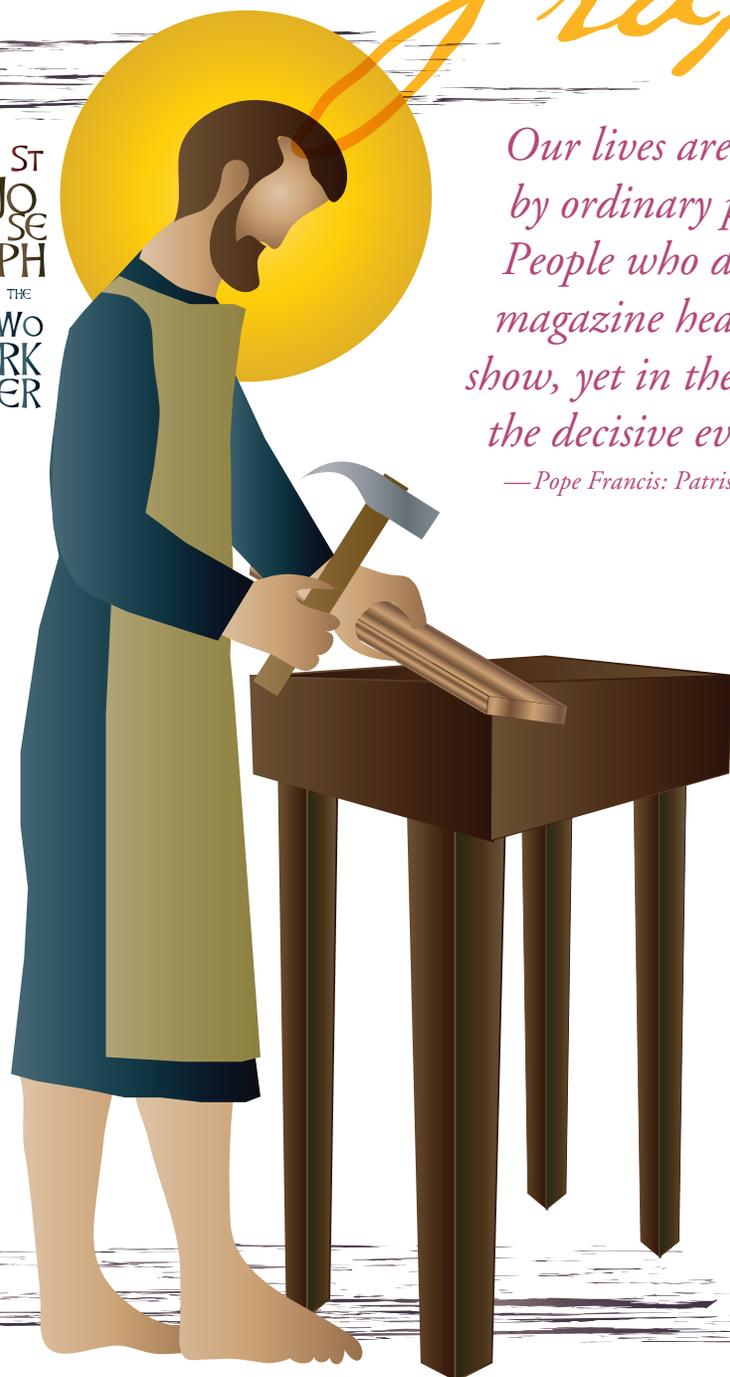




## Gratitude

ST  
JOSEPH  
THE  
WORKER



*Our lives are woven together and sustained by ordinary people, people often overlooked. People who do not appear in newspaper and magazine headlines, or on the latest television show, yet in these very days are surely shaping the decisive events of our history.*

—Pope Francis: *Patris Corde (With a Father's Heart)*

AS WE WELCOME A NEW year, one cannot help but recall the challenges we faced individually, collectively and globally in 2020 and that in many ways are still with us. All are familiar with the changes we were forced to make; we daily took them in, adapted, adjusted and felt the pain of the many. It seemed appropriate in mid-December when Pope Francis issued the Apostolic Letter *Patris Corde (With a Father's Heart)* using the pandemic as a backdrop. Pope Francis stated that St. Joseph is the Saint we need at this time. He elaborates on the hiddenness of Joseph's life. Joseph leads a life of quiet service, a life that remains almost totally unknown to us. Pope Francis helps us see more clearly the importance of "ordinary" people who, though far from the limelight, offer hope every day. In

*cont. on page 3*

# President's Message

February 2021

Dear Friends,

We begin 2021 with hearts filled with gratitude. How can this be when we are still sheltering in place, facing the seemingly uncontrollable spread of COVID-19, and grieving lives we have lost because of it?



