

Sisters of Charity Foundation Awarded \$750,000 Grant from Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Funds expand initiative to develop next generation lay leadership for sister-led, sister-founded ministries

CLEVELAND, OH – February 26, 2018 – The [Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland](#) (SOCF) has been awarded a \$750,000 three-year grant from the [Conrad N. Hilton Foundation](#) to expand Generative Spirit, an SOCF-led effort to develop the next generation of leaders for Catholic sister-led ministries in Northeast Ohio.

“Catholic sisters have an extraordinary legacy of ministering to the most vulnerable in our community – families and children living in poverty, the homeless, the ill and dying,” said Susanna Krey, SOCF president. “It is critical that as more women religious move toward retirement that we have a leadership transition plan in place so these vital ministries in our communities continue to have profound impact on those in need.”

Through Generative Spirit, SOCF, in partnership with the Northeast Ohio Conference of Religious Leadership and the Coalition of Young Adults, intends to inspire the next generation of lay leaders for sister-led, sister-founded nonprofit organizations through relationship building, information sharing, educational seminars, convenings, communication and research.

Over the next five years, half of the 600 Catholic sisters who are active in ministries in Northeast Ohio are expected to retire. A recent survey, funded by SOCF and conducted by Case Western Reserve University, found the median age of sisters to be 75, with only 6 percent under the federal retirement age.

Generative Spirit will create opportunities for Catholic sisters to engage with young adults and lay leaders to combine nonprofit skill-building with a greater understanding of the Catholic sisters’ model to become leaders in service and ministry for our cities, country and world. The Generative Spirit initiative, which is intended to become a national model, will include:

- **Blocks and Bridges** – Program will pair sisters with lay co-workers in a series of workshops to help build and transform their ministries. Topics will include: mission formation, communications and marketing, fundraising, finance, creation of impactful boards, and structuring of staff and volunteers.
- **Ministry Fellows Program** – 20 young adults in ministry will be selected for an up to a year-long fellowship program, which will, at the start of their careers, pair these young professionals with a “sister companion” to learn from her mission, approach and nonprofit skills. The program will encourage young adult awareness of the depth and breadth of Catholic ministries in Northeast Ohio.

- **Convenings** – Three larger group meeting of 150-200 participants to learn more in-depth on issues pertinent to the future of ministry and current social justice concerns.
- **Research/Communications** – Research will be conducted to help shape ministry leadership, the role of retired sisters and to further engage young adult lay leaders. A comprehensive communications program will highlight ministry stories to inspire further involvement of young adults.

“Since the 1800s, Catholic sisters have responded to the unmet needs of the underserved through the development of many sponsored health and human service ministries in Northeast Ohio,” said Sister Marian Durkin, CSA, who serves on the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine leadership council and SOCF board of directors. “Generative Spirit further advances our congregations’ commitment to responsible and creative stewardship of community resources, and increased collaboration with others to bring God’s love and healing presence to those in need.”

Nearly 80 percent of Northeast Ohio sisters hold graduate degrees, reflecting an extremely well-educated group of professionally trained women. More than 70 percent hold master’s degrees and 7 percent hold doctoral degrees. Most have been serving in ministry more than 50 years.

Generative Spirit builds on the foundation’s 16-year strategic initiative, Collaboration for Ministry Initiative (CMI), that cultivates the sharing of ideas, support for each other and collaboration of ministry initiatives among the sisters of Northeast Ohio’s 15 religious orders. By promoting collaboration among both congregations and generations, together, CMI and Generative Spirit will ensure the sisters’ legacies not only survive, but thrive, in the future. Recognizing the critical role these nonprofit organizations serve in helping those in need, SOCF has committed more than \$2 million toward these two efforts since CMI began in 2002.

The foundation was previously awarded a \$300,000 grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in 2015 for a two-year pilot Generative Spirit program. It is intended that SOCF’s 20-year CMI and Generative Spirit initiatives will become a national model to assist leadership transition for sister ministries across the country.

“We found young adults are much more likely to have an interest in spiritual and leadership formation if they have a connection to Catholic sisters. In turn, sisters have come to recognize their own value as advisers, rather than the hands-on ‘doers’, of ministry,” said Erin McIntyre, SOCF senior program officer of religious communities. “Ultimately, Generative Spirit not only enables Catholic lay adults to sustain the sisters’ work, but creates a path for them to live out their Baptismal promise and do what they are called to do.”

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About the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland

Since 1996, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland has partnered with residents, nonprofits and community leaders to change the trajectory of poverty in Cuyahoga County. Its nearly \$100 million

endowment includes the first health care conversion foundation and first foundation formed by a congregation of Catholic sisters in the United States.

Through grantmaking, collaboration, advocacy and more, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland works to improve the lives of those most in need with special attention to families, women and children living in poverty. The foundation works to end homelessness in Cuyahoga County and to reduce health disparities and improve educational opportunities in Cleveland's Central Neighborhood. As a Catholic organization, the foundation extends the values of Jesus Christ through the mission of its founders – the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine – and also works to sustain the ministries of women religious.

The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland is a ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System – a family of Catholic health care, grantmaking and outreach ministries healing individuals, families and communities in Ohio and South Carolina.

About The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation was created in 1944 by international business pioneer Conrad N. Hilton, who founded Hilton Hotels and left his fortune to help the world's disadvantaged and vulnerable people. From its inception, the Foundation has awarded more than \$1.6 billion in grants, distributing \$114.9 million in the U.S. and around the world in 2016. The Foundation's current assets are approximately \$2.8 billion.