



VISION and Challenge

Notre Dame Educators Find Themselves “Linked by Mission”

From August 5 through 7, the Notre Dame Education Association (NDEA) sponsored its second “Linked by Mission” (the first was in 2001). Both were hosted by the Sisters of Notre Dame of the Covington, Kentucky province. More than 50 educators from the four American provinces of the Sisters of Notre Dame attended. Teachers and administrators representing the California schools included

- from La Reina High School, Thousand Oaks:
Jo Dransfeldt, Judy Knight, Sr. Antoinette Marie Moon, Karen Moore and Betsy Potts;
- from St. Bonaventure High School, Ventura:
Sr. M. Josanne Furey;
- from Notre Dame Academy Elementary, Los Angeles:
Sr. M. LaReina Kelly, Kathleen Nocella and Elena Shea;
- from Notre Dame Academy High School, Los Angeles:
Barbara Bader, Nancy Ehrmann, Christiane Elhabr, Sr. Marie Paul Grech, Sr. M. Jolisa Lazaro and Sr. M. Carlann Paganelli.

According to Sr. Mary Jo Szpila, Executive Director of the NDEA, “A major goal of the conference was to provide the opportunity

for Notre Dame educators to realize the larger world of Notre Dame and to create a network of ministries.” Social activities and formal group discussions, as well as casual encounters, helped accomplish this goal.

Fr. Gary Riebe-Estrella, S.V.D., was the keynote speaker on Friday, August 6. He inspired his audience to look again at the demands of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The challenge placed before the audience was “to cross the road,” to move out of comfort zones and reach beyond. The keynote address sparked various discussions and brainstorming for implementation.

The workshop was particularly meaningful for these graduates of SND schools who have become lay educators at their alma mater --Barbara Bader and Christiane Elhabr (NDA High) and Jo Dransfeldt (La Reina). Sr. M. Josanne Furey also reminisced about the early planning for events such as “Linked by Mission.” “About 25

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Left photo: Christiane Elhabr from NDA receives a “Linked by Mission” pin from Sr. Marie Paul.

Right photo: Free time provided relaxation for (left to right) Judy Knight, Barbara Bader, Karen Moore, Betsy Potts, Jo Dransfeldt and Nancy Ehrmann.



...Margie Rivoli

Woman of faith, loyal friend, artist extraordinaire

...who can be likened to the faithful friend described in the book of Proverbs. "A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter, those who find one have found a treasure." To the Sisters of Notre Dame, Margie has been a faithful friend, an extraordinary volunteer and a source of light and joy.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Margie came from a family of four. Her devoted husband, Frank, is involved with a number of her endeavors. Their daughter, Adreanna Provencher, is currently a junior high teacher at St. Mel's in Woodland Hills. Margie works as a dedicated office manager and bookkeeper for Agoura Hills Physical Therapy in Oak Park.

When Adreanna entered La Reina High School as a seventh grader in 1986, Margie quickly became involved with the Parent Council, especially the auction. Together with Betty Jo Hutter, Margie master-minded incredible decorations that would transform the La Reina gymnasium into a showcase for the event's theme. From Mardi Gras to Broadway to a Safari to the Roaring Twenties to the '50's, Margie and Betty Jo's creativity would set the mood and astound the guests.

More recently, Margie has helped with the annual SND fundraiser, *Swing into Spring*. Her creativity shines as she gathers goodies and arranges them in hundreds of unique gift baskets. Another dear friend of Margie's, Betty Jo Hutter, adds the finishing touches with a carefully-crafted bow for each basket. Theme areas are a specialty that Margie dreams up and then devises. As one of the guests commented, "each year, *Swing into Spring* gets better and better!" More than \$52,000 was raised for Notre Dame Learning Center last spring through this one-day event!

Margie is also a woman of great faith. She uses journaling every morning as a way to pray. For many years, Margie has attended the weekly novena at St. Jude's Church in Westlake Village with her good friend, Chris Hudson. She cares deeply for the physical therapy patients she sees--concerned about their spiritual needs as well as their physical healing.

As Chris commented, "With all the talent she has, Margie's best gift is being a good friend. She has been the angel on my shoulder for many years and I love her dearly."

