

2001 Jr2 DRAFTING REQUEST

Assembly Resolution

Received: 04/01/2002

Received By: **dykmapj**

Wanted: As **time** permits

Identical to LRB:

For: **Timothy Carpenter (608) 266-1707**

By/Representing: **him**

This file may be shown to any legislator: **NO**

Drafter: **dykmapj**

May Contact:

Addl. Drafters:

Subject: **Memorials - miscellaneous**

Extra Copies:

Submit via email: **YES**

Requester's email: **Rep.Carpenter@legis.state.wi.us**

Carbon copy (CC:) to:

Pre Topic:

No specific pre topic given

Topic:

Sister Ann Catherine

Instructions:

See Attached

Drafting History:

<u>Vers.</u>	<u>Drafted</u>	<u>Reviewed</u>	<u>Typed</u>	<u>Proofed</u>	<u>Submitted</u>	<u>Jacketed</u>	<u>Required</u>
/1	dykmapj 04/02/2002	gilfokm 04/03/2002	rschluet 04/03/2002	_____	lrb_docadmin 04/03/2002	lrb_docadmin 04/04/2002	

FE Sent For:

<END>

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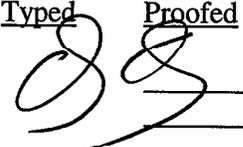
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STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Timothy W. Carpenter

N I N T H A S S E M B L Y D I S T R I C T

TO: Peter Dykman
FROM: Representative Tim Carpenter
RE: Resolution Relating to Sr. Ann Catherine
DATE: April 1, 2002

I've enclosed information pertaining to a constituent of mine, Sr. Ann Catherine, who has been active in promoting mental health awareness. Currently she is organizing a hike across Wisconsin, from Milwaukee to Prairie Du Chien to bring public attention to this cause. Accordingly, I would like to have a resolution drafted in recognition of the Hike It/Bike It Journey to Promote Mental Health Awareness and Sr. Ann Catherine's work.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please give me a call. Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

**SHARING THE HEALING, SHARING THE HOPE
HIKE IT/BIKE IT
A JOURNEY TO PROMOTE
MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS
"I AM ONE OF THEM"
MAY 16 to May 27, 2002
MILWAUKEE, WI to PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, WI
SR. ANN CATHERINE – TIFFANY KOEHLER**

WHY THE HIKE IT/BIKE IT JOURNEY –

On April 22, 2001, Meg Kissinger, award-winning journalist of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, wrote an article about Sr. Ann Catherine. Tiffany Koehler, who was part of the interview, also has her own story to share with others.

"She's spent four decades serving others. Now Sister Ann Catherine Veierstahler reveals what it was like to work with her toughest mental patient. HERSELF."

Since that time, Sr. Ann Catherine has received 100's of letters, calls, e-mails thanking her for sharing her story – not that her story was so unique, but that she had the courage to share it. Over and over she heard, "That's my story with some of the events just a little different, but with my feelings, hopes, etc." Many of these people had lived a very secret life, always afraid someone would find out about their illness. Some refused to get treatment because they thought others would think badly of them, would turn against them, and possibly would institutionalize them. Most of the people did not realize that so many people do care about persons who are sick and do have a brain disease (mental illness).

PURPOSE OF THE JOURNEY:

To raise awareness that most people living with mental illnesses (brain diseases) such as bipolar disease, schizophrenia, major depression, schizoaffective disorders, anxiety disorders, OCD are being treated appropriately. For example, we are taking our medications, seeing our doctor, involved with faith based communities and are very active in society. We are successfully living fulfilling lives, contributing to all areas of our community.

As we hike it/bike it across the State, we will be talking with individuals we meet, we hope to be invited to speak to groups, we will be giving out appropriate literature regarding mental illness, it's accurate diagnosis, treatment and holistic care. We will be sharing our own story as we are invited. We will be wearing pins saying, "I AM ONE OF THEM".

