Sooner Catholic
November 13, 2016
www.soonercatholic.org www.archokc.org

Go Make Disciples

Sr. BJ’s Pantry for the homeless offers human touch
Serving there “takes you out of yourself”

By Tina Korbe Dzurisin
For the Sooner Catholic

It’s a predawn Sunday morning at the end of October, and Sister BJ’s Pantry, a ministry to feed and foster community among the homeless men, women and children of Oklahoma City, is preparing for breakfast. Beyond the serene, pristine Devon Tower and across Shartel Avenue, rests sparser buildings in a little, unnamed district – and a few raucous voices resound.

How to Help
What: Sr. BJ’s Pantry, a ministry to the homeless of OKC
When: 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. Friday-Sunday (during the week by appt.)
Where: 819 N.W. 4
Needs: Dry goods, toiletries, sack lunches, monetary and in-kind donations (www.srbjpantry.com/give).
Volunteer: To volunteer to serve as an individual or with a group, contact Sr. Barbara Joseph Foley at (405) 837-7068.

In the dark, amid all the concrete, a wood pergola appears, cheerily strung with patio lights and surrounded by the soft, shadowy shapes of flowers. Purple clematis climb an aged wall, romantic hydrangeas spread welcoming branches and vibrant roses lift their radiant heads from the four corners of the small grounds.

Sister Barbara Joseph Foley – from whom the pantry takes its name – greets everyone. Sister BJ is warm and vivacious, with an air of simultaneous ease and activity.

Father Rother exhibit opens at CPC

A new exhibit on Servant of God Father Stanley Rother is now open in the Heritage Gallery on the first floor of the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway in Oklahoma City. The exhibit visits Father Rother’s childhood in Okarche, his early priesthood and his time in Guatemala where he was martyred in 1981 while serving in Santiago Atitlán. The items on display include his chalice, cassock, letters, photos, vestments and panels that explain the history of Oklahoma’s native priest.

The exhibit is free and open to the public Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Diabetes treated through faith, diet, exercise, survivors say

Information on diabetes care & prevention
American Diabetes Association 4334 Northwest Expressway, No. 265 (405) 840-3881 www.diabetes.org
Embracing the joy of life’s struggles

“Now often do we go through our day, looking for comfort?” our pastor asked as we slowed the car. “Isn’t it true?”

The question has stuck with me ever since, for it is every day that I seek comfort, whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual.

Every morning upon awakening, I think first of getting a little more sleep, or more coffee, a warm, nutty bowl of oatmeal. Often, I continue on in this manner, seeking comfort and ease in all my efforts — and counseling myself that when things inevitably don’t go as planned, whether it is a traffic jam, a project that is taking longer than anticipated, or a baby who wakes up too early.

Reading of the lives of the holy men and women who have gone before us in faith jar me out of my complacency. Two recent entries in “Butler’s Lives of the Saints” particularly struck me. Each, a woman who loved the mastered man in question demonstrated a greater love for her saint.

John Boyle was executed on grounds of treason for openly practicing the old religion and refusing to recognize Queen Elizabeth as head of the Church. She acknowledged her as the lawful ruler. He repented and returned to the faith, but his love for the true faith won out. He repented and returned to the Church. He was repeatedly arrested for his adherence to Roman authority; his arrest led to fines, time in the stocks, and confinement to reveal the names of other local Catholics. He was even time in the stocks, and executed for his adherence to the true civil authority.

After his ghastly death, he married his foster sister on the very day of his martyrdom. In the night preceding her grief and suffering of her son, this honorable woman understood that her son’s soul — not his comfort or even his earthly life — was the most important thing. She never stopped believing that his fidelity to the Catholic Church was more important than his life itself.

