

# SIENA RETREAT CENTER

Annual Report 2021-2022

## Generosity Leads to Impact

"I have been blessed to be able to attend many retreats," says LaTanya. "This last retreat at Siena was the most uplifting retreat I've attended in a long time. When I went to the retreat this time, I was totally [immersed] in the atmosphere and communing with God. The beauty around Siena and the nature there is so calming and spiritual for me. I always love when I get to go to Siena for retreats. And the food is always yummy!"

When the women from the Ignatian Spirituality Project (ISP) from Chicago, Illinois, visited Siena Retreat Center for their "Sister Friends" retreat this summer, staff of the Center had the privilege of bearing witness to transformation. ISP works with women who have been homeless or are in addiction recovery and who participate in a recovery program at a residential recovery home or transitional living home.

Denise, a member of the facilitation team, said "ever since Covid forced me to work from home and isolate from friends and family, I'm sensitive to too much time alone. I just returned from a retreat at Siena Retreat Center and never experienced pangs of loneliness. Time alone at Siena Retreat Center is time spent in a deep, loving presence. Being on my own in the loving presence so palpable at Siena is a comfort."

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*Ignatian Spirituality Project participants find joy and healing on their recent retreat.*

“

*What people are saying:*

I had no idea how transformative 24 hours could be!

Que me cambiaron la vida. Gracias por invertir en nosotros. Gracias por invertir en mí.

(How you changed my life. Thank you for investing in all of us. Thank you for investing in me.)

”

## Spiritual Guidance Initiatives Expand

Spiritual guidance touches the heart of the mission of Siena Retreat Center. Also known as spiritual direction or spiritual companionship, spiritual guidance is about deepening one's awareness of the Divine Presence within one's life.

The guide invites a person to pay attention to the movements and invitations of the Spirit. This dynamic draws the person into greater personal integrity, closer union with the Mystery many name God, and into ever expanding compassion for the world.

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## Generosity Leads to Impact

Continued from Page 1

"Making retreat experiences accessible is a priority of the center, one that we work diligently to ensure," says Ben Brzeski, Director of Donor and Community Engagement. "We are fortunate to enjoy the generous support of many friends and benefactors – that support has led to impact in a variety of ways this year."

In addition to growing our scholarship fund and keeping the fee structure accessible for groups like ISP, the Center's technology resources got a major boost through a grant from United Way of Racine County this year and a special gift from an individual donor of a 65" smart TV with portable cart, now available to our groups.

A new CRM (relationship management software) system has been acquired and implemented, improving online registration, constituent communication, staff efficiency, and data management.

Guest comfort is always top of mind, and the Center was able to replace a number of our pillows in the bedrooms this year.

"From building organizational capacity to the simple fact that lives are being transformed within these walls," says Brzeski, "it is just so gratifying to be able to so clearly see and demonstrate the impact our supporters are making every day!"

“

*What people are saying:*

Agradezco de corazón el espacio que nos proporcionaron para este retiro y en el Idioma Español.

(I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the space you offered us for this retreat, a retreat done in the Spanish language.)

”

## Siena Retreat Center Staff Grows

This year brought a wealth of new talent to Siena Retreat Center. Guests have remarked on the many new, friendly faces around the Center, and the energy they are bringing is hard to miss!

Ben Brzeski joined the team in January, serving as Director of Donor and Community Engagement. With a background in communications, development, and retreat ministry, Siena is a natural fit for Ben, who has fond memories of bringing his staff out to retreat at Siena in the early 2000's when he served as director of a youth retreat center.

Judy Gavigan first came to Siena Retreat Center nearly twenty years ago as a facilitator during an annual training event for Leadership Racine. Judy joined the Siena Retreat Center team this summer as Business Manager, bringing experience in the banking and healthcare world. Judy is also a certified True Colors facilitator, a team building, conflict resolution, and self-awareness program.

Nicki Nelson, Director of Spiritual Guidance Initiatives, brings a master's degree in Theology from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, and master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Cardinal Stritch

University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. You can learn more about Nicki's work in growing our Spiritual Guidance initiatives in our feature article on Page 1.

Sue McGregor recently joined the staff as Weekend Receptionist. "The biggest thing for me," Sue says, "is the feeling I get when I walk in the door. It's such a serene, welcoming place and I truly enjoy the variety of people I get to meet and the amazing staff that I work with."



## Spiritual Guidance Initiatives Expand

Continued from Page 1

"We are celebrating the rich legacy of spiritual guidance at Siena while looking forward to expanding the availability and accessibility of our spiritual guidance programming," says Nicki Steinmetz Nelson, our new Director of Spiritual Guidance Initiatives.

