



# Sycamore 2015

Martha Associates

September, 2015

*A good word has the power to transform lives.*

Jean Maoulouf

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## Greetings from the Martha Associate Director

As I begin this 2015 Greeting for the Sycamore there is a deep silence and sadness over all of Bethany after hearing the sudden and untimely death of Father Neil McKenna, Bethany Chaplain. On Friday, July 31, Father Neil presided over Sister Winifred Nolan's Funeral and then on August 1 Neil died in his sleep. He will be greatly missed as he loved the Sisters and we loved him. We could always count on a challenging and well-researched homily. We are most grateful for Father Neil' sharing his gift of life and sound spirituality with us.

On a different note, and very vital, is Pope Francis' Encyclical on the Environment. Released on June 18, 2015, 'Laudato Si', is on 'Care for Our Common Home'.



Pope Francis states that the Earth, which was created to support life and to give praise, is crying out with pain because human activity is destroying it. He tells us we all have an obligation to check and modify Climate Change. We have an obligation to clean the land and the seas and to treat all of creation, including people who are poor, with respect and concern. (**Adapted from the Prairie Messenger.**)

In his concern, the Pope states that ecology is firmly within Catholic Social Teaching and therefore, as Catholics, we have a moral obligation to do what we can to remedy the damage done to the Earth. The damage done to the Earth ultimately affects humans and especially the poor among us. To become more aware of this global problem and how we can respond to it locally, I invite you to Google: WWW. Pope Francis' Encyclical on the Environment. There is plenty of material for reflection and small group sharing for everyone.

Seeing that the Earth and all of Creation is in crisis and that Pope Francis is making us aware of our responsibility, how can we as Marthas and Martha Associates be, "Pockets of Hope" for our world on this issue? What can we do as individual local groups or/and as the Martha Associate Movement? What could be doable for your group? Could we

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take it as a project? To me, it looks a lot like Systemic Change. The family of St. Vincent de Paul and Charity Federation, of which the Marthas belong, would be delighted with the Pope's Encyclical on the Environment, knowing that it includes concern and equality for all. Let us see what we can do. If I can be of any help to get you started don't hesitate to ask. This sounds both challenging and exciting!

Sister Claudette Gallant  
[associates@themarthas.com](mailto:associates@themarthas.com)

### A REFLECTIVE BOOKLET TO PONDER ALONE AND IN SOLDARITY WITH ONE ANOTHER

**"I Will Give You the Treasures of Darkness"** is a Reflective Journal of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, which you will receive. The title is taken from Isaiah 45:3. *"I will give you the treasures of darkness and riches hidden in secret places so that you may know that it is I, the God of Israel, who calls you by name."* The reflections offer you insights into some of the Sisters experiences of darkness and what that mystery taught them. Their reflections give us a glimpse of their spiritual journey, struggles and prayer life. Let these reflections help us respond to the Divine Mystery in our own life. In our pondering, may we listen carefully to the treasures they may reveal to us.

Let us be conscious of the Martha Associates and Sisters as we pray these reflections. May our efforts be a great Pocket of Hope for our world so in need of healing and compassion in these dark times.



ARCAN: is a mutually supportive network of Associates and Sisters in Atlantic Canada aiming to live a new and dynamic expression of religious life and spiritual meaning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We aim to support and invite each

other to a wider embrace of Gospel values and to live a commitment of love in relationship with all of creation.

ARCAN is planning a conference for the Atlantic region for 2017. We have an ARCAN committee meeting October 16,17, 2015, if you have any suggestions for a topic or any other suggestions don't hesitate to pass them on to Lorna or Sister Claudette. We also will be looking for a dynamic facilitator.



### The NACAR Mission Statement:

*A membership organization that acts as a catalyst to serve, empower and promote Religious and Associate relationship.*

### NACAR Overview and Update:

As your Canadian representative to NACAR (North American Conference of Associates and Religious) I will take a few minutes to give you a brief overview of our recent happenings and future plans.

NACAR is the only North American professional organization to support & serve associates and vowed members with its mission geared to help all communities to live and grow in commitment to the mission and charism of their religious congregation.

This past year NACAR has been very busy offering a variety of workshops, annual associate retreats which were very successful.