The case of another martyr during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the Welsh Saint Richard Gwyn, showed a similar clarity of judgment. Gwyn, the first Welsh martyr under Elizabeth’s reign, was a schoolmaster and father of six. For a time, he embraced the “new religion,” under immense social and legal pressure. He understood the desire for comfort and ease, and for his fatherland. He repented and returned to the true faith and his love for the true faith won out, his view being that of George Merig to empower groups of poor and working families to make a difference in family life and to fight poverty at the local level.

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Final resting place: Vatican releases instruction on burial, cremation

By Cindy Wootz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Professing belief in the resurrection of the dead and affirming that the human body is an essential part of a person’s identity, the Catholic Church insists that the bodies of the deceased must be treated with respect and laid to rest in a consecrated place, even if the deceased continued to prefer burial in the past.

Catholic Bishop Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation was created to support children in need. And, through the use of the last two major-party candidates for president in the election at the Al Smith Memorial Dinner, the foundation’s principal fundraiser, where they were to show, to the world of the institution, “light humor and political savvy.”

No one doubts that raising funds for New York’s poorest children is a worthy cause, although the amount raised annually at the dinner is not as much as many would expect. Still, the spirit of the Al Smith Memorial Dinner, at least in recent decades, bears serious reflection: What is the connection, said Cardinal Exhausted, a gesture of friendship between Cardinal,” the Pontiff said. “A great many of them, however, would love to have their ashes to be kept in a private home. Cardinal Muller said it was not up to him, but to local and national bishops’ conferences to determine what those “grave and exceptional” circumstances might be.

Placing the ashes in a sacred place also “prevents the faithful from being lost forever from being shown, which is a sign of the Church,” Muller told Catholic News Service, noting that there is a difference between allowing for the natural decay of the body while protecting the environment and ensuring the ashes of the deceased also pass way, the instruction said.

As specifically about the growing trend in his native Germany, many of “forest burials,” where people pay to have their ashes in a final resting place: Vatican releases instruction on burial, cremation

Alfred Emmanuel Smith (1873-1944) served as governor of New York for three terms, and as president of the New York City Board of Education. He was the only Roman Catholic elected to Congress, the Senate, and the White House. In 1924, he was nominated for the Democratic presidential nomination, but lost to Calvin Coolidge.

The Pontifical Missal Program in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City offers online theological education and formation for ministry in affiliation with Newman University in Wichita.

Theology and ministry courses are offered during spring, summer and fall semesters for the convenience of the student. The courses are open to anyone interested in ministry in the Church. Course materials are provided by the university at a fee, and with the possibility of a bachelor’s in Sacred Theology degree from Newman University or an archdiocesan seminary diploma, may be audited for personal enrichment or taken for non-credit continuing education assignments.

Tuition and costs:
Credit: three-hour course, $175 + textbooks. Personal enrichment/auditor: $100 + textbooks. Graduates of our program-Continuing education credit given: $80 + textbooks.

Classes may be attended at the following locations via videoconferencing. Be sure to check availability of the site when registering.

Catholic Pastoral Center (main site)
Rm. 14/15 lower level 7501 Northwest Expyway Oklahoma City
Prince of Peace 1550 Falcon Rd. Altus 73521
St. Mary 115 E. Street SW Ardmore 73401-4735
St. Francis Xavier 110 E. Madison Enid 73702-3527
St. Leo 1200 N. Quinn St. Gumi 73749-0731
St. Philip 1020 W. Alabama Ave. Woodward 73801-4256
St. Mary 1218 Knox Ave. Clinton 73601-1295
Holy Family 1010 NW 82 Lawton 73505-4103

Spring 2017 core courses:
THEO 3053 SACRAMENTAL THEOLOGY (3 credits)
Tuesdays, Jan. 17 – May 2, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. 

A consideration of the Church community as Sacrament and cause of Christ in the world today. This course presents the Church as a living organism, fundamentally off-side.

