

Tributes

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

In Honor Of:
Larry Abram
Fr. Bryon for his 61st ordination anniversary

In Memory Of:
Steve Branstetter
Jean & Bob Carmody
Robert Craddock
Ann Gahn
Jim Kennedy
Mary & Jesse Lopez
Mr. & Mrs. Chester Patton
Paul Raczkiewicz
Debbie Rehm
Dick Reis
Tom Ritter
Dottie Wilson's sister, Pat

Participation in Give STL Day Expands Donor Base

For the first time, Caritas Connections participated in Give STL Day which took place on May 9, 2024. This annual event, which has helped raise more than \$30 million for more than 1000 local nonprofits, gave Caritas a an opportunity to spread the word about the good that we do and expand our current donor base. We hope to make it an annual event with even more new connections made next year.



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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

As a retiree who is required to take RMDs from your IRAs, you could lower your income tax liabilities by giving to Caritas Connections. Once you turn 70 ½, you must take annual Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) from your Individual Retirement Accounts. By giving some or all of that RMD as a **Qualified Charitable Distribution**, or QCD, you could have tax advantages, even as you support Caritas Connections. Talk to your financial advisor for more information.

You can make your donation to Caritas Connections go further by taking advantage of the **Missouri Food Pantry Tax Credit** program that allows an individual, corporation, or trust to receive up to 50% of their gift back through a state of Missouri tax credit. The maximum value of the credit is \$2,500 for an individual or \$5,000 if filing jointly. If you make a donation of \$250 or more before December 31, 2024, Caritas Connections will mail you a tax form in February 2025. This form must be submitted with your state tax return. So, if you double your typical donation, Caritas receives all of it and you can get up to half of it back in tax credits! For more information visit our website: www.caritas-connections.com/Donate

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



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.

STAYING connected

The newsletter of Caritas Connections, Inc.

Golf Tournament Exceeds Goals



Libby and Brian Billhartz shown during the attendance prize giveaways.

You can never predict what the weather's going to be on the day of a Caritas Golf Tournament. But you can predict that there will be a lot of golfers, ready to play and support what has become the largest fundraiser for Caritas.

This year's event, which took place on Friday, May 17th at Aberdeen Golf Course, stayed dry except for a few holes where rain brought out the umbrellas and rain gear. But the rain passed and when the rounds were done, the Stan Schroeder group emerged victorious.

But the real winners of this event were our clients and ultimately, the people that we help them serve. More than \$60,000 was raised for this year's event, making it our largest fundraiser ever! We are so grateful to our many sponsors, participants and volunteers who helped make that number a reality.

Special thanks to all the members of the Caritas golf committee, especially to Libby and Brian Billhartz, for all the hard work that goes into each year's event. We're already looking forward to next year.



The winning foursome featuring Ray White, Stan Schroeder, Dave Cobb and Jeff Sadtler.

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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SUMMER 2024 ISSUE

Another grant awarded to Caritas

Caritas recently received a grant from the Mary Ranken Jordan and Ettie A. Jordan Charitable Foundation. The Jordan Charitable Foundation supports several not-for-profits in the St. Louis metro area with an emphasis on children's health and welfare as well as arts and education. Caritas will focus funds from the foundation on our many clients that help serve the needs of children and their families.



Caritas mourns the loss of Mark Green

This past January, Mark Green passed away after a long and courageous battle against cancer. Mark was a long time supporter of Caritas. He was part of the Caritas Board for a short time—having to step away because of his health challenges. Wanting to continue to make an impact on our clients, he started the Socks for Souls campaign to benefit the unhoused. Barrels were placed by the SGM Christmas tree lot and the collection of socks and underwear took place during December. Each year it got bigger and eventually became tied into an Amazon wish list page. His passion for helping others and boundless enthusiasm will be greatly missed.

Caritas Extends Reach to SE Missouri

Four food pantries in southeast Missouri recently received a wide variety of personal care items, paper goods and laundry detergent, all donated by Caritas Connections along with diapers and wipes that were donated by Our Lady's Inn. The donations came about via a request from Marie Kenyon, who is the Social Outreach Coordinator of the Southern Vicariate of the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

According to Marie, each one of the food pantries plays a vital role in helping the needy in southeast Missouri. The first stop was at Immaculate Conception parish in Park Hills, followed by the food pantry located at St. Joseph's parish in Bonne Terre. Twenty percent of the population of St. Francois County live below the poverty line and there is a 16% food insecurity rate. The next stop was at St. Agnes in Bloomsdale, which is the only food pantry in the area, followed by a stop at the St. Genevieve food pantry which serves several hundred families per month.

