



Saint Martin's Ministries

The Sisters' Legacy

There were many devoted and passionate Benedictine Sisters and laypeople involved in the beginning of Saint Martin's Ministries (SMM). For many years, friends have thought of Sister Patricia Gamgort as the face of Saint Martin's.

Sister Patricia entered the Novitiate with the Ridgely, Maryland Benedictines in December 1955. In December 2015 she will transfer to the Benedictines of Mount Saint Scholastic in Atchison, Kansas.



Above: Sister Patricia in 1955

Right: Sister Patricia receiving the Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness statewide award in 1994



Many of you reading this article will have heard Sister Patricia tell the story of *A Man, A Mouse, and A Ministry*. When telling that story Sister Patricia modestly acknowledges that she was Prioress. She doesn't usually mention the degree to which the Ridgely Benedictines were involved in social justice issues or talk about the Benedictines for Peace movement that began in the 1980's. She doesn't say, I went to Washington, DC with other Sisters to participate with over 500,000 people protesting cuts to economic aid for needy people and increases in the defense budget. Her quiet presentation and sincerity would have you believe that two Sisters praying to Saint Martin de Porres, Sister Immaculata

seeing the mouse run from the basket of daffodil bulbs, and the beginning of Saint Martin's Ministries just happened miraculously without effort.

In 1983 under the strong leadership of Sister Patricia, the energy and focus of the Ridgely Benedictines moved from the national stage to the pressing, local needs of Caroline County's poorest residents.

Donors' belief and support of the mission and the vision of the Sisters enabled Saint Martin's Ministries to open its doors.

Sister Patricia says, "The Sisters donated my time as a response to their commitment to social justice; they supported the growth of SMM with encouragement, donations, and volunteer hours." The Sisters kept detailed records in the early years noting the heartbreaking circumstances of families they helped. Sisters organized the Barn space in 1983 and created areas for sorting clothing, storing food, an office and a space for prayer.

The Barn has seen many changes: siding, carpeting, 2 new roofs and expansion of the food area creating the pantry room, the warehouse, loading dock and playground. Generous donors and major grants from the Laffey-McHugh, Raskob, and the Catholic

Diocese Foundations turned the old dairy barn into an up to date facility with plumbing and better lighting in the mid-1980s. Visitors often stop to chat and tell a story about how they or someone in their family were helped 'at the barn.' Sister Patricia continued as Prioress until 1992, overseeing the work of providing local families with their most basic needs.

Not content with the challenge of making a dairy barn into a service providing food and clothing, the Sisters took on a new challenge, Saint Martin's House (SMH), a transitional shelter and resource for homeless women and children. Recently two local organizations (Talbot Interfaith Shelter, Haven Ministries) in the mid- ▶



Annual Arts Dinner & Auction



Barn in 1983 and today.

shore have tried to open transitional programs. Like SMH before them, these organizations have faced great opposition. Sister Patricia recalls the 'not in my backyard' opposition as one of the most difficult challenges for her and the Sisters. Strong, modest leadership and generous support from donors overcame several serious legal obstacles and got the House built. In 1994 SMH received the Governor's Advisory Board on Homelessness statewide award.

One of the things that Sister Patricia said she values greatly from more than 30 years' experience with SMM is the faithfulness of volunteers. The ecumenical nature of the Ministries is a source of pride to Sister Patricia, she especially cites today's Board and staff. The social justice legacy is strong in both the administration of Saint Martin's and in the diversity of clients served.

If you know her at all, you know that Sister Patricia is always positive. In reflecting on Saint Martin's effort to help those in poverty she is very proud of 'the good' that has been done, helping so many families who do not have enough to eat or a place to stay.

She also says that the fact that poverty and homelessness still exist at so high a rate troubles her, and even more concerning is that the funding and supports are fewer today.

She hopes that our donors will continue to respond to the need both financially and through service because all support makes a difference to a family struggling to put food on the table or stay in their home.



You can make a difference.

- 1** Do you have an old car you would like out of your driveway before the holidays! Donate your car to Saint Martin's Ministries. We are working with CARS to make the process as easy as possible. Go to smartinsministries-cardonations.org to learn more or give us a call at 410.634.2537 x102.

