

2012 Heart to Heart Honoree

Sister Joan Kirby, RSCJ Representative to the United Nations Temple of Understanding



Joan Kirby, a Religious of the Sacred Heart, graduated from Manhattanville College and received a Licentiate in Philosophy from the University of Louvain, Belgium. Before moving to Clinton in 1978, she was working at the Convent of the Sacred Heart on the Upper East Side of New York and in Princeton, New Jersey. In Clinton she lived on 49th Street and now lives in a wonderfully rehabilitated old-law tenement on West 52nd Street. She worked in Clinton for many years at HCC, where she organized 58 families for Home Ownership on West 50th Street, and later at Fountain House as Director of the Wannaque. She served on Community Board 4 during this time chairing the Health and Human Services Committee. While working in the neighborhood she often heard about Encore Senior Services and the great nuns who run this Community Center so, when invited to serve on Encore's Board, she gladly accepted and

continued there until 2011. She remembers with admiration the two expansions on 49th St. and on Tenth Ave. that provide excellent housing for the elderly.

In 1993 she began a new work as Executive Director of the Temple of Understanding, an international, interfaith organization. Since 2001 she has represented the Temple at the United Nations where she continues to develop educational interfaith programs and advocates for inter-religious dialogue. Sr. Joan was President of the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations and Executive Director of the DP I/NGO Executive Committee. She is working closely with UN Environment Program to address the moral urgency of combating climate change.

Her work with the Temple of Understanding and United Nations has taken her to meetings in many parts of the world: South Africa, Spain, Indonesia, Taiwan, China, Denmark and other countries. In June of this year, she will join the Temple Delegation to Rio de Janeiro for the Earth Summit that will address urgent issues of sustainable development and the green economy.

She was a student of Roshi Robert Kennedy S.J. and sits at the Morning Star Zendo in Jersey City, New Jersey.