



WDREF

Wisconsin Directors of Religious Education Federation

WDREF

Winter 2009

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WDREF Calendar

April 26-29, 2009

NCCL National Conference
(Dearborn, MI)

November 5-6, 2009

WDREF Retreat
(St Anthony’s Retreat Center
Marathon, WI)



From the Facilitator

by Becky Thompson

WDREF Facilitator

Greetings! We are nearing the end of winter as I write to you today. What a relief to know that spring is on it’s way! Thank you to all the board members who braved the cold and snow to gather for our January WDREF board meeting. Although few in numbers, we accomplished quite a bit! Here are some of the highlights...

Convention 2008

I want to thank all of the individuals who had a hand in making the convention such a great success, especially co-chairs, Nancy Metz and Bonnie Bauman. We were treated to some wonderful speakers and given the opportunity to network and visit representatives from a variety of publishing companies. This past fall, WDREF members had a chance to nominate each other for a number of awards. The winners of these awards were announced at the November conference. You will read more about these individuals in the coming pages. Congratulations to each of you! We are so proud of the work you continue to do in the catechetical ministry.

Convention 2010

In 2010 we will be celebrating 30 years as a statewide federation. Larry Behlen and Ann Siriani are co-chairs for the convention, which will be held at the Heidel House Resort in Green Lake. The theme of the convention is: *The Soul of Leadership: Responding to the Call.*

PDC and Visioning

We have now made enough money through handbook sales to cover the cost of printing. In fact, our profit now totals \$680. If you are planning to attend the NCCL conference, Joanie McKeown is looking for volunteers to help her staff the booth as we continue to sell the handbooks. Please e-mail her at joanie50@consultant.com if you are willing to help.

Two surveys and a questionnaire were included in the convention binders, but because of the low response rate we are asking local organizations to take a few minutes at the end of their program days to collect them. You can also find them on www.wdref.org. In the near future, we hope to put together another publication on “Best Practices in Catechetical Ministry in Wisconsin” (exact title to be determined).

(cont. page 2)

Retreat

This year's retreat, *Standing on Tiptoe: The Season of Hope*, with Lee Nagel, Executive Director of NCCL will be held at St. Anthony's Retreat Center. You'll want to register early, as the limit for attendees is 80 people.

Misc.

Moving forward, we tackled next year's budget, which will be approved at the May meeting. We also selected dates for the 2009-2010 board meetings, discussed local organization and diocesan reports and had a lovely visit from Mary Testin (now on staff at St. Anthony's). Mary was inquiring about how they could help catechists with certification.

We also spent some time cleaning our storage space at St. Anthony's. Not to worry...we snuck a little fun in there, too. After a few rounds of Cranium and cards we developed the *Top Ten Reasons Why You Should Say, "Yes!" to Being a WDREF Board Member*. If your local organization discerns you or you are asked to join the board, please consider saying yes. Review our Top 10 list and you'll find plenty of good reasons why you should.

WDREF Mission Statement

As the statewide organization of professional catechetical leaders, the Wisconsin Directors of Religious Education Federation (WDREF) promotes ministerial and professional development and provides ongoing formation, advocacy, support and recognition to our members through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Find us on the web!
www.wdref.org

News • Updates • Events

www.wdref.org

Top 10 Reasons why you should say, "YES!"

At the January Board meeting executives came up with the top 10 reasons why you should consider being a WDREF Board member if you are discerned by your local diocese.

Reason #10:

Fellowship and friendships made.

Reason #9:

Great opportunity to know what is going on in other dioceses.

Reason #8:

Hearing about good speakers we could use in our dioceses.

Reason #7:

Sharing recipes for success in ministry.

Reason #6:

Personal growth in knowledge; networking and support.

Reason #5:

Time spent at St. Anthony's for the board meetings is like a mini-retreat with work and prayer.

Reason #4:

Helping each other become aware of national and universal catechetical documents and trends and their implications for our ministry.

Reason #3:

Opportunity to develop and use our leadership skills at the state and national levels.

