

Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network
425 West 18th Street
Erie, PA 16502

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Our Mission: The Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network, founded 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.



(814) 454-7814
Two Neighborhood Offices:
425 W. 18th St. Erie PA 16502
436 E. 26th St. Erie PA 16503
www.SSJNN.org
Facebook @SSJNN
Instagram @SSJ.NN

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Planning for a Brighter Tomorrow
Every flower of every tomorrow starts in the seeds of today

Sisters of St. Joseph Neighborhood Network
2023-2024 Year in Review

Growth, Focus, and Vision: Reflecting on Our Past Fiscal Year

As Board Chair, it has been my honor and privilege to serve this exceptional organization over the past fiscal year—a period marked by growth and focus. We have welcomed remarkable new members to our staff and Board, bolstering the Neighborhood Network's efforts in reaching our program goals. Our accomplishments also included a partnership with Cleveland's City Architecture, Inc. to develop our first Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan.

The addition of new staff has enabled us to enhance and expand many of our programs, such as the Genesis Housing Program, Gardens and Greenspace, Youth Enrichment, Planned Giving, and the After School Program. These advancements were made possible by our dedicated volunteers and business partners in the Erie Community, along with the steadfast support of our Board of Directors.

As we prepare to celebrate our 25th anniversary of community service, we look to the future with optimism. While we could take pride in our past successes, there remains much to be done. We must not rest on our laurels but be ready for the challenges ahead. Under the leadership of our Board, our Executive Director, our extraordinary staff, volunteers, and the partnerships we have nurtured, we anticipate continued growth and success as we celebrate this milestone.

Though the future is uncertain, as American poet and activist, **Amanda Gorman**, states:

"The only way to correctly predict the future is to pave it, is to brave it."



Philip Temple, Board Chair

Save the Date

Mark your calendars to celebrate at the 18th Annual Guess That Tune Gala on May 3rd at 5pm!

Join us at the Bayfront Convention Center for a very special evening honoring our 25th year as a ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Northwest Pennsylvania.

Live music, dinner, themed baskets, silent auction, and our signature music trivia game will help us fuel our mission for the year to come.

More details on tickets and sponsorship to follow in the New Year.

18TH ANNUAL
.....
Guess That Tune
GALA
MAY 3, 2025

Silver Anniversary Edition

Planning for a Brighter Tomorrow

To best prepare for the future, SSJNN hired planning experts and held community forums to advise and guide our team in fulfilling the mission of revitalizing neighborhoods and empowering its people. The **Connections** plan from Cincinnati-based **Yard & Company**, focuses community development and mobility in Census Tract 19, stretching from 19th to 26th Streets and Chestnut to State Streets. This region has the lowest median household income, the highest renter occupied percentage, and the highest veteran population of the 6 census tracts we serve.

Additionally, our staff and community stakeholders partnered with Cleveland's **City Architecture Inc.** to complete the organization's first ever Comprehensive Neighborhood Plan that includes our full service area. This will serve as our north star for the years to come on revitalization, placemaking, and housing projects.

To access the full plans, visit our website at www.SSJNN.org.



Youth Enrichment

When students aren't participating in weekly tutoring or attending field trips across the county, they are involved in a range of activities held directly at the Network location in Little Italy. These activities are supported by our wonderful volunteers who share their gifts, joy, and patience. Youth additionally find enrichment and growth in the process of trying new things like sewing and cooking. Artistic expression is a major focus for activities, giving them a space to be free and creative.



Feeding the Future

Over the course of the year, we help feed over 12,000 neighbors by accessing healthy, local food through our emergency food pantry, weekly soup kitchen, community gardens, farmers market, and urban agriculture initiatives. This season, 15 youth workers served on these projects, learning to grow, tend, and harvest fruits, vegetables, and herbs with the help of our amazing garden coaches. We are planting seeds for positive change towards a future without food insecurity.



Genesis Expansion

For the first time, we have expanded our first-time home buying program beyond the Little Italy neighborhood! This follows our mission to grow in the most inclusive and comprehensive way, including offering all our programming throughout the entire service area. Thanks to a grant from the **City of Erie's American Rescue Plan Community Development Initiative**, we purchased a blighted single-family home on East 22nd Street. Renovations are underway and we look forward to sharing the transformation in the new year.



