



Our Times

Newsletter of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius

Creating Pandemic Connections

by Sister M. Christopher, SS.C.M.
Administrator of the Meadows at MJCCC.

“Where were you during Covid-19?” Everyone old enough to remember the long and difficult navigation of this pandemic has tales of social distancing, masking and long-anticipated vaccines. At the Meadows at Maria Joseph Continuing Care Community, we saw our social activities come to a screeching halt. It was a sad time for our residents, and an even sadder time for our staff, that is, until we began to devise ways to generate safe fun to lift the spirits of our residents.

Denise Toczylousky, Denika Keefer, Dawn Orzechowski and I met to come up with some ideas that would help dispel some of the boredom being experienced by our now home-bound residents. What follows is the tale of our program of activities to conquer a pandemic:

Parking Lot Bingo: Residents drove to the Community Center parking lot, stayed in their cars and received a Bingo card. Denise used a bull horn to call out the numbers. Once they were verified, the winners won lottery tickets. This was a huge success and was repeated several times to the delight of our masked residents.

Dine and Dash Service: Accustomed to scheduled meals in the Community Center Dining Room, our residents were devastated by the closing of the dining room. To alleviate some of the loss, boxed hot lunches were assembled and offered for \$3.00 to residents who phoned in an order. The drive-up pick-up made many people happy over the course of the pandemic. As an occasional alternative, food trucks were invited to offer the residents a change of pace and menu.

More Parking Lot Activities: Every Wednesday, the exercise-loving residents, masked and over six-feet apart, worked out with Denika in the parking lot. On both Mother’s Day and Father’s Day, the residents, masked and seated in lawn chairs at least six feet apart, enjoyed a Happy Hour with music, special drinks and treats. Weather permitting, additional wine and cheese socials were scheduled with



Post-pandemic, the Meadows activity staff continues to brainstorm ways to create connections. From left to right: Dawn Orzechowski, Sister Christopher and Denise Toczylousky. What a team!



Above and right: Projecting to a parking lot filled with Bingo card holders, numbers reach the players by visual and audio means.



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music for masked and distanced residents.

Contests: In March, a Lucky Leprechaun game had residents scouring the campus for paper leprechauns. Finding three, they wrote their name on them and deposited them in the pot of gold at the Community Center entrance for a chance to win a prize. In October, the residents were invited to submit scary stories to the Community Center for another contest.

Better than Television: Resident Jessie Lang, bored with the long hours of television-watching, created a book stand at the end of her driveway. Loaded with paperback books, the stand invited Jessie's neighbors to select a book to enjoy reading. Every week, the selection of books was renewed.

Side by Side Visitation: Residents perked up every time the activities crew took their celebration to the streets of the Meadows. Decorating the side-by-side (golf cart) for the occasion, the costumed crew would drive through the campus offering drinks, treats and even gifts to those



who met them at the end of their driveways. In March, St. Patty Green traveled to share a Happy Hour; in May, there was a Mother's Day visitation and in June, one for Father's Day. In August, thanks to Weis Market, samples of smoothies were delivered to the residents from the cart. Elaborate costumes added a great deal of fun to the visitations for Halloween, Christmas and a summer Luau, capitalizing on a Hawaiian theme.

While we are all grateful that the distancing regulations are in the past, we thank God that most of us are still here to remember the good work that was done to keep spirits up and help people stay connected. May good health and happy hearts always identify the residents and staff of the Meadows at Maria Joseph Continuing Care Community!

Top: The drive-up table was front and center to fill the orders of Meadows residents who wanted a hot boxed lunch. Food service at its most creative!

Above from left to right: The green side-by-side with the yellow seats was a welcome visitor to Meadows residents to celebrate holidays which, under normal conditions, called for close connections.

St. Patrick's Day saw St. Patty Green make the rounds of the Meadows neighborhoods.

Decorated later for a Hawaiian luau, the activities staff circulated with appropriate liquid refreshments.

The Christmas visitation brought Santa and his elves out for a ride with gifts and good wishes.

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Giving Away Your Gift

from the General Superior
by Sister Barbara Sable, SS.C.M.

