

Preface to Associates Presentations at AASH Conference in Los Angeles

On April 24, the AASH 2009 Conference in Los Angeles began its seminar sessions with a panel presentation by three individuals committed to the mission of the Associates. Sr. Anne Wentz, RSCJ works with the San Diego Associate Program and the Associates National Committee. She provided opening and concluding comments to the presentation as well as introducing two individuals who shared their Associates' experience. Cathie Kinabrew is the chairperson of the National Committee and Meg Bugg has been active in the Associates since 2005. Cathie and Meg shared their personal stories which are included in the text of their presentations. The panel was moderated by Mary Forsyth who has been an Associate in three cities.

In 1994, the General Chapter of the Society of the Sacred Heart recognized that a more collaborative spirit between our colleagues and rscj was appearing around the globe. The exact structures of these gatherings and collaborations differed in countries, ministries and community settings but they were a clear sign that the charism of Madeleine Sophie “did not belong to RSCJ alone”(1994) and that some individuals were indeed answering a call in a unique way to deepen their commitment to discover, live and make known the love of God today! The term Associate, used in other Orders, became a way to identify this emerging movement.

Well, you might imagine the conversations! Were RSCJ giving up on vocations to religious life? Were these associates, as we called them, taking “vows”, becoming part of our order?, expecting medical benefits? Faculty in our Network schools were conflicted about joining such groups. Were they not “Associates” already, carrying out the goals and criteria in our schools? The Children of Mary and other “Affiliates” (often known only to Rev. Mother in our monastic days), also wondered what had changed. Of course, associate programs in other congregations can mean anything from apostolic coworkers in a ministry project (e.g. teachers, fund-raisers) to “vowed lifetime members” with active participation in the community life of the order.

Before Vatican II, when RSCJ were cloistered, the collaboration with our constituents was partly for them to “do in the world” what the RSCJ could not, because of cloister. Now, it is much more a true working together in a variety of apostolic endeavors, whether in our schools, mission activities, or professional and ministerial works, in which RSCJ might be just one of a group of committed colleagues.

The purpose of our panel today is to share with you our experience of this one particular response and the emerging structures and resources that we are creating to support these Associates. At present, we have 13 groups. They are in cities that have RSCJ communities, in order that opportunities for strong mutual relationships might form. But, before I go further, I invite you to listen to the experience of two associates who journey with RSCJ to discover and make known the Heart of Christ in their lives.

The Tangible Touch of Grace
Catherine D. Kinabrew
Associates Panel, AASH, April 2009

Introduction

I am deeply grateful for the foresight of the AASH conference committee to ask us to present this panel on Associates today. Like so many of us here, I have the gift of a Sacred Heart life-- as an alumna of the Rosary in New Orleans, as a mom there, and then 14 wonderful years as the Lower School principal. I know that I am one lucky lady! And yet, I have found NEW LIFE in the Sacred Heart as an Associate.

The Grace to Let Grace Happen

How did all this happen? How did I find this path called Associates that is so substantially linked to the Religious of the Sacred Heart? For me, there is one overriding theme--- that of God's invitation to let grace happen. When I returned to the Rosary in 1988, I found that place charged with passion and energy, living the legacy of St. Madeleine Sophie to "let love be your life." As alumnae/i you know exactly what I mean. When we walk into any Sacred Heart school, it feels like home. And that feeling is utterly tangible, unmistakably so because we find a "culture of love."

God's First Invitations: St. Augustine and the Sacred Heart

The process for me to become an Associate was very, very slow and full of surprises! Most of it happened while I was at the Rosary and it happened through prayer.

One morning I was in the chapel for 7:20 Mass. Since it was the feast of St. Augustine the priest talked about that famous line: "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee, O Lord." Hmm. I thought. What's the big deal about that? I soon found out because I couldn't get the quote out of my head.

To my surprise I also noticed—with new eyes--- the wonderful statue of the Sacred Heart that stands over the Rosary altar. Over time, his hands translated those words of St. Augustine very clearly, very simply.

Jesus holds his right hand out as if to say:

Come to me. Come into this place where the love of my Heart is central to its life.
Come here to know me and to know yourself as I know you.

With his left hand Jesus points to his open heart as if to say:

If you accept my invitation to know me and to know yourself, there is so much more that I can offer you. I offer you the knowledge of the depths of my heart, a heart of love and of hope, of compassion and of suffering. Knowing my interior heart can bring you to a new understanding of all of life, of what is intrinsically possible through me and with me, of what is possible through and in your life.