Urban Farm Rebuild

Disaster hit in June when our Urban Farm was vandalized just before our team and youth workers were slated to make the first harvest for the Little Italy Farmers Market. Hope is stronger than grief, and dozens of volunteers and local businesses provided free help and donations for a replanting event held the following week. The community support was overwhelming and powerful. Not only did we fully rebuild our farm, but we were able to donate excess plants to many other local community gardens in the area. Financial donations also supported the installation of 4 security cameras.



National Civilian Community Corps Partnership

In August 2023, we were blessed with a 7-member **NCCC** team from **AmeriCorps** to complete revitalization projects throughout our neighborhoods. They helped empty out a blighted property on West 19th Street that SSJNN recently acquired, filling 2 large dumpsters in one day! Together with our team, they performed maintenance on 2 community gardens, including painting, repairing fences, and spreading many yards of gravel, mulch, and compost.



Thrive in Erie Graduation

Thanks to the financial support of **Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA)** and **PNC Foundation**, SSJNN sponsored 6 businesses within our footprint to participate in the yearlong **Thrive in Erie** entrepreneurial program from **Paramount Pursuits**. Businesses ranged from food service to childcare to custom graphic design. A special shout out to **The Shop at 19th and Chestnut** for hosting this special graduation event with friends, families, and neighbors.



Volunteer Highlight

We've been adopted! A beautiful partnership has blossomed between us and the **University of Dayton – Erie Alumni Chapter**. They celebrated "**Christmas Off Campus**" at our soup Kitchen Christmas Party, where they provided countless gifts for our adults and served food to more than 100 neighbors. This intergenerational group also participated in our community service projects and they are goodwill ambassadors for the work we are doing throughout Erie.

Go Flyers!



Neighborhood Groups

This year, we supported three active neighborhood groups, **Eastside Neighborhood Association**, **Central City Neighborhood Association**, and **Historic Little Italy Wellness Group**, which meet to share information, resources, and good company. With funding from **Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA)**, we also helped neighbors create a beautiful new sign welcoming visitors to Washington Park. These groups foster leadership, address local issues, and educate members on best practices for neighborhood strengthening. By empowering individuals and encouraging collaboration, we're helping create more connected neighborhoods.



Board Mentorship

The (amazing!) SSJNN Board of Directors truly went above and beyond with their service during this year. Several members provided mentorship for our staff, sharing their expertise to improve the organization. This included **Christine Bowen** supporting our development team on creating a planned giving strategy, **Pete Austin** teaching our properties team about prevailing wage requirements, and **Cass Shimek** and **Bob Orton** assisting leadership through multiple hiring processes.



Cheers to retirement, Joanne!

We miss you already, *Joanne Sprickman*! From receiving in-kind donations to greeting neighbors at the door, Joanne was often the first point of contact for folks at SSJNN. Beyond that, she was integral in all event planning and securing coveted sponsorships. She fueled our mission as Administrative Assistant for 7 years. All while holding down the fort, Joanne also served as a longtime mentor for a New American family in the neighborhood. Join us in wishing Joanne all the best in her next chapter!



We Need Your Support

SSJNN stretches every dollar that comes to us through grants, corporate contributions, and private gifts from generous donors. In-kind donations and 5,430 hours donated by 440 volunteers helps! Still, we struggle with the increased cost of food, building materials, and the daily expenses of much of what we do— even as individual needs of neighbors have grown. Our expenses outpaced our income this fiscal year. Would you donate today, and help us continue to provide the same level of service to our neighborhoods?

Secure, online donations can be made at www.SSJNN.org/donate, or scan this code:



