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From the Prioress

June 2007

Dearest Friends,

The brief history of the origin of the Dominican Order featured in this issue of The Good News names some of the essential and defining characteristics of Dominican life - a life begun 800 years ago in the South of France.

In stark contrast to a prevailing dualism that denied the value of the created world, Dominicans preached the truth of the goodness of God's creation. The images of planting, tending, nurturing, so as to bring forth the fruit of the Gospel everywhere are appropriate signs of our mission that persists into the present.

The seeds of the orange trees planted long ago which today flourish on our grounds yield much fruit. They remind us of the mission into which each of us has been invited. Seeds of gospel truth planted by Dominic and the early Dominicans continue to yield an abundant harvest. Those seeds have spread beyond borders, cultures, and ideological boundaries.

The Dominican charism is forever engraved in the hearts of the Dominican Sisters of Houston who, even in the face of diminishment, remain true to the ministry of the Gospel Word by their life and dedication. They are preachers of justice, peace, and the goodness of creation in whose work and prayer the Dominican mission endures. They are teachers of our children in mind, heart and spirit - who journey with others who work to instill the gospel values of faith and compassion in the lives all the people they touch.

This September, the Dominican Sisters of Houston will launch a celebration commemorating the 125th anniversary of our presence in Texas. In a year-long series of events that celebrate our life, work and relationships forged throughout these years, we plan to rejoice with all the people who partner in mission with us, a partnership that strengthens the mission, allows it to thrive and moves it forward to the next 125 years. There are still many seeds to plant!

Marygrace Peters, O.P.

The Mission

We, the Houston Dominican Sisters, publicly commit ourselves to study and address the crucial justice issues of our times.

We assume the risks inherent in preaching and teaching the Gospel.

We will work to transform social structures which oppress the powerless, ministering with them in our common struggle to remain faithful to the Word of God. 1991

The 4 Pillars of Dominican Life

Prayer
Study
Community
Ministry

Leadership

Marygrace Peters, OP
Adrian Dover, OP
Patricia Casey, OP
Antoinette Carter, OP
Prioress
Vicarress
Councillor
Councillor

Printed on recycled paper

The Good News

is published twice a year by the Dominican Sisters of Houston
6501 Almeda Road
Houston, Texas  77021-2095
713-747-3310 ext. 335
713-747-4707 Fax

Contact Muffy Buvens for information at
mbuvens@domhous.org
www.houstonop.org

The Good News
The 125th Anniversary Year Celebration Begins

Opening Mass - September 30, 2007

Celebrating 125 Years and Honoring 2007 Jubilarians

Diamond
Emily Bordages, OP - Dorothy Cruze, OP
Benita Kelley, OP

Golden
Antoinette Carter, OP - Jane Meyer, OP

Silver
Donna Pollard, OP

1882 - The Founding

125 years ago, twenty religious women - Dominican pioneers led by Mother Mary Agnes Magevney - took the train from their convent in Ohio, landing in Galveston on September 29, 1882. We consider this the date of our founding in Texas, when the Dominican mission - to share the fruits of contemplation by preaching and teaching the Gospel truth wherever needed - took root in the Galveston-Houston archdiocese.

Under the leadership of our second prioress, Mother Pauline Gamon, the congregation confirmed and expanded its reputation in education by founding the Sacred Heart Academy in Galveston immediately after their arrival. In 1925, groundbreaking was held for a new mother house at 6501 Almeda Road, in Houston. The disastrous 1900 Galveston Hurricane which cost 6000 lives played a role in this decision, but Mother Pauline’s vision for expansion in Texas was the driving force. She knew the move to Houston would be the catalyst for an ever-widening Dominican influence.

Mother Pauline’s Early Vision

Mother Pauline’s early vision materialized and thus began a long and productive relationship with a broad base of Texas institutions, as well as with individuals, families, and various local communities. The Dominican Sisters provided leadership for the organization and accreditation of the Galveston-Houston diocesan school system, a Montessori school, and Project Head Start. The last 125 years has witnessed the establishment of the Houston motherhouse, the founding of three major educational institutions - the Sacred Heart Dominican College, St. Agnes Academy, and St. Pius X High School - and the opening and staffing of many parochial schools. From their Texas base, sisters also extended their mission to Louisiana and California.

