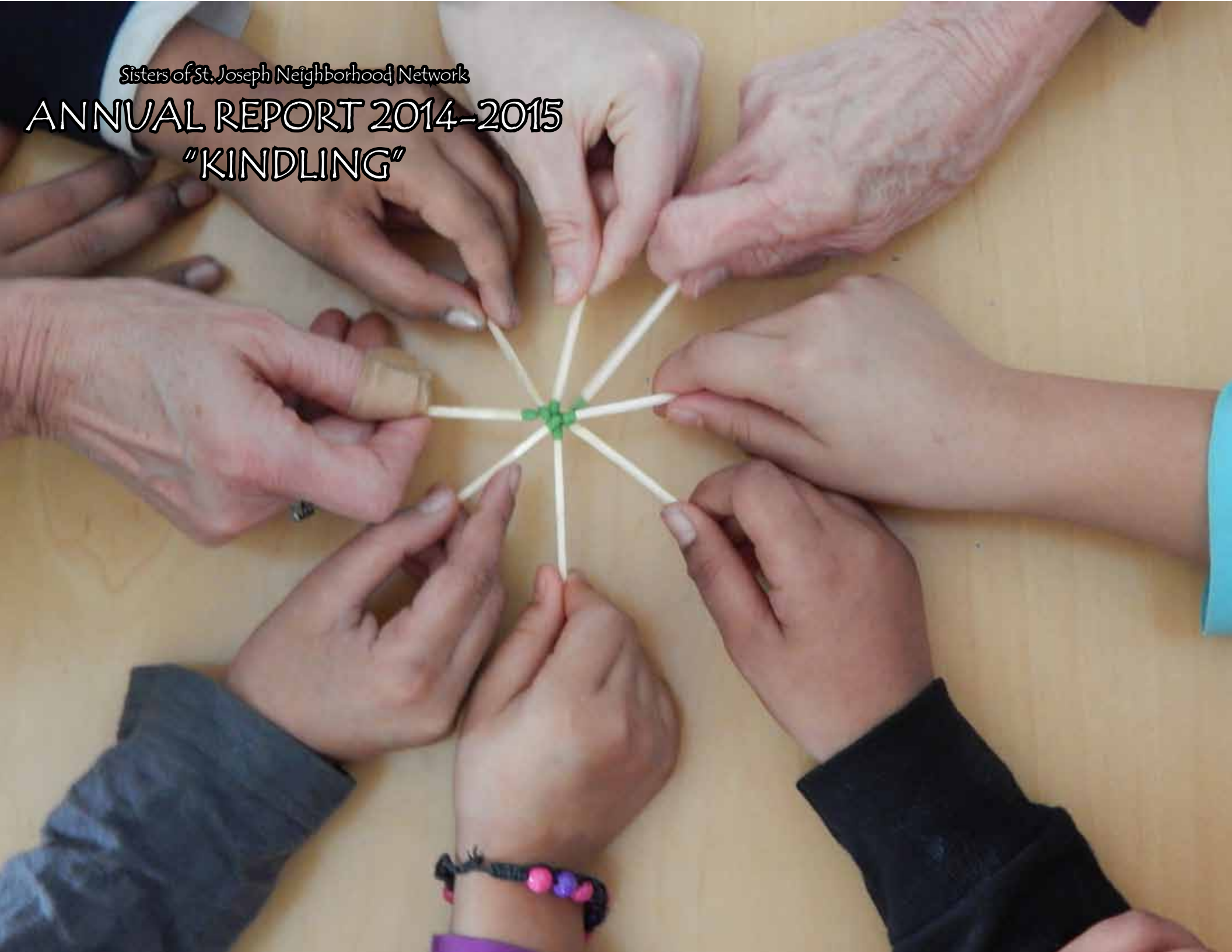


Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network

# ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

## "KINDLING"



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NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK**

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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**

Some of our youth, volunteers, and staff came together to symbolize how everyone has a hand in sparking positive change. There are many sources of kindling in both of SSJNN's neighborhoods, and we hope you enjoy this report that sheds light on some of them.

