

# 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

## A New Member to Facebook

Caritas Connections has been around a lot longer than Facebook. And we’ve always done fine without it. We finally decided, though, to open a Facebook page. We’ll post news, stories and photos, similar to, but more often than you get via our newsletter. Once you visit, please like our page and maybe share it with a few friends. We’re starting small but hoping to make it grow by keeping you in the know about Caritas.



NON-PROFIT MAIL  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PRESORT INC.

## A Valentine Surprise

Since 2014, Merbs Candies has donated more than \$30,000 worth of candies, apples, and strawberries to Caritas Connections, which are then delivered to clients throughout the metro area. This year, they had a special treat for Valentine’s Day as they donated a variety of chocolates in time to be distributed before the big day by our Caritas volunteers.

We salute Taylor Bearden, who has carried on her mother’s tradition of donating to Caritas that goes back to the mid-1980s. “We have always enjoyed donating to Caritas,” said Taylor. “It’s our way of giving back to our community. All our candies are ‘made with love’ and we love to help others, especially those in need.”



**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.

## 2023 Finacial Report—Organization is Back on Solid Ground

### 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.*

In 2022, we had our first operating loss as a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization which we were able to cover with a healthy reserve balance. However, during the first half of 2023, the financial picture continued to look bleak: a reduction in donations combined with ongoing price increases due to inflation combined for a second year of anticipated deficit spending.

By June, we knew things had to change. So, the Board took a hard look at Caritas spending and enacted a 15% decrease in spending by our dedicated shoppers which went into effect in August.

We took several other proactive approaches to help offset the anticipated deficit. For the first time, we began actively pursuing grants. That hard work paid off when we were awarded a \$25,000 grant for COVID Relief Funding from the Missouri Department of Community and Economic Development.

We also took a new approach with donations, preparing customizable letters that board members and volunteers sent out to friends and family members who may not know about the good work that Caritas does helping the poor and underserved throughout the St. Louis metro community.

In November, a four-page article about Caritas Connections was featured in the St. Louis Review. We also informed our donors they were eligible to take advantage of the Missouri Food Pantry Tax Credit.

Combine all those activities and Caritas experienced a remarkable financial turnaround. By year’s end, Caritas’ total income, consisting of individual and corporate contributions, Gifts in Kind, annual Golf Tournament, and the \$25,000 grant was more than \$312,000. For the year, we spent \$279,000 on

food, clothing, personal care items, computer equipment, diapers, pullups and wipes and other supplies. So, we went from having a projected net operating loss of \$60,000 in June 2023 to a net operating gain of almost \$76,000 on December 31, 2023.

The additional funds we received have already been put back into our spending budget for our dedicated shoppers while still having an adequate amount of money set aside for unexpected needs.

As an organization, 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.

We are both grateful and blessed for all the donations we have received this past year. We are continuing to pursue funding through a variety of grants - but it is individual donations that are key to the continued success of Caritas which is why we ask that if you have given before, to please give again. Your donations truly allow us to help the poor and underserved - and there are so many more that we could be helping.

So, consider being a sponsor in the annual Caritas golf tournament. Tell those you know about the good that Caritas does. Make your donation go further by taking advantage of the Missouri Food Pantry Tax Credit. And if your employer participates in matching donations, please reach out to them. With your support, we will continue to do great things.

### Inside this Issue

- 2 Changing of the Board
- 2 Give STL Day
- 2 Tributes
- 3 The MAC’s CSC aids Caritas
- 3 BINGO! for Caritas
- 3 SGM School Can Collectors
- 3 May 17th Golf Tournament
- 4 Valentine Surprise
- 4 Joining Facebook

SPRING 2024 ISSUE



# Tributes

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

**In Honor Of:**  
Brian Billhartz  
Fr. Bryon  
Betsy Kramer  
Patricia Parker  
Cathy Ross  
Mary Sippel  
Rosemary Switzer  
Ed Wanner  
Marty & Ann Ribauda's  
50th Wedding Anniversary  
Srs. Mary Anne Rose  
& Peggy Jackelen  
Friends and neighbors  
Caritas Connections Volunteers

**In Memory Of:**  
Kevin S. Berjer  
Mary K. Brasser  
Madeline Bruns  
Marion Bryon  
Buschmann & Thomas families  
Gene & Dolores Buss  
Jean & Bob Carmody  
Emelia Emke  
Norm & Bee Fitzler  
Douglas Flavin  
Frank Ganninger  
Kristina Glassl  
Tom Gunn  
John Hefe  
Michael B. Jacobs  
Al & Marge Johnson  
Pat Kelly  
Mary & Jesse Lopez  
Marie Mansfield  
Robert Marquitz  
John Olson  
Ann Proscino  
James A. Pudlowski Sr.  
Lillian Risch  
Tom Ritter  
James & Lucille Sanders  
Bob Sanderson  
Ron Schoolman  
Keith Scott  
Dr. John Shaner  
Theresa J. Tramble  
Teresa Traube  
Jorge Luis Tumialan  
Kathy Wacker  
Dr. John H. Winter  
All those helped by Caritas

