

Faithfully Serving in 100 Locations Across 21 Virginia Counties and 7 Cities!



The team which is bringing food to the western rural parts of the diocese: Jean Jackson, Loaves and Fishes pantry manager; Tina Bearden, pantry assistant and part-time driver; and Tom "Action" Jackson, part-time driver.

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Finding and serving the “invisible poor”

“The invisible poor can be anywhere,” says Vincent Cannava, Program Director and Food Source Developer of the St. Lucy Food Project Ministry.

There are nearly 300,000 people in the diocese who experience hunger or food insecurity, especially in the western rural area. One quarter of them are children.

Cannava notes that providing services in rural locations presents special challenges. Unlike an urban or suburban area, there are very limited options to obtain healthy, nutritious food. Some counties have no major grocery stores, and lack of transportation presents a problem for some. In addition, rising inflation and food prices are making it more difficult for the poor to meet their needs.

There are people who are reluctant to go to a pantry, who don’t want to ask for help. These people make up the “invisible poor” – those who are struggling, but whose needs might not be immediately evident.

Catholic Charities is increasing efforts to combat hunger and food insecurity in these rural areas of the Diocese. Last year, the St. Lucy Food Project began a mobile distribution program, operating out of our Front Royal pantry, Loaves & Fishes. Since July, this outreach to people in the Shenandoah and Northern Piedmont areas has provided 20,236 pounds of food to over 180 families.

St. Lucy works with local volunteers, people who can connect with others in their own community. They work to identify the “invisible poor” – including

those who may be reluctant to seek assistance. By connecting with people, these volunteers ensure that those who need help are able to get it.

“The endgame is not to give food to people. The endgame is to give people the opportunity to change their lives.”

– VINCE CANNAVA, ST. LUCY FOOD PROJECT MINISTRY

“Rural community organizations know the people they live with – their vulnerabilities and their challenges,” says Loaves and Fishes pantry manager Jeanne Jackson, who says the food is delivered

→ *continued on page 2*

Dear Friends,

Who would imagine that so many people in our diocese suffer from hunger or food insecurity? When I was growing up overseas in what we now call the developing world, poverty was obvious. Sometimes painfully so. Driving into major cities we would pass through entire neighborhoods that had been created by the poor, living in one room shacks built of cardboard and corrugated tin. Children would be in the streets, begging. The blind and the lame would be at the entrances to the bazaar, and the marketplace, and most especially, outside of churches and mosques.

As depressing and distressing as those sights were, at least we could see the poor. We knew that they were there. In our country the poor are much harder for us to see. And perhaps we prefer it that way.

There is a shame that is wrongly associated with being poor in America. A shame that often leads to isolation. Those suffering from poverty become what are now referred to as “the invisible poor.”

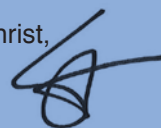
It is to these, and anyone in need, that Catholic Charities extends the love and consolation of God in very real and tangible ways. And in doing so, we acknowledge that they exist, and more importantly, that they are loved.

Sometimes we can overcomplicate our faith. Jesus has a way of cutting to the chase. When his disciples were imploring Jesus to dismiss the crowds of hungry people to fend for themselves, he tells them “give them some food yourselves.”

And with your help and support, this is what we do, every day. Because of your generosity we can provide the material help that people need, and we do so with hearts filled with gratitude and compassion.

May God’s peace be with you this Easter season, and always.