▲ SISTER CARITAS

We are grateful because God is ever faithful. We, like so many others, have chosen to not go out for our safety and the safety of others. We have mourned the loss of our sisters without

being able to gather and celebrate their lives. We have not been able to gather with family and friends during the holidays. And we miss those hugs! Yet our spirits are strong, and our hearts are filled with gratitude for all that we have and for the many ways we have been able to respond to the manifold needs of our time.

We are grateful for the generosity of so many who through their donations—both small and great—have allowed us to provide food, shelter, and technology through our partnership with other organizations

*“There is always light, if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to BE it.”*

—Amanda Gorman, National Youth Poet Laureate

Our hearts are delighted that Pope Francis has dedicated this year to St. Joseph. St. Joseph is often the “forgotten” member of the Holy Family. He has always had a special place in our hearts and our community history. St. Joseph has provided for the needs of our community. Requests were always tucked under St. Joseph as we asked for his intercession. At times he was turned to the wall when we thought he was not responding quickly enough!

Now, we have the vaccine through the brilliant minds and dedicated work of scientists as one of the ways God is answering our prayer to bring an end to the pandemic. We are grateful to our health care and front line workers who continued to serve their communities during these long months. Our list could go on and on.

Even in the dark days of a pandemic God is ever faithful because of individuals and organizations that continue to spread light, compassion and caring.

May 2021 be a year of favor from our God -- a year in which we recognize and celebrate our blessings -- a year in which we allow God to continue using us to be the answer to prayer.

With gratitude in the Holy Family,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sister Caritas Foster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caritas Foster, SHF  
CONGREGATIONAL PRESIDENT

# Gratitude

cont. from page 1

this, they resemble Saint Joseph, “the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and a hidden presence.”

This hidden presence is an example intimately shared by millions of people making their way through the pandemic, especially those deemed frontline and essential workers. So many acts of service and compassion of which we are the recipients! This issue of *Family of Friends* provides the opportunity to shine the light on them and express our gratitude for the hidden acts of love and compassion we receive daily from the many who come to us from On Lok Healthcare, Elder Care Alliance and Sodexo services. Because of the nature of the pandemic, these service providers made necessary changes on a regular basis, incorporating new health and safety procedures to assure the virus did not make its way into our cottages.

We are blessed to have the services of each of these organizations that made every effort to keep our lives as normal as possible during so many uncertainties.

**On Lok Healthcare Service:** Ongoing healthcare services assured that adjustments made would provide daily on-site care and safety for both our sisters and their health care workers. The new norm became virtual activity programming, telehealth care connections for participants, and wellness checks through virtual connections.

**Elder Care Alliance Providers:** In spite of social distancing, masking, and no visiting between cottages, activities remained as normal as possible with the necessary adjustments. Thanks to Eileen Plantenga, Health and Wellness Coordinator, who assured that strong infection control protocols were in place, and coordinated both the COVID-19 testing when needed and vaccine distribution.

(see *Keeping Active* on page 4)



▲ EILEEN PLANTENGA

**Sodexo Services:**

Our food and facilities management continued to provide services with a positive attitude during times of unexpected quarantine, and adapted to the specific needs of each

cottage. Staff also played an important role in assisting us in technology as we relied on virtual gatherings for Mass and other opportunities.

No doubt the coronavirus pandemic turned all that was familiar upside down and we are truly grateful to our essential workers who continue to bless us each day by their service.

St. Joseph, patron of the hidden life and patron in this pandemic, pray for us this New Year and forever.

