

SAINT FRANCIS MINISTRIES

Hi Lites

WINTER 2020

A NEW
PARTNERSHIP
WITH
ST. JOHN'S
PG 8



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Our Mission

Saint Francis, providing healing and hope to children and families.

Saint Francis Ministries publishes the Hi-Lites newsletter four times a year.

To receive future copies of Hi-Lites, subscribe online at [saintfrancisministries/newsroom.org](https://saintfrancisministries.org/newsroom).

At Saint Francis Ministries, we work hard to be faithful stewards of the earth's resources, as well as our own. That's why we have created a user-friendly, easily accessible version of Hi-Lites that you can view online anytime. Past issues are also available to read and download. You can find them at www.saintfrancisministries.org/newsroom/hi-lites.

If you'd rather not receive the printed version by mail, please contact Lindsey Decker, and we'll happily remove you from our Hi-Lites mailing list.

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A Message From Fr. Bobby

INHERENT DIGNITY AND WORTH



**The Very Reverend
Robert Nelson Smith**
Dean, President, and CEO

Decades ago, as Fr. Bob Mize traveled the dusty roads of rural Kansas ministering to Episcopalians on the prairie, he never complained about the thousands of miles he drove or the lack of comfortable accommodations. Later, when he began to encounter all those boys in trouble with the law, he refused to write them off, to proclaim them unredeemable. Fr. Bob saw worth in every human being, and so do his spiritual sons and daughters - the employees, supporters, and donors of Saint Francis Ministries.

You see, the mission of Fr. Bob and Saint Francis has always been about people and their inherent dignity and worth, regardless of their past or where they live. That's why this issue of Hi-Lites is all about people and the many ways Saint Francis is finding to serve them.

Our winter issue's centerpiece is the story of a historic collaboration between Saint Francis Ministries and St. John's Military School, two organizations birthed in the Episcopal tradition and dedicated to serving children and families. The possibilities for service have greatly expanded with our merger, as the St. John's campus becomes our next administrative home and the site of new residential programs.

Our stories about Saint Francis' presence in Guatemala and at the Borderlands Ministries Summit highlight our work serving and advocating for children and families dealing with violence and poverty.

In this issue, we share three stories about remarkable people – Texas foster parents José and Margarita Ramirez, who specialize in fostering teenagers; Ella Umphrey, a major donor who's generosity made possible the Butterfly Sanctuary at our Salina West Peace Garden and who believes giving to others is simply what God expects of her; and the Kishpaugh family, who turned unimaginable grief into a life-affirming vocation of hope and joy.

Finally, you'll read in this issue updates on new and developing programs in Texas, Nebraska, Mississippi, and at Salina West. Good things are happening here as Saint Francis reaches out to help heal a broken and shaken world.

None of this, however, would be possible without you. Thank you for your support, your partnership, your friendship. Together, we are bringing healing and hope to so many, and I am proud to labor alongside you in this sacred work.

You remain ever in my prayers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Bobby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Saint Francis Expands in Nebraska and Texas

Nebraska

Since the announcement in June that Saint Francis Ministries would take over case management of child welfare services in Nebraska's Eastern Service Area (ESA), Saint Francis leadership and staff have been energetically working to complete the transition by the January 1 deadline.

Saint Francis has provided kinship/foster care homes, adoption homes, family support programs, Intensive Family Preservation, Intensive Family Reunification and Family Centered Treatment services to youth in central and western Nebraska since 2012. Under the new contract, Saint Francis expands those services into the ESA,

comprised of Douglas (Omaha) and Sarpy Counties. Nearly 40 percent of the state's child welfare cases are in those regions.

According to Regional Vice President Jodie Austin, Saint Francis began transferring cases from the previous provider in October and started accepting new out-of-home cases in November. Saint Francis currently manages nearly 1,500 child welfare cases in the ESA alone.

Additionally, Saint Francis Ministries – Nebraska has hired more than 100 case managers, of whom more than 70 are already fully trained and managing caseloads.



"We are heavily recruiting fully-trained case managers," said Austin. "We have already hired employees from the previous provider who are interested in doing case management now that the transition is complete, and more are contacting us every day."

