

## DEAR FRIENDS,

**“CREATE MOMENTS OF ENCOUNTER AND FRIENDSHIP,”** writes Pope Francis in his recent declaration for the first “World Day for the Poor.”

The Pontiff’s call to action motivates us to seek opportunities that improve lives, and gain a greater awareness that we are all more alike than different. Everyone has hopes, dreams and heartaches.

Recently, I was impressed by the determination of a

young woman from the Eastern Shore of Maryland who shared her story of overcoming addiction and her pernicious self-doubt before a rapt audience at the 35th Anniversary of My Sister’s Place Women’s Center.

This young woman overcame adversity and self-destructive behavior after enrolling in MSPWC’s Learn to Earn program. Her resilience coupled with a strong support network, enabled her to overcome nearly a decade of defeat.

“As we enter the holiday season, let us make time to create moments that unify us and find common ground with others who are different from us. Through those encounters, may we form lasting friendships that can break down barriers and make communities stronger.”



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WINTER 2017

# BLESSINGS

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL

Inspired by the Gospel mandates to LOVE, SERVE and TEACH, Catholic Charities provides care and services to IMPROVE the LIVES of Marylanders in need.

## My Sister’s Place Marks Its 35th Anniversary

**“MY SISTER’S PLACE WOMEN’S CENTER SAVES LIVES,”** said an emphatic Tamla Olivier, President and CEO of BGE HOME and Constellation Home and the guest speaker for Catholic Charities’ My Sister’s Place Women’s Center’s (MSPWC) Anniversary Breakfast, commemorating 35 years of service.



MSPWC’s former and present directors including (l-r) Sr. Patricia McLaughlin, SSND, the first director of the Center when it opened in 1982 and current Director of the Caroline Center; Rebecca Abrahamsen, current Program Director; and Mary Ellen Vanni, the second director and retired Executive Director of the Fuel Fund of Maryland.



Featured speaker, Tamla Olivier, President and CEO of BGE HOME and Constellation Home.

community providers including mental health and addiction counseling, financial literacy services, and access to showers, laundry, mail and telephone service.

“The women of My Sister’s Place are on a journey,” said Bill McCarthy, Executive Director of Catholic Charities. “A journey to find housing; to obtain

Since 1982, the Center has served as a pioneer in implementing creative care for women and children who are experiencing homelessness and hunger. The crowd of supporters enthusiastically punctuated Ms. Olivier’s remarks with affirmative applause. “My Sister’s Place saves lives with three hot meals, job-training, counseling and an internship program,” added Ms. Olivier. “These services allow women to overcome unplanned barriers and become contributing members of our society.”

During the breakfast, Rebecca Abrahamsen, current Director of MSPWC, introduced Alicia, a former client of the Center and a graduate of its Learn to Earn program.

Before an attentive audience, Alicia, a native of the Eastern Shore of Maryland, shared her compelling story of grappling with alcoholism, anorexia and destructive behaviors that led to homelessness. In 2015, she met a good friend who recommended My Sister’s Place Women’s Center. “We arrived for a warm meal, and when we entered, I nearly cried. After years of trying to starve myself, I was hungry and so moved by the dignity with which we were treated at the dinner.” **Read Alicia’s story – pg 2.**

In addition to lifesaving meals, clients have access to education and life skills training, housing assistance, benefits advice and enrollment, case management, emergency financial assistance, referrals to other

steady employment; to acquire reliable and affordable healthcare; and to rediscover their God-given sense of dignity and hope. We are witnesses and co-travelers on their journey of healing and growth.”

“Even though Maryland ranks as one of the wealthiest states in the country, many in our state struggle,” said Mr. McCarthy. “In fact, 1 in 10 of our neighbors struggle to pay rent and put food on the table.”

Since 2008, when MSPWC reopened at its current location next to the Basilica, nearly 800,000 meals have been served to those in need. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/mspwc](http://cc-md.org/mspwc)



At the breakfast, Laura Bouyea was named MSPWC’s 2018 Woman of the Year in recognition of her leadership and generosity.



MSPWC supporters including (l-r) Evelyn Chatmon; Janet Jones; Pat Tunstall, former Catholic Charities Board Member and representative on the MSPWC Leadership Council; Mary Anne O’Donnell, Assistant Director and Chief Administrative Officer of Catholic Charities; and Carol Guarrieri.



