Celebrating our 2022 Service Award honorees

The Distinguished Service Award is given to an individual or group that exemplifies or significantly supports compassionate caregiving and service; has a personal commitment to the work of Catholic Charities; and demonstrates the goal of cherishing the Divine within those we serve.

This year, the awardee is:

Archbishop Spalding High School

The Anne Lindsey Otensak Youth Service Award is given to high school students in recognition of outstanding volunteer service with Catholic Charities. It is given in memory of Anne Lindsey Otensak, a passenger on 1988 Pan American Flight 103, to honor and perpetuate her spirit which was the hallmarks.

This year, the awardee is:

Ray Kelly

For more information on programs and events, visit cc-md.org

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Greater Promise
agreaterpromise.org

In the cold and the dark of winter, our hearts are warmed and our hope and resolve are renewed by the 100th anniversary of Catholic Charities of Baltimore. Amid continuing and emerging challenges faced by so many, Catholic Charities has worked for a century to help improve the lives of children and families in crisis, people experiencing poverty, individuals with intellectual disabilities, our new neighbors in the immigrant community, and our older neighbors. Our centennial is a time to reflect on the past and to plan for what is next. We will commemorate milestones, accomplishments and our collective impact on the community we love.

In this issue of Blessings, you’ll read more about our history as well as our present endeavors. Each day, our dedicated colleagues and volunteers live the mission of providing care and services to improve the lives of our neighbors. Each day, our friends, benefactors and partners find ways to support our storied mission.

Together, we are endlessly focused on both recognizing and cherishing the divine within every person.

Peace,
Bill McCarthy
William J. McCarthy, Jr., Executive Director

Marking 100 Years as a Movement to Change Lives

One Hundred Years Ago, shortly after Archbishop Michael Curley took his position in Baltimore, he re-organized a dozen local Catholic service agencies under a common mission and a new name – the Bureau of Catholic Charities. Aimed at streamlining efforts and increasing efficiencies, that decision also advanced a tradition of providing services to the poor, which the country’s first bishop – John Carroll – had institutionalized in Baltimore in 1792. And it sparked a collective focus at spark continues to light Catholic of Providence care that this movement to change lives of Charity of Providence Catholic Charities; and demonstrates the spirit of Monsignor Valenzano and his colleagues and volunteers live the mission.

This Friend, the right moment is arrived.

We are continually striving to find ways service with an attitude of God that he has called us people, that in itself is more than enough to help more, give more and love more,” the same time to receive this recognition from Charities we serve.

We are serving God’s people, that in itself is more than enough recognition. We’re grateful for the opportunity to be able to serve the community you serve. I think that’s the piece that this one million people every year at over 200 locations in Baltimore City and nine counties across Maryland, with over one million touchpoints on an annual basis.

“The specific needs and approaches may have changed, but the values that drive our work have held constant since our founding,” said Executive Director Bill McCarthy. “We remain inspired by the Gospel mandates to love, serve and teach, and honored to be called to the vital mission of serving our neighbors in need.”
Esperanza Center expands its support for Baltimore City immigrants

The Esperanza Center of Catholic Charities Baltimore will play a key role in a new Baltimore City initiative aimed at supporting immigrant and refugee families and ensuring they have access to social and health services.

Members of the Baltimore New American Access Coalition (BNAAC), launched this fall with $4 million in federal funds, will help immigrant families access public benefits in an effort to reduce longstanding disparities that grew worse during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over two years, Catholic Charities’ Esperanza Center will receive about $800,000 with other funding going to the International Rescue Committee, CASA, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the Southeast CDC.

“It is a relief,” said Matthew Dolamore, program director of the Esperanza Center. “We have huge demand for public benefit support and such little capacity to actually provide that support.”

BROADENING OUTREACH

When COVID-19 struck, Baltimore City quickly provided cash assistance to immigrant families, working through organizations such as the Esperanza Center. BNAAC funding will allow center staff to continue offering that support, advocating for families who face significant barriers – including language and technology – while applying for the benefits they are eligible to receive.

BNAAC funding will also allow the Esperanza Center to extend aid to the Immigration Outreach Service Center (IOSC) at St. Matthew Catholic Church in northeast Baltimore, which has a long history of working with immigrants from across Africa.

Dolamore expects the grant to support four case managers – one, a French-speaking based at the IOSC – who each assist 50 or more families at a time.

“BNAAC brings together the city and multiple nonprofits in the immigration space to really address some big gaps in access to public benefits,” he said, adding the impact of COVID-19 continues to strongly affect Baltimore-area immigrants. “We’re very much still in the period of recovery.”

In the Community

FARMERS MARKET BRINGS A NEW SOURCE OF FRESH FOOD TO CHERRY HILL

The Community Marketplace at the Cherry Hill Town Center, which is supported by Catholic Charities, became home to a weekly farmers market this fall. This initiative provides a new source of fresh, locally grown produce to a neighborhood that has long lusted a community place to buy healthy food.