We hope to have many supporters hike it/bike it with us – whether it be 100 miles, 10 miles or one block – people who have an illness, family members, professionals, friends – ANYONE!

For further information, please contact

**Sr. Ann Catherine/Tiffany Koehler
4531 W. Forest Home Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53219
414-321-2829**

i.am.one.of.them@att.net or tlkoehler33@msn.com

LOGISTICS OF THE HIKE IT/BIKE IT JOURNEY:

Again, the most important purpose of the HIKE IT/BIKE IT JOURNEY is to increase awareness. However, if after all expenses are paid, and there are unspent donations, that money will go to organizations known for their empowerment of individuals.

To decrease expenses of the walk, the following will be done.

-Lodging each evening will be at homes where we are invited.

-Water, meals along the way will be taken as given to us.

-Free space has already been donated by the United Seniors of Wisconsin as our headquarters.

This is located at 45th and Forest Home. Mrs. Dorothy Seeley is president of the organization, an organizations committed to serving the needs of all people.

-Mental Health Association will discuss linking up with their various sites across the State.

-Harley Davison bikers may assist us.

-Any agency or person interested in persons with mental illness will be contacted to as their support.

- Rescue Mission will be supportive.

- WOKY will give us airtime the first Friday of April and May at 8am to promote the walk.

-We will need volunteers to work at the headquarters, doing mailings, opening letters, sending thank you's.

-We will either wear purple vests or tee shirts and purple shoelaces.

-Contact will be made with the police department and sheriff department for permission

-This will be a simple walk of awareness, plus a time of meeting new friends, joining in fellowship AND SHARING THE HEALING AND THE HOPE.

SCHEDULE OF THE HIKE IT/BIKE IT JOURNEY

(May use Hy 18 most of the trip)

May 16, 2002

7:45 am – Service at Cathedral of St. John, respecting the importance of the Faith Community

10:00am – Start Walk at War Memorial, respecting our many friends of Our Armed Services. Will walk down Wisconsin Ave, then Bluemound Ave to Waukesha.

May 17 and 18th, 2002 Waukesha

May 19th – On to Madison Wisconsin

May 20, 21, 22 Madison to meet with our legislators and other State mental health officials and organizations in Madison

May 23, 24, 25 26. Continue to Hike It/Bike It to Prairie du Chien

May 27, 2002 – Prairie du Chien – Picnic in the Park on Memorial Day – An American Tradition

May 28, 2002 – return to Milwaukee, soak our feet, get a good foot massage and start sending out lots of THANK YOU'S to all who have made this enriching event so special!!!

GOOD MORNING

TODAY'S TOP NEWS

A sense of peace

She's spent four decades serving others. Now Sister Ann Catherine Veierstahler reveals what it was like to work with her toughest mental patient. **1B**

I am one of them

Nun's work finally gives her peace

By MEG KISSINGER
of the Journal Sentinel staff

She's cradled the dying, soothed the psychotic and bathed the bodies of those who don't know enough to wipe themselves.

Secretly, Sister Ann Catherine Veierstahler knows that there is one mental patient that she would not, or could not, give comfort to in her more than 40 years of public health service.

Herself.

“Good morning, Sharkey!” Veierstahler booms, although the sky is still dark and all but the few residents nuddled in the stairway smoking cigarettes at this west side rooming house are out of sight, presumably asleep. “You remember Sharkey. He's the terrific musician.”

Sharkey, a blurry-eyed man dressed in a wild print silk shirt and mustard yellow pants, smiles and shrugs, seemingly both pleased and embarrassed at the introduction.

Veierstahler is here to pick up Suzy McCarthy, a 35-year-old woman with acute mental illness, and take her to 6:15 a.m. Mass at

Gesu Church. It's a Thursday ritual the two women have shared for the past several months.

“I try to give these folks a little kindness and show them the dignity that they deserve,” the nun says as they slip in the side entrance before taking their place in a pew in the back.

