

Serving all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance.

INSIDE this ISSUE

04 *Ball Raises Funds for
Poor and Vulnerable*

06 *Marian Art and
Concert Series*

07 *Longtime Volunteers
Share Experiences*

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www.cdda.net

Catholic Charities provides expectant mothers prenatal care, counseling, housing, and pregnancy and adoption services.

She Came to Us to End Her Pregnancy *then had a change of heart...*

At Catholic Charities Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic, we serve men and women who come to us to be healed. Because our first clinic is housed in the same space as a one-time abortion center, we often witness amazing conversions of heart. Here is one story about a young pregnant woman, who initially thought she wanted an abortion.

They came into the clinic at 8 a.m.

She was with her mother.

She was 14.

She was pregnant.

She had been abused. Her mother took her to the pediatrician. When the pediatrician realized she was pregnant they sent her to our clinic

to end the pregnancy. They sent her to us because our facility used to be the site of an abortion clinic. They didn't know they were sending her to what is now the Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic.

When her mother walked up to the window and asked for an abortion, the staff came and got me.

The young pregnant teenager had her hair covering her face. She was ashamed. When I began talking with her, I told her I understood that what she was going through was traumatic. Being abused was traumatic. Having an abortion would also be very traumatic.

The three of us – mother, pregnant daughter, and I – began to talk about other options.

All of a sudden, the mother stood up and looked at her daughter. She said that she was once in her daughter's very situation. Only then, the baby inside of the mother was her daughter... her daughter who was sitting right there and now contemplating the same options. Mom said that if she had

→ *continued on page 2*

“The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle.” –Pope Francis

Dear Friends,

One of the many privileges we have at Catholic Charities is the opportunity to be close to people who are hurt and suffering. Thanks be to God, and the generosity of so many in our diocese, we are able to offer competent and compassionate care to thousands of men, women and children throughout northern Virginia.

If the church is a field hospital, then perhaps Catholic Charities can be thought of as the emergency room. Every day the wounded arrive at our doorstep seeking, and expecting, not only quality care, but to be treated with respect and kindness. We encounter people at some of the most vulnerable moments in their lives whether that be a single mom receiving an eviction notice, a father needing to find food for his children, a newcomer needing to improve their language skills, or as you will read in this edition of our newsletter, a young teenager, scared and pregnant, in need of pre-natal care.

As in an emergency room, we can never fully know how a person was treated prior to coming to us, or how they will be treated after they leave us; but while they are with

us, it is our prayer that they will know and experience the love and consolation of God.

In this issue of *The Mission*, you will also encounter three very remarkable and dedicated volunteers who have chosen to share their gifts of time and talent with us, and with those in our care. During the month of April, we gratefully acknowledge and express our deepest gratitude to all of our volunteers who share in our ministry to all those in need.

In this season of Easter, let us rejoice in the risen Lord, and give thanks to God for the opportunity to be of service to our wounded brothers and sisters, and in so doing *warm the hearts of the faithful*.

Gratefully yours in Christ,



STEPHEN CARATTINI
President and CEO

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington

Continued from page 1

She Came to Us to End Her Pregnancy

chosen to have an abortion then, her daughter would not be here today.

The daughter was in shock. The mother had never said this to anyone before. It was a very emotional moment. Mother and daughter took some time to absorb all of this. Then they left for the police station, telling me they would call and let me know of her decision later that day.

We contacted our prayer warriors and asked them to pray. We waited... and waited... and waited. It was getting late. The clinic closed at 5 o'clock and it was already 4:45. Just then, they called. They were still at the police station. The daughter said, "I am going to keep the baby."

We referred her to pre-natal care from her provider, and also to Gabriel Project so they could help mother and daughter through the process. We also referred her to Catholic Charities Pregnancy and Adoption ministry so they could assist her in devising a parenting plan.

She began coming to the clinic weekly to attend diet and exercise classes. She continued to come to the clinic, because she felt the love and support for her. She didn't have to, as her provider offered many services. Yet she came. She felt wanted and loved: loved by Christ, through those who serve.

A transformation occurred, from the girl who had been abused and felt ashamed, to the girl who felt loved, wanted, and excited about the future. Although she knew this wasn't going to be easy, she now had an entire community to back her up. She was literally surrounded by love.†



This child is one of many who benefit from Catholic Charities services.