Spring Pastoral Ministry Program releases spring schedule

The end of an era, the internment of an event

George Weigel
Ethics and Public Policy Center

Sooner Catholic

In the United States, and particularly in American states, the practice of cremation is widely accepted, but it is still a controversial issue for some Catholics. The Pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, has said that cremation is “an heinous sin,” and the Church teaches that the soul of the deceased is not preserved in the ashes, but is united with the body in the resurrection of the dead.

But, today it strikes me as moth-eaten, even somewhat sad. It’s almost as if we have no grand support for the grand strategy of 21st-century Catholicism, which is the New Evangelization, an effort of friends of Christ with Jesus, Christ and the Church and States, and particularly in America’s greatest city?

It’s hard to avoid the impression that the Al Smith Dinner has been, and still is, a public ritual of tribal Catholicism. We’re there, by God, we’ve made it; see, we can deliver the two most important people in the country, a few weeks before the election. That statement of Catholic pride (which not infrequently runs into hubris) may have had its place at a previous moment in U.S. Catholic history. But, today it strikes me as moth-eaten, even somewhat sad. It’s almost as if we have no grand support for the grand strategy of 21st-century Catholicism, which is the New Evangelization, an effort of friends of Christ with Jesus, Christ and the Church and States, and particularly in America’s greatest city?

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By 6:45 a.m., Sister BJ and her volunteers had been on the scrounging hunt for hours and a half.

Sister Barbara Joseph founded the pantry in March 2006. Since then, it has grown to serve more than 400 men, women and children each week. A few of the volunteers have been serving with her for almost as long as the pantry has been open.

“IT has developed into a beautiful family for us all,” Sister BJ said. “It is a beautiful family that we have, which is maybe why it works.”

From 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, they’re here – pouring hot, stout coffee into styrofoam cups, presenting pastries here – pouring hot, stout coffee into styrofoam cups, presenting pastries and, or distributing sack lunches charitably decorated by local school children. Once a month, they serve a vestige feast of a hot breakfast – eggs, sausage, potatoes and tortillas, liberally topped with peppers, onions, salsa and cheese.

Steve Reesor is one of Sister BJ’s volunteer workhorses. He has been involved with the pantry for eight years.

“I started coming, and I fell in love with it,” Reesor said.

He said he started off helping people, lost, after a while, you get into a relationship with them and you want to see how they’re doing, and this is just part of it. It’s wonderful.

As soon as the men – about 95 percent of the people who frequent Sister BJ’s Pantry are men – enter the garden, visitors understand what Sister BJ means when she says this is “a random moment.”

The volunteers know a number of the men and women by name – and they greet everyone who enters with the gate with sincerity.

“At Sister BJ’s Pantry, we try to be present to the homeless in the moment,” Sister BJ said. “That personal relationship is most important.”

Many of the clients – Sister BJ uniformly calls them “friends” or, sometimes, “our little friends” – respond to those greetings in kind. Others say little. Everyone receives a plate and some go back for seconds.

“A appreciate her,” one man said.

“Really appreciate Sister BJ being a mediator between us and people who want to give and help. I speak for every person here when I say we appreciate it. Another frequenter, David, said he has recovered his Catholic faith among the roses at Sister BJ’s and has begun to attend St. Joseph’s Old Cathedral as well as to pray the rosary daily.

“It’s a beautiful, tranquil place to come,” he said. “I like to come here and see all the flowers. Every now and then, you’ll see a perfect rose bloom.”

The stories these men tell of how they arrived at the pantry can be somber, a reminder Sister BJ says “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

“It could happen to anyone, but then it takes so much work and so much energy to get back on your feet,” Sister BJ said. “They’re all human beings, and that’s why we want to help all of them. I just try to start small.”

“We’re all made in the image and likeness of God; we’re all the same,” she added. “The little things that you do bring that smile to someone’s face will melt your heart. The human touch is what I fell in love with, and want just like we do. Coming to Sister BJ’s Pantry opens your heart to the simple needs of others. It takes you out of yourself.”