Gratefully yours in Christ,



STEPHEN CARATTINI

President and CEO

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington

Continued from page 1 **Finding and serving the “invisible poor”**

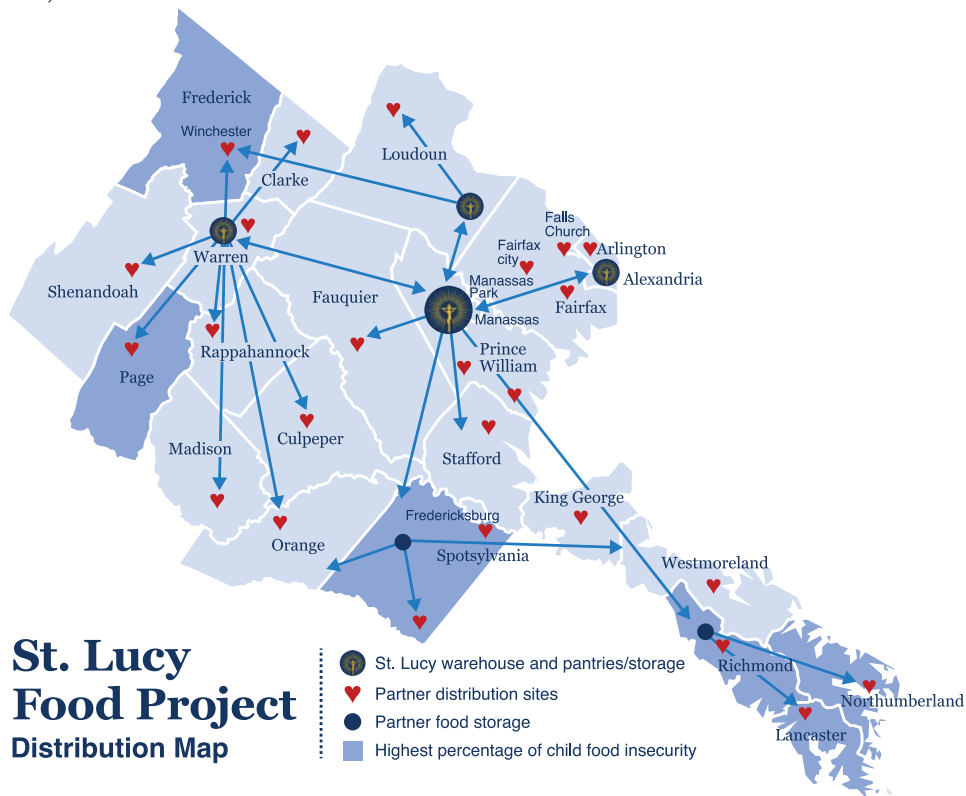
with dignity. “The fire chief who delivers for us has a veteran he delivers to by leaving the box on his porch. He drives by later in the day to make sure the box has been taken into the house. He visits the gentleman regularly, but they never mention the box of food. That’s the kind of personal interaction that makes this program worthwhile.”

Thanks to grant awards from the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank and the PATH Foundation, Catholic Charities has now added a refrigerated van to the fleet, replacing a smaller, unrefrigerated minivan. This further expands food distribution capabilities, enabling us to provide perishable foods such as meat, dairy, and fresh produce.

As the ministry expands to meet needs, plans are being made for additional space where our staff and volunteers can repackage food staples and basic hygiene items. And in the next year, five more distribution locations will be added.

Cannava remembers the example of St. Teresa of Calcutta, who noted that poverty was not merely an absence of food, but an absence of love.

“The endgame is not to give food to people,” Cannava says. “The endgame is to give people the opportunity to change their lives.” †



Parish and school drives help address critical need

By LORI SIKRA, Outreach Specialist, St. Lucy Food Project



St. Veronica School, Chantilly, students donated 468 lbs of soup on prior to this year's Super Bowl Sunday.

THE ST. LUCY FOOD PROJECT DEPENDS ON diocesan-wide parish food drives to provide a substantial amount of healthy, nutritious food options to its ministry that, without parishioner support, would not be available. In 2021, more than 100 parish food drives helped St. Lucy collect food to feed the hungry in the diocese.

Through partnerships with Sheehy Auto Stores and other generous donations, the St. Lucy Project has acquired a six-vehicle fleet to distribute this food around the diocese. These vehicles are loaned out to volunteer drivers from hosting parishes. In addition, St. Lucy provides blue reusable bags to collect the food donations, making it easier than ever for hosting parishes.

