Sisters of Mercy offer spiritual wellness for veterans

The Sisters of Mercy in the Mid-Atlantic Community strive to meet the spiritual needs of others and to make a difference for interfaith clergy, lay leaders and nonprofits in impoverished neighborhoods. The Cranleigh Spiritual Center, located at 13475 Proctor Rd. in Northeast Philadelphia, is open to all faiths for workshops and retreats. The group also offers holistic healing programs for veterans, among them “Days of Reflection & Wellness for Female Veterans” (free) and “Tending Moral Injury after War: A Workshop for Faith Leaders” (fee but scholarships available). Many veterans are members of various houses of worship and, through the workshops, come together for support, reflection, and sharing thoughts and experiences with others who have lived their story. For more information about the Sisters of Mercy’s retreat center, veterans’ programs or other offerings, call Sister Maria DiBello at 215-934-6206.

Red Cross shows R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

The American Red Cross of Eastern Pennsylvania is available to educate seniors on emergency preparedness through its Reaching Elders and Seniors with Preparedness Education Concepts and Tools (R.E.S.P.E.C.T.) program. Houses of worship are considered potential emergency neighborhood resources when fires or other disasters occur. “It is important to prepare both individual residents and the house of worship leadership for possible emergencies,” says Red Cross’ Michael Kiley-Zufelt, who specializes in working with the faith community. Free workshops are available to help seniors, houses of worship, senior centers and other senior service organizations prepare in advance for emergency safety. Call 215-299-4067 or e-mail Mike.Kiley-Zufelt@redcross.org.

Get ready for Spring Clergy & Seniors Day

Spring Clergy & Seniors Day, set for Thursday, May 19, will focus on the theme “Understanding the Connections Between Depression, Medicine and Spirituality.” The free conference, presented by PCAs Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition, will include sessions on Mental Health First Aid training for faith leaders; an interfaith panel discussion on faith community approaches to assist congregants experiencing depression; and an opportunity for participants to share thoughts and experiences related to the conference theme. Dr. Andrew Rosenzweig, director of geriatric medicine for Einstein Healthcare Network, will deliver the keynote address. Participants will have the opportunity to network and check out senior programs and services in the resource room.

Spring Clergy & Seniors Day will take place from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia West, 4010 City Ave., and includes a breakfast. There is no cost to attend. To register, call 215-765-9000, ext. 4470 or e-mail salawren@pcaphl.org. Sponsors for the event include Always Best Care, Health Partners Plans and JEVs at Home. Rev. Jill James Idan chairs the Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition and is assistant to the Pastor of Jehovah Jireh Baptist Church.

Faith leaders support people with HIV/AIDS

Rev. Dr. Carlenthia Dowdy is director of the Office of Faith Initiatives for Philadelphia FIGHT, a comprehensive health services organization providing primary care, consumer education, research, and advocacy for people living with HIV/AIDS and those at high risk. Her office tends to the spiritual health of people living with HIV/AIDS; disseminates information and provides training to faith leaders and their congregants. For information on joining the Philadelphia FIGHT Faith-Based Advisory Committee or to register for the Faithful TEACH course for faith leaders who want to learn about HIV/AIDS, call Dr. Dowdy at 215-985-4448, ext. 253 or e-mail her at cdowdy@fight.org.

Faith leaders also convened for the seventh annual World AIDS Day Prayer Breakfast on December 1 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Center City to remember those who have passed from AIDS and those who are battling HIV/AIDS. Attendees recommitted to standing with their sisters and brothers in faith, in activism, in reducing stigma and in enduring love. Rev. Dr. Wayne E. Croft, Sr., Senior Pastor of St. Paul’s Baptist Church in West Chester, was this year’s featured keynote speaker. In addition to emphasizing the spiritual aspect of help and healing, the event provided an update on medical advances to combat the disease.
Resources and opportunities for seniors

- Philly Food Bucks begins in May. Spend $5 in Senior Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as “food stamps”) at your local farmers’ market and get a $2 Philly Food Bucks coupon to buy more produce. For a list of participating markets, call 3-1-1.
- Philadelphia Interfaith Hospitality Network (PIHN)’s mission is to find lasting solutions to family homelessness and its underlying causes. The organization draws volunteers from congregations in the Northwest and Northeast sections of the city. PIHN is seeking additional clergy and congregational volunteers to assist in furthering its ministry efforts. For more information, contact Rachel Falkove, executive director, at 215-247-4663 or visit www.philashelter.org

Faith Community news

- New Gethsemane Baptist Church, 917 E. Chelten Ave., celebrated its 89th year in 2015. Members visited more than 150 seniors at local area nursing homes last year as part of the church’s mission work. Rev. Samuel Jordan, Jr. is church pastor.
- Chaplain Rev. Dr. Vernell Brown is the newly elected regional president of the Pennsylvania Baptist Clergy Women, Inc. Chaplain Brown is a PCA Advisory Board member and past chairperson of the PCA Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition. Congratulations, Chaplain Brown!
- New Vision United Methodist Church, 3259 N. Broad St., has a diverse congregation, with members from 19 countries and a growing seniors’ ministry that serves the community. Rev. Gregory Holston is senior pastor.
- Congratulations to Friendly Friends Baptist Church on the celebration of its 40-year anniversary in January and for its senior ministry enhancement.
- The First Haitian Church of God, located at 6219 Lancaster Ave., presented a successful Wellness Health Fair on January 31. Rev. Ruth Vincent-Washington is church pastor.
- The Golden Eagles Seniors Group of Germantown Christian Assembly, a multi-cultural and multi-national congregation, located at 610 E. Mt. Pleasant Ave., recently held a seniors’ luncheon. Sandy Lawrence, PCA interfaith outreach coordinator, spoke on “User-Friendly Aging Resources.” Pastor Brian Grant is the spiritual leader of Germantown Christian Assembly.
- Tambason Global Human Services, which works to assist African-born seniors, recently held a series of meetings with them to identify social service needs and resources. A PCA representative attended several of these meetings to learn about African seniors’ concerns, and inform them of aging programs and services. Each event provided food, music, remarks from community leaders and clergy, gifts for the seniors, and fellowship time. Moses Bombo Tambason is president of the organization.