Sandi Stutzman, currently the Director of Volunteers and Public Relations at La Reina High School, first became involved at La Reina because of Margie's enthusiasm. Sandi noted, "Margie is one of the happiest, most upbeat people I've ever met. When my daughter started at La Reina and I first went to a Parent Council Meeting, Margie was incredibly welcoming. SHE is the reason that I kept returning to the Parent Council..."



Perhaps these words from her daughter, Adreanna, best sum up the incredible woman that Margie is: "Not only is Margie a wonderful mother, filled with life and love, she is also my very best friend." Margie, on behalf of the Sisters of Notre Dame and all of the lives we touch through your generosity, thank you for being an inspiration and a partner with us!

Swing into Spring Planned for March 13, 2005



When Halloween and Thanksgiving start to be in the air, members of the *Swing into Spring* Committee begin planning their next brunch, boutique and silent auction. Traditionally held two weeks before Easter, this year's date is particularly early. Proceeds will again benefit Notre Dame Learning Center.

Members of the Committee encourage SND friends to support *Swing into Spring* as early as possible. Donations needed include gift certificates of all types, wine, collectibles, golf excursions, tickets for athletic events and entertainment, autographed memorabilia, antiques, spring basket fillers, technology items and handmade items.

To volunteer as a member of the organizing committee or to assist in any capacity, please call Margie Rivoli at 818-706-1630 or Sr. Lisa Megaffin at 805-917-3714.

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Three Congregations Celebrate Notre Dame Bicentennial

God is good—all the time. All the time—God is good...

Editor's note: The original Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld, of which we are members, were trained in the spirit of St. Julie Billiart by the Sisters of Notre Dame of Amersfoort. In turn, they had been formed by the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur.

Representing the California province, Sr. Marie Paul Grech and Sr. M. Rebekah Kennedy attended the bicentennial celebration of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur this summer in Springfield, Massachusetts. All three branches (Namur, Amersfoort and ours--Coesfeld) of sisters who share St. Julie's spirit were present.

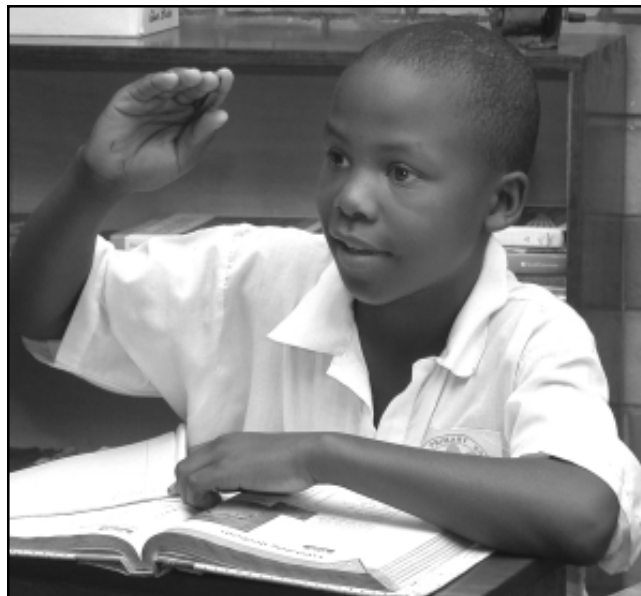
The Namur congregational leader, Sr. Camilla Burns, presented the keynote address on the conference theme, "Rapture of Action." This theme is such a part of the SND heritage--there is no effective ministry to others without a deep union with God. As another speaker, Sr. Marie Chin, R.S.M., stated, "Those who penetrate the innermost recesses of the heart of God find themselves back on the street again."

One of the highlights of the conference was seeing and holding the medal worn by St. Julie as the superior general of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The medal is ordinarily in the archives of the Namur Motherhouse in Belgium, but Sr. Camilla has chosen to wear it during this jubilee year. The medal is engraved on one side with the Latin words, "Ecce ancilla domine" (Behold the handmaid of the Lord) and on the other side is the clear and unmistakable image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is believed that the Guadalupe image was brought to France by one of the priests with the Lewis and Clark expedition who wished to encourage devotion to Mary's apparition in Mexico. For the SNDs of the California province, this connection between St. Julie and Hispanic culture is particularly meaningful.

