

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



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## Childhood Hunger: St. Lucy Food Project Summer Campaign Addresses Chronic Need

**D**URING THE SUMMER, many families plan vacations and shift to a more relaxed way of living. But for thousands of our neighbors in the Diocese of Arlington, summer is anything but relaxed. For these families – especially the 182,070 children\* who rely on free or reduced breakfast and lunch throughout the school year – there is no vacation from a year-round problem: hunger and food insecurity.

For many of these families, no school may mean no lunch. According to Feeding America, 5 out of 6 of those children will not be able to access the meals programs given by their local school system.

Catholic Charities St. Lucy Food Project has again launched its summer **Hungry**

**Children Food Campaign** to provide these kids with nutritious breakfast and lunch food items. It will supply 50 pantries throughout the diocese.

St. Lucy's new refrigeration system will allow Catholic Charities to distribute fresh fruits and vegetables to the pantries.

“When kids are home for the summer they want to be able to feed themselves or whip up something they like quickly,” said Vincent Cannava, St. Lucy Food Project Program Director. Providing quick and healthy food is essential. He suggests “peel-and-eat” food such as granola bars and fruit cups, cereal, microwaveable foods, and shelf-stable milk.

→ *continued on page 5*



**182,070  
CHILDREN  
IN VIRGINIA**  
rely on free or  
reduced breakfast  
and lunch throughout  
the school year\*

\*Data source Virginia Department of Education

# President's Message

Dear Friends in Christ,

Summer is a relaxing time to enjoy the sunshine, spend time with loved ones, and count and recount the many blessings that God gives us. The break is also opportune to live our faith more deeply: read more carefully, make a retreat, and spend time volunteering to help the needy and suffering in our midst. Nearly 4,000 people already volunteer at Catholic Charities. And maybe the freedom of summer can encourage you to do the same.

When we volunteer we are living our faith. We bring our God-given talents to those in such desperate need, and we discover brothers and sisters we didn't know we had.

Summer brings opportunity to many of us, but when school is closed it means two fewer daily meals a day for many children in our diocese. In this edition of *The Mission*, you will learn how Catholic Charities St. Lucy Project partners with our parishes to provide *healthy* food to those children in need. Look how you can help donate to our food drives at your local school or parish.

Opioid addiction is a crisis in our diocese. More Virginians die each day from opioids than die in car accidents. The effect on families is devastating. Catholics won't sit on the sidelines with this problem plaguing us. There is so much that Catholic Charities and our 70 parishes can do to intervene and support these families.

May is the Month of Mary and the month of mothers so we have a campaign called "Love Our Mothers" to introduce you to four heroic mothers we met in our Catholic Charities programs.

Catholic Charities Christ House on West Street in Old Town Alexandria provides more services for the poor under one roof than anywhere else in the diocese: an evening meal 365 days per year for homeless and struggling families; emergency utility and rental assistance, food, a chapel with the Eucharist, a thrift shop, and a transformational shelter for homeless men. With this unending bustling, Christ House needed a renovation. Thanks to the leadership and our partnership with HomeAid Northern Virginia and K. Hovnanian Homes, Christ House now looks renewed and better reflects our care for the dignity of those we serve. Take a look at the pictures and stop by to see the transformation for yourself.

All of us struggle and thank God for the leisure of summer. We are also renewed by the transformative love of Christ. Please pray for the thousands we serve and if you can, lend a hand and join our team. We would love to do God's work with you.

God bless you,



**ART BENNETT**  
**President and CEO**  
Catholic Charities of the  
Diocese of Arlington



## How can YOU help stop summer hunger?



Help us keep our shelves stocked this summer.

When donating food to the St. Lucy Food Program this summer, focus on items that are nutrient-rich and healthy, such as:

- Cereal and oatmeal;
- Nutrition bars;
- Individual fruit cups;
- Green beans and corn;
- Single serve pasta cups;
- Tuna;
- Shelf-stable milk;
- Bottled water.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

on supporting the St. Lucy Food Project this summer, please contact Patricia Kuntz at [patricia.kuntz@ccda.net](mailto:patricia.kuntz@ccda.net) or (703)479-2975 ext 103.



# Christ House Gets Renovation That Boosts Residents, Builders' Spirits

**F**OR THE RESIDENTS OF CHRIST HOUSE, the 200-year-old Old Town Alexandria building that provides transitional living for homeless men, getting new carpet made an impact in their lives.

This spring, HomeAid of Northern Virginia, builder K. Hovnanian Homes and its partner subcontractors replaced the 12-year-old worn carpet with hard flooring throughout the first floor and new gray carpeting on the stairways, offices, community room and bedrooms as part of their donated six-week \$83,000 renovation project.