## Changing of the Board

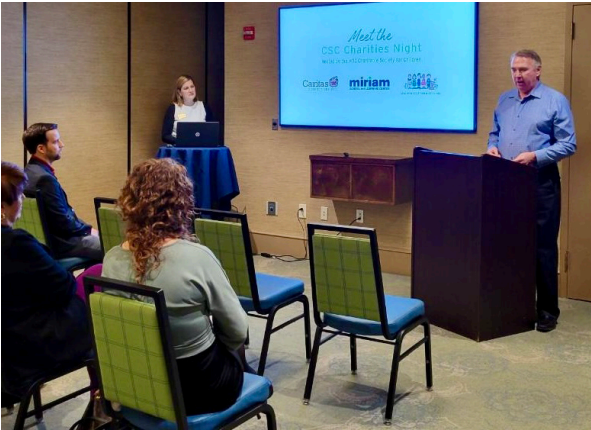
It's not often we inform our readers about the Caritas Connections Board of Directors. But the past few months have seen a change in Board members. In November, Libby Billhartz stepped down as both our Volunteer Coordinator and as a board member. Libby did a fantastic job in her role as Volunteer Coordinator which continues to grow as we now have more than 170 volunteers. When Mark Guenther volunteered to take over Libby's duties, that also meant taking her place on our board. Mark is working hard every week, trying to get to know as many volunteers as he can - and going on a few delivery runs as well. We thank him for joining us and salute Libby for all her hard work and her continued involvement as the chair of the annual Caritas Golf Tournament. Steve Proscino also stepped down from the Board this past November. Steve has been a long-time board member serving for some time as Treasurer. Steve will continue volunteering as a dedicated shopper. In January, Mary Kempa said she'd be stepping aside from her duties regard-

ing client relations—a key role within the organization. For many years, Mary has been an integral part of Caritas—not just from her board duties, but also, organizing and coordinating all garage activities, working with volunteers, and serving as our key client contact. Caritas now has 39 dedicated shopper volunteers who serve Caritas clients. To better serve these volunteers and by extension our clients, Mary's client relation responsibilities will be shared by two new volunteers: Lisa Abram and Mark Perry. Lisa or Mark will join the Board in April. Mary will continue in her role as the Caritas SGM garage coordinator. Once again, thanks to Steve and Mary for their years of service and we welcome Lisa and Mark! Currently, our other board members that weren't mentioned above are: Tom Blood, President; Tim McLaughlin, Treasurer; Stephanie Gummershiemer, Secretary; Madeleine Neuner, Communications. Plans are to add either two or three more board members after the next board meeting.

## The MAC's CSC to Aid Caritas

Since 2005, the Missouri Athletic Club's Charitable Society for Children has donated nearly \$500,000 from generous MAC members and employees to more than 50 deserving charities across the St. Louis region. Each year, the CSC seeks nominations of local children's charities from their members. Michael Gunn, who has been a long-time Caritas volunteer and supporter, nominated Caritas, and then followed through with a presentation to the CSC's committee members. As a result of that presentation, Caritas will now be one of three charities that will be supported with fund-raising drives and special events held throughout 2024. In January of 2025, Caritas will be presented with a check that will be used to support all of our clients that help children in one way or another. Tom Blood, Madeleine Neuner and Michael Gunn all helped provide an introductory glimpse to what Caritas is all about to interested MAC members in February and there will be a variety of activities taking place at the

MAC throughout the year to benefit the three chosen charities including a special hats/socks/gloves/coats/underwear drive for children that Caritas serves. This drive will take place in September and October at both MAC locations. Special thanks to Michael Gunn for his work in getting Caritas known to the Missouri Athletic Club's Charitable Society for Children.



At the MAC West, Tom Blood highlights Caritas Connections' involvement with charities who serve children in the greater St. Louis area.

## Knights of Columbus say, "BINGO!" to raise money for Caritas

You never know where a donation to Caritas might come from, but in many instances, they still begin with Father Bryon. Dave Denzer has been a Knights of Columbus member for 25 years. He also does pastoral care work at Mercy and through a friend of a friend, he heard about Father Bryon and Caritas. Soon after, Dave saw the article about Caritas in the St. Louis Review. It turns out that Dave also helps the Knights of Columbus Holy Infant Council host a monthly Bingo Night, which takes place in the main cafeteria at Holy Infant Parish. With each Bingo Night, they have a 50/50 drawing where half of

the proceeds are donated to a charity—and having heard first-hand about the work that Caritas does, followed by the St. Louis Review article, Dave decided that Caritas Connections would be a most worthy candidate for those proceeds. So, on January 14th, more than 300 Bingo lovers filled the Holy Infant cafeteria and the 50/50 drawing had quite a bit of interest, resulting in a \$1160 donation in the name of Caritas Connections. Special thanks go out to Dave and his fellow Knights of Columbus members as well as all the Bingo lovers who took part in the drawing!

## SGM STUDENTS STOCK SHELVES ONCE AGAIN

For the eighth-straight year, the students at St. Gerard-Majella Catholic School took part in a canned food collection on behalf of Caritas Connections, collecting 1567 cans, as well as boxed/bagged goods and \$425 in donations that were given by the student's families. Special thanks go out to all participants, SGM faculty coordinator, Donna McVey and principal Lucy Ginz for their can-do attitude in continuing to coordinate the drive to assist the Caritas mission.



## GOLF TOURNAMENT TEES OFF ON MAY 17TH

Food, family, friends—what could be better than a day on the links supporting Caritas? Sign up now to play or be a sponsor in the Caritas Connections Benefit Golf Tournament at Aberdeen. The annual Caritas Connections Golf Tournament returns once again to Aberdeen Golf Course on Friday, May 17th. Mark your calendars now 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. To register or for more info, visit our website: caritasconnections.com.



## Caritas to Participate in Give STL Day

Over the past decade, Give STL Day has raised more than \$30 million for over 1000 local nonprofits. For the first time, Caritas Connections will now be a part of this day of giving on **May 9th**. As a reader of this newsletter, we ask that you consider doing three things:

1. Mark your calendar and plan on visiting <https://www.givestlday.org/> to make a donation to Caritas on May 9.
2. Phone, email or write a letter to five of your friends who may not know about Caritas and ask them to consider donating—it can be as little as \$5.
3. Visit the page listed above and donate to Caritas on May 9 to Give STL Day.