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Emergency Assistance Continues to Help Hundreds of Struggling Families

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN BY LESLIE MILLER

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*La'Trell Smith-Owens, Larry Owens, and
Anaeja Owens.*

LA'TRELL SMITH-OWENS WAS working the front desk at a hotel when the coronavirus blew into Virginia last March. As states started putting restrictions in place to slow the spread of the virus, the travel industry was one of the hardest hit.

"My hours got cut short, and my husband, who worked at the same hotel, got laid off," said Smith-Owens, who was pregnant at the time with baby Amarah, now 6 months, and has an older daughter, Anaeja, age 14. She and her husband, Larry Owens, rent a house in Winchester.

Larry was able to find another job, though it was not full time. In September, La'Trell also found a new job, as a front-of-the-house manager at a steakhouse. But her hours have fluctuated from 40

or 45 a week down to sometimes just 30 or 25. Often it has been hard to make ends meet.

"We just couldn't keep up with the bills," La'Trell said. "If I could stay on top of the rent, the utilities would get behind. Thank God, Catholic Charities helped us with rent, and food as well."

Smith-Owens' experience illustrates the kinds of rental and utility emergencies that are becoming increasingly common during the coronavirus pandemic for many families.

"With my husband laid off and my reduced hours, we just couldn't keep up with the bills. Thank God, Catholic Charities helped us with rent, and food as well." – LA'TRELL SMITH-OWENS

Mary McNamee, an emergency assistance case coordinator, hears about clients' struggles firsthand as she conducts the intake for emergency rent and utility assistance. "There's an overwhelming amount of stories, to be honest," McNamee said. "It used to be about 20 intakes a month. Now I'm not even counting any more. It seems like a never-ending thing."

Due to coronavirus precautions, visiting an aid office to apply in person is a thing

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of the past; intake interviews now must be conducted by phone or email, which makes applying especially complicated for families struggling with language, lack of access to technology or other hurdles. With schools and many jobs moving online, the internet is quickly becoming an essential utility that competes with rent, heat and food. "There are a lot of services out there but

unless you have access to the internet, you're in trouble," McNamee said.

Catholic Charities provided rent and utility assistance to some 1,500 households throughout the diocese between March and December, a 233 percent increase over the same period the previous year. Some 55 percent of the funds used to provide assistance came from donations and private foundation grants to Catholic Charities. Another

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President's Message

Dear Friends of Catholic Charities,

Hello, my name is Stephen Carattini and I am blessed to have been appointed by Bishop Burbidge to be the new President & CEO of Catholic Charities beginning in January of this year. I am grateful for my predecessor, Art Bennett, and his ten years of service to our agency, and to all the Directors who have helped guide Catholic Charities over the last 70 years. Please pray that I will be a worthy successor.

Although I have much to learn about the ministries that Catholic Charities offers to thousands of men, women and children every day, I do know that our dedicated employees and volunteers endeavor to share God's love with everyone who comes to us for help with competence and compassion.

In this edition of *The Mission*, you will read about the tremendous support that has been provided by our community to thousands of individuals during the pandemic. You will learn about a couple who volunteers their time at our St. Lucy Food Project ministry, and we pray that their story might inspire you to volunteer as well. We share the news that our St. Martin de Porres Senior Center is getting a much-needed facelift, thanks to the continued support of HomeAid of Northern Virginia.

We are looking forward to the day when we can open the doors of the Center again and welcome back our seniors! These are just a few highlights of the work that is being done at Catholic Charities. We also acknowledge the service of two long standing volunteers and benefactors of our agency: Mr. Rick Kaplar and Mrs. Linda McMahan. Together they have served on our Board of Directors for over 50 years. We are grateful for their wise and constant guidance and counsel, and for their witness to the love of God and neighbor in our diocese.

Our work is made possible by the grace of God, our dedicated employees and volunteers, and most certainly by your prayers and financial sacrifice. On behalf of all the people we serve, thank you for your extraordinary generosity of time, talent and treasure, especially during this time of great personal and financial crisis. It is a blessing to share in this ministry of love with you.

Gratefully yours in Christ,



STEPHEN CARATTINI
President and CEO
Catholic Charities of the
Diocese of Arlington

Easter:

Filling the Emptiness

The message of Easter is simple and clear: the crucified Jesus has risen and is now on the move. Where there was an empty tomb, we rejoice that now there is the fullness of life. Remember the times you've gone to the refrigerator and pulled out the milk carton...and it's empty. OK, it's empty. You've gotten into your car, turned on the ignition and the fuel gauge is low. OK, it's empty!