“The new carpet gives the building an overall clean look,” says Christ House Program Director John Croft.

The residents are also enjoying newly painted walls, renovated bathrooms, new lighting, flooring, countertops, and additional cabinets in the dining room and kitchen.

“I think it makes them feel validated,” said Croft. “It makes them feel like someone cares about their space. The residents don’t always get someone who cares about the details of their lives. That’s what Christ House does.”

Christ House provides 14 residents with a home and meals for 12 to 18 months. They receive employment seeking skills, mental health and spiritual counseling, financial literacy, and clothing. A small chapel, included in the renovations, is available for Mass and prayer.

“The focus on helping men transition to stability particularly interested HomeAid,” said its Communications Director and Program Manager Kathryn Kovacs.



Group photo From R-L: Catherine Hassinger, Catholic Charities; Kathryn Kovacs, HomeAid Northern Virginia; Kristyn Burr, HomeAid Northern Virginia; Matt Glakas, K. Hovnanian Homes; John Croft, Catholic Charities

“Individual men take a backseat of every homeless population,” she said. “For me, that’s what made this project extra special. We’re all human beings who need a hand up on occasion, and this project offers so many programs.”

“The generosity of HomeAid of Northern Virginia and K. Hovnanian Homes towards Christ House was extraordinary,” said Catherine Hassinger, Catholic Charities Director of Community Services. “The renovations were much needed, but we were at a loss how to tackle them due to the cost.”

Christ House also provides an evening meal to the homeless 365 days a year. It operates a St. Lucy Food Pantry and offers emergency financial assistance to people struggling to pay rent or utilities. The thrift store re-opened last fall following its own renovations.

K. Hovnanian Homes supervised the project and 28 tradesmen who worked on flooring, plumbing, electrical, framing, HVAC, painting, and window blind installation.

Last year HomeAid and partners completed a makeover at Catholic Charities St. Margaret of Cortona Transitional Housing for Families in Woodbridge. Catholic Charities is incredibly grateful for the support and generosity of these companies. †



# Parishes Launch Addiction Ministries with Catholic Charities Support

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH ELLIOTT AND ZOELY MARAIST | CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF WRITERS

## SUSAN INFELD'S SON STRUGGLED WITH ALCOHOLISM FOR YEARS.

Infeld and her husband tried many ways to get him the help he needed. Today, he has been sober for more than three years and two months, and works helping other addicts find jobs. Through her own experience and as a parish nurse at St. John Neumann Church in Reston, Infeld knows how addiction can affect addicts and families.

On Divine Mercy Sunday, in partnership with Catholic Charities, St. John Neumann launched a Recovery and Addiction Ministry. "This ministry is my paying it forward for all the grace we have been given," said Infeld. Three other parishes in our diocese have similar ministries in the works: St. John the Evangelist Church in Warrenton, Good Shepherd Church in Alexandria and St. Bernadette Church in Springfield.

"I had made the decision to set up a recovering and addiction ministry and it happened to coincide with (Bishop Michael F. Burbidge's) interest in doing this as well," said Infeld. "It was a fabulous opportunity to get further engaged with the diocese in their efforts."

After a months long process initiated by Bishop Burbidge, Catholic Charities released a working plan for combating the opioid crisis in the diocese, which included encouraging parishes to form an addiction ministry. A diocesan wide conference was held on the topic last fall at Good Shepherd parish.

Then, this March, Art Bennett, Catholic Charities President and CEO, explained to the priests, "Through many

# Addiction intervention available 24/7



## Go to [ccda.net/opioids](http://ccda.net/opioids) for a complete list of resources.

*Courtesy Arlington Catholic Herald*

“Our hope is that through prayer we will be successful, that more people will be in recovery than those passing away.”

– JUDY WETZEL

conversations with parents of addicts, people in recovery, people who went to prison and have re-entered society, as well as interested pastors, parishioners and professionals in the clinical, law enforcement and policy communities, we discovered that there are three areas that make this scourge so severe. Opioid addiction has a radically strong grip on the client. The treatment process is arduous on many levels. Addicts and their families become stigmatized, ashamed and isolated as they navigate through the phases of recovery.” Catholic Charities wanted to do more to support the addicts and their families.

April 29 marked the first meeting held by Catholic Charities at St. John Neumann for the parish resource committees and other interested parties to receive training and share best practices and information.