During this season of giving thanks, giving and receiving is on my mind. Pablo Picasso said, "The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." We can also look to Jesus for some suggestions on giving and receiving gifts, and what making a difference with one's own gifts meant to Him. When Jesus returned from the desert and began His public ministry, Jesus spoke of his own vision and purpose (Luke 4:18). Of all the things to which Jesus could have chosen to give priority, Jesus chose, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, to prioritize giving "Glad tidings to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed."

Today we often look for our purpose in life through accumulations, possessions and shallow experiences that only leave us wanting more, but Jesus teaches us that it is in giving that we receive. Jesus proclaims a God who gives joy, healing and liberation. We, as individual parts of Christ's body are called to participate in this giving. Today, let's ask how we can bring Good News to the poor, joy and healing to the broken in body and spirit, and freedom to the oppressed through all the ways we spend our time and our resources, and by the many opportunities we have to live generously. We are all given gifts and we are all given opportunities to give these gifts away. Let us aim to let God turn us into gifts to others. What's most important is to remember Picasso's second sentence, and the example of Jesus. Don't just find your gift; give it away! It's in the giving away that life finds its purpose and is made so much richer.



Sister Barbara Sable

Acadia Behavioral Health

Construction Nearby

Sounds of construction vehicles and trucks in reverse are commonplace these days as a new medical facility is being built behind Maria Hall. Having purchased the property which was formerly our cornfield, Geisinger Medical Center in cooperation with Acadia Healthcare is building a Behavioral Health Center. No small operation, this facility plans to hold 90+ beds for residential and out-patient care for children, teens and adults. A much-needed medical service, the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius are happy to be a part of this project.

Shortly after the construction company had started clearing the site, on May 7, 2024, leaders from Geisinger Hospital, Acadia Healthcare, and the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius gathered there to ceremoniously break ground for the new health center. Sister Barbara opened the gathering with a prayer, and leaders from each of the sponsors spoke about the need for such a facility in this area. Then the principals, including Sister Barbara, picked up a shovel for the formal ground breaking. (Picture many cameras recording the event for posterity.) All present were then invited to add their shovels-full to the ground-breaking. Light refreshments followed, and before everyone dispersed, a group from Acadia asked to see the Basilica. Sister Denise Marie was on hand to give the tour.



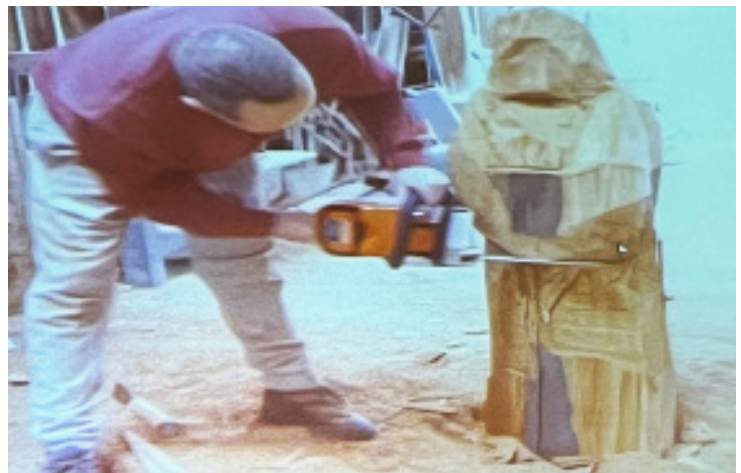
Top left and above: First a prayer, and then the shovels go to work.
Top right: Only a concrete outline of the planned building preceded the ground breaking.
Left: Work progresses slowly but steadily on the new medical facility. Maria Hall offers a good view from the 4th floor.

National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library
**The Jankola Library in a
 Midwestern Setting**

In cooperation with the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library (NCSML) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the extensive collection of Slovak books, newspapers and journals that were held in the Jankola Library and Slovak Museum are being transferred to the Smithsonian-affiliated collections of the NCSML. On May 1, 2024, Sisters Barbara Sable, Michael Ann, Carol Ann and Jeanne Ambre traveled to Cedar Rapids to be present for the formal opening of the Furdek Room in the Library. With the addition of our library's contribution, the NCSML now holds the largest Slovak collection in the United States.