The Second Vatican Council provided the sisters with the opportunity to expand their ministry beyond the classroom into other areas where they have forged deep and meaningful relationships with today’s invested partners: in environmental education, hospital chaplaincy, pastoral work, parish ministry, religious education, social services, campus ministry, counseling, medicine, law, family and women’s services, music and art, the Guatemala mission, retreat work, community organizing and refugee assistance.

Moving Forward with Partners in Mission

Yesterday’s vision to preach the gospel message wherever needed is carried on by today’s Dominican community of Houston. Now is the time to appreciate the past for its strong foundation, but more importantly to celebrate a vibrant future, devoting ourselves to move forward with partners in mission.

The 125th Year Anniversary Celebration is a collaboration with our partners in mission, who support and further the work of today’s Dominican community, and who actively participate in its growth. The year will bring together those who know us personally and by reputation - sisters, friends, former and present students, colleagues and others. There will be many opportunities for all to participate - in planning, in sponsoring, and of course in being present for the festivities.

Celebrating the Pillars of Dominican Life

This year-long celebration beginning on September 30 will be marked by a series of events rooted in the four pillars of Dominican life: prayer, study, ministry and community. Around each pillar, committees are actively planning programs to bring to light our mission and charism. Make note of the key dates and events listed on the back cover so you can spend them with us. Your commitment to the Dominican Sisters of Houston through the years has been a treasured vote of confidence in our community, and for that we are most grateful.

Let the celebration begin!

There is much work to do for this grand commemoration. Please refer to page 11 and the back cover for key dates and to learn how YOU can play a role in planning the year of celebration!
These women live the truth that each has a need awaiting another’s gift. Our lack of strength or mobility needs the gift of compassionate care in another. Our gift of serenity fills another’s hunger for peace. Each one’s gifts and needs are perfectly matched with other’s needs and gifts.

- Honora Werner OP

Sr. Honora Werner at the St. Dominic Villa Garden

Sr. Veronica Borski praying the Station of the Cross that holds special meaning for her - Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Sr. Nicholas Fahey in communion with the wildflowers in the Villa Garden

Life at St. Dominic Villa

In April, the sisters who live at St. Dominic Villa experienced a week of contemplative prayer and re-awakening of spirits that still burn brightly.

Honora Werner, a Dominican Sister of Caldwell, NJ, led the Villa retreat for thirty-three women, who for most of their lives, in true Dominican style, have been extremely active in the Texas community. They have been teachers of children, ministers to families, missionaries and preachers. They have planted Dominican seeds, nurtured them, and watched them grow. And now, their ministry is one of prayer - still making a significant contribution even in retirement.

Although it is sanctuary to those whose physical lives have diminished, the Dominican Villa is an energetic place, home to women who still have great zest for the Gospel. It is a house of prayer, and it reveals the most wonderful opportunity for interdependence!

Sr. Honora’s words – her special view of life’s diminishment – were so powerful to those on retreat that we delight in sharing them with you here. She reminds us that God created us not to rely on ourselves as autonomous beings, but to live in relationship with others.

A Community is Stronger than the Individual
A relationship creates interdependence, in which there is great power. God is seeking those who are available, dependable, and willing to be used. In this state of interaction, where the Holy Spirit is allowed to grow strong, God’s plan will be glorified in each sister’s life and in those she touches.

When each woman took her vows, she received the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, and fortitude. This retreat has been a reminder to the sisters of gifts they still possess today...and of gifts they still share.

The Dominican Sisters of Houston, through their lives and through their work, have forged a strong foundation in their mission. The women of the Villa, many over the last century, were some of the pioneers of the Dominican mission – teachers at the Dominican College, St. Pius X High School, St. Agnes Academy, Msgr. Kelly High School and in many parochial schools - as adult educators in parishes, campus ministers, social workers, and many more. Their gifts live on in those whose lives they have touched over the years.

Individuals inevitably must face their own diminishment, but communities give strength to the individual, and this community looks to a bright future. Because of the women at the Villa, today’s Dominican Sisters are strong, vibrant and interdependent. The sisters have many friends and supporters who journey with them. Like the women before them, today’s Dominican Sisters continue serving as a pillar of the Houston community…a mission undiminished, and moving forward.

