

### **2005 International Spirit at Work Award**

St. Joseph Health System – Sonoma County, Santa Rosa, California

Date of founding: 1/15/50

Number of employees: 2174

Nature and Scope of business: Non-profit Catholic Healthcare System

Locations:

#### **Petaluma, California**

Petaluma Valley Hospital

Radiology & Laboratory Outpatient Clinic

Partial Hospitalization Program

Petaluma Hospice

Sacks Hospice of Petaluma Thrift Store

#### **Rohnert Park, California**

Rohnert Park HealthCare Center

#### **Santa Rosa, California**

Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital

Santa Rosa Memorial Sotoyome Campus

Santa Rosa Memorial Fulton Campus

Santa Rosa Urgent Care Center, Fulton Campus

Ambulatory Surgery Center

Partial Hospitalization Program

Life Learning Center

Memorial Hospice

Cancer Center

Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital Outreach Lab

Renal Transplant

Radiology Lab

#### **Windsor, California**

Windsor Lab Draw Station

Website: [www.stjosephhealth.org](http://www.stjosephhealth.org)

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### **What are the vision and mission: philosophy and core values of your organization?**

The mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange, sponsors of the St. Joseph Health System and its affiliated entities, is to bring all persons into closer union with themselves, others, and God – “to be a compassionate presence in support of the human spirit.” The St. Joseph Health System exists to extend the Catholic health care ministry through its Mission of “continually improving the health and quality of life of the persons and communities served” and its’ Vision to “bring people together to provide compassionate care, promote health improvement and create healthy communities.”

As part of the St. Joseph Health System and as co-ministers with the Sisters, the entities that comprise the St. Joseph Health System in Sonoma County find practical and effective means to communicate and integrate core values into their activities. This co-ministry is characterized by respect for life and dignity of person; allocation of resources for the poor and underserved; provision of resources for excellent compassionate care of the whole person; response to community need; advocacy for just public policies and appropriate social action; provision for a quality work life that is just, respectful, safe, inclusive and enriching.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO VALUES

If the mission expresses who we are as an organization, and the vision expresses what we hope to become, our core values express how we will get there. They are our compass and roadmap for right relationships. The core values of the St. Joseph Health System are these:

Dignity: We respect each person as an inherently valuable member of the human community and as a unique expression of life.

Service: We bring together people who recognize that every interaction is a unique opportunity to serve one another, the community and society.

Excellence: We foster personal and professional development, accountability, innovation, teamwork and commitment to quality.

Justice: We advocate for systems and structures that are attuned to the needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged and that promote a sense of community among all persons.

The values should be recognizable in planning processes, management decision-making, human relations and everyday face-to-face behavior. For a health care system with strong religious tradition, values do not simply make a difference -- they make *the* difference. We expect our values to:

- Be a source of common direction, unity and strength.
- Be the means by which we accomplish our vision and purpose, service and influence.
- Be the basis for creating a unique identity and differentiation in the marketplace.
- Serve as a basis for governance, management, decision making and business practices.
- Be the fundamental criteria by which we pursue strategic development and assess business opportunities.
- Be the measure for evaluating our success and effectiveness.
- Be the basis for attracting and forming affiliations, alliances, associations and relationships.
- Strengthen the potential for individual growth, commitment and contribution to our organization.
- Encourage the realization of our preference for the needs of poor and vulnerable persons.

## INTEGRATING OUR VALUES

Five factors are critical to the effective integration and implementation of values:

Values permeate everything we are and do. Everything we are and do present opportunities to demonstrate our values: serving patients and their families; creating healthy communities, maintaining an environment of wholeness and health; providing for the professional and spiritual growth of employees; and evaluating business affiliations and opportunities.

Leadership is committed to the values. Leadership sets the tone, establishes the climate and creates the culture in our organizations. Leadership's commitment to the priority of our values needs to be repeatedly and clearly evidenced in word and action, starting with executive

leadership and spreading throughout line and staff responsibilities. We acknowledge the influence of both formal and informal leadership.

(Our executive teams go on retreat annually where they experience reflection, dialogue skills, and explore how the mission affects them as a person, a team, and an organization, as well as, how it is tied to their strategic goals.)

*Values are clearly communicated.* We believe that simple, clear and memorable communication of our values is essential; and that values should provide the context for all written and oral communication. Consistent communication that is open and honest, that encourages dialogue and uses common language reinforces our values by keeping them in the forefront of our awareness and actions. We evaluate how well our organization “walks it’s talk” every four years with Values Review committees.

