

Sponsoring Organizations

Daughters of Charity

The Daughters of Charity National Health System (DCNHS) was established in St. Louis in 1986, but its roots extend back to 1633, when St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac founded the Daughters of Charity in France. When Pope Clement IX granted permission for the Daughters to live outside the cloister in 1668, the tone for their ministry was set: They would go where they were needed, putting their mission to work in the real world.

In 1809, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton formed what was to become the American Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Md. Nineteen years later, in response to westward expansion set in motion with the Louisiana Purchase of 1804, the Daughters journeyed to the frontier in St. Louis to provide medical care to settlers. There they established a hospital in a three-room log cabin.

Over the next century and a half, as the need for quality healthcare grew in the United States, the Daughters dispatched Sisters from St. Louis to existing hospitals in Maryland and New Orleans and eventually opened additional hospitals in Maryland as well as California, Michigan and Washington, D.C.

In the 1940s, the Daughters began sharing services among their hospitals in an effort to bring greater efficiency to their healthcare ministry. These efforts laid the groundwork for what would become the Daughters of Charity National Health System. By 1999, the DCNHS included nearly 80 hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient clinics and other healthcare facilities in 15 states.

Congregation of St. Joseph

The Congregation of St. Joseph was established in 2007 when seven previously separate communities of Sisters of St. Joseph chose to come together. The seven communities were the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cleveland (Ohio); LaGrange (Illinois); Medaille (with centers in Ohio, Louisiana, and Minnesota); Nazareth (Michigan); Tipton (Indiana); Wheeling (West Virginia); and Wichita (Kansas). Just two of the founding communities – Nazareth and Wichita – sponsored health ministries.

The roots of the Congregation of St. Joseph stretch back to Le Puy, France, in 1651, with the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph under the influence of a Jesuit priest, Jean Pierre Medaille. Their first charge: running the orphanage in Le Puy. Soon they were engaged throughout France in running schools, hospitals, orphanages and institutes for the deaf.

In 1889, 11 Sisters arrived in Kalamazoo, Mich., at the request of Monsignor Francis O'Brien, for the purpose of establishing a hospital. Under the leadership of Mother Margaret Mary Lacy, these same Sisters also began an orphanage and a school. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth established their motherhouse at Nazareth, Mich., on the outskirts of Kalamazoo, from which they conducted their healthcare social work, education, parish and pastoral ministry, and spiritual development.

Around the same time, in 1883, six Sisters of St. Joseph were encouraged by a local bishop to put down roots in Kansas. Their first priority was education. The Sisters established a permanent home in Wichita in 1900 and became the Sisters of St. Joseph of Wichita. They moved into healthcare in 1903 with the opening of a hospital in Pittsburg, Kan. Over the next century the Sisters expanded their healthcare ministry throughout Kansas. In 1995 they merged their healthcare ministry with that of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, who had arrived in Wichita in 1889, and the ministry was named Via Christi Health System.

In 1999, when the Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth joined their health ministry with that of the Daughters of Charity to form Ascension Health, their health system had grown to encompass four regional health systems operating more than 30 hospitals, nursing homes, outpatient clinics and other healthcare facilities spread throughout lower Michigan.

Upon the creation of the Congregation of St. Joseph in 2007, the new combined congregation assumed sponsorship of Ascension Health, and Via Christi Health System became an affiliate member of Ascension Health while maintaining its co-sponsorship by the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet

The Congregation of St. Joseph and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet share a common foundation and heritage, with roots in 17th century France.

In 1836, a request came from Bishop Joseph Rosati in St. Louis for Sisters to teach the deaf. Eight women were chosen to travel across the ocean and establish a foundation for the Sisters in the United States.

Once in St. Louis, these Sisters opened two houses: one for orphans and the deaf in Carondelet, Mo., and a school across the Mississippi River in Cahokia, Ill. Communication between America and France was difficult and eventually led the congregation to become independent of its French roots. In 1860, Carondelet became the cradle of the congregation, thus known as the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

In 1981, nearly 150 years after the Sisters left France, the congregation brought 13 healthcare institutions together as one shared organization – creating the Health Care Corporation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. In 1992, the organization adopted the name Carondelet Health System, and in 2002 the system became part of Ascension Health.