On Being a Sister

Growing up across the street from a convent in Kansas City, Missouri, Roberta Furey always knew she was destined to become a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth. So it was no surprise to anyone that just two months after graduating from high school in the spring of 1953, she entered the community as a postulant. She was 17 years old.

Sister Roberta’s first assignment to teach third and fourth grade at Topeka Assumption School in Topeka, Kansas came two years later. She created lesson plans, taught her students the “Three Rs,” and worked evenings grading homework. “I was a little wet behind the ears, but there were plenty of other teachers who helped me,” she said.

In 1958, Sister Roberta was assigned to teach first, second, and third grade at Mount Saint Vincent Home in Denver, Colorado. She quickly came to consider Denver her home. She subsequently spent several years at an orphanage in Helena, Montana, but returned to Denver in 1965. “I was so happy to come back,” she said. Collectively, over three separate missions, Sister Roberta has served at Mount Saint Vincent for more than 46 years.

Like any mother would, Sister Roberta taught her young charges how to tie their shoes, ride a bike, wash their clothes, and even prepare a simple meal. “I tried to teach them skills they would need later in life,” she said.

Continued on page 4

A Little Monkey Business

As one would imagine, some funny situations took place over the years that Sister Roberta has been at Mount Saint Vincent. Perhaps one of the funniest stories involved an unusual donation. Sister Jean was being trained to manage the front desk. Sister Frances instructed her to never refuse a donation because that was Mount Saint Vincent’s policy. “The thought was if we couldn’t use whatever was being donated, we’d find someone who could,” Sister Roberta said.

One day, a man brought in a live monkey in a brass cage. He placed the cage on the desk and said he wanted to donate it to the orphanage.

“Doing as she was instructed, Sister Jean thanked the man and accepted his donation,” Sister Roberta said. “I’m pretty sure that was when our donation acceptance policy was slightly revised.”
A Letter from the Executive Director

Since being appointed executive director in November of 2015, the words of Sister Pat Johannsen, a former supervisor, resonate with me as never before. I remember that Sunday afternoon in the late 80s as if it were yesterday.

She explained to me how vitally important it is for lay people to help the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth carry on their mission at Mount Saint Vincent. It inspired me because I realized I was part of something much larger than myself — helping children and families who have experienced significant trauma make their lives better.

Past executive directors — including Sister Daniel Stefani, Sister Victoria Perkins, Dallas Rychner, and Sister Amy Willcott — strengthened our longstanding tradition of meeting the needs of the time by making courageous decisions. I can now see how staying true to the mission was foremost in mind when Sister Daniel made the move from orphanage to residential treatment center, and when Sister Amy declared that we would create a foster care program.

It is now up to me to carry the torch, ensuring that the vision of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth continues to lead us through ever-changing times. That focus remains paramount as we broaden our continuum of care by opening a short-term stabilization unit and expanding our robust training and consultation program.

Through your support of Mount Saint Vincent, you, too, are helping the Sisters of Charity fulfill their mission. Together, we are making a significant difference in people’s lives. Now and in the future, the spirit of the Sisters of Charity and their mission to serve children and families in need will keep us on our steadfast path as we move confidently forward.

Gratefully yours,

Kirk Ward, LCSW

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With his hands on his hips, Recreation Therapist Rob Johnson surveyed the room. It was a jumble of mismatched furniture, storage boxes, and tables piled with used household items. Most people would see an unorganized mess. Rob saw a possibility. His vision of creating a club house was about to become a reality.

Today, the Aspen Club House is an inviting and welcoming space with plenty of activities to choose from. The clubhouse features:

- An arcade-like basketball game with two hoops
- A wall with magnetic poetry to cultivate literacy and foster creativity
- An Xbox One with Kinect, encouraging children to move their bodies
- A handmade, three-foot-tall dollhouse fosters unstructured, imaginative play
- A Nintendo Wii outfitted with Rockband and other active games
- A “store” where tickets can be redeemed for healthy snacks and drinks
- A full-sized foosball table to develop gross motor skills
- An adjacent kitchen where children learn cooking skills

Reverse Engineering
A STEM-based activity the children especially enjoy is reverse engineering. It involves disassembling a manmade device in order to figure out how it works.

