

Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Celebrating 20 Years of Service

“Keeping the Hearth Burning”

1650



Hearth in Le Puy, France, SSJ Beginnings

2000



The Initial “Office”, Little Italy, Erie

2010



10th Anniversary of SSJNN

2020



Celebrating 20 Years A-Blaze



(814) 454-7814

Check out our new website! www.ssjnn.org

Two Neighborhood Locations:
425 West 18th Street, Erie PA 16502
436 East 26th Street, Erie PA 16503

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

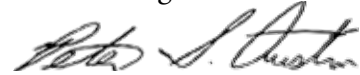
MESSAGES FROM THE BOARD AND DIRECTOR

2020 was a trying time for our community, but the SSJNN rose to meet the challenge. Led by our outstanding Executive Director and our dedicated staff and volunteers, the SSJNN was able to be a steady hand for the neighborhoods we serve. While the pandemic was and remains isolating to many, the Neighborhood Network helped maintain some semblance of social fabric for its many friends and neighborhoods.

Thank you to all those who support this organization both financially and by donating your time and talent. Erie is a better place because of your support and because of our staff and volunteers. Like everyone, we eye 2021 with hope for a much better year than 2020.

On a personal level, I'm proud to have had the opportunity to participate as Board Chair this past year and I'm excited to see the organization march into 2021 with the rewarding challenge of implementing its Strategic Plan.

Please continue all of your generous support. Let's make our Erie neighborhoods thrive.



Pete Austin, Board Chair

We began the year with grand plans to celebrate our 20th Anniversary through expanded events and branded marketing initiatives. But 2020 had different plans, bringing a global pandemic, economic uncertainty, and efforts to correct social injustices to the forefront in our neighborhoods.

These crises have brought us full-circle, ensuring our efforts remain true to the enduring, original mission of the SSJs. In 1650 in Le Puy, France, the first Sisters of St. Joseph gathered around a simple kitchen's hearth, dedicating themselves to ministering "with their feet in the street" to the needs of the "dear neighbors" suffering from unemployment, poverty, illness, and social injustice following Europe's Thirty Years' War.

The 2020 Board of Directors, Staff and many Volunteers of the Neighborhood Network share the deep compassion which was kindled by the fire in that kitchen's hearth and have guided SSJ ministries for generations. With deep gratitude we thank our donors and community partners for making possible the continued service to our dear neighbors.



Heather Caspar, Executive Director

EMERGENCY NEEDS



Over 5,200 hot meals were served at our weekly soup kitchen ministry at St. Paul's and more than 600 walk-ins were provided with emergency needs such as food, hygiene and cleaning supplies, diapers, sheets and blankets. Each neighbor was also provided with referral to community agencies which address underlying needs such as inadequate employment, unstable housing, physical and mental healthcare.



IMPROVED PHYSICAL IMAGE



A blighted property was demolished and replaced with green space and a property was renovated for sale to a family graduating from our home ownership program. Tom Ferraro and Ed Grout completed a mural on Larry's

Market, and a visiting artist from Spain, Manolo Mesa, completed a mural on Rog's. Public art benches by Brad Triana, sculpture by Jamie Borowicz and additional plantings were installed at Three Sisters Park on W. 19th St. and 200 residents and volunteers completed neighborhood clean-up activities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Through 7 housing units, we provided 39 family members with affordable housing, financial literacy, savings, and education toward the goal of home ownership. 8 business or home owners and 3 landlords received grants for façade improvements or basic home repairs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & CRIME PREVENTION



86 business and community stakeholders attended 24 meetings to partner in neighborhood development. 5 business owners received

grants for façade improvements. We employed 22 neighborhood teens for seasonal, highly supported work experiences in urban farming, bike repair and retail with neighborhood partners. Surveillance equipment was installed at 5 locations identified as hot spots.

OUR MISSION

The Sisters of St. Joseph 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.



BECOME INVOLVED

VOLUNTEER your time and talent.

DONATE hygiene and household products, non-perishable food and much more.

CONTRIBUTE via www.ssjnn.org or by using the envelope enclosed. Consider making long-term financial plans for SSJNN and the vital neighborhoods it serves across Erie.

2019-2020 SSJNN BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Chair: Pete Austin
 Vice-Chair: Phil Temple
 Secretary: Catherine Manning, SSJ
 Treasurer: Julie Pelkowski
 Immediate Past Chair: Cass Shimek
 Exec. Director: Heather May Caspar

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COVID-19 RESPONSE

Rather than allow us to mark our 20 years of service with an annual Gala or celebrations, the year 2020 had other plans for us (and the whole world!) The beginning of the year had us quickly making changes to meet the most immediate needs of our neighbors. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to all who assisted with prayers and support for our neighbors in these extraordinary times!

