

Winter Clothing Donations Request

Winters can be especially cruel for the poor and the homeless. So, we're asking you to consider donating gloves, mittens, socks, hats and scarves. New items are preferred, but we'll gladly take gently used items as well. Men's, women's, and children's sizes are all welcomed and will be distributed to our clients to provide to their constituents. NEW underwear and socks for men, women and children are especially appreciated. You can drop items off at the St. Gerard-Majella parish office garage on Monday or Thursday mornings before 10 a.m. through January 5, 2024. If you have questions, please contact Mary Kempa at mkempa@caritasconnections.com.

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: CaritasConnections@gmail.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



Volunteers appreciated at annual Mass and Dinner

The sky was blue, the air was crisp and more than 30 attendees gathered at the home of Tom and Chris Blood for the annual Caritas Connections Volunteer Mass and Appreciation Dinner. Father Bryon said the Mass and, in his homily, emphasized the good that Caritas volunteers do and how Jesus calls us all to help serve the underserved. The evening was an excellent chance for Caritas volunteers to get to know other volunteers and learn about the many ways that people get involved to help us in our mission of connecting those who have with those who need.

STAYING connected

The newsletter of Caritas Connections, Inc.

Appeal Letter Arrives at Ideal Time

“95 cents out of every dollar donated to Caritas is used to help feed, clothe, and support the poor and underserved of the metro St. Louis area.” That’s a statement from our annual appeal letter and one that few other charitable organizations can make. It’s a testament to the many volunteers and of course, our donors who continue to help us in our mission of connecting those who have with those who need.

The appeal letter arrived in mailboxes soon after a recent 4-page article about Caritas ran in the St. Louis Review (see related story on below) So, more people throughout the St. Louis area are learning about the good that Caritas does on a week-in, week-out basis.

But as the letter states, “we could be doing so much more—this past year, we had to turn down four organizations requesting our help as we simply didn’t have the funding needed to support them.”

The end of the year is an excellent time to donate—especially considering the fact that your donation will go even 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**. And for the first time, we’re asking donors to consider using the **Missouri Food Pantry Tax Credit** where you can **receive up to a 50% tax credit for your donation by filling out a form** (check with your accountant before doing so!)

We’re hoping this article serves as a reminder to those that received the letter to continue to help us do what we do best. Please help us keep the good going by donating directly through our secure website at www.caritasconnections.com or by sending a check to Caritas Connections, P.O. Box 31072, St. Louis, MO 63131

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.

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Caritas Profiled in the St. Louis Review

Our mission statement appeared as the headline on the front page of the St. Louis Review’s November 6th edition profiling the good work that Caritas Connections has been doing in the St. Louis metro region for four decades.

Inside was a four-page article detailing how Caritas first began with Father Bryon and telling the story of the good that Caritas does by following along on a typical delivery day.

Numerous Caritas volunteers were featured in the article as well as a few of the clients we serve—all helping to generate more awareness of the on-going work Caritas does to help the poor and underserved.

In case you haven’t read the article here’s a link that you can enter into your browser: <https://bit.ly/CaritasReviewArticle> Enjoy!



FALL 2023 ISSUE

Review cover page courtesy of Jacob Wiegand and the St. Louis Review

Tributes

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

In Honor Of:

Penny Helmsing
Fr. Bryon
Mike Haywood
Carol Maloney
Fr. Bob Gettinger
Dr. John & Mary Beck
Janet Wittenauer
Kim & Dan Dykas

In Memory Of:

John & Nancy Olson
Joseph Boschert
Carol Ann Shuber Baker
Pat Fechter
Catherine D. Bray
Eugenia "Jean" Irene Butch
Edward Tumminia, Jr
Gary Smith
Jackie Ratican
Kaye Huch
Judy Huddleston
Bob Marquitz
Carole Kramer
June Hirlinger
John Hefe
Bridgette Littman
Sandy Pieper
Robert E Lally
John O'Connell
Edward Fick
Eddie Tumminia Jr.
Mary Lee Grone
Ann Proscino
Jorge Luis Tumialan

COVID Setbacks Lead to \$25,000 grant for Caritas Connections

The Missouri Department of Economic Development awarded Caritas Connections a \$25,000, one-time-only grant as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. Caritas was one of more than 250 not-for-profits in the state that were awarded this COVID relief money in the Fall of this year.

And what a relief it has been.

During COVID, we had to cancel our annual golf tournament, reduce the amount and frequency of our deliveries to our clients as well as our volunteer involvement. Those were tough times for everyone.

In the roughly two years since, expenses have gone up and donations have gone down—resulting in us having to cut our client budget by 15% and put a freeze on taking on new clients.

This past year, we began looking for new sources of funding to help carry on

our mission. Grants were one avenue that we wanted to explore. When the opportunity to apply for the COVID relief grant money came along, Caritas definitely qualified and we submitted our proposal on a very tight timeline.

