

St. Joseph Spirituality Center

Baton Rouge, LA

2015-16 Program Report

We strive to meet the spiritual needs of our Dear Neighbors, leading to a deepening and effective role of the Christian in the world.

Over the past year, our Dear Neighbors have expressed their hungers to us and we have strived to meet those needs in any good work of which we were capable. Our main response has been in spiritual direction. 129 directees experienced nearly 1160 spiritual direction sessions. To answer the needs of teachers and other workers, we have extended our spiritual direction to include evening and weekend hours. Many of the directees are pastors and persons in leadership positions.



People continued to express desire for more opportunities for prayerful silence. The “24-Hours for the Lord” Silent Retreat proved to be the perfect amount of time for people with full and busy lives. Participants of last year’s silent retreat were our best publicity, spreading the word and expanding the number from 20 last year to 34 participants this year.

Answering a request by faith leaders for a deeper engagement in justice work, our *Being Neighbor: Justice Work with the Dear Neighbor* program brought the Center to a community across the Mississippi River and 30 miles away. This program, partially funded by the Generous Promise Grant Fund, brought together three Catholic Churches with many other faith traditions to build a strong coalition to address injustices in the area. A culminating gathering in the spring brought together a very diverse group of nearly 300 people from over 30 churches and civic organizations that committed to working together and pledging funds to support the effort. This coalition addresses the Center’s Core Values: exercising collective leadership to bring about a more just and peaceful world; collaborating with others to change societal systems; and working to transform the culture of power, privilege and violence, to a culture that is inclusive, embraces diversity and welcomes the gifts of all.

The strong bonds that were formed over the course of the year of work along with the financial commitments made by the participating churches and organizations made the faith leaders feel confident that the organization was now built up enough to be able to work together on their own without the need for facilitation by the Center, following Maxim 85: “Advance good works until they are almost finished, and then, whenever possible, let them be completed by someone else who will receive the honor.”



Sr. Mary Ann Hebert, CSJ and Sr. Adelaide Williamson, CSJ with Rev. Lee Wesley at spring gathering of the Being Neighbor program.

The growth and development of our Spirituality Center board members remains a priority for the Center. The board trained in collaborative leadership under the guidance of a national expert in the field, Sr. Kathleen Babin, CSJ, a Spirituality Center staff member and spiritual director. In addition, a generous donor contributed funds for a fundraising consultant to provide to our board effective strategies in donor development and mission advancement. The Board is also gaining a new perspective on fundraising from the Henri Nouwen book, *The Spirituality of Fundraising*.

The needs of our neighbors as well as the Core Values of the Congregation will continue to guide the work of the Center through the programs we offer, including: one-on-one and group spiritual direction, on-site retreats, Peer Supervision for spiritual directors, The Spiritual Exercises in Daily Life groups, and Enneagram and Myers-Briggs workshops, serving nearly 800 people in our surrounding community.