

## FRIENDS of AMA NEWSLETTER

Dear Friends of AMA,

Happy Advent!

I am finding it hard to believe that another season of Advent is upon us! Sadly, the season of Advent can be taken over by busyness as we get caught up in the preparations for Christmas Day – buying gifts, baking, sending Christmas cards, etc. But, the Church invites us to enter into this season of preparation in a richer way by pondering Jesus' coming into the world, and our expectant hope of his coming again. Jesus is truly humankind's greatest gift!

Our AMAs, today and over the years, have been "gifts" to the people they serve and the Sisters with whom they have shared their lives. We want to thank you, our donors who have supported the AMA mission over these past 65 years! We pray that with your continued support, both financially and with your prayers, our young people will continue to build up God's Kingdom here on earth!

My wish and hope for each of us over these next four weeks, is that we will accept the invitation to reflect on the wonder of God's plan to break into the world with his gifts of peace, hope, justice and love!

-Sandy



***"We should ask with ardent longing that Our Lord reign totally in us and that His coming be renewed in us!" - St. Marie Eugenie***

### This year's volunteers reflect on how AMA has been a gift to them!



For the past year I've been a part of the AMA family. In that year AMA has been there for me when I needed it most. I'm very grateful to be an AMA!

Serafina —Philippines



AMA has been a gift to me by allowing me to show up with love for my students, immigrants and refugees, and the community of Chaparral. It has been a gift to be loved in return.

Sammy - Chaparral



The AMA program has been a gift to me because it has allowed me to explore my interests and passions while also providing avenues for relationship and growth.

Mattie—Chaparral



I'm particularly thankful for the spiritual, social, and emotional growth that my AMA experience offers.

Conner—Worcester

AMA is a gift because it has given me a stronger connection to my global community.

Kimmy—Newcastle



I am excited for what is still to come this year! Thank you! - Kathryn—Philippines



## KATHRYN SULLIVAN—PHILIPPINES

### *Our Donors are a Gift to Us!*

Anderson, Mary Lou  
Anastacio, Leaia Castañeda  
Assumption College Mass Appeal  
Bayon, Fred and Isa  
Bearden, Bill & Eithne  
Brown, Mark & Kissinger, Kraig  
Buggy, Laura  
Buron, Deacon Walter & Kathy  
Castaldi, Peter & Carolina  
Cataldo, Lisa  
Cinciruk, Melissa & Nick  
Collazo, Lismarie  
Cosgrove, James  
Covino, Deacon Paul & Anne  
Diodati, Gene & Fran  
Dowd, Fred & Kathryn  
Duffy, Phyllis  
Englander, Barbara & Gary  
Fitzpatrick, Jane  
Franquin-Wilkerson, Christine  
Furcinitti, Paul  
Girard, Yvon & Linda  
Glick, Monica & Bill  
Gray, Maureen & Bob  
Hariss, Nubia  
Hutcheson, Robin  
Hutcheson, Sally and Biddle, David  
Kelly, Raymond & Kathleen  
Lazarus, Frank & Carol  
Lee, Janet & William  
Mahon, Paul  
Martin, Scott & Xuan Trang Nguyen  
Maskarinec, Deacon Greg & Maureen  
McCarthy, Gerry  
McCarthy, Patrick & Ann  
McGuire, Frank & Diane  
Mendoza, Vicky Viray  
Meunier, Hubert & Ronelle

Greetings from the other side of the world! As the sun is rising there, it's melting the sea and sky together in hues of lilac out my window. It's just before dark in Barrio Obrero, Iloilo City, the Philippines. This small district juts out from the edge of the city into the sea, and as resilient as its people, weathers storms and waves from three sides. It became populated as a refuge for several waves of victims fleeing fires in the city during the last century. The school at which I live and work is Assumption Socio-Educational Center (ASEC), a Catholic mission elementary school serving this impoverished community.



Two of the young students get in on the painting!

Despite the magnificent sunrises and sunsets, life here is not an easy one, and the adjustment has challenged me in ways I could not have imagined.

Serafina and I arrived to the location of our orientation in the Philippines after an odyssey through 4 countries, 6 airplane meals, and 18 hours accidentally spent in Beijing, and shared a momentary meltdown over the conditions. It was the first of many times I thought that it was too much and I could not stay. The first two months I spent in the Philippines I came up against challenges that I didn't think I could overcome at times, and days when it felt impossible to go on. Those were the days I tied a rosary to my wrist and knew that I was testing the timber of my heart.

