



That all may  
know the Savior

Fall 2023

# SISTERS OF THE DIVINE SAVIOR

## Salvatorian News

### Walk with Us

Whenever I watch the news or read the paper, I am constantly reminded of our world's need for kindness. More clothes donated to homeless shelters. Gifts given to children in foster care. Doors held for the person behind you. Litter picked up in the park. Random calls to friends you haven't spoken to in a while. Thank you notes, a smile, unexpected compliments. I guarantee you, if you act with kindness today, you'll inspire someone to choose kindness tomorrow.

It is my hope that this newsletter will inspire you to share kindness with the people around you. I invite you to fall into heartwarming stories about Sister Patrice Colletti's service dog, the work of our Polish sisters with Ukrainian refugees, and the deep faith of our **2023 Woman of Faith**, Ashley Thomas. We look forward to honoring Ashley at our **Award Presentation & Reception** on September 21. Turn to Page 2 to read about how Ashley's belief in the inherent goodness of people inspires her work at Hope Street Ministry in Milwaukee.

My fellow Salvatorian Sisters and I are dedicated to living out our mission to make known the goodness and kindness of Jesus. Please walk with us through your prayers as we build peace and bridge differences by fostering an awareness of a loving God.



Thankfully,

*S. Jean Schafer SDS*

Sister Jean Schafer, SDS

**Our mission is to make known the goodness and kindness of Jesus and to foster an awareness of a loving God...**

### Serving Others with a Service Dog



**In training, Koda learns how to assist Sr. Patrice as a hearing and physical mobility dog.**

Anytime Sister Patrice Colletti, SDS shares about her elementary class at Tiospa Zina Tribal School in Sisseton, South Dakota, her eyes light up. Clearly, educating the next generation is a ministry she's proud of and one she would like to carry out for as long as possible. However, as an individual with more than one disability, it's not always easy for Sr. Patrice to navigate a world designed for able-bodied people. That's where Koda, the two-year-old service dog-in-training, comes in.

As is typical in the modern age, Koda and Sr. Patrice connected via social media. His former owner, who by the grace of God lived only three hours away from Sr. Patrice, was no longer able to continue his training due to medical needs. Koda only had the beginnings of basic training, but Sr. Patrice felt confident in her experience training service dogs. She had a hand in training her first hearing dog, Tiamo, who served by her side for 13 years.

Koda will also receive the training required of a hearing dog. Sr. Patrice is deaf and will rely on the golden doodle to signal her on specific sounds. "He will be trained to awaken me if there is a fire and lead me to the exit door," she says. "He also will respond to tornado sirens, door knocks/bells, name calls, and police/ambulance siren sounds while I'm driving." Koda's training could be the difference between life or death for Sr. Patrice.

# 2023 Woman of Faith

cultivates hope for those in need of housing, healing, and holiness

Sister Jean Schafer, SDS first witnessed the deep and remarkable faith life of **Ashley Thomas** at a panel on homelessness at St. Pius X Catholic Parish. As a result of hearing Ashley share stories about people struggling to overcome adversity and injustice in Milwaukee, Sr. Jean says, “I could feel her authenticity, passion, goodness, humor, and resilience.” By the end of the panel, Sr. Jean knew Ashley would make an outstanding nominee for our **2023 Woman of Faith Award**.

Ashley is the Executive Director of Hope Street Ministry, “the **Greenhouse for People** on 26th and Capitol” in Milwaukee. Rooted in Christ, Ashley and her dedicated staff and board cultivate hope for broken men, women, and children in need of a safe environment to heal from toxic living situations, their personal choices, or drug and alcohol abuse. Pastor Darrell Hines, II, the organization’s board President, remarks, “Ashley sets a tone of compassion and grace while providing the residents and alumni of Hope Street with a role model for achievement and accountability.”

Though Ashley exhibits the qualities of a natural born leader, she did not step into a leadership role until college. She attended UW-Madison on a full athletic scholarship for basketball. Michelle Wille,

the Executive Assistant at Hope Street, says Ashley has always been honest about the struggles of her faith journey during school. “She had a hard time seeing herself as anything other than a basketball player. Ultimately, Ashley shared that discovering her true identity as a child of God helped her process some of the toughest transitions in her life.” With time, Ashley grew from her struggles and now leads by example and with confidence. “We follow Ashley’s lead. She is a humble leader. She is bold and strong, but always has time to slow down and listen. She treats her

employees with respect and never fails to remind us how valuable we are to her and the wellbeing of the organization,” Michelle explains.



