

Tributes

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

In Memory Of:

Bob Sanderson
Bryan Harrell
Buschmann & Thomas Families
Dana Burmeister
Dennis Nielson
Ed Fick
Ed Lutzweier
Erwin Bleitner
Hanna Hammer
Jack Connell
Jackie Akins
Jeanne Welborn
John H. Winter
Mary Ann & Robert Lehmkuhl
Ruth Jungkuntz

In Honor Of:

Fox Children
Fr. Bryon's 85th Birthday
Greg & Linda Hoffmann's 50th
Wedding Anniversary
Joe Helmsing's 75th Birthday
Mary Frances Layton
Mr. A.C. Reichardt Birthday
St. Mary Magdalen Class of 1971



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The newsletter of Caritas Connections, Inc.

Annual Appeal Seeks to Offset Rising Prices

As an all-volunteer organization, Caritas Connections relies on the generosity of its donors to help us fulfill our mission of serving the poor and underserved throughout the metro St. Louis area.

This past year, as we all began to emerge from the effects of the pandemic, rising prices due to inflation, supply chain issues and the war in Ukraine all diminished the purchasing power of our dedicated shoppers. Though many of our food items continue to be donated, recent years have seen an increase in our number of dedicated shoppers—who are able to purchase specific items that our clients need to better serve their constituents. This is a unique service that Caritas Connections can provide.

But today's dollar simply doesn't go as far. Our annual Golf Tournament is an

excellent source of funding—but it's no longer enough to help us serve our more than 30 clients throughout the metro St. Louis area. That's why our Annual Appeal letter seeks the support of our donor network. The letter emphasizes that donations made to Caritas actually *do* go further, as we have an anonymous donor who has once again issued a challenge grant where **every donation of \$125 or more will be matched up to \$20,000.**

Caritas is a grass-roots organization that depends on the generosity of our donor base. Over the years, we have helped turn lives around and we can't begin to tell you how many people have thanked us for our on-going support—that all begins with you. Please help us keep the good going by donating directly through our secure website at www.caritasconnections.com

Board Changes, Mission Remains the Same

Change is a part of any organization and when Gina Bauman decided to move to Kansas City and step down in her roles as both President and Treasurer of Caritas, it created a bit of a ripple effect. Tom Blood, who has been on the Board for several years, became President. Mary Jo McLaughlin stepped into the role of Treasurer and Stephanie Gummertsheimer became the new Secretary of Caritas. Both the Treasurer and Secretary role have taken on increased importance as Caritas continues to grow with our number of new clients and dedicated shoppers. The board has shifted from that of an advisory role to a more active role where each member has specific duties and responsibilities. It's all designed to keep the organization focused on our mission of connecting those who have with those who need.



From left to right: Madeleine Neuner, Mary Jo McLaughlin, Stephanie Gummertsheimer, Chris Martin, Gina Bauman, Dan Bauman, Mary Kempa, Libby Billhartz, Tom Blood and Steve Proscino as they toast Gina and Dan for all their hard work and dedication.

Donations Are Always Welcome

Non-perishable food items, personal care needs, coats and hats are just a few of the items that we're always happy to receive. If it's in good shape and you're wondering if we could use it, contact Mary Kempa at marykempa2@gmail.com.

Caritas Connections is also eligible for **matching gifts**. We are 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 law changes. To learn more or to volunteer to help, call 314-225-2605 or e-mail: CaritasConnections@gmail.com

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

Please do not leave cash donations intended for Caritas Connections in the garage.
Thank you for your ongoing support!



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.

Caritas Delivers One Last Time for Back@You Program



Nerinx Hall Students Deliver Large Sandwich Order to Caritas Clients

A team of several young women from Nerinx Hall High School recently partnered with Caritas to deliver sandwiches to multiple Caritas clients. Nerinx donated the sandwiches and Caritas provided chips, drinks, and desserts. Forming a production line, they assembled and packed the lunches and later delivered 500 of them to St. Francis Xavier church and another 500 to Fr. Dempsey's program.

According to Becky Giunta, who works at Nerinx, and also volunteers her time with Caritas, "they were all happy to serve and glad they could help while also learning more about the mission of Caritas."

For several years, Caritas has supported the BACK@YOU program, which distributes backpacks filled with essential items that help make life on the streets a little easier for the homeless. This year, our efforts reached across the state as Dan and Gina Bauman, who recently moved to Kansas City, provided the personal hygiene bags, and then drove them to St. Louis in time for distribution in late October. Marge and Keith Rich once again provided non-perishable food items that get included in the backpacks. A special thank you to Lois Etling as well, who acquired personal hygiene items for the first five years of the program and also assisted with packing.