NACAR has also published and made available a **Leadership Manual** called: '**Lead With the Spirit**' for associate leaders. Each year an additional chapter is added. These can all be ordered on our webpage.

Our webpage: [www.nacar.org](http://www.nacar.org) is filled with information, reflections, articles, pictures and happenings in various regions which I am

certain you will find valuable information, plus a recent and past copy of our publication: **The Associate**.

In 2016 NACAR will be celebrating its **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**. As board members, it was decided to host this celebration in three different places that would allow more sisters and associates to attend.

Our Canadian event will be hosted in Howe Island, which is near Kingston, Ontario. This will not be that conducive for us in the East but, check out our website as it will post the reviews. The other sites that will be hosting are California and Wisconsin.

Another very important bit of news is that NACAR entered into a very ambitious undertaking to have a new study conducted for the Associate Movement which is being done by the Centre for Applied Research in the Apostolate, (CARA). This project is in progress.

This study will be of great benefit to all communities to help us to see where we are and help clarify where we can **go** and **grow** in the future. This survey has been sent to all our religious communities and the results once tallied will point to where we are today and where we can strive to grow into the future together.

I would ask that you continue to pray for NACAR and also our regional organization ARCAN, that as sisters & associates we may grow and deepen our commitments and call to be 'followers of Jesus'.

Submitted by Peggy Madigan

*It is hard to know when you 'have enough'. Make the question, "Do I really need more?" part of your life's work.*

Keep-life- Simple Therapy, Linus Mundy

## Christ the King, Trenton

**Co-ordinator: Shirley VanRyswyk**

Our group consists of 12 associates and two sisters. The following are some of the comments and things we did during our 2014/2015 year as associates.

In September of 2014 we met at Bethany in Antigonish for our annual retreat which was well attended and enjoyed by all. Sister Claire MacNeil facilitated the weekend, through prayer, education (teaching), videos, and sharing. She also helped us experience the practice of centering prayer leading hopefully to contemplation. This experience was a blessed event for all of us.

We meet on the last Sunday of each month. In September 2014 we met and Sister Claudette Gallant and Sister Edna MacDonald attended. Sister Claudette as Director of the Associates received Gary Rankin officially as an Associate of the Sisters of St. Martha. A business meeting was held after Gary's ritual of Reception and we discussed what topics we would like to cover for the coming year. Some suggestions for topics for the upcoming year were Evangelization, Angels, Peace, Share personal experiences, and the Synod on Family. A copy of the Sycamore and Directory was passed out to each member as well as a copy of Gary's Column on Retreat at Bethany. We closed with the Martha Associate Prayer and then we had a social with birthday cake for Sister Edna.

The group decided that we would focus on the Synod and the Family. We read and discussed all parts of Part I. There was very good participation. The group was given the choice to choose whether or not they wished to continue Part II and III as a group or if interested they



could go on the internet themselves. The group decided we should continue with Parts II and III together in 2015.

In December 2014 we had our Christmas party. The theme of the party was Angels and our opening song was "Angels Among Us" by Alabama. We read Acts 12:7 (Peter in prison) followed by Psalm 34 and Scriptural passages referring to angels and paused to reflect after each passage. We then opened the floor for sharing of experiences in our lives. After hearing about the various events each of us had we know there are Angels among us. We read the closing prayer together asking that we always stand in readiness to extend our hand to our brothers and sisters with compassion and love- A calling worthy of an Angel! We then played games, had fellowship, prayer, a carol sing and a beautiful meal provided by Sisters Mary and Marie. Each of us went home with a beautiful Angel from Shirley.

In January and February, 2015 we continued with Parts II and III of the Synod on the Family with lots of reflection and discussion.

In March 2015 Sister Claudette attended our meeting and discussed the Chapter Mandate with us. We each received cards containing the Mission and Vision and outlined the Values

present by the 2014 Council for the next 5 years. We took time to reflect on each statement and share our insights. We then received our Direction Statement card which encompassed all the Mission, Vision and Values embraced in the Mystery of God having been heard in the common Martha heart as an invitation by our loving God to be pockets of hope in our world.

In April 2015 we had our meeting and our topic was Peace. We read the gospel reading for the day, and an article from the Word Among Us on

Peace. Linda opened our meeting with a silent prayer and a beautiful song. There was plenty of time spent on reflection and sharing. We then held our business portion and decided on when and where we would have our closing meeting.