All of a sudden I was awestruck by the power of the Sacred Heart. I had NO CLUE, NO WARNING! All of a sudden I wanted to know more about the love of God as expressed in the Sacred Heart and I happened to be in the right place at the right time. My faith journey got a jump start, thanks to those two invitations—Jesus’ hands held out to me and a quote from St. Augustine. I was restless and I just found out! Later I came to realize that these revelations were simply grace at work in my life.

The Second Moment: Oakwood Holiness

How did I respond to God’s invitations? I asked a LOT of questions! I was lucky to have NUN FRIENDS! (imagine that) who were so receptive to my boundless questions about God and Scripture and the meaning of a spiritual journey---honestly, about the meaning of everything! Again and again, I was struck by the feeling of meeting old friends for the first time. Everywhere I went, the same thing happened. I met RSCJ and others who just had this thing about them. We were friends, on the same page, and we had never met before.

A good example of meeting such friends happened when I was at Mass at Oakwood, one of the Society’s retirement communities. With NO WARNING, I became profoundly aware of a deep peace because I was in the presence of holiness. Holiness that was tangible. Holiness from being in the same room with our “Mothers” --- our Society elders, our ultimate “pray-ers”. We were breathing the same air!

I was deeply humbled by these new friends and changed by the simple grace of their presence. I spent maybe 30 minutes with them, yet their breathing invited me to enter into a place where God was calling, a space in the wide-opened Sacred Heart where we all reside.

There is another important part of this. After the graces of my visit at Oakwood, I heard this thing called “Cor Unum.” I tried really hard to get the words straight--- “Cor Unum et Anima Una in Corde Jesu”—one mind and heart in the heart of Jesus. Little by little I realized that Cor Unum was what St. Madeleine Sophie spoke of so long ago. To be a part of “Cor Unum” made so much sense to me, like finding pieces to a big puzzle. I felt very, very privileged to be on this journey with so many likeminded people.

Nun Friends

The more I learned about how the RSCJ lived and prayed and played, I could not get enough. My mantra (they still tease me about this today) was “I want to know what you know so I can do what you do.” I was convinced that the RSCJ had a one way ticket to wholeness, to integrity and I wanted it too. I was invited to my first 8-day retreat—the only non-nun there. I learned so much about the Sacred Heart life of prayer--- how to be open to what God was asking of me right then, especially how to make this world more loved and lovable.

That retreat became the basis for more prayer events and meetings. I found out about other women across the U.S. who had the same questions that I did. Isn’t there a

substantive place in the Society, in the U.S. province, for us to know more about the charism of the Society, about the history and writings of our great Mothers, and particularly how to pray as a Sacred Heart person?

Create A Space for Grace

I loved my relationship as a school person, especially being part of something new called “ESCJ” (Educators of the Sacred Heart). However, I wanted something deeper than an annual contract--- a job in a Sacred Heart school--- and I knew deep down that I was not meant to be a vowed religious. I wanted a way to construct a new thing that had substance and a commitment to prayer with two-way collaboration.

Every RSCJ I met said the same thing. This new thing has to be organic; it has to come from people like you. Be patient and listen to the Spirit. As one dear friend said, “When one begins to LISTEN there is no turning back: it is both a terrifying and exhilarating path to walk along... Whatever this New Creation you feel impelled to fashion, to struggle to fashion, will be made clear.”

My Heart on the Outside

While listening to the Spirit I was faced with a huge personal challenge. How could I share my God-life with others? How could I articulate something that was as close to me as my own breathing, as close as my own heart? How could I take what was so intimate and interior, and put it “out there.” I knew that I had to find my voice in order to be part of this reality called Associates that was evolving. I had to wear my heart on the outside.

My deepest consolation went back to that statue in the Rosary chapel. Each time I saw those hands, I knew that I was not alone on the journey. Jesus kept beckoning --- “Come on, you can do this!” And the encouragement that I received took a surprising turn. I began to encourage others to go where God was calling, to share their God-life. Becoming an Associate has been a big part of those conversations.

Holiness Abounds

Believe it or not, God’s grace still surprises me. It happened just last Tuesday when I was fine-tuning what I would say to you today. I had another one of those ah-ha moments--- so much like the graces of my visit to Oakwood. Once again my God-experience happened during prayer, in a conversation around the dinner table at Duchesne House.

