

Save the Dates


Ursuline Academy Biennial Reunion Weekend Set for Oct. 19 & 20, 2018

The 2018 Couer d'Ursuline Biennial All-Class Reunion Weekend will be held Oct. 19 and 20. Highlighting the festivities will be a dinner at Lombardozi's Restaurant in Bloomfield. Other optional activities include a Friday evening Wine & Cheese Reception at Ursuline Support Services in Squirrel Hill and a Saturday afternoon tour of the former Ursuline Academy.

"We hope every alumna of our school will make an effort to join us that weekend," said Reunion cochair Dorothy Chester. "We look forward to reliving the special experience we all shared as students at Ursuline Academy."

For the second reunion in a row, Ursuline Support Services will open its doors Friday evening to welcome Ursuline Academy alumnae. This is most appropriate, since the social service agency was created by the Ursuline Sisters after the closure of the school in 1981.

"The reception gives us an excellent opportunity to learn more about how the legacy of our school continues to benefit so many people in need through the ongoing work of Ursuline Support Services," said cochair Debby Moskala.

More information about the reception will be sent to alumnae this summer. Any alumnae wishing to make sure they or their classmates are on the Couer d'Ursuline mailing list should email Ms. Chester at dchester52@verizon.net or Ms. Moskala at moskala@verizon.net. 

A Quick Look at

Ursuline's Service Coordination Program

Every day, across the city of Pittsburgh a number of people have their lives enhanced through Ursuline's Supportive Living Enhancement Program (SLEP), thanks largely to the dedicated work of its three service coordinators: Nancy Scott, Toni Federline and Gwen Harris.

This trio of women represent Ursuline's "front line" in the community through their work in Pittsburgh area hi-rise apartment buildings, including all those under the auspices of the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh. (These are rent-subsidized hi-rise apartment buildings for people seeking to live as independently as possible.)

"The goal of the SLEP program is to enrich, educate and empower the residents we serve."

— Nancy Scott
Service Coordinator



Ursuline service coordinators assist residents with acquiring adaptive equipment and in-home supports as well as health and financial benefits. They read and interpret mail, link residents with community services and provide long-term support, crisis intervention and advocacy as needed, including with building management.

"Ursuline's consistent weekly presence in the buildings has worked in developing trusting and supportive relationships with both residents and building managers," said Nancy. "The goal of the SLEP program is to enrich, educate and empower the residents we serve."

This relationship begins with SLEP's consistent weekly presence in each building, which has worked in developing communication and a sense of teamwork and support with key individuals. Service coordinators begin by establishing one-to-one connections with residents by introducing Ursuline and its available services, then getting to know residents through regular visits,

Ursuline Happenings in Pictures...



Volunteers from ReedSmith help load Angel Tree gifts for Ursuline clients in the agency's Guardianship Program.



(L-R) Ursuline staffers Deb Mitchell, Tracey Williams, and Melissa Osman pose in their "Ugly Holiday Sweaters" after each taking prizes in this year's contest!



Commitment to Excellence

Michelle Smart, Ursuline director of Guardianship and Protective Services, was recently honored for 25 years of service to the agency.



Ursuline
Support Services

Help navigating life's transitions

LEADERSHIP STAFF

Anthony J. Turo, MPA
Executive Director

Ron Cichowicz
Director, Development & Communications

John Daub
Director, Finance & Operations

Melissa Osman
Assistant Director, Guardianship & Protective Services

Michelle Smart, MS, NPM
Director, Guardianship & Protective Services

Karen Miller Tobin, MEd
Director, Independence Support Services

DIRECTIONS

from the Executive Director



There's a reason why writers through the ages, from Geoffrey Chaucer to William Wordsworth and William Shakespeare to Emily Dickinson, waxed poetically about springtime—perhaps the most anticipated change of season for those of us living in the temperate zone.

For one thing, the change seems so dramatic. One day we're shoveling snow and two or three days later, the birds are chirping and we're thinking about tuning up the lawnmower. Where once the landscape was fringed with barren trees, now fresh sprouts are appearing. We begin to peel off layers of warm winter clothing in favor of tee shirts, shorts and sandals. Hope "springs" eternal in the hearts of baseball fans (even in Pittsburgh!) and some of us are picking out seed packets for the backyard garden. Our activities move from indoors (often under blankets in front of a TV or fireplace), to outdoors, for a walk with the dog or to catch up with neighbors unseen for the past four months.