Following the weekend drives, the donations are transported to St. Lucy's Manassas warehouse for sorting and packing before being sent to the 111 distribution locations within the St. Lucy network. In addition to three Catholic Charities pantries, the locations include community and parish pantries, medical clinics, schools, mobile sites and more.

In addition, school-sponsored collections at parish and Catholic high schools throughout the diocese help the St. Lucy Project respond quickly to critically high food needs. These also allow students to learn about hunger in the diocese. For instance, each September, students at Bishop O'Connell High School collect cans of soup, a hearty winter staple. This school year, students at St. Joseph Catholic School in Herndon and St. Agnes School in Arlington have had a monthly collection of food and hygiene items. By engaging in these types of activities, students get the opportunity to help those in need and participate regularly in the Corporal Works of Mercy, thereby encouraging a life-long commitment of service. †



To host a drive, contact Lori Sikra at 703-479-2975 ext. 103 or email Lori.Sikra@ccda.net for available dates.

"Is this not, rather, the fast that I choose. ...

Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry, bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house;

Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own flesh?"

ISAIAH 58:6-7

My dear friends in Christ,

God desires that people most in need be the reason for our sacrifices and almsgiving. God knows no partiality. The heart of God includes everyone. Maybe it's a universal partiality like the mother who was asked which of her children she loved the most. Her reply was, "I love each of you the most."

In his encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis speaks about God's tenderness for all human beings ...a love that embraces every single creature with affection.

Today we might want to pray that God teach us this way of stretching our hearts to embrace others, all of them, with affection the way God does. It's one of the reasons I love the ministries of Catholic Charities. We serve everyone.

Love and blessings,



F. Robert Cilinski

FATHER ROBERT CILINSKI

*Episcopal Vicar for
Charitable Works*

Ball Raises Record Amount To Assist Mission



Some 700 guests helped raise funds for the essential mission at the heart of the Church: serving poor and vulnerable neighbors.

IN MID-FEBRUARY, SOME 700 GUESTS gathered at the Ritz-Carlton in Tysons Corner to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Catholic Charities Ball.

Bishop Michael F. Burbidge reflected on the journey that both Catholic Charities and the Ball have taken over the past 40 years: a modest start has led to steady growth, allowing us to respond to increasing needs. The Ball's theme, *Remembering the Past with Gratitude*, was echoed throughout the evening by Master of Ceremonies Kelly McGinn, and by Stephen Carattini, Catholic Charities President and CEO.

In 1982, friends of Catholic Charities organized and hosted the first Ball. Four hundred people gathered and raised \$62,000. Many of those same volunteers and supporters were also in attendance 40 years later and witnessed

how their efforts have flourished into a spectacular event.

Today, that little mustard seed of an idea has helped grow the organization to one that has over 5,000 volunteers who have donated more than 49,000 hours of their time just this past fiscal year. Thanks to the dedication and devotion of the Ball committee and volunteers, the 2022 Ball raised over \$1.6 million.

These resources will bring hope and relief to the thousands of men, women and children who turn to Catholic Charities every day.

Since its inception, the Ball has been a volunteer-led effort and an annual winter tradition in the diocese. Chairing this year's event were Vicki Foster and Karen Skinner. The 2022 James J. Matthews Legacy Award went to long-time Catholic Charities Ball volunteers



From left: Stephen Carattini, Ball Co-Chair Vicki Foster, Bishop Burbidge, and Ball Co-Chair Karen Skinner



Guests enjoyed dancing and singing along with the band.

Mary Joe Barrazotto and the late Jennie Trapasso. The Bishop Paul S. Loverde Award was awarded to Christ the Redeemer Catholic Church for their dedicated support of Catholic Charities and the most vulnerable in their parish. Fr. J. D. Jaffe, Pastor, accepted the award on behalf of the Reston parish.

Watch this year's Ball video on the Catholic Charities playlist on the diocesan YouTube channel.

Catholic Charities thanks the volunteers, supporters, and partners who continue to make this a remarkable event each year. Save the date: next year's Ball will be on February 10, 2023. †

MRS helps Afghan newcomers rebuild their lives

By ZOEY MARAIST | A longer version of this story appeared in *The Arlington Catholic Herald*. Reprinted with permission.

