

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Christina Capecchi

651-245-7323

christinacap@gmail.com

Preparations for 5th annual National Catholic Sisters Week underway

March 8-14, 2018 celebrations to honor women religious as part of Women's History Month

MINNEAPOLIS – Preparations for the biggest National Catholic Sisters are underway. As the national campaign aimed at elevating women religious enters into its fifth year, it continues to grow in scale and scope.

National Catholic Sisters Week was launched in 2014 as an official component of National Women History's Month, which runs through March. The week is intended to raise awareness of the profound impact of women religious and, in particular, to connect them with young women through a myriad of cross-country events held March 8-14. Since its inception, Molly Hazelton has headed the National Catholic Sisters Week team, which is based at the Minneapolis campus of Saint Mary's University of Minnesota.

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, leaders and spiritual guides for all walks of life. "Catholic sisters don't seek the spotlight," Hazelton said. "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."

Since NCSW launched in 2014, 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 events also support young women who are considering religious life – whether they provide initial exposure or deepen relationships, with gatherings that range from a monastery tour to a Nun Run, including retreats and "Come and See" weekends. About 100 women enter religious life every year at an average age of 32.

Among the many preparations underway, Hazelton launched a mini-grant program that will award \$85,000 to individuals or groups hosting NCSW events to honor Catholic sisters. The mini grants will be allocated in increments of up to \$1,000 each. The application process will close Nov. 1, and recipients will be notified Nov. 15.

NCSW mini grants will fund a wide range of events, from large to small, Hazelton said. Some may be hosted by women religious; others in their honor. Past NCSW events have ranged from parades to pilgrimages, including service projects, retreats, creative films, book clubs, lectures and tours. One mini-grant funded a Quinceañera After-Party intended to foster spiritual growth among San Antonio teens. Another grant went toward the creation of a Little Free Library honoring Sisters of St. Joseph in Orange County, Calif. Yet another grant sponsored work in a Missouri eco-village in order to install a bat-house and a bee-house.

The NCSW team is interested in supporting events that focus on the lives of women religious today: their lives of prayer and spirituality; the charism of their religious communities and how that is expressed on a daily basis; their varied ministries; and their pursuit of social justice.

To learn more about NCSW, visit www.nationalcatholicsistersweek.org. Follow NCSW on our social-media channels ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Pinterest](#)) and use #NCSW2018 to engage.

National Catholic Sisters Week is a program of the National Catholic Sisters Project, funded by a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and headquartered at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wis.

About Saint Mary's University of Minnesota

Saint Mary's University of Minnesota awakens, nurtures, and empowers learners to ethical lives of leadership and service. At Saint Mary's, students find in every classroom—whether in person or online—a relationship-driven, person-centered education. Through intense inquiry, students discover the truths in the world and the character within. Founded in 1912 and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota enrolls 5,800 students at its residential undergraduate college in Winona and its Schools of Graduate and Professional Programs, based in Minneapolis but extending worldwide. Saint Mary's offers respected and affordable programs in a variety of areas leading to bachelor's, bachelor's completion, master's, certificate, specialist, and doctoral degrees. Learn more at www.smumn.edu.

About National Catholic Sisters Week

National Catholic Sisters Week is headquartered at Saint Mary's University in Minneapolis and supported by a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. The week was launched in 2014 with the goal of connecting young women and Catholic sisters through national and local events. NCSW is an official component of National Women History's Month, which runs throughout March. The week is coordinated by Site Director Molly Hazelton and celebrated each year from March 8-14. The project encourages and supports events that focus on the richness, diversity and contributions of women religious and that bring young women and sisters together. During NCSW 2017 more than 300 events occurred nationwide, including multiple online events. National Catholic Sisters Week is one of four strands of the National Catholic Sisters Project, a national initiative intended to recognize and celebrate the profound impact of women religious. Learn more about National Catholic Sisters Week at www.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 Alverno College

Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wis., houses the National Catholic Sisters Project, a national initiative intended to recognize and celebrate the profound impact of women religious. It is comprised of four strands: National Catholic Sisters Week, curriculum development, a Diocesan Partnership Program and Latina Women Outreach. Alverno College is a four-year independent, Catholic, liberal arts college for women that 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*.

###