

Sisters will remain in Emmitsburg

BY RICK FULTON Times Staff Writer

Although several provinces of the Daughters of Charity will be reorganized into a new province based in Saint Louis, including the Emmitsburg Province, dozens of sisters will remain on duty in Emmitsburg.

According to Lori Stewart, director of development and public relations for the Emmitsburg Daughters of Charity, approximately “50 sisters will remain” in the Saint Joseph’s Provincial House complex, 333 S. Seton Ave.

The multi-provincial reorganization, designated “Visioning for the Mission,” will consolidate provinces representing Albany, New York, Evansville, Indiana, and Saint Louis, Missouri. The merger is set to occur in July 2011, and will “free leadership from four provinces so they may serve on mission,” according to Stewart.

As a result, the 360,000 square-foot Emmitsburg Provincial House, completed in 1965, will cease to function as a provincial house, but, instead will change to include other functions, including the establishment of senior housing.

“Even though the purpose of Saint Joseph’s Provincial House has evolved throughout the years, there are many areas of the building that are no longer utilized. Because of this, new opportunities are being explored,” Stewart stated.

Sister Claire Debes, Provincial Superior of the Emmitsburg Daughters of Charity, said, “We hope to gradually turn three wings of Saint Joseph’s Provincial House into senior housing.” The Daughters are researching possibilities with a nonprofit housing development corporation (Homes For America, Inc.) to offer senior housing for both lay and religious community residents. “Although we are going through so much transition, the Daughters of Charity will always live and, work in Emmitsburg,” Debes stated. “The sisters who minister in the Emmitsburg area will reside in a renovated wing of the building.”

“Saint Catherine’s Nursing Center has been the anchor for senior services at the provincial house for many years,” Debes said. “We share resources that continue to strengthen the overall care for our residents.”

Saint Catherine’s Nursing Center is considering expansion in both nursing care and assisted living. Only minor renovations would be needed to implement that expansion. Stewart stated, “The current retirement facility for the retired Sisters, the Saint Vincent’s Care Center and the Villa Saint Michael, will continue operating at its current location.”

In addition, she said, the National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton “will always remain in Emmitsburg.” The proposed changes at the Provincial House will be a multi-year project, with the planned commencement date for changes to begin set to occur in spring 2011.

As plans progress, Stewart said, “If you hear something shocking or that doesn’t make sense, it probably isn’t true. Because we are in a planning phase, many rumors can easily start.” “If you hear something and are uncertain, please ask us what is going on. We want to share our journey of transformation because it affects you just as much as it affects us,” she stated. The Daughters’ web site is located at www.thedaughtersofcharity.org.