

Excerpt from Sister Mary Charles Szczecinski's letter of resignation as Consultant to Koinonia Homes, Inc., dated June 1, 1988, quoting Sister Charles' feelings about Koinonia:

"KOINONIA HAS GIVEN MUCH TO ME -- CHALLENGE, STRIFE, SUCCESS, BEAUTIFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND ABOVE ALL, LOVE. I WILL REMEMBER EACH RESIDENT FOR THE MANY MOMENTS OF JOY THEY BROUGHT INTO MY LIFE.

I WILL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND THE AUXILIARY STAFF, FOR WITHOUT THEIR SUPPORT MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS WOULD HAVE BEEN LITTLE."

Tribute to Sister Charles
copied from her funeral liturgy, February 21, 1995

Sister Charles was one of the first to recognize that mentally, handicapped, emotionally disturbed children and young adults were trainable. She did not try to group them all together, but taught them that each individual had at least "One" redeeming feature and that this could be used to help better their lives and future.

Many of Sister Charles' "clients" are still working in jobs they have held for ten ... fifteen to twenty years, where at one time in their life, they would not have been able to do this.

While at Koinonia Homes, Sister was able to recruit many young people to become the 'advocates' for the handicapped and thus they are still being cared for.

Sister Charles had received several awards for her work with the handicapped. She served on a number of American Retarded Association Boards here in Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio.

Mayor Thomas J. Longo of Garfield Heights, Ohio, created SUNDAY JUNE 6, 1993 as "Sister Mary Charles Day".

GOD said: "A JOB WELL DONE SISTER CHARLES.
COME TO ME."



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

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*MARYMOUNT CONGREGATIONAL HOME
12215 Granger Road
Garfield Heights, OH 44125
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Sister Mary Charles Szczecinski ...

Entered community of Sisters of St. Joseph, T.O.S.F.,
on August 10, 1943

Professed Final Vows on: August 10, 1950

Taught at schools in Michigan and Mississippi as well as Ohio between
1945 and 1969.

Received a Masters Degree in Science from the University of Wisconsin.

Established Marymount Rehabilitation Services, a job training program
for educable mentally handicapped adults at the Convent in 1969 and
served as Coordinator of Client Services until 1974.

Opened Leann Home, a group home for mentally handicapped adults in
1974.

Founded Koinonia Homes, Inc. and served as Administrator from 1974 to
1986 ... served as Consultant from 1986 to 1988.

Served on the following boards: American Retarded Association,
Marymount Advisory Board, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, in Columbus,
Ohio; Ohio and National Retardation Association and Ohio Residential
Association.

Retired to Marymount Convent in 1988.

Celebrates 50 glorious years of dedicated life in this year of 1993,
more than half of which was spent in service to the people of Garfield
Heights, Ohio.

Sunday, June 6, 1993 ... Sister Mary Charles Day

Koinonia's Sister Mary Charles honored for outstanding service



Sister Mary Charles

by **George W. Svoboda**

Sister Mary Charles, foundress of Koinonia Homes Inc., will receive the Association for Retarded Citizens (A.R.C.) Merit Award following this evening's annual A.R.C. meeting at the Independence Holiday Inn located at Rockside Rd. and I-77.

The A.R.C.'s annual Merit Award is presented to an individual the Association feels has done the most outstanding service in the field of mental retardation throughout Cuyahoga County.

All who have come to know and love Sister Charles will have the opportunity to share in the evening's festivities during a special reception immediately following the meeting format and presentation ceremonies.

Sister Charles, a member of the Sisters of

St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis (T.O.S.F.) served ten years in the missions of Mississippi prior to filling the needs of a teaching position at St. Emerich's School for the Exceptional Child in Cleveland

Returning to the Cleveland area in 1967 Sister Charles taught for one year at the St. Joseph Center. The following year she organized the Marymount Rehabilitation Services in Garfield Hts. The program's services, directed by Sister Charles from 1968 thru 1974, worked in conjunction with the Ohio Rehabilitation Services and was instrumental in community employment placement.

The interest that Sister Charles has for developmentally disabled citizens led to her founding the first of the Koinonia (Greek for fellowship) Homes in 1974 at 10000 Granger Road in Garfield Hts. The Home for adult women was originally owned by Leo and Sally Schmidt and was later donated by the Schmidt family to the Sisters of St. Joseph for use in serving developmentally disabled adults.

This first of the Koinonia Homes Inc. is known as LEANS and was named such by the Schmidt family. The first initials of Leo and his wife Sally plus their three sons, Ernest, Arnold, and Nestor were used to name the Home.

On February third of this year, a year after Sister Charles became the consultant for the Koinonia Homes, Inc. and Dr. Joshua Fein became its administrator, her dream became a reality as the Benedict Home joined the Koinonia Homes Inc. family.

[See "Sister Mary Charles" pg. A-8]

★ Sister Mary Charles

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Although a great deal of work has been accomplished in the area of the developmentally disabled, Sister Mary Charles feels it is only the beginning.

"I became interested in the developmentally disabled and wanted to see that they were treated with dignity and love," noted Sister Charles. "There is still a great need for community residential services for the developmentally disabled."

As of this publication work is again underway toward meeting such a need with plans for a Tremont Home located on W. 14th St. scheduled to accommodate developmentally disabled senior citizens and the Brooklyn House on W. 35th St. to house the developmentally disabled that have encountered more severe disabilities.

For those who have not had the pleasure of meeting Sister Charles can gain an insight into her philosophy from the Koinonia Homes program director since 1976, Sister Charlene who says...

"Sister Mary Charles is a very selfgiving individual. She is always willing to share her knowledge with anyone interested in the field of mental retardation. She somehow always finds the time to share this special gift...she has always been a very beautiful person."

So, when Sister Mary Charles is presented the Merit Award this evening by her "family", it is their way of exemplifying the picture on her living room wall depicting Isaiah 49:15 which reads....See! I will not forget you. I have carved you on the palm of my hand.

THE LEADER

GARFIELD HEIGHTS, OHIO

THURSDAY - MARCH 26, 1987