



SPONSOR FORMATION: IRELAND ADOPTS U.S. MODEL

BY SR. MARY HADDAD, RSM, M.S.W., M.B.A.

At Catholic Health Association programs and assemblies, it isn't unusual to find participants from other countries — Ireland, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico and Guyana, to name a few. We very much like having these participants. They enrich our conversations, enhance the connections we make and lend a spark of mystery: We never know for sure where these connections might lead.

This is a story about one result of such connections. It traces an encounter between U.S. and international participants at a CHA forum from a casual discussion to a collaborative effort that eventually took a U.S. sponsor formation program across the sea to Ireland.

It also underscores two Catholic trends whose impact author John Allen Jr. believes has yet to be fully realized — expanding lay roles and globalization. Allen, senior Vatican analyst for CNN

and senior correspondent for the *National Catholic Reporter*, names these trends in *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church* (Doubleday Religion, 2009).

As many who work in Catholic health care are well aware, since Vatican Council II, continual involvement of the laity in the mission of the church has given way to new and emerging models of ministry and leadership. Within Catholic health care, efforts to support and advance these developments have moved beyond parochial activities to establishment of public juridic persons (PJPs). These officially recognized groups, which include lay members, are increasingly assuming responsibility for sponsorship of organizations established and long shepherded solely by members of religious orders. Resources and strategies are being shared through a global network, strengthening the Catholic health ministry and — in one recent notable case — offering great potential for influencing the broader church.

It started with a networking connection. Thomas Morris, Ph.D., of Maryland, crossed paths more than four years ago with John Pepper, who

PROGRAM CONTENT

Catholic health care is a complex ministry, so preparing the next generation of sponsors requires a solid foundation. Personal, theological and professional competencies have been identified and incorporated into the Collaborative Formation Program for Public Juridic Persons. Content areas based on these competencies include the healing ministry of the church, apostolic spirituality, social justice and advocacy, mission and ethical discernment and canon and civil law. Theologians and consultants provide input and facilitation on these topics.

had been working in New Jersey with members of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God.

The men met at the 2007 CHA Sponsorship Institute, where Morris was serving on a panel. He is senior vice president, sponsorship and theology, Bon Secours Health System, Marriottsville, Md., and deeply involved in sponsor formation. The two got to talking about efforts in the U.S. to develop governance and sponsorship models for Catholic health ministries. Morris spoke about his participation in the development of Bon Secours Ministries, which received juridic status on May 31, 2006, and, at a later meeting, about his work with the Collaborative Formation Program for Public Juridic Persons. That program was launched in 2003 by five pontifical public juridic persons of Catholic health ministries. (See sidebar).

Delighted to find such a resource person right in front of him, Pepper first invited Morris to work with him and with members of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God on board formation for the order's ministry in New Jersey. That initial collaboration led to a groundbreaking new request: that Morris assist two religious orders in Ireland who were working together on sponsor formation: Saint John of God and Bon Secours.

The Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God provides health care services in more than 250 hospitals and centers in 50 countries. In Ireland, the order is best noted for services to people who

are elderly, disabled or mentally ill, and it is in the process of establishing a PJP to sponsor those ministries.

The Sisters of Bon Secours have been providing health care in Ireland since 1861, first in homes, later by establishing hospitals. In 1993, the order in Ireland established the Bon Secours Health System to manage their five hospitals there, and in 2007, Bon Secours Ireland was granted status as a PJP.

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Sr. Marie Ryan, CBS, leader of the Sisters of Bon Secours in Ireland, had initiated discussions about designing and operating a formation program with other like-minded congregations. Knowing that the Saint John of God brother had initiated planning for establishment of a PJP for their ministries, Sr. Ryan contacted Br. Laurence Kearns, OH, provincial of the Western European Province of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God. The upshot of their conversations was development by the two orders of a joint formation program in Ireland. It is now underway under the direction of Thom Morris and Sr. Catherine O'Connor, CSB.

