

# **‘Good help:’ Mission remains unchanged for Sisters of Bon Secours**

After 100 years of service to West Baltimore through Bon Secours Baltimore Hospital, the “good help” of the Sisters of Bon Secours is moving in a new direction.

As previously reported, LifeBridge Health plans to acquire the hospital by August. It will no longer be a Catholic institution and will eventually receive a new name.

While the Sisters of Bon Secours will no longer be affiliated with the hospital, they will continue to minister to the underserved of West Baltimore through Bon Secours Community Works, a collection of programs and services designed to address public health issues before they require the services of an acute-care facility.

“It’s always a bittersweet kind of thing,” said Sister Rose Marie Jasinski, the leader for the United States Sisters of Bon Secours, based in Marriottsville. “It’s a wonderful experience being in the West Baltimore community (in the hospital) for the past 100 years. We feel good about the fact that our presence there will continue.”

Its Community Works facility includes the Family Support Center, which includes adult education, child care, employment readiness, life skills training and parenting classes.

Career Development helps adults to learn skills and find jobs. The Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship Program helps high-schoolers find after-school and summer jobs, acquire mentors, plan careers and train for job acquisition. Bon Secours offers financial awareness, as well as a re-entry program for ex-offenders.

The Women’s Resource Center, located across the street from the main hospital entrance on North Pulaski Street, is a daytime center for women dealing with issues ranging from domestic violence to substance abuse, homelessness, anger and mental health issues. Services include clothing, laundry facilities, a computer lab, warm

showers, breakfast and lunch, and healthcare referrals.

Another robust program is revitalized housing, which includes more than 800 apartment units, owned and operated by the organization, for low- and moderate-income seniors, families and people with disabilities. Eighty units are at Gibbons Commons, in the former Cardinal Gibbons School. (Community Works is located on North Fulton Avenue, across from the former St. Martin Parish, where Bon Secours Mercy Health plans to develop affordable housing.)

“I think those are wonderful pieces to continue to support ... as part of Bon Secours,” said Sister Rose Marie, one of approximately 20 Sisters of Bon Secours living in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. “It’s going back to our roots and going back to serving the community as we began more than 100 years ago.”

Dr. Samuel Ross, chief community health officer for Bon Secours Mercy Health, said the organization is not starting from scratch, but rather maintaining and building upon the areas of its ministry already addressing health factors determined by social issues.

Bon Secours is trying to focus its ministries, primarily located in the 21223 ZIP code, he said, “in a way that is benefiting not just for the individual, but for the community itself.”

With the Sisters of Bon Secours, Dr. Ross said, it has always been about identifying the need of the community.

“My personal hope is that we continue to scale the programs and services that have been implemented,” he said, including collaboration with community partners. “That’s in the best interest of Baltimore City as we try to revitalize our communities.”