Reason #2:

Fostering a sense of professionalism for and within the catechetical ministry.

...And, the #1 Reason:

Opportunity to be a catalyst and agent for change and improvement in the catechetical ministry throughout the state.

NCCL: A Must-Attend Conference!

Many conferences have inspirational and informative speakers, but how often have you returned home with a renewed sense of vision and been unable to spark your parish to make any changes?

This year's NCCL Annual Conference WILL help you to make a difference!

Each person who registers for the Annual Conference will receive a copy of the popular leadership book, "Living Your Strengths" with access to the online StrengthensFinder survey. Reading the book and taking the survey will help you to analyze your own talents and strengths, to learn the best ways to affirm the talents of your faith community, and develop an approach to ministry that uses those strengths for spiritual growth in the parish.

During the conference, expert coaches/ presenters will offer further insights to assist you in maximizing these strengths within the catechetical field. The process of "Appreciative Inquiry" will guide you in reflecting on what drives your ministry and how you can use your story to help others to *Belong, Engage, Believe*.

Stay for the post-conference sessions on Thursday afternoon and evening (only \$35 additional, which includes supper) to deepen your skills in taking these ideas back to your parish and applying them.

In addition to this over-arching focus, specific topics and practical applications will be covered in the learning sessions, such as: ministry in multi-parish or multi-lingual settings, families with mixed religious affiliations, rural issues, adolescent catechesis, young adult faith formation, and updates on current issues involving morality, theology and scripture.

I urge you to attend this year's conference! If cost is a problem, carpool, share lodging, seek funding from parish organizations with the promise to report on the exciting, useful and practical information that you've received. Don't miss this opportunity!

NCCL's Annual Conference this year is in Dearborn (Detroit-area) MI, Monday April 27 through Thursday April 30 with pre-conference sessions and activities on Sunday April 26. Registration is \$289 for NCCL members.

For more information, go to www.nccl.us or contact Joanie McKeown at joanie50@consultant.com (Joanie McKeown is your representative on NCCL's Representative Council and serves on NCCL's Annual Conference Planning Committee.)

WDREF Members Selected to run for NCCL Leadership Positions

As the two candidates for President of NCCL reflected on whom to select for their slates, both reached similar conclusions: a member of WDREF was a great choice!

Presidential candidate Dr. Lorraine DeLuca from the Diocese of Beaumont selected Mike Westenberg, PCL in the Diocese of Green Bay, for V.P.; Janet Schaeffler, OP, from the Archdiocese of Detroit, for secretary and Mary Jo Waggoner, Diocese of San Diego, for treasurer.

Presidential candidate Dr. Anne Roat from the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana selected Russell Peterson, from the Diocese of Belleville, as V.P.; Joanie McKeown, PCL in the Diocese of Superior, for secretary, and Dr. Kathy Kleinlein, Diocese of Venice Florida, as treasurer.

With the 2008 NCCL Bylaw changes, all PCLs can now vote in NCCL elections. Let your voice be heard by voting during the NCCL Annual Conference, or voting by absentee ballot if you are unable to attend.

Further information on the candidates can be found at www.nccl.org and in the March/April issue of Catechetical Leader.

If you are not a member of NCCL, you can join at the reduced rate of \$50 per year because WDREF is an affiliate member of NCCL.

Looking Back on the Convention...

A Fresh Perspective...

Thanks again to all who attended the 2008 WDREF Convention in Stevens Point this past November. Please visit www.wdref.org to view more pictures. For some members like Carrie Aimers, Religious Education Coordinator at St. Agnes Parish in Green Bay, it was their first time attending the Convention. Here is her reflection from a “new” perspective:



