

# NATIONAL SPONSORSHIP AND NETWORK OFFICE

## Network Notes

*From the Desk of Dr. Laura Koehl*

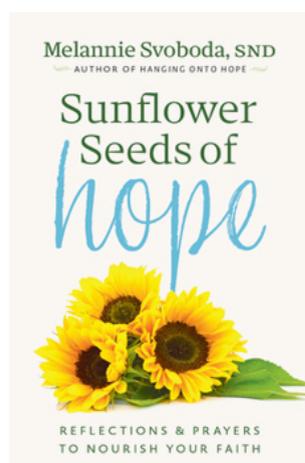
We are living in challenging times, and yet, in this season of thanksgiving, we are called to embrace gratitude for the many gifts God has bestowed upon each of us. Cicero called gratitude the parent of all other virtues and among those is certainly the virtue of hope. And with grateful hearts we can set free that 'thing with feathers' called hope (Dickinson).

At our National Sponsored Ministry Leadership gathering our theme was *Ministry as a Journey of Hope*. As we shared challenges, ideas, stories and strategies, it was clear we have so much to be grateful for in the mission centered dedication of our ministry leaders. Hope is alive and well because of the commitment of so many in each of our sponsored ministries and the transformational impact on those they serve. This was evident in the testimonies of personal experience by members of our SND USA ministries as well as Sr. Mary Ann Culpert's overview of our SND global missions.

This is a special year as the sisters celebrate the 175th year of their founding as pilgrims of gratitude and hope. The sisters have planted and nurtured so many seeds of hope in their many ministries across the globe. May they know how grateful we are for their vision, mission and ongoing commitment to serving others. And may that gratitude continue to be shown through the good work of those who faithfully carry on their legacy in each of our ministries and bring hope to our world.

With gratitude and hope,

*Laura Koehl, Ed.D.*



We are grateful for Sr. Melannie Svoboda's book, which was given to participants of the national meeting each including a personal note from her. The image of sunflowers, chosen for the book's cover, are often used as metaphors for hope, renewal, and unwavering faith. Their sunny disposition reminds us of our innate capacity to seek the light and remain steadfast even in the face of darkness.

This new book by Sr. Melannie is intended for people who are curious about God, the natural world, daily life, spirituality, and the inter-play among them. It's for people who are drawn to prayer as well as those who struggle with prayer. People who are trying to find God in the events and circumstances they see in the world today and experience in their everyday life will also find comfort and inspiration. For more information about this book and Sr. Melannie, visit her blog at <https://melanniesvobodasnd.org/>

Fall 2025

# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE

**Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School (Chardon, OH)** was recognized as a winner in the Cleveland.com and *The Plain Dealer* 2025 Top Workplaces rankings, making it their seventh consecutive year receiving the award. **Julie Billiard Schools (Lyndhurst, OH)** added grades 5-8 this year and was also recognized as a Top Workplaces winner, making it their sixth consecutive year receiving the award. The Top Workplaces program recognizes outstanding companies, nonprofits, schools, and organizations in Northeast Ohio based on employee feedback.



**Notre Dame Academy (Covington, KY)** has once again earned national recognition for academic excellence and Catholic education. The Council for American Private Education has nominated NDA as a 2025 National Blue Ribbon School — the fourth time in their history to receive this honor. That makes NDA the only Catholic high school in the Diocese of Covington to be recognized four times and one of just two schools in Kentucky nominated this year.

Staff and supporters of **St. Charles Community (Covington, KY)** gathered (on left) to celebrate being nominated as one of NKY's finest businesses. Thanks to everyone who voted for St. Charles for Best Retirement Community!



During Spirit Week, **Lial Catholic School (Whitehouse, OH)** dedicated a beautiful new statue of Mary, her handcrafted shroud, and the sunflower mural that now graces the front lobby (on right). This summer, former Lial principal, Dr. Deb Bloomquist, gifted the statue of Mary, created by an artisan in Medjugorje. A Lial grandparent Dave then designed and built a stunning custom black walnut shroud, with the help of his grandchildren. To complete the space, Sr. Suzanne Phillips, SND, lent her artistic vision, designing a sunflower mural as a radiant backdrop for Mary. With the guidance of the art teacher, Middle School Art Elective students joined Sr. Suzanne in bringing the mural to life and just in time for the Sisters of Notre Dame's 175th Foundation Day celebration.