For most of us, this annual transition is a welcome change, if only because it means local TV news won't be dominated by gloom and doom weather forecasts and long lists of school closings and delays.

And as spring begins to blossom this year, I find myself thinking of the many individuals we at Ursuline have met over the past few months whose changes have not been as pleasant.

These are the people we serve and for whom we exist: those who need someone to help with bill paying or protection from exploitation or abuse. Or who need someone to help them maintain a level of independence so they can remain at home or make effective medical or financial decisions. Or who simply find it difficult to shop for groceries or other necessary items.

The reality is that none of us is immune to being faced with such life's transitions and they can overwhelm an individual. And if my own experience is any indication, they often carry their struggles silently, behind a masked smile, afraid to expose their vulnerability for fear of receiving rejection instead of support, even if only the rejection of "I can't help you!" They simply cannot handle the challenge alone. That's where Ursuline Support Services steps in, offering caring, compassionate and professional help, delivered by dedicated staff and volunteers whose first commitment is to the

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dignity of each individual we serve, regardless of their circumstances. Helpers who are here because they can help and they want to help!

Of course, our work as always is buoyed by the support we receive from people like YOU who appreciate how critical our work is to the community. Without your support, we could not make the importance difference we do in the lives of so many of our neighbors.

I hope you have a pleasant spring, one filled with renewed hope for a bright future for those we serve today and those we will serve in the future. Your caring and generosity helps to ensure that we will be there for them—spring, summer, fall and (yes, even) winter!

Tony Turo

Core Values: The Heartbeat of Any Organization

Third in a Series


(Starting in the Winter, 2017 issue of All About USS, Ursuline began to explore its Core Values adopted during our last strategic planning session. In this issue, we take a closer look at the following belief: “Everyone deserves to be treated with respect, dignity and compassion.”)

On the surface, this value would seem to be the proverbial “no-brainer.” Shouldn’t every human being be offered respect, dignity and compassion? Yet, sadly, as Ursuline’s staff and volunteers immerse themselves in our community bringing a variety of services to those in need they find this often is just not the case.

At Ursuline, we understand... that our biggest impact on those we serve comes through the way in which those programs and services are delivered.

From the most horrendous examples of physical abuse and exploitation to those where individuals are simply ignored or treated as if somehow their life’s circumstances have rendered them not as valuable or precious as others, respect, dignity

and compassion seem scarce. For someone surrounded by loving family and friends, such a reality might seem almost incomprehensible. Yet many individuals in our community know only too well what it feels like to be overlooked, ignored, even repulsive in the cruel eyes of judgmental individuals. Sometimes such attitudes can be conveyed by the very support system built to serve these individuals and communities.

At Ursuline, we understand that programs and services only go so far to help restore a person to wholeness; that our biggest, and most long lasting, impact on those we serve comes through the way in which those programs and services are delivered. This commitment is a hallmark of Ursuline Support Services and one upheld by every staff member and volunteer, what we like to call the Ursuline “*Way*.” At least if one of our participants isn’t treated with “respect, dignity and compassion” everywhere else they turn, they can count on it when working with one of USS! 

Take a Hike ... And Help Ursuline When You Do!

For the second consecutive year, Ursuline Support Services will participate in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community at Stage AE on Pittsburgh’s North Shore. The 2018 event will begin with a 5K Walk at 9 a.m., Saturday, May 12. There also will be a one-mile Fun Walk starting at 9:15 a.m.

This year, Ursuline’s event chairs and organizers are board members Lisa Bell and Miles Urban.

To help make this year’s Walk another success, Ursuline is seeking sponsors, donors and, most importantly, walkers. Ursuline receives all proceeds directed to the agency to help those it serves in the community while continuing to spread our mission:

“Helping individuals experiencing challenges posed by life’s transitions, inspiring hope through protection, education and advocacy.”

When asked both event chairs were excited and eager to share more details about their experiences thus far:

“This is a great opportunity for Ursuline supporters, staff and volunteers to be together, enjoy a nice walk along the Allegheny River and know that, by doing so, they are contributing to the mission of our agency.” – Lisa Bell, Board of Directors

“The event brings together a number of outstanding nonprofits from around the Pittsburgh region and Ursuline is both deserving and proud to be among them. This enables us not only to promote our services to the thousands of walkers there, but also to connect with agencies whom we have worked with in the past or might in the future.”

