

Gerard Place Founder Rejoices in the Agency's Growth and Impact:

Sister Margy Gorman, RSM

Sister Margy Gorman, RSM, was and still is a dreamer. A Sister of Mercy for the past 62 years, she worked with members of the 12 Congregations of Women Religious in the Diocese of Buffalo to launch Gerard Place in 2000. These religious sisters were known as "the dreamers."

Following extensive research and fundraising, their goal of addressing the growing problem of homeless women and children on Buffalo's East Side came to fruition and continues to grow. At the time, the primary mission was to provide apartments and support to homeless women and their children.

Approaching her 80th birthday, Sister Margy is grateful and amazed at how Gerard Place has grown to serve so many people.

"I think back to how it all started with a little seed planted that grew and grew to be 100-fold," Sister Margy said. "It keeps growing with newer ministries like the food pantry, mother/baby clinic, education programs, and services for seniors. There are so many opportunities to raise up people's lives and their families."

She remembers the day in November of 2000, when two families become the first residents of Gerard Place. They were afraid and thought they would be lonesome since it was just a few people living in the facility. "A surprise snowstorm happened that day, and as it turned out, Gerard Place became a shelter for 200 children and bus aides," she said. "Police officers even delivered McDonalds to the people who were stranded."



Sister Margy has served on the Board of Directors since 2015 and is a member of the Program Committee. Prior to the pandemic, Sister Margy tutored refugees who were working toward their GEDs. "I tutored Marie, a Congolese woman who was determined to pass her GED and obtain her nursing degree," she said. "She worked diligently, earned her nursing degree, and went on to serve other refugees at Jericho Road. Her story is an example of a life coming full circle."

Sister Margy has long history of service to the community and the Church. She served in various leadership roles at Trocaire College, including dean of students, worked on Diocesan parish teams, and taught junior high school.

Many clients at Gerard Place have experience with abusive situations, homelessness, and challenges of caring for children with extra needs. According to Sister Margy, clients have positive attitudes and are glad to be there to get help. She also notes that they are always treated with respect, dignity, and loving care.

She credits the leadership of David Zapfel, executive director, for building a collaborative team of staff and volunteers. According to Sister Margy, when Zapfel hears about an opportunity for funding or support, he pursues it and when he learns of a need in the community, he determines how to address it. Through ministry and service, the agency is helping people in need.

"Being involved in Gerard Place has broadened my horizons," she said. "I grew up in South Buffalo and had a privileged childhood – I was safe, educated, and respected. I only realized later that we were poor, but we were privileged."

"It makes me part of something bigger, something good. It's like an octopus – all arms of service reaching out in so many different directions," Sister Margy said.

She is grateful to the dreamers - her fellow Sisters who hung in there in the beginning, and to God who made it all possible. She also encourages others to do something with their time, talents, gifts, and finances and get involved in the many programs at Gerard Place.

"If there was ever a time to invest yourself in the East Side, this is the time in whatever manner you are able."