



Mary's Pence News

Fall, 2006

New Class of Women Carries Our Mission Forward

A recent study of water projects by the World Bank found that the effectiveness of a project was 6-7 times higher when women were involved. It makes sense, since women and girls spend an estimated 40 billion hours a year fetching and carrying water! Who would know better where to locate a well, and who would have the most interest in assuring that pumps are maintained than those who depend on it the most?



Karen Flotte and Sheila Daly

Women-led projects benefit everyone in a community. Another finding of the World Bank study was that fewer people in a community suffered illness, education levels improved, and entire families enjoyed a higher standard of living when women were liberated from fetching water.

This is at the heart of the mission of Mary's Pence. Women are capable of creative solutions in their own communities when they are given the resources they need. In that spirit, we introduce our newest class of grantees.

Many of this year's projects may be familiar to you. Half of this year's projects have been funded before, and a quarter of them are receiving their third, and final, grant from us. We continue to provide support to former grantees through networking and sharing information and consider them always part of the Mary's Pence family.

Our long-time executive director, Karen Flotte, also remains "present" as she drapes the mantle around my shoulders. Our successful programs are a result of her many years of dedication and hard work. Mary's Pence will gratefully continue to harvest the seeds she planted for many years to come.

As a donor, this issue is also about the work you do. We proudly announce the grantees for 2006-2007 with full acknowledgment that you are the ones who make it all possible.

With a grateful heart,
Sheila Daly
Interim Director

For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you.

~ Leviticus 25:12

By Karen M. Flotte

Seven years ago, I arrived at Mary's Pence on the midst of a multi-year Jubilee celebration. I was welcomed by a community of empowered women, long laboring to change their communities. Their voices were raised in a beautiful, prophetic song, and they invited me to join the chorus proclaiming that God's Jubilee time is born, passing this news from generation to generation.

The time of jubilee is a time of re-ordering the world, a time in which the gospel values – freedom from oppression, restoration of relationship, care of the earth, Sabbath care of the self, equitable distribution of God's abundance – are lived to their fullest.

For me, Jubilee has always been the heart of Mary's Pence – our community continually celebrates the in-breaking of jubilee into the oftentimes harsh realities of our world.

On the eve of our 20th anniversary Jubilee, I bid a fond goodbye. This August, my family relocated to St. Louis and I left my role as Executive Director, a job I truly loved for seven years.

It has been a privilege to serve Mary's Pence, to be a part of this community living Jubilee justice day in and day out. And it has been a great joy! Thank you for being part of that joy, and thank you for the many ways you have joined me in the chorus.

As a parting gift, in recognition of her outstanding contributions to Mary's Pence, the board presented Karen with the original artwork "Surround Us with Love," by board member Doris Klein, CSA. Sr. Doris, an internationally known artist, has graciously donated the use of the piece to Mary's Pence. The image is available on Christmas cards which honor Mary's Pence in a reflection on the back. Cards are available through Heartbeats, 1-800-808-1991 or www.heartbeatscatalog.org.



Mary's Pence is a non-profit organization rooted in feminist and gospel values. We provide critical resources for creative ministries of Catholic women in the Americas who work for justice and social transformation in church and society.

Board and Staff

Sheila M. Daly
Interim Director

Kira Hutchinson
Kentucky

Doris Klein, CSA, Vice President
Wisconsin

Gilda Larios, Treasurer
Mexico

Kitty Madden
Nicaragua

Victoria Marie, OFC
Canada

Roxanne Morin
Minnesota

Dianne Neu
Washington, DC

Jackie Perro, President
Wisconsin

Jackie Toben, SSND, Secretary
Missouri

Visit our website www.MarysPence.org to read bios and see photos of board members.

Building on a Solid Foundation

A Letter from the Board President

As we gathered for our annual board meeting in July we received the news that Karen Flotte, our Executive Director, would be leaving Mary's Pence to relocate with her family to St. Louis. Over the course of four days we had many opportunities to revisit and celebrate all that Mary's Pence accomplished during Karen's seven-year tenure.

