

Retirement Fund for Religious

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News

The Big Picture: Planning for the Future

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When the Benedictines of Subiaco Abbey entered the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) Planning and Implementation Assistance program in 2009, all they really wanted was funding for a new elevator. Participation in the planning process, however, inspired them to broaden their focus and to evaluate both their long-term needs and the future of their ministries. Now, three years since completing the program, the Benedictines have implemented a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to retirement and eldercare that ensures quality care while promoting continued viability for their community and ministries.

A Long, Hard Look

Since 1878, the Benedictines have been serving in Arkansas. The original priory was raised to the rank of abbey in 1891 and given the name Subiaco, after the place in Italy where St. Benedict lived as a hermit and first began to attract followers. Today, the community has forty-three members, including ten in various stages of formation. On a sprawling, 1,800-acre campus, the monks engage in a wide range of ministries, many of which help sustain the monastery. Chief among these are Subiaco Academy, a college-preparatory school for young men, and Coury House, a busy retreat center. Through participation in Planning and Implementation Assistance, the community came to understand that these works, so central to Benedictine life, would be in jeopardy unless they could stabilize their retirement funding.

Participation in the NRRO's Planning and Implementation Assistance program has helped the monks of Subiaco Abbey to create a long-range plan that promotes ongoing viability for their ministries and their Benedictine way of life.



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Planning and Implementation Assistance includes an initial workshop in which participants work with NRRO-assigned consultants to identify their greatest retirement-funding challenges. The Subiaco participants were Abbot Jerome Kodell; Mr. Glenn Constantino, the community's procurator (finance manager); and Ms. Rose Schneider, RN, director of their health and wellness centers. All three felt the most pressing need was for a new elevator that would allow senior monks to access a third-floor fitness center. Their consultants, however, encouraged the team to take a more holistic approach to their planning and to consider the funding for a new elevator in the context of the community's ongoing needs and goals.

The Benedictines embraced the recommendation to complete comprehensive, long-term planning before deciding on a course of action. Over the next two years, they evaluated nearly all aspects of their finances, eldercare, and ministries. A \$25,000 planning grant from the NRRO allowed them to hire a firm to conduct

a space-utilization study of their wellness and health centers and to complete a Tracking Revenue, Expense, Net Assets, Demographics, Savings (TRENDS) analysis.

The community's efforts resulted in the development of a ten-year strategic plan, completed in June 2011. The plan outlines a series of goals and objectives for the community and was essential to determining ongoing needs. "We realized that you can't know your long-term needs unless you know your plans for the future," said Glenn Constantino. "We also understood that mission and ministry must drive the needs, rather than the other way around."

Concurrent with their financial and ministry review, the Benedictines also evaluated their health-care realities, with an eye toward lowering costs and enhancing quality of life. Although eligible monks were already participating in Medicare and Medicaid, they investigated additional sources of government funding. Two monks

Members of the planning team (*below and right*) discovered that, without a change in approach, the internal ministry of caring for senior monks would have to come at the expense of the community's external ministries.



A member of the retirement planning team, Brother Anthony Pierce (*above, right*) was one of two monks who trained to become a certified nursing assistant (CNA). He is pictured with health-center resident Brother Andrew Suarez.

Pictured (*from left*): Planning team members Abbot Jerome Kodell, Glenn Constantino (*seated*), and Rose Schneider, RN.

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also trained as certified nursing assistants (CNAs), and the care they provide is eligible for reimbursement under a State of Arkansas waiver program called ElderChoices. This step helped elder monks to feel more comfortable receiving care while decreasing the need for paid staff.

Both an eldercare consultation and the space-utilization study recommended relocating the wellness center (*see page 4*) to an area adjacent to the health center rather than purchasing a new elevator. The community was able to complete the necessary renovations for this in-house. Additional recommendations for enhancing quality of life have also been implemented. Among these is a new closed-circuit television system that allows monks residing in the health center to participate in community prayer. Other highlights include dietary improvements, finding creative ways to involve health-center residents in ministry, and the installation of a nurse-call system in select rooms above the health center for well elders who need occasional assistance.

The Campaign for Subiaco

In the end, all analyses pointed to the same issue: the Benedictines lacked sufficient income and savings to support retirement. Without a substantial infusion of

funds, they were projected to deplete their operating budget within a matter of years. A second planning award of \$36,500 from the NRRO enabled the monks to hire a firm to investigate the feasibility of conducting a capital campaign. The findings revealed the community had substantial support for a campaign, and \$300,000 in Implementation Assistance underwrote the hiring of a development firm to execute it.

Initially, the community had envisioned a campaign focused solely on funding for eldercare. However, the feasibility study revealed that donors wanted both to assist senior monks and to ensure the abbey's ministries continued. Vibrant ministries would also appeal to young men interested in joining the monastery. "It's hard to attract vocations when it seems the only ministry is eldercare," said Abbot Jerome. "We didn't have these young guys when we started this effort. Maybe they sense a new vitality here."

The community set a target of \$8 million for the capital campaign, half of which is being allocated to health care and retirement. The remaining \$4 million is divided among needs at Subiaco Academy, Coury House, infrastructure, and the education of new monks.