*Persons are recognized and are held accountable for their fidelity to the values.* The preservation and promotion of our values is our single most important accountability. Formal and informal recognition play an indispensable role in reinforcing the practice of our values.

*We concretely express our special compassion for the poor.* St. Joseph Health System and its member hospitals believe all persons have a right to an adequate level of health care that the provision of health care for those who require it is an obligation of justice as well as of charity or mercy. As a consequence of this belief, all system entities have adopted policies to express their conviction to actively seek out the truly needy and develop creative outreach responses.

### **How do we define spirit or spirituality?**

Our Mission and Vision call us to be a compassionate presence in support of the human *spirit* -- developing communities of wholeness and health, loving kindly, listening fully, relating intimately, instilling hope in others, and summoning wholeheartedness from ourselves and our colleagues.

Ours is a holistic community that tries to treat equally all aspects of person-ness: mind, body and spirit; but the spiritual dimension of our work is more elusive and harder to describe than the cognitive and corporeal element. Our working definition of spirituality recognizes the diverse ways that the life of the spirit is currently fostered in our daily work. It is a prelude for the development of more employee opportunities to nurture and express the spiritual part of our being. We work with the following assumption; people are at their core spiritual beings. We recognize that incidents of daily life are constant opportunities to live our values and deepen our spiritual values, and that it is **always** a work in progress.

### **A Working Definition**

Spirituality is connecting with the divine energy and its meaning for our lives. It is a waking up to one’s life and living fully in the world. Its seeds are found in healing, transforming and loving. It is represented in the mission of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange who “live and work to bring all people into unity with God and with one another.”

### **Examples of Vertical Spirituality (the desire to transcend the individual ego or personality self)**

The organization talks about this “vertical spirituality” through its practices and programs. Begun in 1999, a program called *Spiritual Paths of Renewal* was initiated as a collaborative effort by the Life Learning Center, Mission Services and the Spiritual Care departments. Coordinated by the Life Learning Center, the organization’s non-clinical education department, the program offered a variety of programs to nurture the spiritual part of our being. “Spirituality was defined as fully living out a set of deeply held personal values which are connected to divine energy or a presence greater than our selves. It expresses our desire to find meaning in what we do and treat it as a gift.”

Ongoing classes developed by the Life Learning Center continually address both personal, professional and spiritual development while fostering increased employee health and wholeness. The following are some example of programming that supports vertical spirituality.

### **Discovering Human Potential**

A high quality two- day program, presented through the Life Learning Center that allowed staff to evaluate their life goals, values and path.

### **Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction**

This seven week comprehensive program (developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn, Ph.D.) uses awareness to teach new ways of responding to stress to help improve coping skills and develop more internal balance, focus and well-being. It includes mediation practices, yoga and discussion. Since beginning two years ago, over 200 employees have participated.

### **Art & Contemplation by Sr. Madeleva**

This most popular program taught meditation and contemplation along with watercolor painting and is taught by one of the Sisters of St. Joseph, a professional artist.

### **Guided Imagry**

Offered quarterly as a Continuing Education Program. This program allows clinicians and staff to learn skills to access deeper insight into issue of our lives, providing valuable information on what our bodies are telling us.

### **Cultivating Joy**

Teaching how to cultivate joy through spiritual practices aimed at awakening a joyful freedom and a compassionate heart.

### **Living Well, Dying Well**

Co-facilitated by hospital chaplains and therapists from Hospice, this program explores the fears, losses, hopes, and spiritual tasks at this stage of life's journey and how to talk to each other about them.

### **Other organizational examples of vertical spirituality:**

**Reflection:** We are committed to establishing the practice of reflection as integral to the culture of the organization and as a process for personal and professional growth for individuals who work in a value-based organization. All meetings begin with a reflection as a way to go inward before moving into the business of the day.

**Area Values Roundtable:** An area-wide forum that supports values integration through employee activities. Senior management under the leadership of the Vice President of Mission Integration commissions the roundtable. Membership is based on select criteria. Members serve for two years (renewable for one additional term).

**Life Learning Center:** The organization's Education Center, The Life Learning experience seeks a balance of personal and professional development by integrating mind, body and spirit. This holistic approach promotes a context for our individual and collective call to meaning and purpose.