Saint Francis has offices in Omaha, Bellevue, Grand Island, North Platte, and Scottsbluff.

Texas

Saint Francis has opened new offices in Lubbock and Amarillo to serve children and families within the 41 counties of the Department of Family and Protective Services' (DFPS) Region 1, which includes the entire Texas panhandle. DFPS awarded the Community-Based Care (CBC) contract for Region 1 to Saint Francis in June.

Mandated by the Texas Legislature in 2017, Community-Based Care resulted from a redesign of the state's foster care system. Within a geographic service area, such as Region 1, a single contractor (Saint Francis Ministries) is responsible for finding foster homes or other living arrangements for children in state care and providing them a full continuum of services, including case management.

Saint Francis has already been providing foster care services in 29 other Texas counties since 2017 from our office in Abilene. In addition to opening new offices in Lubbock and Amarillo (Region 1), Saint Francis has hired 50 new team members that are serving over 200 children and families currently - and growing!



Lubbock team



Amarillo team

Guatemala to Partner in Mission and Ministry



The Rt. Reverend Silvestre Romero and Angela Smith, vice president of International Ministries, sign a covenant of cooperation between Saint Francis Ministries and the Episcopal Diocese of Guatemala.

Saint Francis Ministries and the Episcopal Diocese of Guatemala have formed a partnership in mission and ministry to better serve at-risk children and families within the diocese. The covenant agreement for “mutual accompaniment” provides for shared expertise, technical assistance, and resources in developing locally-trained social workers and social outreach programs.

Under the agreement, Saint Francis will provide the diocese with technical advice and assistance to support clergy and lay leaders from each congregation with tools they need to develop a diocesan-wide program of social work outreach. In turn, the Diocese of Guatemala will provide a site for a school to train

community social workers along a model developed by Saint Francis and Central American teams with expertise in child and family services, trauma, and high-vulnerability communities.

Saint Francis Vice President of International Ministries Angela Smith and The Rt. Reverend Silvestre Romero signed the agreement in October, and the diocese ratified it during the diocesan convention the following month.

“By walking together with our fellow Episcopalians, God opens doors to new possibilities, generates new energy and ideas, and strengthens our ministry in relationship,” said Smith. “We hope that by honoring each institution’s core identity, this process of mutual accompaniment will serve as an example of how NGOs and the Church can leverage our unique strengths to serve those most in need of Christ’s love, brought to life through the Gospel in action.”

Through its International Ministries, Saint Francis works to protect children, strengthen families, and search for local solutions wherever their safety and well-being are threatened. In Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, Saint Francis initiatives support and strengthen education, create economic opportunity, and drive system change through advocacy and local alliances.



Learn how you can help support the life-affirming work of Saint Francis International Ministries by visiting www.saintfrancisministries.org/international-ministries.



José & Margarita Ramirez

Love Is All
You Need



"You have to have
a heart for this."

Self-professed Beatles superfan José Ramirez might be excused for believing that “all you need is love.” After all, he’s seen what it can accomplish in the lives of the young people he and Margarita have fostered. Unlike the song, though, he doesn’t believe “love is all you need.” José says teens in care also need structure, discipline, and boundaries. It’s essential to their safety and security.

José and Margarita started fostering about six years ago after looking around at their large empty nest and lamenting all the unused space they now had. Their two daughters had grown and left home, and it seemed a shame to let their rooms remain unused. A friend told them about foster parenting, so they decided to check it out.

“We enjoy helping people,” said José. “For us, that’s what it’s all about. But it’s not always easy, never a piece of cake. We’ve had our challenges; that’s normal with teenagers. It’s a day-by-day process.”

So far, they’ve fostered five teens through long-term placement. They currently have a brother and sister, ages 14 and 16. That they only foster teens seems ironic, considering that Margarita was initially hesitant to become a foster parent. Children in foster care scared her, especially adolescents in foster care.

“I was afraid they wouldn’t like us or wouldn’t want to stay with us,” said Margarita. “I worried they’d be angry and act out, but José said, ‘Let’s just try it,’ and I’m glad we did. As long as you have faith that everything will work out and you’re doing your best to help these children, you’ll do fine.

