By Sally J. Clasen

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When asked about the fighting nun, Sr. Madon-

na ducks the question with a polite smile and says, “It was a gift.” On the credenza is another

moment, a peaceful wooden angel holding a prayer book.

The contrast in objects captures the depth of character and skill the Sisters of Mercy have used to influence the evolution of health care in Arizona since they arrived in the late 1800s. As Sr. Joseph’s celebrates its 120th anniversary this month, it’s fascinating to reflect on the sig-
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As the small adobe school next to St. Mary’s Church flourished, the Sisters noticed a need to treat people with tuberculosis.

The plight of tuberculosis sufferers affected many ways. “They would never complain of suffering, and they slept on the veranda with wet sheets and a fan blowing on them to keep cool.”

The Sisters often met resistance in the community, yet their early endeavors demonstrated their pioneering and entrepreneurial spirit. These Sisters had a sharp business sense, leadership skills, and a particular knack for fundraising.

Thanks to the efforts of the boy’s mother and the Department of Public Safety (DPS), Chris was made Arizona’s first and only honorary DPS officer. While out of the hospital, the law enforce-

ment agency gave Chris a custom-made DPS uniform and when readmitted, the officers visited him at St. Joseph’s to hand him his motorcycle officer wings. He died soon after and Chris was given a full fallen officer burial in his home state of Illinois.

Healing Across Arizona

In the months that followed, DPS officers and Chris’ mother decided to help other children’s wishes come true, and the Make-A-Wish foundation was born. The first official wish was grant-
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The Mercy Effect – Helping Wishes Come True

The Sisters of Mercy’s dedication to car-
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Make-A-Wish began in 1980 in Arizona and was started by Sr. Joseph’s pa-
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