Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ

Partners in the work of the Spirit

COMMUNITY BENEFIT REPORT
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Dear Friends of the Poor Handmaids,

It is with joy and humble gratitude that we present this Community Benefit Report. Through these stories and insights we share how our ministries touch the lives of those we serve, and in turn, whose lives touch the hearts of each of us.

Our Sisters and our ministries have a broad impact on many in the United States and in countries around the world where Poor Handmaids work side by side with others who share in our mission and charism.

“As our community symbol, a rippling pool of water captures the broad impact created by a small force. And so it is within our ministry. Each action makes a difference. Its energies flow outward to become part of something bigger before returning to us. We move with the flow of life to do our work from our Christ-centered belief in the impact of love on the world.”

In this report you will find wonderful stories of lives being impacted and the benefit Poor Handmaids and our ministries provide to the local geographical communities they serve. These stories keep alive the dreams of Blessed Catherine Kasper, foundress of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, who sent Sisters to the United States in 1868. Her dreams continue to be brought to life every day by the work of the Sisters and the many who minister with them.

Enjoy these stories, read them knowing that you also had a part in bringing them to reality. Thank you for keeping alive these dreams and for creating the ripples that carry our mission forward.

In love and gratitude,

Pictured from left to right: Sister Loretta Schleper, Councilor; Sister Michele Doorak, Vicaress; Sister Judith Diltz, Provincial; and Sister Carole Langhauser, Councilor

A Message from Our Provincial Leadership Team

These are just some of the people served by the ministries of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, an international congregation of apostolic women religious within the Roman Catholic Church.
With outreach from Indiana to other parts of the world, the Poor Handmaids minister to God’s people in need of shelter, education, healthcare or physical and spiritual nourishment. Engaging in a process of “attentive listening and courageous response,” the Sisters model simplicity and build community.

Their Foundress, Blessed Catherine Kasper, inspired the Sisters to minister to God’s people by listening prayerfully, living simply and serving joyfully. Throughout her life she told her Sisters to care for “the poor, the sick and the children.”

That inspiration remains as alive today as it was in 1851 when Blessed Catherine founded the congregation in Germany. With central offices in Donaldson, Indiana, the Sisters of the American Province have provided 148 years of ministry in the United States. The Sisters partner with others who share Catherine’s spirit and support Poor Handmaid ministries with their time and talent in a variety of ways, including: supporting by prayer; providing of direct services by co-workers; serving as volunteer board members; and assisting with fundraising activities. The American Sisters currently extend their reach to the poor and underserved in Mexico, Germany, Brazil and Kenya where they bring the message of the Gospel to children and adults alike.

Besides sponsored ministries, more than one third of the members of the American Province carry the message of Jesus Christ to God’s people through their individual ministries in healthcare centers, schools, retreat centers, social work centers and homes for the elderly, demonstrating that, wherever Poor Handmaids serve, there is a ministry of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.

In Mexico, Brazil and Kenya, the Sisters and their co-workers in ministry bring the practical necessities of life such as food and clothing to street children and women struggling to provide for their families. They also provide healthcare and education that raise people from poverty and despair to healthier living and the potential for self-sufficiency. And in the midst of the abject conditions in these countries, the love of Christ and the simplicity of Blessed Catherine inspires all those engaged in ministry outreach.

Each ministry, in whatever locale, has a unique purpose; but each is infused with the spirit of the Poor Handmaids to listen prayerfully, live simply and serve joyfully as expressed in their Mission Statement. God’s Spirit motivates the Poor Handmaids to reach out to the neediest of God’s people, which in turn drives the ministries to serve all people regardless of race, faith background or economic condition.
Believing in You: Ancilla College

Two years ago, Andrew Huff had a passion for skateboarding and working with wood, but he needed the personal attention, encouragement, and entrepreneurial training of Professor John Gough to help take his business, Huff and Puff Board Company, to the next level. Now an Ancilla College graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration (2015), Andrew is selling his custom-made longboards and land paddles at Culver Marina and Outpost Sports.

“We meet our students where they are,” says Dr. Ken Zirkle, Ancilla College president. “The biggest reward is to see our students succeed. Some of these young people have not been encouraged to pursue higher education or to pursue their dreams, but they come here to learn the skills and get the support they need. We’re a college of opportunity.”

Ancilla College is Indiana’s only private, two-year college. We serve approximately 400 students – from first-generation college freshmen to international athletes. Thirty-nine percent of our freshman students are the first in their family to attend college. Through 18 degree programs, 10 athletic teams, and all-campus resources, we offer a platform for people to take their education to the next level.

We all have skills and gifts that are sometimes hidden from plain sight. As a ministry sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, we welcome all students as gifts and celebrate their unique manifestation of God. Our small class sizes make it possible for faculty and staff to develop relationships with students, understanding their needs for support and how to help them grow.

“The smaller class sizes gave me more individual attention,” says Mary Weldon (2006), a registered nurse case manager for the Center for Hospice in Plymouth, Indiana. “One teacher discovered that I was an auditory learner. A bigger school would have never caught that. For some of my nursing exams they let me test in a quiet, separate room.”

Ancilla College is a liberal arts institution of higher learning sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and located at The Center at Donaldson. The college’s religious tradition is Roman Catholic; its climate, ecumenical. In a caring environment, Ancilla serves a diverse population, as we transform and empower students to achieve high academic goals, lifelong learning, successful careers and values-centered lives.
Sometimes barriers facing students reflect the economic circumstances of our times. The academic merit is evident, but tuition expenses at four-year colleges or universities present a challenge to hardworking rural and blue-collar families. More than 93% of our students receive financial assistance, and almost 43% of our families cannot afford any financial contribution toward tuition.

Not every student comes from a family or a community that has a positive attitude and support system for pursuing education. But at Ancilla College, we work to fill in the gaps so that they are prepared for their next educational experience.

“I chose Ancilla College for soccer and for all the professors who made Ancilla one of a kind. They will always remain in my heart,” says Isaias Membreno, transfer student. “The Sisters helped me realize who I was deep inside. The beautiful campus gave me places to study and meditate in between classes. I got my grades on track and transferred to Valparaiso University this spring.”

“I was expelled from high school and sent to an alternative school where I earned a scholarship to Ancilla,” says patrolman Jonathan Bryant (2004), officer with the Marshall County Police Department. “There I was able to have an opinion, and it was encouraging to be involved in discussions. It didn’t matter who you were, where you were from, or what your name was. They encouraged interaction with your teacher. The top people interact with you on a daily basis and know your first name. That personally allowed me to open up my mind and learn.”