Tina Korbe Dutkanis is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

Bishop McGuinness All Girls Sports Complex opens

More than 300 guests attended the dedication and blessing ceremony of the Bishop McGuinness All Girls Sports Complex on Nov. 6. Work on the two-story, 12,000-square-foot facility began this past winter. The complex sits atop the main school building, on the where the Bishop McGuinness previous house was previously located and directly south of visitor bleachers in Pribil Stadium.

The building houses more than 250 female athletes, participating in Cross Country, Track, Soccer, Cheer and Pum. There is a new concession stand, ticket booth and public restrooms for visiting teams. The lower level includes the two-story cheer studio, more than 100 lockers, restrooms, showers and 24 showers for female athletes.

Above, to the right, Bishop McGuinness joins honoree Vicki Luetkemeyer Connelly, Judy Love, Superintendent of Catholic Schools; Diane Floyd, and BMCHS Principal David Morton to cut the ribbon. Below, Cheerleaders perform for the first time in the new facility. Left, The pom squad performs for the first time in the new facility.

The upper level includes a lobby overlooking the Cheer studio, a separate Pom studio that provides an abundance of much needed practice space, coaches’ offices, and a second story of the Pum and Cheer studios were designed to replicate the specific performance space commonly seen at competition.

The facility is dedicated in honor of Vicki Luetkemeyer Connelly, a 1973 Bishop McGuinness graduate.

St. Mary Catholic School sent up well wishes and prayers to the world with balloons as a positive ending of their Red/Orange Week.

Making Sense of Bioethics

The multiple moral problems of surrogacy

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St. Mary Catholic School sent up well wishes and prayers to the world with balloons as a positive ending of their Red/Orange Week.

Making Sense of Bioethics

The multiple moral problems of surrogacy

Sister BJ’s Pantry offers the homeless a human touch.

Serving there “takes you out of yourself.”

“It’s a beautiful, tranquil place to come,” he said. “I like to come here and see all the flowers. Every now and then, you’ll see a perfect rose bloom.”

The stories these men tell of how they arrived at the pantry can be somber, a reminder Sister BJ says “There, but for the grace of God, go I.”

“It could happen to anyone, but then it takes so much work and so much energy to get back on your feet,” Sister BJ said. “They’re all human beings, and that’s why we want to help all of them. I just try to start small.”

“We’re all made in the image and likeness of God; we’re all the same,” she added. “The little things that you do bring that smile to someone’s face will melt your heart. The human touch is what I fell in love with, and want just like we do. Coming to Sister BJ’s Pantry opens your heart to the simple needs of others. It takes you out of yourself.”

Tina Korbe Dutkanis is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.
Supreme Court to hear school’s transgender bathroom case

By Matt Haug
Catholic News Agency

WASHINGTON D.C. – The Supreme Court has announced that it will hear a case on whether students identifying as transgender may be required to use restrooms according to their biological birth sex.

“Schools have a duty to protect the privacy and safety of all students,” the petition to the Court noted in its justification for hearing the Fourth Circuit decision in this case, especially when other court rulings, including Fourteenth Amendment cases, have more or less supported the decision in the case.

Griffin was a boy and, although his biological sex was not in question when he enrolled in the school, the Court stated that he was not afforded the same privacy as his classmates. While the case was being heard, the student was assigned as female but chose not to use the girls’ facilities, which had the effect of allowing him to use the boys’ facilities.

According to lawyers, Griffin used to feel like a boy. The student took the name Lauren after moving to girls’ facilities but later decided to use boys’ facilities. The petition to the Court noted that the student, who has a gender identity disorder, had been taking hormone blockers at the time the petition was filed.

“All the girls seemed to be very comfortable, and they were all smiling,” the mother told school officials that day. “And so he was feeling much better.”

The petition to the Court noted that Griffin was initially allowed to use the boys’ room at school, but then “the board began receiving complaints from parents and students who regarded G.G.’s presence in the boys’ room as an invasion of student privacy.”