**Thank you Sr. Honora for your valued gift of spirit, hope and inspiration.**

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**B**e soaked in the Holy Spirit’s Gifts today! And you know what happens when we are drenched in these gifts...Their fruits sprout out as profusely as the oranges on the trees around this house or the blossoms on the azaleas in the courtyard. Fruits like charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, chastity, kindness and long-suffering...those lovely fruits of God’s spirit at work within us. We will see them in each other!

- Honora Werner OP
To our wonderful partners who are Dominican at heart, who invest in us as individuals and as a community - it is for you and with you that the work begun 800 years ago by Dominic de Guzman continues.

Whichever in the city of Houston or in other places our sisters may be sent, we are busy preaching and teaching the Gospel, walking with the people, as we have done for 125 years.

The Dominican Sisters of Houston are grateful for your steadfast friendship and for your partnership in our mission. With your gracious support, we will continue the vibrant work of the present and look forward to all the possibilities held in the future. And most of all, we prayerfully thank you. Our work could not be done without you!
Every effort is made to record the names of our donors correctly. If we have made any mistakes please accept our apologies and alert us to the discrepancy by e-mailing Mamie Marx at mm Marx@domhous.org, so that we may correct it as soon as possible. Thank you.
“Conscious of our tradition, we pledge ourselves to be servants of the Word of God as those entrusted with that Word for others. We are committed to the preaching and teaching of the Word wherever there are people in need.”

Constitution #28
Please Send Us Updates!
The Dominican Sisters of Houston are looking to the future, and e-mail is the way. Please send us your e-mail address so we can begin updating our records. We also want your updated mailing address. Just send a quick email to mmarx@dotmhou.org with any new information.

THANK YOU
Join the team...

Thank you to our partners in planning, a committed group of over 60 volunteers who have already begun organizing the year. Last January, this energetic group came together to lay the framework for a series of events that would highlight a legacy rich in mission. This celebration of mission, centered around the pillars of Dominican life, will propel the community into the future. With energy that only comes from dedicated collaboration and partnership, the next 125 years will be just as bountiful as the last, and we can’t wait to begin this journey into the future!

You can join a planning committee now by sending your name and contact information, and by indicating which committee you would like to join, to mmarx@domhou.org in the Office of Advancement or by calling 713-747-3310 ext. 335. See back cover for more information about dates and key events.

The Planning Committee wants your help!

Prayer
David Barnhart
Elaine & Chris Butler
Kitty Carter, OP
Annette Dworsky, OP
Margaret Harle*
Ben Jeffries
Carletta LaCour, OP
Claudia Morgan
JoAnn Niehaus, OP
Sonja Novo
Garland Pohl
Patrick Spedale
Vincent Stasio*

Ministry
Jane Abell, OP
Raphael Bordages, OP
Patricia Casey, OP
Jackie Crowley*
Mary Magdalene Hanel, OP
Edna Ann Hebert, OP
Rita Owens, OP
Dottie Ross
Susie Russell
Jean Russo
Denise Stasio
Jinny Swilley*
Stephanie Weber

Community & Reception
Eileen Antill
Elaine Eichelberger*
Yolanda Eugere
Frances Garza
Burney Hebinck*
Kitty Inman
Gayle McMorow
Mary Moratto
Donna Pollard, OP
Mary Linda Portner
Barbara Russo
Susan Inman Russell
Cherry Steinwender
Susan Stromatt*

Community & Liturgy
Arthur Buckley
Deb Clark, OP*
Mike Comeaux
Eleanor Cesar, OP
Adrian Dover, OP
Anna Marie Flusche, OP
Julie Greig
Sara Montgomery
Martin Nguyen*
Most Rev. Vincent Rizzotto
Ceil Roeger, OP

* Denotes Committee Co-Chairs

Special Advisors to Advancement
John Hantak
Burney Hebinck
Ben Jeffries
Catherine Swilley
John & Lorraine Tegan

Special Assistance with Media & PR
Mary Linda Portner
JoAnn Niehaus, OP
Sandy Soliz

Study
Fran Boddeker, OP
Carol Cardenas*
Dave & Patty Kinkelmann
Marygrace Peters, OP
Skip Reeder*
Frank Rynd
Father Juan Torres, OP

Calling for Memories
Do you have a story or experience with the Dominican Sisters of Houston that you want to share?