– Miles Urban, Board of Directors

Anyone interested in participating in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community should visit the Ursuline Team 2018 page or create your own team to support Ursuline by following the steps below.

1. Visit www.walkforahealthycommunity.org
2. Click through the following web links:
Our Locations → Pittsburgh → Register Now
3. Scroll down the page and select “Ursuline Support Services”
4. From this page you can:
 - Make a single donation by clicking “Click here to donate directly”
 - Form a team by clicking “Click here to form a team”
 - Join an existing team by clicking “Click here to join an existing team”
 - Sign as a solo walker by clicking “Click here to register as an individual”

Hope you will join USS on May 12! 

Volunteer Spotlight: Cathie Schmidt

Appropriately enough, Cathie Schmidt first heard of Ursuline Support Services and its volunteer opportunities while reading a newsletter from Pittsburgh Cares—another nonprofit agency for which she was already volunteering!

“That was at least five years ago,” Cathie recalled. “The article mentioned a ‘checks and balance’ service and that interested me.”


Often a spark of interest is all Cathie needs to roll up her sleeves and pitch in. Besides Pittsburgh Cares, Cathie also has offered her time mentoring in the Pittsburgh Public Schools (where she and her husband Mike sent their two children, Peter and Elizabeth) and for 15 years spent her lunchtimes reading to first, second and third graders for Reading Is Fundamental.

Her interest again piqued, Cathie called Ursuline and spoke to Karen Tobin, director of Independence Support Services, who explained a relatively new initiative, the Representative Payee Program, which assists Social Security recipients maintain their independence by managing their financial obligations for them. Cathie, who worked in financial institutions for more than 30 years, saw a great fit for her abilities and desire to help others.

So once a week, Cathie catches a bus from the North Side to Squirrel Hill to spend a day helping ensure that Ursuline clients pay their bills and maintain both their independence and their dignity. Her task enables Cathie to use many of her talents and abilities, from her MBA from Chatham University to her list-making and organizational skills.

“As the number of people we assist continues to grow, Ursuline can use more volunteers who bring a variety of skills and interests,” Cathie said. “We need people to shop for groceries or to actually go into clients homes to help with bill-paying. The process to become a volunteer is easy and Ursuline is happy to accept whatever time you can give.”

Asked why she has generously contributed her time to Ursuline and other causes, Cathie said simply, “I like helping people. It’s my way of giving back. Sometimes it’s easier for someone to give their time than their money and most nonprofits couldn’t function effectively without volunteers.

“The work isn’t hard nor is it mentally taxing. And the time we give is appreciated both by Ursuline staff and the people we help.” 



**“I like helping people. It’s
my way of giving back.”**

– Cathie Schmidt



Name: Katie Le

**Professional Organization/
Title:** PNC Wealth
Management/ Banking Advisor

**In What Other Board and
Committee Membership,
Community Service, etc.,
Do You Participate?**



Current:

- PNC's Asian American Employee Business Resource Group, Secretary
- Ursuline Support Services, Communications Committee
- Outreach Teen & Family Services, Fundraising Committee
- Volunteer through PNC Grow Up Great and The Education Partnership

Previous:

- PNC's Women Connect Employee Business Resource Group, Programming Committee
- Women of Color HerStory Host Committee, New Voices Pittsburgh

How Long Have You Been a Member of the Board of Ursuline Support Services? six months

What Encouraged You to Join the Board?

My aunt (Linh Quach) recommended me as a board member when her term expired, and my family has volunteered with Ursuline for decades.

What Do You Hope to Bring to the Organization through Your Service?

I hope to bring a diverse perspective as a young professional in financial services to help us improve our market outreach efforts. As a member of our Communications Committee, the team and I are thinking of new ways to reach and retain our existing audience while attracting potentially new donors.

What is Your Favorite Part of Serving on the Board?

Spreading Ursuline's mission to new audiences. In my circle, many of my colleagues aren't aware of Ursuline. Thankfully, we haven't had to use Ursuline's services but are humbled to know that such incredible work is being done in the greater Pittsburgh community. I'm very proud to see our organization's progress in recent years and to be a part of our growth and impact.

What Would You Like to Share with the Community about Ursuline Support Services, its Programs and Services?

