

ST. MONICA IS A DREAM COME TRUE

In the early sixties, Sister Helen Wenzel of the Sisters of St. Rita contacted Mr. Steve Horvath and expressed her dream to do something meaningful for the elderly middle class by establishing a senior citizens home in Racine. The four Sisters working for St. Rita's Monastery at the time labored daily by managing the laundry, ironing, cooking, cleaning, gardening, and canning for the priest, brothers, and students living at the monastery. The Sisters toiled endless hours hoping that one day their dream of forming a home for the elderly would come true. Steve began to arrange meetings with every priest in Racine to present Sister Helen's dream. Father Labaj and Father Schmidt wholeheartedly supported Sister Helen's idea and also told her that they hoped to live in such a home upon their retirement some day.

While the Sisters were working at St. Rita's Monastery, they met with Archbishop Cousins to present their dream, and he suggested that the Sisters first purchase some property. Sister Helen and Steve went to talk with the Koleske family and inquire if their 42 acres of land on North Green Bay Road could be purchased for St. Monica's. The Sisters of St. Rita raised money to buy the property by selling honey, jam, homemade noodles, bread and bakery goods, canned fruits and vegetables, strawberries, and flowers. Finally in July of 1963, Sister Helen purchased the land from the Koleske family.

The Sisters continued to raise money for their dream and an Auxiliary was formed to assist the Sisters in their efforts by having card parties and rummage sales. The Sisters moved into the farmhouse on the property on December 24, 1964. Mrs. Amanda Buhler Muhike, President of the Auxiliary, encouraged her son, David, to organize a Board of Directors to establish the senior citizens home and raise money for construction.

The night of March 3, 1969, was very dark. Sister Helen was returning to the farmhouse from the Auxiliary meeting where architect Hans Geyer's blueprints of the home had been approved, when suddenly, she was struck by another motorist after stopping to aid an injured rabbit. She passed away on March 4, 1969, at St. Mary's Hospital following the accident. Sister Helen had devoted her life to the care of all of God's creatures and her determination to achieve the impossible was contagious to those who had worked with her and to those same people who would continue to do everything possible to make her dream become a reality. St. Monica's Auxiliary then started a memorial fund for Sister Helen Wenzel, where contributions went to the building fund for the home.

On July 22, 1969, the Sisters deeded their property to St. Monica's Senior Citizens Home, Inc., a non-profit corporation



Pictured Left,

Mr. Steve Horvath
Emeritus Member
Board of Directors



Sister Helen Wenzel

headed by the lay board and lay administration who volunteered to assist the Sisters in establishing a home for the elderly. Then on December 22, 1969, the Frank C. Lintner bequest of \$500,000 was awarded to St. Monica's Senior Citizens Home for construction of the home. Korndorfer Corporation started to build the home in early spring and the cornerstone was laid in 1970.

When St. Monica's opened on February 1, 1971, three people moved into the home immediately. Mr. Don Kirt was the administrator when the home was dedicated for the senior citizens on March 7, 1971. Through his expertise the home was filled with residents before the end of the first year. In earlier years, St. Monica's staff consisted of six people. Sister Amalia Weiss was the cook, housekeeper, and nurse. She was also in charge of the garden, and in a local newspaper she had said, "I didn't have time to do the weeding, so I said, 'Lord, now you take over.' But we still had to do a lot of weeding."

Sister Dominica and Sister Felicitas assisted Sister Amalia with the cooking and cleaning and also worked in the garden. Mr. Bill Ruffalo was the maintenance man.

Mrs. Evelyn Smith worked as the office manager at St. Monica's for 25 years. When the facility first opened, she set tables, served food, changed beds, printed the newsletter and organized activities.

In 1974, Sister Irene Hanika joined St. Monica's and became the administrator of the home in August of 1976. The mortgage was paid off in October of 1982, and the Mortgage Burning Ceremony took place on November 23, 1982. Finally, the dream of one, shared by many, had become a reality. All those who helped to establish St. Monica's Senior Citizens Home, with God's help, made the impossible dream come true.