Sister Angel Ann Zukowski presenting

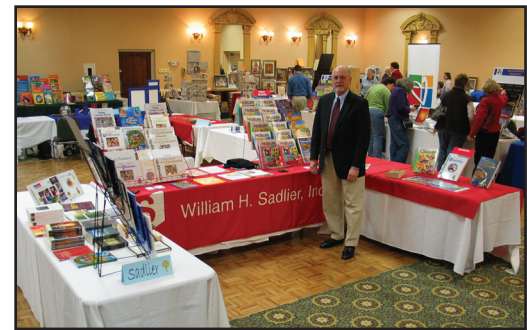
As a first timer at the convention, I was unsure of what to expect. What I had not expected was the depth of relationships one can develop by attending these events. After attending the WDREF convention I felt more connected to other ministers from my Diocese and I was also able to connect with some members from other Dioceses. The speakers did a great job presenting an issue and beginning the dialogue for what we can do to help solve the concern. The one thing that would have made the experience better for me would have been to pay for a hotel room in order to fully partake in the opportunity to bond with others in ministry. The weekend was worth taking time to attend and I left feeling renewed and ready for the challenges that lay ahead of me in the coming year. Thanks for this great opportunity!



WDREF members checking out the exhibits



Members networking over cheese and wine



Exhibitors at the Convention

Table Talk...

At the convention, members had the opportunity to participate in discussion. Here are some of the questions that were brought to the table as well as just a few of the ideas shared in response to them:

Within ministry what do you cherish?

- Being able to do what I love and live what I believe
- Youth who have challenged me & those who have taught me
- The relationships and support of others in ministry
- When God's reality clicks in someone's life
- Hold firm the rudder of faith

What hopes do you have for ministry?

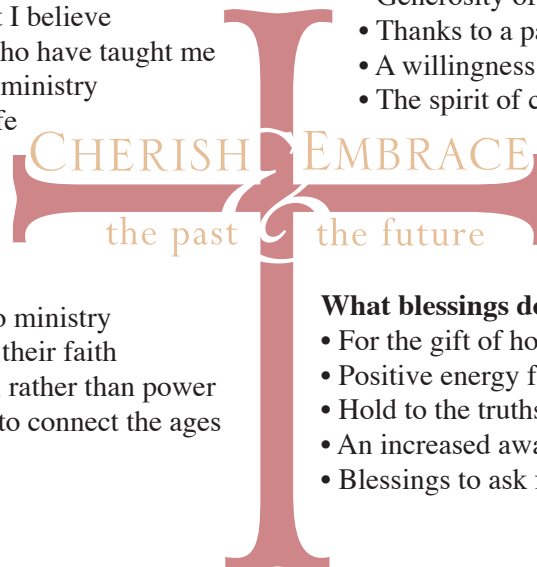
- A sense of community, not division
- Hope for more people to answer the call to ministry
- Help people learn the language to express their faith
- A return to a church based on compassion, rather than power
- Encourage intergenerational faith sharing to connect the ages

What blessing do you raise in thanksgiving?

- Bless all who have carried the message to those in need
- Generosity of catechists and volunteers
- Thanks to a pastor who is totally supportive
- A willingness to be open to others
- The spirit of cooperation

What blessings do you ask for the Church?

- For the gift of honesty
- Positive energy for goodness and service
- Hold to the truths with relevancy to today's Catholics
- An increased awareness of the Holy Spirit & grace to listen
- Blessings to ask for an open mind to new ideas/programs