? How can you help?

Learn more about the services offered by the Catholic Charities Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinics at ccda.net/mercyclinic

As Food Prices Spike, More Neighbors Turn to Catholic Charities Pantries

SOARING FOOD PRICES HAVE IMPACTED ANYONE WHO GOES to the grocery store – but they’ve been repeated gut punches to vulnerable individuals and families who turn to Catholic Charities for assistance.

Over the last year, Catholic Charities three food pantries have experienced dramatic increases in the number of clients coming in for food.

“We are seeing an increase in clients who fall in the higher percentage of poverty category. They work full time and own their own homes, but can’t afford the high cost of food.”

– JEAN P. JACKSON,
PANTRY MANAGER

If rising costs weren’t enough, family budgets have been squeezed further by the March 1 elimination of expanded SNAP benefits (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) offered during COVID. Skyrocketing rents and a lack of affordable housing have also contributed to the problem.

Pantry visits in Front Royal are up 91 percent over last year, according to Pantry Manager Jean P. Jackson. “We are seeing an increase in clients who fall in the higher percentage of poverty category. They work full time and own their own homes, but can’t afford the high cost of food.”

Catholic Charities Sterling facility has seen a 62 percent uptick in visits over last year, says Pantry Manager Christina Harrington.

“Nutrition continues to be a very significant and ongoing problem,” Harrington says. “The ability of clients to obtain protein, nutritious grains, eggs, milk, fresh produce and culturally appropriate foods represents a challenge whereby clients often have to choose to pay rent or buy groceries.” The pantry is also serving more refugees who fled to Virginia after the fall of Afghanistan, she added. †



Catholic Charities Encourages Food Drives Throughout the Diocese

Many thanks to Knights of Columbus St. Louis Martin Council #15256 at St. Theresa Parish in Ashburn. With the help of parishioners, the parish youth group and others, they’ve collected 35,180 pounds of food, 1,085 pounds of hygiene items, and \$525 in gift cards since July.

The Gift of Sunrise

When renewing my driver’s license, along with the test which covers speed limits, road signs, and safety skills, I saw that I could sign up to be an organ donor.

The pamphlet about organ donation was titled the “Sunrise Project.” It read, “Give the gift of sunrise to one who is in darkness.”

What a wonderful gift to give to someone: a heart to live, lungs to breathe, or eyes to restore vision. It’s an act of love.

The stark reality is that in order to do that, you have to die.

But isn’t this what Jesus did? He died so that we might live! Jesus sacrificed everything for us. “Easter triumph, Easter joy.”

We don’t have to wait until we die to share the gift of sunrise to one who is in darkness. Whenever we sacrifice to care for the sick, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, or welcome the stranger, we are a beacon of light.

Shining our light gives new hope to those facing life’s difficulties. Our volunteer ministries and monetary donations to Catholic Charities are a gift of sunrise. Our acts of love bring the new life of the risen Lord to those in need.

Let your light shine brightly this Easter season!

Love and blessings,



F. Robert Cilinski

FATHER ROBERT CILINSKI
Episcopal Vicar for
Charitable Works



Members of the Ghana Catholic Community smile for a photo with Bishop Burbidge and Bishop Loverde as they receive the Bishop Paul S. Loverde Legacy Award.

Catholic Charities Annual Ball Raises Record Amount for the Poor and Vulnerable

ON FEBRUARY 10, OVER 900 DONORS, VOLUNTEERS, parishioners, priests, and friends of the Diocese of Arlington celebrated the 41st Catholic Charities Ball.

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“We rejoice in knowing that because of your generosity, we can continue to do the work of God to such an extensive degree.”

– BISHOP MICHAEL F. BURBIDGE

The Ball, which has been led by a team of volunteers since it was founded in 1982, raised more than \$1.6 million this year.

Bishop Burbidge shared some remarks on how Catholic Charities radiates the Lord’s light. Stephen Carattini, President

and CEO of Catholic Charities, said, “We at Catholic Charities are privileged to encounter people at some of the most vulnerable times in their lives and we are deeply blessed to be able to accompany (them) on this part of their lives’ journey.”