As long as your heart is right, you’ll be okay. Besides, that fear is unnecessary because these are not bad kids.”

Actually, since they both still work, there is an advantage to fostering teens.

“They can take care of themselves while we’re at work,” said Margarita. “That’s why we don’t foster babies or elementary school-aged children. For working people like us, teenagers are easier to care for.”

That’s not to say teens don’t pose a challenge. For many youth in foster care, such structure is alien and new. They’ve never lived by rules, so it can take a while to adjust. Add typical teenaged temperaments to the mix, and José and Margarita have to get creative. José says communication is key; kids need to know that there are always consequences to both good and bad behavior. Yet, discipline must always be non-corporal, age-appropriate, and just. Give kids time to adjust to structure, and they tend to flourish in it.

It helps, too, to know someone has their back.

“Tiajuana (Williams) from Saint Francis is both awesome and fantastic,” said José. “She’s a good support for us. If we ever have a question or a problem, she’s always there with an answer or suggestion.”

They consider Tiajuana a blessing, along with the teens they foster and foster parenting itself.

“There are good kids in foster care, and it makes us happy to help them,” said José. “Something happened at their home, and they need help until things can get straightened out. They

want to live a normal life, just like you and me.”

“You have to have a heart for this,” added Margarita. “If it’s your calling, you can do a lot of good. There are lots of kids that need homes, a safe place to stay.”

José and Margarita believe it takes discipline, boundaries, and structure to provide that safety for kids in their care. Yet, love for those same kids is what motivates and inspires them to keep children safe. Love is the starting point of their service. So, maybe the Beatles were right after all - love is all you need.

“If it’s your calling, you can do a lot of good. There are lots of kids that need homes, a safe place to stay.”

Margarita Ramirez, foster parent

Saint Francis and St. John's Embark on New Collaboration



Leadership from Saint Francis Ministries and St. John's Military School pose together on the St. John's campus following the formal announcement of the two organizations' new collaboration of service to children and families.

Saint Francis Ministries began a new era of service in September when the ministry announced its collaboration with St. John's Military School. Like Saint Francis, St. John's has long represented an Episcopal presence in Salina, Kansas. As part of the merger, Saint Francis will assume possession of the 40-acre St. John's campus and establish future plans for the property's use.

The Very Rev. Robert N. Smith, Saint Francis dean, president, and CEO,

said those plans will include creating a ministry that addresses important needs, while honoring the values of both organizations.

"We are pleased and grateful that St. John's leaders selected Saint Francis as we live into a time of transformation for the campus, giving us the opportunity to build on such a deep tradition and heritage of service," said Fr. Smith.

Founded in 1887 as a faith-based,

private school committed to the development of young men, St. John's will be renamed Saint John's Ministries and School.

St. John's president and CEO William J. Clark, has also joined the Saint Francis leadership team where he serves as Chief of Staff, managing support programs that include human resources, quality control, information technology, communications, marketing, facilities, transportation, and safety and security.

"The vision of St. John's lives on in this new partnership, and we have been encouraged by Saint Francis' commitment to continue our mission of serving youth and families," said Clark. "The devotion of Saint Francis to youth and families is undeniable, so it's the perfect partner with whom to move forward."

One of the first steps will be to relocate all of Saint Francis' Salina offices to the St. John's campus, which is expected to be completed sometime this year.

"As we work on the future of the campus, all options align with the Saint Francis mission to provide healing and hope to children and families," said Fr. Smith. "One area of passion for us is to find innovative solutions, such as a residential workforce program, to address the growing numbers of children aging out of foster care who need ongoing support and guidance."

Such a program would provide training in soft skills needed to be successful in the job market, along with technical training to specifically meet the needs of area businesses. Participants in the program would also work towards earning their high school diploma or GED. Young people aging out of the foster care system face challenges that can make their entry into adulthood difficult, and Saint Francis has been considering for some time ways in which the ministry might better support that transition.

"Access to dignified work can be life transforming," said Tom Blythe, Saint Francis president and COO. "We are fortunate in Salina to have support of civic, educational, business, and industry leaders who have expressed



a strong desire to partner with us to move from visioning to reality."