There are multiple opportunities to engage with spiritual guidance here at Siena, whether it is requesting a single session during a personal retreat, attending a week-long directed retreat during the summer months, or participating in ongoing monthly spiritual direction.

In addition to offering spiritual guidance for those wishing to engage in this spiritual practice, we are known regionally for

providing high-quality training and ongoing educational opportunities for spiritual guides.

Our flagship program is a transformational Spiritual Guidance Training Program, now in its 22<sup>nd</sup> year. The Program prepares individuals to step into this call to accompany others as deep, contemplative listeners. In November, the 11<sup>th</sup> Program cohort will graduate and will be commissioned to serve their communities as spiritual guides!

Siena Retreat Center responds to

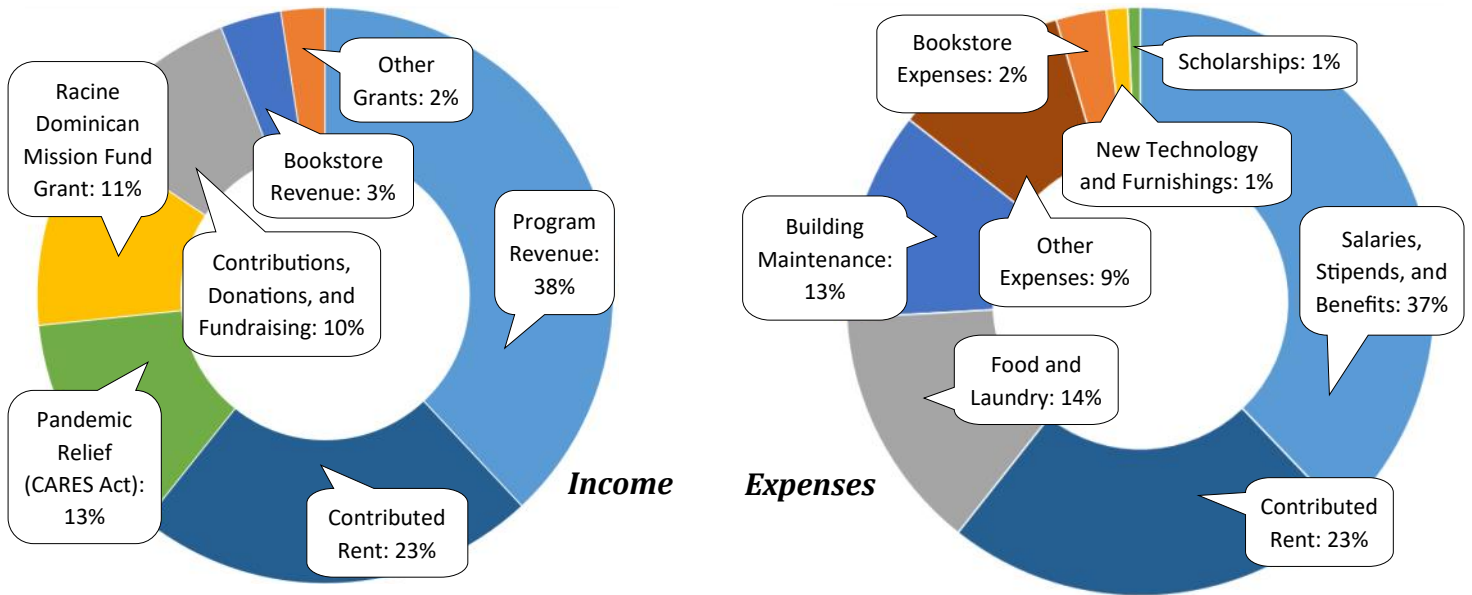
the need for ongoing training, retreats, and community building among spiritual guides by adding offerings throughout the year that provide them with continuing enrichment, education, and connection.

"Though the practice of Spiritual Guidance is an age-old practice, it has been rapidly expanding and evolving over the last several years," says Nelson. "It is such a gift to be part of a community that is so committed to meeting the emerging needs of both seekers and practicing spiritual guides."

