

FRIEND,

Here we are, a full year into a global pandemic, an unprecedented time of disruption, loss and personal and community crises. It can be hard to imagine what the world will be like “after.” The streets are quieter, restaurants are not booked or fully opened, our habits and routines are disrupted, and many who are fortunate enough to have jobs are working remotely. This means we are less likely to see or experience others’ journeys and challenges. Yet between New Year’s Day and Valentine’s

Day, 37,162 Baltimore County neighbors and 20,696 Baltimore City neighbors filed for unemployment. That’s nearly 60,000 people in just two jurisdictions in six weeks.

Your investment in Catholic Charities allows us to assist our neighbors in finding their way back to meaningful work. That’s why we have workforce development programs and resources across our organization. In FY2021, 311 Marylanders found work with help from our programs, and 474 received training in soft and hard skills to help them on the path.

When you see unemployment numbers, please remember the individuals and families behind them. When you see a success story about them— even if it seems small— celebrate it. It means a great deal to the person who claims it – the person we serve together.

I wish you health, and the joy of spring!



William J. McCarthy, Jr.,
Executive Director



SPRING 2021

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 tremendous talent who just needed an opportunity

DEREK TUCKER HAD ALWAYS BEEN GOOD AT CARS – a skill he learned at an early age. But it wasn’t until he got out of jail that he started thinking about his talent as a career option.

“The older guys told me I had a lot of potential,” he said, remembering how he first learned about repairing vehicles. “At the time, I was doing my drug thing and I didn’t want to get my hands dirty. But I sat there and watched them and absorbed.”

After he came home from jail, he began servicing neighbors’ cars from a makeshift repair shop behind his house. (He bought a mechanic’s shirt at a flea market because, as he explained, “you can’t be

charging \$200 or \$300 in a hoodie.”) And he pieced together other work.

But when a family member told him about a Halethorpe-based program called Vehicles for Change, which offers formerly incarcerated people training, an internship and connections to auto-repair jobs, he wanted in. Catholic Charities offered him that chance.

A pathway from resume prep to a dream job

In 2019, Tucker started at a Catholic Charities workforce development site in West Baltimore. The agency’s program begins with two weeks of job-readiness classes, including resume writing, interview skills and other vital competencies. Those who are interested can then move on to automotive repair – a three-month program that Catholic Charities co-hosts with Vehicles for Change. A handful of graduates of that training are invited to stay on to become certified master technicians. Tucker was one of those selected.

Kevin Creamer, Catholic Charities’ program manager for workforce development, said Tucker’s drive stood out.

“He’s a tremendous talent,” Creamer said. “It was really just a matter of moving stuff out of his way so he could do this.”

“God had another plan for me”

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the job-readiness classes to a virtual model, and the lease on the West Baltimore space expired in 2020. But as restrictions lift, the workforce development program will continue working with partners to expand options for community-level access. Expecting people to find training programs and navigate unreliable transportation just isn’t reasonable, Creamer explained.

Vehicles for Change hired Tucker into a full-time position. He said he was honored to hear that managers had asked around to decide who would be best for the position, and his name came up repeatedly.

“I didn’t know I was putting out that kind of energy. I was basically trying to do my thing. God had another plan for me,” he said.



Derek Tucker, working on a car at the Full Circle garage in Baltimore

A family legacy hits home on a new employee's first day of work



Mary Jane “Mike” Flynn stands second from the right.

THE EVENING BEFORE TARA RUNGE STARTED HER NEW JOB

at Catholic Charities, she walked her dog through her neighborhood and – as she often does – talked quietly to her parents, who have both passed away. She was confident about her decision, but asked them to watch over her.

The next morning, during her virtual new-employee orientation, Runge – a part-time administrative assistant at Our Daily Bread Employment Center – was viewing a video about the history of Catholic Charities when she gasped loud enough for her husband to come from a nearby room. She had seen her mother on the screen.

“Boy was I surprised to see such a concrete sign that they heard me!” she said. “I was thankful that I was not on Zoom when the tears came!”

Runge’s parents, Bill and Mary Jane “Mike” Flynn, came to Baltimore in 1954 and raised their seven children here. Runge’s mother was a generous volunteer, the kind of person who celebrated the October birthdays at a local Catholic orphanage by taking the children skating, who invited kids at Villa Maria to join family dinners at home, and who gave her time at Stella Maris’s hospice for almost 30 years.

The still photo in the orientation video features Mike Flynn with another woman and three children, all smiling, holding hands and dressed beautifully. Runge and her siblings guess that it was taken while their mother was volunteering with a Catholic Charities program.

Runge was moved by the trajectory that connected her new position at Our Daily Bread Employment Center so directly to her mother’s passion for service.

Mike Flynn passed away in September at 91. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, she was able to visit and talk with her seven children, their spouses and nine of her 14 grandchildren shortly before she passed.

Runge shared the picture of her mother from the orientation video with her siblings, who sent it across the large family. The responses rolled in “to the effect of ‘Mom Mom is smiling,’” she said, using the grandchildren’s name for her mother.