People who know Veierstahler know that bringing dignity to those with mental illness and fostering their interdependence are her life's passions. They define her just as surely as the gray veil that frames her face and the silver crucifix that dangles from her neck.

Thousands of Milwaukeeans have come to know Veierstahler, a registered nurse, for her work with the American Red Cross or as administrator of the old St. Joan Antida Nursing Home.

She's helped low-income housing residents get better access to community health and social services through SET Ministry. In recent years, her work has taken her to East Samaria and West Samaria, rooming houses on the city's west side where some of the county's most desperately mentally ill are placed. She organized picnics and a choir, always pushing to get the residents out into the community to share their stories. She is strident in her crusade to bring dignity to the lives of those who suffer from mental illness.

Last summer, she went to work at the local chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, coordinating programs for people with mental illness and their families. She's editor of their monthly newsletter, which highlights the stories of those who battle mental diseases such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and chronic depression, conditions that occasionally make them hear voices or want to kill themselves.



Metro

FINAL EDITION

SUNDAY, APRIL 22, 2001

City, state
and suburban news

www.jsonline.com/news

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENT

She calls her column “Sharing the Healing, Sharing the Hope.” But Veierstahler has never written about her most familiar subject.

“I am one with them,” she whispers.

Lifetime of suicidal urges

She first thought of killing herself when she was 16, a high school student at St. Joan Antida.

“You just feel so worthless,” says Veierstahler, now 57.

For more than 20 years, she fought the urges — often dozens of times a day — to overdose on pills, slit her wrists or hang herself, anything to calm her nerves.

“I was very sick for many years,” she says.

Too ashamed to speak of her illness, she never told anyone how she ached to die, or how she would cry so hard that she would vomit. To the public, she was the tireless — if a bit overenthusiastic — champion of the downtrodden.

“That was part of my illness, not knowing how sick I was,” Veierstahler says.

For decades, she even fooled her doctors.

She was born in Milwaukee's central city, the oldest of eight children of Frank Veierstahler, a laborer, who often worked two jobs to support the family, and his wife, Katherine. Her given name was Eileen.

Family photos show a lanky, beautiful young woman with a broad mouth, dark eyes and milky complexion. What they don't show is the pain the family endured from their struggles with poverty, their mother's frequent outbursts after a brain injury and the heartache of their sister Rita, born with severe developmental disabilities. Eileen was a whirlwind — angry, confused, often in trouble at school for acting out.

“I was a very naughty child,” she says.

When Eileen was 9 years old or so, her mother took her to a counselor to find out why this girl was so unruly. The counselor studied her for a time and declared that Eileen was just jealous of her many brothers and sisters.

Although her behavior often got her in trouble, Eileen found comfort in the nuns she worked alongside as a student at St. Joan Antida, where she would scrub floors and clean toilets to earn her tuition.

“I was so impressed with how the sisters reached out to the girls,” she says.

“I couldn't stop. My illness was driving me to work almost around the clock. I couldn't sleep. It was drawing every bit of energy out of me.”

Sister Ann Catherine Veierstahler

Taking vows at 19

They showed her that a dose of humility helped ease anxiety. At 19, Eileen decided to join the nuns. She took her vows with the Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antida, promising poverty of body and spirit. She chose the names Ann for her grandmother and Catherine for her mother, although she changed the spelling.

In 1969, she got a degree in nursing at Alverno College and for the next several years worked at various nursing homes and hospitals, always trying to fix every problem, usually leaving in a huff.

“I was so frustrated,” she says. She helped to organize a clinic for homeless men at St. Ben's, and in 1980, she traveled with the Red Cross to Cambodia to teach wound care and instruct mothers

in proper nutrition. To the rest of the world, she looked like a tireless, selfless worker. Inside, she was losing control.

