

# Volunteer of the Year

## Sister Margaret “Peggy” Devaney

Co-Chaplain

Oakland County Sheriff’s Office

Pontiac, Michigan



**Sponsor: Bob Barker**  
America's Leading Detention Supplier

Reflecting on my life, what inspires me and lives most within me is my Irish heritage. My courageous and loving immigrant parents immersed me and my two brothers in Irish life and culture at home and at the Gaelic League. My parents grew up with the struggles of both famine and violence in their homeland of Ireland before immigrating to our home in Detroit, Michigan.

When I was 12 years old, my dad was tragically killed while crossing the street after leaving work. The hardship for me and my two brothers—and particularly for my now-single mother—propelled me into the search for life’s meaning. God became real!

After high school graduation, I entered the IHM Congregation. As a young Religious Sister, I earned a bachelor’s degree in English and theology, followed by a Master of Education degree. I continued to study to earn a Master of Divinity degree from a local Catholic seminary.

Ministerial and pastoral experiences in Michigan and Florida have engaged me in underserved urban and rural environments, as well as affluent areas along the Florida coast. I’ve worked with school youth to adults, elderly in subsidized housing, small rural towns to large cities, and from a hermitage to a jail cell.

In 1978, I had a sabbatical year at Visitation House of Prayer in Monroe, Michigan. It was a time of reflection and opportunities of prayer, retreat, renewal, and the study and application of the rules of discernment. When I left, I had a conscious call of my life direction but was not clear on how to achieve it. I trusted in God. In an awesome and roundabout way, an internship at a jail led to the Jail Chaplaincy in Oakland County, Michigan.

Jail ministry was certainly not on my list for that “next step,” but here I am celebrating 40 years of a life-giving journey.