The market, organized by the Black Yield Institute, procures fresh produce from local farmers of color who are based in Baltimore City or surrounding counties. Before the Town Center’s indoor marketplace opened in September, the Black Yield Institute and the Cherry Hill Food Co-op sold produce twice a month in the parking lot. The newly designed space allows the market to take place more often and in any weather conditions.

“FARMERS MARKET BRINGS A NEW SOURCE OF FRESH FOOD TO CHERRY HILL”

“The neighborhood has really been craving a sense of community,” said Francisco Baez, executive director of the Black Yield Institute.

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Leone emphasized how initiatives such as the farmers market are thoughtfully connecting with the community, largely because organizers are part of Cherry Hill.

Teresa Melton, 60, has worked at St. Ann since it opened 30 years ago.

“It’s been an irreplaceable role,” she said. “It’s a place where you can, you know, love people and bring them together. It’s a place where we can take on a lot of the burdens of their lives and help them get what they need.”

“The Dragons are coming back to Baltimore September 9, 2023

Stay tuned for more

The Dragons are coming back to Baltimore

September 9, 2023

Save the Date

Inaugural Symposium

APRIL 20, 2022

SPEAKER: Dr. Greer Gordon

TITLE: Journey to Social Justice: A Call to Action

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LAST DECEMBER, St. Ann Adult Day Services surveyed participants’ families and caregivers to ask what they thought of the center. Reading through the responses offers a sense of the program:

• “Everyone is so sweet...” We are so blessed to have found a wonderful place for my mom to go to.”

• “Loving, caring, family-oriented community.”

• “Beautiful place to come. Appreciate the personality, mannerisms and care. Love it!”

• “Caring people doing good work.”

The survey came just seven months after St. Ann had re-opened, following a 14-month closure due to COVID-19. Though the program had not yet been able to resume all services, respondents were still enthusiastically praising the importance it played in seniors’ lives.

As St. Ann celebrates its 30th year, these personal reflections are a rich part of the anniversary, telling the personal stories of the program’s irreplaceable value after three decades.

“What we do here is so important.”

St. Ann Adult Day Services opened in 1992, expanding the offerings of Jenkins Memorial, now known as St. Elizabeth Rehabilitation and Nursing Center. The center served mostly low-to-moderate-income seniors and individuals with disabilities, offering a welcoming place for assistance with daily life, socialization, recreation and rehabilitation. Within 18 months of its launch, it was operating at capacity.

Cherie Melton, who has led St. Ann for two-thirds of its history, emphasized the need – then and now – to help seniors live at home for as long as possible.

“I really feel like what we do here is so important to help seniors age in place,” she said. “We are adding to the value of seniors’ lives, and the participants and their caregivers just thank us for what we do.”

Open Monday through Friday, St. Ann provides transportation to and from the center and a range of activities, including chair exercises, brain-stimulating activities such as trivia and bingo, daily meals, a weekly Bible study, monthly shopping trips and excursions to restaurants. St. Ann also offers physical, occupational and speech therapy, podiatry and access to a social worker on-site. Participants who pay out-of-pocket are charged $105 to attend each day, and others tap into federal and local government supports and subsidies to cover the costs.

A GROWING POPULATION AND A GROWING NEED

As she thinks about the future, Melton worries that inflation and cuts in public funding for adult day services will limit how often people can afford to come – a pressing concern after witnessing the physical and mental declines in many seniors when the center was closed for COVID-19. And, as the percentage of Americans over 65 continues to rise, she suggests that adult day care is a more appealing and affordable option for most people, compared with assisted living facilities and nursing homes.

“All of us truly want to be able to age in the community with our families, and that’s really what St. Ann provides,” she said. “We know this population is continuing to grow, so we need to find ways to meet their needs.”

THE ESPERANZA CENTER OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES BALTIMORE

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“FARMERS MARKET BRINGS A NEW SOURCE OF FRESH FOOD TO CHERRY HILL”

“This is a neighborhood that’s dealing with a lot of food insecurity,” said Lena Leone, Catholic Charities’ community engagement coordinator. “There are not really places with fresh food.”

COMMUNITY DRIVEN

The Community Marketplace is part of a major, $4.5 million revitalization of the Town Center, which included renovating the building’s façade and welcoming the neighborhood’s first bank. Catholic Charities owns the building and worked closely with community partners to envision its future.

Planners intended the 4,400-square-foot marketplace to be a flexible space for community meetings and events. The space can also serve as a home for new ventures of Cherry Hill residents, who may not be ready to rent retail space when launching new businesses.

As the farmers market moved indoors, property managers began receiving more requests to use the marketplace. Black Yield Institute, for example, is also programming a series of monthly evening events, including an arts and jazz night, to build awareness of their work for Black-owned land and food sovereignty.

Leone emphasized how initiatives such as the farmers market are thoughtfully connecting with the community, largely because organizers are part of Cherry Hill.

“People have grown up in the neighborhood. They’ve lived it. It’s not outsiders coming into a neighborhood, ‘fixing’ it and going home,” she said.

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