“I had this Grace Kelly image in mind of what I wanted to be,” she says with a laugh. “Strong. Silent.”

She was strong, but certainly not silent.

“I couldn't stop,” she says. “My illness was driving me to work almost around the clock. I couldn't sleep. It was drawing every bit of energy out of me.”

A nuanced view of illness

There's an old Woody Allen joke about the guy who thinks he is a chicken. When his friend asks him why he doesn't go see a doctor, the man shrugs and says,

“I need the eggs.”

Veierstahler says not all of the energy from her mental illness was bad. In fact, the buzz she got from her illness made her more creative, she says.

Her friends will tell you of her seemingly

endless compassion.

Vicki Conte, who worked with Veierstahler through SET Ministry, was lying in a hospital bed recovering from ovarian cancer surgery when the nun walked through the door.

(continued on back page)

Busy nun makes peace with mental illness



"I really didn't know her very well at all, but she came to my side and told me how much she loved me," Conte says. "She bombarded me with demonstrations of love."

Mary Ann Starrett met Veierstahler about 20 years ago, when Starrett's aunt was a patient at St. Joan Antida Nursing Home.

"She's a ball of fire," Starrett says.

The two became dear friends, and Veierstahler was a constant source of comfort for Starrett as she faced the deaths of her husband and son.

As close as they were, Starrett never had any idea of Veierstahler's struggles.

"She's so busy helping other people," Starrett says. "She doesn't talk about herself."

Over the years, Starrett has learned to be very careful about what gifts she gives the nun for her birthday.

"She gives it all away!" Starrett says, laughing.

When the nun came back from a trip to Peru last October, she had only the clothes on her back.

"This year, I got her some bras and underwear because I knew she couldn't give those away," Starrett says.

But, the energy also was killing her, says Veierstahler, who has a harsher view of herself.

"I was demanding and obnoxious," she says now. "People hated listening to me. I hated it even worse. I expected so much of others and of myself. I was extremely tough to be around."

She battled constantly with her co-workers, continuing to leave jobs abruptly.

"There was no closure," she says.

The year after she arrived back from Cambodia, the nun confided to her doctor that she had suicidal thoughts. He prescribed Mellaril, which eased the urges but did nothing to narrow the wide mood swings.

Her mind was on a wild roller-coaster ride. One minute she would be flushed with energy, her thoughts racing. She was invincible. The next minute, she would come crashing down, full of despair, unable to move. She hated herself.

As a nurse, she knew how important it was to take her medication religiously. But, as is typical of many people with mental illness, she refused to do so. She was growing sicker and sicker.

"I was dying," she says.

Facing more pain

On her 50th birthday in 1994, she was diagnosed with stomach cancer, the same cancer that had claimed her sister, Rita, a few years earlier. Veierstahler had surgery to remove the tumor but opted not to do chemotherapy or radiation.

"I was in excruciating pain," she says. "And you know what? I'll take the pain of cancer any day over the pain of mental illness."

Six weeks after the surgery, she was back at work full time. The cancer was gone; the mental illness persisted.

Four years ago, she met Todd Davison, a psychoanalyst, through Loren Leshan, a doctor she worked with at the Lapham Park Housing Authority. He had started the ecumenical Spirit, Mind and Body Group, which met weekly to help caregivers learn to cope with stress. At Leshan's urging, Veierstahler signed up to join.

"I just loved it," she says. "I get so much strength, so much peace."

Davison says many in the group arrive with big issues in their lives.

"People tend to teach what they need to learn," Davison says.

Partly through the energy she got from the group, the nun decided to get on top of her illness. With the help of her doctor, she more closely identified her problems and has started taking Tegretol, a drug to combat her rapid-cycling bipolar disorder.

For the first time in her life, she says, she is beginning to feel able to relax.

"I'm learning to be, not just to do," she says.

She's now fighting the mental illness with medication, meditation, prayer, a good diet and exercise.

"So far, so good," she says.