The capital campaign is helping to ensure ongoing viability for the community's ministries, especially Subiaco Academy, where junior and senior monks continue the commitment to academic excellence.

Pictured (*from left*): Brother Damien Cafaro, Father Leonard Wangler (*seated*), Brother Matthias Hagge, Father Brendan Miller, Brother Ephrem O'Bryan (*seated*), and Brother Joseph Heath.

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The monks are fortunate to have significant support from alumni of Subiaco Academy as well as dedicated volunteers. To date, over \$6 million has been raised. In conjunction with the capital campaign, the community has also expanded overall development efforts, including a greater focus on annual appeals and planned giving.

Ultimately, the monks took a thoroughly Benedictine approach to addressing their long-term retirement needs: they listened. They listened to the advice and experience of consultants and development experts. They heeded what the TRENDS program forecast for their future. They heard the urgings of alumni and supporters, encouraging them to find a way to sustain their ministries while caring for their elders. They listened; they learned; and then they acted.

“The NRRO helped us face reality. The process allowed us to gain a new perspective, and now we’re not just patching up holes but really planning for the future.”

Abbot Jerome Kodell, OSB



Healthy Lifestyle, Active Ministry

The Benedictines of Subiaco Abbey recognize the central importance of a healthy lifestyle for both the well-being of the monks and for controlling costs. Over the last several years, Rose Schneider, RN, director of the community’s health and wellness centers, has spearheaded a comprehensive effort to improve diet and fitness, especially among elder monks. On any given day, monks of all ages can be found exercising in the senior-friendly wellness center. Staff members monitor progress and assist as needed. The results have been impressive. Monks who once had

trouble walking unassisted now can be seen lifting weights or riding a stationary bike. Others have lost significant amounts of weight—up to 50 pounds! “Our team works really hard to help the monks remain active,” said Rose. “I believe they need to be with their community, and we do everything we can to keep them there.”



Pictured (above, from left): Father Brendan Miller, 69, Rose Schneider, RN, Brother Anselm Allen, 75, and Theresa Naegel, CNA.



Just shy of 85 years old, Father Bruno Fuhrmann has operated the abbey sawmill since 2002.



Among other duties, Brother Joseph Koehler, 73, oversees the monastery vineyard.

Message from the Executive Director

For many, 2014 will go down as the winter that just wouldn't quit! Spring is particularly welcome this year, as is the special feeling of hope that heralds the season.

A similar spirit of optimism is palpable among the Benedictines of Subiaco Abbey, who are profiled in this issue. Assessing their finances and ongoing needs was certainly a painstaking process, but by doing so they were able to implement a plan that allows them to provide quality eldercare and sustain their ministries. They certainly have every reason to feel hopeful! The monks were among the first participants in Planning and Implementation Assistance, and it is gratifying that they continued to utilize the tools and knowledge they gained through the program even after their work with the NRRO ended. I also appreciate the way the community is "paying forward" the assistance they received by allowing their health-center director, Rose Schneider, RN, to serve as a volunteer eldercare consultant for the NRRO.

When we launched Planning and Implementation Assistance in 2009, we recognized that many religious communities faced complex issues that would be difficult to address without outside, objective assistance. Our goal was to provide resources and professional

expertise that would enable religious communities to develop comprehensive strategies for reducing their unfunded retirement liabilities. Five years since the program began, we are grateful for the grant the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation is providing to help us evaluate our efforts. In the coming months, we will gather feedback and data from many of the communities that have participated in the process. Our goal is to make the program even more effective in the future.



The journey to ensuring adequate retirement funding for all religious communities is indeed challenging. Yet I remain filled with hope—hope inspired by the love and generosity of donors to the Retirement Fund for Religious and by the religious who work so hard to steward these gifts. In this season of Easter, may you be filled with the ultimate source of hope, the love of our risen Savior.

Gratefully,

Sister Janice Bader, CPPS

NRRO Calendar

May 2014

13 NRRO Webinar—
Intimacy, Loneliness, and Solitude

June

22–30 Direct Care Assistance checks mailed

August

6–9 CMSM Assembly

12–16 LCWR Assembly

19 NRRO Webinar—topic TBD

September

23–25 NRRO Planning and Implementation Workshop,
Dayton, OH

25–28 CMSWR Assembly

November

3–7 RCRI Conference, St. Louis

Announcements and Reminders

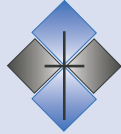
Stay Connected

Please send changes in address, phone, e-mail, or congregational leadership to the NRRO, c/o Tiffany Lezama (tlezama@usccb.org), so that we may keep our records and mailing lists updated.

Bequests

If you would like to make a bequest or restricted gift to the National Religious Retirement Office, please use the following language:

To the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Incorporated for the exclusive purpose of assisting Roman Catholic religious orders in the United States to provide for the retirement needs of their elderly members.



National Religious Retirement Office

Sponsor of the Retirement Fund for Religious

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The National Religious Retirement Office coordinates the national collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes these funds to eligible religious institutes for their retirement needs. Our mission is to support, educate, and assist religious institutes in the U.S. to embrace their current retirement realities and to plan for the future.

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