

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



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It's Simple: Boxes Needed

For a volunteer program to continue to remain that way, it is crucial to continue pursuing donations, potential volunteers and yes, even boxes. Right now, we're in need of empty boxes. Size: no larger than baby diaper or paper ream size. Please include lids or flaps that fold. If you would like to volunteer to help in the garage, be a Directed Shopper or support us in any other way, email [Joann Donelon at joanndonelon@gmail.com](mailto:Joann.Donelon@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:

Britt's Bakehouse, Bello's Bakery, Costco, The Daily Bread, The Donut Palace, Elite Cuisine, Great Harvest Bread, Jimmy John's (Des Peres), 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, 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 SVDP and more....

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

STAYING connected

The newsletter of Caritas Connections, Inc.

2020 Financial Report— Dealing with a Pandemic

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.

The on-going effects of COVID-19 were felt around the world, across the nation and hit home here in the St. Louis metro area, forcing Caritas to make several changes in the way we serve those in need. But through determination, a strong commitment from our volunteer base and the ongoing generosity of our many donors, we were able to rise to the challenge and are poised to continue our mission.

For the year, the total value of aid passed on to our clients in the form of clothing, food, personal care items and other operational supplies was \$214,877. This represented a \$73,015 drop versus our 2019 numbers which was due to so many of our clients having to drastically reduce or even shut down their own operations during the course of the year due to the ongoing pandemic. Add in the fact that many of our suppliers had to also curtail their donations and the impact of the virus is even more apparent.

Still, our volunteers continued to step up, picking up and delivering items to our client base that remained open and finding new ways to donate. There were lots of canned food items collections put on by families, neighborhoods and schools and our generous donor base actually increased donations over our 2019 numbers by more than \$24,000.

This helped offset the cancellation of our annual golf tournament, which is normally our largest source of fund-raising. Even with the tournament cancelled, we still were able to raise more than \$16,000 thanks to many would-be participants passing on their sign-up money for a tournament that never took place—though that was down more than \$35,000 from previous years.

Overall, total revenue for Caritas Connections in 2020 was \$254,966—an increase of \$2,000 from our 2019 numbers. The generosity of our donors was felt throughout the year and especially with our annual appeal that resulted in us surpassing projections for the year by more than \$20,000.

As a result, Caritas Connections is poised to see our level of aid passed on to our clients return to pre-COVID numbers. Like many, we are cautiously optimistic about 2021. 2020 was a year unlike any other and it's even more apparent now that the need for the services we provide to our clients will continue to grow.

Because Caritas has no salaried employees and because of donations of many required services, such as auto repair and warehouse space, we operate with extremely low overhead.

Caritas Connections' overhead is less than 5% of the total expenditures. That means that for every dollar donated, more than \$.95 goes directly to helping the poor. That is a formula that we have no intention of deviating from—now or in the future.

Golf Tournament Moves to August

Caritas Connections Benefit Golf Tournament is now slated for Friday, **August 27th** at Aberdeen Please save the date! More details and registration information will be coming in the Spring!

Tributes

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

In Honor Of:

Father Bryon
John Vogl, DDS
Jim and Sharon Patton's
45th wedding anniversary
Pat and Barb McBride
Caritas volunteers
Cay Sullivan
Kevin Conroy's birthday
Grant Montgomery
Mike and Sandy Murphy
Penny and Joe Helmsing
Jan Glunt
Health Care Workers
Wayne and Kathy Dahmer
Walsh, McBride, Britton, Magac, Travis,
James, Terry & Wagoner Families

In Memory Of:

Adrienne Sametz
James Edwin Klotz
Michael Bridges
John and Ebie McKenzie
Doug Flavin
Tom Schmidt
Jorge Luis Tumialan
Christine Tiemeyer
John Henry Winter, MD
Patrick Joyce and Mary Ann Howley
Robert Cradock
Ann Proscino
Patrick O'Neill
William H. Jones
Jim and Dorothy Askren
Kathleen Kovacs
Larry Mauch
Ray Mandle
Jack Fortner
Robert Glamb
J. Richard Eachern
John Green
Marvin Schweizer
Gene Gahn
Frank Ganninger
Caroline Harvath
Anne Noelker
Mark Elliott
Gerald Corley
Thomas Patrick Manning
Sandy Zygmund
David Switzer
Richard Rabbitt
Norm, Bee and Ken Fitzler
Robert and Mary Ann Lehmkuhl
Mary Ann Walker
Charles and Pat Vatterott
Dorothy Heinlein
Laura Magac
Jack Gordon
Michael Dunker
Jerry Corley
Joan Weissert
Bob O'Brien
Mario Coronado

Can Do Attitude

Canned food drives come at opportune time

A canned food drive recently hosted by the St. Gerard Majella PSR program as well as another effort courtesy of students at St. Gerard Majella school resulted in some much needed items that are distributed each week to Caritas clients.

Participants in the PSR program handed out flyers and empty grocery bags (donated by Schnucks) on December 6th, and then picked the filled bags up on Sunday, December 13th. Overall, about 120 flyers/bags were given out and the following week they picked up about 70 filled bags, which were later brought to the Caritas garage, helping to stock the shelves for the coming week.