Morris and Sr. O'Connor, vice president, mission and sponsorship for Covenant Health Sys-

COLLABORATIVE SPONSOR FORMATION

The canonical statutes of juridic persons require an initial and continuing formation process for members. In 2003, five pontifical public juridic persons of Catholic health ministries — Catholic Health Care Federation (Catholic Health Initiatives, Denver), Covenant Health Systems (Covenant Health Systems, Lexington, Mass.), Catholic Health Ministries (Trinity Health, Novi, Mich.), Hope Ministries (Catholic Health East, Newtown Square, Pa.), and Bon Secours Ministries (Bon Secours Health System, Marriottsville, Md.) — launched the Collaborative Formation Program for Public Juridic Persons. In 2005, St. Joseph Health Ministry (St. Joseph Health System, Orange, Calif.) and in 2009, Providence Ministries (Providence Health & Services, Renton, Wash.)

joined the collaborative program.

The program's purpose is to provide support for the orientation and development of current and future members of PJPs. The program consists of four weekend sessions held over an 18-month period, during which participants are engaged with faculty in prayer, input, reflection and interactive group processes on the theological, personal and professional aspects of the ministry of sponsorship. Since the inception of the program, 149 individuals have participated.

A second collaborative, the Collaborative Sponsor Formation Program, was initiated in 2007 and is modeled on the first program.

tem, have been working together for several years in various ministry formation programs, including the collaborative U.S. sponsor formation program. As a native of Ireland and a member of the Congregation of Saint Brigid there, Sr. O'Connor brings a deep understanding of Irish sensibilities.

The Irish program marks an important development for the global church: a U.S. sponsor formation program developed specifically for members of newly established PJPs has been exported to other shores.

Both Morris and Sr. O'Connor realized that the success of the international endeavor would depend on adapting the American program to the Irish culture and church rather than imposing a U.S. model. So building upon the groundwork established by the two congregations, they began working with a local steering committee on planning. The first sessions commenced in May 2010 with approximately 35 participants. They included members of the two congregations, members of Bon Secours Ireland, and other lay persons engaged in the ministries of Bon Secours and St. John of God.

Planning for lay involvement in the ministry of sponsorship is fairly new for the church in Ireland. So, too, are collaborative efforts between religious orders involved in Catholic health care. Although the Conference of Religious of Ireland serves the leadership of religious orders of both women and men, Ireland has no equivalent to the Catholic Health Association of the United States for support of the particular needs of the health care ministry. Through their interaction in the program, members of the Sisters of Bon Secours, Bon Secours Ireland and the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God have discovered commonalities in their founding stories and in their expressions of the charism of hospitality and healing, both deep-seated in the Irish heritage.



As the sponsor formation program in Ireland has evolved, so have distinct differences with the program in the U.S. The Irish church and culture have shaped the formation program in both content and process. For example, the *Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services* is an important area of study in the U.S. formation program. Although the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference has not developed a formal set of ethical directives for Catholic health care, it has published some bioethical statements intended to serve as guides. Additionally, it is notable that both the Saint John of God brothers and the Sisters of Bon Secours have established guidelines and theological principles for their health care ministries which flow directly from their congregational charisms

Another recognizable difference is experienced in the processes the program uses. It is well known that storytelling is a distinct characteristic of the Irish culture. Morris and Sr. O'Connor discovered that the sharing of stories has both led to a more extended process than has been the norm for the American program and has fostered a strong sense of community among participants.

It is not only the Irish participants who have benefitted from this cross-cultural collaboration. Both Sr. O'Connor and Morris agree that their experiences with the church and health care ministries in Ireland continue to inform and shape how they minister in the United States and to enrich their ongoing work with the Collaborative Formation Program for Public Juridic Persons.

The sponsor formation program in Ireland is strengthening the Catholic health ministry there as it works to ensure a future by preparing the next generation of sponsors. Equally important is the collaborative effort between the Catholic health ministries of Ireland and of the United States. Through these efforts the global ministry of Catholic health care is strengthened and a world church is more fully realized.

It is without question that even in these troubling economic times, the present value of sponsor formation in the global market exceeds a mere nominal gain. Given the probable return on investment, market forecasts indicate that the future value of this asset is beyond measure.

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SPONSOR FORMATION SURVEY

In an effort to ensure and sustain Catholic health ministry in the U.S., the preparation and formation of new sponsors is imperative. Over the past year, there has been growing interest in the ministry for sponsor formation programs for both laity and vowed religious. Recently, CHA has conducted a survey to assess the current need for sponsor formation programs in the U.S. and to gather member input about preparing and forming new sponsors for their vital role in the ministry.

JOURNAL OF THE CATHOLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES

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Reprinted from *Health Progress*, September-October 2011
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