Sr. Marie Paul Grech commented, "The high point for me was meeting the two sisters from Amersfoort, currently from Indonesia. This provided an opportunity for me to thank them on behalf of all of us 'from Coesfeld.' I was also touched by the warm welcome we received, the fact that our Namur sisters call us 'cousins', and the genuine spirit of friendship we experienced."



Uganda Update



Here are some newsy items from St. Julie's Primary School and Notre Dame Academy Secondary School in Buseesa, Uganda.

Five students from Notre Dame Academy will be sponsored by the Liebfrauensschule from Vechta, Germany, to attend the World Youth Day in Germany in August, 2005. This opportunity will give them a chance to travel beyond rural Uganda on an airplane to Europe and see Pope John Paul II! One of the students, Maria Goretti Ayesiga recently wrote to the sisters, "We are off to a good start at our new facility (Notre Dame Academy) and everything is going well..... The purpose of writing this letter is to thank you for supporting me, choosing me to attend the World Youth Day Conference.... Let me just pray that the Lord will let you see me (one day) becoming a member in the Notre Dame Sisters' family.... Your care for me has no boundaries."

Sr. Jane Marie McHugh chronicled the reception of the first Ugandan novices. "We went to Tanzania for the investment of the first Ugandan novices. It was great being there with them and for them. The other young women from Kenya and Nigeria are fine young women, too--they are all full of vigor and enthusiasm. Now there are 15 African novices!"



The Sisters of Notre Dame offer their prayers and sympathy to

the SNDs of the Chardon province on the death of Sr. M. Shelia Keily. Sr. M. Shelia was an educator in California between 1958 and 1980, teaching at Notre Dame Academy, St. Bonaventure and St. Matthias High Schools.

SND Presence Helps Create an Oasis in the City at St. Lawrence

Since 1924, the Sisters of Notre Dame have been present to the people of St. Lawrence Brindisi Parish in the Watts area of Los Angeles. In reviewing the various dimensions of the SND life and ministry at St. Lawrence, many devoted individuals and efforts reveal God's goodness and provident care. The sisters have served during this time with the Capuchin Franciscan priests and brothers.

The first St. Lawrence Brindisi School was a Spanish-style stucco building on the corner of Compton Avenue and East 101st Street in Los Angeles. The building was completed in 1924 and the staff consisted of SNDs who came from Cleveland that year. The 1924-25 enrollment was 200 children in grades 1 through 8--in four classrooms.

Between 1924 and 1940, the school's enrollment remained stable at 200. By 1950, enrollment had increased to 300 and six SNDs were on staff. In 1960, the school population increased to over 360 pupils, housed in eight classrooms. The original building was declared to be a fire hazard in March 1959, so the present red brick building was erected on the campus and ready for occupancy in April 1961.

The social unrest of the summer of 1965 had a great impact on St. Lawrence School. Located on the corner of Century Boulevard and Compton Avenue, the school was only two blocks from the burned-out business area of 103rd Street. Many school families relocated, and so the enrollment plummeted to 210 students with only eight children in the first grade.

African-American and Latino students have always brought their ethnically rich but diverse cultures to the school. Despite many challenges, the Capuchins, SNDs and dedicated lay staff have worked to give the children an education which develops mutual respect and self-esteem as the basis for becoming a responsible citizens of the Christian and global community. Today, the school population is 20% African-American and 80% Hispanic.

In 1970, the parishioners of American Martyrs Catholic Church in Manhattan Beach began a day camp in conjunction with Imperial Courts Community Development Project and St. Lawrence Parish. Rev. William Johnson, the American Martyrs pastor at the time and later the first bishop of the Diocese of Orange, believed that it was important for children to have the chance to go to the beach. Many of the St. Lawrence children had never had that opportunity, although they lived about 15 miles away.

St. Lawrence Brindisi School continued to adapt to the times. During 1993-94, a kindergarten and computer lab were opened. The Writing-to-Read lab was supported by then-Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, in memory of his mother, Geraldine Doyle Riordan.

