



Federation NEWS

Introducing the New Director for the Federation of the Sisters of St Joseph in the United States

A COURAGEOUS FUTURE

Sister Patricia Johnson CSJ, was recently named executive director of the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph. This long-time resident of Hawaii, social worker, policy maker and self-proclaimed “Geek-in-Training” shares with us her vision for a courageous future with a global focus on power for mission, service to the *dear neighbor* and unioning love.

What called you to become a Sister of St. Joseph of Carondelet?

When I was at college at St. Louis University, I became involved in a volunteer program called *Full Achievement*. The students ran a tutoring program, scouts, summer recreation program and visited elderly people in a poor neighborhood on the south side of St. Louis.

In that neighborhood, there was a group of Sisters of St.

Joseph who I came to know and with whom I became friends. As I completed my master’s degree in social work, I was trying to figure out how to create a support system that would keep me energized, challenged and focused on serving the marginalized in society. I began to realize I might not need to create that support because the sisters down the street seemed to have what I was looking for.

What has been your primary ministry?

Up until about eight years ago, my primary work has been with abused and neglected children, first as a social worker and then for about 15 years as a manager. Over the last seven years, I have been a senior manager at the Department of Human Services running Adult Protective Services, managing Medicaid waivers and, over the last three years, serving as the assistant

administrator for Medicaid in the State of Hawaii.

I also had the opportunity to live in the Kalihi Valley Homes public housing with two other sisters, where we recently ended our 34-year presence. This complex housed over 200 low income families. After work hours, I mentored a troubled youth and eventually ran a lending library.

Living in this neighborhood was very meaningful for me. I believe that as a policy maker in state government, I had a unique perspective on the needs of the people for whom we were making policy. I think it helped me recognize that my most life-giving experiences are when I am sharing life with the people I serve.

You have been in Hawaii for more than 10 years. What drew you there and how did you come to find it home?

I had lived in Hawaii as a child for three years. I remembered it as a place where I felt at one with nature and at peace. I also

valued the multi-cultural make-up of the population. When I was considering moving to Hawaii, I thought I could combine the opportunity to do the work I enjoyed with the beauty of Hawaii. I can honestly say that although I worked hard in Hawaii, I really did learn how to live a more balanced life.

What are some of the responsibilities of the role and from where will you be working?

Headquartered in St. Louis, I will be working to implement the vision and strategic plan of the U.S. Federation, working most closely with the Federation Leadership Council, the Federation Assembly, and its many committees. The executive director really serves as the connector, keeping all the pieces of the operation in motion and ensuring appropriate communication with the members and various constituencies. I will represent the U.S. Federation in the CSSJ Global Community.

What are some of your initial goals going in to this position?

One of my goals is to help make information about the federation readily available to all the sisters, associates and ministry partners in easily accessible forms. I have been a “Geek in Training” for several years now, trying to learn new technologies and to apply

them to work and community settings. I hope to be able to further enhance communication and create paperless processes for federation activities whenever possible.

What do you hope to learn?

This position offers me the opportunity to listen and learn from some of the best thinkers within the congregations, leaders who are thinking and writing about religious life and contemporary theology, and people who understand global connections and international responsibilities in a very focused way. This exposure will surely enrich my life and enhance my global perspective while further deepening my commitment to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

What do you see as one of the major challenges ahead?

We are more aware that we live in a global world and how this impacts our vision more than at any previous time in our history. This increased awareness of the interconnectedness of all peoples shapes our world vision, our values and our actions. This paradigm shift is hard to adjust to and makes our individual and corporate decision-making more complex. It stretches us in ways few of us might have imagined, even 10 years ago.

Called to serve God and neighbor 175 years ago, six sisters faithfully and courageously ventured out to a new land.

How do you see the federation courageously and faithfully venturing into the future?

The federation commitment to be and act as one is courageous and the implications for the future are staggering. I don’t think we can even begin to imagine the corporate power for mission that we might achieve by pushing our agenda of unioning love with a global focus together. As the U.S. Federation, representing the current world super-power, our voice for all our sisters worldwide and our *dear neighbor* must be exceptionally strong. ✎

Sister Patricia is a member of St. Louis Province. She holds an M.B.A. from the University of Missouri and an M.S.W from St. Louis University. Her most recent position has been as Med-QUEST Division Assistant Administrator for the statewide \$1.4 billion annual Medicaid and public health insurance programs for the State of Hawaii. She also served in other administrative positions in social service agencies in Hawaii.