Carolyn Gutermuth, 15-year volunteer and Chesapeake Employers Insurance Company (CEIC) employee, distributed aprons to all breakfast attendees in recognition of their service. The aprons were donated by CEIC.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. — MATTHEW 6:21



# Alicia's Story: My Sister's Place Women's Center

Continued from Page 1

**I WOULD NOT BE HERE TODAY WITHOUT THE HELP OF SOME AMAZING INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS LIKE MY SISTER'S PLACE.** Without them, I wouldn't have a story much worth telling.

In 2015, I joined the Learn to Earn internship program at My Sister's Place Women's Center. I was 26, living in a recovery program — essentially homeless. On welfare. Jobless. Uncertain about my future. I'm baffled as to how all these adjectives were part of my reality. How had this happened?

I am blessed to have a loving and supportive family. My parents are well educated and we lived in a lovely home. I was a 3 varsity sport athlete and a straight "A" student in high school. I graduated summa cum laude and attended Salisbury University with the majority of my tuition paid for in academic scholarships. I finished three quarters of a bachelor's degree in Exercise Science.

Even though I had been given so much in life, I was my biggest issue. Many of my problems stemmed from me not being able to accept myself.



Alicia, guest speaker at MSPWC Anniversary Breakfast and Learn to Earn graduate.

In college, my life took an abrupt and total deviation. Alcohol was the magic elixir that allowed me to make friends. And then, I developed an eating disorder, allowing me to feel a real sense of release.

In 2010, after pleading from my worried parents, I entered Sheppard Pratt's Center for Eating Disorders. For five years, I was enrolled in three different facilities. Those years were essentially a repeat of the same; drinking and eating binges every day.

In 2015, my awesome care team at Hopkins assisted me to enter Gaudenzia, a 28-day detox program. There, I met my dear friend Shar. I was so naïve. Shar made sure I registered for food stamps, learned to ride the bus, and, most importantly, enrolled in Learn to Earn.

One night, low on food stamps and hungry, Shar suggested that we eat at My Sister's Place. I was expecting another busy soup kitchen, with the typical buffet style arrangement and having to fight for a seat. I was pleasantly surprised when we were kindly greeted, seated, and even served our food which was amazing! It had been a long time since I had been in a restaurant, but the atmosphere was similar. It almost made me cry.

It was so ironic that I had starved myself for years, and now, I was actually wanting for food. It's amazing how being treated as a normal person makes you feel so wonderful.

While we were at My Sister's Place, we heard about the Learn to Earn Program. I applied to be a front desk intern, and that decision has made all the difference in the world. Because of My Sister's Place and the Learn to Earn Program, I have gainful employment today.

With referrals from MSPWC staff, I was able to get a job at Catholic Charities as a part-time Security Program Assistant for the Weinberg Housing and Resource Center. I loved this job, my co-workers and the residents. However, my name wasn't on any deed, and I wasn't really paying rent, so technically I, too, was still homeless. I needed to change that.

I sought and eventually got a full-time position at Johns Hopkins. I currently work as a Patient Access Specialist II. I also completed a 6-month multi-skills medical program through the Baltimore City Job Center to become a registered Certified Nursing Assistant and a Geriatric Nursing Assistant. I'm now able to go back to school to finish my degree.

I pay my own bills. I have my own apartment. I've purchased a reliable car. And, I'm finally living like a normal adult. Thankfully, I just recently celebrated two years of sobriety. In summation, I'm an addict. There's no escaping that fact, but I am no longer suffering in silence. I have been blessed with people and programs that have offered help and rehabilitation and more than anything — validation. They have made me feel human again when I felt anything but human. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/mspwc](http://cc-md.org/mspwc)

## Senator Cardin holds Listen-In at Esperanza Center

United States Senator Ben Cardin addressed more than 60 constituents from the Latino community as part of his Listen-In Maryland session held in November at the Esperanza Center.



Senator Cardin with Esperanza Center staff.

Joining the Senator was Val Twanmoh, Director of the Esperanza Center; David Rosario, President of the Latino Providers Network; and Catalina Rodriguez-Lima, from the Office of Mayor Pugh. The discussion centered largely on the current political climate and its impact upon the immigrant community. Senator Cardin pledged his support to advocate for immigrants in the United States and Maryland. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/esperanza](http://cc-md.org/esperanza)



## GRAND FRIENDS

While many children have a grandparent, the students from Holy Angels Elementary School all have a GRANDFRIEND thanks to an intergenerational program at The Neighborhoods at St. Elizabeth Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, which is home to 150 older adults on the Jenkins Senior Living Campus in Southwest Baltimore.

