



The Shrine of Saint Joseph's Friends, Inc. NEWSLETTER

1220 N. 11th Street • St. Louis, Missouri 63106-4614 • Rectory Phone (314) 231-9407
e-mail: info@shrineofstjoseph.org

SUMMER – FALL ISSUE 2026

The Heart of the Shrine

The Shrine of St. Joseph stands today as a testament to the enduring love and devotion of generations of extraordinary volunteers.

It was in the late 1970s, amid the decline of St. Joseph's parish and the surrounding urban decay, that the most remarkable of these volunteer groups came together. Father Filipiak, then pastor of St. Joseph's, gathered five area businessmen who were strangers to one another — Robert Arteaga, Charles Finninger, Eugene Boll, Robert Voss, and Charlie Heisler — alongside Ted Wofford, an architect renowned for his outstanding restoration work. United by nothing more than their shared love and devotion to the church, these six men rose against all odds to accomplish what many believed impossible: rescuing the Shrine from impending demolition and restoring both the church and rectory to their original sacred beauty.

Over the five decades that followed, generations of devoted volunteers have faithfully carried that remarkable work forward — honoring the sacrifice behind it and advancing what was entrusted to their care.

Today, as in generations past, men and women of varied backgrounds are drawn together from across the St. Louis area, united by a singular sense of purpose: to ensure the Shrine's preservation, vitality, and enduring presence for future generations. They give generously of their time and talent, tending to the countless tasks that keep the Shrine thriving, while serving as faithful stewards of the resources upon which its future depends. Without question, these devoted volunteers are — and have always been — the living heart of the Shrine.

The 2026 Volunteer Family:



Front: Denise and Kevin Finazzo, Father Dale, Joe and Donna Finazzo, Carolyn Arteaga, Olivia and Luke Zarkadis, Julie and Frank Fessler
Middle: Tony Carleton and Kim Borucki, Karen Majda, Chris Caruso, Karen Fesler, Tony Caruso, Margaret McTague, Mary Matthews
Back: Jim Allen, Kathleen and Michael Wetzel, Joe Stuckey, Howard Matthews, Steve Crump



Patty Nieters, Sherry Chibnall, Jo Ann Geisz, Carolyn Ames, Theresa Horn, Mrs. Santa, Mary Anne Wetzel, Santa, Kathie Schmid, Ted Wofford, David Eller, John Colao, Frank Slonick, Vandy Nies, Tim Nies, Andria Deadwyler, Bridget Bernstein, Phil Nies



Barbara Bilbrey, Andy Chibnall, Mary Ann Crump, Maribeth McMahon, Sue Luepker, Jim Fesler, Mark Ames

Not pictured: Jay Nieters, Brad Arteaga

Lectors not pictured: Heather Seiler, Joe Mazzuca

If you, a family member, or a friend feels called to give of your time and talent in service to the magnificent Shrine, we warmly invite you to join our volunteer family! From weekly maintenance, Sunday Masses, weddings, music, tours, special events, and fundraising, there is a place for everyone here. Please call 314-231-9407 — we would love to welcome you!

Volunteers Help Weddings Flourish

Weddings continue to flourish at the Shrine. With 41 ceremonies booked in 2026 — a 10 percent increase over last year — and 16 couples already have secured dates for 2027, the Shrine remains St. Louis' most sought-after destination for the celebration of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Behind that success stands the Shrine's dedicated wedding staff and volunteers. Organized into teams of four, they bring a level of care and attention to detail that ensures every rehearsal and wedding day runs seamlessly — and that every couple carries with them memories they will cherish forever.



Kathie Schmid, Karen Fesler (and faithful helper Olivia Zarkadis)

Wedding coordinators Kathie Schmid and Karen Fesler, who oversee all wedding planning and lead the volunteer teams, are the first to credit our volunteers for the Shrine's success. "The magnificent beauty of the Shrine speaks for itself," says Kathie, "but it's the personal attention and professionalism of our volunteers that make each wedding at the Shrine as perfect as possible."

The Shrine is grateful to this year's dedicated wedding volunteers: **Denise & Jim Allen, Carolyn & Mark Ames, Carolyn Arteaga, Barb Bilbrey, Kim Borucki & Tony Carleton, Sherry & Andy Chibnall, Maryann & Steve Crump, Loretta DePriest, Marita & Ferdie Domingo, Dave Eller, Karen & Jim Fesler, Donna & Joe Finazzo, Denise & Kevin Finazzo, Theresa Horn, Jane Jostes, Sue Luepker, Howard & Mary Matthews, Margaret McTague, Patty Nieters, Maryalice & Dennis O'Neill, Kathie Schmid, Joe Stuckey, Jim & Cathy Thompson, Kathleen & Mike Weltzin, and Mary Ann Wetzel.**

Springfest and Fundraiser

On the last Sunday of May, the Shrine's volunteers came out in force to host the annual Springfest barbeque. The beautiful afternoon was filled with food, fun, and fellowship. The day also marked the close of the Shrine's spring fundraiser. The raffle winners included: Brian Weir (1st place), Eleanor Riplinger (2nd place), and Mary Jo Welch (3rd place).