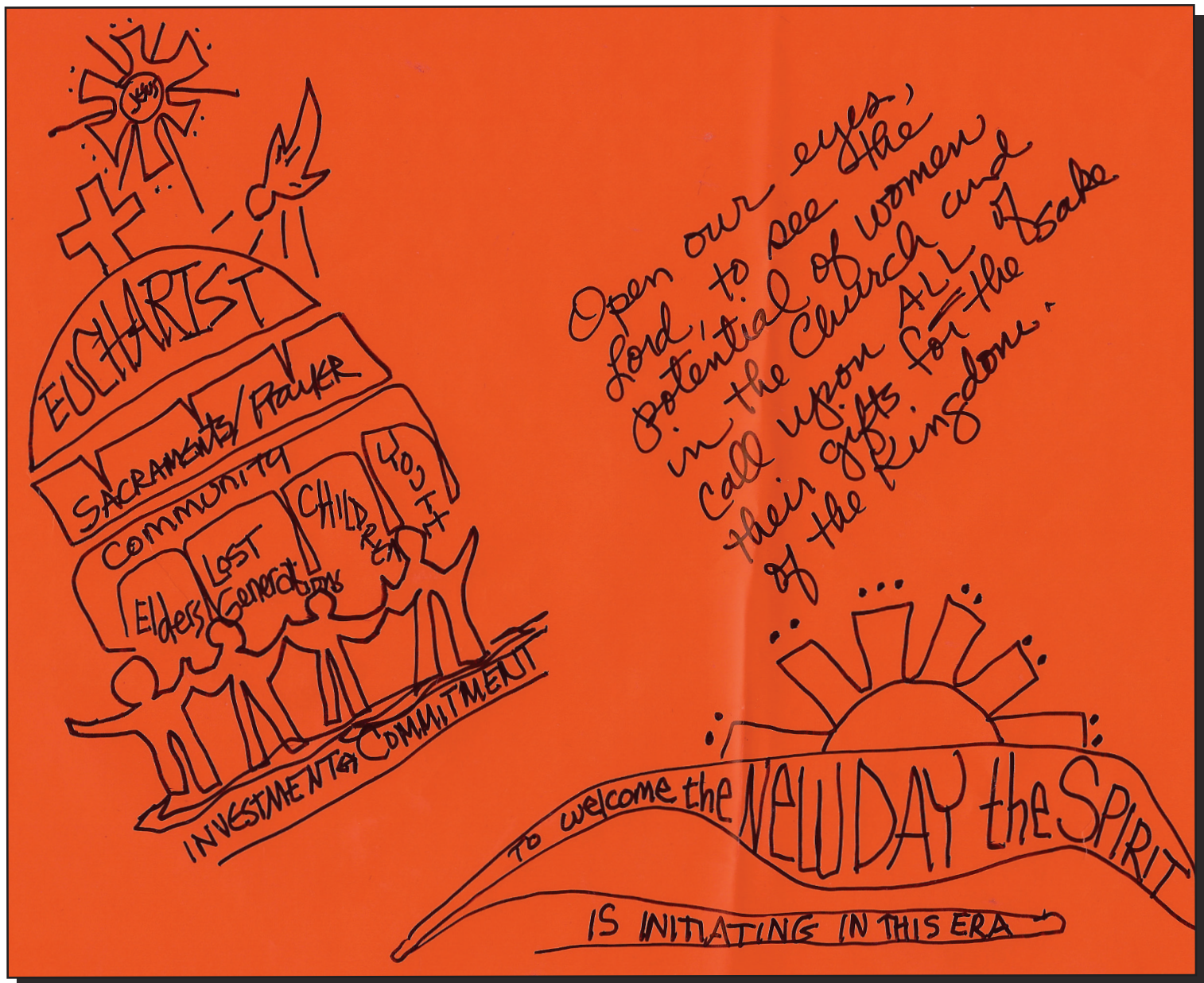


Table talk at the convention went beyond chatter...one WDREF member responded by putting pen to paper.

Convention Surveys Now Available Online

The following forms were included in the binders at the convention:

- Best Practices Questionnaire
- Sacramental Preparation Questionnaire
- Summer Program Survey

We are asking that you please visit www.wdref.org to complete the forms electronically or print and fill them out.

Please e-mail the forms to: Lalella@stmichaelwausau.org or mail to: Lee Ann Lella, 611 Stark St, Wausau 54403.

Save the Date:

WDREF Retreat – November 5-6, 2009

Please mark your calendars for a very exciting retreat opportunity November 5-6, 2009 at the St. Anthony Retreat Center in Marathon, WI. The theme of the Retreat is:

Standing on Tiptoe: The Season of Hope and our retreat master will be Lee Nagel, the Executive Director of NCCL. All are welcome!

For more information, contact Pam Fischer, retreat chairperson, at faith1@lakefield.net.