### **Examples of Horizonatal Spirituality (a desire to be of service to others and the planet).**

The Community Benefit Department of St. Joseph Health System – Sonoma County helps to breathe life into the Health System's mission by integrating strategic actions that contribute to

improving the health and quality of life of the people and communities we serve. The following are just some of the examples of programs in place:

**Neighborhood Care Staff**

A team of community organizers bringing neighbors together to improve their quality of life. Currently working in Windsor, Southwest Santa Rosa, Sonoma Valley, Rohnert Park and Petaluma.

**A,C.T.I.O.N.** (Agents of Change Training in our Neighborhoods)

A bi-lingual grassroots leadership development program serving local residents, community groups and organizations to increase community capacity for effecting social change.

**Quality of Life Initiative**

A project that builds community capacity to respond to specific quality of life issues through organizing, advocacy, education and partnership. We are currently focusing on Sonoma County's mental health system.

**Community Partnerships:**

Working with various persons and organizations committed to Healthy Communities, providing linkages and contributing to building community capacity in order to improve the quality of life in Sonoma County.

**Community Health**

Oral health continues to be the number one unmet health care need and primary concern for Sonoma County residents, particularly the low-income families. We have a three-pronged approach that includes an affordable community dental clinic, school-based educational services and prevention programs, and a mobile dental clinic serving the underserved members of our community.

**Agricultural Worker Health and Housing Initiative**

A collaborative effort that brings the first housing and health services network for agricultural workers and growers in Sonoma County

**St. Joseph Mobile Health Clinic**

Provides comprehensive health care, prevention, and health education services to low-income families who are without a primary care physician.

**Circle of Sisters**

A strategic initiative providing safe, fun after-school programming to girls age 10-14 in order to prevent juvenile violence and promote healthy decision-making for youth.

**Restricted Funds:** A specified amount of income is sent annually to the St. Joseph Health System from whom local grants are made.

**Advocacy:** Advocating for the needs of the poor, including influencing public policy is promoted. We have on staff an employee whose title is Director of Advocacy.

**How do you handle concerns about diversity of religions and what boundaries do you set around employees trying to convert each other, or in any way making others uncomfortable?**

The modeling from our founding Sisters was very clear about not trying to convert anyone to Catholicism or Christianity, instead they encouraged alignment with the mission primarily through our four values. All spiritual traditions are honored, and celebrated. Further our corporate "Values Standards and Key Indicators" call us to assure that "respect for all religious traditions is

demonstrated, not only in spiritual care services, but also in knowledge of and sensitivity to the religious beliefs and practices of those served and those who serve.”

Our Quality of Work Life Policy specifically states: “ We respect each person as an inherently valuable member of the human community and as a unique expression of life.” “St. Joseph Health System is committed to creating a work environment shaped by health, healing, hope, diversity, and mutual respect. By nurturing these spiritual qualities within and among ourselves, we can better serve the people within our communities.”

With respect to boundaries and proselytizing, our organization routinely evaluates all employees in two dimensions. “What they do” (learned skills and performance) and “How they do it” (their demonstration of our core values.) With respect to the how-they-do-it dimension of their work, employees know they are responsible for a set of values-based competencies and we set the bar pretty high with expected behaviors such as:

- Striving to understand and respect the unique contributions of each individual.
- Tailoring each interaction to the unique needs of the person and/or situation.
- Demonstrating open, honest and respectful communication.
- Promoting health and healing.
- Listening actively and seeking to understand others.
- Discerning a deeper purpose in one’s everyday job.
- Creating and sustaining positive working relationships.
- Behaving ethically, with integrity, honesty, and confidentiality in dealing with others.

#### **What policies, program, or practices explicitly promote or enable spirituality at work?**

##### **Programs:**

**Life Learning Center:** The Life Learning Center (LLC) provides cutting edge educational opportunities that address personal, professional and spiritual development while fostering increased employee health and wholeness. It is another way to further the mission of “continually improving the health and quality of life of people in the communities we serve. Our goal is for every nurse, physician, every employee and volunteer to be healthy in mind, body and spirit so that the entire community benefits.

The Life Learning Center has been open for seven years and more than 75% of the employees regularly take classes. Programs run the gamut from Meditation, Healthy Eating, Yoga, Guided Imagery, Healing and the Arts, Gardening, Enneagram, Aromatherapy, Therapeutic Touch, and much more. It combines the best of a Prevention and Wellness Center with a Corporate University.

