Jennings Center for Older Adults, inspired by the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, continues the loving ministry of Jesus by providing health care and supportive services to older adults, with special concern for those with limited means. In fulfilling our mission we commit ourselves to these values: Respect, Hospitality, Community, Discovery of Potential and Celebration of Life.

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DEAR FRIENDS—

It is with much pride and satisfaction that Jennings Center for Older Adults marks another year of service to the families of the Garfield Heights and greater Cleveland communities. We have made significant progress in our goal to develop more linkages between institutional and community-based models of care to effectively impact the long-term health concerns of older adults.

The foresight of our founder, Monsignor Gilbert Jennings, brought us into existence and guided the formative years of the Jennings campus. Members of the Board of Directors, still well-represented today by our Charter members, George Goudreau, Sr., and Sister Mary Loretta, provided the structure and support that enabled us to continue our growth. The consistent enthusiasm and dedication of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit has inspired our ministry. The staff who have served here and the residents who have called Jennings home have left an indelible mark on our spirit and character.

These “Voices of Wisdom” have shaped our community and organization, consistently challenging us in each decade and at each phase, to stretch our notion of who we ought to be and how we can best serve.

We are confident that the Board, Staff, Volunteers, Residents, Tenants, Children and Families of Jennings will face the future with determination and continued inspiration, ever guided by the Holy Spirit, and supported by those who have faith in our mission of service.

Hugh J. Mogan

Martha M. Kubik
More than 8,785 volunteer hours were provided to Jennings Center for Older Adults in 2002. These hours translate to $153,000 in donated services. Though not reflected in the total revenue, each and every volunteer is deeply appreciated.
Jennings marked the beginning of a new era of growth and service in 2002, reaching a significant milestone in our 60 year history. With the completion this year of a new assisted living and memory support assisted living residence, the Eva L. Bruening Adult Day Center, The Wellness Center, The Learning Circle infant and child care center, as well as ground breaking for St. Agnes Terrace Apartments, we will help meet the need for significant levels of support among older adults and their families throughout the next sixty years.

In 2002 we also affirmed our mission within the local community. Working with neighborhood leaders to advocate for the needs of seniors in Garfield Heights’ Ward One, Jennings was honored with the Association of Ohio Philanthropic Homes and Services for the Aging (AOPHA) 2002 Excellence in Community Service Award. As part of this initiative, joint efforts with the City of Garfield Heights have been established in the areas of community-based outreach, senior transportation, and life-long learning and development for emerging community-based elders.

While the numbers we serve continue to grow, the quality of life for those touched by our ministry speaks to the real impact of our work. This year, a father and son benefited from the daily support of adult day center professionals who understand the complexities of caring for a frail older person at home. Someone’s spouse found loving care and spiritual support throughout his end-of-life journey. Grandmothers and grandfathers rediscovered the joy of daily interaction with children. A mother enjoyed the camaraderie of Happy Hour with friends and neighbors.

These and other daily miracles of love, faith and spirit continue to inspire our mission and call us to be of service to those in need.
Founded in faith and inspired by the loving ministry of Jesus, Jennings Center for Older Adults has been dedicated to serving the physical, social, spiritual, and emotional needs of older adults and their families since 1942. Much more than facilities and programs, Jennings is an extended family of compassionate health care professionals, volunteers, family members and benefactors whose faith-based mission extends to elders, children and their families throughout Northeast Ohio.

The life-affirming relationships that characterize our day-to-day work testify to our commitment to give the best of ourselves in fulfilling our mission. At the same time, the many contributions older adults have made to the country and to the communities in which we live speak to their tremendous influence on our lives.

Sharing insights, knowledge, and understanding, those who have come before us show us the way and serve as role models for younger generations. When we stop long enough to listen, we are humbled and enriched by their stories, struck with the clarity of their advice, and reassured by their perseverance.

As we reflect on 2002, we seek out the mentors on our campus, celebrate their stories and take time to listen to their enduring voices of wisdom.
Looking back on 100 years, George Goudreau, Sr. still can’t stop working. Though he slowed his schedule a few years ago, he still busies himself with writing, remaining active in his business, and keeping his position as Charter Member of the Board of Directors at Jennings Center for Older Adults.

As a young newspaper delivery boy in Cleveland, George delivered five different newspapers to 1,000 customers. And though he could read and write English, he could not speak it, which would have meant being held back in school. The determination not to be with the younger grade propelled him to finish high school in two years. On the advice of his father to look into new things like electricity, he was awarded a scholarship and graduated third in his class at Case Institute of Technology (now Case Western Reserve University). Education opened up new opportunities, one of which was helping to establish the Newman Club with friend Frank Cavanaugh.

Generosity and giving back has always been important. He set an example for his son by taking him for several years to deliver Thanksgiving turkeys to less fortunate families, teaching him to be thankful. “You have to be thankful for what you have,” is the advice George passes on. “And give back what you can.”

George doesn’t just start small projects, he nurtures and supports enduring growth. Just one example is the Home Builders Association of Greater Cleveland, which he founded in 1943, becoming the first president at the local and state levels. Among a long list of accomplishments and successes, he has been an active leader and contributor for Catholic Charities, Jennings Center for Older Adults, and Northeast Ohio’s Newman Foundation.

“It’s just something you do,” George says about being involved. “It’s important to contribute what you can to make things better.”
Looking at Eugenia Abratanski you’d never know the roads she has traveled. Enduring hardships throughout many countries, she’s made a home for herself in the United States and brings with her eight decades of world history.