*Top: On Lok staff perform their daily tasks with safety first during the pandemic. Above: A Sodexo baker prepares delicious breakfast treats.*

# Keeping Active

## Keeping Active as We Shelter in Place

—Brittany Fate, Community Life Coordinator

**K**eeping active and entertained in a pandemic, we have learned to be creative and find new approaches in how we can bring life-enriching activities to the sisters living in three separate buildings at our Motherhouse. For instance, the sisters receive monthly newsletters with various word games, trivia, puzzles, and

stories. Newsletters were daily when sisters were required to stay quarantined for a period of time. We have celebrated holidays, had parties, and have weekly activities, seeing that all three cottages have a precise schedule, as staff hops from building to building to host an event. Through programs like Zoom and YouTube, we have had the opportunities to enjoy live musical programs, and chat with friends and family across the United States. We have found music to be incredibly cathartic during this time. In our care center (Cottage Two), we began music therapy. Staff sits one-on-one and plays old personalized music from that sister's playlist, evoking memories.

And the beat goes on as we discover and explore new opportunities during these days of sheltering in place.

*Top: 3rd anniversary celebration of Cottage 3.*

*Middle: Sr. Casattas creating a cherry blossom for our Spring celebration.*

*Bottom: Sisters celebrate Sr. Georgette's 75th Jubilee.*



# The Ministry Continues

*The challenge to respond creatively as the pandemic impacted our typical ways of being in contact with one another calls for new and creative approaches as well as holding on to the familiar. The following is a snapshot of how our sisters continue to be engaged in ministry.*

## Connecting With the Children

— Sharon Flannigan

Last March I began teaching a 4th grade Faith Formation class, and one week later all in-



▲ SISTER SHARON

person classes ceased due to the pandemic. I thought it important not to lose contact with the children and to let them know the Church cares about them. I have kept contact every month with the children by

phone, postcard and letters to encourage them and let their families know they are remembered in prayer. In these times we do what we can to encourage each other.

“A good Catholic meddles in politics.”

— Pope Francis

## Justice/Advocacy

— Gladys Guenther

In the midst of our “Covid-19 Fall” some Sisters of the Holy Family joined Network, a Lobby



▲ SISTER GLADYS

for Catholic Social Justice, on their virtual tour of the United States. Network’s goal was to “... raise the most pressing issues in our nation, elevate the lived experiences of those facing the greatest challenges, and prepare

participants to vote for the common good on Election Day.”

Through an ingenious online arrangement, participants created a ticket to ride and receive messages from advocates around the country. The activities ranged from rallies, town halls, site visits and dialogue. Network Board Members recruited local Sisters to “meet a nun-on-the-bus.” Along with other Sisters from California, the following Sisters of the Holy Family shared a video clip about their ministry and concerns:

- > Sister Aurora Perez, SHF-Prison Ministry, San Quentin Men’s State Prison, Marin County, CA
- > Sister Elaine Sanchez, SHF Community Advocate, Fremont, CA
- > Sister Gladys Gunther, SHF-Holy Family Day Home Volunteer, San Francisco, CA
- > Sister Michaela O’Connor, SHF-Kmhmu’ Pastoral Care Center, Richmond, CA

> Sister Sandra Ann Silva, SHF-Parish Sister for Oaxacan Families, Pajaro, CA

The video can be viewed at: <http://nunsonthebus2020.org/list>

*“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”*

*— Dame Jane Goodall, DBE*



*The ministry goes on, differently, sometimes with difficulty, but it goes on nevertheless as a ministry of the Sisters of the Holy Family!*

## Soul Connection

— Marietta Fahey

In these COVID times, while connecting virtually is not my preference, I am more convinced than ever that what is essential is to be a listening presence, and offer guidance when sought. Whether Zoom, phone or email, I feel privileged to accompany persons as they discover and live into their full potential,



▲ SISTER MARIETTA

rippling out into family, community, business, concern for the environment, works of justice and peacemaking. As Jesus did, I love to meet people where they are, ask what they are seeking and assist them in living more fully into who they are created to *BE!*

