PACE Grows to Maturity in Nigeria
See article page 4

“...like a tree that yields its fruit in due season.”
Psalm 1:4
“We are given a quantum of energy at birth. The most essential task of our life is to stand up and say who we are – participate in our creation and set our truth to work! The power is given to create our truth!” — Brian Swimme

My dear friends of Notre Dame,

What was your birth weight? How many inches were recorded for your fragile body at birth? Are you aware that the fragility, length and size of your infant body was no measure for the invisible quantum of energy given on the day you blessed this planet with your human life? What are you doing now with that inexhaustible gift of energy emanating from you? The power is given to you and to us to create our specific truth!

This issue of Good Works includes several stories about the creative ways many of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are standing up and stepping forward to cooperate with the good God to shape a life-giving environment and loving community in the countries where we serve. These Sisters are using their quantum of energy to draw attention to God’s goodness in continuing education in classrooms, on farms, in a neighborhood home for the homeless and in ever “widening circles that reach out across the world ...” — Rainer Maria Rilke

We thank you for your support of and participation in the mission of education St. Julie Billiart envisioned 207 years ago. The magnetic force of St. Julie’s quantum of energy vibrates everyday in Women Religious, Associates, Mission Volunteers, donors and friends of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

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“Now to God, who by the power at work within us, is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine, to God be glory in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” — Letter to the Ephesians 3:20-21

In God’s goodness,

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN

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SNDs in Ministry
SND deN CONGREGATIONAL LEADER

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The minute we stepped off the plane, the greetings echoed around us: “Welcome.” “You are welcome!” “Sisters, you are very welcome!” In mid-August, we were once again headed to the last leg of the journey in Nigeria to Notre Dame Primary/Secondary School in Awkunanaw, Enugu. At this fifth session of the Preparatory And Continuing Education Program (PACE), we were anticipating another energizing educational experience with seventeen Sisters, including seven Postulants. Sisters Barbara Boyle, Jeanne MacDonald, Jacinta Oparah and I looked enthusiastically to expanding our teaching staff for PACE 2011.

Begun in August 2006, this educational and cross-cultural project was designed to assist our SNDs in the Global South in a teacher-training program. From 2006 to 2009, Sisters from various Units in the Congregation went to Nigeria for four summer sessions. They shared with our Nigerian SNDs their education, skills and expertise in the areas of pre-primary, primary, middle and high school education, administration/management and computer technology. The initial project proposal stated: “If this model of instruction is found to be successful, it will be adapted and expanded to include more Units in the South.”

In 2010, this model of education was reviewed and adapted by SNDs in a similar program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Background and Goal

The idea for the program grew from a conversation between Sister Maria Delaney and me. In November 2005, I had recently returned from my stay in Nigeria where I had assisted teachers with workshops on topics such as lesson planning and teaching styles. While there with the Sisters, I fell in the market place and severely injured my leg which necessitated my return to the US. Sr. Maria suggested to me that I continue the work during the next summer; I jumped at the opportunity. During summer 2006, the PACE program began. Now as Project Coordinator, I realize that the program is still growing and maturing.

The goal of the project is to provide instruction, strategies and a theater for practicing skills in improving the level of education and enhancing the work within the academic school setting as well as in other areas of ministry. The PACE curriculum has expanded from basic math, reading, written language and computer to include Global Studies and Interpersonal Skills.

During the 2008 program, it was evident that several Sisters were ready to begin the continuing teacher education portion of the program. SND classroom teachers were already grounded in basic math and reading skills. They requested course work for emphasizing methods and materials to improve teaching skills and provide greater student involvement in the learning process.

During the 2009 program, Sr. Ifeoma Chukwu partnered in the theory sessions by demonstrating Maria Montessori’s materials and methods...
and by presenting her teaching style for young learners. During three afternoons, Sr. Ifeoma expanded each presentation so that participants experienced the way for greeting the students warmly as they entered the classroom and for guiding them gently through learning activities.