Humorous or moving and poignant, we want to hear them! If so, please contact Muffy Buvens at mbuiev@domhou.org, or send them to her at The Dominican Sisters of Houston, 6501 Almeda, Houston TX 77021.

By sending us your story, you will indicate permission for editing and use in a special collection.
Community & Study

The Rio Grande Valley - Charles Anne Solomon, OP

Every day is different in the routine of Sr. Charles Anne Solomon, who sometimes travels 100 miles a day in her job as Associate Superintendent of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Brownsville. Serving a constituency of 4000 students and their families, Sr. Charles Anne works with 13 Catholic schools where over 15% of the students receive tuition assistance. 90% of the students are from Brownsville, McAllen and surrounding areas, while 10% of the students are from the border town of Matamoros, where poverty rates are among the highest and salaries among the lowest in the United States. Diocesan principals and teachers institute a pure ESL program that works to move children into English language programs as quickly as possible. Combating the effects of the economic climate and high drop-out rates in area schools is a mission Sr. Charles Anne takes to heart. There are two Catholic high schools in the diocese - St. Joseph Academy of Brownsville (celebrating their 100th anniversary this year) and Oratory of St. Phillip Neri (a dual-language school). 96% of graduates go on to college.

Sr. Charles Anne also volunteers in her home parish, St. Pius X of Weslaco, helping those in grief support programs. She is a diligent and determined voice for the students and a blessing to all in the Diocese of Brownsville.

Guatemala - Miriam Oliveros, OP

On March 11, 2007 the Dominican Sisters of Houston celebrated the 40th Year Anniversary of their missionary establishment of a Dominican presence in Guatemala. They began their ministry in Zacapa where they were joined by a number of native teachers including a young teacher, Miriam Oliveros. So drawn was Miriam to the Dominican work, that in 1972 she professed her vows to religious life. Today Sr. Miriam Oliveros continues her commitment to ministry in Guatemala as principal of San Vicenté de Paúl Bethania. She works closely with one of the original founders, Sr. Theresa Macey, who is working to develop leaders among the youth of Guatemala.

Since the founding of the school in 1966, more than 12,000 students have received a Dominican education in the school which serves children PK through 6th grade. 85% of the students graduate to go on to higher education. Currently six alumnae are teachers at the school, and over 6,000 youth have benefited from leadership programs in their community.

Special thanks go to all who have contributed significant and sustaining support to the Guatemalan mission of the Dominican Sisters and to Sr. Miriam for her dedication to the children of Guatemala and the community she serves.

Sr. Antoinette, “Toi” to her friends, was elected as Mother General in 1964 and until 1970, led the Dominican Sisters through the challenges and changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council. The search for truth and study were her constant companions. As teacher, she served at St. Agnes Academy, St. Mary’s High School in Port Arthur, and St. Anthony’s High School in Beaumont. Sr. Antoinette’s reputation in education was heightened by her leadership as Dean and President of the Sacred Heart Dominican College. She was the innovator of many of the congregation’s traditions, ministries and business practices: the Art Show and Sale, the Good News Newsletter, the Sisters’ Retirement Fund, the Guatemalan Mission, the Advancement Office, and more. In her last years, she was confined to a wheelchair, and felt a great sense of accomplishment when she learned to use her scooter! Her accomplishments were many, her fidelity and love for the community obvious, and she was beloved by all.

Given the nickname “Turtle” for her slow and deliberate manner, Sr. Joanna possessed a wonderful sense of humor, beautiful smile and gentle demeanor. Sr. Joanna taught in high schools in Beaumont, Orange, Galveston, Riverside CA, and in Houston where she had as her pupil the young Archbishop Joseph Fiorenza. From 1957 to 1965, Joanna served as registrar and also taught English at the Dominican College. In addition to her love of teaching, she was blessed with an artistic and creative ability seen in her needlework, which was always so beautiful. Her “lilt of Irish laughter” could be heard in the halls and in the notes she loved to write, as she was a talented correspondent with her many friends and colleagues. She was dearly loved and will be missed.

Matthew 25:21

Antoinette Bogkin, OP + January 7, 2007

Joanna Doherty, OP + April 8, 2007

The Good News
The 911 Community - Lavergne Schwender, OP

Did you know that Houston’s 911 emergency response system was formed in large part due to the efforts of a Dominican Sister?

