

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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“An Honor and a Privilege”
Mill Neck Services Executive Director Returns from Abroad

Though exhausted after a 20-plus hour flight, Loretta Murray, Executive Director of Mill Neck Services (MNS), was cheered by the sight of the smiles and balloons that greeted her arrival in Macau, off the mainland of China. It began an experience that she calls, “a wonderful opportunity; both an honor and a privilege to be there.” Murray made the trip to Macau in early December to conduct a three-day Deaf Leadership Workshop at the Macau Association for the Hearing Impaired (MAHI). Located a little over 40 miles to the west of Hong Kong, Macau is a city with two personalities. Formerly a Portuguese colony, in 1999 it returned to Chinese sovereignty. “There is a lot of Portuguese influence,” says Murray, evidenced by the Mediterranean architectural styles that coexist with the customs, temples and shrines of its Chinese heritage. “This trip gave me a totally different perspective, culturally,” she adds.

Murray was approached about traveling to Macau by Rudy Auslander, Chairman of the Mill Neck Manor Board of Trustees and a member of Rotary International, a worldwide service organization with a presence in Macau. Rev. Thomas Dunseth enthusiastically agreed with the suggestion. As Director of Deaf Ministry for Mill Neck, Rev. Dunseth travels several times a year to Macau and specifically to MAHI, where he is a board member. He believed Murray’s presentation to MAHI would be beneficial as the Association strives to broaden its scope. As Rev. Dunseth noted, “Loretta would be able to explain the services in place at Mill Neck. She

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could evaluate MAHI's programs and suggest what they might initiate and also how Mill Neck may assist."

The leadership training was for ten individuals who are Deaf and are involved with the MAHI center. The group included board members and staff, as well as recipients of the center's services. Collectively they developed four objectives for MAHI's 2015 activities, hoping these will provide assistance to Macau's Deaf community. With a Chinese interpreter to facilitate, Murray covered several topics, focusing on the goals the Macau association wished to achieve, among them systemizing their services.

"There is also a huge interest in learning ASL (American Sign Language), which is wonderful! There are some logistics though to accomplishing this. We could make use of Skype, but need to consider the time difference. Also, there would probably be a need for a Chinese interpreter as well," Murray says. Whatever goals MAHI is striving for, Murray stressed that all projects have an accountability component. She says she concluded the workshop by encouraging the participants to submit a report to her by mid-February, thus enabling her to provide feedback on their progress.

During the rest of their stay in Macau, Murray and Rev. Dunseth participated in MAHI's day-to-day activities and attended several special events. At the 15th annual Christmas Celebration hosted by the Rotary Club of Macau, they witnessed the honoring of all the Macau organizations that serve the special needs community. "We were invited by our friends at Concordia School for Special Education in Macau," says Rev. Dunseth. The school was founded by Rev. Louis Jasper on behalf of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Rev. Dunseth, describing a highlight of the event, says, "At the end of the evening, all Rotary members and special guests were invited to go on stage and lead the whole room of 800 people in singing 'Joy to the World.'" He and Murray also attended the 2014 Concordia Awards held at the Concordia School. The breakfast event honored recipients for 25 years of service to the special needs community. Students at the

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school added to the celebration by taking the stage to perform “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.”

It is apparent that Murray’s first-ever trip to Macau was both enjoyable and productive. While she jokes that she could live without the extended travel time, she is grateful to have been part of an experience that was equal parts educational, positive and constructive. She hopes that by the end of her stay in Macau, she had made several points clear, saying, “Those who are Deaf are equal to those who are hearing. We need to understand that we can do it all, except hear.” She believes her trip showed the importance of associations working together to assist their special needs communities and stressed that Mill Neck is more than willing to help when needed.

Lutheran Friends of the Deaf provides support for educational and evangelistic outreach to people of all ages who are Deaf throughout the United States and world. To date, over \$7,000,000 has been granted to a variety of church-related ministries here and abroad. Lutheran Friends of the Deaf is the founding organization of the Mill Neck Family of Organizations, a not-for-profit group dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for people who are Deaf, or who have other special needs, through excellence in individually designed educational, vocational or spiritual programs and services. For more information, please call 1-800-264-0662 or visit <http://www.millneck.org>

Caption: Loretta Murray and Rev. Thomas Dunseth (4th and 5th from left) enjoy a traditional meal with staff and consumers at the Macau Association for the Hearing Impaired (MAHI).

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