Emptiness sometimes fills our lives. During the pandemic we have all been vulnerable—but, we discovered, not equally vulnerable. The poor and those in certain businesses have been more vulnerable. Many have been struggling to put food on the table for their children, pay utilities, and make car payments. Savings have been drained and they are empty of reserves. Many are at a low point emotionally and have the feeling of being lost in darkness, grieving a loss, and knowing the _____ of emptiness on many levels.

Catholic Charities continues the work of Jesus in pouring new life back into the world. Our St. Lucy Food Project, emergency assistance, counseling, Mother of Mary health clinics, and transitional housing floods people's lives with God's light.

Your contribution and sacrificial gifts to support this work of mercy fills families with new life..like a carton of milk, like the gas gauge on full, like the rent being paid. Jesus paid the price for all our debts on His cross. We continue the _____ love of Christ through Catholic Charities. The emptiness we experience can now be filled.

Thank you for being an Easter people!

Easter Blessings,



FATHER ROBERT CILINSKI
Episcopal Vicar for
Charitable Works

A Season for Everything

BY RICHARD T. KAPLAR, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



Rick Kaplar (right) Chairman of the Board, stands with former president Art Bennett, and Bishop Michael Burbidge at the 2020 Catholic Charities Ball

AS THE PANDEMIC CONTINUES and the death toll now surpasses 500,000 Americans, our Catholic Charities of Arlington has continued to shine as a beacon of hope, relief, comfort, and assistance to more people than ever before. Surely the past 12 months have been the finest hour in the history of this organization.

I have been privileged to lead Catholic Charities during these challenging times as Chairman of the Board of Directors. And so it is with a mix of emotions that I prepare to step down from this post at the end of March.

I have served as Chairman since July 2011, and I've been a member of the Board since October 1999. I've seen a lot of changes. When I started in 1999, the agency was headed by a pastor who served as our part-time executive director. Resources, staff, and programs were small by comparison. Under the chairmanship of Dr. Linda McMahon starting in the early 2000s, Catholic Charities began growing into the organization it would become today.

In 2014, I challenged the Board to adopt a visionary goal of doubling Catholic Charities annual revenue from \$8 million to \$16 million by the end of fiscal year 2020. By doing this we could effectively double our services and clients we served. The Board accepted the challenge, as did Art Bennett and his staff. The result: As of June 30, 2020, Catholic Charities annual revenue stood at \$16.3 million.

In the process, we vastly expanded our food distribution effort through the St. Lucy Food Project, opened not one but two free medical clinics, and expanded a range of other services. Had it not been for this expansion, we would've been poorly positioned to respond to the pandemic.

In my nearly 10 years as Chairman, I've been consistently impressed and inspired by the people of Catholic Charities. That starts at the top, first with Bishop Emeritus Paul Loverde and more recently with Bishop Michael Burbidge. Their devotion to serving the poor and their commitment to Catholic Charities is nothing short of inspiring.

I'm grateful for my fellow Board members, who have impressed me with their competence, inspired me with their spirituality, supported me, challenged me, and demonstrated incredible devotion to Catholic Charities and our mission. I couldn't ask for a finer group of colleagues.

In addition, I've been privileged to work with outstanding staff members, especially former president Art Bennett and CFO Jeff Rostand. They've made my job easy. That continues with our new President Stephen Carattini. And of course I'm inspired by our dedicated volunteers, our generous donors, the pastors who work with us, and everyone who does so much on our Ball committees. The success of Catholic Charities is truly a team effort. I'm grateful to every member of this team.

Working in this Catholic environment with spirit-driven people has truly enriched me spiritually. And using my talents in the service of others has given additional purpose to my life. I've often asked myself, "Why me, Lord?" But all I can say is, "Thank You, Lord."

Serving as Chairman of the Board for almost 10 years has been the experience of a lifetime. I will be forever grateful to Linda McMahon for recommending me, to Bishop Loverde for appointing me, and to Bishop Burbidge for allowing me to continue. But there is a season for everything, and now the time for change has come.

As I write this, Bishop Burbidge has not yet selected my successor, but I wish that person bountiful blessings, great success, and continued growth for Catholic Charities. I thank each one of you who has been a part of my long journey with this incredible organization. You have blessed me with your presence and inspired me by your example. May God bless you abundantly. †

When one pantry door closes, another one opens.

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St. Lucy Food Project's new food pantry in the Loudoun Regional Office in Sterling.

