

## “Now We are Growing “

By Nancy Beeghly with Sister Mary Alyce Koval

The original Beatitude House of four apartments - served by 2 staff members -expanded into 23 homes and 20 professional staff members in 11 years.

In addition, two education sites served over 100 women and more than 60 children each year.

Prior to her death, Sister Margaret, the founder, realized that the children of the mothers Living in the housing program were especially vulnerable. In order to respond to the special needs of children, Sister Margaret had begun to plan for a new position in the organization: **A child Advocate.**

Following Sister Margaret’s death, Sr Patricia Mc Nicholas asked Betty if she would take that position. She accepted. This is her story: **Back to the beginning of Betty’s journey with Beatitude House.**

Sister Mary Alyce Koval writes:

*Dear Sisters,*

*Sister Betty’s journey began on Long Island, New York. Throughout her life, she walked with God. She taught physical education classes on Long Island until her life journey brought her to the home of the Ursuline Sisters in Youngstown when she responded to an invitation to become a Companion in Mission at Beatitude House.*

This organization offers opportunities for volunteer service for a year or two. Betty volunteered at both Beatitude House and Immaculate Conception. Mothers called Miss Schuster the “child whisperer” as she could calm the most troubled child and help them develop self-confidence. She was kind but she was firm.

Shelia Triplett was a single parent with two children. She had enrolled them in Immaculate Conception for a good education. Her son Jason was in seventh grade and was forever getting into trouble. She was called to the school so often she was afraid that she would lose her job.

When Miss Schuster arrived at the middle school, she bonded with Jason almost Immediately. She would ask about his interests and encourage him to pursue his joy of music. She saw his potential.

Hanging out in Miss Schuster’s office was a privilege as he was learning how to control his behavior. The calls from school soon ceased. Jason eventually became a professional musician who has played his flute in churches and orchestras all over the world.

Such are the stories as Betty made an ever-lasting impact on families In the Beatitude House programs and in the city schools.



On board with Beatitude House from its conception, Betty worked closely with her mentor, Sister Margaret Scheetz as they transformed the house on Fifth Ave into four shining apartments inside and out. The apartments were waiting to welcome the first four homeless families for the transitional Housing program. Betty volunteered hours and hours helping prepare the newly acquired buildings for the families that would also become a part of the Beatitude House program.

Whether plumbing, planning or painting, Betty was ready and willing with a wrench, a pen and paper or a brush. As they worked together, they became the best of friends.

Following her two years of volunteer service, Betty started the process to become an Ursuline Sister. Shortly after Betty professed her final vows to become Sister Elizabeth Ann Schuster, OSU, Sister Margaret lost her courageous battle with a brain cancer on January 4, 2001. She was 57.

Within three years, Sister Betty faced the failing health and deaths of both her parents as well as her own diagnosis of ovarian cancer.

Even in the midst of her personal grief - as well as the rigor of chemotherapy - the mission of Beatitude House remained a priority in her life. Two friends who had taken her to one of her final treatments before her remission were astounded when they found her conducting Beatitude business on her cell phone from her hospital bed where she was hooked up to a tangle of tubes and monitors.

As the first **Child Advocate** for Beatitude House, Betty was able to create a unique position. Her program provided five broad areas of development and support for homeless mothers and their children: Child Development; family structure; discipline and behavior; health and safety and education and enrichment. She developed specific goals and programming for each area. Much of the success of Beatitude House can be attributed to the accomplishments of the women in the program. The child advocacy program provided Betty with time to work directly with children.

She mentored over 100 families in the 5 years she worked as **Child Advocate**. Her Ursuline and Beatitude House communities recognized her faith and courage and commitment. Through her work, Beatitude House was able to enable homeless and low-income women break the cycle of poverty.

But wait. It was not all work. There was plenty of time to play. Christmas is always a gift of joy as donors create bright memories for the children. One year, Betty arranged for a choir of 40 children to sing Carols at Saint Columba Cathedral. The Director was Kenneth Wlder, a voice major at Dana School. The logistics for transporting the children to the church for rehearsals was challenging, but the work was worth it. Ken was the children's hero.

They could feel his love and respect as they worked and learned together.

There were sled rides and snowmen in the winters and Expeditions to Fellows Riverside Gardens in the Spring to see the beauty of Youngstown. The women got to see their children spreading their arms out and running safely down the grassy slopes far from care and worries. The garden proved to be a place where they could always bring their children back to feel that same peace and freedom.

On hot summer days, the sprinkler came out for water games in the yard. There were day camps and art classes. Older children could spend a week at Camp Fitch. All the children were learning through opportunities to experience new things.

Even as Sister Betty was facing loss and death, she continued to introduce children to the fullness of life.

At the end of Betty's life on October 17, 2013, Sister Alyce wrote:  
*In the course of her illness over the past seven years, Betty never wavered in her belief that God was her constant companion and support through the ups and downs of her journey. She walked with God at Beatitude House for 21 years until July of 2013. She was 57.*

So many grateful families sent notes to say, "I don't know what I would have done without Beatitude House."

And we say to you, our donors, we don't know what we would do without your generosity and help. Working together we are creating a kinder world.