In May 2015 we had our closing meal which was pot luck. All were in attendance and we were grateful to see everyone again. The food was delicious and there was much fellowship. We are looking forward to Bethany in September.

## Emmaus Community, Calgary

On May 31st, 2015, our Calgary Associates gathered for our last meeting.

Present were the following: Yvonne Donahue, Mary Kennedy, Barbara Learmont, Sheila Mattar, Myrna Horak (journeyer) Sister Mary Dolores Sogz and Sister Veronica MacNeil.

Deborah Bennett's work brought her to Ottawa; in her absence, we prayed for her, and wrote a card to let her know that she is very much in our thoughts and prayers.

At our meeting we discussed what our future possibilities might be. We did a "good-bye" walk-through as we prayed the lovely ritual forwarded to our group by Sister Brendalee Boisvert.

The closing message of support and prayer came from Sister Claudette Gallant, which provided hope for the future.

All agreed that they want to attend the annual September Retreat in Lethbridge, which has always been a positive event and an opportunity to connect with other Associate groups.



We will meet for our final social in June, trusting that the summer months may produce new possibilities which will be shared with Sister Claudette Gallant at the fall meeting in Lethbridge.

Our connections with the Calgary group have been a real blessing for us as Marthas over the past number of years. Both Sister Dolores and myself know that, as we leave Alberta, the Good News of the Gospel will continue to be proclaimed through the Calgary Associates.

Blessings as we depart, leaving behind another "pocket of hope".

Sister Veronica Mac Neil

## *Direction Statement*

Out of the abundance of grace of Chapter 2014, we hear within our common Martha heart the profound invitation of our loving God to be pockets of hope in our world.

In a spirit of gratitude and welcome to our life as mission, we respond to this sacred voice moving us to engage in prophetic life giving choices. In our desire to be in right relationship, we extend an open hand to all of life as we embrace the invitation to be women of Gospel hospitality.

Chapter 2014



## Glace Bay

The Glace Bay Associates of the Sisters of Saint Martha are a small group comprised of five members. We are Margie Turnbull, Ken MacAdam, Paula Nearing, Linda McNeil and David Nearing. We are blessed to have Sister Claudette Gallant as our Associate Coordinator and Margie Turnbull as Assistant Coordinator. We have also invited two "pre" Journeyers to join us this year. One is Joanna Crosby of Glace Bay who graduated this June from NSCC, Marconi Campus and Kathy MacDonald who had been visiting from St. John's Newfoundland and recently purchased a home in Port Morien, a beautiful fishing community outside of Glace Bay. Now that Joanna has graduated and Kathy is settled in her new home, we expect they shall become Journeyers this fall.

The year began for us with the September Retreat for Associates at Bethany. This is always an event to which we look forward. It is a time for meeting and making friends from other associate groups, a time to share meals, a time

to listen, a time to learn, a time to be silent, a time to pray and a time to come together in communion as associates and sisters to celebrate Eucharist.

A major theme of our retreat was a presentation on Centering Prayer. Associates were taught the techniques and given the time to practice. This was followed by the witness of several members of the surrounding Antigonish community. A splendid session!

Our meeting was held monthly in the home of one of our Associates. There was always mini pot luck and a good cup of tea! Margie Turnbull hosted these sessions for a number of years but left for Nunavut to use her gifts and skills in this northern area. Upon hearing of the illness of her sister - in - law she returned to Glace Bay to assist in her care, and the care of her children. Her sister-in-law died and shortly after she suffered the loss of a second sister-in-law. We miss her and pray our Heavenly Father comforts

her with the love of her family and loved ones.

The associates then met at the home of Paula Nearing.

Our meetings were rooted in prayer. Sister Claudette led us in our prayer and always provided a time for reflection and a time to share. Sharing was an opening of the heart, and in it we were free to question and discuss, which led to greater reflection and greater growth. There was always another way of considering the situations!