Last Tuesday I was at our Area liturgy with New Orleans RSCJ and Associates when I had the deep sense that I was surrounded by holiness. It started with the first reading about the apostles being of one mind and heart. WOW—I said, Cor Unum! That’s where St. Madeleine Sophie got it! I realized one of the greatest lessons I have received is this: I didn’t have to go to Oakwood to find holiness. We, Associates and RSCJ and Sacred Heart alumnae/I, are holy. You, me, all of us. Born holy. Breathing holy. Living holy. Holy not in spite of our humanness, but because of it. I also realized that these graces on

my faith journey stem from a long history of Sacred Heart experiences and faithfulness to prayer.

Closing:

Friends. Prayer. Spiritual Journey. Surprise. Abiding Holiness. Tangible Grace. Humility.

All of these come from the Spirit at work. All of these enrich my life because the Society of the Sacred Heart has created a space for me as an Associate. I am passionate about our shared life, our invitation into the Heart of God. My “missionary zeal” is to proclaim the joy and challenge of what it means to walk hearts to Heart.

It just doesn’t get any better than that.

AASH Conference in Los Angeles
Meg Bugg - Associates Panel – Missionaries Among Us
Friday, April 24, 2009

When are you going to get back to what is in your heart?
When are you going to get back to what is in your heart?

This question was posed to me six years ago, shortly before the 2003 AASH conference in St. Louis, before I even knew there were RSCJ Associates. I feel like it is no accident that I'm here in LA, on this stage in 2009 speaking to you as an Associate at this conference with the theme: Missionaries of the Heart: Here to Make a Difference.

My mother, Ann Williams Bugg, a Villa and Maryville grad, was the Program Chair for the 2003 Conference. My mom was very interested in there being some representation of younger alums, some "new blood" in the program. Let's see, what young alum could she rope into facilitating one of the panel discussions at the conference? Hmmm...oh, her daughter!

So, again the question from six years ago: When are you going to get back to what is in your heart? A few weeks before the conference, I had a planning meeting with the four panelists. Harriet Switzer, Villa and Manhattanville grad as well as a former RSCJ was one of the women on panel. I knew Harriet from my five years working in Catholic Campus Ministry at Washington University in St. Louis where she worked for the Chancellor and the Board of Trustees of the university. But I had left the Catholic Student Center in 2000 and gone to work as a technology consultant. Now it was almost three years later and I hadn't seen Harriet since.

After the meeting ended, Harriet and I were walking together out to our cars. Harriet asked how I been and I proceeded to tell her about the work I was doing as a technology consultant, how much I'd been learning about companies in St. Louis through my work, had opportunities to travel for work, etc. She said oh, that's nice, and when are you going to get back to doing what is in your heart? I almost fell off the curb. Where in the world did that question come from, I thought to myself. Oh, No, Harriet, I'm really enjoying the work I'm doing. Right, she said, but when are you going to get back to what is in your heart? Still in shock, I think I moved on to how much I was looking forward to the conference. And oh, here's my car. Great to see you Harriet, see you at the conference...

As I got into my car, disbelief was still flooding in. Deep, deep down I knew this was an important question but I was *so* not ready to face it. What in the world made Harriet ask that question? She doesn't even know me that well, I thought, and she hasn't seen me in three years, why that question? And what exactly had she seen in me before?

Sure, I'd loved my work in Campus Ministry at KU and at Wash U. I loved making a difference in the lives of college student, loved the focus on Social Justice, on international and local service, on living with integrity, on building health relationships.

Sure, it had been a privilege helping form the hearts and minds of new leaders for our Church and society – it was transformational work for me... but I'm also really good at designing databases, training sales people to use their technology more effectively. True, I *never* thought I was going to end up in the business world but ...a lot of people aren't exactly following their hearts, right?

It was at the conference that I learned about the brand new Sacred Heart Primary School in Uganda. I'd been pretty darn disconnected from all things Sacred Heart and I had no idea that efforts had been under way to build this school. I had never heard of Sr. Cullen but learned she was traveling around to all the Network schools in the US and to share the story and encouraging the students to develop all kinds of fundraising effort to help support our new sister school in Uganda. Ahh, Fantastic! What a wonderful opportunity for Sacred Heart students in the US. Wow, this touched my heart. I saw a bulletin board full of pictures of the new students in Uganda. It was love at first sight for me as I looked at the pictures. I introduced myself to Irene, said how impressed I was with this mission and told her that some day I wanted to come to help at the school. Renie politely smiled and nodded in her diplomatic way. It suddenly occurred to me she must have lots of people say, oh, I'd love to see the school. I told her, no, I'm serious. I had spent time in Ghana in West Africa two years before and I loved it, I have good friends who have spent a lot of time working in Uganda, I'm really coming to this school some day.

