

FRIEND,

Nothing signals the start of spring more beautifully than the bouquets of flowers blooming throughout our region. And this year, thanks to you, the vibrant blossoms have some company that is every bit as lovely. In a matter of weeks, Catholic Charities' highly anticipated Intergenerational Center will begin to rise in West Baltimore. Following a ceremonial groundbreaking on April 25, work will begin on our \$32 million community hub designed to serve neighbors of all ages, from toddlers to

seniors. Scheduled to open in the summer of 2025, the facility will house an early learning center, a recreation center, workforce development opportunities, health services, programs for seniors, spaces for community partners and more. As you'll see in the article below, the Greater Rosemont community, where the center will be located, is every bit as excited as we are. Also popping up like daffodils throughout our service area are colorful signs promoting our new "Love Your Neighbor" campaign, which will run through March 2025. Our

goal with this effort is to highlight the great importance of loving our neighbors and to encourage everyone to bring the message to life.

I thank you for all the many things you do to love your neighbors, and I wish you a spring season full of flowers, joy, meaning, and winning Orioles baseball.



William J. McCarthy, Jr.,
Executive Director



SPRING 2024

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.

Let's walk together

If a child arrives at Belmont Elementary School without having eaten breakfast, they know to head to Kiara Henighan's office to grab a snack bar. Parents sometimes stop by to pull from her stack of donated diapers. And over the winter, she made sure everyone at school had a warm coat.

As the community school coordinator for Belmont Elementary, Henighan is focused on removing the countless barriers that can stand in the way of a student's success. She works with a range of partners across the West Baltimore community to build out the resources available to its families – whether that's a clean uniform for a fourth grader or connections to a workforce training program for a parent in need of a new job.

She smiles when she thinks about how Catholic Charities' Intergenerational Center, which will be located just a half-mile from Belmont Elementary, will affect her families.

"It will directly impact my work because it will be a resource that I can say, 'It's right here. Let's walk together,'" she said. "A lot of people just need a place to go – somewhere they can grow. And that's what the Intergenerational Center will be."

MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIP FROM THE START

Catholic Charities will mark progress on the Intergenerational Center – the former Alexander Hamilton Elementary – with a groundbreaking and community fair on April 25. The moment is part of a multi-year effort to respond to community needs with a range of opportunities, including Head Start classrooms, workforce development programs and gatherings for seniors.

The building is not Catholic Charities' introduction to the community. The organization has long hosted programs in West Baltimore and spent more than a year listening to the interests and ambitions of neighbors and neighborhood groups as it planned the center.



Catholic Charities' Intergenerational Center rendering.

To Henighan, that kind of engagement is essential to being an effective community partner. Since she started in her role last summer, Catholic Charities staff have brought fresh food to Belmont Elementary, helped families sign up for SNAP benefits and found Head Start slots for students' younger siblings.

"I've never had to ask him to show up," she said of her interactions with Kevin Creamer, the center's program director. "That's how I model my work with my students, too. They never have to ask me to show up; I'm here."

When the center opens in 2025, Henighan knows it will be a key location for a coalition of partners coalescing behind a shared interest in serving the community over the long term.

"It's going to take time. It's going to take trust. It's going to take relationship building," she said. "When you walk with someone on the journey and bring other people along with you, you build a group that's committed to the same goals. That's how you ensure your success."



The Catholic Charities approach in the community

For 20 years, Lena Leone has been deeply invested in the success of Baltimore communities – starting with her own.

After moving to East Baltimore's Greenmount West neighborhood, she witnessed sharp divides between frustrated local leaders and fed-up city officials. Those gaps often stood in the way of basic services reaching her community in an equitable manner. So, Lena leaned in to help advocate diplomatically for what she and her neighbors needed and deserved, building connections across the community, with other communities and city agencies.

Those are the skills, contacts, and approaches she now brings to her job as Catholic Charities' community engagement coordinator. With a focus on the agency's programs in South and West Baltimore communities, she attends meetings, engages with neighbors, and taps connections forged over decades. As she learns about each community's greatest concerns, she helps match up responsive programs and resources, whether those are part of Catholic Charities or not.

