

Renaissance Academy

Spring 2023 Newsletter

President's Corner

"There is no time like Spring

When life's alive in everything."

Christina Rosetti, "Spring"

Hello Renaissance Members!

Welcome back after a rather long Winter Break. It was happily punctuated by our annual Memorial Mass on April 7 followed by Leslie Goddard's fascinating portrayal of Eleanor Roosevelt at the Renaissance Forum. The Mass was a beautiful remembrance of 61 Renaissance members/immediate family members who had passed away since our most recent (pre-Covid) Mass in 2019. Carol Conway's reflection and Father Jim Donovan's thoughtful remarks reminded us that we can rejoice in the knowledge that our friends and relatives are now in a "far better place."

We are so grateful to volunteers on the Forum and Special Events Committees led by Jo Ann Gruca and Sandy Stephens for planning and executing such a delightful event.

As we begin the new term, please take some time to reflect on how you will share your special talents by serving on one of our committees. Please contact the chairperson and make yourself available. Our annual meeting and Spring Luncheon will be on May 22; we would like to have committee memberships for the next academic year in place soon thereafter.

Meanwhile, enjoy the new classes presented by our volunteer facilitators. Looking forward to seeing you on campus and Zoom (and perhaps a TGIT) soon.

Maureen



For All Renaissance Members

Meeting: Monday, May 1st at 10:30 a.m.

**Oak Lawn Library
9427 Raymond Ave.
Oak Lawn, IL**

There will be a meeting for current Facilitators and *any member who is interested in facilitating a course for fall term*. We are always looking for new ideas and people to keep our topics interesting. If you have an interest or hobby you'd like to share, please join us and meet the group. If you have questions, give me a call.

Sue Wrzesinski, Chair of the Curriculum Committee, 773-206-5948

We Need Your Time and Talent!

Do you have basic computer skills?

- Can send emails
- Cut and Paste documents
- Enter data and generate reports
- Upload and download files

We will train you on specific tasks with both written and hands-on training. Help us keep the Renaissance Program alive and running smoothly plus have fun. Contact **Pat Flaherty** if you are interested at Pflaherty43@gmail.com (708) 334-3662

Please Note!

There are no longer any regular office hours for the Renaissance Academy. If you need to access the office, you must make an appointment to gain access.

ATTENTION



Shannon Center

We can walk at the Shannon Center any time on Tuesdays and Thursdays on days when our classes are in session **without** a Shannon membership. Shannon Center is open from 7am to 7 pm. Check in at the desk on the first floor. We cannot walk at Shannon Center when Renaissance is **not** in session.

It is \$200 a year for a senior membership that gives you access to the track (not the gym) whenever they are open.

Musical Performances at SXU:

University Chorale and Chamber Singers, Chamber Ensembles and Wind Ensemble

Sunday, April 23, 2023,
Performance Space 3:00 p.m.

Woodwind Studio Recital

Wednesday, April 26, 2023
McGuire Hall 7:30 p.m.

Jazz Night with the Lincoln-Way East Guitar Ensemble

Friday, April 28, 2023
McGuire Hall 7:30 p.m.

Fish 'n Chips Live (SXU Commercial Music Ensemble Concert)

Saturday, April 29, 2023
McGuire Hall 7:30 p.m.

Tickets for these concerts are General Admission \$6.00; **Seniors \$5.00.**

The Music Department Performance Space is on the 2nd floor across from the elevator.

Senior Health Fair Hosted by Evergreen Park Fire Department

Seniors and their caregivers are invited to the [Evergreen Park Fire Department's](#) eighth annual Senior Health Fair on Wednesday, June 22, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (Entertainment from 11 a.m. to noon). The Fair is FREE to seniors and their caregivers. It will be held at the fire station at 9000 S. Kedzie Ave.

Attendees will be given a wealth of resources and information for aging well. Free health screenings, meet OSF HealthCare Little Company of Mary providers. Fun activities and more.

Masks are required for fair attendees due to COVID-19 protocols. Date subject to change due to COVID-19.



APRIL IS NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

Let's celebrate by getting together and sharing our favorite poems!