And then the day of the conference in St. Charles. I remember I was working at home that morning but thought well, I paid the registration, I guess I'll go try to catch part of the program in St. Charles. Sr. Sharon Karam was giving a talk on Philippine. Hmmm, this should be interesting – I always liked Philippine – and even had a strong link to her in college at the University of Kansas (but that's a whole other talk). Heck- I'd even picked her as my saint for Confirmation when I was in college. Well, Sharon Karam gave a compelling talk. About halfway through the talk, tears started rolling down my cheeks. What the heck? Why was I crying? My heart was stirred by the story of Philippine. It was as if what I was hearing about Philippine was tapping in to something in my core, to the formation I'd had as a student at Villa, a longing to experience and love God in the way of Philippine, in the Sacred Heart way.

Thoughts were welling up in me as I heard the words and saw the images. What am I doing with my life? How did I get to where I am? How am I making God's love known in the world? How did my life become so separate from my Sacred Heart roots and from Philippine? Isn't that what is in my DNA? But if this is who I am, what does that mean? Who are my Potawatomi? Probably not the VPs of Sales I was working with. The tears continued. The talk ended and I waited as people filed out so I compose myself. I went up to speak briefly to Sr. Karam and then I went home, back to my life.

Fast forward to November, 2004. I was still busy working in technology. Well thank goodness for technology because without it I might have never learned about the RSCJ Associates. My parents were out of town and I needed access to something on my

mom's computer so I logged on remotely. While I was connected, I happened to notice an e-mail from Maryville in my mother's inbox with a subject line about RSCJ Associates. Call it being lead by the Holy Spirit or call it being nosy, but I opened the e-mail! She was being invited to an informational meeting to come learn about the RSCJ Associates. I knew I was interested. By the way, a year later, my mother also joined the Associates. It has been great to be a part of this together but I always point out that I was an Associate first. ;)

Less than ten minutes into that first orientation session, I knew in my heart I was going to become an Associate. I was overwhelmed with the feeling that I had come home. But interestingly even though the meeting was held at Villa, the feeling of coming home wasn't in a nostalgic, reunion weekend kind of way. It was home in the "tears during the Philippine talk" kind of way.

I was excited about the formation involved in process. I realized that while I had developed an adult faith and knowledge of the Catholic Church but only had a limited, adolescent knowledge of the Society of the Sacred Heart. I had worked in campus ministry, lead RCIA, been a part of amazing faith communities...all separate from Sacred Heart. I wanted to grow in my understanding of Sacred Heart Spirituality, of Sophie and Philippine, and to have it shape my prayer and my life – the contemplative and the apostolic.

There were 8-10 of us who went through this initial orientation in 2005, accompanied by the five women who were already Associates in St. Louis and about 10 of the St. Louis area RSCJ. I was energized by these gatherings and fascinated by the wide variety of background of the RSCJ and of the Associates. Now it is hard for me to remember what my life was like before I met these women.

And what a bunch we are! In St. Louis, I am the youngest Associate (although in other cities there are some who are much younger. The RSCJ involved range from 50 to 86. Some of us are college professors; some are retired, some working mothers, school administrators, a judge, and a journalist. Our politics vary and certainly some of us would be considered progressive or liberal Catholics and others quite conservative. This can all lead to some interesting discussions at monthly meals following our prayer and reflection. But what unites us? It's our common desire to continue to discover and make known God's love in the world. We don't all have to be going about it the same way in order to support each other in furthering the mission.

The summer of 2005, after going through the Associates orientation, that question came up again. You remember the question? When are you going to go back to doing what is in your heart? Through an amazing, Spirit-filled set of circumstances (that actually included Harriet Switzer again) an opportunity presented itself at Villa Duchesne. With the strong encouragement of the Associates and RSCJ, I was offered the position of Assistant Director of Admissions at Villa for grades 7-12. I loved it and it turned out to be my dream job. Being an Associate was such a great complement to my job. It continually grounded me in the real purpose of Sacred Heart education. The

understanding of Sacred Heart spirituality that I was developing through the Associates certainly brought a depth to my ability to convey the Goals and Criteria and the mission of Sacred Heart education to prospective families. Being an Associate also led to the privilege of helping guide the Formation to Mission of the faculty and staff at Villa Duchesne.