**PACE Moves to Mentoring**

Over these years, the program has seen subtle but significant changes. This year, Sisters Cordis Onyenagubo and Rosita Iwuananyanwu accepted the invitation to be mentored by Sister Jeanne MacDonald and me. Sr. Cordis taught reading skills creatively by using geography lessons. Also, our laity working with the Sisters in three different nearby schools participated in the workshops. Like the Sisters, the lay teachers were extremely eager to learn everything that we are willing to teach them. When one person asked if we could come back the following week, we had to admit that it is a very long commute from the USA!

As more Nigerian Sisters receive degrees in higher education, their expertise becomes more evident and active. Although the need for ongoing education remains, the demand for basic education has diminished. During a dialogue between the Nigeria Unit Leadership and PACE team members, it became clear that it is time for another change in the program to meet present needs. Future PACE will focus on Mentoring Workshops which will begin in 2012. In subsequent workshops, the mentoring process will include all teaching staff. In an ongoing process to insure quality education, all our schools will eventually become learning communities where everyone is engaged in the teaching-learning process.

**Team Assesses PACE 2011**

As the PACE program shared the facilities with children who needed extra lessons in the summer, the building was busy and alive with “educating for life.” We were enriched by the teaching and learning atmosphere. In fact, our 2011 PACE team, Sisters Barbara, Jeanne, Jacinta and I, reflected on the experience. We had engaged with the participants in learning skills to support beginning readers, increase math skills, expand computer skills and enhance reading skills for middle school readers using the curriculum text. As a team, we all learned new approaches. We reminisced about the gifted teachers from previous PACE teams: Sisters Kathleen Haughey, Alice Garrity, Theresa Linehan, Rosa Dolores Rodriguez, Denise Curry and Loreta Jordan. We repacked our bags and headed back home at the end of the three weeks. Our hearts are wider and fuller from this opportunity to live and serve, and to share friendship with our Nigerian Sisters.

“The most important thing I learned was how to get the children involved in everything and not just deliver the information to them.”

Sr. Julie Mokidi

**Sr. Felicia Ogodobri learns computer skills for her classroom in a teacher-training session with Sr. Jacinta Oparah.**

**Sr. Ifeoma Ubah demonstrates ways to create thought-provoking questions for students.**
WIDENING CIRCLES AROUND THE GLOBE

By Sister Jean Stoner, SNDdeN, NGO Representative at United Nations

“I live my life in widening circles that reach out across the world…”

With these words, Rainer Maria Rilke challenges each of us to see the link between larger international issues and local situations. Being associated with the global body of the United Nations is one way to do this collectively. In 2001, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur gained status as an accredited Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the UN. Since then, we have become aware that we share our everyday concerns with others around the globe. Participating at the UN, we bring to this global body the experience, insights and commitment of Notre Dame Sisters, Associates, and co-workers across the world.

At our SND Office, near UN Headquarters in New York City, we work closely with the Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld. Together we collaborate with the NGO community in UN centers to strengthen human rights and dignity, human development and social justice. We focus on people living in poverty, especially women and children; we participate in major UN forums, consistent with our organizational goals. Reinforcing international networks to ensure broad involvement of SNDs in advocacy, we work to change exploitative structures and systems. For appropriate UN bodies, we prepare oral and written statements on issues relevant to SND priorities, in the name of our Sisters.

UN WIDENS SND CIRCLES

SNDs benefit from affiliation with the United Nations. We share with women and men of various philosophical and religious traditions their hopes and concerns for the world community. We are also exposed to pressing issues as well as very real obstacles weighing on governments. In linking with others, SNDs find new energy and power. We face urgent yet long-term struggles for: a more equitable distribution of world resources, an end to sexual exploitation of women and children, responsible governance and respect for the rule of law, protection and nurturance of the eco-system which we share with all of creation.

SNDS WIDEN UN CIRCLES

SNDs contribute significantly to the United Nations. As professional women religious committed to serving those living and working in poverty, we speak with a strong passion, informed understanding, and recognized credibility. Cross-cultural community living and service on different continents provide first-hand experiences of gifts and challenges for creating together environments where all can contribute to understanding, mutual trust, and the equitable distribution of resources.

