



Dear Friends

Storytelling is used as a bridge for knowledge and understanding allowing the values of “self” and “community” to connect and be learned as a whole.

We are so familiar with the words **story** and **story-telling**. Over the summer, we told the “story” of MMM over and over in parishes around the country. So much of the richness of any group or family is contained in the stories told about how people’s lives connected and influenced one another over time. And we hope, because the Gospel story is the one that motivates us, that our connections bring healing, life, and hope to others. Each country and each place within that country where MMM has lived and worked contains so many stories of encounters, events, and the evolution of the MMM Mission. As our Constitutions tell us “You are called to an extraordinary adventure” (2.3 MMM Constitutions). Certainly the MMM presence in Appalachia has been an adventure for the last 40 years.

The heart of our presence is **Sister Bernadette Kenny MMM** who has been in Appalachia since our beginning there. Other MMM’s have come and gone, but Sister Bernie has been a constant presence among those good people. We celebrate that presence in this newsletter. Each year as I write this letter, RAM (Rural Area Medical) has just completed their service to the people of Wise and Dickenson counties in southwest Appalachia. Again, this year it was a wonderful experience for the volunteers as well as those receiving services.

We also celebrate **Sister Kay Lawlor MMM** whose story was told in the Tufts Dental Medicine Spring 2018 Issue. Titled “Compassion on two Continents” it told Kay’s “story” of her journey as a young dentist in Tanzania followed by her years of leadership in the Congregation and then pioneering work during the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Uganda. Today her

present ministry at Bakita House is journeying with woman who have been trafficked. Kay’s story is an inspiration.

We also celebrate **Sister Justina Odunukwe MMM** who is working with 40 Volunteers in Lagos and Benin City in Edo State, Nigeria. They organize seminars/ workshops and carry out public enlightenment /advocacy. Edo State is the hub of Human Trafficking in Nigeria. Justina says “I am indeed most grateful for support from our American partners for my ministry in human trafficking. It is not easy to wipe out this crime totally because the root cause has not been addressed, namely poverty. Many young people are jobless and many want to migrate overseas looking for greener pastures. Traffickers prey on young people by promising them job overseas. Many are forced into prostitution, domestic servitude and some for organ harvesting. “

We celebrate **Sister Kathie Shea MMM** who is part of a group of Sisters writing in a series called “**The Life**” for **Global Sisters Report**. (www.globalsistersreport.org) I encourage you to take a look at the site...wonderful stories of Sisters working around the world.

Finally we celebrate each of you and your families. Our journeys and story-telling over the summer remind us on a daily basis of how important you are to the Congregation and how amazing and wonderful it is that you choose to journey with us. We are deeply grateful!



Sister Joanne

Sister Joanne Bierl MMM
Development Director

Cover Image:
40 years of MMM in
Appalachia...so many
“stories” to share of rich
and blessed human
encounters

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MMM in Appalachia

MMM life and ministry in the United States has been centered in Clinchco in Wise County in Southwest Virginia - Heart of Appalachia.



This is Appalachia's best-kept secret: Far from being a “strange land with peculiar people,” the mountains and hills have been a stage for some of the most quintessential and daring American experiences of innovation, rebellion, and social change. My whole thesis is that you can't understand America until you understand Appalachia. (*Jeff Biggers, The United States of Appalachia*)

From June 1978 until the present, “Clinchco is a mission which, in the words of the Sisters there, is “a real network that weaves within the church, outside the church, and across denominations. The healing that bubbles out of all of this is quite person-oriented and network-oriented” (*History of MMM USA-Sr. Isabelle Smyth MMM*)

MMM came to the Appalachian Mountains at the request of the Richmond Catholic Diocese. Sister Bernie started the program when she began dispensing health care and a kind touch out of her Volkswagen Beetle. In 1980, the



Sister Bernie Kenny, MMM and her nephew, Fr. Todd Kenny, SJ celebrating 40 years in Clinchco.