Runge said her first few days at Catholic Charities have gone well, adding “everybody’s been very welcoming.” Plus, she said, “When my mother’s face popped up, it was a sign I’m doing what I’m supposed to be doing.”

Anxiety, grief and thoughts of what’s next – supporting COVID-19 contact tracers

WHEN COVID-19 CONTACT TRACERS IN BALTIMORE CITY START THEIR JOBS,

Aimee Hoffman is one of the first people they see. The Catholic Charities therapist is part of their orientation to the demanding work, offering advice about stress, anxiety, bereavement and coping through a challenging time, while reminding them that she can help.

As the city began hiring a corps of more than 300 people to help track and limit the pandemic’s spread, it offered benefits that include career advice, legal and financial counseling and behavioral health services. The holistic set of supports aims to help workers overcome any barriers to finding stable employment when the pandemic slows and the temporary positions end.

Catholic Charities’ Villa Maria Community Resources Behavioral Health Clinic in Fallstaff agreed to offer a range of services.

“I let the program evolve and saw where the areas of interest were,” said Hoffman, the senior clinician tapped to lead the effort. “It can be such a stressful position. They’re the ones contacting people who are COVID-positive, or ... who have been in close proximity. They get a lot of pushback and some of the frustration that those people are feeling.”

Good advice for work and home

The initial orientation session allowed her to offer tips on managing stress, explain the supports available through their contracts, and dispel myths and stigmas related to seeking counseling. The employees choose whether and how to participate, with offerings ranging from occasional lunch-and-learn sessions to individual therapy.

“Anything that I’m offering them as support is to enhance their ability to do the job. It’s self-care so they can be more available and focused. And it’s all very applicable to their personal lives as well,” she said.

There has been a high demand for individual services, in part because the contract removes many of the barriers that stop people from seeking counseling – insurance, doctor referrals, co-pays and long waits for appointments. In addition, individuals know what to expect, having already seen and heard from Hoffman at their orientations.

“The removal of barriers to accessing mental health services in general is just so valuable,” she said.



A legislative session where nothing looks the same – except our mission

When the Maryland General Assembly opened the 2021 legislative session, nothing looked the same.

Typically teeming hallways were eerily silent. In-person rallies were cancelled. Plexiglass or empty seats separated legislators when they

were present, and most business moved online.

“Even when the setting looks different, our work and mission remain very much the same,” said Catholic Charities Director of Advocacy Regan Vaughan. “We continue to advocate for our key priorities, highlight the stories of those we work with, and champion systemic policy changes in our work for justice.”

Vaughan pointed to four key focus areas for Catholic Charities in 2021.

THE BUDGET. In recent years, the organization advocated for increases in Medicaid provider rates, which affect a wide spectrum of Catholic Charities programs. But in early December, Gov. Larry Hogan announced some great news – as part of COVID-19 relief, a rate increase expected on July 1 would instead take effect six

months earlier. Catholic Charities will keep a close eye on rates included in the 2022 budget and on safety-net supports that benefit clients.

HEALTH. Telehealth upended the health care landscape over the past year, but remote support ended up benefiting many Catholic Charities clients. The organization is following bills that allow for the continuation of such services after the impacts of COVID-19 have eased.

IMMIGRATION. Catholic Charities has tracked two bills supporting immigrants. One would ensure that Marylanders who have been detained and face removal from the U.S. have access to a lawyer. The second would build stronger relationships between immigrant communities and police by limiting where and when people can be screened for immigration violations.

WORKFORCE. Catholic Charities supported the creation of an insurance fund that would provide partial wage replacement for Maryland employees needing family or medical leave for up to 12 weeks. Benefits would be far-reaching across Catholic Charities’ programs.

The 2021 legislative session of the Maryland General Assembly started on Jan. 13 and runs through April 12.

Homelessness & Poverty

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When Cheryl M. first heard about the renovations to the shelter buildings at Sarah’s House, she was skeptical.

She and her son had moved in shortly before COVID-19 struck Maryland. It was her first experience in a shelter, and while she was pleased with the private room and liked the staff, she didn’t understand why the renovations were a big deal.

which offers emergency shelter, transitional housing, and a range of other services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Anne Arundel County.

Building a trauma-informed environment

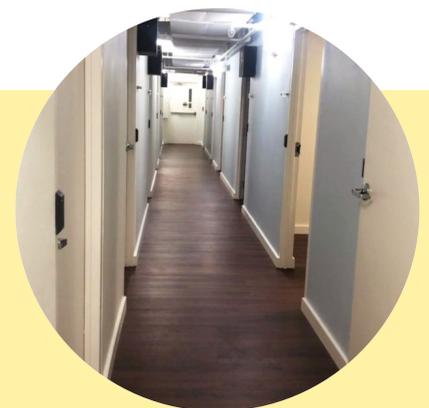
Sarah’s House, located at Fort Meade, comprises eight buildings – old World War

So, with trauma-informed care in mind, Sarah’s House applied for a Local Development Council grant in 2019, securing \$500,000. The bulk of that was designated to upgrade the two shelter buildings, the program’s “most traveled” facilities. Renovations include making basic repairs, replacing decades-old

So much more than a fresh coat of paint



A hallway before...



