



Living our Catholic faith through fellowship and service.

P.O. Box 50994 | Nashville, TN 37205

Minutes of the Meeting

August 16, 2023

Coco's Italian Market & Restaurant - Event Center, Nashville, TN

Welcome & Call to Order:

6:00 pm: Following social hour, **President Claudia Weber** welcomed all to the meeting. **Sister Mary Peter Muehlenkamp** led attendees in praying Grace.

During table conversations, Coco's Catering offered buffet dinner service.

Opening Reflection:

6:30 p.m.: **Father John Sims Baker** delivered a reflection commemorating recently-deceased, long-time Nashville-based champion of the poor, Father Charles ("Charlie") Strobel. The reflection centered on a major positive influence in Father Charlie's life, his mother, Mary Catherine Schweiss Strobel (1912-1986). Father Baker recounted how Mary Catherine Strobel was a remarkable woman of character and faith, dedicated to serving the needy. She became Nashville's first female Fire Department employee when her husband, a Fire Department dispatcher, died. Mary Catherine Strobel was abducted and murdered by a serial killer. The family asked for the death penalty not to be imposed on the killer who had escaped from a mental institution. Mary Catherine's son Charlie built on his mother's legacy and founded *Room In the Inn* to shelter the homeless. Mary Catherine Strobel was a member of the NCBWL, among her other faith-based charitable activities and devotions.

Attendance Update:

36 Members

2 Religious

20 Guests

58 Total Attendees

2 Reservations made without attendance

Program:

6:40 p.m.: Claudia introduced a native Nashvillian, fellow giver, and acquaintance of many years, **Tasha Kennard**, CEO of **Thistle Farms**, to present "A Beacon of Hope: From Survivors to Entrepreneurs." Drawing an historical link between the Strobels and Thistle Farms, Tasha referenced that Father Charlie Strobel was spiritual advisor and close friend of Becca Stevens, who went on to found Thistle Farms (named Magdalene at the time), in Nashville. Becca opened the first home in 1997 as a sanctuary for five women survivors. In 2001, in order to address the women's struggles to become financially self-sufficient beyond personally healed through recovery, Thistle Farms started their social enterprises with candle-making. In 2013, they opened their café. In 2021, they expanded job readiness programs and their manufacturing facility.

Tasha has been CEO of Thistle Farms for about a year. Immediately before this role, she was Farm Program Manager for Southall Farms resort, and previously she was Executive Director of Nashville Farmers Market. Today, the Thistle Farms nonprofit organization has global, multi-cultural community reach. The organization is dedicated to helping women survivors recover and heal from abuse, prostitution, trafficking, and addiction. Thistle Farms provides a safe place to live, offering a two-year residential program plus a meaningful job and a life-long sisterhood of support. Of the current 115 staff members, more than 50 percent were program participants. Tasha spoke with pride, gratitude and passion about how Thistle Farms draws on a community of advocates committed to love as the most powerful force for changing lives and the world.

Tasha introduced survivor, graduate, story teller, author, and **Senior Ambassador, Dorris Walker-Taylor**. Dorris also shared the Thistle Farms story, beginning with her personal arrival to the organization on November 9, 2009, following a 26-year-existence of human trafficking, addiction, and abuse. Dorris is passionate about Thistle Farms and its powerful hand for her and many others, repeatedly showing how “Love Heals” and “Hope is Always Real.” The latter credo is also the title of Dorris’ book.

Dorris explained how thistles are prickly and have deep roots enabling them to survive rough conditions even concrete. They do not give up. They become beautiful with purple flowers, like the Thistle Farms women who become the ones they are meant to be, flourishing through resilience.

Dorris invited NCBWL members to scan the QR code indicated at the products display table and receive 15 percent discount on any of the goods on display that evening and available at Thistle Farms website. The <https://thistlefarms.org> site offers more detail on the organization’s life-transforming work, enables product purchases, and receives donations.

Tasha awarded several women-made door prizes to meeting attendees who successfully first answered Thistle Farms-related trivia questions.

NCBWL Business Segment:

7:07 p.m.: Board members commenced Business Meeting updates, with Claudia’s first inviting new League members to stand up while attendees responded with welcoming applause.

