Lord Jesus, when you multiplied the loaves and fishes, you provided more than food for the body, you offered us the gift of yourself, the gift which satisfies every hunger and quenches every thirst! Your disciples were filled with fear and doubt, but you poured out your love and compassion on the migrant crowd, welcoming them as brothers and sisters.

Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God’s family who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty, persecution, violence, and war. Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion. We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds.

Lord Jesus, help us by your grace,

To banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children as our own brother and sister;

To welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity, while responding to their many needs;

To realize that you call all people to your holy mountain to learn the ways of peace and justice;

To share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us;

To give witness to your love for all people, as we celebrate the many gifts they bring.

We praise you and give you thanks for the family you have called together from so many people. We see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Used with permission of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
After 15 days of living and working with Sister Connie Bach, PHJC, and five other volunteers at a refugee shelter, Casa De Refugiado in El Paso, Texas, I want to share my experience. What an exhausting and thought-provoking experience this proved to be. Together with the rest of my team, we spent two weeks working much more than our eight hour shifts. As the guests arrived at the shelter (a former warehouse) from their ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) bus, they were greeted with food and water. Next came an intake process, a visit to a hygiene room and clothing room to get what they needed. A playroom was set up while we were there for the many children at the facility. And a makeshift clinic was also available. We prepared food, mopped, passed out supplies, sorted donations, took guests to their airport and bus stations, made phone calls, watched children, washed laundry, packed food, vacuumed, and cleaned showers. Each task provided a small taste of what it is like to be someone seeking a better life in another country. Along with the latter comes the realization of how lucky we are to live in a safe country. While there we had many discussions about our responsibility regarding the border crisis...as Americans, as humanitarians, as Christians.

One long-term volunteer shared her response when overwhelmed with so many issues. She asks “What’s mine to do today?” What a valuable takeaway, whether working at the border or in our regular, everyday life. This is my second volunteer experience with Sister Connie. I’d like to thank her and the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ for providing me this opportunity. I’m still processing it, have shared what I learned with others, and will continue to ask, “What’s mine to do today?”

– Pat Rader, PHJC Volunteer

I knew when I returned from El Paso, Texas after volunteering at the United States–Mexico border that people would ask me what it was like. I knew, after the first week, that I would talk about the eyes of the migrants we were assisting. The migrants’ (referred to as guests from here on out, as this is how we referred to them at Annunciation House) stories we heard were each unique in their tales of fear, of suffering at the hands of gangs, government, and everything in between. However, the emphasis and empathy allowed in sharing a language was diminished and necessarily replaced with reliance on body language, and our eyes, as they are the windows to the souls. The eyes of the guests were weary during intake, hopeful after their phone calls to their sponsors, and relaxed when they were in the kids’ room watching their children play while talking with other parents. Through the experience of welcoming these asylum seekers to the United States there are no adequate words for the spirit that runs through the shelter, other than that it is of God. Somehow, there were always enough supplies, food was always provided, and tensions were dispelled. Ironically, what was missing was an overflow of guests, not that there is a shortage of migrants, but that they’re not being released from the detention centers. If you are asking yourself how you can help, I encourage you to volunteer, to see the shelter, to see the expression of relief through body language for yourself. If you cannot spare the time or money to visit, which is understandable, I encourage you to call your elected officials to support the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and Annunciation House, so that more may receive the dignity of moving from ‘migrant’ to ‘guest’ on their journey to their new homes.

– Ann Perri Olton, PHJC Volunteer

PHJC Volunteers traveled to the United States–Mexico border to serve refugees and migrants.
This year for the 2019 Board–Leadership Retreat, a retreat day for our ministry leaders and board members, we focused on Catholic Social Teaching. One of the questions we know our ministry leaders and board members find themselves asking is, “what would the Sisters want?” when they face a big decision in their ministry. We want to help them find the tools and resources to answer that question, and a great resource to turn to is the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

Catholic Social Teaching is rooted in the teachings of Jesus found in the Gospels. But as you know not every issue or concern of our modern world has a direct equivalence in the Gospels. Beginning in 1891, Popes often with the help of Bishops and theologians, began to address the social concerns of their time in the form of encyclicals, or letters often addressed to all people of good will. The first example of this came with Rerum Novarum: The Condition of Labor written by Pope Leo XIII in 1891 which addressed issues brought about by the Industrial Revolution. This encyclical was only published seven years before Saint Katharina Kasper’s death and the only one published during her lifetime. Since then Popes have addressed the social issues of their time by publishing encyclicals on topics related to peace, the family, evangelization, and the environment.