The Shrine Shoppe also held a special raffle for a beautiful handmade quilt gifted by an anonymous donor, which was won by Bill Kren.

The Shrine is deeply grateful for the outstanding participation and generous contributions to the spring fundraiser, whose proceeds directly support the ongoing maintenance and improvement of the Shrine.



Historic Rectory and Church Carefully Maintained

The Shrine's Board of Directors remains committed to preserving its historic buildings, guided by Ted Wofford's ongoing support. Two major projects were scheduled and completed in 2026.

Rectory Freshened with New Carpeting and Paint

Built in 1866, the rectory faced demolition in the mid-1970s when the Archdiocese believed the cost of restoring the church and rectory prohibitive. Since the rectory still housed the parish priest at the time, it became the Shrine's first major restoration challenge.

Beginning in 1981, Ted Wofford enlisted builder Charlie Rallo, whose crew — alongside dedicated volunteers and artisans — transformed the rectory into the exquisite Victorian-style space it remains today, at less than one-third the originally quoted cost.

That same spirit of dedication endures: this past April, the rectory was refreshed with new carpeting throughout all three floors and fresh paint in selected rooms.

Church Interior Renewed by Original Artisan

Michele Bowman began her relationship with the Shrine working for Artisan Decorators, restoring statues and decorative elements under Ted Wofford's guidance. "I started here in 1985, learning from Tom Sator and Ted Wofford," Michele recalls. "The first thing I ever restored was the guardian angel statue in the back of the church, and then I went on to do all the statues in front." After founding her own firm in 1993, she has continued her delicate work ever since.

This past March, Michele returned to the Shrine to renew areas behind the altar and marble-painted pedestals and columns, including meticulous gold leaf restoration, throughout the church.

These projects reflect the same devotion that has guided the Shrine for decades, ensuring its beauty continues to be enjoyed by all who visit.



Michele Bowman and assistant Loretta Coffman

The Third Miracle at the Shrine

A Special Reflection from Father Dale

As this issue of the newsletter celebrates the many volunteers whose tireless dedication ensures the Shrine of St. Joseph continues to flourish, I am moved to share a reflection I have offered on occasion over the years. In my estimation, three distinct miracles have taken place at the Shrine.

The first is the well-known miracle of 1864 when Ignatius Strecker kissed the relic of Peter Claver and was, inexplicably, completely cured of a terminal illness. To this day, the Strecker miracle stands as the only Vatican-authenticated miracle to have occurred at a church site in this region of America.

The second miracle occurred during the cholera epidemic of 1866, which claimed thousands of St. Louis lives and brought about an average of twenty-five funerals each day at the Shrine. That summer, Shrine parishioners signed a solemn vow: should they be spared from the epidemic, they would

erect a monument in honor of St. Joseph. From the Sunday that vow was made, not one parishioner who signed the petition, nor any member of their families, died from cholera. True to their sacred promise, the parishioners built a magnificent main altar in 1867, known to this day as "The Altar of Answered Prayers."

The third miracle, as I have long believed, is still unfolding. It lives in the extraordinary dedication and enduring legacy of the Shrine's volunteers across more than fifty years: from the five visionary businessmen and the architect who rescued the Shrine from ruin and shepherded its magnificent restoration in the 1970s and 1980s, to the devoted men and women who carry that mantle today. Their spirit, selflessness, and unwavering commitment to preserving the Shrine — and all they have achieved in its name — can only be called miraculous.



Fr. Dale Wunderlich

Volunteers Let Our Shrine Shine

From March 15th through April 30th, the Shrine Shoppe hosted its first-ever "Let Our Shrine Shine" art exhibit, celebrating the remarkable gifts of the Shrine's own volunteers and members. Their one-of-a-kind creations — paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, jewelry, crafts, fabrics, wood items, and even food — were displayed and many offered for sale, with every dollar raised going directly toward the maintenance and ongoing preservation of the Shrine.

