

IHMs in Action



Mary Agnes (John Michael) Ryan, IHM, has served as teacher, co-provincial of the Southwest Province for the IHM Sisters, on the IHM Leadership Council and clinical psychologist.

While her latest ministry utilizes all the skills she developed over the years, its focus is very different: she is the IHM mission integration coordinator for schools, a position she has held since January 2011.

“The IHM mission integration effort began long before I started in this position,” Sister Mary Agnes notes. “I want to keep that vital relationship with our sponsored schools alive by building on the work of my predecessors as well as by encouraging the development of training programs to support and clarify the responsibilities of our trustees.”

The IHM Sisters sponsor Marygrove College (Detroit), Marian High School (Bloomfield Hills, Mich.) and co-sponsor Detroit Cristo Rey High School with the Basilian Fathers.

“Originally, the IHMs were very involved with the schools as teachers or administrators,” explains Sister Mary Agnes. “People saw our vision and values being lived every day, just by being who we were.

“Now, with fewer sisters teaching, we need to encourage others within our sponsored schools to embrace the mission and understand what makes the IHM mission distinct. We need to support their efforts to integrate our mission into their personal and professional lives.”

Sister Mary Agnes utilizes a variety of tools to accomplish this.

“We hold orientation days for new employees at the IHM Motherhouse, as well as for faculty and staff of the sponsored schools,” she notes. “We also host orientation days in Monroe for new students. Meeting with the sisters provides students the opportunity to interact with them and to ask questions. There are annual retreat days for sophomores and seniors from Marian High School which include prayer, reflection and sharing. These are memorable times for the girls, their teachers and for the sisters with whom they interact.”

One of her delights in this ministry has been getting to know people from the sponsored schools.

“There’s such religious and cultural diversity when I meet with students and faculty to introduce the IHM congregation,” Sister Mary Agnes exclaims. “I provide numerous examples of the long, deep commitment IHMs have for education of the whole person. I remind them they are always welcome in Monroe, and that they are always in our thoughts and prayers.”

Sister Mary Agnes believes serving as a trustee, especially in one of our sponsored schools, is critical to continuing the IHM mission and values, its legacy well into the 21st century.

“We don’t want to be a majority on a board,” she says. “But we *can* be an influence, keeping the focus on education – the reason we were founded in 1845.”