

Sisters of Social Service

Rooted in the social teachings of the Church, we are sent to be pioneers



Celebrating nearly 90 years of working with and supporting people on the margins of our world through social services and advocacy

Guests at Our Tables – Planting Seeds of Hospitality and Hope

by Jamey Fitzpatrick, SSS Development Director



Women from many cultures celebrate a lighter moment at Wellspring Women's Center in Sacramento, circa late 1980s. Photo by Sr. Catherine Connell, SSS

As we celebrate the 80th Anniversary of SSS in Sacramento this year - and soon the 90th of the Sisters of Social Service Los Angeles - we'd like to pay tribute to some of the former and current works of Sisters and Associates. We rediscovered several interesting photos this summer from the start of Wellspring Women's Center. We wanted to share these images with you, and also interviews that Wellspring conducted last summer with their Sisters of Social Service foundresses, Sr. Catherine Connell and Sr. Claire Graham.

Tales from the Heart of Wellspring

Many wonderful interviews are featured in a blog on Wellspring's website called ***Tales from the Heart of Wellspring***. They've created a colorful mosaic of perspectives and stories from guests, staff, Sisters and volunteers who make up the many hands and hearts of Wellspring from the past and present.

The Birth of Wellspring

In a 2011 interview celebrating Wellspring's 25 year milestone, Sr. Catherine described the genesis of Wellspring and the individual who inspired the program. From this providential meeting, she and Sr. Claire began to envision a place for wrap-around support for one of Sacramento's most vulnerable populations: homeless women and their children.



Sr. Catherine Connell, SSS, and Sr. Claire Graham, SSS



An early staff photo from the 1980s (left to right) Sr. Esther O'Mara, IBVM; Sr. Carol Pack, SSS; Sr. Mercedes Braga, SHF; Sr. Catherine Connell, SSS; Sr. Jane McKirch, IBVM

"A woman came up and nudged me on my arm and said, 'Got any money for food?'" Sister Catherine recalled... The Sisters took the woman to a fast food restaurant in the area where they treated her to a meal. ***"When we left and we were walking down the street, I turned to Sister Claire and said, 'Wouldn't it be wonderful if someday we could offer something more than just food and good-bye in the night?'"***

Four years later, Sister Catherine called up Sister Claire and said it was time to make their dream a reality. With help from a friend, the SSS Community, and the local parish community, Wellspring Women's Center was born."

Wellspring Women's Center today

Currently in its 29th year of "**nurturing the innate goodness and personal self-esteem of women and their children,**" Wellspring Women's Center is a vital hub for women of diverse backgrounds, needs and gifts. Wellspring is still led by a sister, Sr. Judy Illig, IBVM and Executive Director, and a team of caring and compassionate staff and volunteers that work together to meet the needs and interests of the current "guests".

To learn more about **Wellspring Women's Center**, please visit: **wellspringwomen.org**

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