CONNECTING THE DOTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Each year the UN Department of Information (DPI) holds a meeting of NGOs on an important issue. In this conference, held in Bonn, Germany from September 3-5, 2011, the theme was “Sustainable Societies: Responsive Citizens.” Participants focused on a sustainable development responding to present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Subthemes included the “green economy” in the context of poverty eradication, transparent governance and grassroots activism. At the conference, teachers, social workers and justice and peace supporters, especially those living in Europe, met other NGOs working in the area of sustainable development. They learned how to network and strategize through individual and collective action for changing structures to preserve our earth and atmosphere for generations to come.

At the UN and other centers, Sister of Notre Dame de Namur work closely with Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld to strengthen human development and social justice. Left to right: Sisters Mary Jo Toll, Mary Annette Wenning, Petra Tolkkoetter, Ethel Maria Kollenberg, SNDs of Coesfeld and Sr. Jean Stoner SND de Namur

In an orientation preceding the conference, three Notre Dame religious congregations came together for sharing awareness on conference themes for action on local, national and international levels. One participant commented, “I see that I can do on one level a lot for the world and for the small part of earth where I live. It was very encouraging for me to see all the people who do something for our world. It gives me new energy to do the small things…”

Learn more at SNDatUN blog (English) or SNDalIONU blog (French)
Shovels Become Educational Tools
By Sister Leonore Coan, SNDdeN

“When is a shovel an educational tool,” asks Tom Keefe, founder and President of International Medical Equipment Collaborative (IMEC). With his question about a simple tool, Tom is finding ways to change lives with simple things in countries and cultures beyond North America. In 1993, as a hospital administrator, Tom saw massive waste in discarded hospital equipment. In organizing IMEC America, he has been able to change the lives of thousands of people. With help from family and friends, Tom collected and gathered tons of medical surplus. In the IMEC facility in North Andover MA, men and women volunteers, medical professionals skilled in electronics and technology began donating their time to clean, repair and pack this equipment for shipment to destinations in Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Russia and the Philippines. These volunteers have contributed much already in reaching out to enormous needs in our world.

In 2009, IMEC and Tom responded to the needs of our Sisters in two clinics in Ngidinga and Kimwenza, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In partnership with the SNDs, IMEC prepared and shipped surplus materials and equipment to these facilities. With these hospital supplies and furnishings, and ongoing funding from many donors, the new Clinic in Kimwenza, like the Clinic in Ngidinga, is now a vibrant ministry of our Congolese SNDs.

Tools for Teaching and Living
During the past 6 months Tom has been thinking about other ways to extend the work of IMEC with hoes, picks and shovels. How can farm equipment and other tools impact the lives of children who go to bed hungry each night? What can IMEC do? Where can it start and whom can it involve? How will it distribute equipment?

If IMEC can impact the life of a simple farmer with some tools, it will make a difference for some 820 million people who live in chronic hunger throughout our world.

Considering this goal, IMEC turned to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur who teach people “what they need to know to live,” as St. Julie Billiart directed. SNDs educate children and adults of all ages in reading, language and religious education in classrooms, health care facilities and even in fields. In rural areas of Tambogrande, Piura, Peru, SNDs had assumed responsibility in 2009 for the administration of a Fe Y Alegria School System. In these 31 schools, a farming program is an essential part of the curriculum. IMEC seized this current opportunity in a new program to partner again with SNDs for these small schools.

“Feed the Hungry, Give Drink to the Thirsty”
Working with US Agriculture consultants and local suppliers, IMEC has gathered small tools and larger land-clearing tools, including wheelbarrows, post diggers and heavy duty hand saws. IMEC, with a cadre of volunteers, men and women from a Fidelity Management Training Program, prepare these suites of farming equipment for the villages in northern Peru. Each Farm Project includes tools to make the cultivation of the soil a little easier.
Carpenters have devised an irrigation system which allows for even distribution of the water flow. The irrigation system is complete with assembly instructions for a stand to hold the 30 gallon barrow for the water. The barrow is already prepared to receive the tubing that will allow the water to flow evenly through the crops. Each farm project has material for 6 irrigation stands. United Parcel Service (UPS) is donating the shipping costs to transport the 40 Farm Projects from the United States to Peru.

**Teaching Sustainability**

This Farm Project is another way for IMEC to share resources for sustainability and to collaborate in an educational project in partnership with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. For our schools in Peru, the project will allow for effective teaching and accessibility to resources needed to tend the earth.

