



CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL

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Catholic Charities celebrates the extraordinary service of a recent public health graduate

Anne Lindsay Otenasek Youth Service Award is part of week-long virtual event

{October 14, 2021/Baltimore} Johns Hopkins University graduate Karen Sun shines as one of three exemplary area servants Catholic Charities will recognize the week of November 8-12.

Sun is being honored with The Anne Lindsey Otenasek Youth Service Award for her commitment to women and children experiencing homelessness and poverty in Baltimore. The 2020 public health studies graduate has volunteered at My Sister's Place Women's Center for nearly four years. Before the pandemic, Sun was very active in supporting onsite workshops. From the start of the pandemic, Sun devoted her time to coordinating partnerships with other local agencies to provide clients with as many resources as possible, including legal support from several organizations.

"The persistent determination of the staff at My Sister's Place Women's Center to offer these women support while advocating for their needs during the pandemic is very uplifting and motivates me to try to help in whatever way possible," said Sun. "I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to serve the resilient and kind women that visit the center, and who have had the strength to overcome many difficult obstacles in life. I am constantly inspired by their courage, dedication, passion, and optimism and I'm forever grateful for their willingness to allow me to be a part of their journey."

In addition to caring for clients, Sun carried out projects to lift the spirits of frontline workers, by coordinating the delivery of care cards handcrafted by her fellow John Hopkins University students.

“The wonderful women I have met at My Sister’s Place have taught me to always listen and engage diverse perspectives, and I hope to continue supporting them as well as other resilient women in the future,” said the 23-year-old. “I aspire to be a life-long advocate of social justice to combat inequities and move us forward into a more just society.”

This award is in memory of Anne Lindsey Otenasek, an energetic teenaged Catholic Charities volunteer who died in the bombing of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988. The youth service award in her name honors and perpetuates her spirit and personal commitment to helping others. It is given to a high school or college individual or group that shows outstanding volunteer commitment to Catholic Charities.

Along with Sun, Catholic Charities will recognize two other pillars of the community.

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church Pastor Rev. Ray Chase will receive the Msgr. Arthur F. Valenzano Joyful Servant Award. Commissioned to recognize a joyful life and spirit in service, the award honors the spirit of the late rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who served on the Catholic Charities Board of Trustees until his passing in 2015. Fr. Chase began his ministry with Catholic Charities of Baltimore 43 years ago. He started as a deacon at Gallagher Services, formerly known as the Gallagher Center, in 1978. Fr. Chase has served in many roles with Catholic Charities throughout the years, and currently serves as chaplain at the organization’s Jenkins Senior Living Community near Halethorpe, a campus hosting The Neighborhoods at St. Elizabeth Rehabilitation and Nursing Center, Caritas House Assisted Living, St. Ann Adult Day program, and two independent living senior communities. Fr. Chase’s parish, at the foot of I-83, is motivated by significant social and racial justice efforts.

Geri Olsen will receive the **Distinguished Service Award** for her 27 years of service to the residents and staff of St. Vincent’s Villa. The program in Timonium provides comprehensive residential treatment for children from all over the state, ages 5-14, whose behavioral and emotional needs have not responded to community-based interventions and services. Olsen has been the core supporter, organizer, and motivator for St. Vincent’s Villa’s signature Christmas campaign, Season of Wonder, which is now part of Catholic Charities’ Comfort and Joy December community gift campaign. Olsen works tirelessly throughout the year to bring potential donors together to provide for children, staff, and families at St. Vincent’s Villa. Olsen is the recipient of several prestigious awards including The Unsung Hero Award from the Association of Fundraising Professionals, and the 2001 Distinguished Service Award from Catholic Charities. This award is given to an individual or group who exemplifies and significantly supports compassionate caregiving and service through personal commitment to Catholic Charities’ work.

The celebration is a virtual week-long event of November 8-12, recognizing those who serve and those who are served as individuals of value and dignity, with special thanks to those who support the organization’s work. In addition to our three awardees, Catholic Charities will also honor six employees with its Mission in Action Award for extraordinary examples of commitment: **Steve Branson**, director of case management services; **Patti Bulger**, resident associate for senior congregate housing; **Michael Jolley**, facilities project management for Senior Services, **Jill Kratz**, manager of services for senior communities; **Bonnie March**, office manager at Villa Maria Community Resources Behavioral Health Clinic in Lansdowne; and **Erin Moyer**, clinic director at Villa Maria Community Resources Behavioral Health Clinic on the Fallsway.

The week will also feature stories about neighbors' personal journeys toward their better lives, podcast conversations with experts discussing senior care, homelessness & poverty prevention, workforce development, immigration, behavioral health, and intellectual & developmental disabilities, and more. Find all content at catholiccharities-md.org and on the Catholic Charities Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn feeds.

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About Catholic Charities of Baltimore

Catholic Charities of Baltimore is Maryland's largest private provider of human services, with more than 80 programs in 200 locations to serve children and families experiencing homelessness and poverty, individuals with intellectual disabilities, immigrants and seniors without regard to religion, race or other circumstances.

www.catholiccharities-md.org.