*Revitalizing a Neighborhood  
Empowering its People*

*"I am part of a light, and it is the music. The Light fills my six senses: I see it, hear, feel, smell, touch and think. Thinking of it means my sixth sense. Particles of Light are written note. O bolt of lightning can be an entire sonata. A thousand balls of lightening is a concert.. For this concert I have created a Ball Lightning, which can be heard on the icy peaks of the Himalayas." -Nikola Tesla*

Nikola Tesla was referencing his wonderful research which led to numerous inventions including the early theory of wireless communication. Imagine, one spark of lightening now keeps us connected through the internet, cell phones, tablets, etc. This theory can also be used to describe the spark of change we can see through our involvement with you. Because you have shared your light with the SSJNN, our neighbors and our communities are seeing the spark of positive change. Your torch has joined with many to create such positive energy for people who often times feel swallowed by the darkness of their lives.

We cannot thank you enough for your faith in the Sisters of Saint Joseph and their ministry to bring peace and hope to our community. We would not be able to accomplish so many things without your assistance. As you read through our annual report, I hope you see your face in the smiling faces and upbeat stories contained inside these pages. It is easy to focus on the negative in our world as it is played before us like a movie scene in all media outlets. Today, we want you to see the positive happening around you and because of you. Some highlights:

***Education: 155 Children***

***Earn a Bike Program***

***Mentoring***

***Tutoring***

***Work Readiness***

***Art Classes***

***Sewing***

***Cooking***

***Field Trips***

***Choir***

***Gardening***

***Neighborhood Assistance: 1,500 Served***

***Soup Kitchen***

***Food and Supply Pantry***

***Budgeting***

***Emergency Financial Assistance***

***Referrals***

***Neighborhood Revitalization: 3 gardens,  
7 apartments, 16 façade improvements, 13  
murals, 5 park benches, 10 bike racks, 300  
flowers planted***

***Rehabilitation***

***Community Gardens***

***Affordable Housing***

***Public Art Installation***

***Community Activities***

***Clean-up Events***

***Neighborhood Watch***

***Farmers' Market***

We are so blessed to get to work among some of the most wonderful people living in the City of Erie. Thank you so much for being part of the kindling and helping dreams comes true.

Sincerely,

Those you have helped and the staff of the SSJNN

# The Mouths of Babes

Sometimes kindling for a good spark can come in the form of new ideas.

So we asked some of our wise regulars for their top idea of what they'd change in their neighborhood to make it better, and here is what they had to say without hesitation:



"I'd have a store for shoes."  
-Diora, 9, west



"More cleaner spaces and gardens with flowers."  
-Ayasha, 8, west



"I'd fix up the houses."  
-Zarya, 12, west



"I would have even more programs like this to learn things."  
-Ridwan, 16, east



"Robberies; because even if people don't have money they don't have to steal."  
-Emily, 15, west



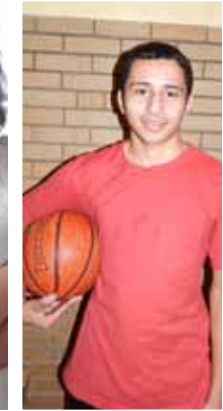
"More stores here."  
-Elvin, 8, west



"Less violence; because I lost someone in my family from it."  
-Jonathan, 15, east



"The shootings."  
-Alexis, 13, west



"No snow."  
-Josè, 15, east



"I'd change it so we wouldn't have snow here."  
-Debora, 7, west



"I would stop the gun violence."  
-Preston, 13, west



"Get rid of the crazy violence."  
-Trent, 15, east



"No more drugs because people are dying from drugs."  
-Antonio, 12, east



"More gardens to help the vegetables grow up to be healthy."  
-Sarah, 8, west



"I would have more programs to stop the violence."  
-Arlan, 16, east



"I'd stop all the bullying and everyone fighting with each other."  
-Samir, 13, west



"I'd have a store where you can pay for things just with pennies."  
-Jaheim, 12, east



"Better houses, because people ruin their houses."  
-Alex, 5, west

# Business Spotlight

Neighborhood corner stores are cornerstones when it comes to community and revitalization. SSJNN is fortunate to know some great and supportive business owners in its neighborhoods. Introducing two of them who both have been around since 1926: Larry Adiutori of Larry's Central Market on W. 17th and Sassafras, and Daniel Serafin of Serafin's Food Market on E. 24th and Ash. Here's to these dear neighbors and to hoping you'll soon stop by and meet them in person.