We have spent time this year discussing the Mission Statement, Vision Statement and Value Statements of the Marthas. We have learned how the Marthas embrace the challenges which come with change. "We Sisters of St. Martha, embraced in the Mystery of God, are empowered to move creatively into the future." Their leadership actively pursues this creative, empowered, move into the future. We, as associates, are privileged to hear of Sister Marion Sheridan's work; an NGO, at the United Nations. A fine representative of the Martha community who lives the Gospel, "... embraced in the Mystery of God" living her community's values of communion, justice, service, collaboration and stewardship!

David and Ken spent an evening describing their experience with the Alpha Course, offered by Fr. Norman and the Glace Bay Adult Education Committee. This is a series of excellent talks very well presented by Rev Nicky Gumbel, an ordained Anglican priest. The session begins with mini pot luck and proceeds to watching a DVD developing one of the aspects of the theme Rev Gumbel is presenting. Those taking the course are broken down into groups and leaders facilitate a series of questions. This is followed by group sharing by a member selected by the group. It is uplifting to be part

of the process and the rewards are those who keep returning and participating. One of the greatest rewards of this particular session was its ecumenical nature. Many of the group were members and clients of Harvest House Ministries. They helped with the technology, provided transportation for participants and at the close of the program extended hospitality to any who wished to visit Harvest House. The spirit was evident at those sessions. Follow up included a request by Rev. Phil, an evangelical minister, to come together in a Faith Walk. Seeds of an ecumenical nature were sown. What a chance to involve all denominations within the town of Glace Bay to participate in ecumenical dialogue!

One evening began by viewing a work of art by Timothy P. Schmalz named "Whatever You Do". (Google it and view some of his Christian art.) The evening was spent discussing Matthew 25: 34-46, all issues brought vividly to the forefront by Pope Francis. How did the evening go? Discussion was lively, some had more tea and Sister Claudette stayed later and we all worried about her driving back to Sydney Mines in the dark. We had a thoughtful evening considering the "right relationships with our sisters and brothers, God, self, and all creation; honoring the dignity, responsibilities, and rights of all, especially those who are poor and marginalized." The Martha Value Statement of Justice. Sister Claudette arrived home safely!

Joanna Crosby

Kathy MacDonald

### MANTRA

(Be aware of the presence of God within and around you)

*Let me hear what you will speak  
When I turn to you in my heart.*

Psalm 85:8

## Martha Centre, Lethbridge

In faith and in friendship the Martha Associates and Martha Sisters have grown together sharing our Baptismal call through prayer, discussions and celebration. It's been another wonderful year!

We were blessed with the addition of three new Associates: Sandy Lodge, Irene Tosczak and Harry Mueller who bring their own special gifts. However with sadness, we stood as honor guard to bid farewell to two longtime Associates, Anne Hoveling and Steve Slemko, who ended their earthly Journey. May their good deeds go with them.

Starting off the year, a September weekend retreat for Associates, twenty eight in total, was directed by Charles Pottie-Pate sj. The theme



centered around the Eucharist, God's great gift to his people.

Each monthly meeting began with a spiritual exercise facilitated by different Associates or Sisters.

This could include various types of prayer and hymns, stories on the lives of saints to information sessions such as Pope Francis' Christmas message to the Curia or a talk on evangelization followed by reflection and lively and engaging discussion. We also had an interesting presentation on mindfulness (living in the present) facilitated by Cheryl Dick.

The Sisters and Associates also enjoyed a good party together at Christmas where the food and wine, the music and laughter flowed. In May a delicious barbecue and pot luck meal will terminate the year on a high note.

As stated in our Associate prayer, 'in hospitality and companionship with each other, let us be challenged and blessed as we step into the future with undaunted hope.' Anticipating the next year we can only add Alleluia, Amen!

Submitted by,  
Ina Boyden



### A MOMENT TO REMEMBER

Let us remember our Associates, family members and friends who have died and are very much present to us.

We hold them in our hearts and remember how they have been a pocket of hope for us through their beliefs, smiles, attitudes and presence.



## Martha Community, Sydney

The Sydney Martha Associates are continuing to journey together in the spirit of the Sisters of St. Martha! Looking back over 2014 and into 2015, we have enjoyed many wonderful gatherings where we prayed together, listened to God's Word and learned about some of the many ways God works in our world!