The college benefits our geographic community in many ways. Local businesses, restaurants and hotels experience the economic impact of families visiting students and watching athletic events. This effect was multiplied with the opening of a residence hall in 2015.

We employ nearly 100 people in both full and part-time positions. According to the IMPLAN economic analysis tool, Ancilla College has a total economic footprint in Marshall County, Indiana, of nearly $7 million. This is based on the ripple effects created by the purchases of the college, the commercial and tax expenditures of its faculty and staff, and the collateral expenditures of students who gain employment-valued skills and increase their own earning and spending power.

Ancilla College students are prepared for their next level. For education. For work. For entrepreneurship. For civic engagement. Many participate in volunteer service opportunities both within and outside Poor Handmaids’ ministries. From golf team members packing food items at the Second Harvest Food Bank in Tennessee after a tournament, to student government hosting a blood drive for American Red Cross, to the men’s basketball team sorting clothing for women in need at Sojourner Truth House in Gary, Indiana, Ancilla College students are prepared for life with a firm grounding in service.

Ancilla College Community Service

JESSE Program
Community Neighbors, Churches, Schools and Hospitals
Better World Books
Ounce of Prevention
College Food Pantry
Marshall County Food Bank
Blessings in a Backpack Project
Sojourner Truth House
American Red Cross
Boys and Girls Club
Relay for Life
Marshall and Starke County Food Pantries
Christmas Baskets for Families
Catherine’s Cottage
Sport’s Clinics for Children at the LifePlex
Starved Rock State Park
Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee
Radiating Authenticity, Love and Peace: Bethany Retreat House

Christians know Bethany as the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, a place of hospitality, friendship, encouragement for prayer, and discipleship. People who come to Bethany Retreat House are looking for the same: they are seeking God, looking to grow spiritually.

Every year, approximately 300 people participate in one or more programs at Bethany Retreat House. Guests come from every socio-cultural and economic circumstance. They participate in monthly dream groups, a women’s group that centers on book discussion and faith sharing, and a spiritual directors’ peer supervision group. Services are offered on a sliding fee scale to ensure that all may participate. Since 2010, Bethany Retreat House has provided more than $8,300 in scholarships for services.

Ministry director Sister Joyce Diltz, PHJC, offers ongoing individual spiritual direction and provides hospitality for day-time personal silent retreats. The Bethany Retreat House bookstore makes spiritual resources, books, CDs, and videos available to the community. In addition, Sister Joyce regularly offers spiritual direction in parishes, takes the bookstore resources to diocesan events and health fairs, and gives presentations on spiritual direction, journaling, spirituality, and dream work. She serves as co-chair for the Michiana Spiritual Directors Network.

“We help people pay attention to the inner life, growing in their relationship with God,” says Sister Joyce. “It is a great privilege to have a front row seat to see what God is doing in peoples’ lives.”

The unique neighborhood setting helps people learn to expect to meet God in the familiar rhythm of daily life, in the simple events, sights and sounds of the neighborhood. People tend to think of God being in nature. In truth, God is everywhere. God is in the neighborhood, in a house, in a dog barking, in flowers growing, in a simple meal, in quiet.

From another perspective, as a retreat house in a neighborhood, a house where people do their inner work and spend time in prayer, that prayer and positive energy radiate out to our neighbors as well.
Several individuals who have participated in groups at Bethany Retreat House have pursued additional training and certification to help others develop their spiritual relationship with God. In this way, peace ripples outward touching families, students, and spiritual seekers. Finding peace can motivate people to learn more and share what they’ve learned with others.

For example, three participants have become spiritual directors themselves, and two individuals have completed the Haden Institute Dream Leader Training program. Four others have attended the Haden Institute Summer Dream and Spirituality Conference. A group of ten spiritual directors meets at Bethany for peer supervision and to continue professional development.

Rosemary Balczo, a retired teacher from School City of Hammond, has been participating in spiritual direction, dream groups, and workshops for more than 20 years. In 2009, she successfully fought and recovered from breast and cervical cancer.

“I was upset with God,” says Rosemary. “I thought that Jesus gave me cancer. I got very busy, and I stopped going to spiritual direction.” Coincidentally, at the same time both her pastor and her good friend gave her the opportunity and the encouragement to receive spiritual direction from Sister Joyce.

“Then he led them [out] as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them.

*Luke 24: 50*
Finding Purpose and Opportunity: Catherine Kasper Life Center

Our continuing care retirement community is committed to the comfort, dignity, and well-being of all residents as they continue on their journey through life.

Sometimes life is exciting. You find your first home together. Your baby is baptized. Your son rides his bike with no help. Your daughter graduates from college. But, sometimes transitions are difficult. Children leave the nest. Spouses get sick. Friends pass away. We know, though, that in every celebration and in every loneliness, God speaks, encouraging us to experience life as it is and seize the opportunity God presents us.

At Catherine Kasper Life Center our role is to journey with our residents as they experience the richness of life, helping them see the opportunities to continue or renew their sense of purpose and joy.

Catherine Kasper Life Center (CKLC) is a continuing care retirement community comprised of Maria Center for independent seniors and Catherine Kasper Home for skilled nursing and rehabilitative care. We offer spiritual care, rehabilitation therapies, recreational programs, and educational enrichment opportunities in a uniquely intergenerational environment.

“There was a charming Irishman named Sean,” says Linda Jung-Zimmerman, director of Maria Center. “He was in his late 80s, and he was so dedicated to his wife. It was hard for him when she needed to transition from independent living to the memory care unit in the Catherine Kasper Home.”

The Maria Center is so close to Catherine Kasper Home that Sean visited his wife every day. Eventually, he began to make friends with others in the memory care unit. “He would bring the residents bracelets that I picked up at the dollar store,” says Linda. “He enjoyed seeing the smiles on his friends’ faces. It buffered the pain of his wife’s illness, and it gave him an opportunity to spread cheer with others.”

Maria Center offers independent seniors a variety of ways to connect with one another, to learn, and to grow in the Spirit. Residents may participate in gardening on the grounds, programming at Earthworks and Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center, experiencing fearless creativity at MoonTree Studios, and sharing large, diverse community with students from Ancilla College and co-workers at The Center at Donaldson. In our communal dining room, residents can appreciate the hustle-bustle of college students at work, co-workers on the job, and many visitors and their families. You
Catherine Kasper Life Center

I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right that I should think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart...