The dedication was part of the NCSML's 50th anniversary celebration which included an Economic Summit attended by ambassadors and representatives from both Czechia and Slovakia, a concert by a Czech opera singer, the opening of two exhibits at the Museum, a Gala and the groundbreaking for the repair and renovation of a clock tower on the grounds. When completed, the clock tower will contain an *orloj*, an astronomical clock modeled after the clock tower attached to the town hall in Prague.

On September 27, the dedication of the renovated clock tower took place in Cedar Rapids. While no SSCM Sisters were present for the ceremony, there was a Sister in evidence. Of the 12 wooden figures which appear and alternate in the two windows of the clock tower, six figures represent professions: butcher, iceman, miner, farmer, blacksmith and merchant, and another six figures depict compatriots in everyday life situations: a mother with a child, a couple dancing a polka, a girl in a folk costume, a member of the Sokol physical education association, an accordionist, and a Sister working as a teacher of immigrants. The figure of the Sister is modeled on a photo of our Mother Pius as a novice, sent to Andej Haršány, the sculptor in Slovakia! One of our Sisters is in motion hourly in Iowa!



Top and center left: At the Furdek Room dedication, the SSCM guests stand with NCSML Board Member Joseph Seliga in front of the plaque which announces the contribution of the SSCM's. Sister Barbara Sable addresses those assembled and leads the prayer.

Center right: Ground-breaking in May for the NCSML orloj.

Center: This is a still shot from a video of the Slovak artist working on the sculpture of the Sister for the renovated clock tower.

Above: Our gift to the Library relates the history of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius and the Jankola Library and Museum.

Right: In August, Sisters Michael Ann, Loretta Marie and Barbara Sable bid farewell to the packers and loaders of the truck headed to Iowa. The two gentlemen are David Muhlena, Library Director, and Dalibor Mikulaš, Vice President and COO of NCSML.



Alphabet Soup

Organizations to which the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius belong identify themselves by catchy strings of letters--LCWR (*Leadership Conference of Women Religious*), RCRI (*Resource Center for Religious Institutes*), NRVC (*National Religious Vocation Conference*) and SCF (*Slovak Catholic Federation*) to name a few. Meetings and conferences keep us in conversation with other communities and people with whom we collaborate. Thus, evidence of participation in LCWR Region 3 (top left), the LCWR National Convention where Sister Debbie was recognized as NRVC Director (top far right and below), an SCF meeting (right), and the party closing the RCRI conference (bottom center). No one said the meetings have to be totally serious!



Sister Mary Kate Mensch Profession and Performance

At Evening Prayer on July 1, 2024, during the Summer Convocation, Sister Mary Kate Mensch renewed her vows in the Maria Hall Chapel. Sister Barbara Sable happily received her renewal for the Community (*Far right and right*). Sister Mary Kate spent a week in Chicago with other young religious preparing for Final Vows next summer.

Sharing her musical talents with the Motherhouse Jubilarians, Sister Mary Kate adds the flute to the Liturgy selections (*Bottom left*).

As a member of the Jubilate Choir, Sister Mary Kate added her voice to the Spring Concert featuring the music of popular movies (*Bottom center and right*).



Catastrophies and Convocation

A Little Bit of a Lot



Where to begin catching up on six months of life at Villa Sacred Heart? While we are not in the path of any hurricane, there have been a few tense days--like the morning of May 31st when there were several fire trucks lined up outside of the Motherhouse following 8:00 a.m. Mass at Maria Hall. (Left) A faulty humidifier had tried to incinerate our Community Archives! Fortunately, the housekeeping staff saved the day by calling 911 and help arrived quickly. Repairs are still in process.

Then a delivery truck tried to pass under the St. Cyril Academy entrance and took it apart in the process. (Below far left) Another long-suffering repair is progressing slowly, stone by stone.

Less stress and more enjoyable were our Summer Convocation Days from June 30th to July 2nd, when we met to reconnect, learn, pray together and ready ourselves for a new year of mission.



