

Did You Know...

Caritas Connections is eligible for **matching gifts**. We are also now set up to receive **automatic monthly gifts via PayPal** or to take **stock donations**. Gifts of stock can be directly made from 401(k) plans or IRA accounts without needing to pay taxes on distribution—a big help if you no longer itemized because of recent tax changes. To learn more or to volunteer to help, call 314-225-2605 or e-mail: Friends@CaritasConnections.com



An Easy Way to Help Caritas

This Christmas season (and throughout the year) you can support Caritas Connections every time you make a purchase via Amazon Smile. Simply copy this link into your browser—<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/26-3332934> – and then, designate Caritas Connections as your charity of choice and .05% of every purchase you make will be donated directly to Caritas!



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St. Louis, MO 63131

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Who We Are

Caritas Connections, Inc. is a faith-based organization dedicated to “connecting those who have with those who need”. Many members of our community are eager to share their blessings. Many of our less fortunate neighbors desperately require their help. The challenge is linking the gifts with the needs. We provide that vital connection—transforming compassion into charity. Members of St. Gerard Majella Catholic Church in Kirkwood, MO serve as the primary coordinators and volunteers.

Donations may be sent to:
Caritas Connections, Inc.,
PO Box 31072
St. Louis, MO 63131

Boxes & Donations Gladly Accepted

In addition to non-perishable food items, personal care needs, coats and hats, please consider dropping off a few boxes (copy paper or diaper box size) to the garage. We're collecting these boxes to help with SGM full time school canned food drive in January. If you have any questions about items we accept, contact **Mary Kempa at marykempa2@gmail.com**.

Every Week at Caritas Connections

Caritas Connections volunteers make over 40 pickups and deliveries every week in order to reliably connect surplus food and personal care items from our donors to those in need.

Our Donors:

Amighetti's Bakery and Cafe, Bello's Bakery, Costco, The Daily Bread, The Donut Palace, Elite Cuisine, Flowers Foods, Great Harvest Bread, Jimmy John's (Des Peres), McArthur's Bakery, Merb's Candies, Panera Bread (Des Peres), Pizza Hut (Des Peres), Raterman and Associates, Sara Lee Outlet Store, Schnucks (Des Peres), Small Cakes, and Starbucks

Our Clients:

Biddle House, Catholic Worker Karen House, Criminal Justice Ministries, Dutchtown Care Center, East St. Louis Heart and Home, Federal Probation Office Family Program, Ferguson Senior Resource Center, Father Dempsey's Charities, Grace Hill-The Patch Center, Guardian Angel Settlement, John Paul II Apartments, Our Lady's Inn, Our Little Haven, Room At the Inn, Rural Parish Workers, St. Agnes Nursing Home, St. Augustine-Wellston Center, St. Francis Xavier SVDP, St. John Neumann Apartments, St. Louis Crisis Nursery, St. Mary Magdalen SDVP, St. Nicholas SVDP, Sts. Teresa and Bridget and more....

STAYING connected

The newsletter of Caritas Connections, Inc.

Annual Appeal Letter Asks For Continued Support

Generosity of donors helps Caritas continue mission

Our Mission

Inspired by the compassion of Jesus, Caritas Connections, Inc. continues His mission to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and help the sick, suffering and homeless.

Caritas Connections sent out its annual appeal letter in late October, asking for continued financial support of this all-volunteer organization. Thanks to the generosity of our donor base, both the clients we serve and the amount of goods we've distributed continues to grow.

The letter noted that since 2016, donations to Caritas have increased 16% while the amount that we have donated has increased by more than 75%. In 2016, we distributed \$137,600 worth of goods. In 2019, we're projected to deliver more than \$240,000 worth of food, clothing, household and personal care items.

Caritas serves organizations throughout the metro St. Louis area on both sides of the river. The food, clothing and personal care items that we deliver fill a real need, helping the poor and underprivileged. The difference

that we make is dramatic. Yet there is so much more we can do as the number of homeless, along with our aging population, continues to be on the rise.