Other plans for the campus include a residential program that provides comprehensive substance use treatment and services for families and an expansion of Saint Francis outpatient services for substance use and behavioral health, that includes telehealth.

St. John's Military School history and legacy will be honored on the school's campus through the establishment of a historical museum in Linger Hall, in which historical uniforms and other memorabilia will be housed. For information about the St. John's Military School Historical Museum, visit sjmsmuseum.org.



(Top) The Very Rev. Robert N. Smith, Saint Francis dean, president, and CEO, shakes hands with William J. Clark, St. John's president and CEO, after the two signed documents merging the organizations. (Bottom) Fr. Smith addresses stakeholders in attendance during the merger ceremony.



IS WHAT DRIVES THEM, SOMETIMES IN TWO CARS



Chad and Amanda Kishpaugh adopted siblings Zaley and Joseph during a National Adoption Day ceremony at the Ellis County Courthouse.

The view through the Kishpaugh front window rolls clear to the horizon, over ochre Kansas hills lit by autumn sunshine. Chad's eyes glisten as he recalls another "bright and sunny day," when he and Amanda lost their son among these hills, in a collision with a truck and trailer at an unmarked rural intersection just a mile from home.

"The other kids and I had been fixing a fence at a pasture a mile east of the house," says Amanda. "We drove up on the accident before the dust had settled."

Chad and Ryan suffered severe injuries in the impact. Badly hurt, Chad had extensive trauma, broken bones, and a serious concussion. He would face a long and grueling recovery. Seven-year-old Ryan did not survive the accident.

The pain is still fresh. Yet, Chad says it helps to share the story, and he's spent much of the six years since the accident reflecting on what it might mean. He says it was his son's words that ultimately "lit the fire in my heart," adding "We know what it's like to have a loss, and these kids also know what it's like. So, for me, it's all about giving them unconditional love."

Back in Oregon, Chad's parents had fostered children, so he knew all about foster care. He had grown up in house filled with both biological and foster siblings, and he valued the experience.

"He always talked about it," says Amanda, "but I was afraid. I thought it would be too hard, that we would fall in love with them and then they'd

have to leave. But, from the time we got married – even before we had our own kids – we had said we would adopt. Even after we came to Kansas, it was always on the back burner."

Ryan talked about it, too.

"We'd look at pictures of children on the Adopt Kansas Kids Facebook page and talk about how nice it would be to adopt a child," says Amanda. "Ryan always wanted these large sibling sets, and we'd say, 'That would be awesome, but we already have so many kids. We wouldn't even be able to travel in the same car.'"

One day, Amanda pressed her son, "Would you worry that maybe Mom and Dad didn't love you as much if we adopted other children? Spending time with more kids would take time away from you. Ryan said, 'They're just kids that want to be loved. I know you love me. They just need someone to love them, too.' So, at that point, we decided to pursue adoption."

Then the bottom dropped out of their world.

"That was a rough year," says Amanda. "We couldn't even consider more kids at that point. But then, somewhere along the way, it got really hard for us to see children mistreated. Of course, it's never easy to see something like that, but after the accident it really began to bother us when children weren't appreciated. So, that finally



The gavel marks the official adoption of Joseph, 3, and Zaley, 2, by the Kishpaugh family at the Ellis County Courthouse. (Photo courtesy the Hays Daily News)

opened my heart to fostering – and Chad by then was also onboard.”

So were their other three children, Kate, Luke, and Carter. Aged just 14, 12, and 8 at the time, they unanimously agreed that if they could help kids with broken hearts like their own, they wanted to.

“Before we brought a new child into our home, we talked about it as a family first,” says Amanda. “Each time, the kids said, ‘yes, let’s do it.’ They have made big sacrifices and it certainly hasn’t always been easy. Hurting people aren’t often easy to love. I’m so proud of my children and the sacrifices they have made to help that cause. They’ve shared their homes, their rooms, their toys, and their beloved family. Ryan would be so proud.”

It took another year before the family was finally physically and emotionally ready, but they eventually welcomed a 9-year-old girl into their home, a non-relative kinship placement, who will soon be adopted by one of

her teachers. They were fostering a second child when their Saint Francis worker called to ask if they could provide respite care for a sibling pair.