And then there's Uganda. Remember that pledge I made to Renie Cullen? Well if you read my article in the last *Esprit de Coeur*, you may have already realized what happened. I had the amazing opportunity to go to Uganda last summer with a group of seven other Sacred Heart educators, each from a different US Network school. It was a program lovingly orchestrated by Renie, a link between the US Province and the Uganda-Kenya Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

As I mentioned in my article in *Esprit de Coeur*, I've never been more proud to be a part of the Sacred Heart family as I was in Uganda and in many ways, had never felt so at home. I know my background as an Associate brought a depth to my personal experience on the trip.

I felt such a strong connection to Philippine while in Uganda, especially during the workshops we had with the educators at Sacred Heart Primary in Kyamusansala, including many young RSCJ. We spent time together focusing on what it means to be Sacred Heart educators and reflecting on the lives of Sophie and Philippine. I kept thinking of Philippine's courage and vision to cross the Atlantic as a Missionary of the Heart, making the education of all of us in this room possible. We would not be here without her courage. And there I was, across the Atlantic in Uganda, seeing the profound impact Philippine's courage and Missionary Heart is having on the lives of the beautiful Sacred Heart girls in Uganda. Such a gift!

And now? As is happening all over the country, in education as well as business, restructuring is happening at Villa. My position as Assistant Director of Admission has been eliminated and I'm currently looking for a new job. The Associates and RSCJ have been a wonderful help, listen to me, praying for me, mobilizing to try to find me another job...

So what is in my heart today? Gratitude. Gratitude for everything in the past six year that led me to this point, this place.

The question is no longer when I'm I going back to what is in my heart but what is the next way I'm going to live out what is in my heart.

Anne Wente RSCJ continued...

Listening to these two stories, calls me back to the icon that we saw earlier of Sophie and Philippine embracing as they discovered each other with a similar experience of vocation!

While Associates have committed their lives in a special way, as Sacred Heart alums, we all are called to discover and make known God's love. I invite you to listen also to this call that is God's invitation.

The Call needs to be understood as both personal and a communal.

First, it is personal in the openness and intimacy of encountering the divine other.

God awakens us to this mutual desire and longing, leading us to moments of true encounter.

Like Philippine Duchesne, Madeleine Sophie was drawn to the Heart of Christ and a deep compassion for others. She longed to bring others to this personal encounter of God's love. Her special gift, even in her demanding administrative life, was her insistence on the possibility of leading a profoundly, contemplative life. Her yearning and her daily discipline allowed Sophie to anchor her prayer and life decisions in the compassion of the Heart of God. She spoke of this "interior life" as a constant discipline of "drawing near" to the presence of God.

Her own life is our example of a commitment to interior quiet, deep intellectual studies, immersion in the Word of God and a very active apostolic engagement. This engagement is marked with that reflective element that is characteristic of a true educator. Or...As one of our RSCJ says: "a passion to proclaim the Gospel with a critical discerning attitude toward the world."

Sophie's early spiritual formation was heavily influenced by the Church's focus then on sin and reparation. Thus, her recognition of the power of Divine Love manifest in all of life was even more remarkable. The power of God's constant love continues to draw all of us today, influencing our reading, prayer, life choices and our ability to find God in all things...our work, our relationships and our every day actions.

Second, the call of our Sacred Heart vocation is also communal. It is communal in our encounter with God in each other and in the World around us.

At the very beginning of Madeleine Sophie's first communities, a candle was lit on the kitchen table after dinner dishes were done, marked in segments so that each woman present had time to describe her experience in prayer. These early RSCJ realized quickly the importance of both Sophie and outside spiritual directors assisting them in formation to practical ways of encountering God's love according to each one's call, personality, attractions and difficulties.

Today, this same emphasis on study, sharing and spiritual accompaniment underlies the lives of women called to be associates. Sacred Heart Associates also commit to faithful attendance at monthly meetings to explore ways of living the spirituality of the Heart of Jesus according to the spirit of the Society. The meetings include study of Society history, spirituality, and mission,

Central to our meetings, Associates share their personal experience of God, deepening their consciousness of God's Presence in their own lives and our world today. We help affirm God's presence...as Paul says in Colossians (1:28) by reminding each other that "The secret is this, Christ is within us,--each of us-- our hope of Glory." (becoming who we are meant to be.) Often Associates remark how amazing it is to share their experience of God's love and closeness in daily life and not be seen as a little strange! Because of their deepening awareness of God, they are also surprised by the apostolic opportunities that open to them and call them to growth.

This call leads to participation in the mission of the society.