The James J. Matthews Legacy Award was awarded to Barbara and Larry Caudle in recognition for their work at St. Margaret of Cortona Transitional Housing. The Bishop Paul S. Loverde Legacy Award was awarded to the Ghana Catholic Community for their longstanding commitment to many ministries of Catholic Charities, including St. Lucy Food Project and Christ House.

We exceeded this year’s goal by raising over \$1.6 million. This success enables Catholic Charities to continue Christ’s work in caring for the needs of the poor.

Echoing this year’s Ball theme, we join our Blessed Mother in rejoicing over what the Lord has accomplished through Catholic Charities, supported by the gifts and prayers of so many. †



Watch the Video!

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



Scan the QR Code



Save the Date

Next year’s Ball will be on February 2, 2024.



Longtime Volunteer Michele Mrozek Shares Her Experiences

**April is National
Volunteer Month!**

Tell me a little about your background.

My husband and I are from two semi-large Catholic families from western Pennsylvania, an area where the vast majority of the people were first- or second-generation immigrants from overwhelmingly Catholic countries.

You've volunteered for Catholic Charities for about 15 years, with just about every program. How did this begin?

I saw an ad in the parish bulletin looking for front desk help at the Catholic Charities office. From there, I moved over to working for Sally O'Dwyer, who was the Director of Volunteers, getting involved in a number of projects including the Parish Liaison Network. I became the rep for my parish, St. Ann, and coordinated the Catholic Charities efforts and collections there. I also oversaw the Christ House evening meal for my prior parish for 15 years, volunteered at the Migrant and Refugee office, and taught English and was the registrar for St. Mark's ESL program.

What do you do in your current role as a volunteer?

About three years ago, when Covid caused everything to pause, I was contacted by the volunteer office because Alexandra Luevano at the Mother of Mercy

Clinics was looking for some help on-boarding volunteers. This was something that I could do from home or in an isolated part of the clinic. I jumped at the opportunity.

What role does faith play in this?

Since prayer is an integral part of the clinic, being there has helped make my faith stronger. The staff gathers at the start of each day to pray for the patients who will come through the door. Providers can ask patients if they would like to pray together for their health during their appointment. And we have a prayer box for people to add their intentions.



Join us!

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@ccca.net.



Grade Schools Share Food With Those in Need

Students at St. Joseph Catholic School in Herndon collected breakfast cereal to donate to Catholic Charities St. Lucy Project.

Celebrating Nowruz at St. Bernadette's Catholic Church

A huge thanks to St. Bernadette Catholic Church for hosting our senior refugees and their families for a celebration of Nowruz (Persian New Year).





One of many works, this one 'Queen of Peace, House of Gold', by Caitlin Solan, to be displayed.

Jubilee Art and Culture Exhibits to Highlight Catholic Charities Ministries, Local Artists

THE TRUTH, GOODNESS, AND BEAUTY OF GOD – evident in art, music, and the ministries of Catholic Charities – will be on display in a Marian art and culture program that travels to parishes around the diocese, beginning in May as part of the Second Preparatory year of the upcoming Diocese of Arlington Golden Jubilee.

The 10-part series will focus on Our Blessed Mother, Mary, and the theme, *Rejoice!*, through original art that portrays different images of Our Lady. The series will pair each Marian image, commissioned by Bishop Michael F. Burbidge and painted by a local Catholic artist, with one of six Catholic Charities ministries. The Diocese will present each work of art to that respective ministry when the program concludes later this year.

“It makes sense for us to pair a reflection on Our Lady to the work of Catholic Charities since, being free of original sin and all desire for sin, Mary is more capable of charity than any other person besides Jesus Himself,” said event host and

“These wonderful images, inspired by our ministries, beautifully reflect how Catholic Charities serves those in need with a Mother’s care.”

– STEPHEN CARATTINI, PRESIDENT AND CEO

emcee, Fr. Joseph Rampino, parochial vicar at St. Ambrose Catholic Church.

Some of the artists chosen have a particular affinity for the ministry he or she painted, said Fr. Rich Miserendino, parochial vicar at St. Bernadette Catholic Church, who is organizing the series for the Jubilee committee.

For instance, Betsy Farr, an internationally renowned botanical artist with a devotion to Our Lady, was asked to paint for Catholic Charities Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic. Because many of Mother of Mercy’s patients are Spanish-speaking, she decided to paint the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe – but used roses and flowers native to Virginia and the Diocese.