Philippians 1: 3-7

Don’t just rent an apartment; you belong to a community. Our main goal is to keep seniors active and independent for as long as possible.

“Two of our residents, retired professors, were invited to speak at the Ancilla College Lampen Lecture Series,” says Linda. “It was a way to share their gifts with the next generation. Seniors have so much to give – wisdom, experience, friendship. Here we create purposeful opportunities to share them.”

In a similar way, Catherine Kasper Home honors the dignity and ability of every resident in temporary rehabilitation, long-term care, or memory care. “Being part of our residents life is a honor” says executive director, Carol McGuigan. “They give more to us than we could ever give to them. Their life experiences, wisdom and knowledge, goes way beyond a degree in life.”

When residents arrive, our intake team completes a health, wellness, and daily routine assessment with each person. Similarly, our spiritual wellness coordinator, Bridget Hoch, interviews new residents and attends to their spiritual needs. We welcome people from all faith traditions, and we coordinate nurturing experiences for all residents who express a desire.

“I played the organ in my Baptist church for 25 years,” says 81-year-old Marilyn W. “But, then they got rid of the organ. It broke my heart.” Bridget found an organ for Marilyn to play, moved it to the community living room, and now Marilyn and other residents enjoy music that stirs the spirit in a variety of ways.

Not only is Marilyn a music leader among residents, she is also an unofficial social director. She coordinates a group of residents who gather before meals, visit with each other, and walk together. “I’ve always been social, and here, I’m me. I’m happy.”

Catherine Kasper Life Center
Community Health Education Programs
(Offered Internally and Open to the Community)

- Dementia Education Groups (four per year)
- “A Matter of Balance” Workshops (six per year)
- “Health Matters” Workshops (six per year)
- Flu Clinic

Health Screenings for Staff and Families
(Offered Externally and Open to the Community)

- Marshall County Senior Expo: Blood Sugar Checks and Education
- St. Joseph County Senior Expo: Blood Sugar Checks and Education
- Women’s Show for 50 and Older: Placement Education
- Marshall County Senior Center Presentation
Since Blessed Catherine Kasper founded the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ in 1851, she and her Sisters enlisted the help of co-workers to assist them in their mission to serve the poor and powerless. Today, co-workers support and complement the gifts and talents of the Sisters themselves, extending their ministries, engaging diverse communities, and sharing their professional expertise.

Additionally, as the ministries of the congregation have grown over time, the Poor Handmaids intentionally contribute financial and professional resources to the ministries. Without these gifts – co-worker service, financial support, and professional resources – many of the ministries would find it challenging to continue to provide the same level of services.

Ancilla Systems Incorporated

The mission of Ancilla Systems Incorporated is to serve the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and PHJC ministries to allow the ministries to enhance their capacity and social impact by serving the poor and disadvantaged. Co-workers offer their expertise and talents by providing human resources, health and welfare benefits, insurance plans, accounting, tax and investment services, strategic planning, project management, facilities and property management, information technology and development services.

The contribution of Ancilla Systems Incorporated services has made a significant impact on the sustainability of each Poor Handmaid ministry. To purchase these high-quality consultative services in the marketplace would be cost-prohibitive. However, the Poor Handmaids give these resources to each ministry to ensure longevity and efficiency.

Ancilla Systems Incorporated serves as the administrator for The Linden Houses, an affordable housing ministry for senior citizens in northern Indiana and Chicago, and it manages Nazareth Home, a licensed foster home ministry for medically fragile infants and toddlers in East Chicago, Indiana. Ancilla Systems Incorporated employs 18 co-workers in Hobart, Indiana.

Ministry Center Services

Co-workers employed by Ministry Center Services bring caring quality services to all who visit, live and work at The Center at Donaldson. Ministry Center Services includes: information technology, dietary, environmental...
Contributed Services

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace.

1 Peter 4: 10

services, facility / grounds, The Greenhouse Project, reception, recycling, safety and support, transportation and the JESSE (Joint Educational Services in Special Education) volunteer program.

Ministry Center Services offers residents of Marshall, Starke and St. Joseph counties job opportunities and exceptional benefits in a value-based work environment, employing 72 co-workers in Donaldson, Indiana.

Our services, in collaboration with each of the ministries at The Center at Donaldson, benefit the economy in local counties as well. By purchasing locally-grown food, raising organic produce and using naturally-raised, hormone-free beef from our own Ancilla Beef and Grain Farm, our dietary department offers guests, residents, students and co-workers healthy meals. Facility / grounds and environmental services co-workers use local vendors, professionals and contractors when buying parts and products or outsourcing work. We purchase and service our vehicles locally.

Environmental sustainability is an overarching goal at The Center. We are committed to minimizing our carbon footprint. To achieve this goal, Ministry Center Services employs a full-time Recycling Manager that works with every ministry on campus, collecting and processing recyclables.

Provincial Services

The important role of Provincial Services is to assist the Sisters in fulfilling their work with both external and internal publics. Departments include: the business office, communications, development services, human resources, the Office of Liturgy, Avita Library, mission integration, marketing, and the Provincial Office.

“We believe in what the Sisters do,” says Julie Dowd, director of communications. “We want to help. We do the needed tasks so that the Sisters and their ministries can concentrate on the work they are called to do to help the poor, the underserved, and children.”

Whether Provincial Services is informing the community about the work of the Poor Handmaids through Word Gathering magazine, advertising The Center at Donaldson events, inviting the community to worship in the Ancilla Domini and Catherine Kasper Home Chapels, providing an opportunity to partner with the Poor Handmaids, educating ministries on the PHJC mission, values, and charism, or processing payroll, talented Provincial Services co-workers share their gifts so that Sisters can focus on serving those in need. Provincial Services employs 20 co-workers in Donaldson, Indiana.

The goal of all contributed services is to support the work of the Poor Handmaid ministries. Together we help the ministries work more efficiently and intentionally.

Contributed Services hopes to “serve others and to make a better world for those who are in need.”

— Sister Stephen Brueggeman, PHJC
Creating Better Decision-Making: Earthworks

I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life. That you and your children may live.

Deuteronomy 30: 19

Our mission is to teach, demonstrate and promote the interconnectedness of all creation. Earthworks is an advocate for environmental education and serves as a resource for local communities who seek to live in harmony with nature.

