

IHM's in Action



Sister Gretchen Webb, IHM, has one goal in her ministry as IHM Motherhouse residents' administrator: to ensure the needs of the Motherhouse sisters are met.

When Sister Gretchen assumed her role in March, she quickly discovered the breadth of the position.

She is responsible for the Motherhouse Residents' Community (MRC), which focuses on the lives of the sisters who reside in the Motherhouse. She is responsible for the departments of Pastoral Care, Resident Services, Volunteer Services and the IHM Gift Shop. When sisters move home, Sister Gretchen helps them determine what area of the Motherhouse would best meet their needs. Her responsibilities also include working with Pastoral Care and the IHM Leadership Council to make funeral

arrangements when a sister dies.

In spite of the myriad details involved in the job description though, Sister Gretchen remains committed to be the listening ear Motherhouse sisters need as they voice concerns or make decisions regarding their care.

"I get to walk with the sisters on their journeys, being present with them and hearing their needs," Sister Gretchen says quietly. "I view this ministry as a privilege. The sisters are so life-affirming, and the staff I work with is amazing, both as individuals and as a team working together to meet the sisters' needs."

Sister Gretchen's background uniquely qualifies her for this ministry. Prior to joining the IHM community, she worked as a licensed practical nurse and as a dental assistant. She realized that one of the things she enjoyed most was listening to people.

After becoming a vowed member, she completed a unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE). Through this experience she met her first social worker and was drawn to the field. She received her BSW from Marygrove College and worked as a social worker at Hutzel Hospital in Detroit. When she was laid off from Hutzel, Sister Gretchen accepted a position at the Eleanor Hutzel Recovery Center as a chemical dependence therapist.

She began working for her master's degree in social work (University of Michigan) and did her internship at, and was later hired by, Henry Ford Maplegrove, a nationally recognized addiction treatment center. In 1999, she began a ministry at Guest House for Women Religious, an addictions treatment facility.

At Guest House, Sister Gretchen developed programs, supervised the therapists and nurses working with sisters in treatment and their communities' leadership when treatment concluded. She also provided educational workshops regarding addiction and its treatment for religious communities around the world. When her job at Guest House ended, she ministered at Hospice of Michigan as a social worker.

"My ministries have been a progression," Sister Gretchen reflects. "Each one has taught me more and prepared me for the one to come. Each step has led to the next one.

"When I was left Hospice, I began volunteering at the Motherhouse because I've always found it so life-giving to be with the sisters. I felt called to be open to accepting the appointment. This is truly a situation where we minister to each other.

"I am very blessed."