The goal of this year's appeal is to raise \$75,000 by the end of the year. To help with that effort, there is a challenge grant where the Caritas Board of Directors has agreed to personally match any donation up to \$20,000.

The annual appeal has increased in importance where it has now surpassed the Caritas Connections golf tournament as the number one source of funding for the organization. Any contribution helps us do a better job of helping others. We ask you to please consider using the enclosed envelope or go to www.caritasconnections.com to donate via PayPal.

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A small sampling of thanks from some of our clients

❖ Lisa Saunders, Housing Director for the **East Side Heart & Home Family Center** shared her thanks for Caritas Connections providing paper products and deli meat for their volunteers' lunches during the 13-week process of building their 22nd home for families in need.

❖ Tess Sanders, Outreach Coordinator at the **College Church** thanked personal shopper Rose Achenbrenner for purchasing multicultural children's books each month. According to Tess, "We've been able to send guests home with a book per child."

❖ **The Eastern District of Missouri Probation Office** recently extended their thanks to Caritas Connections for once again donating gifts as well as 150 coats that will be distributed to children over the holidays.

With more than 30 clients served on a regular basis, we're always getting thank you notes throughout the year. But we can never thank our volunteers enough for the many things they do. They and our generous donor base are the heart and soul of Caritas Connections.

Tributes

Donations to Caritas Connections have been made in recognition of the following family and friends:

In Honor Of:

Sally Wagner
Mary Kempa
Pat McBride
Glen Doherty
Father Bryon
Deacon Don and Jan Denham

In Memory Of:

Pat Howley
Mary Ann Howley
Jane Milhouse
Douglas Flavin
David Switzer
Madeleine Castellini
Andrew Padberg
Eileen Padberg Lee
Robert Albrecht
John and Catherine Molini
Martin Jungkuntz
Ann Gahn
Ann Proscino
Beth Spilker
Sister Barbara Volks
Vicki Ganninger
Ray Mandle
G Lamb and Liana
deceased family members
Fred Baker
Mary Ann Hess
Buschmann and
Thomas families
H. Fritz Shoults
Valenta Grandmother

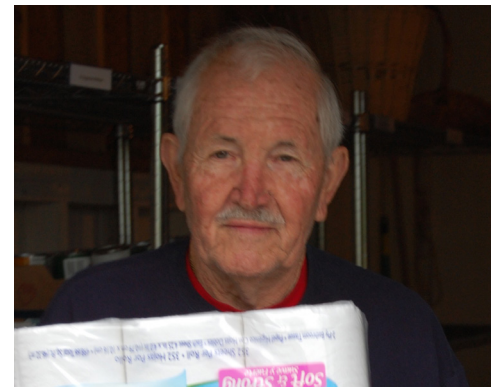
Volunteer Appreciation Dinner Attracts a Crowd



The number of volunteers who give their time and effort to Caritas Connections continues to grow — and so does the annual Volunteer appreciation Mass and gathering. This year's celebration was hosted by Dan and Gina Bauman on Saturday, October 12th. Father Bryon celebrated Mass for the attendees and afterward, the many volunteers of Caritas got an opportunity to learn more about how others are involved. Thanks to all of the volunteers who help make this organization continue to make a positive difference in the lives of so many people.

Caritas Mourns The Loss of Loyal Volunteer Ray Mandle

Ray Mandle died October 19 at the age of 88. Ray was a Veteran of the Korean War, a husband, father, uncle, friend to many and long-time parishioner of St. Gerard Majella. Ray was also one of the original bread runners, back before Caritas Connections even had a name. Ray made countless deliveries to a variety of clients and was always happy and grateful to serve. Ray touched the lives of so many during his time. He will be greatly missed and is forever in our hearts.