She hopes that by sharing her story, others will know relief is always possible.

"I wish this would have happened when I was 7, not 57," she says. "But the point is, I'm feeling so much better. If I can, others can, too."

Finding peace in new season

The signs of rebirth are everywhere this time of year, from the daffodil stems that are stretching out of the earth outside her office window to the Gospel texts she reads each day, with their themes of resurrection.

As she and Suzy McCarthy walk to Gesu, the early morning sky promises a beautiful new day. The stream of pink light from the east is growing wider. The air smells faintly of fresh grass. For the first time in her life, Veierstahler says, she has found true peace.

At Mass, Veierstahler and McCarthy hold hands as they pray the Lord's Prayer. The nun bows her head as she prays the second to last line, holding fast to its plea:

"Protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope..."



NAMI

GREATER MILWAUKEE
THE COMMUNITY'S VOICE ON MENTAL ILLNESS

PHOTO CAPTION, page 1...Sister Ann Catherine Veierstahler (left), 57, walks along Lake Michigan near Bradford Beach in Milwaukee with friend Tiffany Koehler, outreach coordinator for the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill ((of Greater Milwaukee)).....PHOTO CAPTION, above...Suzy McCarthy, a 35 year old with acute mental illness, holds hands with Sister Ann Catherine Veierstahler while reciting the Lord's Prayer recently during morning Mass at Gesu Church in Milwaukee. Veierstahler herself is now being treated for mental illness.

MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL / DAVID JOLIS PHOTOS



King

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION

Thurs., 4/4
[Handwritten signature]

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Relating to: urging Wisconsinites to participate in ^{the} HikeIt/BikeIt Journey to Promote Mental Health Awareness and congratulating Sr. Ann Catherine on her openness in discussing her own mental illness and ^{on} her efforts ⁱⁿ organizing the Journey.

Whereas, ^{the} HikeIt/BikeIt Journey to Promote Mental Health Awareness is being held ^{on} May 16, ~~2002~~ ^{to} ~~May~~ 27, 2002; and

Whereas, the first steps of the Journey will be made near the shores of Lake Michigan in the City of Milwaukee and the last steps will be made near the banks of the Mississippi River in Prairie du Chien, ^{Wisconsin,} 12 days later; and

Whereas, the route for the Journey will take the hikers and bikers through Waukesha, Jefferson, Madison, Dodgeville, Fennimore, Patch Grove, and many other communities and over the Wisconsin River near Bridgeport before ending at Prairie du Chien; and

Whereas, the participants hiking and biking across the state will be talking with individuals ^{whom} they meet; giving out literature regarding mental illness ^{and} it's

[Handwritten signature]

1 accurate diagnosis, treatment, and holistic care; wearing pins saying “I am one of
2 them”; and, hopefully, speaking to groups; now, therefore, be it

3 **Resolved by the assembly, That** the members of the Wisconsin assembly urge
4 Wisconsinites to participate in ^{the} HikeIt/BikeIt Journey to Promote Mental Health
5 Awareness and congratulate Sr. Ann Catherine on her openness in discussing her
6 own mental illness and her efforts ⁱⁿ organizing the Journey; and, be it further ^{provide}

7 **Resolved, That** the assembly chief clerk shall ~~transmit~~ ^{provide} copies of this
8 resolution to Sr. Ann Catherine, to all ^{of the} municipalities and counties along the
9 Journey’s route, and to all ^{of the} television and radio stations that serve those
10 municipalities and counties.

11 (END)

Beam, Laura

From: Loehe, Rex
Sent: Thursday, April 04, 2002 11:21 AM
To: LRB.Legal
Subject: Draft review: LRB-5070/1 Topic: Sister Ann Catherine

It has been requested by <Loehe, Rex> that the following draft be jacketed for the ASSEMBLY:

Draft review: LRB-5070/1 Topic: Sister Ann Catherine