...and after

“My initial thinking was: all they did was change the floor and put some paint on the walls. So what?” she said.

But after she moved into the upgraded space, she found herself spending more time in her room.

“I thought it was just paint on the wall – until I got in there. Then I thought, this is very calming. This is different,” she explained.

That’s the point of the renovations, said Kelly Anderson, director of Catholic Charities’ supportive housing program,

II barracks last renovated “a long time ago,” Anderson said. The shelter buildings had white walls, white tile floors, and bright overhead lights – an institutional feel that often made recovery and healing harder.

“Everybody who comes to us has experienced some level of trauma,” she said, adding the 12-week stay permitted at the shelter is “a Polaroid snapshot in a person’s life, and we have got to make the most impact and provide the most efficient services.”

tile with wood-look flooring, installing softer, dimmable lighting, and painting in an array of calming pastel colors. A donation drive also brought in new bedding, towels and bedside plants to help residents feel more at home.

“Even the decor down the hallway – it had more of a hotel vibe,” said Cheryl M., who has moved on to transitional housing at Sarah’s House. “I was normally up and out because I didn’t want to stay here. Now, I was staying in the room ... and relaxing a little bit more.”

Volunteer service at Anna's House helped this Scout soar

EAGLE SCOUT SERVICE PROJECTS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE CHALLENGING, testing a Scout's determination and leadership. But Tyler Kendrick's project at Anna's

House was particularly tough – a year-and-a-half journey that required adaptations for a global pandemic and special permissions from a Boy Scout council.

Kendrick had previously volunteered at Anna's House, which provides a broad array of services to families experiencing homelessness in Harford County. So as he began to consider his project in 2019, he thought of the program again. He worked with staff to develop a plan to beautify a portion of the property, weeding, mulching, repainting a gazebo and building outdoor benches.

He got necessary approvals for his project, held a fundraiser and prepared for a March start date. "And that's when everything got shut down for COVID," he said.



Tyler Kendrick

Pandemic restrictions prevented Anna's House from hosting volunteers, but the clock was ticking for Kendrick. Scouts must earn Eagle before they turn 18, and his 18th birthday was in September. He filed for – and was granted – an extension, allowing him to continue pursuing the rank, which few Scouts ever reach.

In October 2020, Kendrick was finally able to gather about a dozen volunteers to complete the project. Anna's House staff member Jennifer Crosson said clients now use the benches as a quiet escape or while watching their children on the playground.

"Having beautiful, maintained grounds for our families provides a safe, peaceful place for them to come home to," she said.

Kendrick was named an Eagle Scout in February, and plans to attend the University of Maryland at College Park next fall, majoring in aerospace engineering.

"It made me feel really good that I was able to ... give back to the community," he said. "I'll probably still be volunteering at Anna's House whenever I can."

HOMECOMING, A LITTLE AT A TIME, FOR THE ESPERANZA CENTER

TWO AND A HALF YEARS AFTER A NEARBY FIRE RENDERED IT UNINHABITABLE, Catholic Charities' Esperanza Center is moving back home.

"It's been a long time in the making," said Matt Dolamore, Esperanza Center program director. "We are grateful for our neighbors at the Johns Hopkins Office of Critical Event Preparedness and Response. Thanks to CEPAR we were able to temporarily relocate some of our offices to the Assisi House to conduct vital in-person medical care for various clients. But let me tell you, there's no place like home."

The four-alarm fire on Sept. 7, 2018, at the Budeke Paint store caused extensive smoke and water damage inside the Esperanza Center. Although the roof and walls of the center never collapsed, the building was deemed uninhabitable until major repairs and renovations were completed.

"It's hard to describe how happy we are to be home again, in our own space," said

Wardi Donnelly, healthcare coordinator supervisor for Esperanza Center. "It was an adventure at our temporary space, to say the least, but we made it work because the community needed us, and they continue to need us to help guide them through the pandemic."

A vital community resource

"Returning to our restored and improved home in Fells Point has been a community effort," said Catholic Charities Executive Director Bill McCarthy. "From finding scattered site spaces in order to continue our work with little disruption, to clean-up efforts, to financial support, we would not be returning home without the collective effort of so many. Esperanza Center is a vital resource to our new neighbors across Maryland and we are elated to see our clients returning to the center as we operate within COVID-19 restrictions."

The Esperanza Center is not operating at full capacity at this time, due to the pandemic.



Archbishop William E. Lori blessed the repaired building in a small, COVID-safe gathering.

"We are only seeing our long-standing clients that need to be seen for evaluations, while most clients continue to be seen virtually," said Dr. Bill Gough, nurse practitioner and primary on-staff clinician at Esperanza Center. "A portion of our clients simply need refills, while others have more serious health issues such as diabetes, and that's when we need to see them and conduct full examinations."

Staffers at the Esperanza Center are gladly welcoming new and established clients for telehealth and phone consultations, to then determine who needs an office visit.

"Prior to the pandemic, we saw approximately 400 walk-in patients in a day," said Donnelly. "Our biggest concern is where did they go and will they come back to receive the treatment they need?"

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, families and children in crisis.

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