Judy Wetzel, whose son died from opioids, and Margot Chavez, Catholic Charities Volunteer Manager, provided an overview of Prayer Warrior Teams and how to set one up in parishes. Wetzel encouraged attendees to publicize the email address – [hopenotopioids@ccda.net](mailto:hopenotopioids@ccda.net) – to gather prayer requests. “Our hope is that through prayer we will be successful, that more people will be in recovery than those passing away,” Wetzel said. “We will send out prayer requests monthly. It will help

our families, it will help all those people with addictions and it will help those people who are incarcerated.”

Mike Smith, a volunteer at St. John Neumann and a recovering alcoholic who attended AA in Chicago, said Susan Infeld from St. John Neumann, helped him get his Catholic faith aligned with the recovery programs. Mike said, “They’ve been on parallel paths but hadn’t been integrated before. All sorts of grace has been happening since we started the addiction response program at the parish.”

Infeld is grateful more is being done to serve addicts, their families and the community. “Families are being destroyed by this disease. Grandparents are raising their grandchildren in retirement because the parents are addicts. Parents are going into debt trying to pay for rehab not just once, but sometimes multiple times. Families most often suffer in silence, not getting the tremendous support and tools that a (ministry or support group) can offer,” she said.

On our website, Catholic Charities has created a list of resources, including local hotlines for providing crisis intervention, emergency evaluation and assessment for treatment services, case management services or referrals. †

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### Childhood Hunger: St. Lucy Food Project Summer Campaign Addresses Chronic Need

Summer hunger can have a lasting negative impact on children, according to Deloitte Consulting. The lack of good quality food can:

- Impact a child’s nutrition and affect their physical and mental health as well as academic achievement.
- Cause an unhealthy weight gain among children who are eating more accessible, cheaper and less healthy food. This rapid weight gain makes kids “more susceptible to chronic diseases such as iron deficiency anemia, asthma, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.”\*

Catholic Charities, parishes, Knights of Columbus and other volunteer groups are stepping up to host food drives to collect nutritious, ready-to-eat food this summer for the children of our diocese. †

*\*Data source Virginia Department of Education*



## Call for Volunteers!

To learn more about our volunteer opportunities, and ways you can get involved, please visit [volunteer.ccda.net](http://volunteer.ccda.net) or email Margot Chavez at [margot.chavez@ccda.net](mailto:margot.chavez@ccda.net)



### Join us!

For those who are interested, our next Addiction Ministry Meeting with the Parish Resource Committee will be August 7 at 1pm at Good Shepherd Church, 8710 Mount Vernon Hwy., Alexandria.



# #LoveOurMothers Shows Appreciation for Moms

ORIGINALLY WRITTEN BY GEORGE GOSS | CATHOLIC HERALD MULTIMEDIA JOURNALIST

 **I**N MAY, THE MONTH OF **L**IMARY and Mother’s Day, Catholic Charities and the Diocese of Arlington celebrated mothers – including those served by Catholic Charities and diocesan programs – via a campaign called “Love Our Mothers.” The campaign was featured on the Catholic Charities and diocesan website, the Arlington Catholic Herald, and social media accounts.

The goal was to share these women’s courageous stories to a broader audience. “Love Our Mothers is a way to show how we as a church love and honor our mothers, especially those moms who have encountered difficult circumstances,” said diocesan Deputy Director of Communications Diana Sims Snider.

In addition to celebrating all moms on social media, the campaign featured stories of four heroic mothers.

Soledad Ortiz, 35, who is pregnant with her fifth child, told how – despite broken and abusive relationships, an arduous journey from her native Mexico to the United States at the age of 15, and an initially tenuous legal status – her Catholic faith never wavered.

And, without the help of Catholic Charities Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic in Manassas she could not have afforded the pre-natal care associated with her current pregnancy.

“I don’t know what I would be doing now or how I would be paying because the truth is that I can’t afford it,” Ortiz said, who intends to name her daughter Marisol Yalitxa.

Abbie Lenahan, another mother featured, knew before getting married that adoption was the best path toward fulfilling her dream of being a mom.



Clockwise from top left: Abby Lenahan, Soledad Ortiz, Emma Grimes, and Oyin Kansola Sowunmi. Photo credit to George Goss.

“When my husband, Sean, and I got married, we knew we wouldn’t have biological children. We were going to have to go down the path of infertility treatments and for us that wasn’t really an option,” Lenahan said. “Our hearts were more led to adoption as a way of building our family.”

Her faith drew her to Catholic Charities Pregnancy and Adoption Services which assisted her in the adoptions of her two children, Finn and Molly. “We picked them because our Catholic faith is really important to us. It’s important to me. It’s important to my husband, and so I appreciated the fact that they were rooted in that,” Lenahan said.

Also featured in the #LoveOurMothers campaign was Emma Grimes, a mother of two who lives in Catholic Charities St. Margaret of Cortona Transitional Residences for Families. She moved to St. Margaret’s after having to leave her mom’s home because of occupancy requirements

in the lease. Catholic Charities provided her family with stability, training in household finances and job search skills, as well as therapy, she said.