The Life Learning Center functions also as a “Training and Organizational Development arm” for Human Resources, and programs are offered in Leadership/Management Development, Communication skills, ie “Crucial Conversations,” Feedback Skills, Listening Skills, and a wide range of non-clinical Continuing Education programs (Domestic Violence Series, Ageing Well Series, etc.). The variety of offerings has been as diverse as our employee population.

LLC is currently taking it’s programming “on the road,” ie. It has received a federally funded grant for our Trauma Services which we have named “Eye of the Storm,” designed to address communication, conflict and stress in a highly charged environment. As it’s name implies, we are looking to develop staff who develop the skills to stay calm and centered in the midst of high stress.

Due to stresses on the organization including: ***Increasing stress on health care delivery systems and staff, Continuing challenges of attraction and retention of nursing and other professional staff, Increasing costs of worker’s compensation, Changing demographics of***

**patients and staff associated with aging of the population,** The Life Learning Center is finding more of a mandate for it's programming.

The Life Learning Center has been a recipient of a national Healthcare "Banner Award" for innovative healthcare design.

**Reflection House:** This sacred space also coordinated by the Life Learning Center, serves our employees in many ways; as a place of retreat and reflection; as a gathering place for Book Clubs and Wisdom Circles, as a solitary space for meditation, a calm oasis for reading any of the more than 1,100 resources in our library, as a media center to view tapes on a wide variety of mind, body, spirit topics, and as a place to maintain physical fitness using the Fitness Center in the converted garage. It is located across the street from the hospital and contains over 1,200 books, audiotapes, and videotapes. There is a spacious Meditation Room, and the space is available for individuals or departments who use the space for retreats. The Life Learning Center also works in collaboration with our Trauma Department who use the upstairs bedroom to house on-call physicians on a 24 hour basis.

**C.L.A.S.** (Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services) St. Joseph Health System –SC has been approaching learning around C.L.A.S. standards and integrating the learning into our daily practice and organizational processes as a healthy community effort. We are involving employees, physicians and volunteers in assessment, strategic planning and special initiatives. To date we have created a Community Advisory Board (representing different cultures in the community), assessed the physical environment of the hospitals, created an assessment of the organization on the fourteen C.L.A.S. standards, and created ongoing training for all staff in "Cultural Competencies" through our Life Learning Center. (Cultural competence in health care can be seen as cultural responsiveness and cultural sensitivity.) It has been described by Melanie Tervalon, MD, MPH as "not a discrete endpoint but as a commitment and active engagement in a lifelong process that individuals enter into on an ongoing basis with patients, communities, colleagues, and with themselves."

**Mission & Mentoring:** Part of a system initiative, our cornerstone ministry leadership program, designed to continue the Sister's mission as many of the Sisters are aging and moving out of their roles in healthcare. Employees in formal/informal leadership roles are chosen to participate in this yearly program that includes 14 full day sessions. Combining reflection, dialogue skills, ministry leadership topics and personal development, participants are invited to go within to see how they align with the vision, mission and values of the organization and simultaneously reflect how they might integrate that alignment with action in their entities and in their specific roles.

Graduates of the program return once a year for a full day retreat, ie This year the topic was focused on Compassion, including conversation and practices on how to keep compassion alive in one's life and work. Attention was given around ways to incorporate and translate the learning back to the workplace and with staff who were not present.

**Spiritual Care Department:** The Spiritual Care Department ministers to any patient, family member, staff or physician in need. Chaplains in the department provide spiritual care, crisis intervention, and bioethical consultations, respond to referrals, provide information and assistance with advance directives for health care, and participate in departmental staff meetings and patient care conferences. The hospital chaplains who represent a diversity of faiths help patients integrate their own personal beliefs and values into the holistic healing of mind, body and spirit. The Spiritual Care Department recognizes religious traditions by educating and celebrating the key holidays of Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, as well as, other faiths.

**"We Care" Fund:** A fund to assist patients with special needs, such as transportation, short term lodging.

**Palliative Care Department:**

**HouseCalls:** We reach out beyond the wall of the hospitals to minister to the needs of the community.

**Gallup Survey:** The organization's annual employee survey, addressing how to increase psychological ownership in one's work through employing the response to 12 questions. Gallup's rigorous research has identified these 12 questions that measure employee engagement and link powerfully to relevant business outcomes, including retention, productivity, customer engagement and safety.