DARE (LaCrosse)

Submitted by Ann Lankford

The third Faith Alive faith-sharing program is going strong with the resource written by Christopher Ruff for the Year of St. Paul. The title is: *The Greatest of These is Love, Reflections from the Heart of St. Paul.*

The goal of these faith sharing resources is to help those involved to draw closer to Jesus in prayer and conversion, to share the treasures of our faith, to grow in bonds of friendship, and to serve Christ in others.

Bishop ListECKI and Father Mitch Pacwa, S.J. will be the keynote speakers for a three-day Conference. The Year of St. Paul / Divine Mercy Conference will be held at St. Joseph's Cathedral in La Crosse the weekend of April 17-19, 2009. Please visit the Dare Web site: www.dioceseoflacrosse.com/ to view the information sheet and registration form. Will you help promote this spiritual enriching conference in your area?

MDREO (Madison)

Submitted by Eric Schiedermayer

The Diocese of Madison is excited to host a Youth 2000 retreat March 20-22. Groups outside the diocese are invited to participate as space allows. Visit www.MadisonDiocese.org/OEC for more information.

Plans are being made to launch a youth mission trip program in the Diocese of Madison modeled after the "Prayer and Action" program of the Diocese of Salina Kansas. Three week-long opportunities will be offered for parishes to bring their high school youth to serve the poor via daytime work projects and receive solid Catholic formation via evening activities.

"Connections," the diocesan initiative to foster adult faith sharing groups, continues in its second year. Planning is underway for the next series, to run during the 2009 Lenten season. The Fall 2008 series offered a number of different resource options for consideration by the 100 small groups, which meet throughout the diocese.

Father Thomas Loya will speak at the next diocesan men's retreat March 6-7 regarding "Masculinity for a New Millennium." Men from outside the diocese are welcome. Find out more on the OEC Web site.

The OEC and the Office of Catholic Schools continue work on the FOREM catechist certification program to provide better opportunities for the effective formation of adults, especially catechists, teachers and parents.

Discussions continue concerning a youth congress in the Diocese of Madison, but no details have been decided.

ProCLAYM (Green Bay)

Submitted by Betty Manion

We have been busy finalizing the details that accompany a new name change.

We have:

- Redesigned our membership brochure
- Reinvented our marketing strategies
- Revitalized our gatherings
- Reinvented our logo
- Focused on re-writing our policy and procedure manual

Our Kick-Off Day in September was a huge success. Val Lamar Jensen was our speaker and she inspired us with her stories, songs and faith sharing. We had great attendance and we feel that this goes hand in hand with our "new image."

With our name change we re-configured our diocesan districts. We were able to

combine two smaller (Valley and Lakeshore) districts into one. This will give these areas a larger membership to draw from which also means greater support in the field.

SUMMIT (Superior)

Submitted by Diana Maki

The Executive Board, along with personnel from the Diocesan Office of Catholic Formation and Office of Religious Education and Youth Ministry, met with Bishop Peter Christensen for the first time on September 26, 2008. He referenced the USCCB publication, "Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord" and said he viewed the activity of Lay Ecclesial Ministers as necessary.

Bishop is establishing a Diocesan Office of Vocation of Marriage and Family. It is his goal to give parents the tools to help catechize children. He shared many ideas of involving youth in the ministry of the church and promoting Catechetical Ministry as a viable career option. Bishop stressed the importance of catechesis for all ages as well as the increased need for formation and education for those serving as catechetical leaders.

The Mentoring Committee continues its important work and is sponsoring another round of local (Deanery) meetings. It is hoped that catechetical leaders will attend a meeting if it is geographically closer than a diocesan gathering and that we can hear from and support more people in this ministry.

Bishop Christensen also expressed the thought of more going on at the local level. The next rounds of gatherings occurred on January 15 in all five deaneries.

2008 Award Winners!

The awards committee was made up of one representative from each diocese: Lee Ann Lella (DARE), Lety Gutierrez-Kenny (MAREDA), Becky Thompson (MDREO) and Colleen Monfre (SUMMIT). All of our nominees were very qualified to receive the awards, but after much prayer and consideration the following individuals were recognized at the November 2008 Convention.

