



November 2020

*"We want to give our lives with a touch of madness."*

-St. Marie Eugenie

Assumption Mission Associates

# FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of AMA,

I pray this newsletter finds you and yours well during these tumultuous months as the pandemic has turned our lives upside down.

Like you, I have been processing a range of emotions since March - fear, anger, sorrow, hope, just to name a few - while trying to keep the faith that all will be well someday soon. What has buoyed me during these days is the continued ministry coming out of the Center. AMA Conner Morgan, Cana member Serafina Bon Tempo and the Center staff have not let this pandemic quell our creativity and zeal for the mission of the Assumption and the people in our community in Worcester, MA! While we have had to pivot our outreach in many ways by taking some of our programming virtual, each new project we undertake has brought us the joy of serving others. We were very happy that Conner Morgan, who served in Worcester last year, decided to stay on for another year! Conner has seen his role change in many ways, but he has rolled with these changes and is discovering new avenues to share his skills and talents.

As you may have noticed, each AMA newsletter highlights a quote from our foundress St. Marie Eugenie. This month I came across one that I felt fit our current circumstances - "we want to give our lives with a touch of madness." This quote resonated with me because we have not let this pandemic or any other chaos keep us from moving forward in our mission. Supported by the love and prayers of the Assumption Sisters, we are riding the waves of this storm, and we continue to find new ways to serve and minister to the people in our midst. Perhaps some would say we're crazy, but as St. Marie Eugenie also said, we have "[found] joy in sacrifice and in the total gift of [ourselves] to God." AMEN!

We thank you for your continued support of AMA, and we pray the peace of Christ fills you with hope as we await the coming of the Light of the World at Christmas.

- Sandy & The Assumption Sisters



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## Conner Morgan, AMA Worcester, MA Part Two

And just like that a year has passed since I've last been granted the opportunity to contribute to the Friends Newsletter-and what a year, friends. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to consider the sorts of events that I saw fit to report this time last year in light of the year that's been. For example, I recall recounting the manner in which I often became disoriented whilst navigating out and about in fair Worcester. You'll doubtless be glad to hear that I never get lost anymore. Ever. This is due in large part to the string of yarn that I sometimes trail behind me that I might follow it home. This, coincidentally, also sums up well the amount of knitting that I've picked up in the last year. At this rate I fear that I may never follow in Elliot's footsteps...

Certainly one marked difference between when I arrived in the fall of 2019 and today in the fall of 2020 is the presence of the plague. This reality has surely affected all of our ways of being to some degree and the programs that the sisters offer in the



## Conner Morgan—Part 2

### A BIG Thank You to our Donors!

Kimiko Abramoff  
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Christopher & Margaret Keating  
Patrick & Tana Keivens  
Kathleen Kelly  
Christopher Kelly



Masking up is a new protocol for this AMA.

community have been no exception. While ESL classes have been discontinued for the time being, Myra has worked valiantly and tirelessly to adapt the Mentoring program to take place remotely. Her creativity and ingenuity have certainly not changed from last year nor have they been stunted by viral restrictions.

What else hasn't changed from last fall? We've been able to continue offering food on a weekly basis from the food pantry at St. Peter's church. Many procedural updates have been implemented to reduce contact between persons, but we're distributing to more people than ever—we've gone from 35 families to close to 150 since March. The increase in need in our community corresponds to an increase in need for volunteers. We are, all of us, happy to have welcomed legacy-AMA and current CANA Comrade, Serafina Bon Tempo, to our ranks. Serafina raises the bar for us all at the food pantry in her ability to naturally and joyfully bring to bear the humanity of each individual she encounters.

The ogre's share of my time and efforts these days is consumed by the students at Saint Peter's Central Catholic school where I get to teach fifth, seventh, and eighth graders something about theology and philosophy. I'm kept busy with preparing for lessons and trying to master Google Classroom (to no avail, some say). I am, nonetheless, very grateful for the opportunity and I continue to love every minute of it.

While I've been at school, Sandy and Myra have labored to outfit the Assumption Center for use as a space for students to do school work—a study hall, of sorts. Friends, you'd not believe the transformation they've brought about. The once musty, ill-lit, slightly foreboding basement is no longer. Rather, Sandy, Myra, and the GWD (Girls With Dreams) gang have brought into being a warm, welcoming, colorful, and comfortable space wherein all sorts of academic heights may be ascended. Also, yes, we are now offering our services as a home renovation company.



A new look for our basement meeting room!