*“Men, women, and children come to the greenhouse for people exactly as they are. They are accepted and loved and given an opportunity to choose a different path.”*

Ashley is determined to create spaces where people – student athletes, Hope Street residents and staff, and members of the Milwaukee community – can explore and live an authentic and vulnerable Christ-centered life.

Last year, Hope Street opened Shechem, a community center seven years in the making. According to Pastor Darrell, Ashley was key to the achievement of Shechem. “She led fundraising efforts that include running a marathon to raise pledged dollars, oversaw the construction of the building, and set the parameters for the programming that occurs in the facility.”

In the Bible, Shechem

is a town in ancient Palestine where Jesus rested; whereas in Milwaukee’s

53206 neighborhood, it’s a way to reduce unemployment, incarceration, and substance abuse, improve physical and mental health, increase high school and college graduation rates, and create community.

The 53206 ZIP code has the highest rate of incarceration in the United States. “The message of Hope Street and its affiliates opposes the depressing and racist labels this neighborhood is often given,” remarks Sr. Jean. “People flourish and empower one another to grow. The staff at Hope Street invite the problems in and cultivate hope by living out the ministry of Jesus on the north side of Milwaukee.” Ashley’s vision for Hope Street is to extend the grace and love of Jesus to all people, no matter their life circumstances.

While Ashley is more than the characteristics her acquaintances, colleagues, and friends ascribe to her, Pastor Darrell describes seven reasons why he believes Ashley Thomas is wholeheartedly a Woman of Faith.

*“Competence in running Hope Street Ministry.”*

*“Vision for the people of Milwaukee, particularly those who need healing support.”*

*“Wisdom in dealing with residents, volunteers, and community leaders.”*

*“Transparency and willingness to invest in others’ lives, even when the process may be messy and emotionally costly.”*

*“Boundless energy in both her work and in pursuing her own continuing education.”*

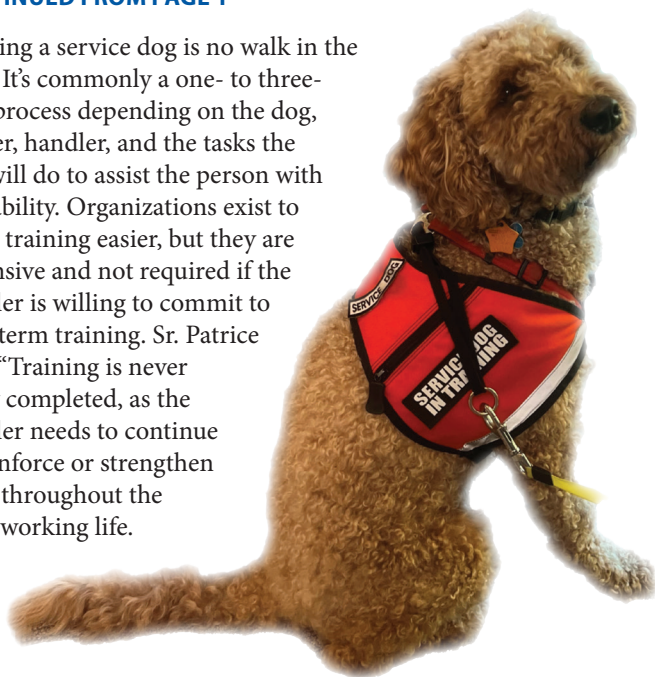
*“Ability to connect with people irrespective of socioeconomic and racial differences.”*

*“Grace and empathy that are beyond her 32 years.”*

Learn more at [hopestreetministry.org](https://hopestreetministry.org) ●

## SERVING OTHERS WITH A SERVICE DOG CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Training a service dog is no walk in the park. It's commonly a one- to three-year process depending on the dog, trainer, handler, and the tasks the dog will do to assist the person with a disability. Organizations exist to make training easier, but they are expensive and not required if the handler is willing to commit to long-term training. Sr. Patrice says, "Training is never really completed, as the handler needs to continue to reinforce or strengthen skills throughout the dog's working life."



A 'good' behavior must come naturally and then continue to be enforced." It's important to keep in mind that service dogs have bad days too. Nobody is perfect, not even a well-trained service dog.