A few of our efforts during the first 4 months of COVID-19 included:

- Distributing 866 boxes of food and 765 hygiene bags in 12 weeks as neighborhood food pantries temporarily closed to keep their volunteers safe
- Continuing to serve the many meals each week at soup kitchen, but take-out style
- Pivoting all youth programs to take place outdoors, at front doorsteps or virtual, at-home
- Distributing bikes that volunteers fixed at home rather than in our building
- Interviewing and hiring teens for the urban farm youth work experience
- Tending to our community gardens and urban farm, and safely launching the Little Italy Farmers Market with new, social distancing provisions
- Continuing neighborhood improvement efforts such as public art, facade grants, and housing repair and rehabilitation projects



THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!

Since 2000, our ministries have relied on the support from many dedicated volunteers. These include everyone from receptionists and soup kitchen cooks and servers, to youth program facilitators and clean up crews, and so much more.

We celebrate 20 years of service in partnership with YOU and are so grateful to all who share their gifts and talents with our neighbors.

We sorely miss our more than 300 wonderful volunteers now more than ever!



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & YOUTH PROGRAMS



146 bikes were given away to youth and adults for exercise and transportation. 2 workshops were held for youth bicycle repair and 4 youth took a bike field trip. 279 neighbors used the Bike Recyclery. More than 600 joined us for 2 National Night Out



events, block parties and farmers market events.

26 youth participated in tutoring, one-on-one mentoring, or enrichment activities like art and cooking. 23 sponsored youth attended Camp Notre Dame.

COMMUNITY GARDENS & FARMERS MARKET



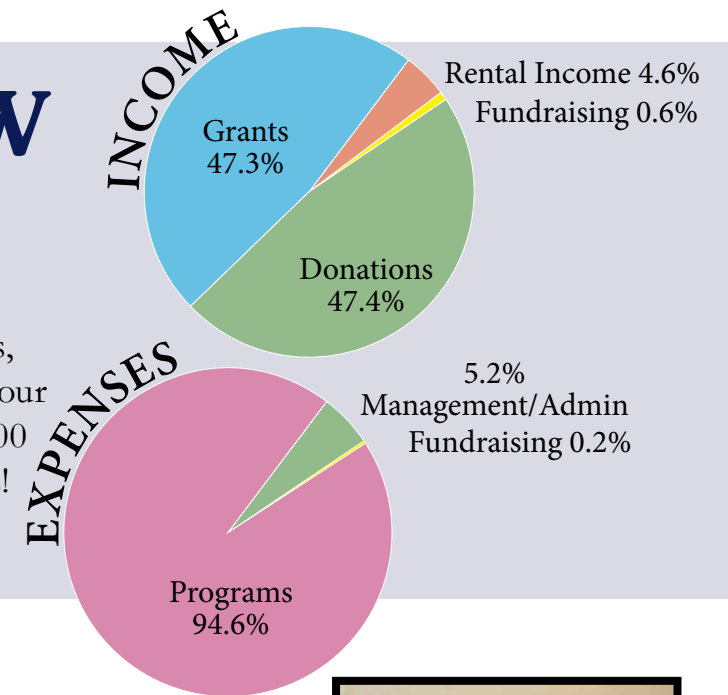
6 community gardens, 1 urban farm and 2 urban orchards provided more than 60 families with opportunity to grow their own fresh produce. More than 4,000 attended the Little Italy Farmers Market over 14 Mondays with our teens and 12 regional farmers selling

local produce. More than \$8,000 in produce match was provided for market patrons shopping with SNAP, WIC or FMNP senior vouchers.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

2019 - 2020 INCOME & EXPENSES

While COVID-19 cancelled our 2020 Annual Gala fundraising event, generous partners provided grants, corporate contributions and private donations to fund our work this year. And with an efficient staff and over 300 volunteers, nearly every penny goes to our programs!



THANK YOU DONORS!

Your support enables us to keep the fire burning!

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All contributions listed within these pages were received July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020. We sincerely apologize for any errors. Please alert us to corrections by contacting JoAnne Sprickman: 814-454-7814 or jsprickman@ssjnn.org. THANK YOU!



Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network
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A GLIMPSE INTO OUR HISTORY

2020 may not seem like a year for celebrating, but it's a landmark year for SSJNN and we are smiling behind our masks as we keep the SSJ mission and spirits a-blaze, looking ahead to our next decade of service. Behind all of this are great supporters like you and we cannot thank you enough!

Check out our newly re-vamped website, where you'll find more photos of our milestones, and a wonderful piece on our full history by Liz Allen.



2000
Meeting neighbors
door to door



2001
First ministries of youth programs &
soup kitchen thriving thanks to many
dedicated volunteers



2008
First community
garden established



2012
First murals,
banners, & more
grace Little Italy



2014
SSJNN expands
East, across the
heart of Erie



2020
Programs pivot yet
never cease during
pandemic

Excerpt from our history piece by Liz Allen. See the complete story at: ssjnn.org

They talked. They walked. They listened. They empathized.
Then they acted to help Erie residents revitalize our city ---first in one neighborhood, now in another.

This year, as the Sisters of St. Joseph celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, we tell the stories of the women whose vision and commitment sparked visible change in some of Erie's oldest neighborhoods.

You will hear the sisters describe the origins of the SSJNN and how their work in these historic yet oft-neglected neighborhoods continues the mission that the Sisters of St. Joseph have followed since their founding in France.