Health Wagon was founded by Sr. Bernie Kenny. St. Mary's Hospital provided a valuable partnership and sponsored the program for over twenty-five years. Sr. Bernie turned over the reins of the organization in December 2005 to Teresa Gardner who has been with The Health

Wagon for over eighteen years. The Health Wagon continues striving to meet the unique challenges of health care delivery to the medically underserved and indigent in poverty-stricken areas of rural Appalachia

Sister Bernie also initiated the invitation to the Remote Area Medical project (RAM) coming to the region, an annual three-day open air medical clinic drawing people from the surrounding counties. We have written about RAM often in these newsletters. Sister Bernie continues to use her knowledge of the area, her friendships, and her skills as nurse-practitioner and massage therapist to open up spaces for healing to take place among the Appalachian people.

Sister Bernie says “It's not about pills. In most health care the emotional part is ignored. Health care is social; it's a way of identifying what's inside a person.”

Our foundress, Marie Martin, whom Sister Bernie knew personally, emphasized respect for persons. Influenced by that belief and by her own family upbringing in the Boston area, Bernie brought that understanding to her ministry in Tanzania, Ethiopia and now to Appalachia. Over the years Sister Bernie's family, our MMM family and our Associates have been engaged in life in Appalachia in various ways.



Health Wagon Executive Director Teresa Tyson, Sr. Bernie, RAM founder Stan Brock, and Pulmonologist Dr. Joseph Smiddy present Sr. Bernie with a gift and plaque for 40 years service to the people of Appalachia.



Time out at the BBQ in Pound, Virginia. From left, Carolyn Pritchard (Indiana) AMMM Pat Adam (Massachusetts), Roberta Spencer (Indiana), Sr. Bernie



Waiting in line for medical care.



Patients receiving dental care.



RAM founder Stan Brock, left, and Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam being interviewed.



Volunteers sorting donated eyeglasses at RAM.



Medical Shed Volunteers, Roberta Spencer, and AMMM Pat Adam.

Sister Bernie says “Showing respect for others is important when providing care. Understanding what care means to individuals in a community is essential because we must demonstrate caring in ways that others can receive it. Caring can be manifested in various ways. How is caring demonstrated among residents in Central Appalachia? How do you experience feeling cared for? How do you care for others?”

Sr. Bernie is co-authoring a book with Tauna Gulley, a nursing instructor for the University of Virginia in Wise VA, that explores the concept of care and caring among residents in central Appalachia. The book explores

what health care means in the families and culture of Appalachia. The interviews begin with the question, “Can you recall when you really felt cared for?”

We will certainly share with you details of the publication of the book and, if you would like, how to obtain a copy when it comes out. For all of us, Sister Bernie’s presence in Appalachia for these 40 years is a living example of what our MMM Constitutions call forth from within each of us:

“Work with all people of good will. Join resources with them, especially in the field of health, so as to bring about a world of justice and peace where true human development is fostered and human dignity and rights, are respected. (*MMM Constitutions 9.10*)

Storytelling - a Bridge to Understanding.



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BEQUESTS - Gifts that keep on Giving

Your will ensures that those you love and the institutions you care about receive a portion of your estate when you are gone. Please consider the MMM's as you prepare your will. If you already have a will, contact your attorney about adding a codicil (amendment). The Medical Missionaries of Mary, Inc. (legal name) is a tax exempt entity in accordance with section 501(c) (3) of the IRS code.

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In our previous newsletter I had given thanks to the Conrad N. Hilton Fund for Sisters who have partnered with MMM in a variety of projects and countries. We would like to make a correction as we used the wrong Logo for this wonderful group and neglected to mention that though there is a connection with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the Fund for Sisters is a separate organization. Again do take a look at their web-site. It is full of wonderful stories of the lives and work being done by Sisters all over the world today www.hiltonfundforsisters.org