“I was hesitant,” says Amanda. “It was just for a couple weeks, but they were both so tiny. One was 2 months old and the other was 15 months old. I thought, ‘this is going to be a lot of work just for them to go back to their other foster home.’ But we took them, and I’m so glad we did. They’ve never left.”

The Kishpaugh family – Chad, Amanda, Kate, Luke, and Carter - adopted Joseph, 3, and his sister Zaley, 2, on November 15 at the Ellis County Courthouse in Hays, Kansas.

“They were so easy,” says Amanda. “Joseph and Zaley fit right in, so when we learned they needed a permanent home, we didn’t even need to think about it. They were a perfect fit from the start.”

The family also fosters another sibling set, which means seven kids

currently inhabit the Kishpaugh home. They travel often, visiting relatives in Oregon and taking family vacations out west to Wyoming and other natural locales. They always go in two cars, because there’s simply no way for them to squeeze into one. Years ago, Amanda had told Ryan that they couldn’t foster his sibling sets because the family wouldn’t be able to fit in one car. Now, she’s surprised how normal it seems.

The Kishpaughs may never fully understand why Ryan was taken from them, but they have struggled and found meaning in their loss. Because of Ryan’s wise and empathetic heart, his new brother and sister will have a chance at a full and happy life with a family who loves them.

“I don’t know how we would have overcome the loss of a child without the Lord and the love and support of our family and friends,” says Amanda. “We suffered a great loss, but many of these children in foster care have also suffered. I don’t think people recognize that. These kids can’t be with their families because their parents made poor choices, but they still need a family to love and support them. Kids don’t care how nice your house is, or how big it is. I just wish people realized how rewarding fostering is and how capable they really are. Our child is gone, but not by choice. We all have a choice with these kids.”

“Love is what drives me,” says Chad. “Before I lost my son, I was more selfish. Now my vision is to help everyone who’s in need. Ryan motivates me, his words motivate me: ‘I know I’m loved, but they don’t.’”

Saint Francis Transitioning Smoothly to Family First in Residential Treatment

Designed to keep children safely with their families and out of foster care, the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) of 2018 provides for a range of reforms to the child welfare system, including those addressing children with trauma. As a longtime leader in providing trauma-informed treatment to at-risk youth, Saint Francis Ministries was already well-positioned to qualify as a provider under the requirements of the Families First Act. The FFPSA provides that children who need special services and treatment in a facility setting can be placed in a QRTP (Qualified Residential Treatment Program) for a

certain duration required for such service and for treatment to be provided.

Saint Francis' Salina West campus provides residential care for children ages 6-18 at the Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility and its two QRTPs. Originally licensed as YRC IIs (Youth Residential Centers), they qualified to be licensed as QRTPs in October. Clover House for girls and Cottonwood House for boys serve youth who aren't ready for a community-based setting. Each cottage can house up to eight young people within a homelike

environment. Clover House also offers therapies that address the unique trauma of adolescent survivors of sex trafficking.

Under the Family First Act, a QRTP must be accredited, use a trauma-informed model, provide nursing services, demonstrate family engagement in treatment, and provide discharge planning and post-discharge follow-up. According to Trish Bryant, vice president of residential services, Saint Francis was already meeting most of those requirements with its YRC IIs, making the transition remarkably smooth.

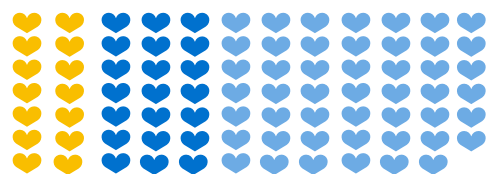
National Adoption Day Kansas



Nearly 85 Kansas children joined forever families in November during National Adoption Day events coordinated by Saint Francis Ministries in Salina, Wichita, and Hays. Founded in 2000, National Adoption Day honors adoptive families and raises awareness about the 125,000 American children in foster care who still need permanent homes.

Each year, judges, attorneys, and court personnel around the nation volunteer their time to finalize adoptions for children and their new families. In Kansas, Saint Francis organizes local events around National Adoption Day. This year, the adoptions of 48 children were finalized at the Sedgwick County Juvenile Courthouse in Wichita. In the West Region, 14 children were formally adopted in Salina, and 21 in Hays, including Joseph and Zaley Kishpaugh (see story Page 10).