Then, for the 5th year in a row as part of Catholic Schools Week, the students at St. Gerard were challenged to fill the office of their principal, Ms. Chris Guthrie with donated canned food items. The result? More than 3100 food items made it into her office! This collection helped bridge the gap for canned food items as normal food delivery from Schnucks had not arrived by Monday morning and the inventory in the Caritas garage had gotten quite low. The canned goods from the school resulted in having plenty of food to deliver to our clients.

Special thanks go out to all participants as well as PSR coordinator Mary Jo

McLaughlin and SGM principal Chris Guthrie for their can do attitude in coordinating the drives and helping Caritas Connections.



Mary Jo McLaughlin with some of the PSR participants and about 2/3 of the cans that were collected helping to fill the office of school principal, Chris Guthrie.

Caritas Benefits from Amazon Smile Button

If you haven't done it already, next time you use Amazon, please choose Caritas Connections as the charity of your choice for their Amazon Smile program. It costs you nothing to sign up—but for every purchase you make, a small amount is donated to Caritas Connections. To date, Caritas has received more than \$800 through this program—and if more people used it, that number would grow even more—and every little bit helps!



TO SIGN UP:

1. Visit smile.amazon.com
2. Sign in with your Amazon.com credentials
3. Choose Caritas Connections to receive donations from the list of organizations.
4. Start shopping!
5. Add a bookmark for smile.amazon.com to make it even easier to return and start your shopping at AmazonSmile
6. If you use the app, you need to activate it there too.

Innovative Idea Demonstrates Power of Connections

Scott Rockafellow had an idea. Seeing how much the ongoing pandemic had hurt local restaurants and knowing there were even more people struggling to get by, he thought, "What if we could raise money to help local restaurants and then use the money raised to pre-buy meals that could, in turn, be delivered to those in need?"

Scott is a parishioner at St. Gerard Majella and was a co-chair of FallFest for several years with Caritas Connections volunteer, Mary Kempa. Scott knew that many area restaurants that had been reduced to carryout service only were struggling and that some of their employees were in danger of losing their jobs, right around the holiday season.

In his role as FallFest chairman, Scott worked with two restaurants that had generously donated food items. So he approached The Corner Pub and Three Kings Public House to see if they might be interested in participating. Next, Scott approached Caritas Connections, asking if the organization would be open to having meals served to some of our existing clients.

We said yes to his proposal and put him in touch with Our Lady's Inn, Crisis Nursery St. Louis and Boys Hope/Girls Hope who all agreed to be part of the program.

From there, Scott sent a letter on behalf of his entire family to friends and acquaintances, requesting that they "Donate A Night Out" which would help provide needed revenue to area restaurants to help their employees get through the holidays and in turn, provide meals to those in need through Caritas Connections.

The response was overwhelming, resulting in \$4500 in donations, which was then matched, dollar for dollar by Scott's employer, Bayer.

Scott delivered two checks, each for \$4500 to the two restaurants before the holidays and then began working on the logistics involved in coordinating orders and setting up pick up and delivery times. Like

all things COVID-related, it took a while to put the program into motion.

Each Caritas client has a different need (family style, individual meals, best day of delivery) and the restaurants are being extremely flexible in meeting those needs. Our Lady's Inn isn't staffed for weekends so getting meals prepared and delivered is a huge help. Crisis Nursery is getting 50 prepared meals delivered right to their door and the staff at Boys Hope/Girls Hope mentioned that meals had become the number one expense during the coronavirus and that it was likely that some of the children had never ordered off of a restaurant menu before.

Scott, his wife Michelle, and their two kids are all engaged in collecting the orders and coordinating delivery to the three different organizations. It has become a family effort. For Scott's son, Max, it became his senior project. His daughter, Tess is getting service hours, and getting the entire family involved has been rewarding, knowing that the good they are doing is helping some local restaurants as well as all sorts of people who they'd probably never encounter do a little bit better during this ongoing pandemic. According to Scott, "We'll keep on delivering until the money runs out."

We salute the Rockafellow family and the many others who have helped turn this program into a reality.



Scott Rockafellow, his daughter, Tess and son, Max, pick up orders that are ready for delivery to three Caritas Connections clients.

client profile: Criminal Justice Ministry

SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE MOST VULNERABLE WITHOUT JUDGEMENT

The premise behind the work done by the Criminal Justice Ministry is simple—do unto others as you would have done unto you. Their mission is to serve those impacted by the criminal justice system, not judge them. And that's exactly what they've been doing throughout the St. Louis area and extending into northeastern Missouri.

For about the past year-and-a-half, Caritas Connections has been providing weekly donations to their food pantry. The majority of food items are then made available to their clients in their housing program. Other items are also made available to help with emergency services for clients with no current place to stay.

According to Tom Casey, Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Ministry, "We know we can count on Caritas for their on-going commitment to providing food items. That's reassuring and really helps us reduce the cost of providing these essential items."

Beyond providing their clients food, clothing, transportation and housing, Criminal Justice Ministry also provides emotional support and encouragement throughout the process of readjusting to society. And the work they do is working as they've been able to drastically lower the recidivism rate of the formerly incarcerated from 66% nationally to 22% as a CJM program graduate.

"We're grateful for all the help and support that Caritas continues to provide us," said Casey. "Obviously, our missions are right in line with each other—and that benefits a lot of people in the long run."