At two months in and when I felt almost at a breaking point, we had our first gathering of all the 23 AMAs in the Philippines. At this week long retreat, I reflected on my work and

The library has been swept and cleaned out and the newly painted bookshelves are in place!



myself, I came to see that only by being challenged to my core could I confront myself and ask who am I, and who do I want to be? On a storming afternoon I stood at the ocean and asked God those very questions, and the waves answered me: joy. I learned that joy is not something that happens to you, but something that you must actively choose. I discovered that lesson Victor Frankl taught us, that you can only be miserable with your permission to allow external factors to affect you. Since re-

turning to ASEC, I have enacted a monumental paradigm shift by reminding myself constantly to choose joy and reflect God's joy from my heart out into the world.

Concurrent with this internal recalibration, I was reassigned to a new job within the school in which I have found enormous purpose and fulfillment. I have been tasked with breathing life into the previously rather abysmal school library--a challenge to be sure, but one I have taken into my heart. My mission is to create a space where the students can feel safe, loved, and inspired. Little about the school is kid-friendly with cement bare classrooms and dilapidated facilities,

so I intend to channel any artistic talent and elbow grease I have, and can gather, to transform the place to somewhere the kids want to be and can cultivate a love for reading.

Last weekend I organized a successful volunteer work party to phase one - clean, sort, move and paint! During the school day and weekends students are always offering to help, so I enlist them in jobs big or small, no matter their age or ability, because I believe this is a chance for them to be invested in their new school library and take ownership of it.

Armed with a new intentional floorplan, actual categorization of books, and big dreams, we've taken the first step in the right direction. I plan to have a comfortable reading nook at the back for older students with a carpet and bean bag chairs, surrounded by fiction books. I hope to create a kids land at the front area under the windows for children that I envision being full of color, stuffed animals, murals and decorations. In the back room I have placed all our encyclopedias, and someday might have computers to teach proper research.

These big dreams keep me working long hours, but I am filled with purpose, excitement, and chosen joy. Life here feels more normal and comfortable now that I am adjusting to it. I have been blessed to be able to look to the Sisters at the main school in the city as a source of strength, counsel and fun, as well as my family and boyfriend who have supported me throughout. I can now say that

I am excited for what is still to come this year and that I will be facing both the good



Kathryn is pictured here with her crew of parents, students and other helpers!



A few students helped with putting the books back on the shelves!

Michalak, Pauline

Murphy, Venus

Nguyen, Khanh Trang

O'Connor, John & Julie

Pacek, Leonard & Carolyn

Pantos, Barbara

Pax, Ann

Perron, Michel & Pamela

Piwko, Paul

Ravenelle, Bob & Deb

Roxas, Candi

Sevilla, Enid

Sevilla, Rosalyn

Sheehan, Ellen K.

Sherman, Michelle & Rade-macher, Nick

Simisky, Kathy

Szelest, David & Margo

Tran, Thuvan & Son

Valdes, Marie A.S.

Verderese, Patricia & Paul

Wanjiku, Irene

Wolff, David & Monica

Wood Brooks, Catherine & Mark

Yu, Alex & Margaret

Zaehring-Haskins, Maddie



Want to give online?

Just go to  
[www.assumptionSisters.org/donate](http://www.assumptionSisters.org/donate)



and the bad with joy.

These big dreams keep me working long hours, but I am filled with purpose, excitement, and chosen joy. Life here feels more normal and comfortable now that I am adjusting to it. I have been blessed to be able to look to the Sisters at the main school in the city as a source of strength, council and fun, as well as my family and boyfriend who have supported me throughout. I can now say that I am excited for what is still to come this year and that I will be facing both the good and the bad with joy.

To see more pictures of Kathryn's renovation of the library go to our Instagram site at [assumptionvolunteersandSisters](#).

## KIMMY MARIANI—NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND

### LEARNING ENGLISH

It has been almost three months since I stepped foot in the land of royalty, tea, and David Beckham and I am just starting to feel as if I am settling into my new home. Since I've arrived to the north I have quickly realized that it is very different than the southern stereotypes most Americans have in their minds when they think of England. Here in Newcastle, I live among the Geordies. Now, they say in England the further north you go, the nicer the people get. Newcastle is almost at the border of England and Scotland, so there really is not much further north you can go in England. Since being here I have felt nothing but a generous welcome into a new community. Between neighboring Sisters, Kids Kabin staff and, my favorite, the Kids Kabin kids, I feel like I am finding a place in Walker.