## Pastoral Care

— Sharon Mello

As Director of Pastoral Care at St. Anne’s Church in Lodi my ministry includes bringing Communion to those in the hospital, care centers and homes, as well as bereavement ministry and funeral planning. Because of the pandemic, this pastoral ministry is done differently. The lay ministers and I phone patients in order to be available to them and to pray with them. We also do this for our parishioners. It is a hardship that we are not able to minister in the same way to the care centers since the residents are isolated in their rooms. I still meet with families to plan funerals. We meet outside and socially distanced. The funerals are outside with limited numbers. We have more funerals because so many deaths are from COVID-19. This has changed our outreach because the needs of the family in the grief process are so different. Bereavement ministry is done individually and creatively because we can no longer gather. An overarching part of parish life is Mass. We now have Mass outside, with limited numbers, and Masses are live-streamed. Communion is also available for those who are able to come outside on Sunday afternoon. The inability to gather for Mass is a great loss to people, so this too impacts how I do outreach. Yes, the ministry goes on, differently, sometimes with difficulty, but it goes on nevertheless as a ministry of the Sisters of the Holy Family!



▲ SISTER SHARON



*A different way of helping.*

## Teaching English As a Second Language

— *Mary Lange*

This time of pandemic and sheltering in place has brought with it a different way of helping my Afghan student learn English and adjust to life here in the United States. We would meet at her home; now it's via Zoom which has its pluses and negatives.



▲ SISTER MARY

I no longer see how the three children (ages 3-9) are doing day to day. I no longer can interact with Sarah and bring items for her family that would be helpful to their ongoing learning and transition. As an example, in preparing Sarah for her driver's test I brought toy cars and trucks along with various road

settings made of paper for her learning experience. I'm happy to share that today she has her driver's license and a part-time job.

On the plus side, I have been able to continue supporting Sarah and her family. I've learned how to "share" on Zoom with videos, handouts and quizzes. I've also seen how the two school-age children are doing with their online schooling.

I look forward to the day when I will be able to visit again with this courageous and loving family. It's been a wonderful experience for me to assist them and to learn about their culture.

## To Our Family of Friends

— *Carol Crater*

In solidarity with all our family of friends we stand together in these times of uncertainty,



▲ SISTER CAROL

heartbreak and the need to make many adjustments in our lives. Some of you may have lost friends or family members. Some have found yourselves no longer employed; some may be exhausted working overtime to

help in this crisis. Some of you may be home and alone yearning to hold a family member or hug a friend, and like many trying to figure out a new way to live. Please let us know how we can help. If you would like a phone call or to have us pray for a special intention or to have one of our sisters pray with you, please contact our Congregational Secretary, Sister Carol Crater, at the following: [congsecy@holyfamilysisters.org](mailto:congsecy@holyfamilysisters.org), or 1-510-624-4596. Some of you may recognize her name from thank you notes received after you sent a donation.

Enclosed in this mailing is a card on which you can write your prayer intentions and send them to us. It will be placed in a basket in our community room, where the sisters will pray for your needs and concerns whenever we gather for liturgy or prayer, as well as in our own personal prayer.

# Associate News



Holy Family Associates continue to reach out in creative ways. We are grateful to our Associates and their on-going spirit in carrying forth the mission. Not surprising we have our own St. Joseph Carpenter who shares graciously his gifts.

Turns out, Associate Robert Snodgrass is also a carpenter and uses his gifts in service of his local community. Robert, Yolanda, and son Matteo provided a desk as a gift for a refugee child for Christmas this year. The desk, shown at right in process and nearly finished, is child-sized and ready to help with school work.



*The Associates participated in a Zoom meeting this past Fall, recounting the past year and planning for 2021.*



KATHI GOODMAN

Words of gratitude to one who continues to reach out quietly in most amazing ways. Kathy's role as Associate Liaison (of course through Zoom at this time) is that of supporting and coordinating events

with Associate members, such as September's Annual Assembly. Before pandemic days, Kathy was a constant presence to sisters in our Care Center, providing hand massages and a listening ear. She is also always a supporter of our homeless outreach by collecting needed supplies for our unhoused friends.



*Above: Associates Robert Snodgrass and Yolanda Esparza pose with son Matteo. Inset: A desk just about ready for pickup.*

## Be Generous

*“Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”*

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu



### It is by giving that we all receive...

**D**uring these past months we no doubt became more aware of the increase of basic needs many of our neighbors were experiencing during this pandemic crisis. The image of hands reaching out, hands connecting not only as recipients but as a sign of partnership as well, words of gratitude expressed by recipients not knowing who might be behind the giving—these are all examples of the hiddenness of our patron St. Joseph.

