

FRIEND,

I hope the Christmas season finds you in good spirits, filled with joy and hope and prepared to celebrate the gift of love.

You celebrate the gift of love through every encounter and engagement with us — participating in or supporting an event, volunteering, providing financial support, donating food, clothing or other items, or accompanying our neighbors in other ways.

In this issue of “Blessings,” you’ll find stories of gifts that have changed the lives of individuals and families who are celebrating Christmas in a special way this year — and who look forward to a New Year of promise. From a family finding a home for the holidays, to another giving an unending gift in blessed memory, to a story of the gift of life itself — this issue is sure to fill your heart with even greater joy, love and compassion. Your support has helped

make our neighbors’ joy, optimism and hope for the future possible. Thank you!

I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas, every blessing of the season, and all the health and happiness 2020 can provide.

Bill



William J. McCarthy, Jr.,
Executive Director

WINTER 2019

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.

A home for the holidays



Aaliyah, Shakira and Anthony Hardy

THREE YEARS AGO, Shakira Hardy and her two children were a month away from homelessness. After her husband was incarcerated, her then-7-year-old son, Anthony, began acting out in ways that confounded educators and mental health professionals. He was suspended from school and hospitalized multiple times. She struggled to keep her job, focused on his needs and those of her then-10-year-old daughter, Aaliyah.

A year ago, Shakira was wrapping small Christmas presents in the cafeteria of a homeless shelter where she and Aaliyah were staying. She had lost her job — and then their home — and they had been kicked out of other shelters because of Anthony’s behavior. But, after months of trying, she had secured a spot for him at St. Vincent’s Villa — Catholic Charities’ residential center for children with significant emotional and behavioral needs. As Anthony received comprehensive treatment, she concentrated on carving out a more stable path for her family.

This year, the holidays will look very different. Now 12, Aaliyah giggles when she thinks about Christmas. She brims with visions of movie nights with holiday classics, home-baked cookies on Christmas Eve, and her own Christmas tree. Her mother beams at her with a proud — and fragile — sense of promise.

**We’ll
all be
together**

Through Baltimore City services, Shakira found Catholic Charities’ Project REACH, which offers permanent housing and a path to independence. On June 1, she and Aaliyah moved into a three-bedroom home in Baltimore, and Anthony joined them after finishing treatment at St. Vincent’s. The holidays offer a chance for renewal, and Shakira pauses when asked about Christmas. “It’s going to be the meaning behind it,” she said, glancing at her children. “We’re going to have our own house and put up our own tree the way we want it. But I’m just elated we’ll be all together.”

For more on St. Vincent’s Villa: cc-md.org/services/st-vincent-villa

For more on Project REACH: cc-md.org/services/project-reach

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out. — JOHN 1:15

SEASON OF HOPE

Today, Rose believes
Esperanza Center saved
her life, giving her more
time to watch her
little girl grow.



Rose, Taliah and Wardi Donnelly (l-r)

ROSE BEGAN TO NOTICE SERIOUS HEALTH PROBLEMS while she was pregnant with her daughter, Taliah, in 2014. But she was an undocumented single mother with no health insurance and, as she explained, “Nobody wanted to help.”

After a friend finally suggested she look into Catholic Charities, she found the Esperanza Center. On her first visit, Community Health Coordinator Wardi Donnelly looked into Rose’s eyes and said, “You’re pretty sick, you know that?”

The Esperanza team sent her for an ultrasound and a biopsy that identified stage 4 uterine cancer which had spread to her lungs. The center partners with health care institutions like Johns Hopkins, which provided Rose with no-cost treatment.

Today, Rose believes Esperanza Center saved her life, giving her more time to watch her little girl grow. “My lungs are getting better every day,” she said. “I give thanks to God, and Miss Wardi, and all the others that have helped.” ■

Want to hear more from Rose and Wardi? Visit cc-md.org/standwithus.



Spring renewal

FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, the Esperanza Center has been operating in temporary spaces after a fire in a neighboring building severely damaged its Broadway facility in September 2018. Despite the relocation, the center continues to provide hope and a wide range of compassionate services to immigrants.

Over the past year, the center has helped reunite 1,445 unaccompanied minors and children separated at the border with family or sponsors, in addition to providing services related to education, health care, legal matters and general support to our new neighbors. Reconstruction continues on the Broadway site, which is expected to reopen in spring 2020. ■

SEASON OF GIVING

How mandatory IRA distributions launched a job training program at Gallagher Services



Morris, Bonnie and Libby Horwitz (l-r)

EILEEN LEIKACH WOULD NOT HAVE KNOWN OF GALLAGHER SERVICES if not for her cousin, Bonnie Horwitz. Yet Bonnie's experiences shaped Eileen's philanthropy in ways that will affect Gallagher clients for years to come.