Recently, Rob showed three children how to remove the housing of a DVD player. None of them had ever used a screwdriver before. Learning the difference between a flathead and a Phillips is a practical skill they will need later in life. “They were fascinated to see the gears and LED lights when the DVD tray slid out,” Rob said. He pauses. “Actually, I was pretty fascinated myself,” he admits.

What’s next on the agenda for club members? “I was thinking of getting together with [Music Therapist] Chris Wojdak and hosting a Wii Rock Band play-off,” Rob said. “I think the kids would love it.”

Supporting Ethan
When Ethan first arrived at Mount Saint Vincent, it was immediately apparent that years of chronic neglect had taken its toll on him. The shy six-year-old tested at the developmental level of an 18-month-old.

Like any toddler that age, he explores his environment by walking around, touching different surfaces and putting objects he finds into his mouth. The cottage and teaching staff must monitor him closely, gently redirecting him when his attention wanders.

It was a surprise, then, to see Ethan’s eyes light up when he saw the elaborate doll house in the Aspen Club House. He walked directly to the doll house, picked up two dolls, and began playing. He played quietly by himself for 20 minutes. That may not seem remarkable until one considers Ethan’s average attention span. That length of time is typically just 45 seconds.

“If you think about a child who is developmentally two years of age, and he’s trying to get to six, he needs to make up for that lost time,” Rob said. “Ethan is rapidly going through many stages of development here at Mount Saint Vincent. It’s nothing short of amazing to witness.”
In the summer of 1983, she hired a young 22-year-old to work as a lifeguard at the pool. More than 30 years later, Kirk Ward would be named executive director of Mount Saint Vincent. “She ran a tight ship,” Kirk recalls. “But it was apparent to everyone that she truly cared about the staff and children.”

Throughout her 46 years at Mount Saint Vincent, Sister Roberta has witnessed laughter, tears, triumphs and heartache. Through it all, she has upheld the Sister’s mission of serving children in need.

Mount Saint Vincent Board member Sue Jackson believes that Sister Roberta is deserving of all the accolades one can bestow upon her. “I’ve known Roberta for more than 12 years now, and I’m here to say, she is like no other,” Jackson said. “She is so kind and so thoughtful. I truly believe that she represents the very heart of Mount Saint Vincent.”

Father John Costanzo, who has known Sister Roberta for nearly 30 years, wholeheartedly agrees. “She has such a sense of fun,” he said. “She makes you realize that being a Sister is a joyful thing.” But he says it’s her unwavering devotion that truly sets her apart. “Every single day, she prays for the children,” he said. “Her dedication to the mission of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth is steadfast.”

In early 2016, Mount Saint Vincent opened a foster care program to serve the Denver area, a decision that aligns with the agency’s mission to serve the needs of children. The new program offers a wide array of services, including 24/7 family support and guidance, training opportunities, respite care, a monthly support group, and more.

There is an ongoing need for foster care homes that provide safe, family-like settings. “The need for good foster homes is astronomical,” said Director of Foster Care Melissa Maile, MSW. “When you look at the data of how many Colorado kids are in out-of-home care and how many foster homes there are, it’s not even close to being equal.”

Indeed, the numbers are staggering. According to the Colorado Department of Human Services, there were 5,327 children in out-of-home placements at the end of the 2015 fiscal year. Of those, there were foster homes available for only 3,534 children.

Melissa urges anyone who has ever considered becoming a foster parent or respite care provider to attend one of Mount Saint Vincent’s monthly information nights. Her experienced staff, as well as one or more foster parents, will be on hand to provide information and answer any questions.