Henriette M. Mackin Award

Congratulations Jan & Jerry Drahos!



Jan and Jerry have been a catechist team for 41 years. In that time they have touched the loves of many children and young adults with their knowledge of the Catholic faith, and their modeling of a Christian lifestyle.

Jerry and Jan with daughter Chris Newkirk in the middle

Jerry is a permanent Deacon in the Diocese of Superior. He was ordained in 1986 in the first group of permanent Deacons in the diocese. At the same time, Jan became a member of the elite group known as the Deacons “widows.”

As a deacon and wife team, Jerry and Jan are teaching by word and example in both the private and public sectors. Whether at work or at play, they have excelled at being everyday Christians. They have dedicated their lifestyle to sharing the message of Jesus Christ. They have opened their hearts and their homes to generations of young people, inspiring them by their example.

Jerry and Jan have been an outstanding example of living out the catechetical ministry in the Diocese of Superior. The Wisconsin Directors of Religious Education Federation is invigorated by their commitment of living the call of discipleship and we were honored to present the two of them with the Mackin Award for support in ministry.

Vatican II Award for Service in Education

Congratulations Jean Marie!

What a marvelous time to be involved in catechesis! On October 12, Cardinal DiNardo from Houston applauded the efforts of catechists in parish religious education programs saying they are, quote “some of the finest preachers we have.”

And, on October 25, as the Synod on the Bible was drawing to a close, the Pope affirmed the synod’s concluding proposition that thanks catechists for their work in promoting scriptural understanding. Jean Marie Weber, someone who’s practically a founding member of WDREF, was honored this fall by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee with the Vatican II Award for Service in Education.

For those of you who may not know who Jean Marie is just Google “Vatican II award Jean Marie Weber” and visit the Archdiocesan Web site where it describes the many ways in which she has dedicated her life to working as a religious educator at the parish, diocesan and national levels, including being a past-president of NCCL.

Archbishop Dolan presented this award, which is given to honor those who have contributed to the vitality and spiritual life of the Catholic Church in the spirit of Vatican II, to Jean Marie on Nov 19 at the Cathedral in Milwaukee. Jean Marie truly exemplifies outstanding catechetical leadership.

We congratulate Jean Marie, for receiving this honor and we thank her for being such a strong supporter of WDREF for so many, many years.

Stephen C. Gilmour Award

Congratulations Susan Leet!



Middle: Susan Leet

Susan has served in a leadership role as a youth minister and RCIA coordinator for the past 19 years. Her ministry began in Jamestown, New York and in 2003 she began work in the Diocese of Madison at St. Albert the Great Parish in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. She is an active member of MDREO, WDREF and NACYML.

Susan is a professional leader, combining her educational background and good sense of creativity to develop innovative sessions and experiences for all. She is not afraid to delegate responsibilities to volunteers so she can concentrate on core programming. Susan has a genuine care for all those she works with.

She is a team player, helping with whatever needs to be done. She is a good listener and a supportive staff member. Susan is organized, hard working and patient. She has been instrumental in developing and working with a team to create a successful intergenerational program for her parish of nearly 1,800 households.

Susan is challenged to balance her work for the parish and her personal life, being a wife and mother of four teenagers. Her ministry among us is not just a job, but a reflection of her convictions and her faith. We are inspired by her dedication to the professional ministry and her outstanding leadership and achievements. WDREF felt blessed to present Susan with the Stephen Gilmour Award for her leadership in ministry.

Who's Who Moment

WDREF Member(s) in the Spotlight

Sr. Casimira Benbenek - Recipient of WDREF's *Good and Faithful Servant Award*

Our WDREF conventions have always been an occasion for renewing our relationships with each other and affirming each other in the ministry we perform. This year, in addition to the Gilmour and Mackin awards, the WDREF Board decided that we wanted to give another special recognition, a "Good and Faithful Servant" Award, to someone who has shown extraordinary, lifelong dedication to the ministry of catechesis and to WDREF, itself.

