



*Sisters of St. Francis
of Mary Immaculate*

www.jolietfranciscans.org

PRESS RELEASE

For information, contact: Nan Nagl
(815)725-8735 x116
nnagl@jolietfranciscans.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joliet Franciscan Sisters and Guardian Angel Community Services End 114-Year Association

Founded in 1897 by the Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate in Joliet, Guardian Angel Home served as an orphanage until the early 1970s. Responding to the needs of the times, the institution became Guardian Angel Community Services (GACS) and changed its focus to begin serving women and children through a variety of exceptional programs such as Groundwork, Suzy's Caring Place and the Dillard Harris Educational Center.

Also among these programs are foster care and adoption. In recent months, the discussion at many Illinois faith-based agencies with state-funded foster care and adoption programs has centered on the Illinois' Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act of June 1, 2011. For the Sisters of St. Francis in Joliet, a key factor to the implementation of this law is that the State of Illinois has rejected faith-based conscientious objections to processing applications of unmarried cohabitating couples.

After months of deliberation, the Board of Directors of Guardian Angel Community Services has made the decision to comply with the Illinois' Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Union Act of June 1, 2011 and process licenses for cohabitating couples.

Due to the Board of Directors' decision based on the new State of Illinois law, the GACS Board of Members, which consists of the Sisters of St. Francis leadership, made the difficult but necessary decision to end its association with GACS. This decision is all the more difficult because of the long history of service Guardian Angel Community Services has provided to the community, particularly the poor and vulnerable.

As a result of this decision, Guardian Angel Community Services must file for its own 501(c)3 not-for-profit status and it will no longer operate as a social service agency sponsored by the congregation of women religious from whom it derived its Catholic identity.

The Sisters of St. Francis of Mary Immaculate have been a presence in Joliet since their founding in 1865. They will continue to serve the Joliet community and beyond through their many ministries.

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