7:08 p.m.: **Treasurer Karoline Mahoney** presented highlights (included in view below) of the July 2023 **Treasurer Report:**

Treasurer’s Report - Balance as of July 31, 2023

Beginning Balance July 1, 2023		\$18,429.64
Revenue		
Dues	\$ 220.00	
Dinner meeting	\$1,255.00	
Kroger Rewards	\$ 69.47	
POW Table/Tickets Purchase	\$1,500.00	
Total (July) Revenue Net Operating Revenue		\$ 3,044.47
Net Operating Revenue		\$21,474.11
Expenses		
Coco's July Dinner Meeting	\$ 0.00	
TN Secretary of State Corporate Annual Report	\$ 40.92	
TN Register April Print Advertisement	\$ 266.00	
Credit Card Fees	\$ 33.36	
Total (July) Expenses		\$340.28
Net Operating Income		\$21,133.83
Reserve/Designated Funds*		
Fr O'Bryan Fund	\$2,037.73	
Retired Sisters 2023	\$ 695.00	
Total in Reserve		\$ 2,732.73
Total Operating Income		\$18,401.10

*Note - The St. Michael Scholarship fund is located in a separate savings bank account. It is no longer in NCBWL’s operating checking account.

7:11 p.m.: **Membership Chair Ellen Wade** welcomed new NCBWL members Beth Reardon and Claudia Chin as well as Joanne Speer, who just joined that night. Ellen reported current total of 72 NCBWL members and 10 honorary members. She encouraged members who have not paid annual dues for FY 2023 to submit payments on-line or via mailed check.

7:12 p.m.: **Communications Chair Patricia M. Smith** referenced her recent knowledge transfer from Cora Newcomb. Patricia urged attendees to spread word of NCBWL meetings and upcoming fundraisers to friends/network associates. Kelley Anne Colopietro (social media focus) was not able to attend this meeting.

7:14 p.m.: **Programs Chair Mary Rolando** advised that Deborah Rayhab (referred by Patricia Smith) from Catholic Medical Missionaries is lined up to speak at the September 20 monthly meeting. The special Pearls of Wisdom annual gala on October 6 is the only NCBWL meeting that month.

Claudia highlighted how helpful Coco's owner/staff are including through their gracious, highly discounted event center reservation for the NCBWL shortly before today when Claudia realized that a large number of August meeting attendees had been confirmed. Claudia also shared the wonderful opportunities to travel to Italy (as she had experienced) with Chuck Cinelli, the owner of Coco's, and she pointed out the informational flyers on Coco's Italy tours available on a nearby table.

7:17 p.m.: **Hospitality Chair Tricia CasaSanta** provided an update on the active mailings of NCBWL cards to target individuals:

- 91 cards have been sent this current fiscal year to date: Baby – 1, Birthday – 56, Graduation – 2, Guest Acknowledgement – 22, Religious Anniversary – 2, Sympathy – 4, Thank You – 3, Thinking of You – 1.
- 51 cards have been sent since June 21 meeting: Baby – 1, Birthday – 32, Guest Acknowledgement – 15, Sympathy – 2, Thank You – 1.

7:18 p.m.: Claudia arranged for presentation of a surprise serving of tiramisu cake to Judy Orr (NCBWL member and Executive Director, Catholic Charities of TN). Attendees honored Judy's birthday by singing "Happy Birthday."

7:19 p.m.: **Old Business** – Claudia reported Darcy Bomer's generous hosting at her **Cute and Comfy Shoes store event**, on July 30, when 20 percent of sales were donated to NCBWL. Turnout was light, though Claudia was a happy shopper who, at the meeting, modeled her cute and comfy purchases. Claudia encourages members to attend the next NCBWL shopping/fundraiser (Kendra Scott shopping event to be further promoted later during this meeting) supporting the scholarship cause underlying the Pearls of Wisdom gala.

7:20 p.m.: **New Business** - Claudia advised of the recent **Board meeting on August 4**, with Board meeting minutes posted on the website within the members' portal. As reported there, the Board voted unanimously to extend Cora Newcomb's consultation engagement through year-end as needed for expertise around the complex WIX software on which NCBWL's website depends.