Work late or exercise? Drive the kids to school or hop on your bikes? Grab a drive-thru dinner or put a roast in the slow-cooker? Plant green beans or buy frozen vegetables? Toss the water bottle or save it for the recycling bin?

Sometimes the illusion of convenience in our hectic world masks our opportunity to choose. We don’t notice. We think it doesn’t matter. Or, we are never confronted with the effects of our choices.

Through education and outreach, Earthworks illuminates choices hidden by convenience and empowers every person to make decisions that support a healthy planet and community. Through the Earthworks ministry, we teach people to make environmentally sustainable choices that promote life for generations to come.

“I remember one nine-year-old camper who asked, ‘What’s the point,’” says Brandi Roberts, Earthworks summer camp counselor. “He didn’t understand the consequences of choosing plastic bags at the grocery store. But by the end of the summer, he was so excited to tell me that his family switched to cloth bags. He was so proud that he could make a difference – that he saved a turtle from eating plastic.”

Earthworks’ staff knows that not only did the child save a turtle from mistaking plastic for food, but that he also saved the soil from contaminants leached by plastic in the landfill. What environmental education is all about these days is learning to change behaviors that spoil our only home, planet Earth. Every choice we make about what to eat, what to wear, what to buy, or how to clean has a ripple effect on people, plants, animals, land, air and water.

One aspect of Earthworks’ ministry is an ongoing bread-baking project. Started over ten years ago, Earthworks’ bread has become well-known in the local area for its healthy ingredients: each loaf is “good for you and good for the earth.” One of the best new understandings of earth-friendly behavior is that foods raised in a way that does not hurt the earth are ALWAYS good for people. Sold both at the Plymouth Farmers’ Market (where Earthworks has been an anchor for the last ten years), and at several outlets in the area, Earthworks bread, with its educational labels, has become a staple in many households, creating new understanding and earth-friendly behaviors one loaf at a time.

Earthworks offers hands-on learning opportunities for children and adults throughout the community: planting elementary school gardens that become healthy snacks in the schools; teaching Lindenwood retreatants through our initiative “Whole Foods for a Healthy Planet.” This provides the retreat groups with education on the importance of the food prepared for them, as they contain no harmful chemicals or preservatives; caring for a farm-full of goats, sheep, chickens, pigs and calves; participating in the Plymouth and Culver farmers markets; and exploring the land surrounding Lake Gilbraith during summer camp, etc. For the last several years, Earthworks has partnered with AmeriCorps, which has provided members who help with school programs, as well as school gardens.

“Without having the proper education, we are not able to make better, healthier choices. Without knowing the consequences, we cannot change our actions. That’s what Earthworks strives to accomplish. We are the teachers eager to provide that education not only for a healthy body and community, but also for a healthy planet.”
In her prayer to Blessed Catherine Kasper, Sister Stephen Brueggeman, PHJC, shared “that the small efforts we make are multiplied by the power of God who has put into our hearts this same desire to serve others and to make a better world for those who are in need.”

The Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ developed various processes of assuring a favorable relationship with our ecosystem. And so, in 2003, the Poor Handmaids created the Ecological Relationships Committee to inspire environmental sustainability, honoring the interdependence of natural resources and human beings, acknowledging that each are benefiting within the greater ecosystem of God’s creation.

We pay careful attention to the ways we help or hurt Earth. Our hope and intention is for our activities and choices that promote sustainability to become practical actions for residents, co-workers, students, and neighbors. In a sense, we trust that our practices will inspire others, creating a ripple effect on the grounds and in our many communities.

Independent seniors living in the Maria Center volunteer to grow organic vegetables as a part of The Greenhouse Project, managed by Ministry Center Services. Their harvest becomes part of the cafeteria meals for all residents, co-workers, and students.

Influenced by Poor Handmaids’ values, Ancilla College 2015 graduate Andrew Huff, owner of Huff and Puff Company, uses 100% reclaimed wood from area cabinet makers and local business to carve his custom-made longboards. (Longboards are large skateboards that offer more traction and stability.) “It’s all their scraps. They’re either going to throw it away or burn it. So I’m doing them a favor.” Andrew says.

Ministry Center Services employs a full-time Recycling Manager who coordinates recycling efforts, saving space in the landfill. Additionally, Ministry Center Services facilitates the JESSE card program in which students with disabilities repurpose greeting and holiday cards that have been given to the Sisters.

Many of these “Green” practices have been recognized by Sustainable Indiana 2016 Bicentennial Green Legacy Award. They include such practices as using earth-friendly cleaning products, restoring land and water, recycling, composting food waste, promoting water efficiency, updating to efficient and alternative energy, purchasing sustainable products and hybrid cars.

As a congregation, we choose to live, work, and minister to the poor and underserved, including our home, planet Earth. We acknowledge and honor all communities that exist and ways the natural and human communities benefit. Not just humans, but everything. Every being has potential to heal our planet.

### Recycling at The Center at Donaldson

In a six month period, The Center at Donaldson recycles...

- 7.5 tons of paper
- 1.75 tons of plastic
- 8.3 tons of cardboard
Empowering People to be Healthy: HealthVisions Midwest

Mission: Rooted in faith and confidence in God, we welcome the challenges of improving the health status of the communities we serve. We work in communities to:

- Advocate for the poor and powerless
- Nurture and foster leadership
- Develop and facilitate partnerships
- Address systemic community health needs
- Advance environmental health

We all face challenges and temptations when it comes to being healthy. Whether you are trying to lose five pounds, exercise more regularly, stop smoking, or manage multiple medications, it’s hard to stay on track and to maintain your motivation.

But for some people in our communities it’s even harder. Imagine that you don’t speak the same language as your doctor. You can’t read discharge instructions from the hospital. Or, your only reliable transportation for any medical issue is an ambulance. How could you be healthy if the closest place to buy food is the corner gas station? How could you keep a baby healthy?

In the communities where we serve, Lake County, Fort Wayne and East St. Louis, the barriers to healthy living are complex. No one provider can solve the multi-layered, systemic health challenges alone. HealthVisions Midwest demonstrates the Poor Handmaids’ value of “Community” by bringing together the right people, organizations, and funders, to empower community residents to overcome their barriers to health.