For information night details, call Melissa at 303-458-7220, or email mmaile@msvhome.org.
Unique Therapies for Special Kids

Because of persistent past abuse or neglect, the children in treatment at Mount Saint Vincent suffer from severe emotional and behavioral challenges, making it difficult for them to function in a family setting.

The average child — typically male — has been in multiple out-of-home placements before arriving here. He suffers from depression and has low self-esteem. He believes that he is responsible for the abuse or neglect he endured and that he deserved it. He lacks relational abilities and self-control. Physically, he has poor motor skills, multiple diagnoses, and developmental delays. He is, on average, just nine years old.

They learn to value, appreciate, and respect people — including themselves.

We have found that traditional “talk” therapies, where a child discusses his or her thoughts and feelings with a trained therapist, are only moderately effective in the treatment of traumatized children. It can be extremely difficult for a young child to verbally express the details of his or her abuse or neglect. It is for this reason that we employ alternative therapies such as play, dance/movement, animal-assisted, art, and music. These alternative therapies offer a more indirect and gentle — yet highly effective — therapeutic experience with positive outcomes.

All the modalities mentioned above fall under the overarching umbrella of the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics, or NMT. NMT offers a developmentally sensitive approach to trauma treatment. It expands on innate human instincts and skills, including rhythmic and relational activities like rocking, soothing, and praising children.

These actions are simple to perform, but have profound impacts on brain development.

Not only does the work being done at Mount Saint Vincent help heal children, it benefits the broader community by helping break the cycle of child abuse and neglect.

As children learn to control their behaviors and come to understand their self-worth, they are less likely to grow up to continue the cycle. Instead, they learn to value, appreciate, and respect people — including themselves. And that is something we wish for all children.

Golf Tournament Raises $50,000

Thanks to everyone who participated in the 10th Annual Play a Round for Kids charity golf tournament. The event, held June 27, 2016 at the Omni Interlocken Golf Club in Broomfield, Colorado, raised more than $50,000 for the care of the children. CoBank was the title sponsor.

Mark your calendars for next year’s tournament, to be held at the Omni Interlocken on Monday, June 19, 2017. See you there! 🎉
Thank You to Our 2015 Donors!*  
We Appreciate Your Support.

Our mission at Mount Saint Vincent is to provide clinical treatment and loving care for children suffering from the effects of trauma, mental illness, abuse, or neglect. But this important work would not be possible without the incredible generosity of our faithful donors. Through their selfless giving, they help heal young children who are in desperate need of love and support. The 900-plus individuals and organizations listed here donated $100 or more in 2015 to help our children.

Our hearts are full of gratitude and we are grateful beyond words. Thank you. We are truly blessed.

*Cash and in-kind contributions of $100 and above received in 2015.
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*Cash and in-kind contributions of $100 and above received in 2015."
### Planning on Giving

Julie knows a thing or two about planning. She’s an attorney who specializes in estate planning, estate administration, and trust administration, so when it comes to planned giving, she’s an expert.

“If someone is making an estate plan and wants to leave money to a charity, one of the best ways to do that is through an IRA or other retirement vehicle,” Julie said. The reason is, if an IRA is bequeathed to an individual, that person will be required to pay taxes on the funds as the money is withdrawn. A charity, on the other hand, is tax-exempt, so it could use the full value of the funds to advance its mission.

Another great option pertains to those with what’s called a taxable estate. Loved ones who inherit an amount over a certain threshold are taxed at a rate of 40 percent. Julie asked, “Wouldn’t you rather that your children not pay that tax and have all the money that’s saved go to charity? As a nonprofit, the charity is not required to pay that tax.”

Julie not only offers advice on charitable giving, she walks the walk. She named Mount Saint Vincent as the beneficiary of one of her IRAs. Julie grew up in a household with seven children; she has one biological brother and the rest of her siblings were adopted by her mother. “My mother impressed upon us how fortunate and blessed we were, and how important it is to give back,” she said.