Please share excellence in your ministry by contacting us at [nsno@sndusa.org](mailto:nsno@sndusa.org).

# TRANSITIONS

***We extend a heartfelt note of gratitude and appreciation to the Board Chairs who have completed their terms of dedicated service to advancing the mission of each of their ministries:***

Kathy Korducki, Notre Dame Academy (Toledo, OH)

Jason Lenihan, Notre Dame Urban Education Center (Covington, KY)

Dan Rudski, Lial Catholic School (Whitehouse, OH)

Julie Tapke, Julie Learning Center Preschool (Covington, KY)

***A warm welcome to our new board chairs, board members and ministry leaders.***

***Thank you for agreeing to answer the call to serve your ministry in these important governing roles***

## **Incoming Board Chairs**

Karen Daughtery, Julie Learning Center Preschool (Covington, KY)

Amanda Foster, Lial Catholic School (Whitehouse, OH)

Sarah Gray, Notre Dame Urban Education Center (Covington, KY)

Jenny Swope, Notre Dame Academy (Toledo, OH)

## **New Board Members**

Jennifer Badoni, Lial Catholic School (Whitehouse, OH); Thomas Belanic, Sr., Notre Dame Urban Education Center (Covington, KY); George Collins, Notre Dame Schools (Chardon, OH); Robert Coode, Notre Dame Schools (Chardon, OH); Molly Davis, Maria Early Learning Center (Toledo, OH); Brian Dunham, Notre Dame Academy (Park Hills, KY); Donna Falzon, Notre Dame Academy Schools (Los Angeles, CA); Nick Finan, Julie Learning Center (Covington, KY); Jenny Kraus, Lial Catholic School (Whitehouse, OH); Gustavo Lamanna, Notre Dame Academy Schools (Los Angeles, CA); Christopher McDonald, Notre Dame Academy Schools, (Los Angeles, CA); Matthew Mishler, Notre Dame Academy (Toledo, OH); Dr. Tripp Petzel, Notre Dame Schools (Chardon, OH); Gregory Rosko, Julie Billiard Schools (Lyndhurst, OH); Fr. Robert Ross, Julie Learning Center (Covington, KY); Stacie Strotman, Notre Dame Academy (Park Hills, KY); Erin Woods, Notre Dame Academy (Park Hills, KY)

## **New School Presidents**

Lauren Hitron, Notre Dame Academy (Park Hills, KY)

## **New Sponsored School Principals**

Lisa Timmerding, Notre Dame Academy (Park Hills, KY)

Alyssa Buzas, Julie Billiard School (Brecksville, OH)

## **New Affiliated School Principals**

Meggie Dansart, St. Mary Magdallen School (Camarillo, CA); Helena DiBiasie, Interim Principal, St. Leo School (Versaille, KY); Joe Gehring, Metro Catholic School (Cleveland, OH); Dr. Rachel Noll, Prince of Peace Catholic School (Covington, KY); Rosalie North, St. Peter School (Lorain, OH); Meghan Whelan, St. Joseph School (Cold Spring, KY)

# MEETINGS and GATHERINGS

The annual **Sponsored Ministry Leadership Gathering** was held in late October at the SND Center in Chardon, OH. Approximately 40 board chairs and members, ministry presidents, school principals, SND leadership and staff attended. This year's theme, *Ministry as a Journey of Hope*, explored Catholic identity in our ministries today, considering the many challenges we face and the opportunities we can embrace. The title was a tribute to the Jubilee Year of Hope proclaimed by Pope Francis and our 175th SND anniversary theme - pilgrims of Hope and Gratitude. The gathering opened with stories of hope that featured inspiring testimonials from a student and his father from Julie Billiart School in Lyndhurst, OH, two seniors from Notre Dame Cathedral Latin School, and a resident of Notre Dame Village, both located in Chardon, OH.