Some dog breeds have a history of qualities that make them best suited for lives as service dogs. Golden doodles like Koda are intelligent, eager to learn, and, most of all, friendly. In fact, "Koda" in the Dakota language means "friend" or "buddy." Sr. Patrice says, "A friend, who is also a tribal elder, suggested the name, given Koda's propensity for making friends of everyone he meets." The name also honors the teaching she does on the Lake Traverse Reservation at a tribal school of the Sissetowan-Wahpetowan Oyate.

At school, Koda is best friends with the entire elementary – about 270 children plus the faculty and staff. Although he is a hearing and mobility dog, he also serves – unexpectedly – as an emotional support animal to Sr. Patrice's classroom. His presence helps calm her students with autism, trauma, and behavioral and learning disorders. "He knows how to be 'silly' and make us laugh. The students have helped me with training, which has helped them learn patience, problem-solving, and communication skills. With the full support of my principal, Koda has made a real difference from kindergarten through grade five," says Sr. Patrice. The students learn from Koda, and he learns from them.

When the golden doodle dons his service dog vest, he is transformed into a powerful advocate for disability rights. Koda's behavior and training reflects upon Sr. Patrice and the whole community of service dogs and their handlers. She explains that people often incorrectly view service dogs as pets or emotional support animals. "The rise of 'fake service dogs' makes it difficult for people with disabilities who benefit from 'real' service dogs for activities at work, school, and in the general public."

As Salvatorian Sisters, we are called to share about our loving God "... by whatever means the Spirit of God inspires." In Sr. Patrice's

case, Koda is one of the means she uses to further connect with the people she serves. "His innate ability to include all in his circle of wagging is a witness to inclusion and acceptance that is so very needed in our world today," says Sr. Patrice. "God has gifted me with so many amazing abilities, and working with a service dog makes it possible for me to effectively live our SDS mission. Even though Koda is not yet fully trained, he is already helping me do my ministry as an educator and live fully and vibrantly in my SDS community as well as in society at large."

### *How to be a Service Dog*

Disclaimer: this is by no means a complete list of the training a service dog requires. This is a basic explanation of the training Koda will receive in Sr. Patrice's care.

1. Master the basics of obedience: stay, sit, walk on a loose leash, and resist the temptation of going after rabbits and squirrels.
2. Master public access manners: work calmly in crowds, busy retail stores, and elevators full of people. A service dog needs to work in all types of situations the handler might encounter – traveling, working, going to school, and being active in their community.
- 2½. Pass the American Kennel Club's Canine Good Citizenship test. It's not specific or required of service dogs, but it is a good evaluation of a dog's abilities.
3. Master task-specific training according to the needs and abilities of the handler.
4. Undergo constant and intense socialization training. Service dogs need to be comfortable with a wide variety of people, places, and situations. ●



# Our 2023 Jubilee Celebration Continues



## Chosen to Be Blessings

**70 YEARS** (right) Sister Maryann Engelhardt, SDS  
(Sr. Joseph Marie)  
*Nurse and former Provincial Team Member*

**75 YEARS** (left) Sister Clarice Steinfeldt, SDS  
*Educator, principal, and artist*

Read about our Jubilarians:  
[sistersofthedivinesavior.org/jubilee-celebrations](https://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/jubilee-celebrations)

You can send Jubilee greetings c/o:  
Mission Advancement Office | 4311 N 100th St,  
Milwaukee, WI 53222  
[missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org](mailto:missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org)

A gift to support our mission is a meaningful  
way to honor a Jubilarian. You can mail your  
donation or donate online:  
[sistersofthedivinesavior.org/donate-tribute](https://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/donate-tribute)

## Counting Your Blessings

CHILDREN BLOSSOM WITH LOVE!



Thank you ensuring every child has the freedom to learn under the gentle care of our Indian Salvatorian Sisters at the Sathirthya Special School. Your gifts ranging from \$1 to \$5,000 will go towards the education, therapy, and skills training of 78 students blooming with potential. Every child, disabled and nondisabled alike, has a divinely designated place in this world. Your generosity in support of our school in India helps us answer God's call to love one another without exception. We pray that the successes of a school like Sathirthya will inspire countries around the world to increase services and education for people with disabilities.

## In Memoriam



**Sister Margaret Hansknecht, SDS (Sr. Liboris)** had the heart of a missionary all along – she just didn't know it 67 years ago when she professed her first vows as a Sister of the Divine Savior. After teaching mathematics for several years at Mother of Good Counsel School and Divine Savior High School in Milwaukee, she found herself answering the call to join the missions in Tanzania and,

later, the Holy Land. All throughout her life, Sister Margaret showed a generosity and openness to all people, especially those she served as a missionary. Sr. Margaret's prayer life and important life decisions were deeply affected by the Virgin Mary's words of The Angelus prayer, "Be it done to me according to your word." She died peacefully on the morning of July 17, 2023 with Sisters Joan Wagner, Denise Demulling and DePaul Schafer, three of her novitiate companions, at her bedside.