IN FEBRUARY, CATHOLIC CHARITIES opened a spacious new food pantry in Sterling when the Loudoun Regional Office (LRO), which serves the western part of the Arlington diocese moved from its Leesburg location, where it was located for the past 15 years.

In addition to the food pantry, the LRO includes offices for Emergency Assistance, Pregnancy and Adoption Support, and legal aid through Hogar Immigrant, Legal.

This past year, Catholic Charities served more than 3,500 Loudoun County clients at the food pantry and provided emergency assistance to more than 1,500 Loudoun County clients who needed help paying rent or utility bills.

"The steady increase in the number of clients served by Catholic Charities meant we needed a larger space, especially for the food pantry," said Catherine Hassinger, Director of Community Services.

Construction at St. Martin de Porres Senior Center

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS of two successful ventures at St. Margaret of Cortona and Christ House, the St. Martin de Porres Senior Center is the latest Catholic Charities site to

benefit from the generous support of HomeAid of Northern Virginia. Thanks to Northfield Construction, the Senior Center is receiving an interior makeover to improve the services provided on site.

Old accordion walls will be replaced by solid walls to improve sound proofing and create spaces with more privacy, which will support the work of senior volunteers who assist with various tasks for the center, as well as volunteer nurses who provide medical consultations to seniors. The walls will be given a



St. Lucy Food Project's new food pantry in the Loudoun Regional Office in Sterling.

The Sterling location almost doubles the space available to the food pantry, which is part of the St. Lucy Food Project pantry and food distribution network. The site includes a large lobby, ample warehouse space and a loading dock in the rear that will facilitate the delivery of food. It also allows for more parking, which will dramatically increase the number of clients who can be served.

"Sterling was a natural fit for us," Hassinger said. "Our new site sits at the crossroads of Sterling, Ashburn and Leesburg, so we will be able to continue serving our existing clients. We anticipate being able to help an even greater number of families who may need a local solution to keep their families fed." †

fresh coat of paint. The lighting will be upgraded, and the bathrooms will receive a much-needed overhaul.

Though COVID has forced St. Martin de Porres to shift to virtual services, the staff are excited to reopen our doors and welcome back the seniors of Alexandria when possible. These improvements will make the Senior Center a more comfortable and attractive place for seniors to come and gather to see friends, share lunch, and engage in various social activities. †

Education and Workforce Development's New IT Class Preps Students for New Career Field

THE NEW YEAR BROUGHT A NEW opportunity for students interested in pursuing a career in IT, one of the fastest growing in-demand careers in our region. Catholic Charities' Education and Workforce Development began offering online IT classes through CompTIA, or the Computing Technology Industry Association, a non-profit that offers a variety of industry recognized IT certifications.

EWD introduced the 12-week fundamentals (ITF+) certificate program, CompTIA's most introductory certification.

"With global IT company headquarters throughout Northern Virginia, including the new Amazon development, IT is a very stable career with opportunity for growth and upward mobility. This course is designed for people who have little to no IT experience who are interested in exploring

if a career in IT is right for them," said Jackie Chavez, EWD program director. Prerequisites include basic computer skills and a high intermediate level of English, but otherwise the course is open to anyone.

"There's a high interest in the course. The first class quickly filled up with 14 students and a waiting list. We'll be offering it again this spring."

EWD plans to allow students to progress to the next level by offering the A+ certificate in the spring semester. A+ is CompTIA's most widely recognized certificate and is considered the "industry standard" for getting entry level careers in IT.

"Though the ITF+ certificate does not guarantee a job in the IT field, it is a great resume booster and a good first step for someone who wants to break into the IT field," Chavez said.

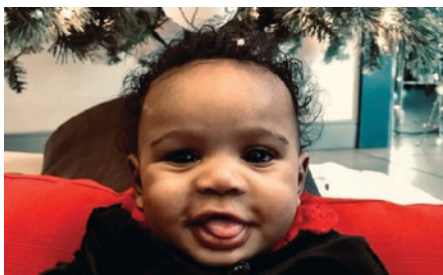
Other educational programs offer the training, but EWD's \$550 class fee for the introductory course and \$650 fee for each of the two core classes for the A+ certificate course is significantly lower than others. It also covers the cost of the exam, which the students will be ready to take by the end of the semester. The Truist Foundation has donated funds to assist in covering student costs in taking Workforce Development classes.