Under her leadership, our annual fundraising increased by 60%, in part to the more than 3,800 new donors who joined with our mission. The translation of materials into four languages, including our new interactive website, has meant that we now receive a full 50% of applications directly from grassroots organizations all over the Americas. Numerous Catholic women's ministries have been strengthened by the networking and technical assistance programs she initiated.

Mary's Pence embarks on its 20th anniversary with a strong foundation! In the coming months the board will undergo a strategic review to build upon our successful programs and assure we are in the best position to meet the needs of our constituents for many years to come.

We are blessed to have the continued leadership of Sheila Daly, who has been a major partner in advancing our mission over the past five years. And we are pleased to welcome new board members who offer key talents and expertise.

Two board members retired after six years of faithful leadership – Celeste Anderson, our past board president, and Mary Howard Johnstone, OF, our treasurer. As we welcome them into the distinguished circle of "Wise Women," we acknowledge their invaluable contributions to the continued legacy of Mary's Pence.

Most of all, we thank all of you who have been the wind beneath our wings! With your support we surpassed \$1 million awarded in direct grants and gave hope to hundreds of women dreaming of a better world for themselves and their communities. We go forward in confidence knowing you stand with us in a ministry of accompaniment.

Peace of Christ,
Jackie Perro



*Jackie Perro,
Board President*

We are grateful for Stock Donations and Will Bequests

For more information on how you can partner with Mary's Pence through a stock donation or bequest, please contact our office at 732-452-9611 and we will happily guide you through the process.

Please keep Sheila Daley, co-founder of Call to Action, in your prayers as she recovers from a serious car accident. Sheila was involved in the founding of Mary's Pence as a committee member, and recently served seven years as a Trustee.

Mary's Pence Welcomes New Board Members



Victoria Marie

Victoria Marie is a Franciscan Sister of Joy and a former Mary's Pence study grantee. Victoria maintains dual citizenship in the US and Canada and resides in Vancouver, BC, where she is on faculty at St. Mark's College. She also provides research in community development as head of MarieCo Research Services, especially in the areas of homelessness and the barriers to employment, and the role of spirituality in the recovery from addiction.



Roxanne Morin

Roxanne Morin is on faculty at the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota, where she teaches theology with an emphasis on social justice. She brings to the board a background in pastoral ministry, and marketing and strategic planning as the owner of her own development business. A woman rooted in prayer, Roxanne believes that it is a transformation from self-centered to God-centered that results in a desire to change oppressive social structures.



Mary's Pence Grantees 2006-2007

AFYA, Women's Holistic Center *Brazil*



This women's health initiative trains indigenous women in herbal medicine, massage, and other holistic practices. Recently women in the community had a day to clean up the garbage in their neighborhood. It was so successful, the women leaders asked for training in nutrition education, care of the environment, and ways to improve the local economy with the creation of small-scale organic gardens.

Comitete Desarrollo de las Mujeres Tejedoras Afectadas por Tormenta Stan Santiago Atitlán

Guatemala

This Looms and Threads Project distributes weaving equipment and materials to displaced Tzuitujil women – all survivors and refugees of the October 2005 mudslides resulting from Hurricane Stan. The project is rebuilding the community by teaching women how to sew and market products from traditional weavings for immediate income and long-term sustainability for their families.

Visitation Rural Ministries

Wisconsin

This project reminds us that many rural women have to cope in isolation with loss of family farms, high rates of suicide, poverty, lack of services, domestic violence and depression. VRM offers training in facilitating "women's circles" so local women can offer each other mental, emotional and spiritual support. Past circles members have been empowered to run for local office, start businesses and open Community Centers.

Dominican Sisters Network

Argentina

This is our third year partnering with Dominican Sisters who are networking women's groups in Rosario around common causes. Many poor women are excluded from their rightful benefits because they are invisible and powerless, but networking has provided strength in numbers. Twenty-three organizations now work together to advocate for change, collaborate on creative fund raising and, this year, be trained in peace education.

OADEPROPAH Haiti, *Haiti*

This organization of ten Catholic women's groups in Latremblay recently began a fund for women who live in extreme poverty to help themselves and each other. Through small loans and training, women are successfully starting small enterprises selling jam, processing fruits and agricultural products, raising goat and chicken and growing small gardens. A second grant this year will enable the project to reach more women.