The position handles recruiting/admissions responsibilities to successor. Apply online at www.stgregorys.edu/about-us/employment.

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Birth Choice volunteers needed

Birth Choice is the key need of volunteers who will administer pregnancy tests, help clients and help with clerical work. Contact Barbara at (405) 866-8428.

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Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School is seeking a part-time BA/BS in education. Contact Laura Frost at lfrost@lmc.edu. The position will be for the school year. A covering letter and CV are required.

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Misericordia y las cuatro últimas cosas

Nos acercamos al final del Año Jubilar de la Misericordia. La caridad, o amor fraternal, es el mejor contexto para meditar en lo que la Iglesia llama “las cuatro últimas cosas” de la vida del ser humano: nacer, morir, pasar al purgatorio y, finalmente, ir al cielo. En estos momentos, y en particular este mes de noviembre, se conmemora la vida eterna a través de la Misa de los difuntos, la plegaria por los difuntos y las bellas imágenes de las almas que viven en el purgatorio que no han sido perfeccionadas. Sin embargo, la misericordia no es sólo un recuerdo de los que han fallecido, sino que se manifiesta en nuestra vida cotidiana, en el amor y la caridad que damos a nuestras familias, en el cuidado de nuestros vecinos y en el apoyo mutuo que damos durante los momentos difíciles de nuestras vidas.

El Día de Acción de Gracias se está celebrando este mes de noviembre y a lo largo del próximo mes de diciembre. Se celebra el Día de Acción de Gracias todos los años, el 12 de noviembre, como el Día de los Muertos, una celebración mexicana que celebra el encuentro de la vida y del mundo de los muertos.

Por medio de esta celebración, esperamos que seamos conscientes de la importancia de la caridad y del amor fraternal, que nos une a todos en nuestro deseo de alcanzar la perfección en la vida eterna. Así, como en el Día de Acción de Gracias, también en el Día de los Muertos, debemos recordar a nuestros seres queridos que han fallecido y que, a pesar de la muerte, siguen siendo parte de nuestra vida.

En este contexto, queremos invitar a todos a reflexionar sobre la importancia de la misericordia en nuestras vidas, y a recordar que, como dice el Padre Roque, “la misericordia no es sólo un recuerdo de los que han fallecido, sino que se manifiesta en nuestra vida cotidiana, en el amor y la caridad que damos a nuestras familias, en el cuidado de nuestros vecinos y en el apoyo mutuo que damos durante los momentos difíciles de nuestras vidas.”

La caridad es un don que nos llena de gracia, nos hace ser mejores personas y nos acerca a Dios. Es una virtud que nos ayuda a vivir en armonía con los demás y a ser capaces de amar y perdonar a todos. Es un regalo que Dios nos ha dado para que lo compartamos con los demás, y un deber que tenemos hacia nuestra iglesia y hacia nuestros próximos.

En este mes de noviembre, y durante todo el año, queremos invitar a todos a reflexionar sobre la importancia de la caridad y del amor fraternal, que nos une a todos en nuestro deseo de alcanzar la perfección en la vida eterna. Así, como en el Día de Acción de Gracias, también en el Día de los Muertos, debemos recordar a nuestros seres queridos que han fallecido y que, a pesar de la muerte, siguen siendo parte de nuestra vida.

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Sooner Catholic

unique pilgrimage to Ireland, July 2003, mroewe@Unitours.com.

pp deposit. Contact (405) 293-

Mass daily, Santiago de Compostela. Cost is $4,399 pp dbl. occ., includes all

ext. 245.

158. The cost at CPC is $7, which

and St. Peter, Woodward. To register, call (405) 721-5651, Ext. 158. St. Joseph, Galway, and more. Mass, breakfast, dinner daily. 4-star hotels, luxury air-conditioned mo-

prays for the Rosary for Life at the Norman abortion clinic, 2453 Wilcox Dr., at 6:30 p.m. every Sunday. Contact Connie Lang at (405) 399-9086 or Tim Harrellas at (405) 341-2199.