The Community Health Worker (CHW) has been a part of HealthVisions Midwest programs for the last 10 years. Through collaborations with Ivy Tech of East Chicago, Indiana and the Affiliated Service Providers of Indiana (ASPIN), HealthVisions Midwest has educated more than 20 frontline public health workers to serve as liaisons between health/social services and community members. CHWs provide outreach, community education, informal counseling, social support and advocacy.
Maria was in her early 50s when she suffered congestive heart failure and arrived at an East Chicago hospital by ambulance. She recovered in the hospital, but had it not been for her CHW, Maria would have been readmitted. The CHW spoke Spanish, Maria’s native language. She listened to the doctor’s discharge instructions and interpreted Maria’s plan of care. Each week for the next month, the CHW visited Maria in her home. During one of their meetings, the CHW helped Maria make an appointment with a doctor for a minor infection rather than return to the ER, and together they found affordable transportation to get her to the appointment.

“Our goal is to help people stay out of the hospital if they don’t need to be there,” says Raquel Castro of HealthVisions Midwest. “Sometimes it’s through preventative health education; sometimes it is meeting with people and helping them connect the dots; sometimes it is helping mothers-to-be deliver healthy babies. We want to bridge individual needs with the resources of the community.”

Each community is unique and barriers to health pose different challenges to residents. In East St. Louis, Illinois, HealthVisions Midwest empowers seniors aged 60+ suffering from chronic disease complicated by the emotional toll of geographic isolation. In Fort Wayne, Indiana, our focus is to serve the minority community, and in Lake County, Indiana, minority women and children are primary participants in our health programming.

In order to tackle the overlapping community challenges, HealthVisions Midwest serves as a coalition-builder, convener of service providers, and training center in each of the communities. Programs, coalitions, and trainings have included:

**Lake County, Indiana**
- Bridges to Wellness Network
- Breast and Cervical Cancer Program Wisewoman
- Maternal Child Health Network of Lake County
- Great Beginnings
- Promotores de Salud Maternal e Infantil
- Indiana Community Health Worker Region 1 Association

**Fort Wayne, Indiana**
- Allen County Health Disparity Coalition
- American Diabetes Association Programs: Live Empowered and Por tu Familia
- Empowering Fort Wayne to Self-Manage Diabetes
- Empowered Adult Obesity Program
- Prevention 2 Clinic – Free Health Screenings
- Multicultural Outreach through Medical Interpreters and the Bienvenido Program

**East St. Louis, Illinois**
- Mission Outreach Reaching Everyone
- Living a Healthy Life Chronic Disease Self Management Program
- Faith in Action to Serve and Transform
- Assisted Transportation

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**HealthVisions Midwest Funding**

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.

Matthew 25: 35-36
Humility. Personal responsibility. Family. Faith. Duty to God and country. Thrift. The value of a job. Modesty. The value of a dollar. Our parents and grandparents taught us lessons that developed from hardship and war. Now, these seniors who have worked hard all of their lives, need a safe, caring, affordable place to call home.

Each of the four Linden Houses apartment buildings offers subsidized one-bedroom apartments for individuals who qualify under the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines. Linden Houses in Indiana offer 50 apartments per building, and The Linden House of Chicago provides 100 apartment units. The rental amount for a unit is determined by a resident’s ability to pay. The annual income range for The Linden Houses residents’ is $4,000-$32,000.

There is a growing need for safe, low-income housing. As baby boomers continue to age and as the safety net of Social Security becomes less definite, the demand for affordable senior housing will increase.

Colette, a petite resident in her late 80s, came to America from Europe after WWII. When she arrived at Linden House, she was quiet, withdrawn, and scared. She had suffered financial abuse at the hands of a young relative with whom she was living. Two longtime friends helped her move and regain her independence in one of our communities. Now Colette walks the grounds every day, cheerfully greeting and encouraging other residents.

In each location, The Linden Houses social service coordinator supports residents as they navigate health care challenges.

Lucy, a former resident in Gary, Indiana, worked in an ammunition plant during the war. The noise, a hazard of her job, caused hearing problems. But, other medical priorities prevented her from seeking hearing assistance. Instead,
she learned to read lips... very well, in fact. Lucy carried herself with pride and dignity, and none of her fellow residents knew about her hearing impairment. That was how she wanted it. Our caring team at The Linden House helped her communicate with medical providers and community services so that she could advocate for the best care possible, without missing a single word.

Each of The Linden Houses has its own personality, and the demographic make-up of residents reflects the diversity of its geographic community. Board members from each of The Linden Houses collaborate with residents and representatives from the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ to ensure that each building offers the services, amenities, and programming important to local residents. Residents interact with board members annually to share what they like about living at The Linden Houses and what can be done to improve resident experiences. This has proven to be a good way to keep the boards grounded and for the residents to share their ideas and suggestions.

Activities vary from month to month, and they can include:

- Health care screenings and blood pressure checks
- Outings to popular shopping centers, casinos, and restaurants
- Bingo, Bunco, and Dominoes games
- On-site prayer services
- Celebrations for birthdays and holidays
- Learning opportunities about nutrition, financial issues facing seniors, etc.
- Transportation to and from weekly faith services, doctors’ appointments, and special events

“The values of the Poor Handmaids are what bind us together,” says Cindy Sater, manager of The Linden House of Mishawaka. “Our staff live the values of Dignity and Respect for all, and our residents experience safety and security. When community members realize that we are a ministry sponsored by the Poor Handmaids, they relax. There is a sense of trust.”


Designed to meet the physical, social, and psychological needs of the residents, Linden House creates a caring community as it promotes health, security, quality of life, and the opportunity for interaction and involvement of residents.

_In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive._

_Acts 20: 35_
Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center provides an atmosphere of peaceful, quiet and sacred space in a natural setting. Lindenwood offers individuals and groups an environment for faith development, personal growth, team building and artistic endeavors. We do this with a welcoming presence to all we serve.

...for nothing will be impossible for God.
Luke 1: 37

Sharing Hope: Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center


Life can be full of demands, worries, and draining relationships. As our days become cluttered with tasks and to-dos, anger and resentment build, and we forget that the Lord is working in our lives, bringing us to the end he has in store for us.

People come to Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center to restore and renew their sense of hope and to share it with others. They come to listen for the voice of God in their lives.

“There is a man in his 50s who participates every year in one of our 12-step retreat programs,” says Christopher Thelen, director. “He is a recovering alcoholic. He shows up in ripped jeans and a plaid shirt. But this year, on the last day of the retreat, he told me that he just didn’t want to leave. His experience was so powerful that he didn’t want to leave.”

The skinny, balding man reminds Christopher of the apostles Peter, James, and John who witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mt. Tabor; filled with hope, promise, and mystery, they did not want to leave the mountain top.

