

## Vision of Hope History

The genesis of Vision of Hope began in November 1876 when three very young Dominican Sisters traveled by train from New York at the request of Archbishop Joseph Alemany. The bishop, a Dominican himself, was looking for teachers, and within three days of their arrival, the Sisters were teaching at St. Boniface parish in San Francisco.

The Sisters' ministry grew. Settling on property in Mission San Jose, property made available by the archbishop, the Sisters formed a new community that eventually expanded throughout California, into Oregon, Arizona, Mexico, and even Germany. Their foundress, Mother Pia Backes was committed to the highest quality education for all children regardless of income.

Every five years the Dominican Sisters gather in a Convocation to plan for their community and its various ministries. Studies begun in 1991 looked at the difference that development programs made in the resources available to schools. The results clearly indicated that schools without systematic development programs lagged behind those with programs and directors. The poorest schools could not afford the luxury of development directors, and principals were already struggling to manage their schools and pay bills. Unless significant funding was found, the most at-risk schools would face closure within ten years.

The Congregation's education committee proposed that the entire community approve a plan that would set up development offices to assist the survival of the eight inner-city Dominican schools: Sacred Heart, St. Ignatius, Santa Teresita, St. Frances Cabrini and St. Michael in Los Angeles, St. James, Saint Anthony and Immaculate Conception Elementary in San Francisco. The vote was unanimous. As a body the 180 present stood in a standing ovation.

Sister John Martin Fixa, O.P, the Dominican Sisters' school development consultant, was named overall development director and coordinator. The first regional director Ruben Longoria was hired in Los Angeles in December, 1996; Marie Driscoll, an alum, started the San Francisco office in September, 1997; Sister Barbara Lerner, O.P. began the South Central

office in Los Angeles in January, 1998.

The development team began “friend-raising” immediately with a statewide Advisory Board, chaired by Rob and Joanne Smith. This board was later divided into Northern and Southern Advisory Boards, who along with the development team, have initiated school development boards to encourage local involvement and active alumni associations. Between 1997 and 2002, the development team raised over \$3.5 million dollars to directly benefit the schools. Long deferred maintenance was addressed at each school, computer labs and resources were upgraded, educational options and resources expanded, and tuition assistance was provided.

In 1999, the Advisory Board decided it was time to ensure the future of each school. With that goal in mind, Vision of Hope entered a new phase: Endowment. The Dominican Sisters Vision of Hope incorporated in 2000. The first goal of the endowment was \$8 million (allocating \$1 million per school to generate at least \$50,000 for annual tuition assistance). This was met in July 2005, after a “miracle challenge grant” sparked momentum to bring in the last \$800,000 in just three months.

That same year, Vision of Hope welcomed St. Elizabeth Elementary, Oakland, as St. Anthony-Immaculate Conception was combined on one campus in San Francisco. The family of schools remains at eight, as originally established.

As of June 2016, the endowment had reached \$10 million. In the year 2015-2016, the endowment distributed \$60,500 to each school plus a total of \$679,291 in tuition assistance and other support to the eight schools.