The international Chapter of the Society this last summer, lifted up the experience of the RSCJ around the world in an attempt to name and discern our "consciousness " of God's presence and call in our lives today. We named "five priorities or "doorways" of this encounter that we feel called to deepen: Contemplation (our foundation), community (at all levels), Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, dialogue toward communion, and young people.

While some of the priorities have always been clear to us, there are new emphases...such as accompanying young people...in their 20s and 30's who search for ways to engage our World, in the need for dialogue toward community with the diversity of cultures and religions around us today and in eco logical and justice issues that effect the lives of all people and require a new respect and concern for God's creation.

The Associate community recognizes the seriousness of both our personal and global call to transformation. We are challenged to trust that the love of God can really transform us and our world. That transformation does begin with our personal lives. Like Philippine and Sophie, we feel the call to leave familiar ways of being and to trust God, faithful to our deepening relationship. We know that human love can transform us, if we nourish this relationship. It is a discipline involves daily attentiveness, self knowledge, vulnerable intimacy and fidelity in hard times.

Our relationship with God involves that same discipline; a constancy of attentiveness and openness to the other, intimacy and faithfulness, bring forward our most vulnerable selves, a deep hope of truly discovering God in our deeper and best selves, in our relationships and in the world around us. We learn the wisdom of constancy in prayer. The concerns of our world challenge us and God's relationship sustains us. We see the deep reality of being wholly contemplative and wholly apostolic women of the Sacred Heart.

The movement of the Spirit is alive and growing, not a static reality that we can contain or limit, especially not in a document or organizational structure. In another ten years, we may see new dimensions of these associate communities in the larger family of the Sacred Heart. Cathie Kinabrew will talk about our current growth in this country. Long active in promoting the Associate vision, Cathie was named Chairperson of the USA Associates Nations Committee in January of 2007.

Associates of the Sacred Heart at the National Level
Catherine D. Kinabrew
Associates Panel, AASH, April 2009

Getting Started

One of the things that I dearly love about the Religious of the Sacred Heart is their courage to move forward despite the messiness from letting the Spirit be in control! They teach me so much about patience and decisions through discernment. The Associates Movement is a prime example of that.

Starting in the mid-1990's we had a several national meetings of RSCJ and Associates. These meetings had common themes--- building relationships, looking at what true collaboration is, learning the Society's historical context and prayer life, and sharing current province issues such as the Chapter documents, elder care, and financial challenges.

Then in 2006 this dynamic and collaborative group got really smart. We decided that we had done a good job in the first stage of the Associates movement but now it was time for action, for taking a giant step forward. With over 100 Associates in 13 areas spread across the U.S., we needed a structure to channel our energies on the national level.

The ANC-USA Is Born

In January 2007 the Provincial Team answered that call by creating the Associates National Committee (ANC-USA). There are four regional representatives (South, Central, East, West), two RSCJ and one member of the Provincial Team who meet by conference call every month or so.

Our mandate from the team was simple: to be a vehicle for communication, facilitation, and development of the Associates movement. Here are some of the specifics things we have done:

The Identity Statement--- We spent the good part of a year putting together a statement of who we are. It was a lively and very healthy discussion that leaves space for growth because each of the Associate groups is so different from the next one. The statement is available on our new Associates bookmark.

Resources Booklet--- We created a list of important materials to orient new members and to help us continue to grow in all things Sacred Heart. Our next step is to develop an initial orientation process that includes the wonderful things that so many areas do when new people join their group.

Another achievement is the Associates website (<http://rscjassociates-usa.org>). Now we have a place to find the latest news in each Associate group and a place for broadcasting opportunities for further growth---retreats, province news, meetings, prayers, etc.

One of the most recent transformative events was the Spirituality Forum of 2008. It was a vibrant gathering of the Sacred Heart family--- RSCJ, school people, Associates, alumnae, collaborators, friends.

To our great delight there is another “family gathering” coming up. The Spirituality Forum 2010 will join with the Network of Sacred Heart School to present “Celebrating Sacred Heart Spirituality and Mission in a Globalized World.” Mark your calendars for July 7-11, 2010.

A few of our current goals are to connect with young adults, to create ways to be financially sustainable in light of today’s economic uncertainties, to write a history of how the Associates began, and to connect with other religious groups who have Associates.

It has been very exciting to work at the national level with the team and other RSCJ and Associates. We are truly part of the U.S. Province and yet we are still evolving in an organic way--- from the bottom up! We listen to the Spirit as we discern the best use of our talents and energies. As Anne Wenthe said, “The movement of the Spirit is alive and growing!”