**A** **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR SISTER STELLA BREEN AND SISTER SHEILA BYRNE, UPON THE OCCASION OF THEIR RETIREMENT AFTER TWENTY‑SIX YEARS OF SIGNIFICANT SERVICE TO BEAUFORT COUNTY, AND TO WISH THEM MANY YEARS OF CONTINUED HEALTH AND HAPPINESS IN ALL THEIR FUTURE ENDEAVORS.

Whereas, for the past twenty‑six years, Sister Stella Breen and Sister Sheila Byrne, of the Order of Saint Francis of Philadelphia, have ministered to thousands of Beaufort County residents through the Franciscan Center on Saint Helena Island; and

Whereas, in 1987, the Sisters arrived at the Franciscan Center with paltry funds and little knowledge of Lowcountry culture and began to meet their neighbors on the dusty back roads of the island. With their scanty budget, they initiated activities to assist native islanders, isolated Hispanic families, and migrant agricultural workers living in the poverty of crowded camps; and

Whereas, those activities evolved into today’s extensive programs staffed by hundreds of volunteers serving thousands of families and individuals through private and corporate donations, proceeds from fund‑raising events and the Center’s yard sales and Thrift Shop, and grants from community and religious foundations; and

Whereas, their far‑reaching educational programs developed from an effort to assist neighborhood children with homework in the afternoon and now offer two programs serving students at risk for academic failure, phonics‑based adult literacy instruction, English as a second language, and classes in religious education; and

Whereas, due to the dilapidated condition of some neighboring homes when they arrived, Sister Breen and Sister Byrne often used their own house to shelter those in need until the Franciscan Center helped to establish Northern Beaufort County’s Habitat for Humanity and initiated a Home Repair Committee to provide materials for emergency home repairs; and

Whereas, from a desire to meet their neighbors’ basic needs, the Sisters gradually developed a robust financial‑assistance program, a food pantry, and a Thrift Shop; and

Whereas, the Franciscan Center’s ministry to the Hispanic community of Saint Helena has expanded to include the Migrant Agricultural Worker Program, which provides four hundred boxes of food, bedding, towels, toiletries, and shoes to fifteen hundred workers in ten camps; immigration assistance to those seeking to leave migrant life; and liturgy that now offers Spanish Mass; and

Whereas, among the seasonal activities the Sisters developed are a Christmas dinner for seniors and the provision of blankets, pillows, and stuffed animals for seniors at the Leroy Brown Center, an Easter egg hunt sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, an Angel Tree that donates personalized Christmas gifts to five hundred children each year, and an Adopt‑a‑Family program for needy families at Christmas; and

Whereas, the Center also sponsors special events that feature dancing, singing, and storytelling from a variety of cultural communities; fiestas, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe; the Mexican Folklorique Dance Group; and religious retreats; and

Whereas, from 2006 to 2011, the Sisters received grants to launch Project Hope, helping alleviate poverty in Allendale, and have seen the development of Allendale Farmer’s Market, Flat Street Sugar Hill Community Garden and Youth Center, New Life Center’s Youth Development Program, and Easter in the Park, all of which assist hundreds of individuals each year; and

Whereas, the House of Representatives considers it altogether appropriate to pause in its deliberations to honor the selfless efforts of these humble servants of God. Now, therefore,

Be it resolved by the House of Representatives:

That the members of the House of Representatives of the State of South Carolina, by this resolution, recognize and honor Sister Stella Breen and Sister Sheila Byrne, upon the occasion of their retirement after twenty‑six years of significant service to Beaufort County, and wish them many years of continued health and happiness in all their future endeavors.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Sister Stella Breen and Sister Sheila Byrne.

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