



Sister Mary Ann Sutera
Recreation Therapist, St. Ann's Home

I often stand outside the chapel at St. Ann's Home and read the plaque hanging there dedicated to the Sisters of St. Joseph. I feel blessed to be part of that heritage begun so many years ago by our Congregation.

I began my own journey at St. Ann's seven years ago as a volunteer. After a few months, I knew that God was calling me to minister to the elderly. I was hired as a Recreation Therapist in 2004, and assigned to our dementia unit. The residents on this unit are in various stages of dementia. Each day is a challenge and a gift.

I provide various activities to help keep them as engaged as possible, as well as giving them a sense of the spiritual that has been so much a part of their lives. As a therapist, my work goes beyond providing "entertainment." I provide comfort when needed, hold a hand when someone is in distress, or just give them a smile and a hug. Many of their memories have faded and new ones need to be created. I am also part of a team of nurses, social workers, and dieticians. Together we discuss the needs of our residents on a daily basis.

I also have the privilege of working on many of the other floors. This gives me the opportunity to get to know many of the other residents. It always amazes and delights them when I can call them by name. I often provide spiritual programming, and that seems to be a light in their day. They enjoy having me on their floor simply because I am a Sister.

I visit many residents each day who are in rehab on the 2nd and 9th floors. Many of them will share stories of their spiritual as well as their personal life. Often times, I will hear of relatives or friends who are or were Sisters of St. Joseph. When I leave their rooms, I assure them of my prayers for their speedy recovery, and promise to return to see them again.

The most difficult part of my ministry is saying farewell to those whom the Lord is calling home. Each resident becomes very much a part of me, and it is like losing a family member. The actual family members are always grateful when I am there to provide support and to pray with them.

The Congregation already helps by the continuing presence of its great heritage, as well as by its ongoing prayer and support; and, of course, we are always happy to have new volunteers. Even a few hours a week make a difference.

The elderly are a gift to society, and bring a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to the world. It saddens me when I hear about all of the budget cuts in health care. Our motto at St. Ann's is "Caring for the most important people on earth." Our elderly deserve the very best care in the final days of their lives.

I am proud to be a part of St. Ann's community and will continue to try to bring the spirit of the Sisters of St. Joseph to our residents and co-workers.