St. Lawrence Brindisi Parish has always been a welcome oasis in the midst of the Watts community. When people have met with hard times, their religious beliefs did not matter--they knew they could receive help at St. Lawrence--even if that help was just a listening ear and an understanding heart.

...Teresa Perez, Ministry of Caring Coordinator





The After-School Literacy Program, started in 2001, helps students build their fundamental reading skills in order to strengthen and enrich their achievement in all subject areas. Standardized tests and other measurements have shown significant improvement in student learning. High school and college students are employed as tutors. As part of their exposure to the world-of-work, these tutors prepare their own resumes, submit applications and participate in interviews. They are also encouraged to be mentors to the youth they serve. A strong component of the program is computer time in which students write, research and/or practice their language arts and reading skills.

St. Lawrence Brindisi and American Martyrs Parishes have continued to work collaboratively for more than 30 years. Originally, American Martyrs “adopted” St. Lawrence families, providing gifts and tuition assistance. Friendships between the parishioners blossomed as they visited each other’s homes and shared parish outings. In the 1990s, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles formalized a sister parish relationship between parishes of different economic backgrounds. This was an easy transition for the two groups. Today, they share staff retreats and field trips for students and they publicize each other’s events in their respective bulletins. American Martyrs parishioners serve as art teachers and tutors during the regular school year and during summer school, and their social justice group, “Matthew 25,” has provided some repair work for distressed homes in the Watts area.

Another unique group is the “Friends of St. Lawrence,” a fundraising and advisory group for the parish. Members are parishioners from St. Lawrence and American Martyrs, as well as school personnel and other people who are devoted to St. Lawrence. They provide funding for the After-School Program, high school scholarships, and some school field trips, school technology and other parish needs.

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In 1990, Rev. Michael Walsh, O.F.M. Cap., developed the Ministry of Caring as he formalized the outreach programs that the parish had been conducting for many years. Sr. M. Judeen Julier was the first executive director, serving in that capacity for 10 years. Today, Teresa Perez leads the program which now includes:

- A lunch counter which serves a full meal to about 75 homeless or low-income guests several times each week and a food pantry that gives groceries to about 200 families each month.
- At Thanksgiving and Christmas, nearly 500 families receive food and gifts for their children.
- A monthly swap meet allows 80 local vendors to profit from sales while shoppers can obtain many items at low cost without traveling great distances. Both the school and the parish benefit from the “renting” of the parking lot for the swap meet booths. Sr. M. Christopher Smetanka has been particularly energetic over the years in helping with the swap meet and regularly sends items from Notre Dame Center.
- An information center provides free financial and legal advice on issues such as income tax and difficult immigration situations.
- Health clinics include education on such topics as nutrition, diabetes and high blood pressure.
- English as a Second Language classes are conducted four times each week

In many ways, the Ministry of Caring has linked the people of Watts with volunteers and professionals who give their time and talents so that others may have guidance



Upper photo: Sr. M. Balbina and Fr. Stephen with the 1928-29 8th graders

Middle left photo: Students using the computer to develop language arts skills in the after-school program

Lower left: Former principal Sr. M. Paulyne Tubick with students at lunch

Middle right photo: The five SND St. Lawrence pioneers--Srs. M. Balbina, Alice, Sirana and Blanche with Sr. M. Clarissa in the foreground

Lower right photo: Sr. M. Judeen with Ministry of Caring volunteers

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Special Thanks to These Major SND Donors!

Each year, the Sisters of Notre Dame pause to thank the donors who are making a significant contribution to the SND life and ministry. The donor recognition board, located prominently in the lobby at Notre Dame Center, is being updated to reflect cumulative gifts made through September 1, 2004. Individuals and groups who have been added to the list or who have moved to a higher donor level are listed below. An asterisk indicates that the donor is deceased. The complete list of major donors is available on the province website, <www.sndca.org>. These contributions reflect a variety of contributions: children's and parish sacrifices to support the SND missions, especially in Uganda; the capital campaign for Notre Dame Learning Center; foundation grants; monthly contributions for the needs of the retired sisters; matching gifts from major corporations, employee designations through United Way; bequests; proceeds from fundraising events, etc.