The gathering featured Sr. Mary Ann Culpert, SND Provincial Superior, who gave an inspiring overview of the SND Global Missions, and Rev. John D. Betters, who provided a thought-provoking session titled *Keeping the Faith: A Journey of being irresistibly Catholic, academically excellent and operationally sound*. Other sessions included AI and Catholic identity, and round table breakouts addressed a variety of topics providing for much discussion among participants. The gathering wrapped up with a summary of outcomes of the Assessment for Sponsored Ministries, how to improve the process and plan for the assessment going forward.

NSNO distributed a new SND USA Sponsored Ministries Board Handbook to each ministry and governing board. This handbook is meant to complement other board materials and provide information on SND heritage, SND USA governance structure, and best practices for boards.



Two **New Board Member Orientations** were held this fall for new board members. Sr. Joanne Keppler presented information on SND Charism, Mission and Vision, and Laura Koehl discussed our SND USA governance model and roles and responsibilities for board members.

An **SND Networking Group Zoom** was held in September bringing campus ministers together from sponsored and affiliated schools. Topics included how schools celebrate SND Foundation Day; provide opportunities for faculty formation; and organize Campus Ministry Instagram posts. A follow up Zoom was proposed to discuss religious vocation with members of the SND Vocation & Young Adult Ministry, and ways to join sisters in service and promote their corporate stances including "Water for Life" and opposing human trafficking in each regions.

# MISSION MOMENTS

**Maria Early Learning Center (Toledo, OH)** rose to the SNDs' 175th anniversary challenge by collecting 175 water bottles to give to the Isaiah 117 House, a national organization that reduces trauma on the day children are removed from their home and provides physical and emotional support in a safe and loving home as the children await placement in a foster home. The two children who brought in the most water bottles were able to "pie" Director Lisa Nowak and Assistant Director Jordan Zechman. The team also worked together to fill the bottles with stickers, faith-filled, encouraging messages, and coloring pages. Current and past board members also donated water bottles.



For the second year in a row, **Notre Dame Academy (Toledo, OH)** packed 3,000 bags of food and created over 5,400 cards of encouragement to spread hope & joy with Connecting Kids to Meals for a school wide day of service to kick off the year!

**Notre Dame Academy (Park Hills, KY)** held a Back-to-School Drive collecting 110 backpacks, 300 supply items including pens, markers, notebooks, paper, and folders, and \$1,380 to donate to the Notre Dame Urban Education Center in Covington, KY to help students start the year prepared and supported.



The **Notre Dame Academy community (Los Angeles, CA)** came together to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption on Friday, August 15, a beautiful way to begin the year in prayer and unity. The homily invited participants to reflect on the theme of transformation, reminding everyone that growth and change are at the heart of the journey as students, educators, and people of faith.

Seniors at **Notre Dame Academy High School (Los Angeles, CA)** participated in several activities during senior service week, including working with students in the classroom; organizing clothing and food donations; and improving a garden space. Many of the organizations at which the girls volunteered have a long-standing relationship with NDA and were thrilled to have them return including Sophia T. Salvin Special Education School, St. Sebastian School, St. Anne School, and St. Margaret Center. (Information and photos provided by Sr. Frances Wahl.)



## RURAL HEALTHCARE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Students and chaperones gathered in Morehead, KY for the fourth annual **Rural Healthcare Student Experience at UK St. Claire Healthcare**. Students shadowed health professionals in the hospital and medical offices and made home visits with Home Health nurses, therapists and social workers. In addition to shadowing, students participated in a half day of community service at Rowan County Christian Social Services, a food and clothing center. Some students also made personal care packages at the newly opened SND EKY Foundation House.



Students enjoyed swimming in the hotel pool, signing t-shirts and a pizza dinner followed by ice cream treats and competing in the blow-up obstacle course at the UKSC Foundation House. The week concluded with a morning skills lab where students learned to suture and dissect a fetal pig and about the UK physician assistant program and medical and nursing school funding sources.



Approximately 65% of past Rural Healthcare Student Experience participants are currently pursuing education in the medical field.