During the retreat day, Sister Michele Dvorak, PHJC spoke to the leaders about the history and development of Catholic Social Teaching. The leaders then had time to reflect on what they’ve learned, discuss how it might help them make decisions in the future, and even how they have been using it in the past. There was a wonderful discussion with Sisters and our ministry leaders about how they see Catholic Social Teaching embedded in the values of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and in the life of Saint Katharina Kasper. Our hope is that by encouraging ministry leaders and board members to grow in this knowledge area they will feel more equipped to reach the answers to the questions their ministries face and know where to turn when they need additional resources to reach a conclusion. If this is a topic you have interest in, all encyclicals are posted on the Vatican’s website www.vatican.va
On March 15, 2019, we started the assembly with the installation of the new leadership team, 2019-2022.

It was a moment of great joy since for the first time the regional leadership was assumed by three Mexican Sisters! Sister Jean Christianson, PHJC, the outgoing leader, blessed Sister Elvia Mina Juárez, the incoming leader.

It was also an appropriate time for the region to express their deep gratitude to the outgoing “pioneers” of leadership: Sisters Jean Christianson, Elvia Mina Juárez, and Marilyn Haselhorst.

Together, full of trust and hope in God, we pray for the graces that the new leadership team and the Mexico Region needs to face the present and future challenges. We continue to walk in and with the spirit of Saint Katharina Kasper.

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When I received permission to enter the novitiate, I felt very enthusiastic and very grateful to God. It was also a time of moving to a new formation house in Queretaro, Mexico. This physical move symbolized for me the interior movement of my life and of giving priority to God’s call by entering the novitiate. Hope and joy and the unknown abounded.

During my first six months, I have experienced many challenges, changes and wonderful moments in community living, in the educational institutes and in personal growth.

I understand more deeply the values of the life of Saint Katharina, our foundress, and feel more identified with her vision and love of the Poor Handmaid mission. It is such a wonderment to study the movement of the congregation to other countries and especially the historical founding of the PHJC congregation in Mexico in 1988. Obviously, all of this enriches my personal prayer life. This closeness to God, the intercession of Saint Katharina and the witness of the Poor Handmaid Sisters have brought a deeper perspective of my calling as a Poor Handmaid in the world today.

Since we live in a time of many changes and challenges in our church and society we need to walk firmly with faith and hope. It is my responsibility to use the opportunities I have to deepen my knowledge of religious life, my relationship with God and the meaning of “poor handmaid.” I need to prepare myself to live my calling and prepare myself to bring the mission of Jesus to others.

Pope Francis writes: “God lights the stars so that we may continue walking” and for me, each one of the persons who support me are the stars. I am profoundly grateful for all their prayers. It is in the moments of difficulty that these prayers help me to continue onward. Recognizing the joy that comes from being a follower of Jesus, I continue my vocational journey with confidence in God, the accompaniment of Saint Katharina Kasper and the support of the PHJC Sisters and so many others.
Building Intercultural Competencies for Sisters

By Sister Joetta Huelsmann, PHJC

During the Poor Handmaids' Community Days in June, we were privileged to have Dr. John Chitakure present important understandings about relating and living interculturally. With PHJC Sisters living and ministering in five continents, this continues to be a goal for the international congregation.

Dr. Chitakure teaches at the Mexican American Catholic College in San Antonio, Texas. He and his family migrated to the United States from Zimbabwe in 2012.

He defined culture as the learned behaviors, values, and perceptions with are shared by a particular group. It includes food, song, and ways of celebrating. We are all formed by our culture and we bring our culture to wherever we are. It is a core part of our identity. Culture is a gift from our ancestors, it is about what we value. It is also the beliefs that we have about beauty, color, and order for example. Culture is how we communicate, relate, and the expressions that we know.

Dr. Chitakure’s shared with us an “Iceberg Analogy of Culture” based on materials by Edward T. Hall and Eric H.F. Law. The first level of the iceberg is the external culture which consist of our conscious behaviors and beliefs. This includes gestures, eye contact, emotional display, art, music, food, language, and pace of life. Below the surface of the iceberg is the unconscious, which holds our values, traditions thought patterns, perceptions, and myths. Included in this is tolerance for change, gender roles, communication styles, relationship rules, importance of work, and notions of time. This internal culture is where most clashes happen, but it also can happen with external culture.

An example of an external culture clash is a negative reaction to the aroma of an unfamiliar food being cooked. An impulsive of negative verbal or body language would be very offensive to the cook.