SHAMSUDIN SHAMSUDIN HAD A GOOD job as a telecommunications technician, opportunities to travel the world, nice cars, and a comfortable home in Kabul. But when the Taliban took over Afghanistan last year, Shamsudin decided he, his wife Zumrad, and their four children should leave the country.

“They can kill us immediately or they can kidnap my son and ask for money. They are doing these kinds of things,” said Shamsudin, who had been a contractor for the U.S. Agency for International Development and other organizations.

Farida, whose last name is withheld to protect her identity, had a similar experience. She was working as a dentist when she and her mother fled Afghanistan last summer. Farida, Shamsudin, and thousands of other Afghans are now starting over. As with other resettlement agencies, Catholic Charities is helping them on their journey to self-sufficiency, as they work to achieve in the United States all that they accomplished in their home country.

Because of his work with the U.S. government, Shamsudin was able to receive a Special Immigrant Visa, which is issued to individuals who supported U.S. armed forces overseas in conflict zones. But although he had the visa, trying to leave the country last summer was dangerous and difficult. In August, he recorded a video on his phone that shows scores of people flocking toward the airport as the sound of gunshots punctuate the air. “We tried many times. It was impossible,” he said.

In September, they were able to fly to Islamabad, Pakistan. “It was \$1,800 per person for a 45-minute flight,” he said.



Zumrad Shams, Shamsudin Shamsudin and three of their four children, Niayesh, 8, Mohammad Amran, 6, and Mohammad Balal, 12, gather in their Alexandria apartment. ZOEY MARAIST | CATHOLIC HERALD

They spent several days there before getting much cheaper tickets for the 18-hour journey to the United States. Hedayat Madari, a Catholic Charities case manager, met the weary family at Dulles Airport on October 6.

After arriving, Shamsudin, who speaks English, quickly went to work finding affordable housing and someone to cosign the lease. The family now lives in a two-bedroom apartment in Alexandria. Catholic Charities helps them pay their rent through its matching grant extended assistance program, which supports clients for up to six months.

Though Shamsudin has 18 years of experience in his field, he’s still eagerly searching for a job which will support his family. “When I’m going with the food stamp card to the supermarket, believe me I’m not feeling (good),” he said.

But he’s looking forward to the opportunities living in this country will give his children. “I came for my kids. My girl is 14 years old, (the Taliban would) not allow her to go to school. They don’t see women as human,” he said. Now, all his children attend school and are doing well, he said. “They are more than happy.”



Farida, a recent newcomer who worked as a dentist in Afghanistan, is a dental assistant in Herndon. COURTESY

Not long after she arrived in the U.S. and settled in Woodbridge, Farida enrolled in the Catholic Charities Breaking the Barriers Employment Program to help her find a job. Her English skills were basic, but she still wanted to work in a dental office. Her employment specialist helped her develop a resume and apply for several jobs. Eventually, she was hired as a full-time dental assistant at a clinic in Herndon, making \$20 an hour.

Farida is working towards being a dentist again; she recently earned her X-ray certification from Northern Virginia Community College. She told Catholic Charities that the day she got her first paycheck was “the very best day.” †

WHY WE VALUE OUR VOLUNTEERS

By DEBRA BEARD, Director of Volunteers

In a three-month period, the number of volunteers who registered tripled with 613 new signups



When word got out last August that Catholic Charities was resettling Afghan refugees, our phones began ringing off the hook. We received generous offers from parishioners and community members all over the diocese who wanted to help. As a result, we were able to serve 800 refugees, supporting their efforts toward building self-sufficient lives in their new homes.

What caused such a response to Catholic Charities?

Mother Teresa dedicated her life to serving society's most marginalized victims. Her actions conveyed that every individual mattered. "I believe," she once said, "in person-to-person contact. Every person is Christ for me, and since there is only one Jesus, the person I am meeting is the one person in the world at that moment".

