

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

11/27/13

**Contact:**Lucia Riviuccio  
646-315-7633  
lriviuccio@egscf.org**Sr. Mary Nerney, Long-time Advocate for Incarcerated Women and East Harlem Community Activist, Passes Away at 75**

NEW YORK, NY – Sr. Mary Nerney, Founder of STEPS to End Family Violence and Greenhope Services for Women, passed away early this morning. A dear friend, mentor, and teacher to many, she was diagnosed with stage four melanoma in October and has been surrounded by her dear friends and family for the past several weeks. Sr. Mary was an inspiration. A counselor, fierce advocate, and a champion to countless women, she was the first to bring attention to the plight of incarcerated women who had survived lifetimes of violence and trauma.

An institution in the East Harlem community, Sr. Mary founded Greenhope Services for Women and STEPS to End Family Violence. She was a founding member of the Coalition for Women Prisoners at the Correctional Association of NY and co-chair of the Coalition's Violence Against Women Committee. She was a leading force in the Coalition's work to advocate for domestic violence survivors and alternative to incarceration programs, and was instrumental in efforts to pass legislation in 2002 that restored work release eligibility for survivors who defend themselves. Through the committee, she worked tirelessly for the passage of the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act. Up until her diagnosis, she continued her beloved work visiting the women at Bedford Hills, providing support through group and individual counseling and assistance preparing for parole hearings and clemency requests.

Nearly 30 years ago, Sr. Mary helped organize a unique legislative hearing at Bedford Hills where women at the prison testified about their shared histories of abuse. This hearing led to the development of STEPS to End Family Violence.

Sr. Mary was also a founding member of the East Harlem Human Services Consortium, serving as their Treasurer until recently, and an active member of the

Harlem Community and Academic Partnership. A long-time educator and mentor to students of social justice, she was teaching from her bedside until just last week. Sr. Mary was a sister of the Congregation of Notre Dame and an active member and leader in the Catholic social justice movement.

###