

Sister ‘Kitty’ Nueslein filled many needs

St. Peter’s Adult Learning Center honored its founder, Religious Sister of Mercy Katherine Nueslein, in a May 27 dedication ceremony of a newly acquired building on Hollins Street. The building was renamed the Sister Katherine Nueslein Center. The St. Peter’s Adult Learning Center was founded by Sister Katherine in 1982 to provide programs for an unserved population of adults with intellectual disabilities in Southwest Baltimore.

Sister Katherine, who passed away Oct. 14, 2010, was the embodiment of the Sisters of Mercy’s moniker, “The Walking Nuns.”

The Sisters of Mercy were founded in the early 1800s by the first “Sister Catherine” – Catherine McAuley. Her passion for the poor of Dublin, Ireland inspired her to break with convention and go out into the neighborhoods around her to provide for those in need. Her legacy extended across the sea, when, in 1855, Monsignor Edward McColgan of St. Peter the Apostle Church requested that the Sisters of Mercy work with Irish immigrants arriving in Baltimore.

Then another Catherine came – Mother Catherine Wynne. She, too, took to the streets, a basket on her arm, bringing food and prayer to people in need in Southwest Baltimore.

Finally, in 1978, a third “Katherine” – Sister Katherine Nueslein, or Sister “Kitty” – came from Savannah, Ga., to follow in the footsteps of those who had come before her. For more than 30 years, she walked the streets of Southwest Baltimore, visiting with her neighbors and working to find answers to the social troubles that plagued the area. She walked the streets with people with intellectual disabilities, which led to the founding of St. Peter’s Adult Learning Center.

She walked with the homeless and those who were living in deplorable houses. These walks led to the founding of Southwest Visions. She walked with people with addictions and people in recovery, which led to her work with the Hezekiah

Movement.

She walked the streets of Southwest Baltimore and, then, El Salvador, with the hungry, the abused, the neglected. She walked with those displaced and rejected by society. She searched for and found the value of humanity in each person she encountered; regardless of their social standing. She was not only a woman of great faith and compassion; she was a confidante, a healer, a leader, a problem solver, a strong shoulder, and a true friend.

Sister Katherine was once asked what she would like to be and what she would like the Sisters of Mercy to be. Her answer epitomized her philosophy and her life.

"I would like," she said, "to be a presence wherever a need is discovered, a witness to the love of Jesus with a readiness to share and exchange talents and gifts among God's people."

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