We are always grateful to our donors who continue to support and partner with us. Your prayers and gifts make our mission work possible. These past months with your help we responded to emergency needs of the following organizations that have been greatly impacted by the pandemic. Our five focus areas, Homelessness, Children, Hunger, Health Care, and Immigration/refugees have been our guide during this time. Please be aware that in most cases these organizations included more than one of the focus areas.

**ABODE Services:** Launched a number of programs to move the homeless into supportive housing in response to Covid-19.

**Mercy Brown Bag program/Elder Care Alliance:** Increased the number of low income seniors to receive bags of groceries in Alameda county.

**On Lok Healthcare:** Increased the delivery of nutrition/meal program and technology equipment for low income participants.

**Holy Family Day Home** (San Francisco) **and Saint Vincent’s Day Home** (Oakland): Provided economic and emergency food support for children and families.

**All African Conference, Sister to Sister:** Emergency Assistance Fund provided food and met supply shortages related to the breakdown of traditional sources of aid during the pandemic.

**Washington Hospital Healthcare Foundation:** Emergency funds for protective gear for healthcare workers and local community members.

**St. Vincent de Paul Society** (Weed, CA): Pandemic emergency funds for families who were impacted by the California fires.

Along with this we hold as priority the needs of immigrants and refugees. Responding to Christ’s call for us to “welcome the stranger among us” we continue to support organizations that provide advocacy, education, and legal services to families of immigrants and refugees.

## Aging in Wisdom and Grace— And Ministry

Since our previous issue of Family of Friends, four of our Sisters have gone home to God. All four of them are beautiful examples of aging in wisdom and grace, and they also exemplify the virtue of aging in ministry.

Many Sisters, as they age, fear the time when they will no longer be able to do ministry. But ministry doesn't stop when we are no longer able to go out to work in the parishes and missions as before. Ministry is not just a job, but is the outward expression of the mission that has lived in our hearts and which in fact first drew us to the Sisters of the Holy Family. As we grew older, we also grew in our grasp of mission and ministry. That's why ministry doesn't stop when we slow down; ministry just changes with us.

### **Sister Christopher Schmidt**



SISTER CHRISTOPHER

was a religious education teacher in Reno for many years. When she could no longer remain in Reno and moved to the Motherhouse in Fremont, she reached out to the sisters around her with stories, mostly funny, about her early adventures with the sisters in the various locations where she had served. She connected people with their earlier history, and was often in the middle of a circle of laughing sisters remembering lighter times past. Sister Christopher died on March 21, 2020, just days after we began our sheltering in place due to Covid-19.



SISTER LUCILLE

**Sister Lucille Hintze** spent many years in religious education in various places. When she returned to the Motherhouse in Fremont, she continued a massive outreach ministry by written note, phone calls and later email with people all over the United States and even beyond. In fact, for months after her death, people were still receiving birthday cards from her, which she had arranged for before she died on March 24, 2020.



SISTER GERALDINE

**Sister Geraldine Garbarino**

spent many years in religious education before moving into ministry with sick and aging people in her parishes. When she returned to the Motherhouse, she continued reaching out as a volunteer with the local homeless population. When Sister Gigi was no longer able to go outside the Motherhouse for ministry, she ministered to the sisters around her with frequent cheery messages and wrapped candies, most often closing her notes with a hand-drawn smiley face and “God bless you and me, too!” Sister Geraldine died on August 13, 2020.