In addition to the certification classes, EWD introduced free or low-cost online workshops for students to access different types of assistance or training in a one-day workshop format. Topics include but will not be limited to resume writing, cover letter writing, citizenship mock interviews, email basics, Microsoft Word basics, and others. †

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45 percent came from the CARES Act or other federal funding, including funds that came through the Loudoun County government, with whom Catholic Charities has formed a strong partnership since the onset of the pandemic.

Catherine Hassinger, Director of Community Services commented, "we're still seeing companies close their doors and people's hours being cut. We've not



Baby Amarah Owens



Services provided between March and December 2020.

seen a drop-off at all in the number of people needing assistance."

All this has led to unprecedented levels of stress, anxiety and depression, along with an increase in substance abuse as people struggle to cope with "the helplessness they feel during this pandemic," she added. Catholic Charities has also seen a dramatic increase in mental health counseling

requests with sessions offered through telehealth.

Mary McNamme said, "The gap is getting wider as time goes on, but thanks to support from many people, we've been able to string help together for those in need. There are so many people out there that have been so generous," from donors to landlords who are doing what they can to help people. †

Running 320 miles in solidarity

One volunteer takes to the streets to raise funds and awareness for migrants and refugees.

BY CHANTAL SKUBIC, VOLUNTEER MANAGER, OFFICE OF NEWCOMER SERVICES



Volunteer Kasim Hasan, shown running, logged 320 miles in January to spread awareness and raise funds for refugees through Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services.

SOMETIMES ALL ONE NEEDS TO TAKE a long journey is a bit of motivation. Kasim Hasan, a management consultant who volunteers for Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services, got a firsthand look at the program's services that assist refugees, asylees and other newcomers to the United States, and decided he wanted to do more to support those served by the program.

In January, Hasan, an avid runner, took to the streets to raise funds for the MRS program. He ran trails throughout Falls Church, Springfield and Lorton, as well as trekked up and down his neighborhood on colder days. Hasan initially pledged to run 200 miles, taking the averages of distances traveled by Rohingya, South Sudanese and Syrian refugees in 2016 (according to the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees). But he increased his goal and logged 320 miles in the month of January, spreading awareness and raising funds in the process.

"In the end, it wore me out a little bit, but my empathy toward refugees who I was running in solidarity with grew and grew," said Hasan.

"Kasim generously donated his time to helping recently arrived refugees with updating their resumes and learning about the U.S. job interview process and the D.C. area job market. As a child of immigrants, Kasim knows the challenges our clients face," said MRS staff member Laurel Collins. "We are so grateful to Kasim for his care and compassion for the clients we serve and for lending his professional expertise." †

Newcomer Services launches Parish Engagement Program to Welcome Refugees

THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION HAS announced it will raise the number of refugees who can be admitted to the United States and seek changes in immigration policy. This means Catholic Charities Office of Newcomer Services expects to be serving more refugees, immigrants, and their families. Newcomer Services helps State Department approved refugees who

were forced to flee their homeland find their initial housing, employment, or job development, and assists refugee children and youth as they integrate into American schools. Programs also serve refugee seniors and specific refugee health needs.

Catholic Charities is expected to welcome more than 300 refugees this year, and 600 in fiscal year 2022.

Newcomer Services is working to build up capacity to welcome new families who will be resettling soon. In February, Newcomer Services hosted a virtual information session for parishes and other faith community groups to find out more about how to partner in supporting immigrants and refugees. More than 20 participants attended to learn how they could donate items, volunteer, and engage with training to prepare for new arrivals. Among the parishes and churches represented were Our Lady Queen of Peace, St. Bernadette, St. John Neumann, and Rock Spring Congregational Church of Christ, among others. †



For more information

Options for becoming involved include: engaging in a refugee simulation, having a guest speaker talk about a newcomer program, collecting household items for new arrivals, participating in virtual volunteer opportunities or fundraising. Email: Lourdes.Iglesias@ccda.net

Meet Tom & Monica Pedagno

STRIVING TO LIVE AS INTENTIONAL disciples of Jesus Christ, Tom and Monica Pedagno have sought to serve God throughout their married years. They both come from families where their Catholic faith was the center of their lives. Tom and Monica met in high school in New York through their membership in the Interact Club (a student service branch of the Rotary Club). Loving the service mission of the Coast Guard, Tom went to the Academy in New London, CT and made a career of serving his nation. Monica went to Niagara University, a college where the Vincentian mission of service to the poor was encouraged.

The need arose for a SLP truck driver to pick up parish donations, and Tom started helping out in that capacity as well.