Because I currently represent all the PCLs in Wisconsin at the national level, serving on NCCL's Representative Council on your behalf, I was asked to present this award. WDREF came into existence in 1980. During the past 28 years, a lot of people have been involved with WDREF, serving on the WDREF Board, working on WDREF's committees, because it takes a lot of dedicated work by a lot of people to carry out the mission of WDREF.

Speaking on behalf of WDREF and the WDREF Board, I can say that we are very grateful to all those people who have helped WDREF over the years. Some people have served WDREF as chairpersons of WDREF's Standing Committees, or facilitator of the WDREF Board, or as WDREF's rep to NCCL – positions that place our names and faces in front of people. Others, serve more quietly, but perform ministry that is just as important. Their names might not be as well-known to all of WDREF's membership, but for those who work with them, we know how important these people are to WDREF.

For almost half of WDREF's history, the person who has been selected as the recipient of this award has been a Good and Faithful Servant of WDREF, quietly serving on WDREF's Board, year after year serving on WDREF's Committees. When others have hesitated, unsure if they can take on one more thing, she has shown that she can always be counted on to step in and help out just one more time, and one more time, and one more time.

Throughout the years, health problems and surgeries, and bad weather, and long distances to drive, have barely slowed her down. She has served on the WDREF Board, served as secretary of the WDREF Board, served on the WDREF Convention Committee for at least four conventions, served on WDREF's ad hoc Scholarship Committee, Grants Committee, Awards Committee, and often has chaired one or more of these committees.

Even when she wasn't on a particular committee, a number of us would use her as a sounding board to bounce ideas off and get her perspective. We always knew that she brought great experience, wisdom and insight to any issues we were facing. This dedication to WDREF did not materialize out of nowhere. It began with her decision 46 years ago to dedicate her life to the service of others by becoming a religious sister in the Order of the Servants of Mary. She taught school in St. Paul MN, Hillside IL, and throughout northern WI in Ladysmith, Spooner, Eagle River, Washburn, Medford and Tomahawk, and also served as principal in Ladysmith, before becoming a DRE, showing that she was always ready and willing to go wherever she was needed most.

In the early 1990s, when she hit an age when a lot of people start to say, "I've paid my dues," instead of sitting back and starting to coast a little through life, she went back to school and in 1995 earned a Masters in Pastoral Studies at Loyola University. She is a quiet person, a very gentle and kind-hearted person, and a very spirit-filled person, having also been very involved in the charismatic renewal and Teens Encounter Christ, serving on the TEC Board many times throughout the years.

Eighteen months ago, when a staph infection after hip replacement surgery left her weak and worn out, she continued the fight, continuing to serve on the WDREF Board and the Convention Committee for this convention. And when cancer was diagnosed 9 months ago, she took that in stride, as well, and continues to fight the good fight with a smile on her face, that twinkle in her eyes, and that gleeful laugh never far from her lips. When I emailed another religious sister of the Servants of Mary, someone who herself is one of the founding members of WDREF, she summed up what we all feel in two simple sentences: "She's an all around good person. I am proud to call her my Sister." With a great deal of pride, I was truly honored to present this award for a lifetime of dedicated service to catechesis and to WDREF, the "Good and Faithful Servant" Award, to Sr. Casimira Benbenek from the Diocese of Superior.

-Award presented by Joanie McKeown on behalf of WDREF

Who's Who

B&R Blessings & Recognition

If you have a recent accomplishment, or know of a WDREF member that deserves a round of applause, we'd like to hear from you. We are thankful each day for the blessings in our lives, let's share the good news with each other!

Leading Links

Just a click away

www.homefaith.com

Your source for everyday wisdom from real Catholic parents, offering you creative ideas and best strategies for handing on a living faith to your children, while deepening your own faith in the process.



www.gratefulness.org

A Network for Grateful Living (ANG*L) is a nonprofit that provides resources for living in the gentle power of gratefulness, which restores courage, reconciles relationships and heals our Earth.

Contact the WDREF President...

If you would like to contact Becky Thompson regarding any WDREF matters, please e-mail her at **beckyt@stjosephbaraboo.org**

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