

JUSTICE FROM THE HEART

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE
OF SACRED HEART PARISH

A LIFE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY

By Nancy Hemesath

Jeanne Schuler and Patrick Murray have been part of Sacred Heart since 1981. Prior to that, and newly married, these two Chicago natives settled in Omaha as they began their teaching careers in philosophy at Creighton University.

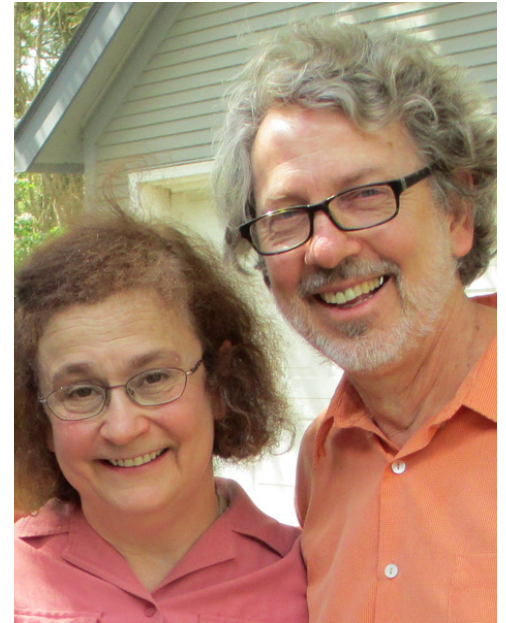
Though they did not meet until they were young adults, their family histories had much in common. Both their families were part of the Christian Family Movement where there was a strong emphasis on living Christian values in the world. They were involved in justice efforts through their families, their schools and their parishes. They learned that to be Catholic was a call to be Catholics in the World. Vatican II, the peace movement and civil rights initiatives all contributed to their early spiritual formation.

Patrick was shaped by his Jesuit connections which started in 1966 and continue to this day. He attended an Irish Christian Brothers high school, Marquette University for undergraduate and St. Louis University for graduate school. He was then hired by Creighton where he has taught philosophy for over 40 years. Jeanne attended a Catholic girls' high school where she was highly influenced by nuns whom she described as bold women. She fought for the Farm Workers at grocery stores, discouraging people from buying boycotted lettuce. She then attended St. Louis University and got her graduate degree at Washington University.

They were both influenced by Catholic peace and justice celebrities in the 1960s and '70s. They met Dorothy Day of the Catholic Worker Movement and Jeanne's parents met Catherine De Hueck Doherty, a civil rights activist, pioneer in interracial justice and founder of Friendship House. They followed the work of Daniel Berrigan, SJ, a widely known peace activist during the Vietnam War. They engaged other activist protesters to speak at their schools. They themselves participated in demonstrations for justice.

This activist foundation has propelled both Jeanne and Patrick to work tirelessly for justice while raising their three children. For 20 years, Jeanne has been active in OTOC as a parish liaison. For the last ten, she has been a leader with the Immigration/Refugee Committee. As organizers this group has had significant successes. Currently they are involved in a major collaboration with the Chambers of Commerce, unions, businesses and government entities to allow immigrants and refugees to meet the needs of the acute labor shortage. These efforts may result in significant Nebraska and federal legislation.

Patrick also supports OTOC and has taken active roles with many other organizations, such as the Omaha Solidarity Committee for Central America, PAX Christi, New Covenant, Nebraskans for Peace, and the United Farm Workers.



Jeanne Schuler and Patrick Murray

At Creighton, Patrick holds the John C. Kenefick Faculty Chair in the Humanities which allows him to bring in speakers who educate on various justice themes.

As parish influencers they say to be a Catholic means "... a life of deepening prayer, community with others, living simply, social justice, support of the marginalized and standing in resistance to a culture that does not follow these norms." Patrick and Jeanne live by these standards every day.

Frequently they share their stories with other Sacred Heart parishioners as we work together to bring justice to our world.

NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE

ACTIVITIES/ UPDATES

By Kathy Gast

Sacred Heart Panthers GOOOOO PANTHERS!!!

New sports team uniforms and choir robes for the school choir will help build confidence in the players' and singers' abilities and will help build school pride.

Our Neighborhood Alliance team is getting much closer to our goal of new athletic uniforms for our Sacred Heart Panthers. We are starting with the basketball teams. We have some eager Panther boosters from our team, supporters from the parish and other parishes who want to help us to get the players outfitted with new uniforms. We hope to stay on top of the game schedules so we can add to our Panther cheer squad at the games too.

We have also received a request to help with choir robes for the Sacred Heart school choir. We have been working on requests for donations for this very worthy cause too and are excited and hopeful about reaching this new goal.

Join our team!

If anyone is curious about joining our team or just dropping in for one of our meetings to see what is going on in our neighborhood we want you to feel welcome to drop by. We meet on Saturday mornings on a varying schedule, and we publish upcoming meetings in FlockNotes.

Native Omaha Days



Neighborhood Clean-up



Christmas in the Village



The Empowerment Network and Omaha Economic Development Corporation in partnership with community partners invites residents to attend this one-of-a-kind community celebration and holiday tradition. Mark your calendars for Christmas in the Village Dec. 1, noon to 5 p.m.!

PURPOSE STATEMENT: To develop a presence in and connections to the Sacred Heart neighborhood and North Omaha.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE TEAM

LIKE A GOOD NEIGHBOR ...

By Gene Summerlin

The thing about jingles is that they get stuck in your head – like it or not. While reading a recent update from Donna Alcocer on the headway made by resettled families from Afghanistan, a certain insurance company came to mind.

“The families are in many ways independent now, yet we are still there to offer a helping hand when needed, much like a friend, or a good neighbor.”

Donna summarized the goal of our resettlement efforts in this simple sentence.

Independence, offering a helping hand, and being “a good neighbor.” At the start of the journey, the needs were urgent – housing, medical issues, jobs, financial literacy, school, language barriers – everything involved in relocating to a different country and culture.

Today, the children are in school and learning English. The parents are settled and can economically provide for themselves and their children. Our original circle of one family grew to two and then four as relatives initially placed in other cities relocated to Omaha.

This progress didn’t happen because we directed these families towards our goals, but because we walked alongside them providing assistance when needed so they could meet their goals.



The immigration team continues to be there when needed during the progression to independence. Driving lessons for some of the men led to drivers’ licenses. Licenses led to the donation of a car by a SH parishioner and the purchase of vehicles by other families.

The team assisted with the process of registering vehicles and obtaining insurance. Now, many of the women (and even one teenage daughter) have learner’s permits, and the SH driving school will soon have another class of graduates. Other team members provide financial literacy assistance in budgeting, banking and understanding how far (or not) a dollar will go.

Some volunteers continue to help meet material needs directing donations of things like sewing machines, household goods, and the abundance of the harvest from the SH garden.

And like a friend or neighbor, we are there for those things that just come up, like running kids to dental or medical appointments, a field trip to Vala’s Pumpkin Patch, or organizing a baby shower for an expectant mother.

Like any good relationship, this is not a one-way street. Just as these families are exploring our culture, we too have had the benefit of experiencing theirs. We get to see them interact with their relatives in Afghanistan through What’s App.

They have shared their food with us, we have listened to their music, and a couple of us have even had the pleasure of dancing with them. We see the children take joy in school, the diversity of their playmates on the playground, and some really good games of soccer.

Donna expressed it best, “For the most part, they live frugally, but are rich in their sense of who they are, their culture, their family, and their God. The children seem genuinely happy. I believe we have been a blessing to them, but I also believe that we have been very blessed by them.”

*Salaam Alaikum
(Peace Be Upon You).*

PURPOSE STATEMENT:

The Immigration and Refugee Team works to welcome, with respect and solidarity, the “foreigners” residing among us.