“I told him it was time to go. He had to share the sense of hope and God’s love that he felt at Lindenwood with other people,” says Christopher.

Retreats and conferences at Lindenwood are for people who thirst for an encounter with God. Our hectic lifestyles make it easy to feel lost, and it is important to make time for prayer, reflection, contemplation, and rest. An average of 9,000 people come to Lindenwood every year for day and overnight programs.

Moved by the depth of their experiences, Lindenwood retreat participants frequently contribute to the Gift of the Spirit Scholarship Fund as a way to “pay it forward” to guests who cannot afford programs and accommodations. Since 2008, the scholarship fund has grown to more than $15,000. Similarly, the Lindenwood staff works diligently within the constrained budgets of groups and organizations.

For example, Indiana University Northwest approached Lindenwood about housing two medical students gaining field experience while
serving the poor in both Starke and Marshall Counties. Our willingness to stay within the limited budget not only helped the medical students, but also indirectly contributed to the overall health and well-being of our underserved neighbors.

Lindenwood serves the entire Christian community of Catholic, Protestant, and other faith denominations. One model for this collaborative work is the Visitation Ministry training program. This 12-week program prepares candidates from Christian faith communities to be the embodiment of Christ’s care and compassion for those older adults who are home alone, grieving, suffering loss, and without a support system.

Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center is a training ground for the future leaders of our Catholic faith. For example, young adults in their mid-20s from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend worked for 10 weeks with the director of Lindenwood to create a custom retreat to engage their peers in a life of faith. The young leaders discerned their own spiritual passions and shared that hope and fire with others. The leadership team was transformed through preparing and facilitating the experience for young friends in the Diocese.

“One young woman was fired up about sacred art,” says Christopher. “Others enjoyed playing praise and worship music. Another person led discussions about Fr. Robert Barron’s Catholicism video series. It was amazing to witness the leaders’ self-discovery and how they shared their excitement with other young people.”
Like many of us, Peggy Coffey works hard to negotiate competing passions – children, spouse, career obligations, personal and professional commitments, meetings, tasks and to-dos. But, ten years ago, Peggy felt an imbalance. She sought refuge in nature – getting lost in the woods – in order to gain space and solace. In that stillness, she discovered a longing and yearning to create.

“God is always asking us the creative question,” says Sister Nancy Raboin, PHJC. “We are always encouraged to ‘fear not.’ And we need to respond. In that way, as Mary did, we are always living into the mystery of the Annunciation. God is always calling us to create. It’s about listening to a question within ourselves and creatively and fearlessly responding.”

MoonTree Studios is a ministry that refocuses us on the process of creativity. The answer to God’s creative question is in the process, not the product. We are formed to be creative, and each one of us has that spark. The process of creating art is a spiritual journey to discover the divine within.

“Two experiences have continual impact for me as I use art to express my faith journey: soul-tending (art journaling) and the sacred circle (mandalas),” says Peggy. “Each is a tool to connect with the Spirit’s leading… I can see how God is shaping my life whether or not it ‘makes sense’ or there are words to express it to someone else. Both are a new form of praying for me that strengthens my faith and gives peace within.”

Participants explore faith and self-knowledge by fearlessly creating art: painting, writing calligraphy, working clay, enameling on copper, spinning and weaving, shaping glasswork, making baskets, jewelry, and hand-made paper, experiencing nature as art, and woodworking. By learning and doing together, we preserve creative traditions that have been passed from generation to generation.

“As I look at myself now I would describe my transformed self as someone who is coming closer to being whole – who I am meant to be – and being balanced,” says Peggy. “Self-care, work and leisure have equal roles.”

At work, school and home, it’s easy to be focused on the objective quality of our products. Our fear and obsession with “getting it right,” or
“making it perfect” sometimes gets in the way or prevents us from even starting a project. In contrast, MoonTree Studios offers individuals, church groups, workplace teams, and families “facilitated art experiences” that directly confront fears blocking innovation and our ability to work and live together peacefully and cooperatively.

The MoonTree Scholarship Fund provides access to the arts for women who are working to create better lives for themselves and breaking cycles of violence and poverty. We open these opportunities for women veterans and veteran family members, clients at Sojourner Truth House in Gary, Indiana and Heminger House in Plymouth, Indiana. In addition, MoonTree Studios has joined the international Empty Bowls movement, raising more than $4,000 to combat hunger in our own neighborhood.

Art educators and artists reap professional benefits through MoonTree Studios as well. Our experiences are certified by the Art Education Association of Indiana to meet the professional development standards required for Indiana art teachers to maintain teaching licensure. The MoonTree Gallery features regular exhibitions of emerging artists, which enrich participants and community members.

MoonTree Studios, located at The Center at Donaldson, is a U.S. Green Building Council LEED® Gold certified complex of buildings, with a prairie and rain gardens surrounding it, built for sustainability and to open the artist in each of us to nature’s abundance and beauty.

MoonTree Studios challenges people to experience mindfulness as they fearlessly explore the interconnectedness of Art, Nature and the Spirit within.

Since therefore we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divinity is like an image fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human art and imagination.

Acts 17: 29
Loving the Least among Us: Nazareth Home

Natalie was only 1 year old when she arrived at Nazareth Home. She was a handful—defiant, rebellious, bullying other children. But it wasn’t her fault. Her mom was drug-addicted, alcoholic, and in jail. For the first twelve months of her life, Natalie bounced between at least two other foster families who weren’t able to offer the consistent love, attention, and patience that she needed.

“We wouldn’t give up on her,” says Ernestine Edwards, Nazareth Home foster mother. “We loved her, sang to her, and massaged her at bedtime. Pretty soon, she came around. She learned what it felt like to be loved and to love other people.”

Her transformation was remarkable. At first, Natalie was challenging. She wouldn’t make eye contact. She pushed, pinched and yelled. But as the caring co-workers and volunteers at Nazareth Home offered unconditional love, daily structure, and boundaries for her behavior, Natalie blossomed into a charming, loving girl.

“At Nazareth Home we provide a stable, loving foster care environment for medically-fragile infants and toddlers. We are licensed as a traditional foster home that provides round-the-clock care for children from all over Lake County, Indiana.

Children come to us suffering severe abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome, drug addiction, or other physical and developmental challenges that require specialized attention. Our purpose is to provide unconditional loving care to all children.