Planned Giving

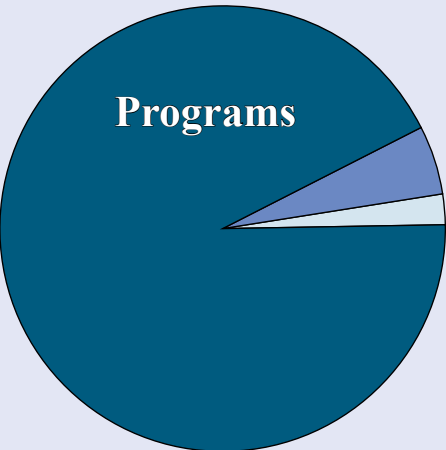
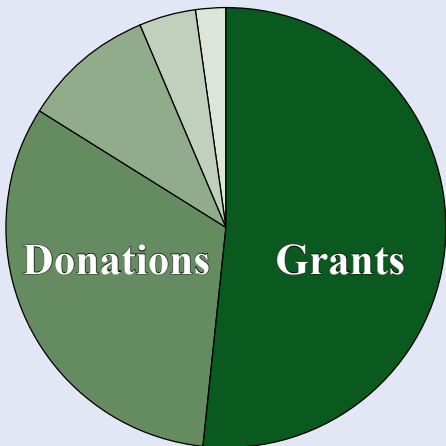
Legacy giving provides tax relief for you and your loved ones, offering a profound way to leave a lasting impact. Current supporters provide gifts through stock, 401K or IRA disbursements, and additional popular methods are to leave a gift to SSJNN in your will or to name SSJNN as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy. Together, we can create a legacy of love, hope, and transformation. We would love to speak with you about options to meet your needs. Please contact *Jenn Kennedy at 814-454-7814 x206* for more information.

Total Income \$1,077,194.00

- GRANTS 51.75%
- DONATIONS 32.25%
- FUNDRAISING 9.75%
- RENTAL INCOME 4.25%
- INTEREST INCOME 2.0%

Total Expense \$1,259,739.00

- PROGRAMS 93.0%
- MANAGEMENT 5.0%
- FUNDRAISING 2.0%



New Beginnings, New Staff

SSJNN welcomed four new team members! Filling vacancies, **Jennifer Kennedy**, Donor Relations and Volunteer Coordinator, and **Patrice Swick**, Neighborhood Engagement Specialist, both started in the summer of 2023 and have fostered great relationships and partnerships. Our new Director of Gardens and Greenspace, **Matt Yelkovich**, started in April of 2024 and immediately hit the ground running to not miss a beat of the growing season.

And while it falls outside the time frame for this report, we couldn't leave our new Administrative Assistant out! **Lisa Ramsey** started with us in October of 2024, completing our team.



Lighting Up Three Sisters Park

Since its dedication and opening in 2021, SSJNN's team has been eager to bring lighting to **Three Sisters Park** on West 19th Street between Walnut and Chestnut Streets. In partnership with a donation of posts and lamps from the **City of Erie**, there are now beautiful historic streetlights illuminating the green space. This project took several months and the tireless hard work of our team and volunteers, plus **Zeolla Construction**, and **Bob Neil** with the experts at **Stonehouse Electric**.



A Look Ahead

We Are Turning 25!

In 2025 we celebrate a quarter-century of service. In honor of our milestone year, gifts made during our Anniversary Appeal will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$25,000 by generous SSJNN supporters. This means your gift will have double the impact for our neighbors in need.

You can participate by (1) Designating your gift for the Annual Appeal, or (2) Increasing our Anniversary Match, which will help to sustain our neighborhood work into the future.

Contact **Jenn Kennedy** at **814-454-7814 x206** to help increase our match.



Anthony's Garden Dedication

On a beautiful sunny day in October, the community gathered to dedicate the former Namaste Garden at Sassafras and 18th Streets in honor of our beloved, late youth worker **Anthony Cortes**. The garden has tripled in size by expanding to two vacant lots, and now includes perennial and annual produce tended by youth workers, a shed, a swing, native pollinator flowers, picnic tables, benches, a washing sink, and a memorial to Anthony with a plaque created by his former garden coach **Gary McEnergy**.