The exhibit was the brainchild of Julia Crump — great-great-granddaughter of Ignatius Strecker of the Shrine's miraculous healing — who conceived the idea during a visit to the Shrine Shoppe last year. It was brought to life by tapping the artistic talents of twenty-two Shrine artists, ages 5 to 94, and the dedicated support of Shrine volunteers. The response exceeded all expectations. "Every piece of wonderful art made available for sale was sold," said Shrine Shoppe manager Kathleen Wetzel. "I cannot be more thankful to Julia, the exhibit participants, and all the volunteers who set up this first show of its kind at our Shrine!"



Denise Finazzo's
"Friends"



Ted Wofford's
"Death of St.
Joseph"



Julia Crump



Kim Borucki's
handmade crocheted
baby blanket

Board Members Re-elected

At the annual public meeting held Sunday, May 10th, three incumbent Board members were re-elected to another three-year term: Joe Finazzo, Maribeth McMahon, and Kathleen Wetzel.

Joe has served on the Board since 2011 and as its president since 2025. Maribeth joined the Board in 2017 and serves as the Shrine's music director and cantor. Kathleen has been a Board member for nine years and has managed the Shrine Shoppe since 2024.

The Board of Directors meets monthly and serves as the official governing body of the Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc., a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation.



Joe Finazzo



Maribeth McMahon



Kathleen Wetzel

Remembering Our Faithful Volunteers

Over the past year, the Shrine lost some dear friends and former volunteers:



John Coughlin (November 16, 2025) was a beloved fixture at the Shrine, faithfully greeting fellow churchgoers in the Shrine Shoppe after Mass with his warm smile and a hot cup of coffee. While known for his knowledge of St. Louis history, it is his genuine love of people and welcoming spirit that will endure as his lasting legacy.



Jim Fuller (January 21, 2026) joined the Shrine's Board of Directors in 2014 and served as honorary member until his passing this year. A decorated Vietnam veteran and two-time Purple Heart recipient, Jim met life's challenges with irrepressible warmth and a quick wit, which he shared at the Shrine — most memorably bringing Santa Claus to life each Christmas to the joy of children and families. His humor and humanity will never be forgotten.



Geraldine Allen (April 20, 2026) gave many years of service to the Shrine and Shrine Shoppe, embodying a remarkable three-generation legacy of volunteerism — her mother served before her, and her son Jim Allen, the Shrine's tour director, carries the tradition forward. Widely recognized throughout St. Louis for her dedication to volunteering, the Shrine was profoundly fortunate to have benefited from Geraldine's devotion to family, service, and faith.



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1220 North 11th Street
St. Louis, MO 63106-4614



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Check if appropriate:

- ☐ My name is misspelled
☐ My address is incorrect
☐ I received more than one (1) copy
☐ I no longer wish to receive the Newsletter
 Please clip the address panel and mail it to us noting your correction or request.

Mass Times

Sundays: 11:00am

First Friday of each Month: 12:00pm (Noon)

Holy Days of Obligation:

See Website www.shrineofstjoseph.org for details

Veneration of St. Peter Claver Relic or St. Padre Pio Relic following Mass
 Fr. Dale Wunderlich, Rector and Recipient
 of the Aquinas Institute "Great Preacher" Award.

Staying in touch with the Shrine:

www.shrineofstjoseph.org

facebook.com/shrineofstjoseph

YouTube StJoseph Shrine

Supporting the Shrine with Your Membership



Sherry Chibnall

Restoration and conservation of the historic Shrine relies solely on private contributions. Basic membership is \$15 per person per year. However, if you can help out a little more, it would be greatly and humbly appreciated. We are grateful for your support and commitment to this historic Catholic landmark. Please make your check payable to "Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc."

Please Remember the Shrine in your Will or Trust.

Application for Membership & Renewal Form

Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.

Basic membership \$15 per person per year

Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Check \$ _____ Check Number _____

Date _____ Cash \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.
 1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614

Special Notice: Please be aware that the Shrine has not and does not give or sell names and addresses on our mailing list to any other groups or organizations.

Air & Steam Club

Members of the Air & Steam Club have, for many years, helped to cover utility costs. Your donations have contributed greatly toward the Shrine's heating and AC bills. If you aren't currently a Member, please consider joining now. Your help is needed! There are monthly drawings for prizes totaling \$200. Tickets are \$12 each, and 1 ticket gives you 1 chance to win each month and there's no limit on the number of tickets you can purchase.



John Colao

Simply complete the form below and mail it together with your check payable to:

"Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc."

1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614.

For more information, please contact **John Colao**, Chairperson at (314) 231-9407.

Air and Steam Club

Shrine of St. Joseph's Friends, Inc.

1220 N. 11th Street, St. Louis, MO 63106-4614

1st Prize \$100

2nd Prize \$50

3rd Prize \$50

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

☐ Please enter my name. I do not wish to make a donation at this time.