Choose a poem from your childhood, your high school or college days, or a verse that has

pulled at your heart for some reason or another. It could be funny, touching, and/or thought provoking. It could be beautifully phrased or discordant. It could be a song, a rap, or a psalm. You may want to share why this poem is meaningful to you. You may want to read it, sing it, or recite it from memory. Anything goes!

Please join us on **Tuesday,**

April 25 at 11:00 a.m.

Evergreen Park Library

9400 S. Troy Avenue

Evergreen Park, IL

Jean Day - Facilitator

A Renaissance Person You Should Know: **Betty Kort**

by Mary Healy



Betty Kort, a woman of varied interests and talents, is an outstanding member of Renaissance. Singer, actress, dancer, runner, reader, wife, mother, grandmother, and facilitator all describe Betty. She grew up in Beverly the 5th of 14 children attending St. Barnabas, Academy of Our Lady, and then Quincy College where she obtained a degree in psychology and met the love of her life. She married Clayton when she was 22, and eventually became the mother of four. They recently celebrated their 47th anniversary.

In 1991 Betty and Clayton entered the diaconate program. Clayton was ordained in 1994; he served at St. John Fisher for 7 years, St. Helena of the Cross for 12 years, and again at Fisher until the pandemic forced his retirement. Betty was his helpmate with this calling.

Betty has always loved singing and was a member of three choirs before Covid suspended all, leaving her distraught. The pandemic also caused the cancellation of the South Side Irish St. Patrick's Parade in which she had marched with the Gaelic Park Ceili Dancers and Choir. This woman can do anything!

Betty also acted in the comedy *Mommy's Boy* at Gaelic Park. In 2018 she traveled with this theater group to perform at a theater festival in Canada. Later she appeared in *Moll* at Gaelic

Park and at a theater festival in Ireland. As if Betty's activities in the arts weren't sufficient, she took up running at age of 54; her goal was 6 marathons before turning 60. That accomplished, she was determined to run seven more before age 70, again accomplished! Eight more by 80?

Betty was grateful for the Zoom classes during Covid. She loved seeing everyone on the screen and particularly enjoyed Mike Hasting's, Dan Burns', Maureen Connolly & Peg Walsh's, and Sue W's classes. Always willing to help, Betty volunteered to facilitate several classes. She began with the *Art of Storytelling* and proceeded to *The History of Quilting* even though she does not sew. Betty researched quilts and quilting museums. Her sister-in-law Barb has been making quilts for 45 years; they conducted a Zoom class from her sewing room in South Carolina.

Covid allowed Betty to read more; a book that especially impacted her was *The Women With Silver Wings* by Katherine Sharp Landdeck. Intrigued with women aviators, she convinced two friends to join her in facilitating *Women in Aviation*. This spring they will introduce women astronauts.

Betty feels the pandemic brought her 11 surviving siblings closer. They began weekly Zoom Bingo sessions and had a virtual Christmas party in 2020: all 36 nieces and nephews logged on. In 2021 and 2022 many family members traveled to Anderson, Tennessee, for a week of fun at an estate that sleeps 40-50. That gathering will take place again this year. What a remarkable family! Betty has found facilitating valuable and encourages members to become facilitators. Renaissance is so lucky to have such a talented, interesting, dedicated and energetic member.

IN MEMORIAM

On March 7, 2023, a Memorial Mass was celebrated to pray for deceased Renaissance members and relatives who had passed away since our last (pre-Covid) Memorial Mass. Carol Conway gave a beautiful reflection at the Mass and many have requested a copy; it is printed below following a list of those remembered at the Mass..