OUR GRATITUDE TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED OUR MISSION: Jeanette Adamczyk, Martha Adamczyk, Sr. Marjorie Adams, SSJ, AFSCME Local 2450 American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, Jay Alberstadt, Destiny Aldridge, Linda & Elbert Allen, Elizabeth Allen, Amark Environmental, Andy's Equipment Exchange, Anonymous Donors (17), Elsie Arnold, Mary Anne Ashworth, Auto Express Kia, Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Center, Inc., Jeanette & Robert Barczynski, Tony & Jean Barry, Barbara Bauda, Heidi Beezub, Donteja Bender, Benevity Fund, Maggie Benson, Bianchi Honda, Biroscak Printing, Eileen Blakeslee, Gerald Blaszczyk, Blessed Sacrament School, Monica Bloomstine, Casimir Bogniak, Cynthia Brown, Nancy Brown, John Buchna, Heidi Burton, Burton Funeral Home, Bob & Marianne Calabrese, The Carmichael Family, Mary Ann Carmichael, Heather May Caspar, Gay Catania, Joy Catania, Cathedral Preparatory School, Tom & Amy Chaney, Kathleen Chimenti, Margaret Chrymko, Vincent Cieslewicz, Steph Ciner, Circolo Nazionale Lodge No. 122, Almi Clerkin, Sr. Colette Palmer, SSJ, Joan Collins, Community Shelter Services, Danielle & Anthony Concilla, Country Fair Stores, Michelle Cuzzola, Dahlkemper Custom Jewelers, Dailey Supply, Inc., Susan Daley, Judy Dauson, Jennifer Davis, Cindy DeCoursey, Ellen Deering, Judith & John DelFreo, Kathleen Delio, Lucia DePalma, Sr. Josephine DePetro, SSJ, Sr. Lucille DeStefano, SSJ, Mary Deutsch, Raylene Dill, Mary Therese Dinga, Chuck & Nancy Donnelly, Beth Dubik, Janice Durney, Gretchen & Dave Durney, East Erie Moose Family Center #593, ECRE, LLC, Jean A. Eller, Erie Construction Council, Inc., Erie County Council of Garden Clubs, Erie Otters Hockey Club, Erie School District, Erie Zoological Society, Guy Euliano, Europa Delicatessen, Barbara Famageltto, Katherine Fatter, Susannah Faulkner, Madeleine Felion, Joan Fels, Gloria Ferritto, First Presbyterian Church of Waterford, Barbara Fish, Sharon Fish, Antonette & Tim Flatley, Rebecca & James Flynn, Ross & Jacqueline Fonticella, Foresters' Beneficial Association, Mary Forgenie, Sr. Margaret Frank, SSJ, Lorie Fritts, Sr. Linda Fusco, SSJ, Merianne Gaber, Mary Gallagher, Janet & John Gambates, Theresa Gamble, Gannon University, David Gasiewski, Mary Gensheimer, Gerlach's Garden & Floral, Peter & Jane Gilewicz, Linda Gleeson, Mark Golden, Maureen Griffin, John Groh, Karen Grove, Geoff Groves, Laura E. Guncheon, Robert Hafenstiner, Mary Alice Haibach, Mark Haibach, Russ & Sally Hampton, Jack Hanrahan, Harley Davidson of Erie, Sara & Randy Harris, Helen Hedderick, Jean Heintzel, Marilyn Helsley, Naida Hernandez, Sr. Mary Herrmann, SSJ, The Hershey Company, Sr. Susan Herzing, SSJ, Highmark Health, Bill & Becky Hilbert, Joe & Christina Hilbert, Martha Hilbert, Sr. Phyllis Hilbert, SSJ, Jack Hilliard, Jean Hoblitzell, Paula & Edward Hokaj, Patricia Holstein, Kerry Hughes, Humes Chrysler Jeep



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GRANTS: Catholic Foundation of Northwestern PA, City of Erie, Erie Community Foundation, Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority (ECGRA), Erie County of PA, Erie Women's Fund, First National Bank, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, PNC Bank, Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie, PA, SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation, Toyota of Erie • **FOUNDATIONS:** Insurance Management Company/The Bloomstine Family Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, John & Nancy Hilbert Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, Maleno Family to Family Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, Richard & Mary Ann McCormick Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, Thomas L. & Mary K. Quinn Family Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, Bruce & K.D. Raimy Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, Walter Family Fund of the Erie Community Foundation, Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Pittsburgh, Dr Sunesh & Ritu Khera of the Khera Sunshine Fund, Frank & Elaine Marie Haas Charitable Fund at Schwab Charitable, SSJ Mission & Ministries Foundation, SSJ M&M Foundation Peter Lyons Award • **TRIBUTE GIFTS:** *In honor of Heather Caspar* by Sr. Phyllis Hilbert, SSJ; *In honor of Reddog Industry Customers* by Reddog Industries; *In honor of Nancy Donnelly* by Jeannette Barczynski; *In honor of 60th Wedding Anniversary of Marty & Kathy Eisert* by Rebecca Flynn; *In honor of Mary Alice Haibach* by Mark Haibach; *In honor of Sr. Suan Herzing, SSJ* by Jeanette & Robert Barczynski; *In honor of Mr & Mrs Joe Hilbert* by John Buchna and by Mary Therese Dinga; *In honor of Sr. Phyllis Hilbert, SSJ* by Betsy Williams; *In honor of Sr. Phyllis Hilbert, SSJ & Midge Klebes* by Reddog Industries; *In honor of Thomas Krivak, MD* by Barbara Widrig; *In honor of the Sisters of St.*



