

## **Diocese of Great Falls-Billings Independent Review Board**

As mandated in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, Bishop Michael Warfel has selected a group of competent people to turn to for advice. As stated in the Charter, "Dioceses . . . will also have a review board that functions as a confidential consultative body to the bishop... The majority of its members will be lay persons not in the employ of the diocese... This board will advise the diocesan...bishop in his assessment of allegations of sexual abuse of minors and in his determination of suitability for ministry. It will regularly review diocesan...policies and procedures for dealing with sexual abuse of minors. Also, the board can review these matters both retrospectively and prospectively and give advice on all aspects of responses required in connection with these cases" (USCCB Charter and Norms for the Protection of Children and Young People, Article 12).

Members of the Independent Review Board and their terms are as follows:

- Teresa McCann-O'Connor, *Chair III 4/18*
- Nick Murnion, *Secretary I 12/16*
  
- Jan Carter, *I 12/16*
- Verne Petermann, *III 4/18*
- Sue Swan, *III 4/18*
- Sr. Bernadette Helfert, *SCL, III 4/18*
- Rev. Peter Guthneck, *I 2/17*

### **Ex-Officio Members**

- Maxon Davis, *Diocesan Attorney*
- Rev. Jay H. Peterson, *Diocesan Vicar General*
- Anne Beckley, *Interim Victim Assistance Coordinator*
- Richard Moog, *Diocesan Business Manager*
- Rev. John Robertson, *Promoter of Justice*
- Rev. Robert Grosch, *Promoter of Justice*

### **Teresa McCann-O'Connor**

Teresa McCann O'Connor is the current chair of the Independent Review Board and was originally appointed by Bishop Warfel in September, 2008. She was raised, the oldest of nine children on a cattle ranch along the Missouri in northeastern Montana, and was baptized, confirmed and married at St. Anthony's in Culbertson. She attended the Academy of Our Lady of Good Counsel in Mankato, Minnesota, the flagship school of the School Sisters of Notre Dame for secondary school, graduating in 1974. From there, she won the Archdiocesan Scholarship (the thankful response of the Vatican for the generosity of the Americans to the Peter's Pence collections) to the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, earning three degrees in six years-- a Bachelor's Degree in Politics, a Master's Degree in Library and Information Science, and a Juris Doctorate.

When Teresa and her husband, Bill O'Connor, also an attorney, returned to Montana, they settled in Billings. She worked as a Deputy County Attorney in the Yellowstone County Attorney's office, handling a wide variety of major felony litigation and, for much of her tenure, all of the prosecution of sex offenses against children. She also taught quite widely, in those years, her views on the specialized litigation and advocacy for children within the system-- making the victims safe while also fulfilling the requirements of the constitution for due process and protection of the defendants she was prosecuting. In 1990, Teresa entered into a wide-ranging general litigation practice with her husband, O'Connor and O'Connor, PC. Bill and Teresa have three grown children, all now through college, one in medical school and two in law school. Besides serving on the Independent Review Board, Teresa volunteers her time in various political activities, and she is beginning her eighth year as a member of the Montana Board of Pardons and Paroles.

### **Nick Murnion**

Nickolas C. Murnion currently serves as the Valley County Attorney at Glasgow, Montana which is a position he has held since August, 2009. Prior to that time he was Garfield County Attorney for 30 years at Jordan, Montana where he was born and raised. He obtained an undergraduate degree in Government from Montana State University (Bozeman) in 1975 and received a law degree from the University of Montana (Missoula) in 1978. In 1998 he received the Profile in Courage award from the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts. In 2000 he was the recipient of the Courageous Advocacy Award by the American College of Trial Lawyers. He also serves on the Montana Board of Crime Control, is a member of St. Raphael's Catholic Church in Glasgow, Montana, where he serves on the Pastoral Council. Murnion is also a member of the Knights of Columbus.

### **Jan Carter**

### **Verne Petermann**

Born and raised in Wibaux, Montana, Verne Petermann received his A.A. degree from Dawson College in 1967. He served in the US Army, 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division from 1969-1971. He received his B.A. degree from Eastern Montana College in 1976. He served in the Billings Police Department from 1976 to 2006 and is currently retired. He has been active in Critical Incident Stress Management, Victim Services, Family Violence Intervention, and the Attorney General's Anti-Terrorism Task Force. He married Karen Lemm in 1983. Karen has been teaching in the Catholic schools since 1976 and is currently Principal of St. Francis Primary. They have three children and are members of St. Thomas Parish. He joined the church in 1982, having been baptized and confirmed at Little Flower Parish. He represented Little Flower Parish on the Billings Catholic School Board from 1994 to 2000. He was part of Marriage Encounter Team 1984 to 1989 and Cursillo in 1993. He is an associate member of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth.

### **Susan M. Swan**

Educational background prepares Sue Swan well for membership on the Independent Review Board. She attended MSU-Northern in Havre from 1980 to 1985, attaining a B.S. degree in Secondary Education, with a Major in Education-Trades and Industry and a Minor in English. From 1962 to 1965, she attended St. Catherine's Hospital School of Nursing, Brooklyn, NY and became a registered nurse. In 1990, she participated in Stephen's Ministry Leadership Training. In 1998, she attained Parish Nurse Basic Education, Carroll College, Helena. Her employment history contributes to her expertise as well. Susan is currently semi-retired, working intermittently as a Public Health Nurse for Hill County and with Northern Montana Hospital's Senior Connection. Current community activities include; member of the Adult Protective Team for Hill County, President of Montana Nurse's Association District 6, Recycle Hi-Line member, Parish Council for St. Jude Thaddeus Church, Extraordinary Minister of Holy Eucharist, Lay Leader of Prayer, Co-facilitator of New Beginnings (a healing program for separated, divorced and widowed persons) and organizes Parish Nurse Ministry activities at St. Jude Thaddeus Parish.

### **Sister Bernadette Helfert, SCL**

Sr. Bernadette Helfert is a Montana native, born in Helena and raised in the smelter town of East Helena. Love of the land comes naturally for her as her family comes from a line of farmers, ranchers and miners. The Sisters of Charity educated her from grade school through college, so their influence was pervasive as she was growing up. So much so that she entered the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth after attending St. Mary College for one year. As a sister, she has had wonderful opportunities – and challenges – as a teacher, principal and school consultant. For 12 years she served on the congregation's leadership team. She also served as the Pastoral Administrator in the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings for the parishes of Chinook, Harlem and Turner. Currently, she serves as the vice-president of Mission Integration for the Montana Region which includes St. Vincent Healthcare, Billings, St. James Healthcare, Butte and Holy Rosary Healthcare, Miles City. Over the course of years, she has also served on numerous boards, councils and committees. Her hobbies include piano, gardening, flower arranging, photography, making note-cards, camping and hiking.

### **Rev. Peter Guthneck**

Rev. Peter Guthneck was ordained May 22, 1971 for the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings. He served the diocese in Poplar, Brockton and Fort Kipp from July 1971 to August 1977. Father Guthneck has served the parishes of Big Sandy and Box Elder since August 1977 where he currently resides. He has served on the diocesan Clergy Personnel Board for many years and currently is a member of the Priest's Council.