An internal culture conflict would could center on the meaning in different cultures. An American would show up at a meeting on time based on the values of productivity and efficiency. Because of the value of relationship and courtesy a person of another culture may arrive late because of the importance of interacting with a person met on the way to the meeting.

The important thing when living or relating to a person of another culture is to respect and appreciate the other’s culture. We each need to maintain our own cultural identity, but at the same time be open and accepting of the others.

Dr. Chitakure shared his personal stories of integrating himself and his family into the culture of the United States. He encouraged us to share our stories with each other. Even though most of us are Americans, we still have our own family cultures that are different. We discovered that intercultural does not just mean going to another country or culture, but hearing each other’s story of cultural encounters and learnings.

In my family some of the foods we ate were referred to by German names because that was my heritage. Until I entered high school, I was unaware that it was a German name. That is an example of how ingrained we are in our own culture. We realized that we still have much to learn as we continue to interact with each other and with people of other cultures.
"How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures." (Psalm 104:24)

Each year, the Indiana Academy of Sciences gathers together the state’s best naturalists to converge on a single property and count as many species of life as possible in a 24-hour window. This “bioblitz” (biodiversity blitz) creates an invaluable snapshot of the natural communities around us, and the resulting data will help scientists track species on the move. It was also a great opportunity for the public to engage with real science up close. MoonTree Studios and the Center at Donaldson had the great privilege of playing host to the 2019 Bioblitz in June bringing together over thirty scientists.

Our basecamp was right in the middle of the prairie at MoonTree. As the sun (and temperature) soared at noon on Saturday, the teams set off to all corners of the 1,100 acres of pastures, woods, wetlands, and restored prairies.

Back at basecamp, we scheduled a variety of opportunities for the public to engage with nature and science. Children learned how to use plants as paintbrushes; they also made lots of joyful noises with instruments made from natural materials, compliments of Elsa Littman of the Maria Center resident. Family-friendly talks were scheduled throughout the afternoon on everything from beetles to bats.

Sundown wasn’t the end of the day, rather just the beginning of the nighttime sampling. Nature runs 24/7 and so did our crew. We erected a ten-foot pole with giant bug light, drawing in insects from hundreds of yards away. May flies, Io moths, June bugs, and dozens of other species swarmed the hillside. The lead entomologist said it was the best night of bioblitz buggin’ he’s ever had.

The birders are out early Sunday morning. Their total would edge up over sixty species for the weekend. Other scientists, finished with field collections, turned to the microscopes to keep tallying collected specimens such as insects and spiders.
At noon on Sunday, the hardy few who have persevered through the entire 24-hours shared their stories, their notable species found, and any oddities or surprises. The preliminary numbers were encouraging: over 300 plant species (including 240 in a single high-quality wetland, including at least six listed by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources as rare or threatened), 12 herptiles (reptiles and amphibians), up to 100 species of spider, just to name a few.

Carl Strang, singing insect specialist, made this notable observation of a species that was previously unknown in Marshall County: “a single male eastern striped cricket (Miogryllus verticalis)... has been observed at only five other sites in northern Indiana, and this one is the easternmost. Either they are spreading from the west or south, where numbers are higher and locations have been known since the first third of the 20th century, or they are so thinly scattered in the fringes of their range that they have not been noticed in northern Indiana before.”

It will take a few more months to get the final and official species tally. A description of these species and the event will eventually be submitted for publication in the Proceedings of the Indiana Academy of Science.

We were absolutely thrilled to have the opportunity to see the ecological beauty of the rural Midwest highlighted in this way. Recent research suggests that these smaller islands of habitat are crucially important to global biodiversity.1

As inheritors of a settler nation, the extractive mentality of land “usage” is lodged deep within each of us. We still have a long way to go towards valuing the full web of creation for its own sake. One barometer is to look at real estate listings for rural land parcels. The descriptions detail the dominant values we attribute to the land: a hunter’s paradise, timber production for income, or simply not having to deal with neighbors. These can be well and good in their own right, but it is uncommon to see wetlands sought after and preserved because of their rare sedges, or an old field trading hands so that a new biodiversity study could be launched.

