

LEGACY FOR OUR MISSION:

For Our Children and the Future

REVITALIZED OUR LADY OF FATIMA RETREAT HOUSE

ST. PIUS X PARISHIONER NANCY LEE OF INDIANAPOLIS REMEMBERS HER FIRST EXPERIENCE AT OUR LADY OF FATIMA RETREAT HOUSE. It dates back to 1980, when fellow St. Pius members Helen Jongleux and Cathy Farney invited Lee to attend a weekend Lenten retreat for women.

The weekend left such an impression on Lee that she's been a regular since she attended that first retreat led by Father Jim Farrell, now pastor of St. Barnabas Parish in Indianapolis and a frequent retreat leader at the center.

What's more, Lee has also contributed her time and talent over the past 26 years by serving as a volunteer and in recent years on Our Lady of Fatima's advisory board. It's the least she can do, she says, to support a ministry that has given her so much.

"Fatima is a hidden jewel in the middle of the city," Lee says. "It's wonderful because our location is so accessible to everybody. But once you go up that driveway, you're in the middle of so many acres of woods where you can walk the grounds and visit the Stations of the Cross. It's a place of peace and quiet where people can go away and recharge their batteries—not just spiritually, but also physically."

The center has been alive as a retreat ministry since 1950. That's when it opened its doors as a women's retreat center at the Convent of the Good Shepherd on the near-south side of Indianapolis. (A facility named Alverna served as the men's retreat center). Groundbreaking for the current facility on the city's northeast side took place on May 13, 1963, the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima. The facility later opened its doors to men in 1967.

Today Our Lady of Fatima provides spiritual renewal programs for more than 7,000 people every year. Rick Wagner, director since 2004, believes the ministry is growing after weathering several difficult years during which it surpassed fiscal hurdles along with a perception that it was preparing to close.

"There has been a revitalization of the ministry," Wagner. "Group sizes for our weekend retreats and days of reflection are



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growing, and there seems to be a real desire to take advantage of the programs and serenity that Our Lady of Fatima offers."

The center has also enjoyed revitalized financial and volunteer support. Recent gifts have funded paint work for common areas of the retreat house. Contributions also helped pave the center's driveway, add driveway lighting and purchase new dining room tables.

Wagner credits the center's advisory board, its staff and numerous volunteers for providing energy and leadership behind the rejuvenation. New marketing efforts are further supporting this revitalization effort, and the center advertises its ministries more frequently in *The Criterion*. It's also extending a proactive outreach to archdiocesan parishes to spread awareness about retreat opportunities. And initiatives such as a growing e-mail database—thanks to the time and talent contributed by a volunteer—enables Our Lady of Fatima to send monthly messages

to more than 600 contacts. A quarterly newsletter also reaches 8,000 households.

Our Lady of Fatima is seeing the results generated by efforts to reach young people in archdiocesan parishes as well as Catholics from the neighboring Lafayette Diocese. And to serve more people who are interested in retreat opportunities, the center added evenings of reflection and monthly Sunday Night 101 sessions on topics such as the sacraments, the liturgy, the rosary and other building blocks of Catholicism. Mornings for Mom gatherings (formerly called Leisure Days) have been restored for mothers of young children; these sessions draw more than 40 mothers and nearly 50 children, Wagner said.

The *Legacy for Our Mission* campaign will help Fatima continue the renewal of its facilities. The center needs an elevator and accessible restroom facilities as well as a new heating and cooling systems. The to-do list includes renovating guest rooms with new lighting, carpeting, bathroom sinks and other items.

Those challenges can be daunting, Wagner said, but they affirm the center's future. The drive of volunteers such as Lee and the center's staff are another indication that Our Lady of Fatima is energized as an archdiocesan agency. And through past support and future contributions to the *Legacy for Our Mission* campaign, Wagner said, it will continue to evolve.

"The ministry of spirit-driven renewal continues to expand as more and more people are feeling the need for renewal and looking to Our Lady of Fatima to help provide this renewal," Wagner said. "We need the help of the community to 'renew' the retreat house so that we can continue to renew the community."

Legacy for Our Mission, the archdiocese's capital campaign, is guided by the principles of Christian stewardship and addresses the needs of archdiocesan ministries such as Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House. By contributing to the Legacy for Our Mission campaign through your local parish, a portion of your gift will be allocated to ministries such as Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House.