Sr. Marleny Bardales Raymundo and the staff in the Tambogrande region are planning to extend this learning and make equipment accessible to the students’ families. IMEC is shipping 40 Farm Suites to Peru in this first phase of the Farming Program. Expanding involvement in our partnership with IMEC enables SNDs to bring about growth for more people in this rural area. We are able also to envision new possibilities for our sisters and brothers who live in poverty in other cultures and countries around our fragmented world.

In Tambogrande, Sr. Mary Kavanagh directed students in the tilling and planting process.
Our 17th year for Notre Dame Mission Volunteers AmeriCorps (NDMVA) began on September 1, 2011 with 460 volunteers from across the USA. Through these years, our volunteers have collaborated with Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SND) and lay personnel in schools and educational non-profit institutions. At about 150 sites, volunteers have extended the SND commitment to education by empowering over 348,000 people.

NDMVA believes that education is the fundamental tool in the struggle for people living in poverty to realize their God-given potential. Education is the focus for our volunteers who become teacher assistants, direct after-school programs, teach GED classes, and mentor at diverse sites. One-fourth are intern teachers in Nativity Miguel Network Schools, who use a small classroom model in extended days for low income inner-city students. At Nativity Preparatory School in Wilmington, Delaware, volunteers start each day with students at breakfast and serve as intern teachers, mentors, and soccer coaches throughout the day, until the dinner study-hour.

We have two value goals. First, we believe that education is a tool to help people living in poverty. Education enables them in their struggles as they develop personally and realize their God-given potential. Second, we utilize training sessions to build the volunteers’ skills and to provide time for reflection on their service and on social justice issues. Volunteers develop a greater understanding of service through reflection. One NDMVA volunteer in Boston said it best, “This experience has inspired me to spend my life in service to others. I have learned so much more than I have taught - about myself, life, other cultures and being part of a community.” Inspired and energized by NDMVA, over 95% of our volunteers indicate every year a commitment to future community service.

Witnesses to Mini-Miracles
We hear stories about volunteers witnessing almost daily miracles at their sites. In the migrant farming community in Watsonville, California, education is especially needed. Volunteers there serve mostly in schools. One volunteer, Megan, experienced what she considered a miracle at this site. She started a reading club to make a connection with her class by providing books for underprivileged students. Luis, loving to read, showed his inquisitive nature; he inquired constantly about titles and found new books. However, he struggled with school and decided to drop out of the 8th grade. Disappointed and challenged by Luis’ decision, Megan reached out to this student in need. She discovered his suffering in being jumped daily by bullies, in facing a hard home life, and in his inability to comprehend material in most of his classes. Megan continued to correspond with him. Her understanding, acceptance and guidance resulted in Luis’ request to re-enroll and continue his education. Such mini-miracles occur frequently for our volunteers.

Our NDMVA volunteers learn the principles of Catholic Social Teaching. With SND guidance, they attempt to apply them in their service across the country. In the past 16 years, over 73,000 children have been tutored by NDMVA volunteers, with 43,000 assisted during after-school enrichment programs. In the past three years, NDMVA has helped 84% of these children to advance at least one grade level. Also, we were able to help 23,000 adults with their personal education goals.

Making a Difference in NDMVA Ministry
Our ministry focuses on America’s impoverished and struggling people. We work also at ensuring each volunteer’s development of a personal service ethic. When these balance, our program produces successful volunteers committed to the promises of the Notre Dame community. One volunteer articulated his personal view: “To serve as a Notre Dame Mission Volunteer is the image of the person I would like to be: energized by my work, sure in my purpose, and spiritually fulfilled with the knowledge that I am making an impact on the lives of others.”
**Connectedness with SNDs**

Founded by SNDs, NDMVA is grounded on ND values. Partnership with AmeriCorps has helped our growth. The leadership and full participation of the Sisters have enabled the NDMVA to flourish. Our current Site Directors are Sisters Ann Kendrick, Kathleen O’Brien, Carmen Silva, Judy Tensing, and Barbara Jean Kubik. Other SNDs do training of our volunteers locally and nationally; some offer hospitality by welcoming volunteers and providing housing in their communities. Some SNDs give spiritual guidance in days of reflection and retreats for volunteers. Often, NDMVA volunteers work with SNDs who “make known the goodness of God” through their ministries. Volunteers extend this service to new places. After Hurricane Katrina, NDMVA helped to recruit, train, and place 50,000 college and church volunteers for the rebuilding of New Orleans.