It's been a full year, marked by both continuity and change. For example, the leaves still need to be raked like they did last fall, but this time I'm on better terms with our neighborhood cats: Zucchini, Tomatillo, and Carmel Sunrise Pumpkin (the neighbor kids helped us name that last one). Day-to-day life as the lone AMA of Worcester looks a bit different than it did a year ago, however, I still could not have asked for a better volunteer arrangement.

**-Conner Morgan**

## Myra Villas - AMA to Youth Director for the Assumption

I first connected with the Religious of the Assumption through the AMA Program in 2018 to start a year of service in England. Going into the program, I was looking for a change of pace and more purpose in my work. I focused on immersing myself in the community every day and fulfilling the needs of the people in Walker and the children who attended Kids Kabin. My time volunteering at the arts center ended up being the perfect bridge into my next opportunity- my current role as the Youth Programs Director at the Assumption Center. My journey has been an unexpected one, full of growth both professionally and personally as I discover how I can make an impact on others.



Myra in action last winter before we had to go virtual with our Mentoring program.

When I arrived in Newcastle, the Kids Kabin staff quickly welcomed our small group of new international volunteers and guided us through our roles. Soon, we were leading multiple creative arts sessions every day in various skills like painting, woodworking, cookery, and bike repairs. While I was becoming more comfortable with using the potter's wheel and replacing bicycle bearings, I was also getting to know the kids better. I loved the excitement they had when they waited at the door to start a session and told me their latest ideas of what they wanted to create that day. The most challenging days were the ones where we dealt with difficult behavior. Knowing the struggling circumstances that some of the kids came from, it was important to approach every case with empathy and try to be an advocate for them even when they tried to reject any help. I was happy to play a role in these kids' lives and see positive changes in them, like their growing confidence, better anger management, and increased teamwork.

Seeing the progress I made with the kids in Newcastle helped me decide to continue working with youth when I returned home. That's why I was excited when Sr. Nuala emailed me about a new position at the Assumption Center that I might be interested in. I'm thankful to the Sisters and the whole Assumption Center team who saw potential and passion in me during the interview process and hired me for the role. I began the job a month after I returned stateside and jumped right into planning for the new year of the Mentoring Program.



Myra and GWD member Clare.

It's not hard to love the kids in mentoring and it's very special to see how our college student mentors form lasting relationships with them. The atmosphere of afternoons at St. Peter's can be hectic and loud, but it's also proof of the inviting and safe space the program has established where kids are free to be themselves.

Brigid & Paul Killian  
Frank & Carol Lazarus  
Sally Leathersich  
William & Janet Lee  
Ching Legarda  
Laura Libanati  
Paul Mahon  
Lourde Martinez  
Gregory & Maureen Maskarinec  
Stephanie McCaffrey  
Ann McCarthy  
Gerald McCarthy  
Vincent & Christine McCormick  
Francis & Diane McGuire  
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Patti & Paul Verderese  
Victoria Viray-Mendoza  
Mary & Bob Wagner  
Irene Wanjiku  
David & Monica Wolff  
Catherine & Mark WoodBrooks





It's been rewarding to carry that feeling into our smaller weekly group, Girls With D.R.E.A.M.S. where we can delve into more focused topics and creative activities.

Since the pandemic took hold, it's been challenging to provide services for these families and stay connected. If there's any lesson I took away from my AMA year, it's that even with an uncertain future, we must show up and give our best every day. Although we've scaled down our programs, in the Assumption spirit of service and community, my goal has been to let families know we are still here to support them and we won't disappear as these obstacles arise. It's a privilege to be in a position to give back and look out for others during this tumultuous time, and I'm grateful I get to do this alongside the Assumption. —Myra Villas

## AMA 2019-2020—So much to be thankful for!

Kimmy and John with the Kids Kabin staff in Newcastle, England.



Sammy serving a meal to refugees in Chaparral.



Serafina teaching children to swim in San Jose, Antique.



Kathryn cooling off with the school children at ASEC school in Iloilo.



Conner with his co-teacher and ESL students.



Katrina with children from the AHA Learning Center in Manila.

## Happy 100 years to the U.S. Province!

Since we could not gather in Philadelphia last October to celebrate the end of our Province's Centennial Year (thanks to COVID19!), friends and well-wishers from around the Assumption world sent their greetings the virtual way! Be sure to check out the video if you haven't seen it yet! **Watch the video on YouTube by copying this link.**

<https://youtu.be/ioEPryzEVOE> **Here's to 100 more years!**