As we turn our attention to the small and overlooked neighbors, we see that the glory of creation is not only found in majestic, mountaneous vistas. The world underneath our feet, within us, and in the forgotten fence rows and field corners awaits our exploration and engagement.


preliminary Findings at The Center at Donaldson

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Implication for a Contemporary Leader

By Sister Nkechi Iwuoha, PHJC

Saint Katharina was born in 1820. At the age of 25 she gathered a group of women who committed themselves to not only bringing about positive social change in their town of Dernbach, Germany, but also influenced the faith and spirituality of the people they served. From this simple beginning she founded the congregation of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus of Christ in 1851 at the age of 31. Saint Katharina walked in ways that transcend culture, age, tribe, race, and religion. She wore sturdy shoes to protect her feet as she went about the business of doing good in the name of God — tending to the sick, orphans, widows, and the homeless in her village while supporting their growth in relationship to God.

What has metaphorical significance for a 21st century leader is the worn-out appearance of the shoes in which she walked, evoking strength hidden in weakness; thus, a paradoxical symbol parallel to the vulnerable Jesus on the cross witnessing to the strength of resurrection and life.

Saint Katharina challenges leaders to emulate Jesus’ disposition to be servant as well as leader. She invites leaders who follow in the footsteps of Jesus to walk with a persevering spirit and love that embraces all of God’s creation, beginning with self. She beckons leaders to become the voice of the voiceless, taking a prophetic stance in our world crippled with injustice.

Saint Katharina suggests a spirituality of leadership that embraces listening with compassion at its core. Ministering in leadership with an attentive empathetic ear is a radical alternative to the need to be in control. Listening lies at the heart of relationship. It means openness to the other, respect of their perspective and the feelings that matter to them. In this way, the leader gifts the other with the encouragement to be honest, even if it means making themselves vulnerable. Learning to listen as a leader is therapeutic for the two parties involved in true contemplative dialogue that expresses “I do not necessarily have to agree with what you have said, but I do hear, understand and respect your message.” This type of engagement fosters healthy community in our diverse and polarized world and fosters respect and honest dialogue.

Saint Katharina teaches leaders to let go and become detached when the time comes to empower the next generation to give a new version of vitality to the mission. It is God’s mission and not an individual business. Our purpose is not to aggrandize our ego and status as leaders, Jesus realizing that they were about to make him king, slipped away into the hills by himself (John 6:15). Jesus rode on a donkey used by ordinary people to triumphantly enter Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1). He came unassumingly to rename our world. As Bishop Romero rightly said, “We are prophets of a future not our own.” We are called to plant seeds that one day will grow. I hear Saint Katharina saying “AMEN” to this statement as she addresses the leaders of today.

To be an effective and influential, leaders need to be open to Katharina’s challenge to seek understanding of self. Self-knowledge is critical to servant leadership because it helps us to realize when we are projecting our issues onto another. Leaders are called to rise above controversies, jealousies, petty personal attacks, and ego slips, real or imagined, in order to accomplish anything of worth. The paradox of strength in vulnerability imagined by both the cross of Jesus and the worn footwear of Katharina is a resource for prayer and reflection of servant leaders.

Join me to explore further the “Spirituality of Saint Katharina’s Worn Out Shoes” on October 18–19, 2019 at Lindenwood Retreat & Conference Center.

Visit www.lindenwood.org to register or learn more about the retreat.

Nazareth Home New Director

By Jessica Krupa, Nazareth Home Volunteer Coordinator

Angela Curtis is a Hoosier, born and raised in Gary, Indiana. Angela earned a dual master degree in human resource management and business administration from Keller Graduate School of Management. She also has her master in social work from Indiana University Northwest. Angela brings years of social services as well as child welfare experience to the position. Being a foster parent herself, Angela knows the hardships foster children go through and the obstacles they must overcome. She is pleased and honored to accept this new role as director of Nazareth Home.

Nazareth Home is a 24-hour per day group home for medically compromised babies and children from birth to age six. The home was founded in 1993 by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, to confront the growing problem of abused or abandoned children, with unique and critical medical needs.
Sojourner Truth House (STH) supporters certainly showed their “true colors” when they took steps to end homelessness the morning of Saturday, June 8, at the 20th Anniversary Walk for STH that raised more than $105,000. Funds will support STH clients as they work toward a more stable path in life. The weather was sunny and mild, perfect conditions for the fundraising event. Walkers were able to choose a walk route with color or without. Many walker’s shirts became rainbows as the walkers made their way around the route. Afterward, tours of STH were available, and a Color Celebration Festival was held in Froebel Park, where participants were able to throw their own color around!

The following Friday, June 14, a mini-version of the Walk was held at The Center at Donaldson. The event was just as colorful and the weather just as cooperative. Congratulations to all participants and supporters for a job well done – they really did put the FUN in FUNdraising this year!

