In 2002, a man named Ray Robinson had a vision which has become a mission that still continues today even after his death in 2010. Ray, who was a resident at Villa Maria Nursing Center, started selling **chachkies** from a little corner of the lobby of the nursing center. The money went to fund many of the living/entertainment costs for the other residents. His good deed was recognized by all.

And even before Ray came to Villa, five special sisters, Candy, Lucy, Jeanette, Catherine and Mary have been volunteering at Villa Maria for many years and have made it a huge part of their daily lives.

Candy Keener, a volunteer at Villa Maria for the past 30 years, still comes in every day. She felt her calling one day when sitting in the chapel and knew that it was her purpose to come in and do this daily. Candy assists in daily Mass and helps the priest on the altar. Candy has many family members and four of her sisters volunteered for Ray's Corner. In 1996, She was recognized for excellence in volunteering and featured in the Florida Catholic.

Lucy Paulson came in to Villa Maria one afternoon, approximately 14 years ago, to see how she could volunteer her time. Lucy, one of Candy’s sisters, saw how dedicated Ray was to his corner and decided that it was her “calling” to assist him.

To this day, Lucy is still very much dedicated to his mission. She expanded the corner into a granite display case always filled with stunning accessories. Lucy does all the “mystery shopping” as the other volunteers call it. She goes around town finding the best bargains, sales and donations and brings them back to Villa Maria for sale. Nobody knows where she goes, but she comes back with amazing new items. Ray’s Corner, named in honor of the beloved founder, sells everything from jewelry, infant and children’s clothes, pajamas, night gowns, ladies hats, watches, hair accessories, books, purses, scarfs and many more beautiful accessories thanks to Lucy’s findings. All the proceeds go to the support special patient needs at Villa Maria.

Jeanette Harrington, who has also been volunteering at Ray’s Corner along with her sister Lucy for around the same time, has made a huge difference in the way items in The Boutique are displayed. She started by assisting the Food Services department by getting the patient’s menus choices for the each day filled out. Now she assists at Ray’s Corner and The Boutique two to three times a week. Jeanette has turned the small closet into a veritable specialty boutique. Jeanette makes sure the supplies are always replenished and the storage room is always ready with upscale donated items. If a patient needs anything from the boutique, they receive it without charge.

Continued
Villa’s Volunteers—It’s a Family thing!

“'To be able to help the patients at Villa Maria and see the smiles on their faces is why I am here’” states Terry Lamberto a volunteer at Ray’s Corner for the past 7 years. Originally asked if she would be willing to come in for only 4 hours a week, Terry is now up to 14 hours a week and loves every minute of it. Terry is 90 years young and until recently very active with ballroom dancing three times a week. Terry still drives herself to Villa Maria on Tuesday and Thursday to make sure she is there for Ray’s Corner.

Catherine Hanson, also a faithful and steady volunteer, is very proud of what they have accomplished. Her sisters and co-workers tell us that she is an excellent sales person always talking to the customers and showing them the beautiful items they have on display. Mary Gibbermyer, another dedicated partner, has passed recently and is missed by all whose lives she touched.

The ladies of Ray’s Corner do an outstanding job for the patients of Villa Maria. Raising close to $80,000, they are so pleased that it has gone directly to the patient’s needs. A new BINGO machine, Karaoke, patio furniture, radios, cameras and movie experiences in the auditorium are just some of the ways the money has been used. Their hard work, dedication and loving caring hearts are the true mission of Catholic Health Services.
After an extended stay in my home diocese of Albany in New York from mid-May to mid-July, I returned to the Catholic Hospice In-Patient Center at Holy Cross Hospital, where I serve as per-diem chaplain a few hours weekly.

Several of the patients in the unit that day were alone, unable to be awakened and without family. There was one patient whom I will call Eddy, one of eighteen siblings from the same set of parents, who was being attended by one of his sisters, a brother and sister-in-law from the area. Eddy lay there snoring in what appeared to be a very deep sleep and unable to be awakened; as if he had not a trouble in the world.

This family with strong Catholic roots was very receptive to my visit. After eliciting their worries and concerns, that revolved around a pain free journey home to God and family members who preceded Eddy in death, I bestowed the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick praying for the particular needs they articulated for Eddy’s journey and themselves during the service.