(1996)

· THE SISTERS OF ST. RITA

In 1911 in Wurzburg, Germany, the Augustinian pastor, Father Hugolino Bach, saw the need for someone to care for distressed mothers, especially those alone. During that depression, many German husbands and fathers had to seek work outside their homes. Jobs and money were scarce. That left the mother alone with her children, often beset by illness, depression, and fatigue. The group of young women who answered Father Hugolino's call became the Sisters of St. Rita.

Home and hearth thus played a key role in the founding of the Augustinian Congregation of the Sisters of St. Rita. They took their inspiration from the medieval saint of the impossible causes, St. Rita of Cascia. St. Rita herself was a wife, mother, widow, and nun. Her heart always remained motherly, concerned for families, for their peace and forgiveness. So too would the modern day women find their focus in family care.

The story continues in 1935 when a small group of Augustinian Sisters, including Sr. Helen Wenzel, Sr. Dominica and Sr. Amalia Weis left Wurzburg to travel to Bolivia, South America, to work with a group of Augustinian Fathers from Holland.

During these years, working in the mountains of Bolivia, Sr. Helen began contemplating on ways to continue the Sisters' mission of "Family Care" once their service in South America was completed. Because of the evolving world conflicts during the late 1930's, returning to Germany was not assured. As she began to think more and more about this, her ideas of establishing a home for the elderly in the United States began to take shape.



After departing by ship from South America, the Sisters arrived in the U.S. in 1940 and found temporary work in a New York monastery. In 1942 they came to Racine, Wisconsin and formed the St. Rita's community. They continued saving their modest earnings by doing domestic work for the Augustinian Fathers, and also by selling baked and canned goods. Finally, after thirty years, the Sisters had enough saved. In 1963 they purchased the land where St. Monica's is now located.

(Pictured Left to Right)

Sister Clare Marie, Sister Rose Therese, Sister Irene, Sister Angelica, Rose Alice Morris

ST. MONICA'S HISTORICAL EVENTS

- 1963: July - Sister Helen purchased land from the Koleske family.
- 1964: The Sisters and St. Monica's Auxiliary continued to raise money for the home, and a Board of Directors was organized.
- December 24 - The Sisters moved into the farmhouse.
- 1969: July 22 - The Sisters deeded their property to St. Monica's Senior Citizens Home, Inc.
- December 22 - The Frank C. Lintner bequest was awarded to St. Monica's.
- 1970: Spring - St. Monica's was built by Korndorfer Corporation.
- 1971: February 1 - St. Monica's Senior Citizens Home officially opened.
- March 7 - The home was dedicated for the senior citizens by Archbishop William Cousins.
- 1972: January - St. Monica's received the Burlington House Award for "creative use of interior design to advance the welfare and enjoyment of those served."
- 1976: August - Sister Irene Hanika became administrator.
- 1982: November 23 - Mortgage Burning Ceremony.
- 1986: May 5 - South Addition Groundbreaking Ceremony
- June 7 - Blessing and Dedication of the Stations of the Cross along the walk track in back of St. Monica's. The residents of St. Monica's raised the money for this development.
- 1987: February 1 - Dedication of South Addition by Archbishop Rembert Weakland.
- December - Dedication of St. Rita's Convent by Auxiliary Bishop Richard Skiba.
- 1990: Summer - Steve Horvath and sons, Dan and Dave of D&D Construction, built the garage located near the South Wing.
- October 7 - Dedication of the Holy Rosary Walkway.
- December 16 - The 20th Anniversary of St. Monica's Annual Tree Lighting Party was celebrated.
- 1991: Summer - The gazebo was dedicated.
- 1995: December 10 - The 25th Anniversary of St. Monica's Annual Tree Lighting Party was celebrated.
- 1996: Sr. Amalia: On her 25th Anniversary, she got a gift to Washington D.C.
- The Ladies' Auxiliary was dissolved after 24 years.
- 1999: Sr. Irene celebrated her 25th Anniversary.
- The Link from the Home to the Convent was built; it was blessed by Fr. Joseph Hornacek.
- Congressman Paul Ryan and Speaker of the House Dennis Haster visited St. Monica's.