In thinking about her own two children, who are now grown, Julie saw an opportunity to make an impact. “My children had an amazing start to their life. They had parents who loved them, they grew up in a stable home, and they got to go to college,” she said. “I feel like the kids at Mount Saint Vincent don’t necessarily have that same opportunity.”

Julie hopes her children will carry on the family tradition of charitable giving. Given that their mother sets such a fine example, the chances of that happening seem high indeed.

For information on including Mount Saint Vincent in your estate plan, contact Tonya Kelly at 303-458-7220 ext. 217, or email her at tkelly@msvhome.org.

“My mother impressed upon us how fortunate and blessed we were, and how important it is to give back.”

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### Pass Your Values on to the Future

**ESTABLISH A LEGACY THAT LIVES ON FOREVER**

Help ensure that children suffering from the effects of abuse or neglect receive the clinical treatment and loving care they deserve — both today and in the future. Demonstrate your desire for a more compassionate world, and make a legacy gift commitment and join the Sister LaVonne Legacy Society.

Learn more about planned giving options and the benefits of joining the society by visiting MSVhome.org/planned-giving, or contact Tonya Kelly at tkelly@msvhome.org, or by phone at 303-458-7220, ext. 217.
V Is for Volunteer

Like many nonprofits, Mount Saint Vincent relies on volunteers to assist with numerous projects all around the agency. Every year, a small army of 1,000-plus people volunteer their time here. They host barbeques, pull weeds, repair bikes, wrap gifts, rake leaves, play with the children, and much more.

Among the dozens of amazing people, there are a handful who demonstrate steadfast commitment to Mount Saint Vincent. Week in and week out, year after year, their dedication to serve children in need deserves special recognition.

Every Monday and Tuesday that school is in session, Roger can be found in Room 6. He quietly identifies a student needing attention, and sits alongside that child throughout the day. “Roger’s ability to provide one-on-one time with students is absolutely invaluable,” said Special Education Teacher Myra Marcus. “He also claims to be the world’s best pencil-sharpeners.”

Judy and Juanita are the epitome of a tag team, stopping in on Wednesday mornings to assist in the development department. The J’s are up for whatever task is put before them, from organizing the children’s clothing closet to stuffing envelopes to wrapping gifts. “We basically do all the odd jobs that nobody else wants to do,” quipped Judy.

Diana organizes the 2,500 books in the school library and even finds time to update the seasonal selections rack every Wednesday. The school staff appreciates her work in organizing the teacher resource section. “She is one incredible woman,” said Educational Mental Health Worker II Patti Chrisco. “She works so hard and is always kind and helpful to the children and staff.”

Each Thursday evening, Linda and Don help the children in the Grays Peak cottage get ready for bed. They read bedtime stories, calm them down, and spray “monster repellant” under beds as needed.

John volunteers nearly every weekday, arriving at 5:30 am to make coffee for the staff. He also helps Sister Roberta with a variety of tasks, including hanging up seasonal decorations around the main administration building for the children and staff to enjoy.

Former resident Ray is a man of many talents, and he loves to volunteer his services here. A master woodworker, Ray has refinished many of the antique stair railings, doors and windows. He also wields a fierce paintbrush.

Leslie loves to bake, and the children in the cottages are more than happy to consume the treats she creates for them. From brownies and cookies to mouthwatering cakes, every Tuesday and Thursday the smell of homemade baked goods comes wafting out of the kitchen. Yum!

These individuals are just a few of the hundreds of wonderful volunteers who help keep Mount Saint Vincent humming along. Together, the volunteers and Mount Saint Vincent are able to accomplish our common goal: to serve children facing the challenges of trauma, mental illness, abuse and neglect.❤️

Mount Saint Vincent is now on social media!

Connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram and join in the conversation.

Facebook: MSVhome
Twitter: @MtSaintVincent
Instagram: mtsaintvincent
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Much More than Medicine

Dr. Ben Green listens intently as a member of the clinical team describes seven-year-old David’s case. Years of physical and emotional abuse have made David prone to confusion and uncontrollable behaviors. After reading through David’s monthly summary report and listening to the team’s remarks, Dr. Green thoughtfully considers all the information before making his recommendation.