Residents of St. Elizabeth's, Dorothy Chmielewski, Edith Evans, Dorothy Dunaway and Eunice Holloway serve as Grandfriends to 7th and 8th grade students Kendyll Kellum, Jalynn Manigo, Kiah Benjamin, Sydnei Chase, Nevaeh Lofton, Samari Brown, TiYon McDowell and Jaymond Chapple-Deanda.

Megan Cosgrove, Holy Angels Assistant Principal, and Reilly Smith, Administrator of St. Elizabeth, started the program in 2016.

"These visits clearly lift the spirit of our older adults and keep them engaged," said Mr. Smith. Ms. Cosgrove concurred, "It's amazing to see the connection between our students and these older adults as they swap stories."

Students and their Grandfriends do arts and crafts, share lunch, and on warm spring days, they'll picnic under the outdoor pavilion. The children also include their Grandfriends at school events. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/st-elizabeth](http://cc-md.org/st-elizabeth)



## Mayor honors Esperanza's Helany Sinkler

Mayor Catherine E. Pugh recently presented Helany Sinkler, Program Manager for the Family Reunification and Anti-trafficking Services at Esperanza Center, with the Hispanic Heritage Award for her outstanding contribution toward improving the quality of life in the Hispanic community.

Within the past year, Esperanza has reunited 932 unaccompanied minor children with family members in Maryland and provided family reunification services to 995 sponsors. ■



Helany Sinkler and Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh.

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/esperanza](http://cc-md.org/esperanza)



# FEED THE HUNGRY WITH IRISH SONGS ABOUT THE FAMINE



Irish musician Declan O'Rourke with Catholic Charities' supporter Doug Desmarais and American singer-songwriter Peter Breinholt (l-r) at the benefit concert for ODBEC.

**ON A DAMP AND CHILLY FALL EVENING – FITTING FOR A NIGHT OF ACOUSTIC IRISH MUSIC** – Declan O'Rourke, an immensely popular singer-songwriter from Dublin, Ireland, joined American singer-songwriter Peter Breinholt to perform before 120 music lovers for the Fourth Annual Benefit Concert supporting Our Daily Bread Employment Center held at Notre Dame of Maryland University.

"The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. Tonight, music is our gladness while we address homelessness and hunger," said Doug Desmarais, a Baltimore native and Brigham Young University (BYU) graduate, who spearheaded the benefit concert.

Peter Breinholt, a favorite of BYU students and a resident of Utah, opened the evening with his original compositions. His fantastic performance was followed by O'Rourke's poignant and powerful songs from his album, *Chronicles of the Great Irish Famine*. O'Rourke's songs matched the theme of the event – to raise awareness and support to fight hunger.

In the past year, Catholic Charities provided 481,176 meals to men, women and children through Our Daily Bread, Christopher Place Employment Academy, My Sister's Place Women's Center and Sarah's House. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/whrc](http://cc-md.org/whrc), [cc-md.org/odbec](http://cc-md.org/odbec), [cc-md.org/sarahshouse](http://cc-md.org/sarahshouse) and [cc-md.org/mspwc](http://cc-md.org/mspwc)

## CODE BLUE IN BALTIMORE

When temperatures drop below freezing, the lives of older adults, people experiencing homelessness and other vulnerable populations are at risk.

Catholic Charities works with the City to broaden its services during the winter months and particularly when Code Blue is put into effect.

Catholic Charities' Weinberg Housing and Resource Center, Our Daily Bread Employment Center and

My Sister's Place Women's Center experience a significant increase in the number of men, women and children who rely on these programs for shelter, food and emergency medical services during Code Blue events.

Caring for many more individuals significantly increases the operating costs for these programs. Catholic Charities welcomes financial assistance to fund this essential, life-saving work. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/whrc](http://cc-md.org/whrc), [cc-md.org/odbec](http://cc-md.org/odbec) and [cc-md.org/mspwc](http://cc-md.org/mspwc)

## Weinberg Housing and Resource Center opens Shed of Respect

Individuals who are experiencing homelessness can safely store their belongings while moving from place to place in the newly-opened Weinberg Housing and Resource Center's (WHRC) *Shed of Respect*.

"The *Shed of Respect* restores dignity to those who are struggling to find permanent housing and are in constant fear of losing their personal belongings," said Bill McCarthy, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, as he addressed those gathered for a ribbon-cutting.