Since we opened our doors in 1993, we have loved and cared for almost 200 babies. Every year, more than 40 volunteers shower our children with love, spending their regular weekly shifts cuddling infants, crawling on the floor after toddlers, reading, singing lullabies, and changing diapers. They provide stability, routine, and consistent affection that begin to heal the trauma.

Many community partners recognize the lifetime influence they make when they invest in the well-being of children. For example, The Foundations of East Chicago, The John W. Anderson Foundation, the Hammond Gaming Commission, and First Merchants Bank provide significant ongoing financial support. Tom Sourlis and Sue Eleuterio established the Olga C. &
William Brinkman endowment fund through the Legacy Foundation because they understand greater community impact of making sure that all children have a stable beginning.

Nursing students from Purdue University Northwest collaborate with the co-workers and volunteers at Nazareth Home, providing specialized training to staff while receiving hands-on pediatric experience. Additionally, future therapists and psychologists complete internships in early child development.

“Ever since I was a little girl, I have dreamed of becoming a pediatric nurse,” nursing student Megan Anderson remarks. “Going to Nazareth Home was one of the highlights of my pediatric clinicals. It is such a rewarding experience to be able to use my knowledge to help better the lives of the children.”

A few months before Natalie’s second birthday, she and her large foster family of co-workers, staff and other children prepared to launch her into a new life with her aunt. During a special blessing ceremony and birthday party, her foster family showered her with gifts, love, and prayers, hopeful for her new journey and trusting that she will always feel the love and care she received at Nazareth Home.

Nazareth Home cares for poor and powerless infants and children, those unable to speak for themselves, by providing them with a loving, caring and stable beginning. We are dedicated to meeting the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of medically compromised infants and children who are faced with extraordinary challenges in life.

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.

1 Jn 4: 11
The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, stewards resources to:

- Respond to community needs with grants;
- Leverage collaboration with community partners;
- Engage in transformational initiatives.

In the spirit of Blessed Catherine Kasper, the foundress of the Poor Handmaids, the Foundation listens carefully to the needs of the poor and to those who serve them by meeting with the approximately 65 different agencies annually in Allen County, Indiana, with which it collaborates. With the input of a local Board of Trustees, this Ministry responds intentionally by providing more than $1.3M to support important health and wellness programming with grants as well as occasionally stepping into “gaps in services” with transformational projects and collaborations. Three of the current community impact areas are:

**Quality, Affordable Health and Wellness Care**

One of the primary areas of community benefit is the healthcare safety net. Foundation grants support Matthew 25 Health and Dental Clinic’s medical and dental director positions responsible for delivering care for more than 25,000 medical and dental visits annually. The Foundation provides funding to other safety net providers including the Super Shot vaccination program, which serves nearly 7,000 children annually, keeping their clinics open in the lowest income neighborhoods. In addition, the Foundation also annually invests heavily in agencies and programming, removing barriers such as language, transportation, knowledge and finances that too frequently prevent people from accessing health and wellness care.

**Maternal Child Health focus on Pregnant Moms, Dads and their Infants**

Single, pregnant women, their babies, and the fathers are a second major focus area. In addition to grant support to six local agencies who provide care to new, vulnerable families, the Foundation coordinates a quarterly “Prenatal and Infant Care Network.” More than 30 local organizations participate in the network to improve care, providers’ training and firsthand knowledge of community resources available to assist new moms, dads and their newborns.

**Refugee and Immigrant Health**

Renewing the PHJC’s longstanding commitment to serve refugees and immigrants, the Foundation has responded to a major resettlement of an estimated 5,000 Burmese refugees into Allen County. Today, this response not only includes
many grants for medical interpreters, health navigators and a variety of multicultural health services – but it has also inspired the Foundation to operate a Community Resource Center for Refugees, a video-conferenced medical interpretation program, a refugee agricultural program, training of more than 300 bi-lingual medical interpreters in 17 languages, and the facilitation of several networks of health professionals focused on serving the international community.

According to Meg Distler, executive director of the Foundation, “Our daily goal with all of our activities is to continue the legacy of the Poor Handmaids by serving as the feet, hands and heart of Christ with all of the poor in the community.”

Funding by the Foundation enables Matthew 25 Health and Dental Clinic’s Medical Director, Dr. Brad Isbister, to provide and oversee care to approximately 100 low-income, uninsured patients daily and 18,710 medical visits annually.

As an example of its Maternal Child Health grant-making, the Foundation has supported Women’s Care Center since it first opened its doors in 2004. The center has served more than 20,000 women who have made 135,714 visits for counseling, ultrasounds, education and assistance. One in four pregnant women in Allen County now start at Women’s Care Center, which has a unique opportunity to help them choose life and connect with many supporting services, including medical care, throughout the community. This makes a big difference.

The Foundation offers medical interpreter training and facilitates continuing education workshops to assist its grantees and community partners in equipping their staffs to provide quality medical care to those unable to speak the English language. Allen County Health Commissioner Dr. Deborah McMahan now insists these trained interpreters are “essential members of the medical team.”

The HEAL (Healthy Eating Active Living) partnership enabled the Foundation to support urban gardens, cooking classes, 30 different community centers and more than 100 farm markets in low-income, food desert areas of the community.

The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation serves the poor in body, mind and spirit to achieve quality health and wellness, focusing on the community of Allen County, Indiana and may respond to needs among other underserved populations.

And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, “Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.” His master said to him, “Well done, my good and faithful servant. Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master’s joy.”

Matthew 25: 20-21
Sarah, a 62-year-old African American woman, participated in the Sojourner Truth House case management program to find stable housing. She was living on her friends’ couches in between broken relationships. She is a recovering alcoholic.

Sojourner Truth House works with homeless and at-risk women and their children, helping them gain material stability (food, shelter, clothing) and employment and reclaim their God-given dignity and sense of purpose.

As co-workers developed a relationship with Sarah, her case manager learned that her birth parents abandoned her, leaving her with neighbors when she was an infant. Sarah never knew her given name.

In addition to the physical and psychological traumas she survived over the years, there were bureaucratic obstacles that prevented her from achieving stability. Sarah never had a social security number or a birth certificate. Without these documents, she couldn’t obtain an ID or driver’s license, and therefore, she couldn’t rent an apartment or be legally employed.

All she knew were her parents’ names. “We worked together for eight months,” says Sister Peg Spindler, CSA, director of Sojourner Truth House. “We were persistent, and finally we got a call from South Carolina. They had found her birth certificate. In a very literal way, Sarah reclaimed a piece of who she was.”