Auxier Lifetime Learning Center

Appalachia

This project seeks to empower the women of Appalachia with skills and knowledge to break the cycle of poverty. The organization has successfully taught more than 4,000 community members to use computers and given them a donated computer at the completion of the class. In this new initiative, women will learn fiber arts and basic sewing machine repair and receive a sewing machine to start their own businesses.

Colectivo de Mujeres El Ojoche

Nicaragua



Respect for the environment combines with women's development in this project that promotes the use and sale of *ojoche* (breadnut) flour products. The breadnut is a traditional part of the Mayan diet, high in nutritional value. A grant last year provided income for women who produce and bake with *ojoche* flour by opening a bakery. This year's grant will be used to increase sustainability by opening a café next to the bakery.

Familias Especiales de Santa Julia Billiard

Nicaragua



There are very few services for disabled people in the rural area of Nicaragua where Familias Especiales offers support to 1,000 families a year. Their mission is not only to provide training and a source of income to disabled people and their families, but also to raise sensitivity in the community that disabled people have much to offer. The youths in the program will continue to be trained in creating and selling their original artwork.

Asociación La Casa De La Mujer

Peru

This project helps women in poor communities learn about their rights and defend themselves against the pervasive violence in their lives. The goal is to promote self-awareness through joint and individual counseling. The organization teaches women they are citizens deserving of respect and how to advocate for human rights and just development in the governance of their local communities.

Room for the Spirit

Florida



The Center is located in an impoverished section of St. Petersburg, where many women are raising their grandchildren. The center focuses on spirituality as the foundation for self care and stress management through support groups and retreat experiences. This year the Center is piloting "Midtown Circle of Friends" a handicraft coop aimed at providing an income while rediscovering the spiritual benefits of needlecraft.

WOC Young Feminist Network

National

The Young Feminist Network (YFN) provides a forum for young Catholic women wanting to integrate faith and feminism as they respond to God's call. A grant last year enabled YFN to host a national "Meet-Up," inviting a diverse group of young women to draft a common agenda and develop a five-year plan for implementation. This year, YFN will offer Anti-Oppression Training as the first step in realizing its goals.

Saint Teresa Community Outreach and Empowerment

South Carolina



This ministry was started by former study grantee, Terrie Gaskins-Bryant, in an area where female-headed households living in poverty are common and illiteracy rates are high. It integrates the spiritual values of the Gospel into practical literacy, ESL and job skills classes. The women set personal goals and objectives and also serve as the board of directors, helping to establish ministry for the community while also helping themselves.

Colectivo de Mujeres Unidas

Nicaragua

This Colectivo was born from Mujer y Comunidad, a former Mary's Pence grantee that trains women in the theory and practice of alternative medicine. The group is now autonomous and members manufacture 28 natural products. The goal of the group is to become stronger as a collective and to meet Department of Health standards for the manufacture and widespread sale of their cereals.

La Asociación para el Desarrollo y Defensa de la Mujer (APDM)

El Salvador

The transference of land after years of war in El Salvador transpired largely through men, excluding women from the benefits of citizenship and leaving them vulnerable to economic dependency and domestic violence. This project networks women's organizations in Suchitoto for political strength, and offers leadership training that each organization, in turn, teaches its own members.

Casa Nana Nagle

Chile

Casa Nana Nagle was founded in 2004 in the shanty towns in the desert of Chile where seventy percent of the women are the primary earners for their families. Its mission is to provide education and technical training; spiritual development; and the promotion of human rights for women and children. This grant will be used for workshops in hairdressing and complementary medicine, specifically Reiki and Healing Touch therapies.

Women's Circle, Inc.

Florida

This ministry began in 1999 after canvassing African-American, Haitian and Hispanic women in Boynton Beach. All programming is in response to the women's expressed needs, with the understanding that when a woman is empowered her family prospers as well. The grant this year will be used to enable women to get needed education, offer training in home-based industries, and purchase supplies for community gardening.

Mujeres y Valores Project

Nebraska



Many Latina women face isolation and domestic violence in their adoptive country. This project in Omaha teaches leadership skills as participants progress from newcomers to small-group facilitators to co-presenters. The Mary's Pence grant will be used to assist with stipends for Latina speakers, transportation and education costs, as well as completion and translation of a manual for replication of the program.