10 a.m. to 7 p.m. To register, contact Fr. Calvey at (405) 630-0539, calvey@stgregorys.edu.

or older, you can gift up to $100,000 per

This calendar only covers the two weeks between issue dates and may not reflect all of the calendar items. To see a full calendar, go to www.soonercatholic.org.

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November

12 National Bible Work begins.

13 St. Joseph, Norman, annual Thanksgiving dinner at 42 E. 21st St., 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Advance tickets at stgregorys.edu.

7 Church service, 7 p.m., Catholic Pastoral Center. Contact Toni Calvey at (405) 353-4059, calvey1900@gmail.com or call 600 13th Ave., Duncan, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

13 Christmas bazaar at Assumption Church, 711 W. Hickory Ave., Duncan, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

19 Catholic Singles and Friends will have their annual Thanksgiving dinner at St. Charles Borromeo, 5024 N. Grove, at 7 p.m. Dance end at 11 p.m. Snack foods welcome for sharing table. Donation $20. info@biblestory.com. Pray the Rosary for Life at the Sacred Heart, King of the Universe, Jubilee Year of Mercy ends.

20 Pray the Rosary for Life at the Norman abortion clinic, 2453 Wilcox Dr., at 6:30 p.m. every Sunday. Contact Connie Lang at (405) 249-1041 or jlang@stgregorys.edu.

20 St. Teresa of Avila, Harrah, Thanksgiving dinner and bazaar from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

20 Christmas bazaar at St. Teresa of Avila, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., 7504 E. Wilcox Ave., Duncan, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Contact Susan Stoudt at (405) 473-6328.

19 Catholic Lay Missionaries of Charity, Assumption Church, 711 W. Hickory Ave., Duncan, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. First Communion is as follows: Monday-Friday following Noon Mass. Saturday after 5 p.m. Mass. Saturday after 5 p.m. Mass.

20 St. Joseph, Norman, annual Thanksgiving dinner at 42 E. 21st St., 6:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Advance tickets at stgregorys.edu.

19 Charismatic Catholic prayer group, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., Catholic Pastoral Center. Contact Toni Calvey at (405) 353-4059, calvey1900@gmail.com or call 600

in his room in Guatemala after his murder. The free exhibit is open

day 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sunday 20; Friday 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Satur-

tion will delight both young and old. "James and the Giant Peach," by Roald Dahl, will be performed by local actors. The production will be presented Nov. 22-26 and Dec. 7-10.

the Sarkeys Performing Arts Center in the SGU Sue Ann B. and Bart Pope Center for the Performing Arts. Advance tickets available at stgregorys.edu.

Assumption Church, 711 W. Hickory Ave., 8 a.m. Their Annual Christmas Bazaar Nov. 18-20. Friday 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., Satur-

25 Call the Office of Worship and Spiritual Development for more information at 752-4151 or www.soonercatholic.org.

19 Annual Thanksgiving dinner at Our Lady of Prompt Succor, 3524 S. Bryant, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Proceeds benefit the build

17 Harry Kocurek. Participants who attend "Living in Community" by Dr. Andrew Bernauer, at 9 a.m., will have their An-

13 to a favorite Bible passage in public.

17 Monthly Novena to the Infant Jesus. Nine days of novenas will be as follows: Monday-Friday following Noon Mass; Saturday following 5 p.m. Mass; Sunday following 5 a.m. Mass. Mass.

13 St. Teresa of Avila, Harrah, annual Thanksgiving dinner and bazaar from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

13 to see a full calendar, go to www.soonercatholic.org.