Tom, Monica, and their two adult daughters, Amy and Mary Claire, took a mission trip to Kenya with Commissioned by Christ (CBC) in 2018. CBC was looking for expanded locations for 'one-day mission trips' and Tom became the liaison between CBC and Catholic Charities for some of the SLP gleaning missions in the Northern Neck area, tying together two organizations that serve the poor. Working alongside other volunteers from throughout the



Tom and Monica Pedagno

warehouse, and Monica assists with shelving donations and assembling the bags that go out each month to the various locations. She also helps distribute the bags at the Woodstock location, and she and Tom often drive down to St. Matthew's parish in Spotsylvania to drop bags off there.

Tom and Monica love giving their time, talent, and treasure to Catholic Charities, particularly because of the evangelizing aspect. They said, "Catholic Charities employees and volunteers do the corporal works of mercy as a response to the love given to them by God, with a desire to share that love with all they encounter. When MRC clients thank us for driving such a far distance and for giving them dignity, it's a good sign the organization is doing its mission well." †

Volunteer!
Interested in learning more about volunteering?
Email
volunteer@ccda.net.

“When MRC clients thank us for driving such a far distance and for giving them dignity, it’s a good sign the organization is doing its mission well.”

– TOM & MONICA PEDAGNO

As Tom was stationed around the country, the family happily became active in the various ministries of their parishes, particularly in the areas of outreach and service. Their involvement with Catholic Charities grew here in Arlington when Monica volunteered to be the Parish Liaison for their parish, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Lake Ridge, in 2018. Ministries within Catholic Charities sent representatives to speak on different topics at the parish. When the needs of people facing hunger each day in our diocese was addressed, the head of St. Lucy Project (SLP), Vince Cannava, gave a very informative talk and invited parishioners to 'come and see' what goes on at the warehouse. Tom and Monica took Vince up on his invitation and the two began to volunteer to shelve and box donations.

diocese has been rewarding and provided wonderful fellowship opportunities for Tom and Monica.

Monica is also very active with the Mobile Response Center (MRC), a ministry of Catholic Charities that brings household cleaning and hygiene products to three of the neediest areas in the diocese. The MRC warehouse is just a few doors down from the SLP



Monica and Tom volunteer their time gleaning corn with Catholic Charities

2021 Catholic Charities Ball – Stories of Generosity and Service

THE 39TH ANNUAL CATHOLIC Charities Ball could not convene in person this year, but with more than \$1.1 million raised from hundreds of individuals, families, businesses, schools and parishes across the Diocese, the outpouring of generosity to help those in need has never been greater.

Instead of a band and a dancefloor, this year the Ball was transformed into a video, *By the Grace of God: Stories of Generosity and Service*, which features Fr. Robert Cilinski, pastor of Nativity Catholic Church and Episcopal Vicar for Charitable Works, leading a video tour to “see what love looks like” through Catholic Charities’ ministries. The tour includes poignant interviews with men and women who received assistance from Catholic Charities during this difficult

year. Donors and volunteers tell what moved them to respond with such generosity to serve our neighbors in need.

“To those of you among the 4,000 who support our efforts by volunteering your precious time and those of you who support Catholic Charities by donating your financial resources, I express my deepest gratitude,” said Bishop Michael F. Burbidge. “We can be at peace because we know that this work is not our work, it is God’s work, and by the grace of God, we will not fail.”

“Your efforts to us...words cannot express how far they go. Your contributions and your assistance...it really is just life-changing to the kids and it creates an environment where they are safe,” said Kala Mayberry, who lives with her



three young children at Saint Margaret of Cortona Maternity and Transitional Housing for Families.

If you have not seen it yet, the video *By the Grace of God: Stories of Generosity and Service*, can be viewed at ccda.net/ball. Catholic Charities thanks all who supported the Ball effort this year. Please save the date for February 11, 2022 when we hope to resume the Ball in person! †

Catholic Charities Future Needs

It's easy to name Catholic Charities as a beneficiary of a retirement plan, brokerage account or life insurance policy. For instructions view our website ccda.net or contact Gretchen Koch at (703) 841-3819 or gretchen.koch@arlingtondiocese.org

ABOUT CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

Together, We're Transforming Lives!

21 programs across 21 Virginia counties and 7 cities

Serves all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance

85 cents of every dollar spent goes to programs and services



200 N. Glebe Road, Suite 250
Arlington, VA 22203

Join Our Online Community



ccda.net

Our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 24770.