2023

Dan Daniher

2022

Joan Dahm
Bridget Forde
David Golden
Therese Gump
Joan Hession
Rev. Ralph W. Klein
Joy Kuchler
Rev. William Malloy
Linda Pappalardo
Connie Ratzel
Catherine Reardon
Marie Ruff
Judy Sandberg
Mary Stiemann
Ernestine Vanier
Arlene White

2021

Edward T. Dineen
Nancy Donnelly
Rev. William Kenneally
Bob Kuchler
Lawralee Luetkemeyer
Vic Mugica
Patricia Mulvihill
Mildred Myren
Charlot Richards
Mary Wersells

2020

Barbara Casey
Irene Friend
Anne Grgich
Joseph Guinane
John Haugh
Mary Margaret Haugh
William Hession
Dorothea Jung
Celeste Kinsella
Eileen McAlpine
Catherine M. McDonnell
Marino Michicich
Jack Mulvihill
Sheila Phelps
Jack Stapleton
Rosemary Stifter
Joan Tobin

2019

Mary Margaret Kelleher Burke
Barbara Campbell
Deacon Don Daum
Dennis Day
Patricia Deiters
Lucille Farrell
John Fitzgerald
Thomas Haas
Elva Mae "Patsy" Kelso
Robert Konen
Alice Lindquist
James McDonnell
Kay McNamara
Cecil Smith
Ted Stiemann
Deacon William Sullivan



Memorial Mass Reflection

(This reflection was based on *Isaiah 35* and *Matthew 5*.)

When I was a young teacher, my very good friend Eileen called me to take her to the hospital; she died of a brain aneurysm shortly after we arrived. Eileen was young, full of life, a wonderful art teacher and friend. I was inconsolable. Her funeral was at St. Denis, and the presider was fresh out of the seminary, but I have never forgotten his analogy. He spoke of twins *in utero*, floating around, safe and warm, well fed, hearing their mother's heartbeat, needing nothing else but each other's company, certain that theirs was the best life possible. But then one of them started to move away, leaving the other behind. Ultimately, that twin was born into a different world—one filled with light, sound, new smells, touch, and so much love. He couldn't believe that what he had known before was so very little in comparison with this new life. He mentally called back to urge his sibling to follow him, but the other twin was too afraid and refused—confident that his reality was the real thing, the best thing, the only thing. Well, we know the rest of the story—the second one is finally born and the two experience being reunited in a most wondrous world that neither could have ever thought possible. Imagine that!

The priest went on to make the evident comparison between the second twin and those of us who cling to this life as if it's the real thing, the best thing, the only thing. We believe that death is sad and that those who die are missing out—like on birthdays, weddings, births—what we call life. But like the first twin, those we remember and celebrate today know better. Imagine that!

People often speak of the dead as enjoying earthly things in heaven—you know, playing bridge, having a favorite cocktail, sleeping on a cloud without an alarm clock. Even Isaiah does this. The lame will leap like a stag—imagine, no more walkers or wheelchairs, no more knee or hip replacements, no more fear of falling. The deaf will hear and the dumb will speak: no more isolation or confusion due to poor sound, no panic when we run out of hearing aid batteries; no more feeling old or inept while searching for words or trying to remember names; even those of us who are tone deaf will sing beautifully. Imagine that!

Obviously, I don't know the specifics of the next life, but I know enough people who have been at death beds to witness the joy and peace in faces of the dying, to hear them call the name of someone who has gone before them, to see them look up with recognition and reverently say "Mary." Years ago, I sat next to my mother at the dining room table when she had a sudden heart attack. She looked up in recognition, smiled widely, said "Oh," and died. I didn't have to imagine that.

In a world filled with the pursuit of pleasure, the pursuit of more, we often ignore the Paschal Mystery that is at the center of our faith. Christ was born so that he could suffer, die and rise in order for us to do the same. It's not something this comfort-seeking world concentrates on. But the fact is that the wood of the manger becomes the wood of the cross; it must in order for everything Christians believe to make sense. As we get older, we experience more of what the Irish call the thin places—times when the door between this world and the eternal is not as solid as we usually think. Thin places heighten our senses and build our awareness of the Holy in our lives. Special places, times and people can signal thin places. A liturgy such as this is one—a time to remember gratefully God's gift of the people we have lost—all one big family, the Body of Christ, all praying for each other all the time. So, when we feel special loss, we can shut out the noise that usually surrounds us and visit the thin places where God's love is ever ready to break through, and know that even when our loved ones die, they are never far away and we are never truly alone. Imagine that!

