

IHM^s IN ACTION



Sister Beth (Maria Alma) Wood, IHM, found herself in her current ministry as the University of Michigan – Dearborn circulation librarian by divine providence.

She had gone to the UM-D library hoping to bone up on her computer skills. A sign at the circulation desk read “Now Hiring.” She applied and was hired immediately.

“The Holy Spirit is definitely in charge of my life,” she says. “I believe and trust.”

She can point to many examples of the Spirit at work, starting with her freshman year at Immaculata High School in Detroit.

“I was on a waiting list to get in,” she recalls. “I went the first day of school and hoped for the best. Another girl called to say she was moving, and because I was right there, I got in. It was my first exposure to the IHM Sisters!”

After graduation, Sister Beth joined the IHM community and had been teaching for 22 years when Sister Claudia Carlen suggested that someone learn library science. Sister Beth turned out to be that “someone.”

During the school year, she continued to teach full time. She attended UM-Ann Arbor during the summer and received her degree in library science after five years. Sister Beth continued teaching after she graduated, until she “was guided by the Spirit to a school library ministry in Benton Harbor, Mich.,” a position she held for six years.

When librarian jobs opened at St. Mary Academy in Monroe, and Immaculata, Sister Beth was drawn to both.

“I kept an open mind,” she says, “and I left the decision up to the Holy Spirit – but I gave him a deadline of one week to decide!”

“At the end of the week, I received a note from the Academy telling me how they hoped I would follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

Sister Beth spent 10 years at the Academy and another four years at St. Mary Catholic Central High School before going to Rome to work as librarian at the Casa Santa Maria, a graduate house of studies for North American priests. After 10 years in Rome, she began her ministry at UM-Dearborn.

“I often tell people I would go to work even if they didn’t pay me,” she states. “I have never worked with so many wonderful people. We are professionals with a family spirit. We care about each other and about each patron.

“People meeting people – what could be nicer?”

In addition to her ministry, Sister Beth is an avid runner. She recently competed in the Detroit Free Press/Flagstar half-marathon and finished first in her age division.