After obtaining a degree in psychology from Yale University, Dr. Green attended Emory Medical School in Atlanta. He chose to complete his residency in Colorado.

His area of expertise is child psychiatry, and he held several noteworthy positions throughout the state, including 10 years as medical director of the inpatient child unit at Children’s Hospital Colorado.

Early in his career, he began working for Mount Saint Vincent. One day per week, Dr. Green provides medication management, mentoring, encouragement, and guidance to the staff. He has provided these services — at a greatly reduced cost — for 30 years.

“When I first started working here, I wanted to be like him,” said Mount Saint Vincent Executive Director Kirk Ward. “I wanted to have that vast knowledge. Dr. Green gave me a lot to think about in terms of how to therapeutically intervene with children in a residential setting.”

Staff Nurse Cathi Sommer says that Dr. Green is completely devoted to the children and the mission of Mount Saint Vincent. “He provides medication management, and he does it extremely well,” she said. “But even more impressive is the fact that he helps the other members of the team by discussing various diagnoses or suggesting different therapeutic approaches.”

“I love being in a place like Mount Saint Vincent that believes in the importance of relationships,” he said. “We treat the whole child here, which is why I have stayed here so long. It’s a thrill to work here.”

Now, after serving the children of Mount Saint Vincent since 1985, Dr. Green plans to retire in a few months.

Dr. Green has worked in six different psychiatric hospitals and seen numerous treatment environments. He feels that there is something distinctive about Mount Saint Vincent. “From the leadership to the clinicians to the kitchen staff — everyone here supports that broader vision of what’s healthy for kids and families,” he said. “It’s a unique and wonderful place.”

Thank you for your 30 years of service, Dr. Green. On behalf of the children and staff, we wish you all the best.

Mark Your Calendars for Colorado Gives Day!

Colorado Gives Day is an initiative to increase philanthropic online giving in Colorado. The program was developed in 2010 by Community First Foundation, with financial support from FirstBank. This year’s event takes place on December 6, 2016.

If you are planning to participate in Colorado Gives Day, please consider making a donation to Mount Saint Vincent. As always, we thank you for your support.

Mount Saint Vincent | 303-458-7220 | MSVhome.org
Our Dining Out for Kids restaurant day is a fun way to help the children receiving treatment at Mount Saint Vincent. Dine out at any of the participating restaurants, and they will donate a percentage of the day’s sales to Mount Saint Vincent! Visit MSVhome.org for details.

Thursday, September 22, 2016
Various locations throughout the Denver metro area

Our Pledge Breakfast is a great way to learn about the many programs offered at Mount Saint Vincent and how we impact the children in our care. Our guest speaker, a former resident, will recount how Mount Saint Vincent changed his life. A complimentary breakfast will be served.

Tuesday, October 18, 2016
PPA Event Center
2105 Decatur St.
Denver, CO 80211

Mount Saint Vincent’s Silver Bell Ball is the unofficial kick-off to the holiday season. Join us for a delicious dinner, a silent auction, entertainment, and dancing. Fabulous vacations, sports memorabilia, and one-of-a-kind experiences will be sold during the live auction. Join us!

Friday, November 17, 2017
Grand Hyatt Denver
1750 Welton Street
Denver, CO 80202

How You Can Help Our Special Children

You can help make a difference in a child’s life. Here’s how:

❤️ Make a donation.
While we accept donations of many types, our most urgent need is for cash donations. These funds help pay for therapy sessions, food, clothing, and more. You may donate online at MSVhome.org.

❤️ Volunteer your time.
There are many opportunities available, from reading to the kids to helping in a classroom. For information on volunteering, call Meaghan Peters at 303-964-1122.

❤️ Give clothing or supplies.
Donations of clothing for children aged 5 to 12 are always appreciated (new only, please). View our wish list at MSVhome.org.

Thank you for your generous support!