Beneficiaries and loved ones should know that there is no shame in seeking guardianship and additional support. As a first generation American, I know first-hand that access to financial and educational resources and guidance can appear daunting or difficult. If we can make a small impact to empower individuals and families to feel confident, self-sufficient, and valued, we can ensure that our most vulnerable populations can lead a fulfilling and safe life.

What would you say to others who may be considering board membership as a way to volunteer in support of a community benefit organization?

As a first generation American, I've witnessed the challenges posed to my family when emigrating to a new country and the impact it can make on their American Dream. I have such an appreciation for the struggles they faced in the 1980s and even today to learn a new culture, speak a new language, and create a new life on new territory. Through all of these life transitions, my elders always maintain and instill strong family values to my generation and remind us to exercise gratitude in all that we do.


We've volunteered with Ursuline for decades, offering translation services to our neighbors in need. We see ourselves and our loved ones in so many of the individuals we meet at Ursuline and hope that our efforts can make their aspirations feel within reach. When my aunt neared the end of her term as board member, I was honored to be



nominated as her successor. I am humbled by the opportunity to keep our organization focused on its mission: to “help individuals experiencing challenges posed by life’s transitions, inspiring hope through protection, education and advocacy.”

In my term thus far, my favorite part of serving on Ursuline’s board is spreading awareness of our cause to new audiences. When people see the work we do, it gives newfound appreciation that they may have not had to utilize Ursuline’s services for themselves or loved ones. For so many of our neighbors in need, we may be their only option for support. When our outreach efforts connect Ursuline with new audiences, we hope people take notice of passersby and acquaintances who may need the attention and care that they are not often awarded. If we can make a positive impact to empower individuals and families to feel confident, self-sufficient, and valued, we can ensure that our most vulnerable populations can lead fulfilling, productive, and safe lives.

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I look forward to growing with the Ursuline family and continuing our momentum into 2018! If you’re reading this, thank YOU for your continued support. I encourage you all to share this newsletter with your families and friends so that they can learn more about how Ursuline is making an impact on the Greater Pittsburgh Community. 

SLEP cont. from page 1


both with individuals and in group settings. All three coordinate efforts and talk to each other regularly to ensure they provide the best service possible.

The critical role SLEP service coordinators play is to connect residents, their families (where appropriate) and building management with a network of services, whether provided by SLEP, Ursuline or one of dozens of qualified agencies or individuals vetted by SLEP. Critical to this process is the consistent thread of SLEP involvement. Even when a resident is referred to another agency for specialized attention or care, that resident knows that his or her service coordinator will follow the process, figuratively holding his or her hand along the way—and be waiting at the facility when he or she returns.

Gwen says each building is different and the residents present their own unique issues to be resolved. “We start our visit by meeting with the building manager to see if anyone owes outstanding rent or if there are other concerns needing to be addressed,” she said. “We have to keep in mind the human factor. We all might one day face circumstances where we need someone’s help. We help these individuals navigate the system and arrive at the best result possible.”

Added Toni, “Sometimes people just need to talk. We are a sounding board for their concerns. We provide therapeutic listening. We treat everyone with dignity and respect. Everyone’s life matters and lives can turn around for the better.”

As one building manager said, “The service coordinators are an integral part of our team and I enjoy working with them. They are individuals able and willing to roll up their sleeves to improve the lives of our residents.”

(SLEP is a part of Ursuline Support Services (ISS), directed by Karen Tobin. Other programs offered through ISS include Checks & Balance, which provides volunteer bill-paying and representative payee services as well as Cart to Heart, a volunteer shopping program. If you would like more information on SLEP or how its services could connect to a property you live in or manage, call Karen at 412-224-04700 or visit www.ursulinesupportservices.org.) 



Toni Federline (left) and Gwen Harris (right).

“We help these individuals navigate the system and arrive at the best result possible.”
 – Gwen Harris
 Service Coordinator



Ursuline Support Services

Help navigating life's transitions

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INSIDE:

Core Values: Third in a Series

Volunteer Spotlight

A Quick Look: Ursuline's
Service Coordination Program



Walk with Ursuline on Saturday, May 12

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Ursuline Support Services helps individuals experiencing challenges posed by life's transitions, inspiring hope through protection, education, and advocacy.

www.ursulinesupportservices.org

United Way Donor Designation Code: 281



Ursuline Support Services was awarded this Seal of Excellence by the Pennsylvania Association of Nonprofit Organizations (PANO), under the Standards for Excellence.