Employees are encouraged to take the "Strengthfinder," an online measurement tool designed by the Gallup Organization, which identifies your top five strengths. Employees are encouraged and taught how to then leverage their strengths with the understanding that when engaged employees utilize their natural talents, they are more deeply satisfied, productive and effective

More than a survey, the Gallup process has become an integral component of our organizational culture, with workgroups creating an "action plan" each year to create their department as a better place to work.

#### **Practices:**

**Reflection Process:** Incorporated into the organizational culture is the practice of a reflection before each meeting intended to promote going within and deepening the quality of one's work. Reflections are often poems, sayings, quotes that are encouraged to be relevant to the business at hand. This ability to reflect allows employees to connect first with themselves and as a human family, before moving into the work ahead.

**Performance Reviews:** The organization assesses performance 50% by "what you do" and 50% by "how you do it," (the demonstration of our core values.) Reviews are linked to values and values based competencies.

**Selection for Success:** This is a two day program designed to prepare managers for Behavioral Style Interviewing and selecting the best candidates. Based on the values-based competency model of SJHS.

**Golden Hour:** A new program: Executives, Managers and Directors make rounds within their department and throughout the organization twice weekly for one hour. The purpose is to connect to our employees, listen, help to solve problems, and let them know that their opinions count. Managers ask the following questions:

**Tell me what is working well today?**

**Are there any individuals I should be recognizing?**

**Are there any physicians I should be recognizing?**

**Is there anything we can do better?**

**Do you have the tools and equipment to do your job?**

**Values Review:** Every three years our organization takes a look at how well we "walk our talk" through a values review process. Employees are chosen to lead taskforces in order to evaluate our Value Standards and Key Indicators and prepare a summary of their findings. These reviews underscore what we do well, and what we need to work on. Implementation plans receive the support of top management.

**Values in Action Awards:** An annual process conducted in each SJHS region to recognize persons formally for values-based behaviors. Formal recognition programs exist to celebrate nominees and nominators, as well as awardees. Peers are encouraged to nominate peers around the four core values of Justice, Dignity, Service and Excellence. In 2005 there were over 500 nominees, which was a significant increase from the previous year.

**Policies:** Every policy created begins with a values context, in other words, “why do we do this?”

**Recognition of Staff:**

Employee Service Awards  
Hawaii/ travel awards for 15 and 30 years of service  
Quarterly free buffets  
Holiday gifts  
Education Assistance grants  
Employee of the Month/Year Awards  
Manager Incentive Programs

**Values Standards and Key Indicators:** Developed in 1991 clarifies expectations, provides guidance and promotes accountability regarding value integration in SJHS. The Human Resources standards and indicators directly address our efforts to strengthen quality of work life.

**What has been the effect of policies, programs, and practices on the stakeholder community?**

A collection of letters that express our communities gratitude will be sent as separate documents.

**What has been the effect of policies, programs, or practices on nominee’s business success?**

The financial picture from 2002 –2004 has shown a significant increase in income: This comes at a time when it is extremely competitive and challenging within the healthcare environment. It is hard to attribute this improvement to any one thing, but profitability does demonstrate strong stewardship and a vote of confidence in the quality of our services.

2002	\$3.3 M (Operations)
2003	\$12.1 M (Operations)
2004	<b>\$22.4 M (Operations)</b>

**Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital has been named The Consumer Choice Award winner for Santa Rosa (2004).** It is the eighth time Memorial Hospital has received the award, winning every year the award has been given in Santa Rosa.

The Consumer Choice award honors those hospitals that consumers feel have the best quality and image based on multiple consumer ratings. In the largest study of it’s kind the National Research Corporation (NRC) survey over 140,000 households nationwide, representing 400,000 consumers.

**PEP-C:** (Patient Evaluation of Performance in California) PEP-C comes from the NCR Picker Foundation based in Omaha, Nebraska and has 182 California hospitals engaged in studying how to “improve the quality of healthcare “through the eyes of the patient.”

The survey focuses on:

What do patients want?

What do patients value?

What helps or hinders their ability to manage their health problems?

What aspects of care are important to them and their families?

The Picker Institute identified seven key dimensions of care: Respect for Patients Preferences, Coordination of Care, Information and Education, Physical Comfort, Emotional Support, Involvement of Family & Friends, Continuity & Transition.

In 2004 - SJHS-SC scored a mean score of 88.7 (The overall average of all other California hospitals surveyed was 85.3.)