Joining Mr. McCarthy (far left) was Lee Martin, Program Director of WHRC (far right), Amy Collier, Division Director of Community Services (in purple) and Janet Herilla, Administrator of Community Services (3rd from left).

WHRC provides overnight accommodations for 275 adult men and women. The *Shed of Respect* primarily serves individuals who cannot be accommodated at WHRC for an overnight stay, but need a safe place to house their belongings as they travel to another shelter. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/whrc](http://cc-md.org/whrc)

## LEARN TO EARN GRADUATES INTO THE WORKPLACE

Learn to Earn is a free 12-week training in either food preparation or clerical services. The program includes hands-on and classroom learning through My Sister's Place Women's Center.

In October, nine women graduated from Learn to Earn including: Culinary Certificate recipients Shanae Burton, Latasha Lee, Karen Stinson and Tilleisha Fenwick and Clerical Certificate Recipients Stacia Archie, Janet Matthews, Sharon Mitchell, Lisa Nutt and Asia Thomas. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/mspwc](http://cc-md.org/mspwc)

## THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS at St. Vincent's Villa!

Since 2007, volunteers have transformed the St. Vincent's Villa school gym into a magical winter wonderland for the holiday season. Until January 1st, the students will enjoy the festive display of more than 100 pine trees decorated with twinkling lights and thousands of ornaments.

Ellen Torres, a former Catholic Charities employee, rallies the volunteers to create the magnificent Christmas tree display.

"For many of these children, this is their first holiday away from home; therefore, we make every effort to bring them joy, as they address a whirlwind of emotions," said Ezra Buchdahl, Director of St. Vincent's Villa.

St. Vincent's Villa provides comprehensive residential treatment for children, ages 5-14, whose behavioral and emotional needs have not responded to community based interventions and services. There are 78 children enrolled in St. Vincent's Villa. ■

To learn more, visit [cc-md.org/svv](http://cc-md.org/svv)



## CREATE YOUR LEGACY

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[cc-md.org/plannedgiving](http://cc-md.org/plannedgiving) | [plannedgiving@cc-md.org](mailto:plannedgiving@cc-md.org) | 667-600-2026



Join us now to end homelessness and hunger with a bequest.



BILL'S LETTER CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Read her story on page two and rejoice in her success.

By bearing witness to her strength, we are all made stronger. Moments like these are humbling. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."

We are all drawn together by our humanity. Our shared dignity transcends all superficial differences.

Peace,

William J. McCarthy, Executive Director

Visit our new website:  
[www.cc-md.org](http://www.cc-md.org)

One of the ways we share impactful stories about Catholic Charities is through our website. Take a look at our new web design that was completed in conjunction with Eyer Creative. We hope you find it inspirational and useful.



O come, all ye faithful!

Share your blessings this holiday season and make your year-end gift at [cc-md.org/blessings](http://cc-md.org/blessings).

You improve lives with your generous support.

Thank YOU!

Save the Date! Saturday, March 10, 2018

27th Annual



Dinner & Auction

6:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m.

B&O Railroad Museum

Benefitting Our Daily Bread Employment Center

TICKETS/INFO: [cc-md.org/tasteofmd](http://cc-md.org/tasteofmd)

Back by popular demand:

HYPED AFTER PARTY for Young Professionals

9 p.m. – 12 a.m.

TICKETS/INFO: [cc-md.org/after-party](http://cc-md.org/after-party)



Featuring Cuisine from More Than 30 of Maryland's Top Chefs

CATHOLIC CHARITIES

CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL

Catholic Charities is the largest multi-service charitable organization in Maryland. Serving all, we provide innovative programming to accompany people on life's journey including assistance to those living in poverty, individuals with developmental disabilities, immigrants, older adults and families and children in crisis.

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Rena Daly, Managing Editor



For more information: [cc-md.org/events](http://cc-md.org/events)

- February 7, 2018: My Sister's Place Women's Center Networking Event Hosted by Venable Law Firm
- March 10, 2018: Taste of Maryland – ODBEC Annual Dinner and Auction at the B&O Railroad Museum, Plus the HYPED After Party for Young Professionals
- April 7, 2018: Sarah's House Bull Roast
- April 20, 2018: 26th Annual Breakfast Benefitting Anna's House and Early Head Start of Harford County
- May 7, 2018: 29th Annual Gallagher Services Golf Tournament
- May 16, 2018: Bridesmaids' Bingo Benefitting My Sister's Place Women's Center

SAVE THE DATES:

BLESSINGS

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