

## Message from the Director

Dear Friends,

Welcome back to the Headwaters! My name is Helen Ballew and I am the new director at the Headwaters Coalition. I am looking forward to meeting you if I haven't already and inviting you once again to help us create a sanctuary for nature and the spirit that is worthy of this historic place.



I first came to the headwaters in 1986, my very first month in San Antonio. The late Maury Maverick brought me to the Blue Hole in the course of orienting me to my new town. I had come to San Antonio with The Nature Conservancy to help foster a

land ethic between Texans and their land. The Blue Hole became for me a kind of spiritual retreat: a place of peace, beauty and quiet reflection in the heart of a bustling city. It stirred in my city-weary spirit a sense of what Wordsworth called "natural piety."



*I could wish my days to be bound each to each in natural piety.*  
—William Wordsworth, *The Intimations Ode*

Whether we realize it or not, we need such places in our lives. As recent events in Copenhagen attest, this is truly a critical time in our human history.

*Never was there a time when the Earth cried out more for us to wake up, be mindful, have heart, and act accordingly.*

Our connection to places like the Headwaters can help us wake up to the harm our civilization has done to the Earth, be mindful of what a right relationship with the Earth looks like, have heart to mend our ways, and act with courage to restore health to the land, waters, and ultimately our selves.

I may be new to this project -- this relatively new ministry of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word -- but I am not new to the nature lover's cause. Already I see so many rich and powerful symbols and stories and lessons emanating from this home of the "Spirit Waters." I look forward to sharing what I'm learning with you and learning from your own deep engagement with the Headwaters.

We have our work cut out for us in doing honor to the Blue Hole and the "spring field" around it, the last remaining undeveloped parcel of land first purchased by the Sisters of Charity over 100 years ago. We must befriend the neighbors, restore and safeguard the springs, heal the land, listen to the elders, make and mark the trails, find the tools and recruit the helpers, raise the money, learn the history, teach the children, share the stories -- all in the spirit of Earth stewardship.

I am grateful to the Sisters for setting aside this last 53 acres including the Blue Hole to become a sanctuary. Humans have had a relationship with this land and its former "fountain spring" for over 11,000 years and while much of the land has already been put to other uses, it is possible that in time this sanctuary will become the most significant use of all.

It's going to be a wild, difficult and wonderful ride, and I can't wait to welcome you -- as you welcome me -- along the way.

Gratefully,

Helen Ballew

**P. S. Please consider making a year-end contribution to the Headwaters Coalition as an expression of your recommitment to this place and this project. Your contribution will go directly into restoration and education.**

Visit our website to make your donation online:

<http://www.headwaterscoalition.org/getinvolved.html>

## Roll Up Your Sleeves!

Work Day: January 16, 2009, 9:30 – 12:00

YOU are invited to a Saturday morning Work Day in the Headwaters Sanctuary on January 16 from 9:30 a.m. to noon. Please come out to meet the new Headwaters director and chip in a few hours of satisfying manual labor in the great outdoors. You will be helping to restore health and beauty to our “wild” little corner of the Earth, including the uppermost reach of the San Antonio River, the lowermost reach of Olmos



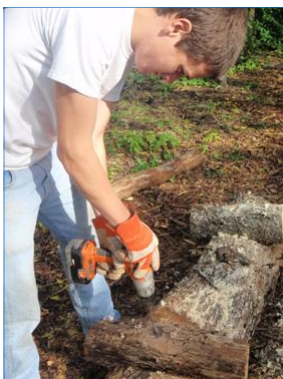
Creek, the “Little” Blue Hole, the St. Brigid’s Path and creek area, and any cat claw-infested areas in the sanctuary (depending on how big a crew we have). Meet at the Blue Hole for an

orientation and blessing, followed by work crew assignments. If you have them, please bring work gloves, loppers, pruners, your own personal water bottle, and your enthusiasm! A water jug and light snacks will be available to help fuel your work.

**Many hands make light work. If you can, let us know you’re coming, but you’re welcome no matter what. For more information, call Helen at 246-2883.**

## The New Outdoor Classroom!

Thanks to the vision and labor of high school senior, Julian Cross, the Headwaters now has an Outdoor Classroom along the south side of the main loop trail. Julian took on the project as part of his Eagle Scout program, and was aided in



Eagle Scout Julian Cross making a log bench.

the effort by his father, fellow Scouts, friends, and UIW groundskeepers on Bobcats, who helped with the heavy lifting of big timbers. An interesting aspect of the project is that the timbers used for natural seating (benches) originated from Main Plaza downtown where the development of that space required the removal of several very large old trees. They have now found a new home and new use in the Headwaters.