As people of faith, Catholic social teaching reminds us to remember in prayer and deed those who are vulnerable. During the ongoing pandemic, many of us are experiencing more loneliness and disconnection. The Afghan refugee crisis provided an opportunity for connection and the desire to contribute was even stronger. People who reached out to us offering to help expressed deep sorrow and anxiety for those Afghans caught in a gut-wrenching and helpless situation. Many parishioners, with backgrounds in the military, federal government, or NGOs, had formed personal relationships with Afghan interpreters and others while working abroad. Feeling powerless to change the situation overseas, they turned their energy into making a difference at home. In a three-month period, the number of volunteers who registered tripled with 613 new signups. They offered to provide housing support, employment mentoring, interpreting, teaching and administrative

support. Our offices were bursting with material donations of mattresses, dishes, car seats, and other necessary items and 87 volunteers showed up to sort, organize and support the distribution of these household goods and food for incoming families.

While surprised by the volume of support, we were not surprised by the interest in serving. Building and sustaining a volunteer corps to help us serve our clients is integral to our mission. In serving the poor, protecting the vulnerable, caring for the sick, and welcoming the newcomer, we rely on our faith community to partner with us to bring the love of Christ to all.

In this encounter with one another, we experience inclusion, connection, contribution, and meaning. Over the past year, Catholic Charities has received support from 3,500 regular active volunteers, and a staff of 165.

While the coronavirus pandemic has increased the need for services among the poor and marginalized, it has strengthened the hearts of those who serve. The courage, dedication and love shown by volunteers is a powerful statement of God's Mercy.

The good news is volunteers are serving alongside staff supporting their ministries and clients. The better news is that Christ's love is cascading through the diocese. †

If you feel called to join our mission, please visit volunteer.ccda.net to explore volunteer opportunities or contact volunteer@ccda.net.

Here are a few examples of volunteer impact:



2 million pounds of food distributed, with the help of 2,100 volunteers.



1,465 patients received medical care from our 192 volunteer doctors and nurses.



10,397 hot meals provided by 48 recurring volunteer groups comprised of 200 volunteers.



456 immigrants were provided educational and professional training to support job acquisition by 249 volunteers

While Catholic Charities spends 89 cents on the dollar on direct ministry services, **the combined in-kind contribution of our volunteers is valued at \$1,683,860.00.** At the height of the pandemic, volunteers contributed 59,000 hours of service with the Independent Sector valuing each hour as a \$29.14 contribution.

Meet Joanne and Bob Abbott



“Catholic Charities is able to help so many people in different ways. Knowing there is a need and that we are part of a mission that can provide that help is rewarding.”

– JOANNE ABBOTT, VOLUNTEER

Tell us a bit about yourselves.

Bob: We both come from the New York metropolitan area and went to Catholic schools from first grade through college. After separate careers in banking (Joanne) and teaching at the college level (Bob), we married, had a son, and came to the DC area to work in government. Two daughters more, five grandchildren, and a lot of time later, we retired and found ourselves looking for a way to keep busy and help those less fortunate. This led us to Catholic Charities.

How and when did you start volunteering for Catholic Charities?

Joanne: When I retired 5 years ago, I needed something to do. So I called Catholic Charities and came in for an interview. I practically started the next day in the administrative offices answering phones, and directing calls to the correct ministry. I still volunteer in the office once a week.

Bob: Both of us saw an ad in our parish bulletin (St. John Neumann in Reston) about opportunities at the Mother of Mercy Free Clinic a few years ago, and we have been volunteering there as well.

What do you do in your roles as volunteers?

Bob: Joanne helps organize the patients' electronic records. I do some of this as well and also do interviews with prospective volunteers.

Joanne: In the main offices, I help with all the calls that come into the main information line. We get all types of calls such as requests for emergency assistance, immigration support, and calls from refugees. I also help with the paperwork needs at the clinic. My husband does a great job interviewing the prospective volunteer doctors, nurses, and other support volunteers!

What do you find rewarding about volunteering?