Saint Martin's Ministries
18th
 ANNUAL
Authors' Luncheon



Join us for these upcoming 2016 events and help support Saint Martin's.

Thursday, February 18, 2016

Empty Bowls

Come to SMM to enjoy homemade soup in mugs from the Thrift Store and help pack food boxes.

Saturday, March 5, 2016

19th Annual Authors' Luncheon & Auction

Best-selling authors discuss their recent books and sign books at the Chesapeake Bay Beach Club in Stevensville, Maryland.

Saturday, June 4, 2016

3rd Annual Chase Off Poverty 5K and Fun Run

Come to SMM to help us Chase Off Poverty on the Eastern Shore!

Date TBD June 2016

1st Annual Golf Tournament Kent County

Saturday, August 27, 2016

2nd Annual Music on the Miles

Join us at the Miles River Yacht Club for an evening of local food and music.

Date TBD September 2016

1st Annual Golf Tournament Talbot and Queen Anne's County

Friday, October 7, 2016

11th Annual Arts Dinner & Auction

Local art and a themed evening at The Chesapeake Room Rock Hall, Maryland.



2 When you do your Holiday shopping at **amazon smile** and choose Saint Martin's Ministries as your preferred charity, Amazon donates .5% of the purchase price to SMM. Please bookmark the link smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1913676 and support us every time you shop.

3 You can also always help families on the Eastern Shore with their most basic needs by making a **donation online** at StMartinsMinistries.org.

What's so special about volunteering at Saint Martin's Ministries?

Margie Callahan Palazzolo

As my husband spends his Wednesday's working in Saint Martin's pantry, I spent my time as a member of the Board of Directors of Saint Martin's Ministries. As a Board member I had the opportunity to work closely with Sister Patricia and Jean Austin, two women who give their all to SMM all day, every day, and are an inspiration to those who work around them. The number of men and women who come forth to give of their time and talents as Board Members to further the services of Saint Martin's is amazing.

While working with Sister Patricia, Jean Austin and other Board members influenced my volunteer work and commitment, the women and children at Saint Martin's House are the "crowning jewel" of my volunteer efforts. Board member Win Anderson and I worked with the women at Saint Martin's House planning dinners for all the women and children living in the House. As hostesses the women would invite the other families, prepare a dish and ready their unit for the event. Often we were able to use food from the food pantry, helping the families to taste venison or find new casserole recipes to include canned goods or beans and rice. We had these House dinners for more than two years while first Win and then I was Board Chair. To share a meal with these courageous women and children is a privilege.

Seeing women from Saint Martin's House reach goals that had previously eluded them in life is an incredible experience.

Knowing that in some small way I have been able to assist in providing a safe, healthy and happy environment for these deserving Moms and children is a reward like none other.

The rewards of volunteering at Saint Martin's Ministries far outweigh the effort put into it. Try it, I know you'll like it!



Margie and Dick Palazzolo

Dick Palazzolo

My volunteer efforts for these past eight, almost nine years, have been pretty much concentrated in working in the pantry area of the Barn. When I work in that area I can see direct results from my efforts almost immediately; packing boxes and making other preparations of food and grocery items, sorting donated breads and sweets, moving stock in the warehouse. Work that needs to be done.

The food pantry is a place where the same work gets done over and over again. These volunteer activities let me see and directly help people whom I would otherwise probably never come across in my daily life's routine. Folks who are less fortunate and need special help.

Each time that I serve a customer at the pantry it reminds me that "...but for by the grace of God there go I..."

I feel very privileged to do my part in helping to bring good, nourishing food to families who are having a difficult time putting food on their tables.

I am continually reminded what our good Lord said, as it is written in Matthew 25:35-40, "...for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat..." Saint Martin's Ministries gives me that opportunity to live this Gospel's passage.



Saint Martin's Ministries

Fighting Poverty on the Shore for over 30 Years

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Jean Austin, President and CEO

Sister Patricia Gamgort, OSB, Executive Director, Emerita

