

The first meeting to formulate plans to establish the Guild of St. Agnes was held in the old Institute Hall of St. John's church, January 27, 1913. The Group assembled to discuss the need in Worcester for a temporary shelter for young women who had appeared in court as delinquents while their cases were pending arrangement. There was also a need for destitute women and neglected children who were homeless and without funds. Community leaders at several of the Charities in Worcester had long felt the need for such temporary homes and the matter was proposed for consideration to the bishop of Springfield who at the time presided over Worcester until 1950, Right Reverend Bishop, Thomas D. Beaven.

It was on February 7, 1913 that the "circle members" met and voted the temporary shelter to be known as the Guild of St. Agnes. They elected the first officers that day and Bishop Beaven was chosen honorary president. The first president was Miss Rose Boyle, (later to be known as Mrs. Rose Hebert). Vice President was Mrs. Kate Butler, secretary Mrs. Eliza Kelly and first clerk, Miss Agnes Salmon. Interest grew for the mission and in one month there were over 400 members donating financial gifts to the endeavor. The total money raised was over \$1,500. The site was selected, and the first address of the Guild of St. Agnes became 20 Vernon Street, Worcester, MA, the former Hopkins Estate.

Immediately following a meeting of the officers on March 13, 1913, the women began working to prepare the house as a shelter. That spring the work was complete and the Guild opened for operation on June 30, 1913.

Various committees formed to teach classes in the domestic arts. The teachers worked on a voluntary basis and held classes for fifty women once a week. Later classes included embroidery, basketry and millinery.

In the fall of 1913, the Guild committees addressed several other needs in the community. A committee formed to aid the poor of Worcester and assist them with food and clothing. Other members supervised young boys on probation from Juvenile court.

On December 18, 1913, the Guild received its State Charter as an organization whose primary goal was to provide temporary shelter for women and children and supply relief to those in need. The Guild was also approved that same year by the State Board of Charity.

Later the Guild in conjunction with a local hospital had a maternity annex for unwed mothers. There was a small cottage adjacent to 20 Vernon Street in Worcester, which was purchased and later known as the Annex (St. Ann's Cottage). The Annex accommodated 40 unwed mothers during the first year.

In the summer of 1914, the services of the Guild expanded to include a "Day Nursery."

The Nursery was placed under the management of the Sisters of Providence. In August of 1914, four Sisters arrived, and their immediate duties were to convert one of the rooms at 20 Vernon Street into a chapel. Although there were many financial hardships, the Nursery was completed and by November, 751 children were enrolled.

In 1916 the Guild purchased the property at Mt. St. Joseph School in Millbury and the maternity hospital was moved to the new location. The hospital remained there until it was destroyed by fire in 1920.

The Annex was converted into a working home with sleeping quarters for the Sisters who worked there. The Morrison apartments were then purchased on 26 & 28 Vernon Street to accommodate the need for working women who needed assistance.

World War I broke out in 1917 and the Guild established an auxiliary Red Cross to help in those efforts. When the following year, and influenza epidemic severely struck the area, the Guild took care of many of the children whose parents were victims. During the next 650 days, the Guild cared for fifty-one inflicted children.

A capital campaign was intimated in 1921 to build a new nursery. Money was pledged, and the Guild joined the Worcester Welfare Federation, later to be known as the Community Chest, and today the United Way. In 1922, the new nursery was completed. In 1924, the Guild secured a bus to provide transportation for children from other areas of the city. With the exception of renovations to the playground area, no major projects were undertaken again until the 1950's.

Additional changes occurred in 1950 with the founding of the Diocese of Worcester and the creation of a Diocesan Bureau of Catholic Charities. It was in the same year the Guild and Catholic Charities decided to segregate their services. The Guild of St. Agnes would continue with child care and Catholic Charities would fulfill the social service component. At the same time, the state was looking to contract with the Guild of St. Agnes for child care services. The only hitch was the Guild had to cut off ties to the church. The Guild became a corporate private, non-profit child-care agency. The Catholic Church was allowed to maintain the Bishop as the ex-officio and continue that tradition of the Treasure of the Worcester Diocese as the board appointed treasurer of the Guild, for many years.

In 1953, through the efforts of Catholic Charities, the third floor of the Vernon Street site was renovated to accommodate 20 children. Community Chest paid for the \$12,000 renovation.

Over the next ten years, the various services of the Guild of St. Agnes were assembled by Catholic Charities. The Guild has since focused exclusively on child care programs. A building was secured on Granite Street in 1987 specifically for child care. Sometime later Catholic Charities offered their Fitchburg site so that the Guild could provide child care services to North County. The Fitchburg location has been operating successfully ever since.

In 1983, the Guild of St. Agnes secured a better location on 133 Granites St. in Worcester, formerly St. Ann's Orphanage. This site has been home to one of the Guild's largest sites with 125 children currently enrolled.

The need for women to work at home became widespread. The Guild saw an opportunity to recruit women as home child care providers. Coordinators were hired to recruit and supervise

these providers in various areas of Worcester County, (Milford, Clinton, Spencer and Worcester). Today Family Care represents 20% of the agency's enrollment.