Bob: One of the things that has appealed to us is that there are a lot of non-medical things we can do that contribute to the clinic's mission, which allows the medical professionals to concentrate on directly helping patients. While we don't deal directly with patients ourselves, we are grateful to deal with those who do, and to witness their dedication and selflessness.

Joanne: The clinic has many needs, and we were able to take away some of the paperwork so they could focus on patient care. Catholic Charities is able to help so many people in different ways. Knowing there is a need and that we are part of a mission that can provide that help is rewarding. There is such a misconception that one needs to be Catholic to get help, and that's simply not true.

Tell us about a bit more about the volunteer experience.

Joanne: I've learned a lot about the generosity of our community while working at Catholic Charities' main

office. When the Afghan refugee crisis hit, Catholic Charities was overwhelmed with offers of help and donations. The phones were constantly ringing, and we are still trying to keep up with the calls and emails offering help – as well as with people who need help.

We were able to offer support to the clinic in a virtual capacity during the early part of the pandemic, and still do. Volunteering during that time was a great way to keep our sanity! For a free clinic, they're providing exceptional personal care. It's really impressive.

Bob: I'm invariably impressed by how many people of so many different backgrounds apply to help our patients, and how many hours our doctors, nurses, and aides devote to our work. I'm also struck by how many people there are who need the service we provide, and how little they have of their own. Recognizing this makes volunteering a reminder of what Christianity is about and how Jesus inspires and guides us. †



Call for Volunteers!

To learn more about our volunteer opportunities and ways you can get involved, please visit volunteer.ccca.net or email Debra Beard at debra.beard@ccda.net.

How Family Services has adjusted to pandemic life

By MARGUERITE TURNER, MS, LPC, Catholic Charities Family Services, Regional Manager & Psychotherapist

I'm a psychotherapist with Catholic Charities Family Services. In March 2020, our world changed overnight. We stopped seeing clients in person at in our offices in Fairfax, Fredericksburg, and the 15 parishes where Family Services clinicians were serving. In less than one week, our Clinical Director Michael Horne, Psy.D., and then-Program Director, Anne Devine, LPC, helped all the Family Services' clinicians create accounts with a HIPAA-compliant telehealth program that allowed us to continue services even though we could no longer be with our clients due to the pandemic. My last day seeing clients in person was on a Wednesday. By Monday, I was seeing clients virtually.

At the beginning, I feared I would miss too many non-verbal cues if I couldn't see all of the client. Now I can't imagine returning to only face to face meetings since we've found that telehealth can work very well.

Some of the benefits we discovered at the start of telehealth have continued. Clients still tell us they like doing therapy from home because it's easier, more private, more comfortable, and they have more flexibility scheduling around their needs. Virtual therapy allows therapists to see clients no matter where they're physically located. And we have found we are able to achieve the same goals virtually that we did in person. For those who prefer to be seen in person, we have returned to our Fairfax and Fredericksburg offices along with eight parish locations.

We have also been blessed this year with the addition of two Spanish-speaking therapists. This brings our number of full-time Spanish-speaking therapists to four. Both Christina Almeyda and Natalia Dominquez-Buelot graduated with their Master's degrees in 2021 and joined Family Services soon after. Both work with couples and also with children, a group who often waits the longest to receive services.

Family Services staff have been immensely grateful that Covid hasn't derailed our ability to provide therapy to our clients and has allowed us to grow and expand our availability and presence.



Learn more about our counseling services under "Need Help" at ccda.net.



Workplace Giving

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington's CFC number is #24770

The CFC also allows:

- You to pledge volunteer hours to help Catholic Charities serve tens of thousands of clients each year; and
- Federal retirees to make a recurring donation by deduction from their annuity.

Please remember to check "YES" to share your pledge information so we can keep you updated on the impact of your gift.

Thank you for your generous support of our work.

ABOUT CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

Together, We're Transforming Lives!

21 ministries across 21 Virginia counties and 7 cities

Serves all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance

89 cents of every dollar spent goes to ministries 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.