GREEN TEAM

LOOKING AHEAD TO WHAT'S NEXT

Solar panels, vehicle charging, bike rack

Sacred Heart is now producing electrical energy from sunlight. The installation of 27 solar panels on the parish office roof is complete, and the system went into service on July 10, 2023.

Each panel can put out 325 watts of power for a total of 8,775 watts of maximum power. Output is rarely that high because weather conditions are never perfect, but the system should produce about one third of the parish office's electrical needs. The system is grid-tied, so any extra production is sold back to OPPD. A very big thank you to all who contributed.

Soon, we will connect our solar system to Sacred Heart's computer network. When that happens, you will be able to monitor our electrical production through a link on Sacred Heart's website.

At this point we have not installed an electric vehicle charging station. However, we will survey the parish and if there is enough interest, the installation will go forward.

Sacred Heart bicyclists: You now have a place to secure your bicycle when you are at church. The Green Team has installed a wave-style bike rack on the patio in front of the parish office. It's designed to accommodate seven bicycles.

- Phil Alcocer

Garden wrap-up

We are called to feed those in need. The Sacred Heart Community Garden volunteers have provided much food for those in need.



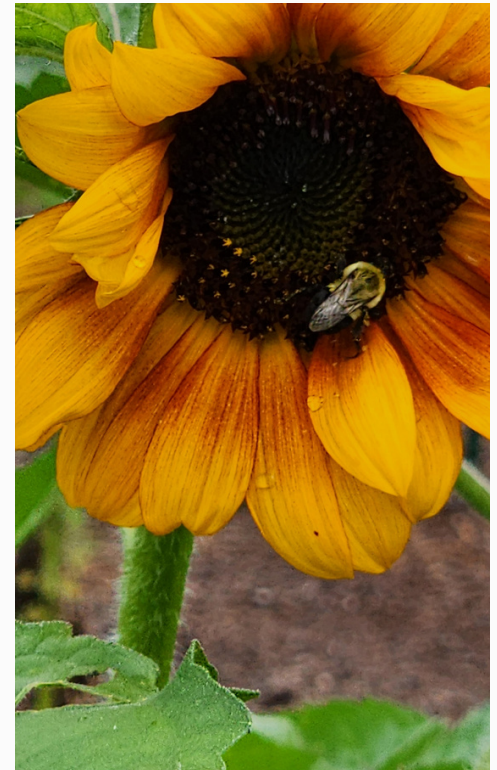
Jane O'Connor faithfully weighs all the produce that is given away — over 1,100 pounds!

As of mid-October, 1,217 pounds of fresh vegetables have been harvested to feed our neighbors, immigrants and CUES families.

There are still two fall vegetables that are growing and producing. The total poundage will increase depending on when frost occurs. Our volunteers have donated 293 hours for the care of our garden. The garden's beauty was also blessed with zinnias and sunflowers. These pollinator flowers fed butterflies, bees and birds.

Planning for 2024 is in progress. We are expanding in-ground planting to areas not utilized this summer. We will ask our CUES families, neighbors, and our immigrant families for their input for vegetables to grow for next year. We are here to serve their needs. Please be watching for more information via the "Justice from the Heart" newsletter and Flocknotes. Many thanks to our volunteers, Father Dave and CUES staff for a successful year.

- Jane O'Connor



What's ahead for the Green Team?

Members of the Green Team will meet in October and November to plan for the next 18 to 24 months. We reviewed and revised our Purpose Statement in October 2023 (see below).

We will analyze our successes and celebrations of the past 24 months, and we will dissect our lessons learned so we can strategize effectively for the next 1 to 2 years. We will report out on our plans to the parishes in the next Justice from the Heart newsletter.

Laudato Si will continue to guide our work, and we will maintain a focus on action grounded in ecological spirituality.

PURPOSE STATEMENT: *In partnership with our parishes and the surrounding community, the Green Team is continually learning, educating, calling all to take action, and working to care for our common home.*