85 KANSAS KIDS ADOPTED



14 Salina | 21 Hays | 48 Wichita



Saint Francis National Adoption Day made possible with support from AETNA.



Saint Francis Joins Borderlands Conversation



The Rev. Benjamin Thomas, Th.D., presented at the Borderlands Ministries Summit in Tucson, Arizona.

Saint Francis Ministries' Director of Social Justice Programs, The Rev. Benjamin Thomas, Th.D., presented at the Borderlands Ministries Summit in Tucson, Arizona, in November. Hosted by the Episcopal Diocese of Arizona, the second annual summit addressed the urgent need for ministry and service to children and families along the 2,000-mile border between the United States and Mexico. Nearly 200 persons from across the U.S. and the Episcopal Church attended the summit at St. Philip's in the Hills in Tucson.

Attendees and presenters also included clergy and laity from the Grand Canyon Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Southwest Conference of the United Church of Christ. Episcopal bishops from five border dioceses were joined by bishops from Anglican/Episcopal dioceses south of the border: The Rt. Rev. Francisco M. Moreno, Primate of Mexico and Bishop of Northern Mexico; The Rt. Rev. Ricardo Gomez Osnaya, Bishop of Western Mexico;

and The Rt. Rev. Juan David Alvarado, Bishop of El Salvador. The American bishops included The Rt. Rev. Jennifer A. Reddall, Bishop of Arizona; The Rt. Rev. Jeff Fisher, Bishop Suffragan of the Diocese of Texas; The Rt. Rev. Michael Hunn, Bishop of the Rio Grande; The Rt. Rev. Susan Brown Snook, Bishop of San Diego; and The Rt. Rev. John Harvey Taylor, Bishop of Los Angeles.

Following the same format as 2018's inaugural summit in El Paso, Texas, the conference provided a venue in which participants could share information about active ministries along the border (both north and south), form partnerships for ministry, and build awareness about border issues. The event began with a prayer service at the border fence in Nogales, Arizona, followed by Eucharist and lunch at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Nogales. Over the next two days, participants engaged in panel discussions with bishops from both north and south of the border and screened the film "Trails of Hope and Terror," co-produced by keynote speaker Dr. Miquel a De La Torre, professor of social ethics and latinx studies from Iliff School of Theology in Colorado.

"Saint Francis is deeply concerned about the welfare of all children and families, and we want to advocate beyond our system of care for changes in society that will improve the welfare of children and families everywhere, especially those caught

in systems of poverty and injustice," said Fr. Thomas. "We currently serve children and families on both sides of the border and given the unfolding humanitarian crisis, it is a natural and organic fit for us to be part of the conversation that is aimed at alleviating that suffering and fixing the system that is perpetuating harm to everyone involved, whether they are migrants, citizens of border towns, or law enforcement officials."

Fr. Thomas' presentation, "Borders of the Bible," addressed the theological implications of borders as presented in the Bible and discussed the similarities between contemporary migrants and those represented in scripture. Biblical migrants left their homes and crossed borders for many of the same reasons that migrants from Mexico and Central America do so today – for a better life, to escape persecution, and to save the life of a child.

"As a ministry firmly rooted in the Church, speaking to a theology of border ministry and how it fits into the larger Christian story is part and parcel of my job as director of social justice programs," said Fr. Thomas. "By framing issues in terms of Christian theology and ministry, we help ourselves and others understand our work, and that when we do it right, it is not our exclusive work. Our work is actually part of the Church's mission to 'restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.'"

A Place to 'Be Still and Know That I Am God'

Ella Umphrey believes nature nourishes the soul. For much of her life, she has sought respite among the butterflies, birds, and flowers of her Salina, Kansas, yard and garden.

"Redbirds indicate that one of your relatives is thinking of you," she says. "That's what it means when a redbird flies into your yard. Birds bring peace and joy. I used to have five feeders and a beautiful bath for redbirds, blue jays, a sparrow hawk, and a thousand sparrows. I can't do that up here anymore."