Back in January, 2014, our group welcomed Fr. Ray Huntley, Pastor of St. Leonard's Parish in New Waterford, NS. Fr. Huntley enlightened us on his work within the L'Arche Community and how he has been involved in the building of "Nora's House". On the suggestion of Sister Dorothy Moore, our Sydney Associates have decided to institute a "social justice" collection at every meeting where our associates can donate a small amount of money to be given to Fr. Ray to help in the support of "Nora's House".

In February, we were delighted to welcome Deacon Robert Coleman from St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Sydney, NS. Deacon Coleman provided us with a wonderful talk / discussion on the Deaconate. It was Spiritual as well as educational!

During March, 2014, we moved our meeting site to the Bethel Presbyterian Church Hall in Sydney. As in many communities, finding meeting space is often very challenging, but within the Bethel Hall is a lovely room called the "Shaw Room" where many Bible studies are held and prayer groups meet. The good people of Bethel were delighted to share their warm and inviting space with us so that we could hold our monthly meetings there. And so, we continue to meet at Bethel. Also in March, our Sydney Associates welcomed a new journeyer, Jean Peinsznski, and we are extremely happy to



have Jean "Come and See"

In April, our own Sister Dorothy Moore was our guest speaker. We were humbled by Sister Dorothy's honest and poignant sharing of many of her experiences in life, the challenges, joys and sorrows!

During the month of May, we welcomed Sister Franklyn Ferguson. Sister spoke to us about Systemic Change and the state of poverty within our own community!

Our wrap up in June was held at the beautiful summer home of Mary Gillis out on the glorious Mira River! As we shared a delicious pot luck, we all felt very thankful for the gift of being Associates of the Sisters of St. Martha!

September opened with a wonderful retreat to Bethany. The facilitator was Sister Claire MacNeil CSM, the topic: Centering Prayer. The Associates who were able to attend were pleased with all they learned about prayer, and several of our members indicated they would love more information and exposure to this type of prayer.

We spent time in planning for the year ahead in October with the help of some of the inspiring

words in the "Martha Wisdoms" Booklet.

In November we welcomed Lexie MacKinnon, an experienced Spiritual Director, to our meeting. Lexie lead us in a prayer reflection and guided us in ways to find God in our everyday lives.

In December, all of our local Associates groups as well as some of the Sisters of St. Martha formed the congregation for the Christmas taping of Mass For Shut Ins. Our presider was Father Everett MacDow.

WE were extremely happy to welcome Sister Claudette Gallant in February and so thankful that she is feeling so much better! Sister Claudette lead us in a lovely reflection and sharing around the Martha Direction Statement resulting from the Chapter of 2014. In addition, she also guided us in a reflection around the Mission and values of the Marthas.

In March, we welcomed Father Bill Burke, Pastor of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys Parish in Sydney. Fr. Burke lead us in a Lenten discussion with the theme of fasting and its meaning for us today.

In April, Wanda Fedora, Chairperson of the Committee on Latin America for the Diocese of Antigonish enlightened us on the work that the Parish of Our Lady of Fatima has done for the poor in Honduras. She enlightened us on a

wonderful project called "Fatima House". Along with Wanda, another parishioner from Our Lady of Fatima, Mary Aucoin, RN, enlightened us on some work she has also done in third world countries with immunization.

One of our Associates, Michelle Finnegan, reminded us that May is the month of our lady and suggested we pray the Rosary together. Terry Campbell lead us in the beautiful praying of the Rosary. As well, we reviewed what it meant to answer our Baptismal call and what it means to assist each other in living out our call everyday!

During our year, Mary MacKinnon decided to step aside as the Assistant Coordinator. We would like to thank Mary for her many years of dedication in this role with the Sydney Associates. We would also like to thank Mike Finnegan who has graciously offered to fulfill this role for us. Mike has also been keeping notes at our meetings and sending out a little News Bulletin to our group as a summary of our meetings. Great job Mike, thanks from all of us!

We are looking forward to our final meeting and pot luck to finish off a very busy year! We are thankful to our great and glorious God for the gift of our friendships with each other and with the wonderful Sisters of St. Martha. Have a blessed and restful summer. God Bless.

