens during the war and now she delights in seeing the community garden on W. 18th. She spent her first years of teaching in a rough



"It makes me feel really good to be able to be with her and give her that **boost** and that *opportunity*."

school in Philadelphia's inner city and in the '70s she helped bring the first three computers to Girard School District "when nobody wanted them in their rooms," she said with a laugh. With grateful hearts we honor and applaud her for her dedication and for passing along that spirit of forging ahead.

Flat tires, brakes to be mended, and young people looking for their paths are no headache to Eric Brozell - for him these add up to the excitement of Pedal Mettle, the earn-a-bike program at SSJNN's east side locale.

Sixteen youth have gone through the program since its inception in spring of 2014, and Brozell has been a volunteer since the start.

After meeting with SSJNN staff as well as volunteer Kris Nelson, Brozell was excited to get the ball rolling. The program runs for five weeks, meeting two hours each week. Youth start by learning the basic parts and terminology, and progress into choosing a bike for their size and learning about tools and repairs. Capping it all off is a safety component and a final flair of painting or designing their new wheels.

Brozell touts many other positives of the program, including problem solving, improved concentration, and confidence to tackle other important things in life. As part of Erie becoming a progressive, healthy, and resilient city, he believes our youth must become better educated on bicycle use and life skills. "Encouraging people to bicycle will allow our community to improve their health, environment, and economics."

We are so appreciative for all who were involved in getting Pedal Mettle in

motion and are excited to begin it again in spring with even more youth. "When riding a bicycle you are able to see the world in a whole better way," Brozell said. Indeed he is also an important piece in providing that light and that better way.



Participant Arlan Pulliam, age 16, is shown working with volunteer Eric Brozell.



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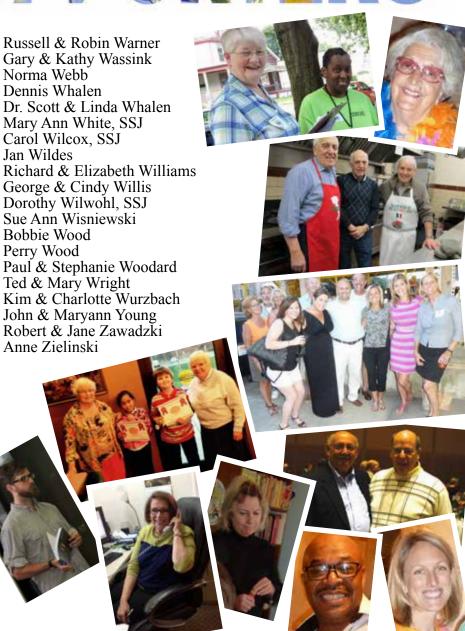
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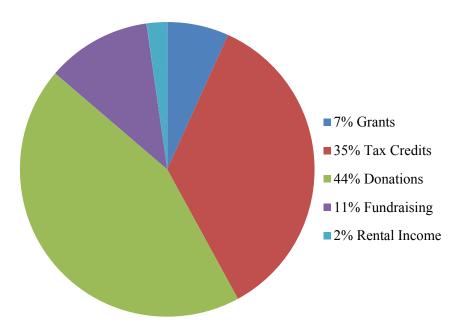
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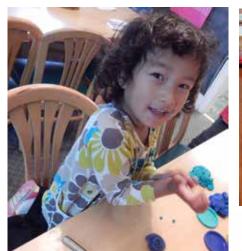
<u>Current Assets</u>	2014	2013
Cash and cash equivalents	389,747	409,467
Grants receivable	39,363	2,309
Property and Equipment, net	453,346	303,273
Total Assets	882,456	715,049

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	10,206	8,526
Accured payroll	5,569	7,031
Security deposit	5,843	3,870
Payroll liability	1,031	
Deferred revenue	<u>173,314</u>	124,538
Total Liabilities	<u>195,963</u>	143,965
Net Assets		
Temporarily restricted	20,958	17,498
Unrestricted		
Designated	75,000	50,000
Undesignated	<u>590,535</u>	503,586
Total Net Assets	<u>686,493</u>	<u>571,084</u>
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	882,456	715,049



Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.
-Matthew 5:15









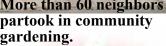
67 children created art.

















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SSJ Neighborhood Network



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