Read about Sister Margaret here:  
[sistersofthedivinesavior.org/in-memoriam](https://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/in-memoriam)





The Sisters of the Divine Savior invite you to join us in honoring

**ASHLEY THOMAS**

Executive Director, *Hope Street Ministry*

***CULTIVATING HOPE FOR THOSE IN NEED***

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2023  
7:00 PM CDT**

**SDS Community House  
4311 North 100th Street, Milwaukee**

*Award Presentation followed by Reception and Refreshments*

---

RSVP by **September 15** to attend this free event.

**Three easy ways to register:**

**Online:** [sistersofthedivinesavior.org/woman-of-faith](https://sistersofthedivinesavior.org/woman-of-faith)

**Email:** [missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org](mailto:missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org)

**Phone:** (414) 466-7414

---

# Sister Magda Creates a Home for Ukrainian Refugees

When Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, over 8 million Ukrainians sought refuge throughout Europe. Not known for sitting idly, European Sisters of the Divine Savior quickly adapted their ministries to address the needs of refugees, especially those close to the Polish border.

**Sister Magdalena Kumorek, SDS,** Provincial Councilor for the Polish Province of the Sisters of the Divine Savior, is responsible for hosting refugees at her convent in the village of Goczalkowice-Zdrój. She says, “We welcomed these people fleeing from war, not because the government told us to do so. We did it and still do it because we, as a Polish nation, survived and experienced wars and military occupation from Russia and other countries as well.” Poland’s warm reception of Ukrainian refugees has minimized the need for refugee camps. All refugees are sheltered in private homes, hotels, schools, parishes, convents, and other safe havens.

Shortly after agreeing to host refugees, Sr. Magda opened her convent’s doors to a family of seven and a 68-year-old lady named Walentyňa. The family had fled from Kharkov, Ukraine with their entire lives packed into a few backpacks and

plastic bags. Over two days, Lena and Maxim led their five sons and adoptive disabled daughter, Polina, on a 940-mile journey to safety. Polina has a multitude of health concerns, including near blindness and hearing difficulties, due to her biological mother’s heavy drug and alcohol use while pregnant.



The family settled quickly into life in Poland. “One night, Lena and Maxim admitted to me that Lena was four months pregnant. It was a big happiness for them. We were all talking about their future in Poland,” explains Sr. Magda. “Ultimately, they decided to stay in my country due to their house being destroyed by bombing. The boys enrolled

in school, Maxim got a job, and I helped arrange Polina’s medical appointments. Everything was going well.”

War, however, takes its toll, even when it’s hundreds of miles away. On a night in early May 2022, Sr. Magda brought Lena to the emergency room with a high fever. Sr. Magda recounts, “I was with Lena when the doctor told her that she miscarried. Her stillborn baby was poisoning her, that’s why she felt so bad. When we heard this devastating information, we both started crying. It was so heartbreaking. Lena had a miscarriage because she was undernourished and stressed due to war. It was a traumatic experience for all of us.” Over time, Sr. Magda helped the family process the loss of their unborn child.

Eventually, Lena and Maxim requested Sr. Magda’s assistance with finding an apartment to call their own. It wasn’t an easy process due to high rental costs, but with God’s help, Sr. Magda found the family a peaceful place to call home. “They can always count on the Salvatorian Sisters for help,” she says. “It’s a joy to see Lena and Maxim’s family try to live a normal life despite so many difficulties. Happiness in the eyes of their children is the greatest proof that we can make a difference.”

As the Ukraine-Russia war continues, our sisters in Poland are determined to aid the people of Ukraine in any way possible. Thanks to the generosity of our friends, Salvatorian Family members, and a financial matching gift from our U.S. Province, our Polish sisters will be able to purchase more than 125 generators to relieve the plight of the Ukrainian refugees. ●



This summer, Sr. Magda visited parishes throughout the U.S. to share about her ministry to Ukrainian refugees.

## SDS Mission Advancement Office

4311 N. 100th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53222-1393  
414-466-7414

[missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org](mailto:missionadvancement@salvatoriansisters.org)

Tim Kasza  
Director of Mission Advancement

Kaitlin Seebruch  
Director of Communications