In January of 1998 Ascension Church was interested in returning the Guild of St. Agnes to its original location on Vernon Street. The Guild's school age program was expanding and needed new space. "Kids Club" was established. The move increased enrollment from 22 children to 52 children including an all-day summer school.

In 1998, the Guild was growing by leaps and bounds. In March when the Visiting Nurses Association closed their child care center in Gardner, the Guild was chosen out of several other agencies that bid on the site to administer the facility. On July 1, 1998, the Guild of St. Agnes opened in Gardner.

During the spring of 1998, Monsignor Needham, pastor of Immaculate Conception parish in Worcester, contacted the Guild. He was interested in transforming their social center into something more profitable. On August 24, 1998, the Guild opened another location in Worcester at the Father Connor Center at Immaculate Conception.

In June of 1998, the Guild received information from the Attorney General's Office that V.O.I.C.E., a child care agency in Bellingham, was closing. The Attorney General was in search of an established child care agency to take over the management of the facility. The Guild of St. Agnes was asked. On December 31, 1998, V.O.I.C.E. was dissolved, and the Guild of St. Agnes assumed ownership.

The Guild of St. Agnes has been offering after school care since September of 1992. In September of 1999 the Guild of St. Agnes joined partners with the Worcester Public School to offer after-school programs at Quinsigamond Elementary School, Worcester Arts Magnet School and Tatnuck Magnet Schools. Over the years, the Guild added programs at Woodland Academy, Union Hill and Rice Square schools.

In the spring of 2004 the Guild was approached by the owner of All Aboard Day Care, a small private child care center in Ayer. The owner of the Center was leaving the child care profession and was interested in the Guild of St. Agnes. As of July 3, 2000, the Guild has a presence in Ayer. There are currently 63 children enrolled ages 15 months to 12 years.

On September 5, 2000, the Guild of St. Agnes opened a new center on Lincoln Street in Worcester. The Massachusetts Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Children, M.S.P.C.C. asked if the Guild would collaborate with them to offer a more extensive support program for children and families in Worcester. While the Guild provided the child care M.S.P.C.C. assisted parents in achieving better parenting skills.

February of 2003 54 Croydon Street in Worcester was rented for an after-school program for children in the Burncoat area schools. Enrollment hovers around 39 children. In the summer the center is open all day from 7:00am to 5:30pm.

Since the opening of the center in Ayer, the Guild realized the need for more services in this area. A contract with the Devens Massport Association enabled the Guild to break ground for a larger, new center that would provide more care to the children of North County. The opening was September 3, 2002.

While plans were underway for our new center in Devens partnerships were being formulated in Charlton., While owned by the Masonic Home the new child care center is licensed and operated by the Guild of St. Agnes. The facility has the capacity for 49 children , Employees from the Masonic Home and neighboring families are eligible to enroll their children at the center.

On Monday, November 1, 2009, the Guild purchases a building on 155 Green Street in Gardner, MA. For eleven years the Guild has been renting from the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA) at 28 Pearly Lane in Gardner. The new Gardner site was formerly a nursing home and then a private school. It was retro fitted to become one of our flagship centers. The new location has increased our capacity for 40 additional openings.

December 1, 2009, the Guild opened its doors to the highly anticipated, long awaited, new child care facility at 129 Granite Street in Worcester. The land for this location was purchased from Catholic Charities for \$265,000, Ground breaking was held on October of 2008 and the project was made official at a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony on December 15, 2009. This new facility enhanced our capability for 38 additional children.

Currently the Guild is accredited by the National Academy of Early Education programs at our sites; on Granite and Grove Streets in Worcester, Gardner, Fitchburg, Devens, Charlton and Webster.

The child care agency formerly owned by Commerce Insurance in Webster, now MAPFRE, sent out a Request for Proposal for an agency to manage their state-of-the-art child care facility. The Guild was chosen as the Agency of choice and began managing Webster on July 2, 2012. The Center on 58 Bigelow Road in Webster enrolled, exclusively, employees' children from MAPFRE.

Once the Guild took over the management the Guild opened its' doors to the Webster area community. Soon enrollment went from 62 children to 165 children as of February of 2018. In July of 2017 the Guild of St. Agnes purchased the building from MAPFRE. This new location is also accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

In August of 2016, the Guild began renting a building on 336 Hamilton Street in Worcester to meet the needs of the overflow of interest in afterschool programming in the area. There are 39 children enrolled year-round in the program.

On November 1, 2017, the Guild of St. Agnes was asked to assume the ownership of the Elm Park Child Care Center on 187 Highland Street in Worcester. The Guild has assumed ownership

and is in the midst of making the many needed improvements while continuing to enroll children in the facility. As of March 2019, this center is full.

On February of 2018 the Guild entered an agreement with Rice Square School in Worcester, offering an after-school program to those children who attend Rice Square. The program enrolls 26 children in the after-school program.