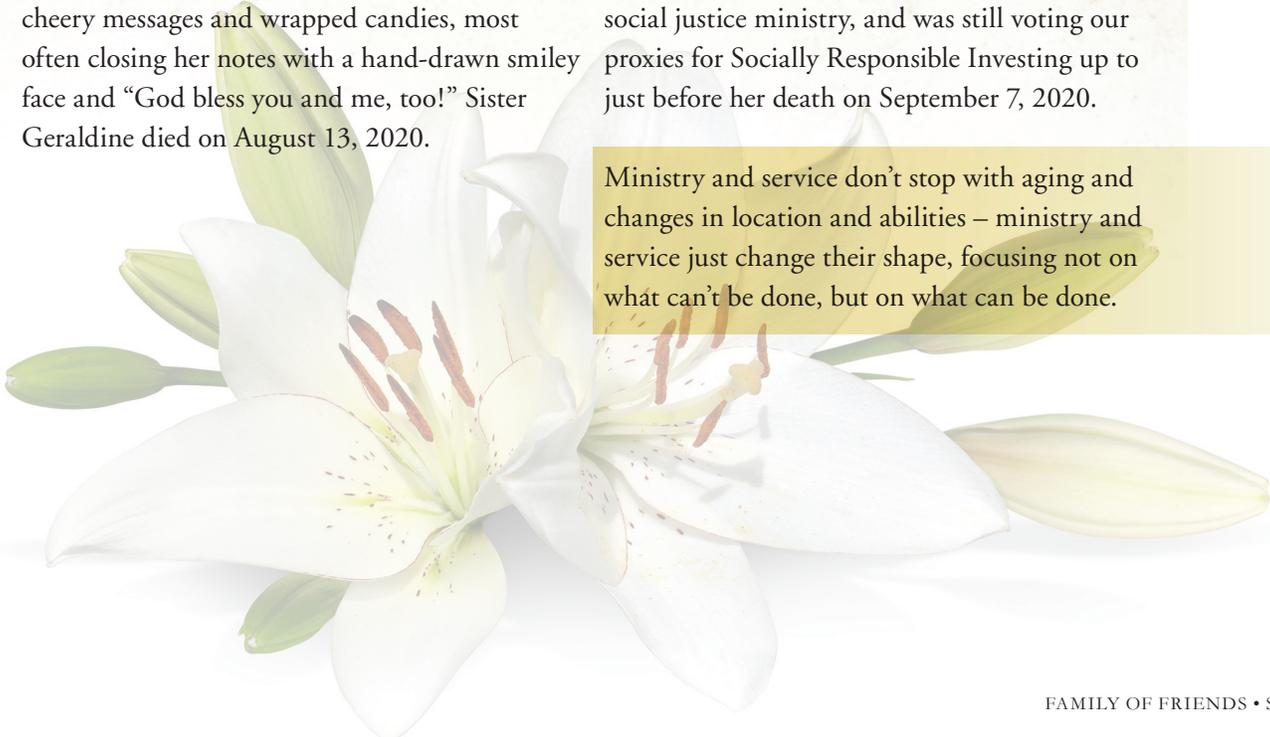
SISTER CAROLYN

**Sister Carolyn Whited**

served for many years as chaplain at prisons in California’s central valley, always insisting on calling the residents “men,” when the officials would only refer to them as “inmates.” She continued in correspondence with some of the men even after they left prison, and later, even after she left the prison ministry to return to the Motherhouse. In addition, Sister Carolyn was passionate about social justice ministry, and was still voting our proxies for Socially Responsible Investing up to just before her death on September 7, 2020.

Ministry and service don’t stop with aging and changes in location and abilities – ministry and service just change their shape, focusing not on what can’t be done, but on what can be done.

Memorial Remembrances may be made to: Sisters of the Holy Family P.O. Box 3248 Fremont, CA 94539



## Family of Friends

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SHF President

— Sister M. Caritas Foster

SHF Vice President

— Sister Elaine Marie Sanchez

SHF Congregational Councilors

— Sister Ann Marie Gelles

— Sister Kathleen Littrell

We welcome your comments.

In keeping with our commitment to the Earth Charter, this newsletter is printed on recycled paper using environmentally friendly inks.

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## The Last Word



### Justice at a Time of Public Health and Economic Crisis

**COVID-19** has given new urgency and a moral mandate to provide health care for all, to protect the rights and health of workers, and to ensure sufficient affordable housing. We recognize that during this pandemic, and at all times, the wellbeing of our nation depends on the wellbeing of each and every person.

**Black Lives Matter**—we are called to speak and act against the sin of racism. Now is the time to cultivate the spirit, the courage, and the fire of commitment to make the change we seek. This is an opportunity to uproot white supremacy wherever we find it and create a new society where racial justice and equity flourish.

**Join us** as we keep updated on these issues from a Catholic Social Teaching stance by going to the NETWORK website:  
[www.networkadvocates.org](http://www.networkadvocates.org)