Maria Center Senior Independent Living will be the host of a Senior Summit on October 23, The Center at Donaldson. Co-workers and residents are planning an amazing day designed specifically for senior citizens, their family members, and caregivers with the goal of providing educational and awareness sessions, resources, and fun to support and improve the quality of life for all those in Marshall and surrounding counties.

The Senior Summit will be an interactive time to gain insight and ask questions of the guest speakers from the Indiana Attorney General’s Office, the Bowen Center, as well as local and state officials. Participants are invited to come to the sessions of their choice or to stay for the entire day to maximize their opportunity of achieving their own summit, or aspirations and understanding.

Session topics include: Embracing the Positive Power of Active Aging, Becoming Scam Free, Senior Residency Options, Mental Health Awareness & Resources, Laugh & Living, A Gift for the Future, and many more! We plan to provide you a complimentary luncheon complete with a style show by J.C. Penney. Along with the specific topic sessions, there will be time for attendees during the mini breakout sessions to meet with community and educational partners of for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.

The Senior Summit is free and open to the public. Seating is limited and reservations are strongly encouraged.

To RSVP for this event, please contact Becky Ansbach, Resident Manager of Maria Center, at 574-935-1784, by email at ranspach@poorhandmaids.org, or visit The Center at Donaldson’s Facebook page to register online.

Watch for more specific details on the Summit agenda in the coming weeks. Please consider attending the Senior Summit on October 23 and allowing us to motivate, prepare, and propel you to your highest summit!
Despite intermittent rain and thunderclaps, vendors set up under the building’s overhang to share information about their services. Donated backpacks were moved, again and again, to shield valuable back-to-school supplies. Staff dodged raindrops to wipe off tables and chairs, moving them under small tents so seniors were shielded from on and off showers. Sister Margaret Anne Henss, PHJC, prayed for those who were affected by local flooding.

The community came to fellowship with HealthVisions Midwest of East St. Louis (HVESL) and celebrate 15 years of service to seniors and others in need. Director Cassandra Williams invited the community to celebrate HVESL, “the best kept secret in the area.” HVESL shared the day with community leaders, donor representatives, service providers, volunteers, clients, and residents of the area as their way of saying “Welcome and Thank You!”

HVESL received a proclamation, presented by Sarah Joshway, from the East St. Louis Mayor’s office. HVESL honored AgeSmart, represented by Joy Paeth, Marillac Mission Fund, represented by Claire Hundelt, the Lutheran Foundation and the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ for their years of financial support and commitment to serve the poor. These generous organizations fund senior transportation, information and assistance, friendly visits, minor home repairs and the MORE (Ministries Outreach Reaching Everyone) program. MORE provides training and support to churches to encourage them to reach hurting people for God. Sister Margaret Anne Henss, PHJC Provincial Leadership member, offered a prayer of thanksgiving and greetings. Governing Board Chair Adeline Torres greeted attendees and expressed gratitude to the executive director, director, volunteers, seniors and staff of HVESL for their work in the community. HVESL expressed its gratitude to Poor Handmaids for maintaining their commitment to the community. Carol Conner, operations manager and Cassandra Williams concluded the program by presenting a special commemorative plaque to Paula Wills, who now serves as executive director of HealthVisions Midwest. Paula humbly accepted the award by reflecting on her years at St. Mary’s Hospital and receiving the call to continue ministering to the community as the leader of HVESL. She thanked the Poor Handmaids and the board of directors of HealthVisions Midwest for the opportunity to serve the clients of East St. Louis and ended by encouraging attendees: “Whether you have an hour, a day or more, please volunteer and help us serve our clients.”

HealthVisions Midwest was founded in 1998 to meet the needs of the underserved in communities where the Poor Handmaids no longer owned hospitals. HealthVisions is celebrating twenty years of ministry this year. HVESL was founded in 2004 after the sale of St. Mary’s Hospital in East St. Louis. Following in Saint Katharina Kasper’s footsteps, HVESL ministers to the poor and needy with a focus on seniors and the disabled. Together with volunteers, they provide senior transportation to medical and non-medical appointments, telephone reassurance calls and friendly visits. They offer benefit access assistance, helping seniors and persons with disabilities receive assistance with free bus passes, discount license plates, Medicare subsidy programs and referrals to organizations that can help them maintain their independence. And they offer volunteer opportunities to individuals in the area who are willing and able to lend a hand to their neighbors in need.