Larry Adiutori pauses for a moment at the store with children Ashley, Becky, and Larry III.

Larry Adiutori said his grandfather had the first store at 16th and Chestnut in the 1920s, and after his father returned from the war there was the spot at 14th and State. But since 1963 the family has been at 1626 Sassafras, and as for the future, "we're going to keep it going."

And that's not the only good news coming

from the market. The list goes on: the greetings, good humor, homemade sausage (we recommend the spinach romano), generosity (he donated the land for the first community garden), and the fact that they hire folks from the neighborhood. One neighbor has even been employed with them for more than 40 years and Adiutori remembers him coming in as a little boy.

"I know it's used a lot, but there's that old saying that if you enjoy what you do, you'll never work a day in your life," he said, "but that's the truth." Try as you may to find that spirit and dedication in the likes of a cookie cutter strip mall, you will not - and SSJNN is glad to have their unique presence that adds to the character of Little Italy.



Daniel Serafin in front of his laundromat that is adjacent to the market.

Lawrence and Mary Serafin carefully chose their location for a grocery store, as it bordered a Polish and German part of town and they spoke both of those languages. As for what lies ahead, Daniel Serafin carefully said in his friendly way, "we're hoping for maybe another ninety years."

"People say to me, you can't move, you can't take away that charm," said Serafin, whose ties run deep in the area. "Dad was even born in the back room," he added.

His shop adds vibrancy to the neighborhood, but he said he also sees it with Holy Trinity Parish and their "home coming" of an annual festival, and with the presence of the Sisters of St. Joseph. "You know you just get so busy running your own business that you can only do so much, but Margarita knows who to reach out to and it's so nice having a helping hand in bringing everyone together."

"The neighborhood is good - it still has a lot of good people," he said. It is with such zeal that SSJNN's east side location is progressing, and it is with certainty that Serafin is one of those good people.

# Volunteer Spotlight

It was difficult for the SSJNN to shine light on but two of the more than 300 fantastic volunteers that they know and love, but below are the unique stories from two gentlemen who live right in the neighborhoods they serve so well. In addition to SSJNN, they both volunteer with the mobile homeless shelters during the winter months, and other programs in the city. Here's to both of them and their contagious spirit to serve.

Mark Baumgartner, a neighbor on the west side, has a story that not so long ago was more bitter and less sweet. In the 2008 recession, he said he received a big dose of bad luck all at once - losing his job and finding himself homeless and hopeless and struggling with bouts of depression and alcoholism.



His service with SSJNN started out as the mandatory kind, “but then I just wanted to stay on”. Baumgartner said he likes seeing the changes in the community and likes to contribute. He describes those contributions as small, though his list of service might suggest otherwise: Snow shoveling, taking out the garbage every week, setting up and tearing down for the farmers’ market every week, decorating the garden’s tree for Christmas, helping to move furniture and more.

In 2010 just before Christmas, Sister Phyllis Hilbert got him into the Maria House Project. Since then, “it’s been a continual thing,” he said, “God’s helping me and people are helping me - like Sister Phyllis, Wally, and Father Pete.” He said he reads the Bible and tries to catch a Christian radio show daily, “because you can’t save yourself just by doing good works”. And while that may be so, his good works are big pieces of kindling in revitalizing the neighborhood.



“The sidewalks made a huge difference. I’m just doing one small part; but I like it.”



Darnell Stallworth is an active member of the advisory board for the east side and cares deeply about what he calls a “new breath of life” that has arrived there. “For a long time no attention was given to this neighborhood, and now with the Sisters here it gives it hope,” he said.

From helping to paint porches, to hearing out problems, Stallworth, originally from Philadelphia, said he tries to be understanding of others and be involved in the community he now calls home. “I believe in the community needing to pull together, so I think whatever little thing I can do, I should do it.” Stallworth’s down to earth way is just the kind of presence needed on the east side, and he easily helps to foster relationships. Residing just a few blocks from St. John’s, he sees the problems from a close-up lens and chimes in with possibilities.