The quarterly turnover rate at SRMH declined from 3.18% in quarter 1, 2004 to 2.34% in quarter 1, 2005. Our current average years of service for all employees is 8.78 years.

We have grown 6% in headcount fiscal year to date. Headcount rose from 2052 employees as of 7/1/04 to 2174 employees as of 4/29/05.

**How the organization has been a model or inspiration for other companies in your industry or outside of it.**

The Life Learning Center continues to receive recognition by numerous healthcare institutions throughout California. It recently hosted a breakfast for healthcare leaders in Sonoma County highlighting it's programming and exploring opportunities for becoming a community resource for professional development and preventative/holistic care in the healthcare industry

Letters of Appreciation for the Life Learning Center:

Memorial Hospital has for a long time stated that people are not just bodies, but also mental, emotional and spiritual beings. Nowhere in the organization is this view embodied or mirrored more than in the philosophy of the Life Learning Center. The Life Learning Center was created, as I understand it, to honor and nurture every aspect of the a person's being- physical, mental and spiritual. Aside from work related classes, I have been challenged and enabled to feed various other aspects of myself. I've enjoyed various classes on cooking, gardening, drawing, watercolor, financial, exercise, yoga, as well as psychological issues. The class that I am the most thankful for is "Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction," which changed my life in both small and large ways, and in ways I did not foresee.

When I feel the St. Joseph organization unresponsive to the concerns and needs it's employees, I have only to remind myself that the Life Learning Center does it's part to negate this view. It's very creation negates this perception. In this case the money is where the mouth is, and every employee should take advantage of the opportunities it affords.

Jennifer Hoegerman, RN  
Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital  
Emergency Department

Dear Mary, Emily, Pat and Denise,

I want to express my appreciation and gratitude to you all for the useful, helpful and satisfying classes you present to us employees of St. Joseph Health System – SC. Not only are they useful, but satisfying to our needs of continuing education but also most satisfying to our spiritual needs. The spiritual sessions have been very comforting for me through some difficult periods in the past several years. Support sessions would be most helpful to many of us, your strong consideration in that direction would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your supportive attitudes and great help in accommodating our needs.

Most Sincerely,

Felipe Rodriguea,  
Certified Nurse Associate  
4West  
Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital

\*You all deserve an A+ for your service and dedication to learning.

Dear Denise:

As a longtime employee of SRMH (Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital) I want to express my appreciation for the most remarkable benefit our employer offers: The Life Learning Center. Over the years I have taken many classes directly impacting on my work performance, having to do with computers, conflict resolution, etc. and many more enriching my personal, spiritual and creative life. Without exception, the staff has been courteous, helpful and accommodating, and the classes have been very worthwhile.

But not until this last year have the benefits been this important to me. Let me explain: I have been on disability for 12 months now, a very scary and life altering status, also painful, frustrating, tedious and exhausting. Having coped successfully with many physical challenges over the years, I encountered a new world of relentless chronic pain, uncooperative insurance companies and the growing realization that this was not going away, that I had to live with it, that is, myself, my body, my spirit, my limitations. I am 59 now, too young to vegetate, too disabled to return to the level of physical requirements of my previous position. Since my first hip surgery in 1987 my physical abilities have diminished and I have adjusted to this by working physically less demanding positions and doing fewer physical activities in my personal life. To put it bluntly, by body at 58 felt like it was 78, despite everything I did, like regular exercise, watching weight, diet coping with stress, pain, etc. It was a steady downhill slide, which I resented and detested. This year I took a Hanna Somatic Education class, given by Stanlee Smith, and a Pilates class, given by Kashmyra at the Life Learning Center. I learned to pay attention to my body in my daily life and to re-train muscles that were weak or overused. I had so many health issues and was so impressed with both instructors, and their gentle and meticulous attention to every participant in their classes, that I am seeing Kashmyra now in her studio privately in addition to the ongoing, weekly classes at the LLC. I also do Pilates exercise regimen and plan to take the class again, when it is offered in January. After about 11 weeks, I now feel a reversal in my physical abilities. I can sit straight, stand straight and walk without a cane, not yet for a long time or long distances, but I'm working on that. Yes, I am also doing many other healthful and helpful things, but the most astonishing change has occurred through these movement classes at the LLC. I highly recommend them for anyone with joint, movement or pain issues. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Sincerely,

Barbara Shatto  
RN