Growing up in Poland, Eugenia learned to “sew and bake much like the other girls.” But by 14, the start of World War II turned her life upside down when Russia occupied her small town. Her father was arrested, and soldiers later returned to put Eugenia, her mother and two younger sisters on a train to Siberia. Throughout their ordeal, her mother instructed her daughters to pray for those showing a fragment of kindness or offer what little they had to others in need. When soldiers refused to let her mother work, a teenaged Eugenia provided for her family with “a piece of bread and water soup as each day’s pay.”

On her release, “they didn’t know what to do with us...we walked miles in the desert to Camernay to join the Polish Army. As soon as they found I had training...four o’clock the next morning I had to go to work.” Though her family was separated throughout several countries, Eugenia’s position as a medic took her to army hospitals across Russia, the Middle East, and Italy. After the war, she reunited with her family in England, where she spent the next ten years as a registered nurse.

In 1956 Eugenia decided to move with her five-year-old son to the United States, finding work as a clerk for Shell Oil in Cleveland and then TRW. “I cannot just sit and do nothing. I cook for friends or bake and I make my own clothes. I must keep busy.”

Even with all that life has offered her, she has persevered and feels she must give back. “I mostly volunteer at Jennings because I am so grateful for everything they do for us. I just want to give something back.”
John Markowski's collection of medals from World War II is displayed in his bedroom. His purple heart and infantry badges sit front and center in the frame. But underneath is a special message written by his grandson: “My grandpa John Markowski is a brave man. He fought with General Patton and General Eisenhower in World War II. He got hurt and came home. I think he is a nice man especially when he takes me fishing.”

There are few other words to tell the story of John Markowski, the army veteran. But he recalls with ease the three years and eight months spent serving his country in France and missing the birth and first three years of his oldest son’s life.

“I just met my wife when they grabbed me back in '42,” John recalls. “My buddy in Toledo said, ‘what have we got to lose’ so we signed up, and off I went.”

All three boys in his family were sent to Europe. Joe was a Medic and Charlie was in the field artillery, but John was the messenger between army squadrons. He drove his motorcycle up and down the countryside delivering reports to commanders.

He recalls the war bluntly. “I went through hell,” he says. “All the close ones I survived and the chances I took, I’m not sure how I made it through.”

But he survived the war and returned to his wife to have another son and a daughter, three children to whom he passes on life’s lessons. He sums it up with finality: “I fought for you kids so you could have a good life.”
Father Charles Haluska finds himself back home. His assisted living suite is just three miles from his childhood parish of St. Wenceslas in Maple Heights. It was there that he made the life-changing decision to enter the priesthood and answer his call to serve God.

“I don't remember a time when I didn't want to become a priest,” Father Charles recalls with a matter of fact. “There was nothing else for me to be.” One can't help but imagine the impact his dear friend and St. Wenceslas's first pastor, Reverend Joseph Koudelka, had on the young man's life.

Father Charles tells the story of his ordination with bittersweet feelings, as it was the same time he lost his dear mentor. “I was ordained Saturday, visited him in the hospital Sunday and he died Monday,” Father Charles tells of the late Reverend Joseph Koudelka.

Father Charles' calling went beyond the priesthood and led him to find ways to directly impact young people traveling the road to priesthood. He spent most of his life teaching at St. Charles Seminary in Columbus, Ohio. “It's a real joy to be able to impart knowledge on young minds,” he says with a smile. He enjoyed teaching and couldn't think of a better way to spend each day.

With eighty-eight years of experience in teaching and service, Father Charles has this advice for future generations; “be moral,” and “Pray, pray, pray. As long as you pray you'll be alright.”
At 72 years old, Theresa Sokolnicki glides gracefully across the floor. Wherever Theresa meets you, she greets you with a smile. And in speaking to her, you wouldn't know what Polio has taken away from her physically. She only talks about what she can do.

Two weeks before Theresa's 21st birthday she was stricken with Polio, a disease that left her with only the use of her right hand. But it didn't stop her; she worked part-time monitoring television and radio spots. When her mother, her main support, passed away, Theresa met a social worker who said, 'Let's get you more independent.' Theresa adds, 'All these years my poor mother was cranking up my bed, and now I was going to get a powered bed and motorized wheelchair.'

"Since I'm motorized I can do more," Theresa beams about having found that independence years ago. "It felt good to 'control your own car' and move around!" And move around she does. In addition to attending daily Mass and Rosary at Jennings, delivering neighbors' mail and Catholic Universe Bulletins, she is also a member of the Resident Pastoral Care Team. And all of this is before she heads out to meet friends and attend a Polio Support Group. "I might be in a nursing home, but I can still do a lot of things," states Theresa.

Theresa's involvement in her community keeps her going and faith pulls her through tough times. "It makes me feel better that I'm contributing," Theresa says. "Having a lot to hang on to is important to keep going when you're down. Everybody has their own illness or limit, so you have to judge what you can and cannot do. But a person has to keep trying, and don't give up."
Jennings Center for Older Adults is deeply grateful for the many blessings we’ve received in 2002. Our contributors have inspired our accomplishments and help us provide vital programs and services. We are especially thankful for the substantial impact charitable gifts have on our commitment to provide for older adults of limited financial means. These and other gifts of ongoing sustenance strengthen our mission and provide dignity, comfort and hope to those in need.