2016 Calendar

11 p.m. Mass. The day includes a presentation by Bishop Paul Etienne, who will discuss "Healing after abortion: the emotion is not a disease or disability, but an open-
Brain cancer survivor lends voice to campaign against assisted suicide

By Jennifer Mauro

TRENTON, N.J. – Two years ago, as terminally ill 29-year-old Brittany Maynard made national news by publicly advocating for her right to end her life under Oregon’s “Death With Dignity” law, Sarah Steele sat in her Camden County home, quietly anguishng over her right to live.

“I felt like it really minimized what I had fought for and conquered in my own life,” said Steele, 44, who 10 years ago was told she had only months to live.

That’s one reason why Steele, a two-time cancer survivor, wife and mother of three, is now working with a broad-based coalition, including the New Jersey Catholic Conference, diocesan leaders throughout the state, and several right-to-life and disabilities advocacy groups against legislation in the New Jersey Legislature that would legalize assisted suicide.

Known as the “Aid in Dying for the Terminally Ill Act,” the bill would permit terminally ill patients to “self-administer medications to end life in a humane and dignified manner.” The state Assembly passed the measure Oct. 20 in a 41-28 vote, with five abstentions, and it now goes to the state Senate.

A similar measure is currently pending in the D.C. Council; and Colorado voters will decide if assisted suicide should be allowed in their state.

“Terminally ill 29-year-old Brittany Maynard made national news by publicly advocating for her right to end her life under Oregon’s ‘Death With Dignity’ law, said Steele, 44, who 10 years ago was told she had only months to live.

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“‘I remember pleading with the doctor, ‘I want someone to look at my brain.’”

What was discovered, Steele remembers, sent her doctor back into her hospital room, his face drained of color – a brain tumor.

“It was surreal,” she said. “It’s like when you hear that someone you know is going to pass away. You know, but you’re still not prepared for it. I was in shock.”

She was rushed to Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, and as she and her family awaited the results of a biopsy, she remembers feeling relieved, not from the news, but to finally have a concrete diagnosis.

“We were celebrating that I had an answer ... we were almost giddy,” she said.

A euphoria that was short-lived as the diagnosis returned – anaplastic astrocytoma, a rare, aggressive stage three brain cancer. She underwent two surgeries soon after, but was told she would not see Christmas, which was only four months away.

Those months of chemotherapy and medications turned into years of treatment – years that as she fought for life, she saw her children grow into teenagers. Now, 10 years later, she is stable, but the tumor is still present in her brain, and she is considered terminal.

But she’s alive.

“I have to take naps; sometimes I can’t remember names,” Steele said. “I basically have a brain injury, and there’s a stigma that goes along with that.”

Through it all, she said she never considered suicide.

“I never wanted to end my life. I wanted to fight. What made me feel empowered was to embrace what was in front of me and to be here as long as I could for the people who love me.”

Steele admits to being frustrated at the overwhelming media attention that surrounded the Maynard case. She said that at the time, she, too, attempted to reach out to media outlets and advocate for the right to live. She got nowhere.

Meanwhile Maynard, who was also diagnosed with terminal brain cancer, ended her life in November 2014 with the aid of medication.

“What my concern about assisted suicide is, it’s a slippery slope,” she said. “My decision to live doesn’t have an effect on others, unlike Brittany’s decision to die,” she said, expressing concerns over health insurance.

For example, Steele cited the case of a 64-year-old woman in Oregon, who, in 2008, was denied medical insurance coverage to treat her lung cancer. The insurance company, however, did agree to pay for a physician-assisted death.

“The sanctity of life is deteriorating, and Brittany Maynard’s death and Oregon’s decision to support it affect my right to fight my illness,” Steele said. “Nobody should be telling you that you don’t have rights to medication.”

Steele, who continues to be on aggressive treatment as the diagnosis returned – anaplastic astrocytoma, a rare, aggressive stage three brain cancer. She underwent two surgeries soon after, but was told she would not see Christmas, which was only four months away.

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