We owe a great deal of thanks to Kent Hornberger, who alerted us to the grant's existence. The grant money arrived in November and was quickly put to good use - allowing us to reinstate meat purchases starting in December that had been recently discontinued, and is allowing us to continue Christmas donations to several of our clients that we had planned on curtailing.

Though it's a one-time-only grant, the new funds are helping us return to our pre-pandemic giving numbers. And, as always, 95 cents out of every dollar spent, goes directly to the clients we serve.

Pretzel Boys Joins Caritas Donor Roster



Tony Roldan has been a frequent customer of the Kirkwood Pretzel Boys location. On one of his many visits, he got to know Tim Garvey, the owner of Pretzel Boys. "My stomach brought me here," said Tony. "But one day, in one of our conversations, I decided to ask Tim if they'd consider donating to Caritas."

Turns out, Pretzel Boys has been a sponsor of the annual Caritas Golf Tournament for a number of years. And the connection goes back even further than that. Tim worked with Father Bryon many years ago helping to deliver items when Father was at St. Mary Magdalen.

Tim was well aware of the good that Caritas does and was happy to help our cause by donating unsold pretzels at the end of each workday. "We bake as we go, here at Pretzel Boys," said Tim. "But we almost always have leftover products each day and we're happy to have Caritas volunteers stop by at the close of each business day."

A new team of recruits was needed to make these pickups and the end result is that several Caritas clients are now able to provide their constituents with a fresh pretzel to enjoy.

Special thanks to Tony and Tim (pictured above), our new team of volunteers, and everyone at the Kirkwood Pretzel Boys location!

Client Profile: Our Lady's Inn

Since 1982, Our Lady's Inn has served as a life-affirming alternative to abortion for over 7,000 women who have chosen life for their unborn babies. For more than 40 years, these families have been housed and supported in their efforts to live healthy and productive lives, achieve educational goals, gain employment, and secure stable housing.

Caritas has been happy to help Our Lady's Inn for more than seven years, providing a variety of food products, cleaning supplies and personal products that are put to good use at their south city location at Meramec and Compton.

According to Gloria Lee, Chief Program Officer at Our Lady's Inn, "Caritas allows us to choose what we need on an ongoing basis. We give them a monthly grocery list based on how many women and children are staying with us at the time. They bring us items like pancake mix, syrup, baking supplies, condiments,

canned fruit—it's a variety of food items."

Dedicated shoppers handle that list which also includes wet wipes, detergent, and cleaning supplies. In October, Caritas had to cut back on purchasing meat items due to cost-cutting measures. But that is now being reinstated in December.

"Meat is the hardest to come by," said Gloria. "We're grateful that we only went two months without the Caritas delivery. At any one time, we can have up to 16 families residing at our south city location—and we often have as many children as we have moms. Caritas does an outstanding job of helping us in our efforts to serve everyone who stays at Our Lady's Inn."

When asked about the volunteers who serve Our Lady's Inn, Gloria said, "They are so efficient, friendly and hard-working. They always ask how our clients and staff are doing. Our thanks go out to each and every volunteer at Caritas."

Caritas Hits the Jackpot Thanks to Casino Giveaways

Generally, the only thing casinos and Caritas have in common is they both start with the letters, 'ca'.

However, paths recently crossed when a friend of a friend heard that Janet Wittenauer, who is a dedicated shopper for the Wellston Center, was in search of items that could be donated as potential gifts for the Center's Christmas store.

The friend happened to be a frequent visitor to area casinos, taking advantage of the many giveaways the casinos often do for their rewards members. Many of those giveaways ended up in storage, so the individual got in touch with Janet who volunteered to stop by and pick up a few of the giveaway items.

The result was a carload of household accessory items, all in perfect condition that will help fill the shelves at the center, becoming great Christmas gift items for those who shop the center



looking for affordable gifts.

So, if, by chance, you know anyone who may have a few of those casino giveaway accessory items sitting around, we would be more than happy to help them find a deserving home. To donate, simply contact Mary Kempa at mkempa@caritasconnections.com



DONOR SALUTE: Hanlen's Fine Meats & Catering

For several years, Brady Hanlen has worked with Caritas Connections. He filled and packaged meat orders for two Caritas residential clients and Caritas volunteers picked up the orders and delivered them.

It was a great combination.

Brady had a dependable customer which helped sustain his business, especially during COVID. Caritas had a dependable supplier of meat. And two Caritas clients, (Fr. Dempsey's and Our Lady's Inn) could count on a reliable source of protein for their residents.

This past September, the five-decade-old Kirkwood institution closed its doors as Brady, who is a third-generation owner, wanted to spend more time with his family.

"As I look back on the years, it is the daily interactions, the stories shared and the connections forged that I will miss the most," Hanlen said in an article that ran in Sauce Magazine. "The conversations, the laughs and the friendships have made this more than just a profession—it has been a way of life."

We salute Brady for his years of service in helping put together specific orders for our Caritas clients and wish him well in his retirement!