Alternatives With Education

Missouri

Women who are incarcerated often find themselves in an environment that is violent and abusive, reinforcing patterns that have kept them from breaking destructive cycles. This project guides incarcerated women as they reflect on their own self-destructive behaviors and teaches them new ways of relating using impulse control techniques. Only one of the women who took part in this successful program last year was disciplined.

Asosyasyon Peyizan Fawes (Association of Peasants of the Far-West)

Haiti



The severe poverty of Haiti requires creative solutions from the grassroots. This project empowers women with low-interest loans to develop small businesses, and training in team development, planning and decision making. As women grow in financial independence and knowledge of how to run a business, the Association is better able to address community-wide concerns with education, health, agricultural and development.

Mujeres en Tierra Sagrada

Mexico

Mexican women have long struggled for equal rights and opportunities in education, nutrition and healthcare. This group believes that none of these can be overcome without a dignified home and an income that allows for basic human needs. The women of this community have begun to organize themselves, construct wells, improve housing, and advocate with the government to provide basic services.

Centro de Educación y Promoción para Salud

Nicaragua

This social non-profit promotes education and permanent and viable healthcare alternatives while also encouraging women to be protagonists in transforming their own lives. This grant will be used to address the lack of income for women, mostly single mothers who live in extreme poverty, by teaching them to make crafts from *tuza* – the leaves that surround the corn cob.



This all-volunteer organization works to assure that all people in the developing world have access to education and other basic rights guaranteed under the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Mary's Pence will partner for a second year with ACCESO through a women's center in Cochabamba, Bolivia, to promote women's rights, including free legal aid for women affected by domestic and public violence.

Fortunate Families

National

Fortunate Families is a new organization that provides support to Catholic parents of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered children. This includes the development and dissemination of educational and spiritual resources, peer counseling, days of reflection and retreats, educational workshops and presentations nationwide. They will use the grant to provide outreach to un-served and underserved areas.

Centro de Jovenes Nueva Generación 2000

Nicaragua

Nueva Generación is a group organized by young adults and youths from Chacaraseca community hoping to break the cycle of poverty by empowering young women. Their mission is to promote a social change in living standards for the entire community by providing work, healthcare and education programs. The grant will be used to train youths in a trade and also teach them how to run small businesses and save money.

Angela's Piazza Women's Drop-In Center

Montana



Opened in 1998, this drop-in center in a low-income neighborhood offers hospitality to all women, especially those experiencing dislocation and poverty. Currently, 50% of the women coming to the Center are Native Americans, who face cultural obstacles to spiritual healing and overcoming addiction. This year's grant will be used to pay a young Native American facilitator and allow her to get additional training.

Study Grants

Rosa María Ávila Bañuelos

Sociology Degree, Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

Rosa has been involved with base communities in her diocese for the past 20 years and is reaching out with new initiatives to the needs of her community. She has already established a hermitage for women, programs for indigenous people relocated to urban environments, and women's programs to strengthen families. She is now seeking the broader framework and theoretical underpinnings a degree will add to her ministry.

Rebecca Chabot

Master of Divinity, Weston Jesuit School of Theology

Rebecca is looking to transform her passion for social justice into active ministry. She distinguished herself as an undergraduate at Creighton where she coordinated SOA trips and received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Leadership Award in 2005 for writing and directing *No Mas!*, a dramatic performance to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Jesuit martyrs. In addition to her studies, she will be editing a compilation of essays from young Catholic feminists.

Alma Herrera

Master of Non-Profit Management, Regis University

A native of El Salvador, Alma has long been involved in ministry in her New York diocese and was instrumental in organizing faith-sharing group for professional Latinas and a Spanish-language bulletin in her parish. Her faith formation includes completion of the archdiocesan Pastoral Formation Institute. She's concerned about how women suffer most in society, especially immigrant women, and wants to start her own non-profit to work with immigrant women on a variety of topics, especially violence against women.

