

SOAR! Celebrates 40 Years of Caring at 2026 New York Awards Dinner

Carmelite Sisters, Carmelite System President and CEO Trish Gathers, and supporters of religious life gathered to advance the dignity and care of aging women and men religious.

Support Our Aging Religious (SOAR!) celebrated its 40th anniversary at the 2026 New York Awards Dinner, held September 17 at the New York Athletic Club.

Presented under the theme “40 Years of Caring,” the gala brought together Catholic Sisters, clergy, healthcare and philanthropic leaders, and guests from diverse backgrounds and vocations. Among those in attendance were members of the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm and Trish Gathers, president and CEO of The Carmelite System.

Founded in 1986, SOAR! provides grants to Catholic religious congregations across the United States to address practical and immediate needs. Funding supports accessibility renovations, hospital beds, assistive devices and other essential resources that promote safety, independence and quality of life.

For the Carmelite Sisters and The Carmelite System, the evening reflected their longstanding commitment to compassionate eldercare and the preservation of Catholic identity and mission. It also underscored the importance of collaboration as religious communities face rising healthcare costs, declining membership and increasingly complex care needs.

“This wonderful event brings



L-R: Sister Patricia Wolf RSM and Sister Peter Lillian Di Maria

strengthen our common mission,” said Sister M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

Christine Persichette emceed the gala, which began with a prayer by Sister Ellen Dauwer, SC. SOAR! President Kristen R. Wise welcomed guests, and Essie Walker, National Regent of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, gave a special presentation. Bishop Edmund J. Whalen received the Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Award



L-R: Trish Gathers, Evelyn Bennett and Stephen Bennett

Sister Patricia’s recognition carried particular significance for Marian Woods. She was instrumental in its founding, bringing several religious congregations together in 1995 around a shared vision for the dignified care of aging Sisters. That initiative laid the foundation for Marian Woods and its enduring model of inter-congregational cooperation. Her leadership grew from a lifetime of ministry spanning education, social justice and administration. From teaching in East Harlem and learning Spanish to build trust with Puerto Rican families to advancing corporate responsibility and alternative investing, Sister Patricia has

consistently transformed compassion into action. After retiring as president of St. Catharine Academy in 2024, she continued that commitment through the Mercy Investment Services Social Responsibility Committee and her work exploring global collaborative care for elderly Sisters with The Anna Trust.

Marian Woods in Hartsdale, New York, is an inter-congregational adult-care community for women religious, sponsored by the Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm. Opened in 2001, it was established through collaboration among religious congregations to provide a compassionate and sustainable care model for elder members. The community allows senior Sisters to age with dignity, maintaining lives centered on prayer, reflection, friendship, and engagement. Its person-centered approach adapts to residents’ changing physical, spiritual, emotional, and social needs. Marian Woods aligns with SOAR!’s mission by showcasing the potential of united efforts among religious congregations, caregivers, and supporters. It serves as a faith-centered home that upholds community, belonging, and religious traditions.

Reflecting on aging women and men religious, Trish Gathers said, “After giving so much, they deserve to age with dignity, security and exceptional care. Their legacy of humility, generosity and service is our sacred responsibility to sustain.”

As SOAR! marked 40 years of caring, the New York Awards Dinner reaffirmed a sacred responsibility: to care for those who have spent their lives caring for others—a commitment that reflects the Carmelite belief that The Difference Is LoveSM.

Learn more:
Carmelite System Inc:
www.carmelitesystem.org

Avila Institute Of Gerontology
www.avilainstitute.org
Carith Ministries :
www.carithministries.org

Email: rtoussaint@carmelitesystem.org



L-R: Sister Cyril Methodius Kasper, Sister Margaret Costello, Sister Francis, Bishop Edmund Whelan and Sister Peter Lillian DiMaria

religious communities and their supporters together to help aging Sisters. It is more than a gathering—it is an opportunity to reconnect, share our stories and

from Sister Joan Curtin, CND, while Sister Patricia Wolf, RSM, received the Father Victor Yanitelli, SJ, Award from Sister Maureen King, RSM.