I then blessed water using it as a way for Eddy’s relatives to bless him; using the sign of the cross of Jesus, in thanksgiving for the blessing he has been in their lives. I invited them to bless a part of Eddy’s body that reflected their unique relationship with him; the manner in which he touched and blessed them. Blessing his lips Eddy’s sister spoke in gratitude to Eddy for the love and wisdom his sister-in-law expressed his heart for always treating her as his “sister”. His elder brother said, “Eddy, I bless your eyes for the way in which you always viewed the world; with your own vision and truth”. Blessings upon Eddy were also bestowed in the name of all who due to distance, could not be present.

In the thirty years of my hospice-related ministry, and using this ritual as a way for family and friends to process their sense of hopelessness in the face of the terminal illness of their loved one, the particular blessing of Eddy’s brother really moved me. Perhaps it was with a heightened sense of the call to mercy in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, proclaimed by Pope Francis last year, that this blessing struck me as particularly profound. It begs the question: “What is our own vision and truth as pilgrims on our journey of faith?”

Speaking at St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican on December 8th, 2015, in blessing the Holy Doors and proclaiming the Jubilee Year, Pope Francis said: “We have to put mercy before judgment, and in every case God’s judgment will always be in the light of his mercy. Let us abandon all fear and dread, for these do not bett men and women who are loved. Instead, let us live the joy of encounter with the grace that transforms all”.

Following that theme Franciscan friar and spiritual author Richard Rohr recently wrote, “knowing your need for mercy opens you to receiving mercy. Knowing your intimate need for mercy is in great part what it means to know, need or fall in love with God, because God is mercy itself and must be experienced as such!”

So if our vision is one of being transformed by God’s mercy then we ourselves will in turn be dispensers of the love and mercy we have experienced. With this vision — the way in which we view the world — our truth will include reclaiming that we are the beloved of God.

From the perspective of Eddy’s family, as revealed following the ritual blessing, Eddy “lived the joy of encounter with the grace that transforms” expressing it through his love of family, song and dance. From my perception the unspoken truth of Eddy’s life was that he came to know he was the beloved of God and “abandoned all fear and dread” thus experiencing God’s mercy. Having received the joy of God’s mercy Eddy bestowed it in kind upon others. Quite unexpectedly, however, within the hour following the ritual blessing Eddy opened his eyes, looked at his brother attempting to speak and took his last breath. His brother, while wiping tears away, expressed the belief that the blessings of gratitude gave Eddy the consolation to pass on in peace.

In my formative years as a hospice chaplain over three decades ago there was a “hospice proverb”, created by our team several years before my involvement in this ministry that we used repeatedly; “As you live so shall you die”. While the Year of Mercy will soon end this December its call to be transformed by God’s mercy and to bestow that mercy upon others must endure. May it be so through the manner in which we bless one another, in a spirit of gratitude, for the gift we are to one another. May that be the way we view the world; with the vision and truth of who we are as God’s beloved daughters and sons so that like Eddy, “As you live so shall you die”.
Special Day at Marlins Park celebrating the 30th Anniversary of CHS

Our 30th anniversary is a chance to reflect on our organization’s history and reward those special employees who have contributed to CHS’ success along the way. Long time loyal staff from across Catholic Health Services representing many of our service lines, who have served 30 or more years were honored on the field and received a special certificate and Marlins signed autograph picture. We heartily congratulate John Kissel and Silencieux Alexandre from the Catholic Cemeteries, Terry Cooney from CHS Home Office, Pearllyn Wallace from St. John’s Nursing Center, Betty Williams and Bridget Wilson from Villa Maria Nursing Center, Debra Hamelath and Pedro Navarro from Catholic Housing Management.

First pitch was thrown by Jim Ball, COO of Catholic Health Services with his grandchildren, Caroline and Ethan on the field watching and cheering him on! Joe Catania, our CEO delivered the Line-up Card to the Umpires and team managers alongside the Marlins’ Doug Mattingly! Lineup cards are used to convey to the umpiring crew the batting order and who the available players are. After the game, the cards are turned in for official record keeping.

CHS kids and families enjoyed a visit from Billy the Marlins to get everyone in the spirit of the game during the first inning, selfies with a Marlins player and great arcade games, activities, face painting, giveaways and the fan favorite — running the bases.
What is violence?