Above center: An outdoor Evening Prayer included an opportunity to donate clothing and items for the poor.

Above far right: Postcards to advocate for social justice issues were sent to PA legislators.

Right: Sister Carol Marie leads the Sisters in a Cosmic Morning Prayer.

Far right: Sister Suzanne Duzen had the opportunity to introduce the members of her Justice Circle to the Sisters.

Below: Associates were invited to join us for a full day of presentations on July 2nd.



Above: Helen Wieger, Joanne Stahura, Mary Teresa Berrettini-Molino and Paul S. Makuch were welcomed into the SS.C.M. Associates

Right: As the last event of the Convocation, Sister Michaellette and all the Sisters were missioned for 2024-25 and encouraged to "Go Make a Difference!"



A Diocesan Pilgrimage at Villa Sacred Heart

The Eucharist Again in Procession

As part of the commemoration of the Year of the Eucharist, pilgrimages to various places were celebrated in June in the Harrisburg Diocese. On Thursday, June 6th, the Most Reverend Timothy Senior, Bishop of Harrisburg, invited local parishes to Villa Sacred Heart for a 6:00 p.m. Eucharistic Devotion. Beginning with Adoration at Maria Hall, the Blessed Sacrament was carried by Bishop Senior in procession during the recitation of the rosary. Stopping for prayers at the Pieta, Assumption Court, and the mosaic of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, the procession ended at the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius where the pilgrims attended Benediction.

A reception followed in the Motherhouse dining room. It was wonderful to host such a solemn event!



Top and center left: The pilgrims assemble for adoration in the Maria Hall chapel, and are led in procession by Bishop Senior. Far left: Once inside the Basilica, the pilgrims enjoy the beauty of a house built to honor and reverence our Eucharistic Lord. Left: Bishop Senior confers with the altar servers from St. Joseph Parish in Danville ready to carry the candles in the procession. Above: Cookies and punch in the dining room after the pilgrimage provide an opportunity to prolong the joyful interaction with people who love the Eucharist.

Annual Prayer Events

Every year in May, Mary is crowned in multiple sites by the St. Cyril students and Sisters. In June, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is honored on the front lawn of Villa Sacred Heart (weather permitting). Some things just do not change!



Above far left: Mary in Assumption Court stands amid the flowers placed by children. Above center and above: Mary is crowned in front of Maria Hall and in the chapel. Far left and left: The patron of our home hears our prayers for so many intentions.

Southern Generosity

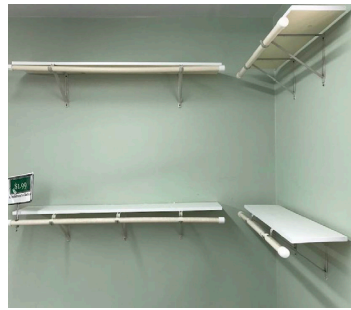
It would take more pages than we can afford to display pictures of the many activities and programs provided by the St. Francis Center in St. Helena Island, South Carolina. The Sisters there are always preparing for some holiday or special event, in between regularly scheduled food pantry distributions and resale shop hours.

Having celebrated their 10th anniversary with the distribution of 200 air conditioners, the Sisters at the Center topped that number this past summer with 240 units provided to those who enjoy the South Carolina sun and suffer its seasonal heat.

The generously celebrated Mother's Day and Father's Day brought the St. Francis Center clients much joy, and the annual Christmas in July event provided an opportunity for friends and benefactors of the Center to help finance the programs for which they volunteer to help.

There is a lot of giving and receiving that goes on with the ministry of Sisters Canice, Marcine and Agnes Marie, sponsored and supported by all the SSCM's.

Right and below: In response to a teacher from St. Peter Catholic School who was preparing to take supplies to Asheville NC following Hurricane Helene, the St. Francis Center emptied the shelves of baby and children's clothes as well as blankets that had been supplied by St. Gregory the Great parishioners. **Center right:** A happy client is now the proud owner of the 240th air conditioner to be given away by the SFC this summer.



Above: Taking applications for emergency home repairs inspires hope and smiles.

Right center: The wide assortment of Mother's Day gifts fills several tables.