Shortly after that phone call, Sarah was able to sign a lease to an apartment. She is now living in her own place. She has taken great steps toward stability and reclaiming self-worth.

Sojourner Truth House offers three streams of service. First, women and their children seeking stable housing participate in case management. Once they reach this milestone, our clients can become TOPPs (Transitional Outreach Program Participants), our second stream of service to help women overcome other barriers in their lives. Finally, we offer food, clothing, health screenings, and community assistance referrals for all community residents – men and women.

Each client comes with unique needs. People come from violent situations. They have histories of abuse or rape. Or they simply lost their jobs and couldn’t pay rent. Our co-workers work tirelessly to advocate on behalf of these individuals, simplifying bureaucracy, and offering a rich learning environment.
We offer a curriculum-based child enrichment program while moms are participating in workshops about financial literacy and job-seeking skills, taking classes toward GED or college degrees, learning parenting techniques, reducing stress through yoga, supporting each other in recovery groups, and rediscovering their connection to God through spiritual companioning.

An important part of our role is educating community members about homelessness and poverty. Each month more than 2,100 people participate in our services. We serve 14,000 meals every year, and 3,200 women select clothing from our community clothes closet.

Sojourner Truth House helps to train future social workers and nurses as a placement site for interns from Indiana University Northwest, Purdue University Northwest, and Ivy Tech Community College. We have also provided experience for counseling interns from Valparaiso University and Samaritan Counseling Center. It is a win-win for our clients and the student-practitioners.

“Sometimes we think that we are immune to homelessness. But in reality, anyone can become homeless,” says Rondi Wightman, director of operations. “We have had women with Ph.D.’s come for services. They never thought they’d be here. But anyone could be just a paycheck, or an illness, or a bankruptcy away.” Homeless people look like us.

Co-workers treat everyone with equal dignity, helping each woman to reclaim her own sense of self – being aware of her God-given dignity, accepting her gifts and limitations, being comfortable in her own skin.

Testimony from a former client:

Dear Sister Peg,

I just wanted to take the time to thank you and your co-worker for all you have done for me in the past. I have hit rock bottom, and God put you in my life to redirect me and help me find my way. You have been an instrumental part of my journey. I am graduating on Saturday with an Associate’s Degree in Applied Science. I have completed my Medical Assistance Certificate, passed my certification, and will have an additional certificate in Medical Administration. I have a great job with a hospital, and I have bought a house. My youngest is now living with me, and I gained custody back in October. She attends Catholic school and is an honor student. God has blessed me in abundance, and I thank you personally for being his instrument. God bless you and all the women at Sojourner Truth House. You are all in my prayers, and I am forever grateful for having you as a part of my life.

Patricia B., CMA
Ancilla College – offering challenging academic programs to a diverse student body in a caring environment

Catherine Kasper Life Center (Catherine Kasper Home and Maria Center) – providing for the comfort, dignity and well being of adults in a continuum of care

Contributed Services:
Ancilla Systems Incorporated
Provincial Services
Ministry Center Services

Earthworks – teaching people of all ages through an environmental education center to love and care for the natural world

Lindenwood – offering spiritual retreats and conferences for groups and individuals in a quiet and peaceful setting

Ecological Relationships Committee – is a committee appointed by Provincial Leadership whose purpose is to express the vision and values of the Poor Handmaids for land and Earth at The Center at Donaldson

MoonTree Studios – promoting the healing of the earth through artistic expression and spirituality
**Ministry Locations**

**Linden Houses** – providing affordable housing for seniors and individuals with special needs in a respectful, communal setting. Located in Chicago, Gary, Hobart and Mishawaka.

**Bethany Retreat House** – finding God in one’s life through prayer and reflection in a quiet space.

**Nazareth Home** – caring for medically compromised infants and young children in a loving and stable foster home setting.

**Sojourner Truth House** – advocating for homeless and at-risk women and their children at a day shelter in an impoverished neighborhood.

**St. Joseph Community Health Foundation** – providing funds and programs to improve healthcare among the poor and underserved in Allen County, Indiana.

**Health Visions Midwest** – building healthy communities among the poor and underserved through partnerships with other agencies.
Contact Information

Ancilla Beef & Grain Farm
P.O. Box 1; 9601 Union Road
Donaldson, Indiana 46513
(574) 935-1796
www.ancillabeef.com

Ancilla College
P.O. Box 1; 9601 Union Road
Donaldson, Indiana 46513
(574) 936-8898
www.ancilla.edu

BACHworks!
1213 East Bronson
South Bend, Indiana 46615
(574) 340-6409
www.bachworkstherapy.com

Bethany Retreat House
2202 Lituanica Avenue
East Chicago, Indiana 46312
(219) 398-5047
www.bethanyretreathouse.org

Catherine Kasper Life Center
P.O. Box 1; 9601 Union Road
Donaldson, Indiana 46513
(574) 935-1742
www.cklc.poorhandmaids.org

Earthworks
9815 Union Road
Plymouth, Indiana 46563
(574) 935-4164
www.earthworksonline.org
www.earthworksmarket.org

HealthVisions Midwest
Lake County Office
3700 179th Street
Hammond, Indiana 46323
(219) 844-2698
www.hvusa.org

Fort Wayne, Indiana  (260) 745-1600
East St. Louis, Illinois  (618) 271-7000

The Linden Houses
Chicago, Illinois  (773) 276-6031
Gary, Indiana  (219) 885-1534
Hobart, Indiana  (219) 942-9440
Mishawaka, Indiana  (574) 258-0777
www.thelindenhouses.org

Lindenwood Retreat & Conference Center
P.O. Box 1; 9601 Union Road
Donaldson, Indiana 46513
(574) 935-1780
www.lindenwood.org

MoonTree Studios & Gallery
P.O. Box 1; 9601 Union Road
Donaldson, Indiana 46513
(574) 935-1712
www.moontreestudios.org

Nazareth Home
P.O. Box #3067
East Chicago, Indiana 46312
(219) 616-6090
www.nazarethhome.com

Sojourner Truth House
410 W. 13th Avenue
Gary, Indiana 46407
(219) 885-2282
www.sojournertruthhouse.org

St. Joseph Community Health Foundation
347 West Berry Street, Suite 101
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802
(260) 969-2001
www.sjchf.org

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ

Partners in the work of the Spirit
www.poorhandmaids.org
facebook.poorhandmaids.org