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Celebrating the nuns who heal a troubled nation

The fourth annual National Catholic Sisters Week takes place March 8-14, 2017

ST. PAUL, Minn. – [National Catholic Sisters Week](#) (NCSW), the fourth annual celebration of women religious taking place March 8-14, 2017, announces a record number of events planned across the country to celebrate the remarkable contributions of Catholic sisters, in tandem with National Women’s History Month.

The week is intended to honor the nation’s 47,170 Catholic sisters and all who have gone before – founders of schools and hospitals, artists and activists, first responders and spiritual guides for all walks of life. “Catholic sisters don’t seek the spotlight,” said Molly Hazelton, site director of NCSW, headquartered at [St. Catherine University](#) in St. Paul, Minn. “Humility is in their DNA. But we know that raising awareness of their ministries can inspire the masses, and that’s what we’re aiming to do. In a time when there isn’t much good news, we need more than ever to hear stories of how they help and heal a fractured country.”

Nationwide events – small and large – are being planned for the week of March 8-14 to celebrate the profound impact of Catholic sisters. The gatherings include panels, pilgrimages and service projects. Many are grassroots; others are formally organized, funded by 67 \$1,000 mini-grants awarded by St. Catherine to enable the message of NCSW to travel in broader, more robust ways. Grant recipients range from Pittsburgh to Santa Cruz, from Dubuque to San Antonio, honoring a host of religious communities: Dominicans, Franciscans and Benedictines, Sisters of Charity and Sisters of Providence, and many others.

Sister Amy Hereford, a 58-year-old CSJ, is hosting an event called “[Sisters Supporting Sustainability](#),” coordinating a team of women religious and lay people to meet at a St. Louis eco-village March 9 to boost sustainability: installing a bat-house and a bee-house; enhancing an existing mini-garden pond; and planting native plants to support pollinator populations and increase soil fertility. She’s trying to live out the radical charge set forth by Pope Francis in “On Care For Our Common Home,” his 2016 encyclical. “I love that image, common home,” Sister Amy said. “It really is. We are all in this together.”

Meanwhile, a group will meet March 10 at a convent in New Ulm, Minn., to [sew habits](#) for the Handmaids of the Heart of Jesus, a 10-year-old religious order made of up 20- and 30-somethings living out the presence of Mary in their diocese through humble, joyful service. “This meeting will inspire many practical and spiritual conversations between the sisters and the local women,” said Jackie Finstad, 39, the local mom coordinating the gathering.

Indeed, there's no telling what will ensue when you can initiate that spark by introducing someone to a Catholic sister. That's the message behind the YouTube video that helped kicked off the inaugural National Catholic Sisters Week, showing a variety of people finishing the statement: "Because I met a sister..."

"National Catholic Sisters Week is the time to reach out," Hazelton said. "Meet a sister, hug a sister, pray for a sister, research a sister, write to a sister, take a sister out to dinner. You won't regret it."

Since NCSW launched, Hazelton has heard again and again from young adults amazed by the connections they have forged with women religious, voicing a deep admiration and natural kinship. "Many of the causes that animate Catholic sisters deeply resonate with Millennials – whether it's sustainability, care for the marginalized, or building a life that reflects your core values, an authentic one. Sisters have so much to teach us."

NCSW is intended to amplify the rich legacy of women religious, to illuminate their current ministries and to spotlight the young women who are continuing to pursue religious life. About 100 enter every year at an average age of 32.

To learn more about NCSW, visit www.nationalcatholicsistersweek.org. Follow NCSW on our social channels and use #NCSW2017 to engage.

About National Catholic Sisters Week

National Catholic Sisters Week is headquartered at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minn., and supported by a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. Everyone is invited to participate in National Catholic Sisters Week through local community events and outreach, volunteer opportunities and social media. National Catholic Sisters Week also features community-submitted content through its Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest channels. Learn more at nationalcatholicsistersweek.org and follow the campaign on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#).

About the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation was created in 1944 by international business pioneer Conrad N. Hilton, who founded Hilton Hotels and left his fortune to help the world's disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The Foundation currently conducts strategic initiatives in six priority areas: providing safe water, ending chronic homelessness, preventing substance abuse, helping children affected by HIV and AIDS, supporting transition-age youth in foster care, and extending Conrad Hilton's support for the work of Catholic Sisters. Following selection by an independent international jury, the Foundation annually awards the \$1.5 million Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize to a nonprofit organization doing extraordinary work to reduce human suffering. From its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1 billion in grants. The Foundation's current assets exceed \$2.2 billion.

About St. Catherine University

St. Catherine University is an undergraduate college for women. A comprehensive University, St. Kate's offers baccalaureate, associate, master's and clinical doctorate

degrees in a variety of liberal arts, health care and professional programs. Committed to meeting the educational needs of women of all ages, as well as men in its associate and graduate programs, the university offers many of its degree programs in traditional, weekend and evening as well as online formats. With beautiful campuses in St. Paul and Minneapolis, St. Catherine University has a total enrollment of 5,075. It was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1905.

About Alverno College

National Catholic Sisters Week is headquartered at St. Catherine University and funded by a Conrad N. Hilton Foundation grant awarded to Alverno College, which works in partnership with St. Catherine. Alverno is a four-year independent, Catholic, liberal arts college for women, exists to promote the personal and professional development of its students. The college has earned accolades and respect internationally for its highly effective ability-based, assessment-as-learning approach to education, and has consulted with three U.S. presidential administrations on accountability and outcomes in higher education. For the last seven years, Alverno College has been ranked one of the top five schools in the Midwest doing “the best job of educating undergrads” by *U.S. News & World Report*.

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