



Benedict Center · SISTERS PROGRAM

Compassion • Justice • Action • Transformation

**SISTERS
PROGRAM
SOUTH**

COLLABORATORS

Ascension Lutheran Church (ELCA)

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes

Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa

School Sisters of Notre Dame

School Sisters of St. Francis

Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida

Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi

Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis

October 16, 2020

Dear Friends:

Sister Celia Struck, Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi and member of our Sisters Program South Advisory Board, recently wrote about how the Benedict Center’s Sisters Program is helping women in the street-based sex trade find hope and live healthier and safer lives through a harm reduction and housing-first approach. Sister Celia’s article appeared in the National Catholic Reporter Global Sisters Report.

The Sisters Program began officially in 2011, but is entering its fourth year of collaboration between the Benedict Center, Ascension Lutheran Church (ELCA), School Sisters of St. Francis, Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, and Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis. Since then, Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes, School Sisters of Notre Dame, and Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida have joined the cause.

With the support of our collaborative partners the Sisters Program has been able to expand and grown: opening a second Drop-In Center, purchasing a Street Outreach Van, and operating a winter warming room - all while continually working to effect systems change.

With the Milwaukee County Housing Division, Medical College of Wisconsin, and Southside Organizing Committee, the Benedict Center is leading a cross-sector collaboration to establish diversion policies focusing on women in the street-based sex trade who use opioids. The Sisters Program is also partnering with IMPACT 2-1-1 and the Milwaukee Continuum of Care to expand access to housing for homeless women in the street sex trade.

While Sister Celia’s article highlights successes of the Sisters Program in advocating for a public health approach to street-based sex rather than criminalization, it also demonstrates the value of partnership. At the Benedict Center, our partnerships are instrumental in helping us achieve our goals. We deeply appreciate the support from faith-based groups, system partners, and neighborhood and government institutions as we collectively advocate and work for long-term change in the criminal justice system.

As Helen Keller said, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

Thank you for doing this life-saving work with us.

With gratitude,

Jeanne Geraci
Executive Director

Sr. Linda Szocik
Sisters of St. Joseph of the
Third Order of St. Francis