“It’s *our* Lady of Guadalupe,” Fr. Miserendino said. “She will greet the clients when they arrive in the clinic, a little beauty to be medicine for the soul.”

In addition to Mother of Mercy, Catholic Charities ministries represented will be Pregnancy and Adoption Services, St. Margaret of Cortona Maternity and Family Transitional Housing; St. Martin de Porres Senior Center; Migrant and Refugee Services; and Family Reunification Services. †



Mark Your Calendar for the Upcoming Marian Art and Concert Series

May 3 @ 7 p.m.
GMU, St. Robert Bellarmine Chapel

May 19 @ 7 p.m.
Good Shepherd Catholic Church

June 16 @ 7 p.m.
St. Agnes Catholic Church

Learn more about the series at arlingtondiocese.org/marianartconcertseries



Meet Joyce Hoffman



Joyce Hoffman is a member of All Saints parish in Manassas, where she lives with her husband and 94-year-old mother. She first learned of the need for volunteer teachers from Father Juan Puigbó. Although she didn't have any formal training as a teacher, she felt called to help immigrant

adults learn English.

"My students keep me going," she says. "They're from different countries and have different life experiences."

No formal training is necessary to be a volunteer teacher

Some of my students have been registered nurses or other professionals in their native countries. Although their skills could benefit our country, they're held back because of their limited English abilities. Some of the other students have little or no formal education, and are not able to read or write in any language.

"One of my students who was illiterate persevered in his classes, taking my Literacy class twice, getting help from me and some of his fellow students. He was with our program for several years and eventually was able to speak, read, and write reasonably well in English. One of his proudest moments early on was when he was able to go into Starbucks and order in English."

"I am presently helping a man who is illiterate, but has been in this country for 30 years, with a Green Card. His goal is to learn to read and write and become an American citizen soon."

Hoffman reiterates that no formal training is necessary to be a volunteer teacher. "There are opportunities to learn to teach and become a better teacher through training classes available several times a year. Teachers are provided with resources and curriculum to teach the classes."

"My students are grateful for the opportunities they have at Catholic Charities. I am happy to be part of their journey!"

Meet Moire Latamore



Moire Latamore initially became a volunteer when she saw a notice for Hogar Immigrant Service, now Catholic Charities Education and Workforce Development. She has taught classes in Citizenship and English.

When asked about her experience teaching, she says, "The students are the most amazing, wonderful people whom I have ever had the privilege to know. I learned about different foods, different cultures, and different ways of experiencing English. I tried to fill in whenever substitute teachers were needed. Over time, I was able to 'taste' all class levels offered."

"These people give me hope for our nation because of their strong spirits and kind hearts"

"The students are intelligent hardworking people with an incredibly positive outlook, although many have endured extreme hardships. They are eager and grateful to the

volunteers who are able to help them navigate not only the English language, but some of the quirks of American life.

"I have helped students develop English skills to open their own business, or get certified and licensed to get better jobs. Others can now read to their children in English. One student who proudly told me that he went to the doctor and – for the first time – did not need an interpreter. A few students whom I taught as beginners have gone on to earn their GED, and that always makes me proud. In these troubled times, it is these people who give me hope for our nation because of their strong spirits and kind hearts."

When asked how she's been inspired to volunteer for 10 years, she says, "The short answer is the students, but also the incredibly supportive staff. I know that I'm making a positive change in the world every time I teach, and the students always let me know that they value our class time. So many students have included me in their prayers. I am truly humbled by the love that is shared with me."

She adds a few words to those who might be considering volunteering. "If you know any English, please consider teaching a class. You will learn more than you ever thought possible."



Workplace Giving

Every day, Catholic Charities brings transformational services, delivered with compassion, to meet the needs of every person who seeks our help, regardless of background, belief, or circumstance.

You can be a part of this transformation by making a pledge to Catholic Charities during this CFC campaign season.

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 a 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.

It's Easy to Donate Online!

To make a gift online, visit ccda.net/donate or scan here →



Catholic Charities Future Needs

You can leave the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington a gift in your Will or Trust with as little as one sentence.

For instructions, view our website ccda.net or contact John French at (703) 841-3819 or at john.french@arlingtondiocese.org.

CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

*Join Us—Together,
We're Transforming Lives!*



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