Julian’s sincere hope is that the space he has created will be used and enjoyed by others, whether solitary visitors seeking a place of rest and reflection, or groups of school children getting a dose of the great outdoors. Watch in early spring for news of a dedication ceremony honoring Julian’s handiwork.



UIW grounds crew help with the heavy lifting!

## 140 Years!

Thursday, December 3, 2009 was a very special day for the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word. On that day, the Sisters celebrated one hundred forty years of service to the San Antonio community and to missions in many parts of the globe. One of those missions -- one of the newest -- is of



course the Headwaters, home of the Blue Hole and its associated “field of springs,” original headwaters source of the San Antonio River.

The Sisters gave

this parcel of land and created this project to preserve a sacred space, to honor their roots which began here, to live more fully their faith as environmental stewards, and to share this special place and legacy with us all. In this season of giving, give thanks!

Among the San Antonio institutions founded by the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word:

- ≈ Christus Santa Rosa Health System
- ≈ University of the Incarnate Word
- ≈ Incarnate Word High School
- ≈ St. Peter’s/St. Joseph’s (St. PJs)
- ≈ Visitation House
- ≈ The Village at Incarnate Word
- ≈ Headwaters Coalition, Inc.

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## SELAH: Pause & Reflect

On Tuesday, December 16, 2009 several members of the Headwaters board of directors and core committee made a pilgrimage to Selah, Bamberger Ranch Preserve, the 5,500-acre ecological restoration success story of J. David Bamberger, Texas's 2009 Aldo Leopold Conservation Award winner. With his keen wit, unconventional mind, caring heart and fire in the belly, J. David led the Headwaters group tour sharing stories of his life, work, family history, and love of the land. J. David's passion for Mother Nature inspired him some forty years ago to want to assume the challenge of restoring ecological health to what was once "the sorriest piece of land in Blanco County." Indicators of his success at Selah include grasslands reclaimed from cedar breaks, perennial springs flowing where once there were none, a five-fold increase in the number of bird species, an increase to hundreds of species of native trees and over thirty species of native grasses, and white-tailed deer weighing in at several times the average weight for Hill Country deer, among other things. If our intent was in part to gain inspiration for our own challenge of ecological restoration at the Headwaters, we succeeded. Our thanks to J. David Bamberger and Justin Duke, a Selah staffer, for their hospitality! For more information, see:

[www.bambergeranch.org](http://www.bambergeranch.org)



J. David demonstrating the relationship between land use, surface water and groundwater with the use of his "rain machine."



After the rains: Confluence of a muddy Olmos Creek with spring flows from the Blue Hole



### Special Visitor

This Red-shouldered Hawk lives in the neighborhood of the Incarnate Word Generalate and paid us a visit in the courtyard during the feast of Thanksgiving in November. A beautiful bird -- and remarkably unperturbed by our human presence.

### Headwaters Core Committee

- Dr. Bob Connelly**, Dean, Humanities, UIW
- Adela Gott**, Multimedia Specialist, UIW
- Troy Knickerbocker**, Web Manager, UIW
- Dr. Bonnie McCormick**, Associate Professor, Biology, UIW
- Ben McPherson**, Instructor, Biology, UIW
- Margaret Mitchell**, Professor, Theater Arts, UIW
- Sister Helena Monahan**, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
- Dr. Sally Said**, Associate Professor, Foreign Language, UIW
- Dr. Eloise Stoker**, Professor Emerita, Art, UIW

### Board of Directors

- Debbie Brient**, Assistant Vice President for Advancement, Trinity University
- Dr. Bob Connelly**, Dean, Humanities, UIW
- Sister Yolanda Tarango**, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
- Donna McElroy**, Attorney, Cox Smith Matthews, Incorporated
- Sister Cindy Stacy**, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word

Headwaters Coalition is a sponsored ministry of the **Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, TX**  
4503 Broadway • San Antonio, Texas 78209



Left to right: Adela Gott, UIW staff; Dr. Sally Said, UIW faculty; Dr. Sara Tallarovic, UIW faculty; Sister Cindy Stacy, Headwaters board member; Sister Yolanda Tarango, Headwaters board chair and General Councilor of the Congregation of Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word; and Sister Feliciana Mejia, Council member of the Congregation of Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word.