Something that I learned very quickly upon arriving to Newcastle is that they speak English and I am speaking English, but we are not speaking the same language. Like I said, I live among the Geordies and Geordies speak...well...Geordie! It is a thick accent with, what sounds like, fake words sprinkled in. For example, "Christmas" is "chrimbo," and "didn't," or "don't" is "divn't." It is all very confusing at times, except for the fact that this language barrier has brought me closer to the children of Kids Kabin. They love to teach me and the other



Kimmy seen here in the woodworking shop at Kids Kabin.



volunteers Georgie slang. This has been particularly evident in my relationship with Paul.

Paul is a member of Kids Kabin at my outreach across Newcastle in Cowgate. Paul is middle school age and middle schoolers just happen to be one of my biggest fears in life. It also does not help that Paul is –and this is just a rough estimate – eighteen feet tall. He towers over me, so not only is he a middle schooler, but he is also a giant. I feel comfortable describing him as my walking nightmare. Immediately after meeting Paul it became abundantly clear that he is in fact completely lovely. I am only enjoying my time with him more and more and one of our favorite things to talk about – English.



Paul, pictured on the right, from a Kids Kabin camping trip. He's the tall one!

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When Paul and I have sessions together every Tuesday, he spends half of the session pointing at items and getting me to say the word and then he proceeds to mock my accent. He teaches me new words all the time that I try to work into my daily vernacular. Let's see how I do. Howay, man! What time are we leaving our neet oot on the toon? I gotta get hyem for scran or me Mam is gonna be up a height.

Differences have been a key component in forming relationships with the members of Kids Kabin. Differences can cause so much tension around the world, specifically with adults, but with children there is nothing more exciting. Just the way I pronounce “water” differently from them creates excitement. While I feel like I am offering a lot of skills and knowledge to these kids they are so clearly teaching me more than I could ever teach them and I look forward to many more conversations on culture with them. Hopefully, by the time July rolls around I am a fluent Georgie speaker and will make my little (and not so little) teachers proud. Cheers!



Kids Kabin, Walker neighborhood in Newcastle

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## MYRA VILLAS

### NEW YOUTH PROGRAM DIRECTOR AT ASSUMPTION CENTER, WORCESTER



Myra getting in on the Halloween fun with the girls!

When the Assumption Sisters decided they needed a full-time youth program director at Assumption Center in Worcester, MA, they formed a Search Committee and launched a nationwide search for the right person to fit the bill. After searching far and wide, they looked across the pond and found her: Myra Villas — our AMA (now alum) in Kids Kabin, Newcastle! Myra served last year in Newcastle, England in the Walker site. She was a valued part of the Kids' Kabin team and was integral in planning their 25th Anniversary celebration that took place last July.

Myra is now responsible for our after-school Mentoring program, Girls with DREAMS program, and recently began partnering with Assumption College Campus Ministry to begin a young people's environmental group, focusing on Pope Francis's encyclical, *Laudato si'* (On the Care of our Common Home).



Myra, helping out at the BC recruitment fair!

We are so happy that Myra said yes to joining our Assumption team in Worcester. We know that she is going to bring a new excitement to our programs!



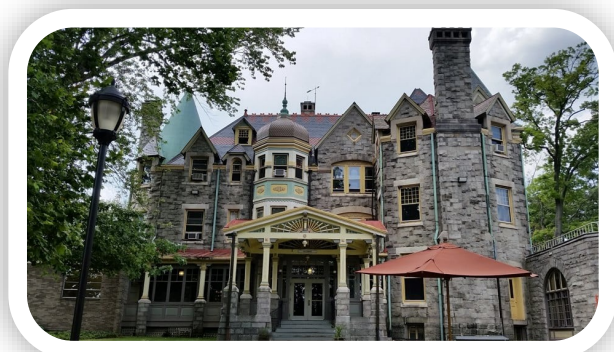
## HAPPY 100th BIRTHDAY ASSUMPTION U.S.A.!

### SAVE the DATE!

## CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION - OCTOBER 17th, 2020



It was October 12th, 1919 when the first Assumption Sisters arrived in the USA. Mother Agnes Marguerite, accompanied by three Sisters, landed in this country and took up the task of founding the first community of Religious of the Assumption in North America. Three weeks later (November 3, 1919) Ravenhill Academy for Girls opened at Germantown near Philadelphia with three students. Four more joined them in December and at the end of the school year in May eight young girls made up the school!



We invite you to join us as we celebrate our Centennial next year! A Mass of thanksgiving will be held on Saturday, October 17th at 12:05 pm at the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, Philadelphia, PA. The Mass will be followed by a reception in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center.



Be sure to "like us" on Facebook and learn more about our history every Saturday. Centennial Saturdays are being shared with us by Sr. Ann Christopher each week! Our page name is: Religious of the Assumption