María Fidela Luna Robles

Education Degree, Universidad Autonoma de Ciudad Juarez, Mexico

Maria has sought to live out her faith and be a positive force for change in her community from a young age. Although she lives on a poverty wage with three children to support, she is earning a teaching degree in order to help women who are trapped without an education to fight for a dignified life. She has organized "Mujeres luchando por una vida digna," circles of support for women who work in the factory where she is employed.

Theresa Ann Yugar

Doctorate in Religion, Claremont Graduate School of Religion

Theresa has been using her Master's degree from Harvard to educate the next generation of feminist theologians at a Catholic school in East Los Angeles. After earning her doctorate with a specialization in Latina Feminist liberation theology, she hopes to teach at a university level in order to educate priests, and to be involved in parish ministry with an outreach to women. Among her considerable accomplishments, Theresa is a co-founder of the Young Feminist Network.

My Visit to Nicaragua:

What I learned from the women of Nicarahualt Network

By Gilda Laricos, Board Treasurer

I was there, ready to talk with them about my experience with women's savings and loans, and they were eager to know. But they were also open to sharing and to learning from each other. Women from nine organizations in different parts of Nicaragua arrived with their hearts full of hope, knowing that after four days together they would return home changed: with new ideas, with more confidence, and with renewed strength. We shared our dreams, our faith, our fears, our laughter, our doubts and our consciousness. As one woman, Zoraida Soza, expressed during the meeting, "We women will change the world!" And all of us agreed with her.

For me it was encouraging to be there with these women who, instead of feeling like victims of the structural oppression of Nicaragua, were trying to find creative ways to advance their own development, and that of their communities and their country.

We were a living partnership in action, not just among the Network members but also together with the whole community of San Francisco Libre where we gathered. We stayed with host families who willingly shared with visitors their lives, their homes and their food.

After those four days, I felt energized by what I had heard, seen, learned and lived. I was ready then to continue my journey visiting individual projects in Matagalpa, Chinandega, León, Limay-Esteli and back again to San Francisco Libre. Five places in five days seemed easy knowing that in each place I would be received by the same women with whom I had felt so at



In March, board member Gilda Laricos (left) travelled to Nicaragua to attend an "Encuentro" with our network of grantees. Gilda shared how she started a successful savings and loan project with women in rural parts of Mexico. While Gilda went to Nicaragua to share her knowledge, she learned much about hope from the women of the Network.

home during the *Encuentro*. Reyna, Dominga, Maritza, Adriana, Maria Concepcion, Auxiliadora, Lucila, Yajaira, Rosa, Kitty and Zoraida organized my travel. They wanted to show me their projects and explain how and why they did what they did.

All of their experiences together seem like a bouquet of flowers; some work with clay, wheat, painting, fabric, natural products. Others focus on women's rights and maternal health. All of them work collectively, not without problems, but in order to find ways in which individual need can be satisfied in the group and not in solitude.

They know that in their country, as in many other countries of the world, opportunities are not around the corner. Together with women across borders they make their own opportunities. I am grateful to Mary's Pence, Kitty and all the women of Nicarahualt for giving me the opportunity to share my experience, but also to learn from them and to re-fill my heart with hope, faith and enthusiasm as I continue my search for new opportunities and justice.

The Nicarahualt Network reminds us that the most effective projects are ones which raise women's status and promote women's rights as well. Cooperatives and networks are a successful way to generate income, and they also provide needed peer support and opportunities to for leadership.

To read another first-person account of working together, visit our website www.MarysPence.org. Charlotte (Maura) Flavin, who helped the women of Villa Esperanza start a sewing cooperative with support from Mary's Pence, writes about the benefits of working cooperatively.

Join Our "Compañeras"

Consider becoming a monthly Compañera donor. In addition to providing a steady stream of support to our sister-companions throughout the Americas, you also...

- Receive only one mailing a year asking for your support
- Benefit from the convenience of donating monthly, quarterly or as you are able
- Contain costs so more of your donation goes directly to our grantees
- Enjoy our Calendar of Women honoring holy women who have changed the world

NEW: Now donations can be transferred directly from your bank account.

"Go out on a limb; that's where the fruit is."