While overcoming trials earlier in his life, Stallworth said he found himself in a nursing home at age 40 and did some reexamining and soul searching. “I really realized that attitude is such a key to life.” Whether with direct service or being part of the plans for change, his can-do attitude is now one of the keys for sparking positive change on the east side.



“I believe in the community needing to pull together.”

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Wegmans West  
Welders Supply



# Finances



## ASSETS

### Current Assets

	2015	2014
Cash and cash equivalents	\$557,232	\$389,747
Pre-paid expense	350	-
Grants receivable	-	39,363
Property and equipment, net	311,510	453,346
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b><u>\$869,092</u></b>	<b><u>\$882,456</u></b>

## LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

### Current Liabilities

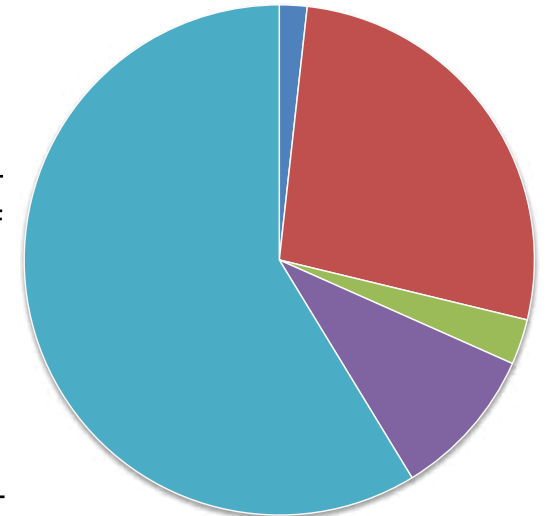
Accounts payable	\$29,995	\$10,206
Accrued payroll	7,710	5,569
Security deposit	8,940	5,843
Payroll liability	1,477	1,031
Deferred revenue	132,182	173,314
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b><u>\$180,304</u></b>	<b><u>\$195,963</u></b>

### Net Assets

Temporarily restricted	24,934	20,958
Unrestricted:		
Designated	100,000	75,000
Undesignated	563,864	590,535
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b><u>688,788</u></b>	<b><u>686,493</u></b>

<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b><u>\$869,092</u></b>	<b><u>\$882,456</u></b>
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## FUNDING SOURCES



- 2% Rental Income
- 27% Tax Credits
- 3% Grants
- 10% Fundraising
- 58% Donations



# Because of You



Over 60 neighbors grew produce in the community gardens and \$4,000 in food stamps were redeemed at the farmers' market.



32 people received affordable housing.



More than 10 large neighborhood clean-ups were held.



28 children stayed a week at Camp Notre Dame.

68 people participated in the earn-a-bike and bike lab programs on the east side.



600 neighbors came together for National Night Out; 400 on the west side and 200 on the east side.

83 children created art.



32 youth received weekly individualized tutoring.



15 children were individually mentored, such as Frankel below who travelled out of state for his first time.



More than 1,500 walk-ins were provided assistance on the west side.



4,410 hot meals were served.



334 families were serviced with diapers.



15 facade improvements were made to homes and businesses, totalling more than \$52,000.



2 homes were painted and more than 200 flowers were planted on the east side.



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**SSJ Neighborhood Network**

**How You Can Have a Hand in the Mission...**

**Volunteer** - Tutor, mentor, soup kitchen, gardens, office duties, events, marketing, neighborhood clean ups and improvements, earn-a-bike and various other programs

**Donate** - Hygiene products, paper products, (i.e. laundry soap, dish soap, deodorant, paper towels, toilet paper, diapers, hand soap), non-perishable food items, paper products for the soup kitchen, used bicycles and bicycle parts

**Contribute** - For your convenience, an envelope is enclosed. Please also consider making room in your long term financial plans for the future of SSJNN and its neighborhoods.

Please let us know if you have a change of address, if you would like to receive our newsletter; if you are receiving more than one newsletter; or if you would like to be taken off the mailing list.