The day began with jovial references to the Biblical story of “Noah’s Ark” and ended with a group united under one cause, the desire to serve. HealthVisions Midwest of East St. Louis is in the business of serving and looks forward to serving the community for many years to come. You can assist HealthVisions fulfill its mission in three major ways: prayer, donations, and volunteering.

By Sherita Brewer, Development and Communications Manager
Farm Markets are worth it.
The rewards of running HEAL farm markets, Martin and Dwire say. Despite the work, not to mention the heat, Martin and Dwire say their stories is transforming.

During summer months, the duo and their helpers scramble to set up tents, tables, chairs, and cashier stations for weekly pop-up markets. The result is a steady flow of customers who leave with bags of low-cost plums, tomatoes, cabbage, squash, corn, and other fresh produce—often locally grown in northeast Indiana.

Despite the work, not to mention the heat, Martin and Dwire say the rewards of running HEAL Farm Markets are worth it.

**What are HEAL Farm Markets in Allen County?**

Mark Burkholder, Multimedia Coordinator, St. Joseph Community Health Foundation

When Gonzalee Martin and Laura Dwire joined forces in 2014, neither one imagined the impact that an urban garden and a handful of farm markets would have on Allen County, in northeast Indiana. But today, five years later, their efforts are enabling more than 1,200 families to put nutritious food on their dinner tables and live healthier lives.

Martin and Dwire oversee HEAL Farm Markets, a venture co-sponsored by the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and Parkview Health.

During summer months, the duo and their helpers scramble to set up tents, tables, chairs, and cashier stations for weekly pop-up markets. The result is a steady flow of customers who leave with bags of low-cost plums, tomatoes, cabbage, squash, corn, and other fresh produce—often locally grown in northeast Indiana.

About 20 years ago, Martin started GATE (Growth in Agriculture Through Education), a program that exposes youth to the business side of farming.

GATE teens now help pick crops at Martin’s urban garden on Slataper Street. Then they sell the vegetables and fruits providing the majority of the produce at HEAL markets near McCormick Place Apartments, Parkview Health Greenhouse, and Trinity English Lutheran Church. Other farmers partner with Martin and HEAL at these markets and at the South Side Market.

“HEAL has kept my mission alive to educate youth about farming and to serve the community through agriculture,” Martin says.

The Northeast Indiana Farmers Market Guide lists about two dozen farm markets and farm stands. But HEAL’s four locations stand apart, largely due to their low prices and special “double-up” program.

This program allows HEAL to maximize the value of purchases for people in the federal government’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and those using produce vouchers issued through the state’s Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program or Aging and In-Home Services.

Research shows that this economic boost is necessary to give more people access to nutritious food.

A Vulnerable Populations Study in 2018 revealed that 110,000 people, roughly one-third of Allen County’s population, live in food deserts. The research was commissioned by the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and conducted by Purdue University Fort Wayne’s Community Research Institute. The study detailed the extent of economic and transportation barriers that keep people from eating healthy.

Some patrons have also expressed their gratitude.

“Shopping at your market and getting double the voucher has made a big impact on my life,” wrote Meredith Ashe, a senior on a fixed income, in a note. “There wasn’t any money this month for fresh fruit and vegetables. Thanks to your program, I now have them.”

And consumers aren’t the only ones who benefit from HEAL markets. Jack and Ann DeGrandchamp are among the farmers who participate in HEAL’s double-up system, selling their produce at the South Side Market. While the location is not a weekly pop-up, HEAL cashiers manage the double-up system there, too, allowing customers to walk away with twice as much food, while the matching program pays farmers for the added produce.

“It seems like a win-win situation for everybody,” Jack says. “We can plant more. We can bring more. We can sell more.”

Dwire steers HEAL’s partnership with area farmers. She came aboard after successfully working on other community projects with the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation.

“I was hesitant at first,” she says. “I grew up in the city and had very little knowledge of agriculture.”

Now Dwire is a certified Market Master, a member of the Food Council of Northeast Indiana, and a member of the Community Harvest Food Bank AG Committee. The experience has taught her much.

“I knew how to feed people after seven years on the board for Community Harvest,” she says. “But I didn’t know how to nurture people by addressing barriers and giving access to healthy foods. Now, I have that opportunity every day.”
Handel’s Messiah

November 16
Ancilla Domini Chapel
The Center at Donaldson
All are welcomed.
Free-will donations accepted.
Reception to follow.

New this year!
Dinner and overnight accommodations packages available. Limited seating for dinner. More information available at poorhandmaids.org/HandelsMessiah

Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ and the Mary Lou McCarthy-Artz Concert Series present

The Center at Donaldson is sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.