Julia Townsend, Sydney Martha Associates

### MANTRA

(Be aware of the presence of God within and around)

*I will not leave you comfortless*

*I will not leave you alone.*

*I am the air you breathe in*

*I'm the light of every star*

*and every dawn.*

Jan Phillips

## St. Clare Convent, Sydney Mines

In September 2014 some of our Associates attended the Weekend Retreat at Bethany Center. They shared on how they enjoyed it. The theme for the Weekend was "Centering Prayer". Some of us are hoping to attend this September. Sister Sheila O'Handley is the presenter. The Topic is: THE SHADOW: THE OTHER ME.

In October of 2014 and after journeying for a year Jacque Cantwell, Brenda Blinkhorn and Lola Tobin were welcomed through the Associate Reception. It was a very moving spirit filled evening.

In December two new journeyers were welcomed, Harry and Norma Blinkhorn. Also in December the Martha Associates and Sisters were present at a taping for Mass for Shut-Ins, which aired on Christmas morning with Father Everett Mc Dow as Celebrant.

We celebrated our Christmas party in January with a fun filled evening of delicious dishes, and entertainment. As an annual event we remembered the Saint Clare deceased Associates in a Prayer Ritual. Non-perishable items were collected for the food bank to remember the less fortunate in our community of Sydney Mines.

We were privileged to have three guest speakers this Winter and Spring. The first was Father Thomas John who gave an informative talk on Northern India, where he was born, raised and educated. He came to Sydney Mines in 2009 and after many challenges was successful in bringing the three churches, Immaculate Conception, Sydney Mines, Saint Stephens, Florence and Saint Pius X in Sydney Mines, together as one. As of June 24, 2014 we are known as Holy Family Parish. He has since returned to India where he has been appointed



in a leadership position in his congregation.

Our second presenter was Sister Mary Gouthro who explained and guided us on a presentation on Prayer with Lexio Divina. It was truly enjoyed by all present. Our third presenter was Sister Marion Sheridan, a sister of Saint Martha, and a representative on the NGO (non governmental organization) at the United Nations. She presented a heartfelt information talk as a member of the NGO, which is sometimes referred to "as the conscience of the U. N."

Our Winter was long, Snowy and cold but in spite of that we were very busy.

The sessions usually last one hour on the third Thursday of the month; it is followed by lunch and friendship. Our mission and vision statements are discussed throughout the year. Sister Claudette Gallant in her annual visit as Director facilitated the Martha Direction Statement received at Chapter 2014. It was presented in a most interesting process.

Our June meeting will be celebrated with a barbeque, salads and desserts. The male Associates will be flipping the steaks so we are hoping for a nice sunny evening.

I'm sure I speak for all the Associates that we find these sessions a warm, safe and friendly atmosphere and companionship at best.

Respectfully submitted  
Lola Tobin

## Teachers' Residence, Eskasoni

### God Gifts Us In Many Ways

Our year began by attending the annual gathering of Associates at Bethany in September. All enjoyed Sister Claire's presentation and we returned home filled with enthusiasm for the year ahead.

However, our year was quite unsettled/ unusual as some family members of our Associates and some Associates were visited by serious illness or loss of a loved one. Our severe winter weather also hampered our efforts to meet regularly, share our faith, enjoy some story telling and a good cup of tea.

These events called each of us to live our 'Martha Hospitality' to the fullest, supporting those who were seriously ill and reaching out to the families who lost a loved one.

### Mary Ellen Stevens' story is one example -

Mary Ellen, a sister to Annie Catherine Stevens received a double lung transplant this year. She waited several months before receiving the call to travel to Toronto and spent months in the hospital. Annie Catherine was her special



companion on her long road to good health. We all journeyed with Mary Ellen through her waiting, her surgery and her recovery. It was a journey in faith for all and we were pockets of hope for each other.

We thank, Sister Claudette, for her informative visits and encouraging us to be faithful to our Christian call as Martha Associates.

Throughout this unusual year, we journeyed with joyful, faith filled hearts, comforted by a quote from Father Hasse, OFM -

**Our love shown to others,  
fulfills the love of God.**

July 30, 2015

*The NEW Martha Associate Website is:  
[associates.themarthas.com](http://associates.themarthas.com)*

*Any Associate group who has news items or pictures that speak of  
the life of your faith community please email material to:*

*Tanya Mullin at [communications@themarthas.com](mailto:communications@themarthas.com)*

*Submitted items may appear on the website or in our newsletter.*

*Please help keep our news and website current.*

## Sycamore 2015

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