And, while we remain on this side, inside this world's womb, we can prepare for our ultimate birth by following the Beatitudes as our loved ones did—we can strive to be peacemakers, to seek justice, to be meek and poor in spirit, to be merciful and clean of heart—and, yes, to mourn. Mourning is normal, natural, and is an opportunity for the rest of us to provide the comfort that God promises. My prayer for each of you this morning, as you remember your loved ones, is that you truly feel such comfort. After all, one day we will leave this earthly womb and be born into a life we can't even begin to picture, one that, as Isaiah promised, we will enter singing, crowned with everlasting joy. Sorrow and mourning will flee. Imagine that!

Carol Conway, 7 March 2023

Spring 2023 Dates to Remember

April 18: First day of Spring Term

April 25: Poetry Celebration/Book Club 11:00 a.m. Evergreen Park Library

May 1: Facilitators' Meeting 10:30-11:30 a.m. Oak Lawn Library

May 22: Board Meeting 11 a.m. Orland Chateau

Spring Luncheon* Noon Orland Chateau

**Reservations Required : Guests: \$25 (Cash Bar at 11:30 a.m.)*

May 25: Last day of Spring Term

June 21: Board Meeting, 11a.m. Ridge Country Club

**Donatta Yates
1925-2023**



Although we are saddened by the recent loss of founding Renaissance member Donatta Yates, we continue to be inspired by her leadership and devotion to our organization. Donatta embodied the ideals of Renaissance: she was a lifelong learner and an active volunteer with us and with many other organizations.

Donatta served as Renaissance president for two terms: 1992-1993 & 2001-2003. She facilitated several Poetry

and Great Books classes. In spite of the Covid quarantine Donatta continued to be an active participant in Renaissance through the current academic year. Facilitators welcomed her insightful comments which enriched everyone's understanding of the topics discussed.

An alumna of the University of Chicago, Donatta's career in Education began with teaching in the Chicago Public Schools and culminated with her appointment as the first female principal of Eisenhower HS. She chaired the Theology South organization, was a member of the Chicago Catholic Theology Union, sponsored and attended the Lyric Opera, Chicago Symphony, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Donatta treasured her family. The younger generation's love was touchingly expressed by a niece at the Celebration of her Life at St. Barnabas, another organization to which she devoted her time and talents.

A member of the "greatest generation," Donatta was an indomitable woman admired by all who were lucky enough to know and work with and for her. May she rest in peace and rise in glory!

Tribute written by Maureen O'Connor

Let Evening Come

Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

This was one of Donatta's favorite poems. She stipulated that it be shared at her funeral. Even in death, Donatta continues to educate and uplift her "students" of all ages.





2022-2023 Officers

President	Maureen O'Connor
Vice-President	Jean Day
Secretary	Sheila O'Sullivan
Treasurer	Sharon Coghlan Gerc
Information Systems	Jim Condon
Past President	Eileen Holderbum
Consultant	Donatta Yates
SXU Liaisons	Linda Moreno Sandra Diaz

2022-2023 Committees

Care	Ramunas Rackauskas*
Communication	Openings
Curriculum	Sue Wrzesinski* Mary Johnson
Historian	Openings
Membership	Openings
Messaging	Pat Flaherty* Opening
Newsletter	Peggy Dosch* Mary Healy Maureen O'Connor
Office Managers	Mike Yeager* Joan Werthman
Renaissance Forum	JoAnn Gruca* Pat Clair Therese Cunningham Kay Heafey (advisor)
Special Events	Sandra Stephens* Kathleen Fassel Sharon Gerc Phyllis Sheahan

*Chairperson

Mission Statement

The Renaissance Academy at Chicago NFP was created for those individuals of the community, retired and semi-retired, who have the desire to learn simply for the joy and excitement of learning. Its primary purpose is to provide forums for participatory group study on topics decided on by the membership. The focus is on member participation and peer teaching. Aims include intellectual stimulation, cultural enrichment, and fellowship.

**Did you know that
Saint Xavier University
has a Facebook page?**

<https://www.facebook.com/stxavieruniversity/>

Renaissance Email:

renaissancechgo@gmail.com

Renaissance Website:

<https://renaissancechgo.org/>

Tel: 773-298-3149

**Renaissance Office is not staffed,
please leave a message or contact
via Email.**