Since 2015, the BACK@YOU program grew in size and scope. Over the past seven years, they have distributed more than 3200 filled backpacks to the homeless throughout the St. Louis metro area. Socks, hand-knit scarves, gloves, fleece throws, sleeping bags, a variety of non-perishable foods as well as personal hygiene items all help fill the backpacks. It's been a labor of love, supported by many volunteers and we've been happy

to help. Unfortunately, this is the last year for BACK@YOU as the founder, Kathy Acre, is stepping down.



Gina and Dan Bauman provided personal hygiene bags to be included in the backpacks.

Annual Volunteer Mass & Dinner Shifts to New Location

The annual Caritas Volunteer Appreciation Mass & Dinner has become somewhat of a fall tradition. This year, the event moved to the home of Tom and Chris Blood, with an outdoor Mass and dinner that took place poolside on a gorgeous, sun-drenched afternoon. Monsignor Francis Blood said the Mass, recognizing the efforts of all Caritas volunteers in his homily. After Mass volunteers enjoyed a delicious dinner and fellowship. The consensus seemed to be, "We look forward to this again next year!"

Monsignor Francis Blood presides at the annual Caritas Volunteer Appreciation Mass.



St. Louis Crisis Nursery–Jefferson Co.

St. Louis Crisis Nursery is the premier child abuse prevention program in the St. Louis region and Caritas has been happy to help three of their locations providing a variety of food items, cleaning supplies, along with pull ups, formula, and diapers. So, when the opportunity came along to serve a fourth location in Jefferson County, the decision was an easy one.

Sharon Renth, Family Engagement Specialist, met with Mary Kempa and knew there was a need that Caritas could help fulfill. According to Sharon, "We are so grateful to have the support of Caritas. Every month, they make deliveries that have really made a difference to the children and families we serve in Arnold, High Ridge and Jefferson County."

Michael Forster is the dedicated shopper who works with Sharon to compile a list of needs which often includes pull-ups and formula, as well as diapers, wipes, hygiene products, food bags and food boxes.

"All of my families have been touched by the food deliveries," said Sharon. "The formula for our premie babies along with the pull-ups they deliver helps us keep these infants properly fed and clothed—and with money not going as far as it once did, that has a major impact on families."

In addition to the Jefferson County location located in Mercy Hospital, Caritas also serves Crisis Nursery locations in north county, south county and Richmond Heights.

St. Louis Crisis Nursery–Jefferson County 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.



Sharon Renth stands in front of fully stacked shelves after a recent Caritas delivery.

PSR Students Create Canned Food Fundraiser for Caritas



Several St. Gerard PSR 8th grade students took to their neighborhood streets on Sunday, October 2nd, seeking food donations to help support Caritas Connections. Their efforts paid off as they helped fill the Caritas garage with more than 50 of their blue bags, filled with a variety of food items that were soon sent on their way to the clients we serve.

Canned food collectors included Tony Zoia, Sophie Applebaum, Nate Wilhelm, Tori Knowles, Maggie Biermann, and Riley Bryant.

Volunteer Spotlight

DAN SIMMONS



When Dan Simmons got out of the Navy in 1971 and began working for his dad, little did he know he would end up in the National Football League's Hall of Fame. At the time, his dad was a teacher and a coach at Ferguson Junior High School—but also worked as the equipment manager for the St. Louis football Cardinals. The behind-the-scenes equipment needs of a professional football team are many and Dan quickly learned all aspects of preparing the team to take the field.

When one of the higher ups within the Cardinals organization switched to the New Orleans Saints he asked if Dan would be interested in taking on the job as equipment manager of the New Orleans Saints. He certainly was and there he remained until 2015 when he retired and moved back to St. Louis.

It was around that time that Dan met Fr. Bryon who had given his sister the blessing of the sick. Soon after, Dan was riding along with Fr. Bryon, making deliveries to DeSoto and East St. Louis. From there, Dan became a regular Tuesday delivery driver.

"I was pretty good at packing boxes and loading them," said Dan. "After all, an equipment manager has to do a lot of that every week."

Though Dan has recently had to cut back on his involvement with Caritas, we are honored to have a Hall of Famer among our volunteers and salute him on his career and the many hours he has dedicated to fulfilling our mission.

The Tuesday volunteer team that Dan worked with included: Fr. Bryon, Gary Behrens, Dave Zensen, Mike Haywood, Paul Roth, Denny Lanser, Ron Fitzler.