Dave Baranowski, who heads the stewardship office for the diocese, was the primary delivery driver of a van loaded with the donated items along with multiple other vehicles that made the trek. All those vehicles wouldn't have been necessary though, without the coordinated efforts of Mark and Dolores Guenther and Larry Wise, who purchased all the items Caritas donated from several different retailers. Mark and Larry then put in some major sweat equity in organizing all the items to be delivered to the four different food pantries.

This marked the first time that Caritas worked in conjunction with the St. Louis Archdiocese as well as the first time Caritas items were delivered beyond the St. Louis metro area and it's just another example of how we help connect those who have with those who need.



The Southern Vicariate Mission Day 3 staff in front of the van loaded with donations from Caritas Connections.

Stockpile of canned goods distributed by Caritas

252 assorted cans of food. The amount may not be staggering, but how these cans made it to Caritas, to be delivered to our clients, we found to be yet another extraordinary example of how we connect those who have with those who need.

We received a call from an individual stating he'd like to donate a trunk full of canned goods, so arrangements were made to meet him at the Caritas garage. As we were unloading the assortment of canned goods, we asked where he got them all.

"I'd been preparing for the end of days," said the individual. "But recently, I rediscovered my faith. And I decided these cans could be put to a lot better use helping to feed the poor. So, I asked an acquaintance if he knew any place that might be interested in my donation. He told me about Caritas. So, I went to the Caritas website and knew this was the right decision. I didn't want to just drop the cans off at a food pantry. I really liked the idea of how all these cans will be distributed to places all over St. Louis."

As he was getting ready to leave, we asked if we could use his name. He requested to remain anonymous but asked if we could say, "This donation is in memory of Ryan Loftus." Yes, we most certainly can!

Client Profile: Criminal Justice Ministry

Since 1979, Criminal Justice Ministry (CJM) has served individuals, families, and communities impacted by the criminal justice system. From offering services to incarcerated individuals to providing reentry programs for those returning to the St. Louis area, CJM seeks to serve the needs of the most vulnerable without judgment.

CJM provides programs to individuals both inside area institutions and throughout the St. Louis community.

Caritas has supported Criminal Justice Ministry for more than seven years. Steve Proscino has been their dedicated shopper, providing snacks and other assorted items which are provided to ex-offenders. According to Sr. Geraldine Neier who is a First Services Liaison for CJM, "We know we can always count on the reliability of Caritas. And the snacks provided each month are always appreciated."

"People have no idea how hard it is for individuals who are reentering

society to get back on their feet," said Sr. Geraldine. "When some are first released from incarceration, they literally have nothing more than the clothes on their back - and even those may not have been

their own. We try to make sure they've got the basic necessities - food, clothing, hygiene items - and Caritas certainly helps in that regard."

CJM's mission is to improve our communities by supporting and empowering those impacted by incarceration, not judge them. According to Sr. Geraldine, "We and all those we serve are grateful for the support that Caritas provides."

Criminal Justice Ministry 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.



Donated Sandwiches from St. Louis Air Show land at a few clients

The St. Louis Air Show is an annual event that takes place every summer at the Spirit of St. Louis Airport in Chesterfield where thousands of people turn their eyes to the sky, watching the Blue Angels and other aircraft perform some amazing maneuvers.

Thanks to a connection that was made back in 2016, Caritas has been one of the recipients of hundreds of food items including sandwiches, snacks and a variety of baked goods that make their way back to the Caritas garage.

But the more than 400 sandwiches/bagged lunches didn't stay there for long as they were quickly distributed



over a 3-day period to Our Lady's Inn, Room at the Inn, Father Dempsey's Charities, the Ronald McDonald House and Sisters Mission.

Special thanks to Kelly Wacker for her continued involvement in the donations and to Mary Jo McLaughlin in helping to distribute the goods!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MARK GUENTHER



Mark Guenther and his wife, Dolores, have been dedicated shoppers for the Latino Crisis Nursery for almost seven years. Their involvement with Caritas first began several years ago when Mark was rehabbing from a serious injury and met Fr. Bryon.

Father invited Mark to accompany him while purchasing and then delivering a few items to the Latino Crisis Nursery. Mark agreed and soon after, he became a dedicated shopper for the Nursery and quickly discovered the good that the donations resulted in—and the need for more.

As the dollar amount of donated items increased, Mark enlisted the help of his wife, Dolores, as well as two long-time friends to help with both purchases and deliveries. This past year, Caritas was named as one of the recipients of the Latinx Outreach Program Agency of the year award—due to the continued efforts of Mark, Dolores and Larry Wise.

As our new Volunteer Coordinator, Mark believes the best way to really understand his role is by doing. So, he's been on multiple deliveries to different clients and has enjoyed meeting Caritas volunteers and several of the clients we serve.

"If this weren't an all-volunteer organization, I probably wouldn't be involved," said Mark. "But knowing that everyone who helps at Caritas is doing it for the greater good - I like that! And it inspires me to want to do more as I enjoy being busy."