

## SISTERS IN HEALTHCARE PROJECT AT SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania, one of the 14 state universities comprising the State System of Higher Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, is creating a permanent historical exhibit showcasing the significant contributions made by sixteen orders of Roman Catholic nuns to healthcare from 1847 to the present. According to Dr. John A. Bavaro, RN, School of Business, the idea he has had years has now become a reality. Dr. Bavaro said, "The project is important because many do not know about the work of these women in healthcare, especially during a time when few were concerned about providing healthcare services. Many suffered hardships and even gave their lives in service to healthcare."



Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm and Residents and their Easter Bonnets, Garvey Manor c.1960

Targeted to open in the fall of 2006, the traveling exhibit will feature memorabilia, photos, and historical clothing worn by nurses and sisters who have worked, and continue to work in acute and long term care facilities from Erie to Altoona/Johnstown. Plans are to eventually expand to include other orders throughout the country. Bavaro explained that many are not aware of the numerous contributions made to healthcare by nuns in

Western Pennsylvania. The project will remedy this.

For example, Pittsburgh Mercy Hospital introduced aseptic surgery in the early 1900's and was the first Mercy hospital in the world. Sisters of Mercy sent 27 nursing sisters to care for soldiers during the civil war and ran military hospitals during the battle. The Sisters of Mercy from Altoona/Johnstown were the first to develop an in-patient drug rehab center in Western PA in 1954, while the Sisters of St. Joseph were instrumental in starting South Hills Healthcare System. Advancements in psychiatric treatment provided by the Sisters of St. Francis are legend in the industry. Sister Bernard Sheridan, a Sister of St. Joseph of Northwestern Pennsylvania, was the FIRST certified nurse anesthetist in the nation. The Vincentian Sisters of Charity were pioneers in long term care in Western Pennsylvania, while the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm helped to develop models combining various modalities such as physical, occupational, and speech into an accepted form of treatment in gerontology.

According to Bavaro, the project has been strongly endorsed by the Women's Studies Department, which plans to fold some of the exhibit's information into some its programs and courses, including SRU's Women-in-History Month. It is also being created in collaboration with the University's History Department which plans to also include research from the exhibit into its courses. A video documentary and a resource center dedicated to the study of women religious in healthcare are also being planned as part of the project.

An advisory board representing each order has been convened and the project is well under way. The project not only honors the work done by thousands of sisters caring for hundreds of thousands of patients, but also contributes to SRU's uniqueness because it is the only project of its kind in the state of Pennsylvania and the nation.

For further information, please contact Dr. John A. Bavaro, RN, at 724.738.2265, or john.bavaro@sru.edu. He also asks that individuals and organizations consider donating objects such as nursing pins, caps, other historical artifacts, and books related to the work of Sisters in healthcare to exhibit.

### **Daughters of Charity Receive Grant to Document Catholic Education**

The Daughters of Charity Archives of the Northeast Province was awarded a Documentary Heritage Program grant by the New York State Archives to study the Daughters' role in the history of Catholic education in New York State. The grant funds will be used to locate records pertaining to the thirty-two educational institutions in New York State operated and staffed by the Daughters of Charity from the mid-nineteenth-century to the present. A complete list of the schools, orphanages and other educational organizations is available from the Daughters of Charity Archives of the Northeast Province.

While the immediate goal of the project is to inventory diocesan records, the project also aims to identify any relevant parish, community or private collections held by local parishes, schools, alumni associations, former students, and historical societies. If you know of any unpublished records related to these schools please contact John Diefenderfer, the project Director, to participate in the project at 518/462-5593 or jdiefenderfer@dc-northeast.org.

## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

### **Local Cultures/Global Church: Challenge and Mission in the History of Women Religious June 24-27, 2007**

**The seventh triennial conference on the  
History of Women Religious  
Hosted by the Cushwa Center for the  
Study of American Catholicism  
University of Notre Dame, South Bend,  
Indiana**

The Conference on the History of Women Religious invites paper and session proposals that explore how communities of women religious or their individual members have answered the challenges of interacting with peoples from different cultures and backgrounds. Studies may focus on challenges within communities as well as sisters' encounters with people of different cultures in their work. Papers on women religious from all faith traditions are welcome. Disciplinary approaches may include but are not limited to history, sociology, literature, anthropology, theology, and communication.

Send proposals for papers and/ or sessions in the form of a one-page abstract accompanied by a one-page C.V. (letter, email, fax) by July 15, 2006 to:

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For more information or clarification on the program contact Prudence Moylan, HWR Program Chair, pmoylan@luc.edu, Phone 773-508-3082.