From the early 1960’s to 1980’s, cities all over the country were implementing their own phone numbers for emergency response, but because of political issues, a universal number was hard to establish. Locally, in the fall of 1982, Commissioner Tom Bass and City Attorney Mike Driscoll enlisted the aid of two county attorneys - two women with Dominican ties. Laverne Hogan, a former Dominican Sister, and Lavergne Schwender, OP went to work and immediately surveyed legislation in the country dealing with universal emergency response systems. Forging through the political process, the “two Lavergnes” (as they came to called) were able to write legislation to form the Greater Harris County 911 Emergency Network.

In 1983, voters approved the creation and funding of this special purpose district. Laverne Hogan, the district’s first Executive Director sadly passed away in 2004, but Sr. Lavergne Schwender easily took over the leadership role. Under Sr. Lavergne’s watchful eye, Harris County became the first major metropolitan area in the nation to install wireless technology to locate cell phones. She continues to cultivate a proactive, one-step-ahead-of-the-curve culture in the district that oversees 48 cities and two counties, and she does it all with a witty and cheerful outlook that has become her trademark.

The Universe - Linda Gibler, OP

Sr. Linda Gibler thoroughly embraces study as a pillar of her daily life. She has spent the last eight years at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco where she recently completed a Doctoral Degree in Philosophy and Religion with an emphasis in Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness. Dr. Linda’s dissertation is titled, Cosmocentric Sacramentality: Water, Oil, and Fire in the Roman Catholic Celebration of Baptism. So impressive and complete was Linda’s dissertation, that it was accepted without change, a rare achievement indeed.

Linda hopes to share her knowledge to help people understand and respond to today’s global crisis. Earth has suffered five mass extinctions, and is in the midst of number six. This is the first and only extinction resulting from a single species – humanity. But through teaching there is hope. Linda delights in teaching the 14 billion year story of what she calls “Our God-Drenched Universe” and offers presentations designed to help us become more intimately aware of God in all aspects of creation, particularly in the common things that surround us. To paraphrase Thomas Aquinas, “Without an accurate understanding of nature, we cannot truly understand God,” and this is the understanding Linda hopes to bring to our community.

Linda has recently returned to Houston to be closer to the community and to her family, and to teach wherever the opportunity arises.

Mary Gerard Barry, OP + May 5, 2007

loves were history and the greening of urban areas of Houston. The pine trees on our property are part of that legacy, for it was she who enlisted her high school students to help plant them on weekends. She was a faithful volunteer at Habitat for Humanity and rarely missed her other faithful habit of evening walks to pray the rosary. She herself summed it up best when she said, “I tell the children that if life on earth can be so much fun, just imagine what it will be like in heaven.”

Sr. Gerard led a long, dedicated, and happy life as a Dominican Sister, but we love to remember her mostly for her adventurous spirit! Two of her greatest

Sr. Marcella entered the Dominican community in 1935, at 17 years old, just shy of her 18th birthday. As a young postulant, Sr. Marcella was often found giggling at play - jumping over the seedling pine trees planted by Sr. Gerard outside the old mother house. In 1953 she entered her ministry of prayer at St. Dominic Villa after becoming ill. In her later years, she loved to sing and music would bring out the most beautiful smile and sparkle in her eyes. For that she will be always remembered.

16 years ago, Kay Crocker came as a trail blazer to the community, serving as its first lay volunteer. She was loved for her friendliness, her calming presence, and her commitment to the community mission of preaching justice. Kay was proof that we do not need words to preach, for she gave her time and talent to better the lives of the poor and needy. She also raised a fine family with loving values. We will miss her friendship, her sense of humor and her inspiration - she was truly one of us.

Kay Crocker + March 23, 2007

Marcella Sedela, OP + December 3, 2006

“Those whom we love and lose are no longer where they were before. They are now wherever we are.”

Early Christian writer
John Chrysostom
n the year 1206, a young priest named Dominic de Guzman traveled through Toulouse, France, with his bishop, Don Diego de Acebes - the Bishop of Osma, Spain - on a mission for the pope. It was a time of political and spiritual unrest and growing division among Christians. A newly emerging market economy flourished in what had been a world dominated by a feudal system that had prevailed for centuries. Dualistic heretical sects denied the goodness of the world and creation itself. Southern France was a hotbed of one such group, the Cathars. Dominic’s compassion for those caught up in heresy impelled him to dedicate his life to preaching and teaching the truth of the Gospel.

