Sister Rose Mary (Mary Romanus) Sam, IHM, taught French and Spanish at the all-boys’ Notre Dame High School in Harper Woods, Mich., for 22 years. When she received her contract for the following school year, she went to the school chapel to pray about it.

“I loved the school, the students and those with whom I worked,” Sister Rose Mary recalls. “I wanted to talk to God and see if continuing felt right.

“When I left the chapel, I began walking around Notre Dame school and the all-girls’ Regina High School building next door. A car pulled up next to me. It was Sister Leanne, Regina’s principal. We began chatting, and I learned she was looking for a French teacher. She offered me everything I needed to take the position.

“That was nine years ago, and it is a delight to be at Regina – a very Catholic, academic and disciplined community with a wonderful family spirit.”

Sister Rose Mary is a gifted musician – she plays viola and is part of the Grosse Pointe Symphony Orchestra. She majored in music initially at Marygrove College. Her parents died while she was still a student, and she took a year off from college to help stabilize the family. When she returned to Marygrove, she was caring for her three youngest siblings, working to support the family and continuing with the rigorous demands of a music major, both in the classroom and the hours necessary to practice the viola.

“Sister Mary Constance, my advisor, told me there was no way I could keep up everything I was doing and told me to choose another major. Without hesitation, I told her, ‘I choose French, Sister.’”

Sister Rose Mary saw Spanish becoming a second language in the United States and learned that as well.

Her language skills have opened many doors for her, such as the opportunity to work summers at Lourdes, France.

“I work at a community in the mountains,” Sister Rose Mary explains. “We offer hospitality to those who cannot afford the hotels around the Lourdes shrine. It’s an international effort.”

During one of her summers at Lourdes, she met a teacher from a small country school in France. The two have collaborated on a program for their students.
“Students exchange letters and small gifts, which they all enjoy,” Sister Rose Mary notes. “They’re all learning about a different culture and having practical experience with a different language.”

Sister Rose Mary also provides opportunities for her students to bone up on their French language skills close to home.

“During the semester, I take them to French restaurants. Parents are also involved, and the project has been so successful, I’ve had to break it into two groups. We always receive compliments for the girls’ behavior – they’re very polite, and it is noticed and appreciated by those at the restaurants.

“I hope to continue teaching for years to come,” she says. “God is still blessing me.”