Ella recently relocated to an independent living facility in Manhattan after spending more than six decades in Salina, where she and her husband, "Cork" worked and raised three children. They arrived from Kansas City, Missouri, so Cork could help Ella's brother start a business, Bishop Lumber. Along the way, Ella and Cork bought properties and managed rentals. They also helped start a church, Belmont Christian Church. Salina was good to them, and they were grateful.

That gratitude led them to give, and together they helped support a variety of local charities, community projects, and nonprofit organizations over the years. As far as Ella is concerned, giving to persons in need is expected, and there's nothing praiseworthy about it. It's just what we're supposed to do.

"I've had wonderful opportunities in my life, and I feel that the more I



give, the more I receive – especially when it comes to supporting children. That's what attracted me to Saint Francis, the connection to children."

Last summer, Ella's son-in-law mentioned that Saint Francis had planted a Peace Garden at its Salina West residential facility, which treats young people dealing with trauma and other mental and behavioral health issues. The garden features a greenhouse and fresh vegetables grown year-round for the Salina West kitchen. It also serves as an outdoor classroom, where children in care can learn how to grow living things from God's good earth. Mostly, though, it provides a peaceful place to heal and to connect with the natural world. Designed as a sacred space where children and families can rest and feed their spirits, the Peace Garden serves as an integral part of Saint Francis' holistic therapeutic approach.

Such a project spoke directly to Ella's heart.

"A lot of those children have been told that they're not special, or that they're unimportant," she says. "They

need a quiet place where they can try to get a handle on things. They need a place where they can discover they are important to God."

So, thanks to Ella, the Peace Garden now has a Butterfly Sanctuary, certified by the North American Butterfly Association and dedicated last August. It provides sanctuary to both butterflies and children where, as the Psalmist says, they can "Be still and know that I am God." Naturally, that verse is one of Ella's favorites.

"Life has gone well for me, so I don't need any special attention for giving," she says. "Ten percent of my income is simply what I owe. Whatever I give above that 10 percent is my actual gift. It's my tithe to God for people who need help, so that pretty much sums it up for me."

Saint Francis Ministries serves at-risk children and families through a wide range of programs and services. Find one that speaks to your own heart by visiting saintfrancisministries.org and making a gift today.

Saint Francis Mississippi Plans New Program in Picayune

St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Picayune, Mississippi, will partner with Saint Francis Ministries to provide day services for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) residing in the Picayune area. According to Jason Kirkland, director of operations for Mississippi programs, Saint Francis will house the new program in the parish's former education building as part of a new agreement. Kirkland said the building will eventually enable Saint Francis to provide adult day services for up to 35 persons.

"Essentially, day service provides for regularly scheduled, individualized activities in a non-residential setting separate from the person's home," said Kirkland. "Participants must have intellectual and developmental disabilities and meet Medicaid requirements to be eligible for services that include activities to help persons with IDD build skills, optimize choice, and support their independence. It's right in line with the work Saint Francis already does in both Picayune and Gulfport."

Saint Francis Ministries already provides supervised living and supported employment services to adults with IDD at both Bridgeway (Picayune) and Cheshire (Gulfport). Saint Francis Adult Day Services will enable the ministry to enhance and extend those services to more people in the community.

"Community is a big part of this program and individual well-



being," said Kirkland. "Community participation opportunities will be offered to persons at least weekly that address daily living skills or engagement in local social activities and events."

The program will serve participants for up to six hours a day, five days a week, providing transportation and lunch, as well as offering a range of arts and crafts, educational, and leisure activities to foster meaningful experiences.



Persons interested in learning more about the program are encouraged to contact Jason Kirkland at (601) 749-4848.



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Saint Francis Marks Another Successful Christmas for Kids

Once again, Saint Francis children in foster care experienced a Christmas of good news and great joy because of Christmas for Kids. Thanks to the generosity and friendship of our partners, supporters, and donors, Saint Francis Ministries provided thousands of children in our care with Christmas memories to last a lifetime. Your gift reminds children in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Nebraska, and Arkansas that they are remembered and have worth. Thank you for making Christmas for Kids 2019 so meaningful for our children and for helping make this world a gentler place. May God bless you and yours in 2020.