The recent spate of violence, most of which has involved mass killings, in different parts of the world today warrants a discussion of the topic. Violence is generally regarded as a “behavior or treatment in which physical force is exerted for the purpose of causing injury and damage” (www.theterror-dictionary.com). It is also used to describe the ferocious and destructive forces in nature, e.g., during hurricane, tornadoes, tsunamis, etc.). Violence occurs in various settings. Domestic violence is directed to a spouse or domestic partner. Road rage is the type of violence we see among some drivers in traffic. Public violence takes the form of strikes and riots.

Terrorism is a kind of violence that has become very rampant recently. The World Report on Violence and Health (WHO) defines violence as a way that clearly captures the description of terrorism. It sees it as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.” Terrorism is said to be motivated by political, religious or ideological interests. The WHO lists four modes of violence: physical, sexual, and psychological attack, and deprivation. It also distinguishes three sub-types of violence based on victim-perpetrator relationship. In this case it falls into self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence.

We cannot distinguish these forms of violence. Self-directed violence is expressed in self-harm and suicide. Hate the perpetrator and victim coincide, interpersonal violence which occurs between individuals is further divided into family and intimate partner violence, and collective violence. Child maltreatment, spousal violence and elder abuse. Family violence, Community violence can be directed towards an acquaintance or stranger. It includes youth violence, assault by strangers, violence related to property crimes, and violence in workplaces and other institutions.

Collective violence is one committed by larger groups of individuals. It is subdivided into social, political and economic violence.

What triggers it?

According to the American Psychological Association violence causes a number of factors that include: frustration, exposure to violence at home, in the neighborhood or media, and a perception of others behavior toward one as hostile, whether they are actually so or not. Lack of empathy has also been identified as a possible trigger of violent tendencies. Lack of empathy can also show itself out as hate. Any or a combination of these factors can lead to violence. The perception of others as hostile to one could cause frustration to the effect that one with no empathy for others inundated by images of violence from their environment and the media may act out violently against others. Their victims may be specifically targeted persons or just innocent individuals. In victims may not necessarily be connected to the reason the assailant is frustrated.

In recent times we have seen a recurrence of lethal violence against innocent people, individuals and groups alike. This includes violence among citizens, violence between law enforcement authorities and civilian citizens, and terrorism. Every type of violence is disturbing, especially if it is preventable. However, terrorism in my opinion presents the most insidious form of violence in our society today. Some of those who have perpetrated violence in the name of Islam have claimed that their target was the campaign Western culture. They are scared by a division for Western Christian civilization. Others claim to be retaliating the injustice against Islamic society. Regardless of the reasons, the bottom-line is that such people lack basic empathy for others. I personally believe that such violence is easily fanned by a refusal to accept that there are other views apart from one’s and a refusal to dialogue.

The aftermath

Violence always leaves a horrid-in society, at large and in people’s lives in particular. People deal various forms of suffering as a result. There is loss, including the loss of life if the attack is fatal. People are traumatized and griefed. Some victims suffer deadly injuries and have the resulting scars or bodily deformation to bear for the rest of their lives. Violence also results in lost of property How do we bear or cope with the loss from violence? How do we heal the face of violence?

Can it be tamed?

Disappointingly, in several cases religion has been used as propaganda tool for recent deadly violence; religion, which generally should promote peace. One would have surmised that religion could be a tool for abolishing the surge of violence. But any religion fails in this direction, if it recognises only its agenda and refuses to accept any other point of view. For example, insisting that all must convert to Islam or else be perceived as evil and subject to death. Turn the other cheek (Matt 5:39) is a way of advising against violence. Violence can arise from wanting to retaliate or revenge. Turning the other cheek, can qualt the violence that could arise from religious bigotry or the desire to stubbornly “stand your ground” and insisting on being in control. It complements the advice to go and first make peace and reconcile with your opponents before presenting your gifts at the Lord’s altar (Matt 5:24). We easily conclude that these standards are not good enough for the warriors we wish to be. It’s too humiliating, we may think. That is why peace in this world continues to elude us, because we think in this way.

The world cannot give peace. But Christ does (John 14:27).