Dominic’s first converts were a group of Cathar women of noble descent who were estranged from their families because of their radical views. Not willing to abandon them, Dominic and Bishop Diego gathered them together as a community in the village of Prouilhe, France, in 1207. This monastery of nuns exists at Prouilhe to this day. Dominic served as a parish priest in nearby Fanjeaux for the following 10 years, preaching and teaching. He gathered around him a group of brothers who shared the same vocation as his daughters of faith.

This year the Order of Preachers celebrates its 800th anniversary. What began as a community of converted Cathar women, added to its ranks friars on whom Pope Honorius III conferred the official designation of Order of Preachers.

"Dominic was not primarily concerned to find a way of life which would be convenient or even safe for himself, nor was he concerned to realize any dream of his own perfection; what he wanted was to preach the gospel where it was needed most, in whatever way would make it most effective."

- Simon Tugwell, OP

The Good News
St. Dominic Villa has become the busy hub for making Dominican orange marmalade. Sr. Marie Bordages takes charge of the process by gathering the bitter Seville oranges from the trees and recruiting sisters who look forward to the lengthy and complex event of turning them into sweet marmalade. The process is not for the faint of heart, but when Sr. Marie posts the day and time, she always has many willing hands ready to work. They peel, de-seed, separate and compile the ingredients. Every part of the orange is used.

So popular is Sr. Marie’s marmalade that its production is called the Villa Community Project. Jars of the Villa marmalade can be found in fund-raising projects such as the Art Show and school auctions, and many friends are lucky enough to be gifted with a jar. In honor of the 125th Anniversary Year Celebration, Sr. Marie has agreed to share her recipe, but beware, only the most patient and willing of cooks will be able to pull it off!

Go to www.houstonop.org and click on the jar of marmalade!

Over the years, Houston Dominican Sisters have made regular pilgrimages to Spain, France and Italy to experience the surroundings where St. Dominic began his ministry of preaching and teaching. The first stop is north of Madrid, the village of Caleruega, Spain - Dominic's birth place. The Dominican headquarters at Santa Sabina, Rome is last.

Legend has it that the Seville orange tree at Santa Sabina was planted there by Dominic himself. The six Seville orange trees at our Houston motherhouse are descendants of the tree at Santa Sabina. Four of the six got their start on Almeda Road in 1991 thanks to Sr. Audrey Vice who traveled the lands of Dominic that year. Two of the motherhouse trees are older, and the story of their Texas arrival is a topic of frequent speculation and local legend. The six trees can be seen in bloom mostly year-round. They are truly a sight to behold and are a constant reminder of Dominic's mission.

Contributed by Heloise Cruzat, OP

Spring is Marmalade Time

From Spain to Houston Transplanted and Thriving
You are Invited!

The Dominican Sisters of Houston - 125th Anniversary Year Celebration

Mark your calendars now - see inside stories on pages 3 and 11 for more details.

Key Events and Dates Beginning September 30, 2007

Opening Mass & Reception Celebrating the 125th Anniversary Year and Honoring 2007 Jubilarians
Sunday, September 30, 2007, 2 PM
St. Agnes Academy

An Evening with Timothy Radcliffe, OP
What is the Point of Being a Christian?
Saturday, November 10, 2007, 7 PM
St. Vincent de Paul Church

Grand Reunion of All Dominican Schools & Ministries
Sunday, April 13, 2008, 1 - 5 PM
Grounds of the Dominican Sisters

Interfaith Solemn Sung Prayer
Date TBA Late Spring/Early Summer 2008
Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

Closing Mass & Reception
Sunday, September 28, 2008, 2 PM
St. Pius X High School

2007 Jubilarians

Diamond
Emily Bordages, OP
Dorothy Cruze, OP
Benita Kelley, OP

Golden
Antoinette Carter, OP
Jane Meyer, OP

Silver
Donna Pollard, OP

For more information call Barbara Abell, Director of Advancement
713-747-3310 ext. 335 or e-mail to babell@domhou.org