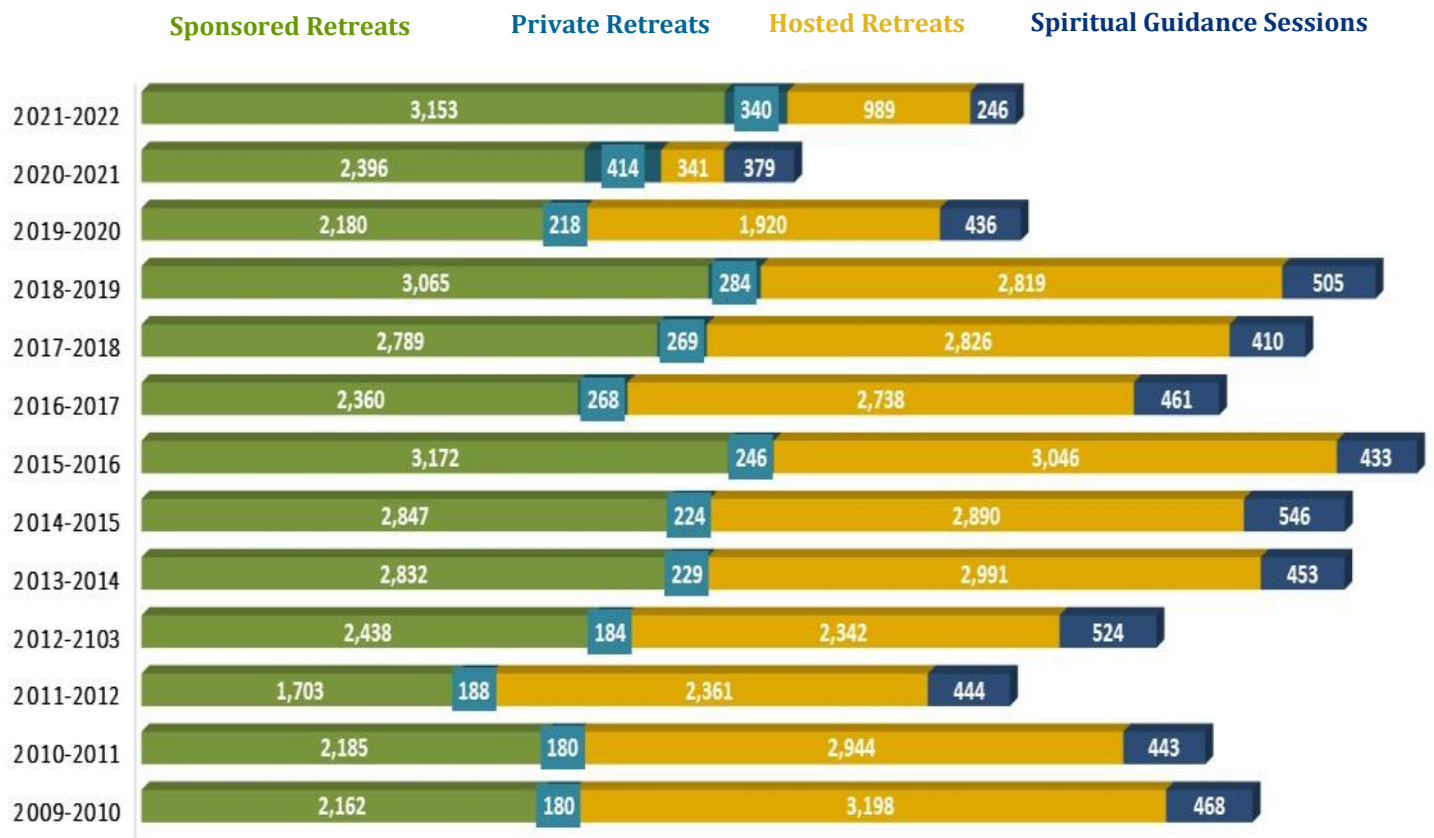
The next Spiritual Guidance Training Program begins in January of 2023



## 2021-2022 by the Numbers



## Number of People Served



*We are grateful for the 5,833 hours of service offered by our dedicated volunteers this year.*



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## ***Racine Dominican Sisters and Siena Retreat Center Lay Foundation for Future Governance***

With a long-term vision in mind, the Racine Dominican Sisters have begun to make plans for the structural viability of their ministries well into the future.

Once called "sponsored ministries," these nonprofit organizations, including Siena Retreat Center, are working toward further organizational self-governance.

A step in this process is the Racine Dominicans Sisters' creation of the M.B. Bauer Group Inc. Named after the founder of the Racine Dominicans, Mother Benedicta Bauer, the M.B. Bauer Group serves as the Corporate Member of Siena Retreat Center.

"I'm so grateful for the long-standing support and forethought the sisters are giving to the future of their ministries," says Executive Director Claire Anderson.



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