"Lena's position allows us to be deep listeners, which is

the stance we want to embrace in the community – especially those communities that are traditionally underserved," said Allison Stone, director of mission integration and engagement for Catholic Charities. "Listening for the needs, desires and strengths of neighbors as we continue to serve and accompany helps us focus on our mission and plan strategically for the future."

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE ISSUE

Lena describes her work as "problem solving," internally and externally. At times, that includes introducing communities

to city or state services and providing the contacts to help advocate for more attention or resources. Other times, her work includes reaching out to Catholic Charities colleagues to extend programs in ways that meet community needs.

In the Cherry Hill community, for example, Lena helped facilitate a free geriatric nursing assistant (GNA) training at Catholic Charities' Cherry Hill Town Center, aligning the community's need for workforce development with St. Elizabeth Nursing and Rehabilitation Center's need for GNAs. Several residents who completed the

training found work with Catholic Charities programs immediately.



Graduates of GNA training at Cherry Hill Town Center

"I think what Catholic Charities does really well is getting at the root cause of an issue and finding ways to solve it holistically," she said. "It's not easy. You're working with complex issues and, sometimes, trauma that compounds with each generation. But the amount of care that each and every individual gives in all of our programs? I've never worked for an organization that lends this much support across such a variety of social concerns."

Advocacy Check-In



With the 90-day session of the Maryland General Assembly scheduled to conclude on April 8, Catholic Charities' advocacy team is hard at work on a number of proposed measures designed to improve the lives of our clients, our colleagues, and our communities. For example, through the first two months of the session, we submitted testimony in support of these bills:

- Establishment of the Maryland Pathway to Nursing Program and Advisory Committee;
- Access to Care Act;
- Family and Medical Leave Insurance Program – Modifications;
- Annual Behavioral Health Wellness Visits – Coverage and Reimbursement;
- Establishment of the Homeless Shelter Licensing Program;
- Residential Treatment Centers – Accreditation; and
- Behavioral Health Crisis Response Services (9-8-8 Trust Fund Fees).

For more information, please connect with Val Twanmoh, Director of Advocacy, vtwanmoh@cc-md.org.

Support from someone who's walked in your shoes



Adam Trionfo was in his seventh substance use treatment program when he was first assigned a peer recovery coach. Trionfo started sharing his story when the coach cut him off abruptly.

"He said, 'Adam – stop. Stop lying to me,'" Trionfo remembers. "I realized I wasn't going to be able to manipulate him – he could see right through it. Knowing his background, and that he was able to get from a life of drug use and housing insecurity to where he was at that point, changed my concept of therapy and recovery."

That conversation also ended up changing Trionfo's career trajectory. Today, he leads a team of five peer recovery specialists at Catholic Charities' Villa Maria Behavioral Health and helps certify others in the approach.

FINDING THOSE WHO NEED HELP

Peers play a different role in supporting people with substance use disorders than counselors or sponsors found in programs like Alcoholics Anonymous. They focus less on a person's history and more on how to help them take their next steps. Their work can include long-term relationships or one-off conversations. Trionfo stays connected to his coach four years after being his client.

Trionfo trained as a peer recovery specialist after getting sober in 2017. It wasn't a common profession at that time, however, and so he started working at Catholic Charities' Fallsway clinic in the psychiatric rehabilitation program (PRP). He and Clinic Director Erin Moyer continued to talk about how peers might be helpful in their work.

"We were wondering, how do we get people to ask for therapy? How do we get them to walk in the door?" Trionfo said. "There are drug users who have not left a three-block radius of their homes in years and years. And we were wondering, how do we get to them?"

"WE DON'T WANT YOU TO DIE."

The work of Trionfo's team takes various shapes. They visit Safe Streets violence prevention programs to support employees or their family members who might be struggling. They show up in the same communities every week, often with snacks, clothes, hygiene products or naloxone kits to draw neighbors. They make referrals to treatment programs and drive people to the program, even sitting through the intake process with them.



Adam Trionfo

"We have had conversations with people while they're smoking crack or injecting heroin. And it's not like, 'You need to quit.' It's more, 'We don't want you to die,'" Trionfo said.

Over the past two years, Trionfo estimates his team has distributed more than 1,000 naloxone kits (2,000 doses) and linked more than 400 people to residential treatment programs. As they saw first-hand what people need, they also developed new trainings – including one focused on veterans and housing instability – to help an ever-widening community of peer coaches.