## SND Eastern Kentucky Foundation

The **SND Eastern Kentucky Foundation (Morehead, KY)** has announced its first five grant awards, marking a significant milestone in the foundation's inaugural year. These grants address critical needs in health and wellness, education and career development, and quality of life across the region. They include:



- People's Self-Help Housing in Lewis County for home modifications and repairs for low-income senior citizens.
- CASA of the Gateway Region to support the training and needs of court appointed special advocates.
- The Northeast Kentucky Area Health Education Center to implement a dental careers education program in 10 local high schools, addressing a severe shortage of dentists in the region.
- Christian Social Services received a four-wheel drive vehicle to aid in reaching deep rural parts of the region.
- Two book vending machines were awarded to local elementary schools in partnership with the Morehead Rotary Club.

These initial awards represent the Foundation's commitment to addressing critical needs across its eight-county service area. Additional grant decisions will be announced as the Foundation continues its first funding cycle.

# CELEBRATING THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME



Students at **Notre Dame Elementary School (Chardon, OH)** celebrated Foundation Day with teachers and sisters at right.



**Notre Dame Academy Schools (Los Angeles, CA)** celebrated Foundation Day with a Rosary Prayer Service (on the left) to celebrate all the Sisters of Notre Dame, from Ohio to Thousand Oaks, Uganda,

On October 1, 2025, **Clearwater Central Catholic High School (Clearwater, FL)** joined together to honor the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Notre Dame, whose charism and mission continue to shape CCC's identity and purpose. The school community gathered near the Chapel of St. Julie Billiart for a prayer service, surrounding a newly planted commemorative tree, which will soon be accompanied by a plaque honoring the sisters' 175 years of faithful service to God and His people. Freshmen received tiny saints of St. Julie Billiart from President Dr. John Venturella as a reminder of the sisters' enduring influence, while all students enjoyed special Foundation Day treats during lunch. The day concluded with a Holy Hour dedicated to the Sisters of Notre Dame, deepening the school's connection to its spiritual roots.



Throughout the celebration, CCC reflected on how the SND legacy lives on through its mission: to educate students to use their minds for truth, hearts for love, and hands for service. Inspired by the sisters' commitment to God's goodness and the dignity of all people, Clearwater Central Catholic leadership and faculty remain stalwart in carrying forward their vision: forming young people who generously serve others and transform the world for the better. (Information and photos provided by CCC.)

Under blue skies and autumn sunshine, students and administrators from **Notre Dame Middle School and Notre Dame Cathedral Latin School (Chardon, OH)** planted a red maple tree to commemorate the 175th anniversary of the Sisters of Notre Dame.



## Coming Up

12/8

SND USA Feast Day

1/25-1/31

Catholic Schools Week

3/8-14

National Catholic Sisters Week

3/25

Feast of the Annunciation

3/25-27

Charism Experience

3/31

Network Award Submissions Due

4/18

Feast of Julie

4/15

DGA Medallion Orders Due

5/1

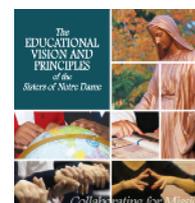
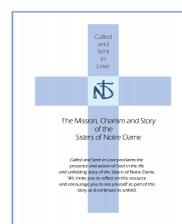
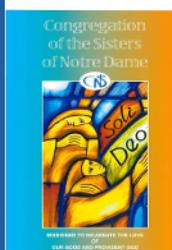
Network Award Recipients Announced

6/7-11

Rural Healthcare Student Experience

## Resources

Many books, stickers, bookmarks and the perpetual calendar as well as the *NSNO FY25 Annual Report* and *SND USA Sponsored Ministries Board Handbook* were made available at the Sponsored Ministry Leadership Gathering. Please contact me the office if you would like copies of any of these items.



The Leadership and Board online resources section on the NSNO website is constantly being updated. Visit the website for helpful information and documents on:

*Board Roles and Responsibilities*

*Board/CEO Leadership*

*Board Development*

*Board Structure and Processes*

*SND Governance/Heritage*

Also available on the website are past and current newsletters, annual reports and news updates, as well as information on our award programs.



Visit the NSNO website at <https://nsno.sndusa.org> for more resources and information or contact the staff at:

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