Bonnie moved into a Gallagher group home more than 30 years ago when she was 17. Her parents, Morris and Libby, recognized they could not provide the care necessary to support her disabilities. Bonnie had spent most of her time silent, often in front of the TV. The environment and staff at Gallagher's home helped her open up and take on new responsibilities.

Importantly to the family, the Catholic Charities program also honored her Jewish faith. Staff took her and other Jewish individuals from Gallagher Services

to religious services every month. They also supported her bat mitzvah as she turned 13.

Gallagher Services was not just providing Bonnie with clean clothes, good meals, necessary doctor visits, and job training that allowed her to work after reaching adulthood. Rather, the program found ways to understand all of Bonnie's needs.

"They just took very good care of her," Eileen said.

Bonnie passed away seven years ago. Before Morris and Libby's deaths in 2018 and 2019, respectively, Eileen asked about their financial preferences. They included supporting Gallagher Services in recognition of all they had done for Bonnie. When Eileen inherited Morris' IRA, she remembered these conversations. Though she had many financial priorities, she channeled some of the mandatory distributions to launch an employment service that helps people supported by Gallagher Services — and others served by Catholic Charities — find competitive employment.

"I believe in giving," Eileen said, "and I don't need a million dollars." ■

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Learn how to use your mandatory IRA distribution to help others. Contact Erin Bolles at ebolles@cc-md.org or 667-600-2012.

'Tis the season to share your holiday blessings!

As the year comes to a close and you consider your year-end giving, please share your blessings this holiday to give our vulnerable neighbors a safe place to rest, a warm meal and hope in the new year.



Please use the enclosed envelope, visit cc-md.org/give or contact us at 667-600-2018 to make your gift today.

To discuss stock transfers or distributions from a retirement account, please contact Erin Bolles, ebolles@cc-md.org or 667-600-2012.

Thank you!



T A TASTE FOR M RE



Brett Plano

a culinary benefit for **OUR DAILY BREAD EMPLOYMENT CENTER**

*Brett Plano, Board of Trustees;
Chair, A Taste for More Committee*

I BEGAN CHAIRING the annual fundraiser for Our Daily Bread Employment Center in 2018. I'd been volunteering at the center monthly for several years, often with a team

from my company, Plano-Coudon Construction, and knew there was more we could do.

This event – previously called “A Taste of Maryland” and now named “A Taste for More” – will be held on Saturday, March 7, 2020. Despite the name, the extraordinary chef-catered offerings at the event, and the meal service that Our Daily Bread Employment Center has run for 37 years, this night is about far more than food. Filled with music, dancing, raffles and the kind of inspirational stories that move and motivate, this night is about the ways each of us can help:

- The ways we can grow a center that serves up to 800 people every day.
- The ways we can expand Our Daily Bread Employment Center's wraparound services, allowing clients to deal with addiction and other challenges so they can discover the paths that will carry them forward.
- And the ways we can prompt people to look up from their day-to-day lives to make a difference in the lives of others – whether by buying a ticket or by learning more about Our Daily Bread Employment Center and other Catholic Charities programs.

Plano-Coudon Construction was founded with a fundamental belief – one that separates us from other firms – that meaningful engagement in Baltimore will help our city thrive. As a company, we have found countless outlets for service within Baltimore, Our Daily Bread Employment Center among them. A Taste for More stands out, both as a fun night and as an example of the very best our community has to offer.

I invite you to experience the gifts of Catholic Charities and Our Daily Bread Employment Center – and look forward to seeing you on March 7, 2020! ■

To register: cc-md.org/atastefor-more



JOIN US FOR A
Season of
Wonder

FOR NEARLY TWO DECADES, volunteers have turned the gymnasium at St. Vincent's Villa Residential Treatment Center into a winter wonderland, featuring more than 100 trees and thousands of decorations. This year, we upend that tradition to spread that Christmas cheer throughout the building and onto the surrounding property.

To learn more about opportunities to deck – or un-deck – the halls of St. Vincent's Villa, to bolster the resilience of families going through trying times, or to support Catholic Charities' child welfare and mental health programs in other ways, please visit www.seasonofwonder.com.