My peace. I give you, he assures us. But not as the world gives, he notes. The peace of Christ is not an illusion, it is indeed attainable. But first we must accept his recommendations for humility, dialogue and reconciliation. We must prove to being willing to give up control and empathy; show a readiness to leave vengeance to God (Heb. 10:30). We do not all have to be of the same religion, we do not have to be all Christians to appreciate the values in Christ’s teaching. Karl Rahner talks of the “anonymous Christian,” who lives out Christian values without knowing about Christ and Christianity. We should try to understand each other through mutual dialogue. We should learn to show compassionate love and mercy towards others. We should do these, if we want the peace Christ proclaimed to be real in our world. And let us remember what people Can actually posses these virtues without necessarily of knowing attributing them to Christ. Let the peace of Christ reign in our lives, in our families, communities, nations and world. We pray. Amen.
Backyard Getaways, Staycations and Summer Fun

What is your backyard? Where is it? A tidy little patio, a big sprawling back yard, a lovely balcony with some flower pots and a reading chair, how about a porch or front step where you hang out in the evening to watch the sun set or the full moon rise in the summer? Maybe your back yard is really a great little trip to the beach or a walk or bike ride to your favorite park. You don’t even need a patio or deck. Just set up a chaise or two, grab a chilly drink, maybe some music to put you in a relaxed mood and you’ll have the start of a perfect place to enjoy the summer scenery.

Maybe you are a little short on funds, but you have a few days off lined up and not sure what to do with your family to make some summer memories...You still have time to plan a Great Staycation.

FUN and DO-able Staycation Ideas

✔ Take a hike. Walking is the best exercise. Find some park or scenic area and plan a hike. Pack a picnic lunch and water and go explore.

✔ Read a book. You don’t have to be sitting in a far-away place to settle in with a good summer read. Go to a local coffee house and splurge on a cappuccino or other creation and spend a few hours lost in a book.

✔ Take an exercise class. Try yoga, pilates, spinning, or ZUMBA.

✔ See a ball game. Go hang out with Billy the Marlin, catch a ball, have a hotdog, and relax.

✔ Go to a movie. Yes, you can rent a movie on Netflix or borrow one from the library and have an evening movie night at home. But you can also go to one of the giant theaters and have a 3D experience. Don’t forget popcorn.

✔ Have your own three-day film festival. Pick a theme — When Smooth Men Ruled the Silver Screen, Road-Trip Movies, The Five Biggest Tearjerkers, Laugh till you Cry Comedies.

✔ Go shopping. Make the trek to your favorite mega mall and spend the day seeing what’s new.

✔ Do an “out of the office” message for your e-mail (even if your office is a corner of the playroom). Say you won’t be checking your e-mail till you’re back from vacation. Then power down the computer and throw a towel over it.

✔ Skip the news — and maybe even stop the mail — for a week. When you banish the source of stress, the stress itself may follow. The earth will continue to turn even if you’re not reading all about it every morning at 7:30 sharp, and sadly, the bills will still be there when your vacation is over.

TEAM CHS contributes to the number one fundraising cycling series in the nation.

Bike MS raises more money than any other cycling event for any other cause. To date, Bike MS cyclists, volunteers and donors have raised over $1 billion so people affected by MS can live their best lives as we stop MS in its tracks, restore what’s been lost and end MS forever.

Multiple sclerosis is a chronic, unpredictable disease of the central nervous system (CNS), which is made up of the brain, spinal cord and optic nerves. It is thought to be an immune-mediated disorder, in which the immune system incorrectly attacks healthy tissue in the CNS. MS can cause many symptoms, including blurred vision, loss of balance, poor coordination, slurred speech, tremors, numbness, extreme fatigue, problems with memory and concentration, paralysis, blindness and more. These problems may come and go or persist and worsen over time. Most people are diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 50, although individuals as young as 2 and as old as 75 have developed it.

Many therapeutic and technological advances are helping people manage symptoms. Advances in treating and understanding MS are made every year, and progress in research to find a cure is very encouraging. Catholic Health Services rehabilitation hospitals offers numerous services and programs to assist persons with MS.

WRAP HANDS AROUND BAR. 
SQUEEZE LIFE OUT OF MS.

Team CHS, led by Jim Ball ranked among the highest not only in great attitude, enthusiasm and commitment - but also in fundraising for the cause!

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