Pearls of Wisdom fundraiser updates/asks from Co-chairs Lauren Barca and Courtney Conklin – Courtney introduced **Kaylee Franzen** from Kendra Scott. Kaylee is helping to orchestrate NCBWL's next pre-gala fundraising event, **Kendra Scott store sip and shop event**, scheduled for Wednesday, August 23 at 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. Twenty percent of NCBWL purchases at this jewelry boutique will be donated to support NCBWL Pearls of Wisdom. Location is Kendra Scott Hill Center, 4025 Hillsboro Circle #505, Green Hills. For those unable to attend in person, a shopping code of GIVEBACK-EIPCK may be used on-line August 23-24, and 20 percent of proceeds will go toward NCBWL Pearls of Wisdom scholarship fund.

Gala-related messages that Courtney and Lauren highlighted included:

- Status - Already tickets for 50 percent of available table seating have been sold! Finalized Invitations soon will be arriving via mail, and event information/tickets continue to be available on the NCBWL website.
- Gratitude - Thanks especially to those who have already contributed through their auction item commitments and table purchases.
- Request - Additional high-quality auction items, especially experiences, are sought. Silent auction items should be provided by September 15.

7:31 p.m.: **Asks** from NCBWL members were raised for attendees' consideration and/or prayers:

- **Claudia**, in the spirit of promoting members' business enterprises, announced that **Danielle Robinson**, present this evening, is a certified dog trainer.
- **Courtney** shared requests for prayers around (1) good news: Kaylee Franzen make it through round one of *America's Got Talent*, and (2) sad news: Jenna, a friend and mother of two young children, was recently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

- **Sandra McSweeney**, who has started her Psychiatry certification work at TrustPoint Hospital in Murfreesboro, asked for donations, over the next month, of sweaters, pants/yoga pants, and shorts (all sans strings) for ages 4 – 90. Sandra’s email is: smacs2000@hotmail.com.
- **Melanie Scott** of Nurture the Next advised of their fundraising event at TopGolf on Thursday, November 16. Bays are available for six players, plus up to two non-players. Melanie’s email is: melanie.scott@nurturethenext.org.
- **Lisa Link** reminded attendees that her photography services are available for head shots, family photos or senior photos. Email address is: lisalink14@gmail.com.
- **Lisa** also advised that the Nashville Kappa Kappa Gamma Alumnae Association is hosting *Songwriters Night Under the Stars* fundraising event for Mental Health and Well-Being philanthropy partners on Saturday, September 16, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. in Sylvan Park. Site for tickets/donations is: <https://kkgalumnae.crowdchange.co/33602/page/512508>.
- **Diana Miller** shared that the Cross Catholic Outreach organization will be collecting Christmas gifts (e.g. clothing toys, books, supplies) for their “Box of Joy” outreach event benefiting children of developing countries. More to come to NCBWL members, closer to the holidays. Diana’s email is: dcarmil@me.com.

Closing Reflection, Prayer, and Adjournment:

7:39 p.m.: Spiritual Chair Jennie Guinn was absent. **Sister Mary Peter Muehlenkamp offered reflection** on Saint Mary Magdalene, who was an apostle to the apostles – and to all. Sister noted that Mary Magdalene, appropriately, is patroness of the Dominican Order.

Jesus cleansed Mary Magdalene of seven demons. She repented of her sins and was redeemed, reflecting the transcendent power of grace. Mary Magdalene was the first person to see the Risen Christ and the first evangelist. She offers hope to those who long for healing and purpose and who struggle to find the Light of Christ. Sister pointed out that Mary Magdalene helps us realize, as Saint Pope John Paul II proclaimed, that “we are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures; we are the sum of the Father’s love for us and our real capacity to become the image of His Son Jesus.”

Sister Mary Peter also shared that a new class of 11 Postulants joined the Saint Cecilia Motherhouse this week, and meeting participants are invited to pray for these women on their journeys.

Attendees joined together in **Hail Mary prayer**.

7:43 p.m.: Meeting was **adjourned** on motion raised by Claudia and unanimously affirmed. Informal post-meeting socializing continued.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Cronin
Secretary