



Dear Family and Friends,

Words are inadequate to express our loving gratitude to all who responded so generously to our "call for action." As most of you are aware, the recent meetings held in Springfield began a very important process for the future of Misericordia. Scott Mendel, our most wonderful volunteer lawyer; John Nicolay, another great volunteer lobbyist; and Kevin Connelly, our "man with many hats" and a generous member of our Executive Team, all played major roles in our success. But, this is only the first step, and there are other challenges before this continuum of care bill becomes a reality. Special thanks to Representative Jim Durkin and Senator John Mulroe who sponsored the bills, along with other senators and representatives who were so supportive.

Going through this government process has been demanding. But one of the truly great joys has been the wonderful bipartisan support from our government officials. Many have taken time to tour Misericordia, and all are impressed and become our friends. We will keep you informed of our progress.

In March 2016, we began our celebration of the 40th Anniversary of Misericordia. It was a cold, wintery day in 1976 when 39 children left Misericordia South to be "the pioneers" who would occupy two of the renovated buildings on the abandoned campus of the former Angel Guardian Orphanage (AGO).

We began this journey because of the closing of Angel Guardian Orphanage in the early '70s. A lesson for today can be learned from this sad experience. AGO was an affiliate of Catholic Charities and operated by the Sisters of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ. It was providing a "home" for hundreds of children. It depended solely on government funding, and when all funding stopped, the closing of AGO was inevitable. When I see the middle-aged homeless people on the streets of Chicago, I wonder how many are the so-called "success stories" of the '70s when the government allowed institutions to close without providing adequate support for all involved.

Today, the government agencies responsible for funding and licensing agencies that provide residential and work opportunities for persons with developmental disabilities are discriminating against families and agencies. They hold there is only one way to serve people with disabilities, and everyone belongs in isolated houses in the neighborhoods. Misericordia has 10 houses called CILAs in the neighborhoods, and the residents enjoy this environment. But if they did not have the campus to complement their lives, they would be isolated! This approach of only one way to serve people with disabilities violates families' rights to choice.

Another reality is that four of our former residents of these homes had to be brought back to our McAuley Skilled Nursing Home or Holbrook Residence because their physical needs changed radically. After a period of time, all these residents, surrounded by their devoted families and loving staff, died at Misericordia. What will happen to residents when CILAs can no longer adequately meet their changing needs? Will they be transferred to inappropriate nursing homes? Has the government even considered this reality?

We at Misericordia learned a lesson from the past. Although we still depend heavily on government funding, and are truly grateful for its support, we also work very hard to raise the private dollar. We could never offer our residents the many services that enhance their lives without fundraising.

I do believe as government funding becomes more unstable for so many human services, the Judeo-Christian philosophy of reaching out to God's wounded people becomes a responsibility of all believers. Over the years, it truly has been a joy to observe that this responsibility is not only accepted by individuals, but also by corporations and foundations. This challenge is not only for the rich, but for all who are "comfortable" in comparison to the suffering. Has not Pope Francis called for this to be the Year of Mercy!

As we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Misericordia North, we give thanks to our families and friends, past and present, who have made the Misericordia of today the beautiful "home" it is! This is true for 600 children and adults and 1,000 staff. God has surely blessed our efforts through your loving friendship and support.

Together we are making a difference! For certain, there is more "mercy and compassion" in our world, especially here in Chicago, because there is a Misericordia. So let us all continue to be the "salt of the earth and light of the world" for all of God's wounded people.

Thank you for believing in us. God's blessings on you and yours.

Lovingly,

Sister Rosemary Connelly, RSM  
Executive Director



Forty years ago these "pioneers" moved to what would become the present-day Misericordia North.