Right and far right: Christmas on July 27th is good for generating joy and resources.



Julia Victoria Anna Knazik was born in Chtelnica, Slovakia on July 8, 1931 to Victor and Helen (Durdy) Knazik. She had 2 younger siblings, Mary, and Frank who arrived in the United States with her mother several years before Julia did. Once here, she attended St. John Nepomucene Grade School in Manhattan, where the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius taught; then St. Jean Baptiste High School in Manhattan for two years, and Saint Cyril Academy in Danville for two years.

After graduating from Saint Cyril Academy in June of 1950, Julia worked as a typist in a hospital before entering the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Julia's first recollection of wanting to be a Sister came in grade school when her family lived in an apartment building across from St. John's Convent in Manhattan where the Sisters lived. Julia became curious about the Sisters and said, "My friend and I tried to meet in front of the convent at prayer time to listen to the Sisters chanting Morning and Evening Prayer. No doubt my vocation had its roots in this experience. My desire to become a Sister was confirmed by the fact that I had them as teachers in both elementary and high school. I will never forget the kindness and good example of the Sisters who taught me at St. Cyril Academy."

Having entered the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius in 1951, Julia was received and professed as Sister Martin. She expressed a desire to become a nurse, and after three years of teaching and six years as a nurse's aide at Villa Saint Cyril in Highland Park, IL, she began her nursing studies first at Gwynedd-Mercy College, where she received an Associate Degree in Nursing, and then at Bloomsburg University, receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing in 1983. Sister Julia then served as a nurse and Director of Nursing at Maria Joseph Manor for twenty-three years, and as a nurse at Maria Hall for eighteen years.

In Memory of
Sister Julia
Knazik,
SS.C.M.

Born:
July 8, 1931
Professed:
August 13, 1953
Went Home to God:
September 28, 2024



Sister Julia Knazik was known for her dedication to religious life and for sharing its benefits with others, especially through her kindness and good humor. In 2013 when she celebrated her 60th anniversary as a religious Sister, she wrote, "Each day I thank God for the gift of my vocation as a Sister, and the opportunities it gives me to grow through the friendships I have made and the living out of my spiritual life and commitment to God's call."

As a resident of Emmanuel Center, Sister Julia continued to direct the nurses who attended to her since she knew exactly how they needed to minister to their patients. Sister Julia Knazik, SS.C.M., died at Emmanuel Center in Danville, PA on September 28, 2024, and was buried on October 5, 2024 following a Mass of Christian Burial at Maria Hall. May the memories of her loving ministry and devoted religious life continue to inspire us all.



In Memory of
Reverend
Gerard
Heintzelman

Born:
October 10, 1933
Ordained:
March 14, 1959
Went Home to God:
June 7, 2024

What seemed like a life-long friendship and spiritual bond changed significantly on June 7, 2024, the Feast of the Sacred Heart, when Father Gerard Heintzelman was called to his eternal reward. Father Jerry died at Maria Hall after an illness that moved him to hospice care for several months. Prior to that, Father Jerry had been the Maria Hall chaplain for years, and the Motherhouse chaplain before that, beginning in 2008. This stint was an echo of his assignment early in his priesthood when in 1964 he had become the

first Catholic chaplain at Geisinger Medical Center and chaplain and teacher at St. Cyril Academy. From 1970 until his second retirement in 2006, Father Jerry ministered as pastor and hospital chaplain in many parishes and hospitals in the Harrisburg diocese as well as Eugene, Oregon and San Francisco and Napa, California.

The funeral liturgy for Father Jerry, SSCM Associate and Fr. Jankola Lifetime Servant Leader awardee, was celebrated in the Basilica of Saints Cyril and Methodius on June 13th by Bishop Ronald Gainer. Father Jerry's one-time altar boy, Father Patrick Devine, gave the homily--limiting himself to only a few "Father Jerry" stories. A long procession to Elysburg brought Father's remains to rest in All Saints Cemetery, the completion of which Father Jerry had supervised early in his priestly ministry.

May he rest in peace!