**Future of NDMVA**

Economic hardships are surely signs today of a continuing need for NDMVA and other national service organizations. To ensure the ongoing life of NDMVA, we do need funding through AmeriCorps. However, with the present economic environment in Washington, DC, financial support for this national service is tenuous at best. For NDMVA, we rely now on the leadership and vital and necessary support of our donors.

Please visit www.saveservice.org to see what you can do to promote national service as a nationwide priority.
A neighborhood community came together to celebrate the opening of *Sister Virginia Mulhern House*, a new home in Jamaica Plain, MA for people who have journeyed from homelessness.

The day, June 11, 2011 was bright and welcoming to new residents, visitors and many people. Beautiful flowers in varied colors welcomed visitors to this home for people who have struggled with addiction. The new residents have spent a good period of their lives in searching each night to find shelters and transitional housing in Boston. Now they will live independently in permanent housing in this residence, located in a former building of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Jamaica Plain.

With simple individual bedrooms, a freshly painted community room, kitchen, TV and music room, the whole structure combines to support the daily life and struggle of people who have wanted to return to society and to achieve life-long goals.

**Neighborhood Effort**

*The 'House' is in reality a community effort.* The opening could never have happened without the dedication and support of many individuals and organizations. The planning process included the voices of neighborhood residents, merchants, parishioners and other community stakeholders. Funding has been provided by numerous sources: City of Boston, Mass Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Philanthropic Initiative. The Pine Street Inn, a final partner with two other corporations, has worked for systemic change through permanent housing.

The opening was a celebration of a new beginning in a special home named for a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. It was also a celebration of Sr. Virginia who has dedicated her life serving others for more than 60 years in teaching, educational administration, social services, parish and pastoral ministry.

**Named Appropriately**

Born in Boston, Sr. Virginia grew up in West Roxbury, attended Notre Dame Academy in Roxbury and entered the Sisters of Notre Dame in 1947. Receiving her first degree from Emmanuel College in Boston, she attended later the University of Notre Dame in Indiana on a National Service Foundation Grant, and completed advanced studies in mathematics. For 23 years, she taught math in SND schools in Hudson, Somerville, Tynsgboro and Waltham, MA; she served also as principal in East Boston.

In 1973, Sr. Virginia turned her efforts to pastoral ministry. **She lived and worked in public housing in East Boston, as a neighbor, an advocate for the homeless and an activist for justice and social change.** In 1980, she continued her pastoral ministry for two decades in Blessed Sacrament Parish in Jamaica Plain. She became active in City Life/Vida Urbana’s campaign to fight displacement, the “Eviction Free Zone.”

From 1995 until 2002, Sr. Virginia took on a leadership role for Notre Dame/AmeriCorps. She recruited and encouraged many college graduates to give commitment for one or two years in working for justice, and against poverty in urban centers and schools, particularly serving mothers and children. Sr. Virginia is now a pastoral leader in St. Mary of the Angels Parish in Egleston Square, Roxbury.

**We rejoice with Sr. Virginia in the opening and naming of this home for the homeless!**

*SNDs join in the celebration of the opening of the Sister Virginia Mulhern House. Left to right: Sisters Geraldine Stanton, Elaine McTaggart, Elizabeth Michaels, Ann Marie Cook, Virginia Mulhern, Catherine Panetta and Margaret Lanen*
SNDdeN Mission

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, women with hearts as wide as the world, make known God’s goodness and love of the poor through a Gospel way of life, community and prayer.

Continuing a strong educational tradition, we take our stand with poor people, especially women and children, in the most abandoned places.

Each of us commits her one and only life to work with others to create justice and peace for all.

Africa
Democratic Republic of Congo
Congo Brazzaville
Kenya
Nigeria
South Africa
Sudan
Zimbabwe

Asia
Japan

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Nicaragua
Peru

North America
Haiti
United States
(29 states and the District of Columbia)

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