Joseph by Heather May Caspar; *In honor of SSJ 2023 Jubilarians* by Sr. Margaret O'Brien, SSJ; *In honor of Kelly Smock* by Our Lady of the Lake; *In honor of Joanne Sprickman* by Rita Musante; *In honor of Catherine Sullivan* by Stephen Sullivan; *In honor of the People of Ukraine* by Delores Pasiecznik; *In honor of Female Veterans* by Delores Pasiecznik • **MEMORIAL GIFTS:** *In memory of Maureen Bovee* by Mark Golden; *In memory of Kathy Brown* by Christine Scutella; *In memory of Dolores Corsi* by Ronald Corsi; *In memory of Mark DiPlacido* by Valerie & Jim Lindenberger; *In memory of Sr. Anne Donohue* by Patrick Shaughnessy; *In memory of Barbara A. Dougherty* by Anonymous, Gregory Cermak, James Clement, Dolores Garvey, Robert & Mary Lester, Stephen Suroviec, Barbara Thoman, Kathryn Wilt, and Jane Zawadzki; *In memory of Gerri Gallagher* by Michael McCurdy; *In memory of Joe Gallagher* by Anonymous and by Sr. Mary Herrmann, SSJ; *In memory of Robert Haibach* by Mark Haibach; *In memory of Kurt Hermann* by Delores Pasiecznik; *In memory of Bill Hilbert, Jack Theiss, & Tom Lyons* by Mary Stephany Lyons; *In memory of Arthur Martinucci* by Anonymous and by City of Erie Zoning Hearing Board; *In memory of Janet Plavcan* by Father Jon J. Plavcan; *In memory of Joan Rosenthal* by Mary Ann White; *In memory of Becky Heintz Shafer* by Mary Ann White; *In memory of Patty Tomczak* by Jean A. Eller; *In memory of Teri Vieira* by Mary Ann White; *In memory of Claire Weber* by Anonymous, Susan Daley, Kerry Hughes, Mary Ann Carmichael, Todd Carmichael, Larson Texts, Inc., Robert Raymond, Ronette Schneider, and Gerry Spero; *In memory of Sr. Carol Wilcox, SSJ* by Rita Musante; *In memory of Bobbie Wood* by Judith Idzik • **IGIVECATHOLIC DONORS:** Anonymous, Ann Badach, Heather Caspar, G. Renee Clark, Gretchen Gallagher Durney, Kathleen McCabe, Sr. Phyllis McCracken, SSJ, James Willats • **ERIE GIVES:** Anonymous Donors (5), Mariam Abdel-Malek, Mary Anne Albaugh, Jay & Ruth Alberstadt, Elizabeth Allen, Linda Allen, Lisa Scibetta Allen & Kirk Allen, Nancy Andersen, Mary Anne Ashworth, Pete & Amanda Austin, Jeannette Barczynski, Barrett Family, Barbara Bauda, Lisa Baumgardner, Sr. Clare Marie Beichner, SSJ, Margaret Benson, Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Bensur, Jason Porreco & Bianchi Honda, Cynthia Billisits, Tom & Sue Blecki, Linda Bliley, Diane Bloom, American Hollow Boring Company, Christine Bowen, Karen & John Bozza, Irene & Ken Brasington, Richard & Victoria Brogdon, Cynthia Brown, Eric & Cheryl Brozell, Bob & Kathy Bruno, Elizabeth Bucarelli, Valerie Bukowski, Michelle Butler, Mary & Willis Cardot, John Carneval, Niken Carpenter, Jim & Heather Caspar, Sydney Cassidy, Gay Catania, Joy Catania, Linda & Greg Cermak, Amy Chaney, Clark Electric of Erie, Inc., Jean Clemente, Parker J. Colt, Rock Copeland, Frank & Shirley Czulewicz, Mr. & Mrs. David Davis, Renee Deau, Susan DePlatchett, Richard & Sally DiBacco, Raylene Dill, Ernest & Elizabeth DiSantis, Chuck & Nancy Donnelly, Steve & Susan Drabant, Sr. Mary Drexler, SSJ, Janice & Mike Durney, Natalie



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