No sooner has one school year closed than another one begins. A colorful Field Day in May (Top and right), the marriage of Q and U (Below), Young Authors Day at Maria Hall (Right center) and an impressive Art Show (Below center) wrapped up the 2023-2024 school year. Goodbyes were expressed as Lollipop Day, Certificate Day and Graduation (Bottom) sent the students on to the next level of their education. And then in August, it all began again with new students and returning ones. One of the first events was the Kindergarten Mother's Tea for which the boys were waiters and the girls served the guests (Right bottom).

St. Cyril Preschool and Kindergarten Years Run Together



When We Wish

We are grateful for those who contributed to the fund to purchase golf carts for easier transportation of the Maria Hall Sisters on the Villa Sacred Heart grounds. Those funds, together with a grant from SOAR (Support Our Aging Religious), enabled us to add new wheels to our fleet!--Catsup and Mustard (Above).

Recently the seven-passenger van which was used to transport Sisters to retreat and diocesan events decided to retire and travel no more. Consequently, we are researching a replacement for the vehicle. Our finance office estimates that we are looking at a \$30,000 investment for a van that will meet our needs. The previous van made multiple trips to the closings of Eucharistic Devotions in local parishes. We promise a remembrance in our prayers for anyone contributing to the purchase of the needed van!

You Are Invited to Leave a Legacy

With a gift through your will, you can support the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius and ensure that our mission of witnessing to, proclaiming and building the Kingdom of God will continue into the future.

An example of bequest wording:

I give, devise and bequeath to the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius, a not-for-profit organization located in Danville PA, the sum of \$ ___ (or ___% of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate) for the unrestricted use and general purposes of the Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius.

It is a good idea to let your heirs know about the charities to which you are donating.

If you would like more information about giving to the Community in your will, please contact:

Sister Barbara Sable, SS.C.M.
General Superior
570-275-3581 ext 300
barbarasable@hotmail.com

Sister Pamela Smith and Sister Suzanne Duzen
Busy Kingdom-Building

Sisters Pamela Smith and Suzanne Duzen minister many miles from each other, but each enjoys a busy schedule of working to build the Kingdom.

In South Carolina, Sister Pamela Smith juggles meetings and activities for the Charleston Diocesan Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs while writing for *The Catholic Miscellany* magazine and meeting with the many SSCM Associates living in Bluffton, to name only a few of the pots in which she has her hands.

In Danville, Sister Suzanne is the Director of Youth Services at St. Columba Parish in Bloomsburg. The parish recently closed its elementary school, so Sister Suzanne is working to maintain a church context for young people through interesting and challenging activities and events. A Kids Peace Club meets twice a month to learn, enjoy each other and experience the benefits of community.

Kudos to the Sisters whose ministry can easily fill a full page of this newsletter!



Top: In Columbia, SC, the Tekakwitha celebration on July 13th brought the universality of the Catholic Church into focus.
Top left: At St. Peter Catholic School in Beaufort, Sister Pamela led the faculty retreat before the start of the school year. A review of the Christian commitment to education prefaced a look at Jesus' teaching style and how to model it.
Above center: On World Day against the Death Penalty, the South Carolina Christian Action Council delivered petitions to the Governor and state legislature to end the death penalty.
Above: The Bluffton Associates filled purses with needed personal items for gifts for Mother's Day at the St. Francis Center.
Left center: Pentecost offered Sister Suzanne an opportunity to invite her young people to a Prayer Walk around the Villa grounds. One of Sister Suzanne's favorite stops is the Peace Pole.
Left: The Master of Puppets, Sister Suzanne, gives the Preschool and Kindergarten students a spin on the Good Samaritan story,



Sisters of Saints Cyril and Methodius
 Villa Sacred Heart
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Thank you for reading our newsletter.



Mission: *In the name of Jesus we teach and heal.*
 Spirituality: *Christ centered and Mary-modeled.*
 Motto: *Thy Kingdom Come!*



Summer Fun and Competition

Best described by a selection of photos, the 2024 Summer Festival on July 13th generated much joy and many happy memories. Then, the Sisters' entries into the Montour-Delong Fair in late July and the Bloomsburg Fair in late September merited ribbons and displayed a variety of talents. See for yourself!