AGAPE event honors past PCA president & CEO

The AGAPE African Senior Center honored Rodney D. Williams, PCAs former president & CEO, at its annual Senior Citizen Appreciation Dinner in November. Mr. Williams headed PCA from its founding in 1973 until his retirement at the end of 2012, building it into one of the region’s largest nonprofits with a broad array of programs and services. Held at the Pennsylvania Apostolic Church, 5200 Paschal Ave., the event featured guest speaker Louis Colbert, PCA vice president of operations. It was sponsored by Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell, the Presbytery of Philadelphia, the Liberian Ministers Association and PCA. Rev. Dr. John Jallah is AGAPE’s executive director.
**Water Revenue Bureau offers financial assistance options**

The Philadelphia Water Revenue Bureau offers programs to assist consumers with their residential billing concerns:

- **Senior Citizen Water Bill Discount:** Adults 65-plus can apply for a 25% discount on water and/or sewer bills if their total household income meets eligibility requirements. The bill has to be in the senior’s name. For more information about this senior discount, call the bureau at 215-686-6880.

- **Water Revenue Assistance Program (WRAP):** WRAP offers extended payment agreements to customers who are at risk of a water shutoff. Income guidelines apply. For more information, call 215-686-6880.

- **Homeowners Emergency Loan Program (HELP):** HELP is an emergency loan program for water service line or sewer lateral repairs that are the responsibility of the homeowner. The program provides a zero-interest loan to eligible water customers who have been issued a Notice of Violation/Defect for a defective water or drainage system. To report plumbing problems, the homeowner should call 215-685-6300. This will trigger an inspection and potential citation of a violation, both of which are required to apply for assistance through the HELP program. The loan is interest-free and is repaid over a five-year period.

**Elder Michael Beauford honored**

Elder Michael Beauford was awarded the 2015 Senior Citizen of the Year Award on Nov. 15 by Greater Enon Missionary Baptist Church, 1854 N. 22nd St. State Representative Donna Bullock and Rev. Michael Robinson, church pastor, presented the award at a special ceremony. Elder Michael Beauford oversees the operation of the Beloved St. John Evangelistic Church Community Development Corporation. He also visits hospitals, homes and hospices to provide cheer, prayers and encouragement to seniors who are ill. He is a longtime member and past co-chair of PCA’s Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition.

**St. Matthew A.M.E. kicks off breast cancer awareness series**

On March 7, St. Matthew AME Church held part one of a planned three-part breast cancer awareness and education series. The topic was “Think Pink, Live Green … How Environment Impacts Your Risk for Breast Cancer.” “St. Matthew has many members age 50-plus. We try to be supportive of our congregants and the community by offering workshops on health topics of interest and importance,” says Beatrice Sims, resource coordinator for the church and a member of PCA’s Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition. St. Matthew AME Church, whose pastor is Rev. Rolland McCall, is located at 215 N. 57th St. For more information about the breast cancer series, call 215-472-6834.

**Emergency Fund Luncheon June 16**

The Emergency Fund Coalition for Older Philadelphians will hold its 27th annual Emergency Fund Luncheon on Thursday, June 16. The Emergency Fund Luncheon, and the Rose Epstein Auction held during the event, benefit the Emergency Fund for Older Philadelphians, which provides assistance to eligible low-income Philadelphia seniors in financial crisis. Last year, the fund disbursed nearly $216,000 to help close to 1,800 senior households with heat, food, rent/mortgage, prescriptions and other critical needs. PCA administers the fund, which is guided by a coalition of 25 community-based organizations and service providers.

The luncheon will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Canstatter’s Catering, 9130 Academy Rd. in Northeast Philadelphia. Information will be available on PCA’s website www.pcaCares.org or by calling Rick Spector, PCA director of community relations, at 215-765-9000, ext. 5340 or e-mailing rspector@pcaphl.org.

**Milestones newspaper**

*Milestones* newspaper, published by PCA, has a readership of 170,000 older Philadelphians each month. This free newspaper is aimed at reaching senior citizens with news, features and information on activities and opportunities for involvement. Copies are distributed at more than 900 locations throughout Philadelphia, including senior community centers, senior living facilities, libraries, doctor’s offices, pharmacies and conveniently located honor boxes. *Milestones* is available for free delivery to faith institutions that order 50 or more copies. Contact PCA at 215-765-9000, ext. 5050.
PCA Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition

Mission:
Recognizing the contributions of faith-based organizations in the social services and the importance of spirituality in the lives of older adults, Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) formed the Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition in 1998. The Coalition is interfaith, intercultural, and multi-ethnic in makeup and includes clergy, lay leaders, senior constituents, and professionals from agencies that serve Philadelphia seniors and their families. The Coalition advises PCA on the needs of older adults in their communities and helps raise awareness of, and increase access to, PCA services.

Coalition goals:
* Assist religious leaders with building senior programs within their congregations and strengthening existing community-based programs
* Enhance the ability of clergy and religious organizations to function as service providers
* Enable clergy to better identify isolated older adults and communicate unmet needs in their congregations and communities
* Build a stronger coalition to advocate on behalf of older adults
* Provide tools to guide decision-making with older adults and families