

PaLS Donates Diapers

The St. Gerard Majella group known as PaLS (Parents and Little Spirits) was looking to ramp up activity once again after a nearly two-year hiatus thanks to the ongoing pandemic. During Advent, they created a drive where participants could drop off diapers and wipes in the Church Narthex. The drive culminated when children brought in their baby Jesus from family Nativity sets to be blessed by Father Grosch and later, all the diapers and wipes were donated to Caritas.

According to Therese Haluska, "It was a fun way to get PaLS going again and we look forward to being able to support Caritas more in the future."

Collections like these, along with other drives and fund-raising events are truly appreciated and help enable Caritas to continue to support the many clients we serve.

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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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

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 County Probation Office, St. Louis Crisis Nursery, St. Mary Magdalen SDVP, St. Nicholas SVDP, Sts. Teresa and Bridget SVDP and more....

STAYING connected

The newsletter of Caritas Connections, Inc.

2021 Financial Report—Ramping Up and Moving Forward

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.

When looking at the challenges Caritas faced in 2021, many thanks go out to the generosity of both our donors and our volunteer network. In what was a most uncertain year with the continued pandemic affecting the way we all work and live, the total income for Caritas was more than \$278,000 consisting primarily of individual and corporate contributions, Gifts in Kind and the return of our Golf Tournament. That was a \$23,000 dollar increase over our 2020 numbers.

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 \$221,268 representing an almost \$6,400 increase over last year's numbers.

Donations were up, but so were expenses and that's a trend we're expecting to continue. The cost of gas, food and personal care items began to climb towards the end of 2021 and that is continuing this year. Looking at our current budget numbers, we are anticipating that our overall expenses will increase by \$76,000 in 2022.

Those numbers are daunting—but thanks to the determination and dedica-

tion of our many volunteers and donors we are prepared to meet that challenge. In the coming year, we'll be focusing on delivering healthier food choices to the clients we serve. Our dedicated shoppers will be able to deliver specific items that our clients need.

There will always be special requests and needs—a good example is our recent push to help many of the emergency shelters in the St. Louis area where we met and exceeded a request for warm clothing donations. We put out a request for help and our volunteers and donors delivered.

That is the on-going strength of Caritas. We have always kept our expenses as low as possible. 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.

Once again, our overhead was less than 5% of our total expenditures for the year. **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.**

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SPRING 2022 ISSUE

Golf Tournament Swings Back to Spring

Caritas Connections Benefit Golf Tournament Tees Off on Friday, May 20th at Aberdeen

We were thrilled last August when the Caritas Connections Golf Tournament was able to be held at Aberdeen. This year, we're even more excited for it to return there in the spring. Please mark your calendars now for Friday May 20th and plan on joining us for our biggest fundraiser of the year. You can play, be a sponsor or simply join us afterward for dinner. Questions or need more info? Contact Libby Billhartz at billhartz4@att.net or call 636-236-5212.



Tributes

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

In Honor Of:

Father Bryon
Larry Newell
Haley and Dave Bell
Anne Bly
Terry Rock
ESH&H Family Center
Mike Haywood
Joe and Penny Helmsing
Dr. Stephen Ross

In Memory Of:

Jennie Talbot
Mary Ann Hess
Dave Redington
David Pilla
John Fitzgerald
Ron and Wanda Sohn
Rick May
Mr. & Mrs. Chester Patton
Jack Fortner
Patrick, Joyce and
Mary Ann Howley
Mary Ann Walker
Kenneth Tiemeyer
Douglas Flavin
Jim Hacking
Loretto Scharf
Laura Magac
Thomas, T. Pat and Kevin
Manning
Ann Proscino
Keith Scott
Bob Sanderson
David Switzer
Geraldine Burch
Julie Long
John Baudendistel
Buschmann & Thomas Families
Ralph Brinkman
Rob Forsythe
Raymond Klotz

Socks for Soles Collects. Caritas Delivers.

Socks for Soles is a grassroots based, non-profit organization dedicated to helping people affected by homelessness in St. Louis. Over the past five years, Socks for Soles has helped over 6,000 people in need, collecting socks which Caritas Connections has helped deliver to worthy organizations in the St. Louis metropolitan area.

In 2021, Socks for Soles added underwear and gloves to their collection itinerary which had always had a drop-off box at the SGM Christmas Tree Lot. When the pandemic interfered with those plans, Socks for Soles adapted and created a website with Amazon pages so that orders could be shipped directly. In addition, Socks for Soles created a contest for neighborhoods with SGM kids in them to win a Block party for the most donations.

All those efforts paid off as Socks for Soles collected more than 2100 items which Caritas has been more than happy to distribute. Caritas salutes Mark Green and Tara Scherer for all their efforts and thanks all of the many people who have donated, collected and sorted these items.



The Scherer boys open and sort packages of donations.

Caritas Aids Unhoused in Crisis

City Hope St. Louis runs eight homeless shelters in the St. Louis area. According to founder Michael Robinson, “These are typically individuals that have experienced high levels of stress and trauma. PTSD is very strong. Mental health conditions are very prevalent with the unhoused community members. Winters can be extremely harsh on the homeless. Our goal during these times is to ensure that nobody loses their life. Nobody freezes to death. Nobody who wants to be in a shelter has to be outside.”