- 2000: A new generator for emergencies in the whole building was purchased.
- 2001: Sr. Angelica celebrated her 25th Anniversary.
- 2002: The celebration of 60 years of the Sisters of St. Rita in Racine, 70 years of Profession for Sr. Amalia and 40 years of Profession for Sr. Irene were celebrated at St. Rita's by Fr. Joseph Hornacek.
- The mortgage was paid off for the Link.
- 2005: Mr. Stephen Horvath became an honorary member of the Board.
- 2006: Priests of the Racine area were invited to get to know St. Monica's.
- 2007: Luncheon with the Elder Attorneys was held.
- Protestant ministers were invited for lunch.
- 2008: Carol Stutzke, kitchen supervisor, celebrated 30 years of service.
- St. Monica's held its first Open House.
- 100th Birthday of Sr. Amalia; two weeks later she passed away.
- 2009: Bernice Wilkstrom became our Compliance Officer.
- New chairs for the dining room were purchased.
- 2010: First Health Fair was held at St. Monica's.
- New, revised Personnel Policies were given to employees.
- The Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary were ordered.
- Dates for celebrations were set for the 40th Jubilee of the Home and 100 years for the Sisters.
- 2011: Sr. Angelica celebrates 35 years.
- Celebration of 40th Anniversary of St. Monica's Home.



The Anniversary Celebration of Forty Successful Years St. Monica's Senior Citizens Home Racine, Wisconsin

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St. Monica's Senior Citizens Home is a Roman Catholic community based residential facility located in Caledonia Township, northwest of the City of Racine. It is non-denominational, welcoming people of all creeds. We are located on 42 lush acres with North Green Bay Road on the east and the Root River on the west. St. Monica's serves 110 residents and is administered through a Board of Directors and the Sisters of St. Rita.

St. Monica's provides affordable assisted living in a secure, home-like environment for elderly people, single or couples, of any heritage or faith, in a compassionate, Christian facility.



St. Monica's delivers the safety and security residents need, with the freedom, social participation and comforts they desire. It is assisted residential retirement living at its finest.

SISTER AMALIA SHARES HER GIFTS



We worked at St Rita's Monastery before coming here to live. We were very poor, and it took awhile to fill the rooms. I did many jobs at St. Monica's; the Sisters and I cleaned the rooms together.

I enjoyed nursing and took care of residents here during the day, then worked at St. Mary's Hospital at night. I like being with people!

By Sister Amalia Weis, 1996

*Pictured Left
 Sisters with Archbishop T. Dolan*



Pictured above: Sister Amalia's 100th Birthday; (standing) S. Teresa, S. Clare Marie, S. Angelica, S. Elizabeth; (seated) S. Irene, S. Amalia, S. Rose Therese

Sr. Amalia was born on November 5, 1908 in Germany. She comes from a good Catholic, farming family. After she entered the community and studied to become a nurse, she was sent with 3 other Sisters to Bolivia. She really enjoyed the mission work. In 1942 she was asked to come to Racine, St. Rita's Parish. There the Sisters took care of the domestic work. With the help of Mr. Stephen Horvath, the Sisters were able to purchase the property from the Koleske family. After Sr. Helen's death in 1969, Sister Amalia became the supervisor and participated in the groundbreaking for construction of St. Monica's. Sr. Amalia enjoyed being with people and her humor helped a lot. She also was a hard-worker and at the age of 95 she finally retired from the kitchen. In 2008 she celebrated her 100th birthday and two weeks later she left us. She will be missed.

