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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAMA FOUNDER HONORED WITH RENAMING OF LORETTO MUSEUM'S LOWER GALLERY

Loretto – The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art has honored Museum Founder, the late Rev. Sean M. Sullivan, T.O.R., with the naming of the Loretto Museum's lower gallery the Sullivan Gallery. The commemoration was held earlier this summer as part of the Museum's year-long 40th anniversary celebration.

Through his vision, creativity and drive, Sullivan was largely responsible for the founding of the Museum. When SAMA first opened its doors in June of 1976, Sullivan – then president of Saint Francis College – was the first President of the Board of Trustees. Through the leadership of Sullivan and former director Michael Strueber, SAMA made enormous strides. The Museum expanded with satellite facilities in Altoona, Johnstown and Ligonier. A robust exhibition schedule was developed which now offers more than 20 exhibitions annually, and a multi-faceted education outreach was established that presently benefits thousands of area residents each year.

The Museum's permanent collection increased from fewer than 80 works at its founding to more than 4,500 today, including offerings by some of the nation's preeminent artists. Many of the signature works in the SAMA collection came courtesy of Sullivan, his family, or the art acquisition fund he stewarded, the Frank and Margaret Sullivan Fund, named in honor of Sullivan's parents.

"Forty years ago, the visionary leadership of Father Sean Sullivan, T.O.R. resulted in the founding of the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art," said Dr. Scott Q. Little, President of the SAMA Board of Trustees, earlier this summer during the Sullivan Gallery commemoration. "In 1976, Father Sean's vision became reality with the transformation of what was then Doyle Hall to a museum of fine art. Father Sean Sullivan was instrumental in establishing this museum of fine art for the people of this region and in creating a cultural resource for generations to come."

Sullivan, who passed away in August 2014 at age 85, was honored five years ago at the Museum's *Founders Day* event. That celebration included the unveiling of a bronze sculpture in his likeness that memorializes Sullivan's integrity, determination and spirit. The sculpture was created by Jennifer Frudakis of Philadelphia.

“The Board’s unanimous decision to honor Founder and Trustee Emeritus Father Sean Sullivan, T.O.R. with the recent naming of the Sullivan Gallery at SAMA’s Loretto Museum was a major highlight of our 40th anniversary celebration,” said SAMA Executive Director Gary Moyer. “Father Sean Sullivan loved art; he dabbled now and then as a painter himself, and I think he would agree that his greatest creation was, in fact, the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art.”

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art at Loretto is located on the campus of Saint Francis University. Hours of operation are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 1 to 5 p.m. Saturdays. The Museum is open to the public free of charge. For additional information, call (814) 472-3920 or visit www.sama-art.org.