"I think the outreach has been successful in bridging that gap between the services we offer at the clinic and the streets," Trionfo said. "And Catholic Charities has been a bit ahead of the curve for an organization that is not strictly about substance abuse." This peer recovery model is a reflection of Catholic Charities' greater vision – the call to action of "Love Your Neighbor," which focuses on the hope and promise of better days.

Leadership Breakfast 2023 Coverage

Thanks to so many of you, Catholic Charities raised a record \$5.1M for the Leadership Breakfast Campaign! Your support is already making a tangible difference to thousands

of Marylanders every day — as a meal, a safe place to rest, health care, assistance finding a job, and more. These funds are flexible and able to be immediately used where they're

needed most across our more than 80 programs. Visit our annual report to learn how your donations provide life-changing opportunities to Marylanders of all faiths, ages and backgrounds.

“This guy made it through!”

Mike Weeks really wants the owner of the Baltimore Ravens to know he's OK.

It's been two decades since Weeks, then a child living at St. Vincent's Villa, toured Steve Bisciotti through the Baltimore County property as he got to know Catholic Charities. But their interaction – and a handwritten note from the business magnate a few weeks later – helped Weeks realize that other people cared about him and the direction of his life.

THAT DIRECTION WASN'T EASY

St. Vincent's Villa is a residential program that offers comprehensive behavioral health treatment to children under 12 who haven't responded to community-based interventions. Weeks stayed there between 2003 and 2005. After he left, he bounced around foster homes and attended more than a dozen schools before graduating from high school in 2010. Over the next several years, a series of tragedies, “bad choices” and heavy drinking led him the wrong way.

“I felt my consequences,” he said. “But I ended up turning my life around, and I got sober.”

Today, Weeks works as a crane operator, a job that has provided comforts he never



Mike Weeks and St. Vincent's Villa therapy dog, Carmen

had as a child, including a home, a truck, and a dog named Maverick.

PUTTING IN THE TIME

He was in the crane when he came up with the idea of re-connecting with St. Vincent's Villa. Though he spent time in many residential settings while growing up, the care and attention he received from the Catholic Charities program always stood out to him.

“I really bonded with the people. It felt like family when I was there. It's just the time and effort they put into kids – I think it's amazing,” he said.

On his first return visit, Weeks sat in a circle with the residents, who initially didn't believe he had been in their position.

“Then they automatically connected with me and said, ‘Well, this guy made it through!’” Weeks said. “I just want the kids to see the light at the end of the tunnel. I want them to understand they're not alone.”

Since that first visit, Weeks has returned monthly to ride bikes, throw a football, or just hang out. Sometimes, kids will open up about their experiences, knowing he will understand. Other times, he said, it's enough that someone has taken the time to be with them.

PASSING ON A MESSAGE

One of the things he remembers most clearly about Bisciotti's visit was the sense that someone cared. A couple of years after their first meeting, Weeks ran into the Ravens owner at M&T Bank Stadium.

“I walked up to him and said, ‘Hey, do you remember me?’” Weeks said. “He said, ‘Absolutely I remember you.’ And he looked at me again and said, ‘You're going to have a bright future. And if you need anything, call me.’”

Years later, that's exactly the message Weeks is passing on – in his own way – with every visit to St. Vincent's Villa.

Blase Cooke History

Catholic Charities' annual golf tournament is named after Joseph “Blase” Cook, longtime board member of Catholic Charities. Mr. Cooke's 25-year involvement with Catholic Charities included serving on the development committee, leadership breakfast committee, and the capital campaign. He was the founding chair for this golf tournament, while also working tirelessly for My Brother's Keeper, a program of Catholic Charities in Irvington. This is the 37th annual Blase Cook Classic Golf Tournament.



June 17, 2024

(Rain Date June 24, 2024)

Baltimore Country Club, Five Farms

To register, visit <https://cc-md.org/blasecooke24/>
Contact Izabella Downs for more information:
Office: 667-600-2029 | idowns@cc-md.org

Thanks to you, we are able to continue our work in the community.

Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code to donate today!



CATHOLIC CHARITIES

CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL
Catholic Charities is the largest private 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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