Sock Drives Underway

Last Christmas season, customers of the **Smallcakes** store in Kirkwood were kind enough to donate many pairs of socks to Caritas Connections into a decorated collection bin. **Lauren Donoghue**, who is the store manager at Smallcakes kept the sock drive going throughout the year, resulting in many new pairs of socks as well as several donations of personal care products and two large bags of donated clothes. This year, the SmallCakes sock drive continues, thanks to the support and generosity of Lauren.

Meanwhile, blue bins can once again be found at the SGM Christmas tree lot as the **Fifth Annual New Sock Collection** for both adults and children gets underway. Please consider donating several NEW pairs when you get your tree. If you can't make it by and would still like to contribute or if you have any questions, contact markgreen73@gmail.com —or, if you're shopping in Kirkwood, stop by Smallcakes and fill the bin with socks or clothing items.

Hunger Is Closer Than You Think

Often we assume that “those in need” are limited to the inner city or historically poor neighborhoods. We don't expect to find families struggling with hunger in West County, but the need exists. As part of its efforts to significantly increase the amount of food and personal care items it donates, Caritas Connections has been expanding its relationship with several organizations near its base in Kirkwood, MO.

Two years ago Caritas joined the efforts of Trinity Church to support the **Robinson Cares Food Pantry**, for families in need at Robinson Elementary. As Caritas is known to go above and beyond, it decided that a gap could be filled by contributing fresh and frozen foods. These foods provide higher nutritional value than typical food pantry

items and a tasty boost to mealtimes that frequently lack in quality. Caritas donated a freezer and a refrigerator to the food pantry for storage. Caritas now provides monthly donations of frozen meals, meat, dairy, eggs and fresh fruit. Our personal shoppers work with Trinity Church and school counselors to fine tune the specific needs and help to provide balanced diets, which is proven to help students succeed in school.

Caritas also supports **Kirkwood Nutrition of the Weekends**, a program that provides meals for over 125 students each weekend. Once again, Caritas asked how it could fill a need, and is now donating personal care items each month.

Most recently Caritas became involved with a third client organization in our backyard with **Barretts Elementary School's PTO** to provide meals for food-insecure students. Each Friday needy students are discretely given a backpack full of food items to be consumed over the weekend—when school sponsored meals aren't available to them. Caritas is contributing non-perishable food items to this program.



Gretchen Whittington, personal shopper for the Robinson Cares Food Pantry.

These clients are just some of many organizations, groups and places that benefit from the many works of Caritas Connections. The more people who volunteer their time as well as donate to the organization, the more people Caritas Connections can help. The need is great. The good you can do is immense.

volunteer spotlight

MAKING FRIENDS AND CONNECTIONS

It's not surprising that a teacher and mother would see the importance in assisting with food-insecure students in local neighborhoods. As a teacher **Gretchen Whittington** was well aware of the link between food insecurity in students and their performance and behavior in school. As a mother she knew that students struggling with hunger negatively affect all students, including her own.

So as a volunteer at Caritas, Gretchen has worked to develop and support the relationships with food pantries and weekend food programs at several local schools. She is currently the personal shopper for both the Robinson Cares Food Pantry and the Kirkwood NOW weekend meals program.

Gretchen first started participating with Caritas five years ago as a way to get involved with her church, St. Gerard Majella, where the tireless activities of Fr. Tom Bryon were an inspiration to her. “I love to organize things, and I started by helping once a week to prepare food deliveries. Each Monday our team has quite the challenge of assessing and organizing the food we've received for delivery the next day to about ten client organizations,” Gretchen said. “I've really enjoyed working with our Monday morning team and I made some great friends along the way.”

As she became aware of Caritas' increased activity donating purchased food and personal care items, Gretchen helped make the connection with the school food pantries. When she went to work part time as the art teacher at Assumption grade school, more flexibility was needed in her volunteer schedule. That's when the role as personal shopper became a perfect fit.