Without transitional housing, Grimes does not know where she would be with her two children, Harmonee Ann and Onyx-Azai.

The fourth mother featured was Oyin Kansola Sowunmi, who received help from Gabriel Project, an initiative of the diocesan Office of Marriage, Family and Respect Life that helps expectant mothers in difficult situations. She was paired with a mentor, Angela Nicholson, who provides moral support as well as help obtaining needed material goods for her two children, Jeremiah and Jemimah.

The culmination of the campaign was a May 15 Parish Liaison Network event at Our Lady of Good Counsel, Vienna, highlighting the programs featured in the videos. †

# Helping Parishioners Feed the Hungry in the Diocese Offered a Fulfilling Challenge for St. Joseph's Parishioner

**ST. JOSEPH'S HERNDON PARISHIONER,** JOHN PALASZCZUK, was looking for something more to do. After 40 years at ExxonMobil Oil Corporation, he was ready to retire from his position as manager, Americas and International Trading Group.

He also did charitable work at ExxonMobil, including the very successful Employees Favorite Charities campaign, and he was a member of St. Joseph's Men's Society which ran two regular food drives for LINK, Inc., a local pantry that supplies food to the hungry in Herndon, Sterling and Ashburn.

In 2015, he was seeking a way to parlay his organizational and charitable experience into where it was most needed.

"I wanted to get involved in something that was worthwhile," Palaszczuk said. He approached Catholic Charities President and CEO Art Bennett, who introduced him to Vincent Cannava, Program Director for the newly formed St. Lucy Food Project. St. Lucy addresses hunger throughout the 21 counties and seven cities of the diocese. It collects food at local parish drives, transports it to its Manassas warehouse, and then supplies that food to more than 50 parish and community pantries throughout the diocese.

**"I wanted to get involved in something that was worthwhile."**

— JOHN PALASZCZUK



*John Palaszczuk poses next to a recent food donation.*

The possibilities and scale of the food project struck a chord with Palaszczuk. He secured the permission of St. Joseph's pastor, Father Tom Bourque, to add food drives for the St. Lucy Food Project while continuing to collect for LINK.

"It was something that fell very easily into my wheelhouse," he said.

He now speaks to parish groups, such as the RCIA program, business groups and the local Knights of Columbus to raise awareness about food challenges experienced throughout the diocese. "We're in a very prosperous area, and sometimes hunger is not visible," Palaszczuk said.

Today, St. Joseph's holds three regular food drives every year and one summertime Cereal Drive for The St. Lucy Project. A team of about 24 volunteers from the Men's Society and Knights of Columbus distributes royal blue St. Lucy bags one week, then the next collects those food stuffed bags at each of the eight Masses. "People love the blue bags. When they see the blue bags, they know what's coming," he said.



*John Palaszczuk volunteering at St. Lucy's Manassas warehouse.*

"John Palaszczuk is a true blessing to St. Joseph and the St. Lucy Project," said St. Lucy Food Project Outreach Specialist Patricia Kuntz. "He's extremely organized and manages an incredible team of volunteers from St. Joseph. With his expertise in planning and logistics, John has propelled St. Joseph of Herndon to our largest donor of food. St. Joseph parish has donated 31,333 pounds of food in FY19."

"It's been very gratifying, and I know people are helped by it," Palaszczuk said. "People want to do good things. We try to make it as easy as possible to make that happen." †



# World Refugee Day

*The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day, are unable to find a stable home anywhere... [We are called to work] so that every person's dignity is respected, the immigrant is welcomed as a brother or sister, and all humanity forms a united family which knows how to appreciate with discernment the different cultures which comprise it. -St. Pope John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day 2000*



On Thursday, June 20, 2019, Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) will again invite diocesan staff and seminarians to celebrate World Refugee Day with agency staff and their clients.

This event, like last year, has Catholic Charities staff spend the day visiting clients in their homes, bringing food staples, toys, and sharing good will and hospitality. Last year, there were 22 home visits, with Bishop Burbidge joining in for a visit to a Central American family living in Manassas. This year, the hope is to have 20-25 home visits. MRS will also arrange talks to orient the group to the agency's work and to understand the trials and hopes of these newly-resettled neighbors. Lunch will be prepared by a refugee chef. †



Photo from home visit in 2018.

## ABOUT CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

*Together, We're Transforming Lives!*

100 direct and affiliated service locations 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

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[www.arlingtoncatholiccharities.com](http://www.arlingtoncatholiccharities.com)

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Our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 24770.