The Sisters of Notre Dame offer their deepest gratitude and promise of prayers to these, and to all of our kind benefactors.

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The Oasis of the St. Lawrence Community

in learning what is needed to successfully raise their families amid the struggles and difficulties of urban Los Angeles. The SNDs have been a part of this endeavor in many ways, going far beyond the formal school environment that first called them to St. Lawrence.

Sr. M. Colette Theobald, who has spent a number of years as the principal of St. Lawrence School, has these reflections. "My years at St. Lawrence were a time of great joy and personal growth for me. Although many live in physical or emotional poverty, there is a spirit of hope and trust in God. I have seen God shining on the faces of people living in the projects or on the streets. I have heard mothers telling me how good God is, despite the fact that their son or daughter was killed in a drive-by shooting. I have seen many parents sacrifice to send their children to Catholic school because they want them to know God more deeply and to have a good education. One has only to attend a parish liturgy to be touched by the sense of community, the action of the Spirit, and spiritual hope within the praising community of St. Lawrence. Everyone is welcome and everyone is nourished!"



Sr. M. Christopher Smetanka with one of her favorite St. Lawrence youngsters

Educators “Linked by Mission”



Ministering in education since 1850

years ago Sr. M. Louise Wanamaker, Sr. M. Immaculette Moose, Sr. Gina Marie Blunck and I really wanted an organization of Notre Dame schools across the United States... So for me it was great to see that there is such an organization, and everything about it is what we had envisioned. So the entire experience was a real thrill. I also got reacquainted with many friends from the east and west. It's amazing how many friends one makes after 59 years in this high school business.”

Participants in “Linked by Mission” 2004 left feeling enriched by the conversation, input and networking of the event as these reflections reveal.

Nancy Ehrmann writes: “Attending ‘Linked by Mission’ was not only a great experience but a real ‘boost.’ It was heart warming to be in the presence of so many caring and truly inspirational people.... I found my days and nights to be filled with warmth and fellowship coupled with a deeper sense of commitment and energy for our individual and collective mission.”

Sr. M. Jolisa Lazaro found that this experience confirmed these facts for her: “We are genuinely dedicated to the education of young people believing that they are the future Christian leaders who can make a difference. Also, we share a common vision that we must be prophets of hope--hope that sets hearts on fire for mission--the mission of gospel living.”

Christine Elhabr noted: “Often as busy educators, we feel alone in our struggles and triumphs. Participating in ‘Linked by Mission’ gave me the opportunity to see that we are not alone--in neighboring cities and in states hundreds of miles away, we experience similar challenges and accomplishments. All in all, I learned that hundreds of wonderful people in this country and in the world share in

the mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame and experience the tremendous joy that comes along with being a part of such an admirable mission. The ‘Linked by Mission’ experience also taught me that all Notre Dame educators diligently strive to provide nurturing and academically challenging environments for their students. Seeing all of their hard work has inspired me to continue mine.”

And finally, these observations come from Betsy Potts:

- We have much in common: a dedication to teaching, a desire to be inclusive, not exclusive, in our education of all of God’s children.
- The Notre Dame spirit is intangible, but apparent. Those who have the “spirit” of a Notre Dame school care deeply about education and about bringing God’s love to others; they consider their teaching a vocation, not a job. In addition, they are unselfish. When they see a need, they fulfill it.
- Those that teach at a Notre Dame school consider their colleagues like family--their best friends are there, their confidantes, their spiritual advisors.
- The students at Notre Dame schools love their teachers. Whenever we went in Covington, students recognized a teacher and came up and hugged her and stayed and chatted. I saw the same enthusiasm many of our students have for us.
- ALL of the schools had a sizable number of alumnae teaching or working there--a testimony to their feelings about a Notre Dame education.
- I wish that all faculty members that are committed to a Notre Dame education could go to “Linked by Mission” so that they could meet some of the many outstanding people who are linked to us by common goals (mission) and could come to understand what I believe is the essence of the Notre Dame message: that God is good and that the sisters are doing God’s work on earth in the best way they know how--and that is through education.