But with the recent spate of freezing cold weather, even City Hope was stretched to fill a need that the city of St. Louis was unable to meet. That’s where our client, Safe Haven and other emergency pop up shelters stepped in to help. These shelters are all completely volunteer run and are a part of St. Louis Winter Outreach and Unhoused STL.

During their work with Safe Haven, Kelly and Alan Loretta saw there was a tremendous need for warm clothing and blankets—so she reached out to see if

Caritas could help. A request for donations went out to our volunteer list and the response was overwhelming.

Over the next few weeks, Caritas volunteers donated several carloads of coats, warm clothing, blankets and towels that went to the shelter with the most immediate need. In addition, Caritas donated personal care items and \$400 a month so that Kelly could buy food, blankets and other needed items for the various shelters in response to each severe cold weather storm.

Efforts like this are yet another example of the ongoing kindness and generosity of Caritas volunteers. This effort demonstrates our ability to respond to immediate needs as all donations were quickly distributed and made a direct impact this winter.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can help the homeless, visit <https://www.stlwinteroutreach.org/>, <https://linktr.ee/unhousedstl> or <https://www.cityhopestl.org/>

Client Profile: Latinx Outreach Program

Every child deserves to be safe and happy. Unfortunately, that simply isn’t the case.

The Saint Louis Crisis Nursery provides a short-term, safe haven for 5,000 children a year, birth through age 12 whose families face an emergency caused by illness, homelessness, domestic violence or overwhelming parental stress.

One of the St. Louis Crisis Nursery’s programs in the metro St. Louis area is the Latinx Outreach Program that focuses on providing those services for Hispanic and Latino children along with their families. Many of the families served are recent arrivals to the area, arriving from Mexico or Central America looking for asylum.

According to Sarah E. Johnson, Latinx Program Manager, “We provide concrete, tangible resources that really help the family. We help them get settled as they establish lives here in St. Louis by guiding them through the process of accessing and navigating resources and services as well as provide children a place to stay where they’re safe and cared for.”

That’s where Caritas Connections comes in. Every month, Caritas shows up at the Latinx Outreach Program with a pick-up truck filled to the brim with food items for the pantry as well as cleaning supplies and personal care items.

“It’s so impressive to see Mark and Delores show up every month,” said Sarah. “They’re so dedicated—and the food and supplies they bring us are both meaningful and impactful to the families we serve.”

“Caritas is helping us make a difference,” added Sarah. “Really, we all have

the same mission – helping those who need it most. Our job here at Latinx is to provide families ongoing support. We want to engage them further, with a focus on building family stability and safety. Thanks to Caritas, we can do that job a little better.”

Latinx Outreach Program is just one 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.



Sarah E. Johnson, Latinx Program Manager, reaches for supplies donated by Caritas.

St. Gerard Majella Students Collect and Donate More Than 3000 Canned Food Items During Catholic Schools Week!



Once again, the students at St. Gerard Majella set about trying to fill the office of Principal Chris Guthrie with donated canned food items. The result? More than 3000 food items made it into her office!

But they didn’t stay there long. Many of the cans containing protein were immediately distributed as the warehouse had gone bare so those cans quickly found their way to a number of our clients.

Special thanks go out to all participants and SGM principal Chris Guthrie for their can do attitude in coordinating the drive and helping Caritas Connections.

Volunteer Spotlight

MARK & DOLORES GUENTHER

About six years ago, Mark Guenther was recovering from an injury at Mercy Rehab Center and happened to meet Father Bryon who was visiting patients. The two of them became acquainted and it was at that point that Father Bryon told Mark about Caritas and how he could potentially help. About a year later, Mark decided to take Father up on his offer. He volunteered to be a driver for Caritas.

Soon after, he enlisted two of his friends to join him on his runs as well. Mark enjoyed giving back and being a volunteer. Looking back on his time spent volunteering, Mark said, “It’s interesting how my involvement has transpired over time and how Caritas has evolved as well. They provide so much more than they used to.”

These days, Mark and his wife Dolores along with Larry and Ginny Wise are all dedicated shoppers on behalf of Latinx Crisis Nursery. About once a week, he’ll be in contact with Maria Mullis at Latinx who updates him on items needed to help the Nursery serve the needs of their clientele.

Both Mark and Dolores are amazed at how many families Latinx is able to help and how appreciative they are every time they make a delivery. “They really care about the families they work with—it’s more than just a job to them,” said Mark.

The couple do their shopping for items at WalMart so that they can bargain shop, picking up cartloads of food, personal care items along with laundry detergent, soap and cleaning supplies—all of which goes into their recently purchased truck.

“One of the reasons we traded in our SUV for a truck was because we knew we could deliver more with the truck,” said Mark. That new vehicle suits their needs quite well. “We feel very grateful to be able to volunteer,” said Dolores. “We’re glad to give back.”