~ Mary Luke Tobin, SL



Mary Luke Tobin, SL and Kitty Madden

The World Beyond Your Window

For Luke, Fall 2005

By Cecily Jones, SL

*The world beyond your window
has so comforted my heart this year
that I bless each truck, tree, and bird
I see out there, bless them for their being
and bless them for that pique of interest
in your eyes.*

*We watched expansion trundled in
and counted gravel trucks to twelve.
Who'd think the rolled spread of tar
or a parking line machine
could be the lore for conversation?*

*The world beyond your window
revealed tiny chartreuse finches
at the feeder. And now we marvel
at the swirling fog swallowing the dawn
and hint of scarlet tinting maple leaves.*

*When others ask if you converse
I want to say, of course,
pretending that your nodded yes,
your phrases left mid-voice,
your gentle pointing at a puff of cloud
create the stuff of deepest dialog.*

*My dear, I yearn to hear you read
some lines from Levertov or Rumi,
Rahner, Merton, your recent Oliver.
I miss the charge of searching energy,
the delve and questioning, the lifted hope
but, suddenly engulfed in grace, I bless
the marigolds and barn you see as you embrace
the world beyond your window.*

September 29, 2005

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Mary Luke Tobin, SL, one of the founding mothers of Mary's Pence, died on August 24, 2006 at the age of 98. Loretto Community president Mary Catherine Rabbitt related "how special Mary's Pence was" to Mary Luke who was a tireless advocate for justice and the rights of women in the Catholic Church and society.

Sr. Mary Luke achieved national recognition as one of a handful of women who attended the Second Vatican Council and was one of three women serving on commissions who wrote conciliar documents. Her entire life was dedicated to justice and peace work whether picketing with the United Farm Workers or risking arrest at nuclear weapons sites.

Sr. Mary Luke willed her body to the University of Louisville School of Medicine. A Memorial Service celebrating her life will be held on Saturday, October 7, 2006 at the Motherhouse in Nerinx, Kentucky.

With Mary Luke Tobin in the continuing Dance of Mary's Pence

*By Kitty Madden, Mary's Pence board member with
deepest thanks to Cecily Jones, SL*

It was spring of 2001 when our paths first crossed in Nerinx, Kentucky. I was beginning an extended retreat at the Loretto Sisters' Cedars of Peace. At the end of Sunday liturgy, a slight, gray-haired Sister arose and most gracefully danced to the music of the closing hymn. My friend leaned over and whispered with pride, "That's our Mary Luke Tobin."

Days later, I realized that this very same Mary Luke was indeed one of the founding mothers of Mary's Pence. Over the next few years, I was privileged to spend time with Luke, as she was familiarly called, sharing her memories of the beginnings of Mary's Pence "on behalf of the women of the Church who deserved to be recognized and helped." She delighted in hearing how many grants had become available for women in the south – in Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America – and affirmed the work of providing technical assistance to grantees while also helping with the formation of networks in St. Louis and in Nicaragua.

Through conversations with Mary Luke's lifetime friend and biographer, Cecily Jones, I learned even more about her. Cecily Jones tells us that "Mary Luke's concern for peace took her to Saigon and Paris during the Vietnam War, to Northern Ireland in support of Women of Peace; to disarmament hearings in Amsterdam; to anti-nuclear events in England; to El Salvador to stand with the 'mothers of the disappeared'; to Germany to study the rise of neo-Nazism and its implications for working for human rights....And from 1972 to 1978, she was director of citizen action of Church Women United, working at that ecumenical organization's New York office."

The passing years began to dim Luke's memory and her ability to communicate with words: yet, her bright blue eyes continued to light up at the words "Mary's Pence" and in my recent visits, we just sat holding hands as we gazed out the window of her infirmary room. As I left, I always asked her blessing on behalf of Mary's Pence.

Even after she was no longer able to physically dance at Sunday liturgy, Mary Luke's early years as ballet dancer and teacher, were imbedded in the very fiber of her being. And thus, as Mary's Pence begins its 20th year of service,

**We ask you, dear elder sister, to be with us as you were in the beginning.
Help us never forget our commitment to peace and social justice. Continue
now to lead us in the dance of service to/with the women of the Americas!
Be with us in the dance of life!**