UPDATE ON NOTRE DAME LEARNING CENTER

The Sisters of Notre Dame are grateful to God and to their many friends who are assisting with the funding necessary to open Notre Dame Learning Center, a preschool and day care center. A regularly-updated Capital Campaign Progress Report is available at <www.sndca.org>. In particular, the sisters are grateful for generous bequests from long-time friends Vicky Godard and Joe DeGeorge.

To date, all of the necessary plans have been submitted to the City of Thousand Oaks, and the preliminary projection is that construction may begin in November. These plans include the remodeling of one wing at Notre Dame Center and the major expansion of the parking lot.

According to Sr. Betty Mae Bienlein, the opening date for Notre Dame Learning Center will be in the late summer of 2005. When registration information has been finalized, it will be posted at <www.sndca.org>.

Special thanks to Betty Jo and Chris Hutter, Sandi and Jim Stutzman and

Margie and Frank Rivoli for hosting a “Building Blocks Fundraiser” in September. Friends gathered at the Hutter home in Simi Valley to review the NDLC plans and to hear a presentation by Anne Randall, architect with Lauterbach and Associates.

Additional information about NDLC will be included in the next edition of Vision and Challenge, including a report on the October 31 Groundbreaking ceremony.



CALIFORNIA GRAPEVINE



- Congratulations to *Associate Marty Garcia* who was recently installed as a member of the Pastoral Council for St. Julie Billiart Parish in Newbury Park.
- A unique gathering was held over Labor Day weekend for the American women in formation, their directors and representatives from their local communities. Held at Bethany Retreat Center in Chardon, Ohio, discussions centered on topics such as community living, the needs of each generation and the challenges of a vowed commitment. Those attending from California included *Nicole DeLeon, Val Roxburgh, Sr. Cristina Marie Buczkowski, Sr. M. Kathleen Burns, Sr. M. Amy Hauck, Sr. M. Joann Schlarbaum and Sr. M. Donnamay Weigler.*
- *Postulant Val Roxburgh* has been teaching a “Body & Soul” class at St. Cornelius Parish in Long Beach. Classes include group prayer, silent meditation, and basic yoga, as well as a variety of dance movements--liturgical, Latin, African or western rhythm. Val commented “It is a true blessing and a joy to be able to share my love for God and dance with these wonderful women.”
- Congratulations to Notre Dame Academy Elementary School--they recently received a full six-year accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges!

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Dear Friends,

When I first read the letter from Ugandan student Maria Goretti Ayesiga and her comment, “Your **care** for me has no boundaries,” I had to stop and reflect. The wording may seem a little awkward compared to our standard English structure, but her message is incredibly powerful. Immediately, the words of Jesus in Matthew 25 came to my mind. “When I was hungry, you gave me food. When I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink. When I was sick, you **cared** for me.” It seemed like Maria’s words were a contemporary paraphrase of Jesus’ words, and in that, I hear the Spirit speaking to you--our friends and partners.

As Sisters of Notre Dame, we are committed to bring hope within a diverse society--helping our brothers and sisters--both locally and internationally--to trust in God’s goodness and provident **care**. As part of our human condition, each of us experiences spiritual, physical, emotional or intellectual poverty in the course of our lives. Each of us, then, needs God’s **care**. What a privilege for us to have students like Maria Goretti who recognize and appreciate our **care**, which is truly a reflection of God’s goodness and tender love.

What is very important, however, is that you realize that the Sisters and Associates of Notre Dame serve interdependently in this mission of bringing hope. We rely on wonderful partners like you whose **care** is incredibly evident--in our Ugandan mission, in our future Notre Dame Learning Center for three- and four-year olds here in Thousand Oaks, in the inner city of Los Angeles, and in the hearts of the thousands who have been part of the fabric of our lives. Truly, your **care** has no boundaries. Your spiritual and material support are deeply appreciated--thank you! May God’s **care**--which also has no boundaries--continue to bring you hope!

Gratefully,
Sr. M. Lisa Megaffin, S.N.D.

P.S.--During November, we will have a novena of Masses for all of those enrolled in our Memorial Program. Please note that new full-color memorial cards are now available. For further information, please give us a call or an email.



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