

## A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS

### A ROUTE TO STABILITY

You've probably heard it before – someone joking that things have gotten so bad that they'll have to live out of their car or under a bridge.

For Stephanie, that joke was never funny.

Not long ago, the New Jersey native was living in Florida, struggling to extricate herself and her four children from her abusive husband. Last December, she and her kids returned to New Jersey, bouncing between friends' and relatives' homes until she discovered Linkages, Catholic Charities' emergency transitional housing program for families, in August.



▲ Stephanie at Linkages, Catholic Charities' emergency transitional housing program for families

All referrals come from the Monmouth County Board of Social Services. The program quickly focuses on a housing stabilization plan and employment options through intensive case management. Once employed, families can apply for Rapid Rehousing vouchers through Monmouth County.

As one of just a few transitional housing programs statewide, Linkages is special in that it offers families in housing crisis apartment-like living quarters, with a kitchen and separate bedrooms in every unit and laundry facilities, a playground, a community room, and 24/7 staff on site.

### A HOMEY SETTING

"It provides a home-like atmosphere for families, where they're able to really feel comfortable, and intensive case management to secure permanent housing," said Stacey DePoe, Linkages' director. "They don't get that atmosphere or support in a one-room motel."

The need for such a program is so great that Linkages has a waiting list.



▲ Catholic Charities' Linkages housing in Tinton Falls

### HELP WHEN IT WAS NEEDED MOST

Without Linkages, Stephanie said, moving her family onto the street was a distinct, terrifying possibility.

"Where do you go, when there's nowhere to go?" she said. "If we weren't here, where would we be?"

Linkages houses 28 homeless families in the old London Motel in Tinton Falls, where beach-bound tourists used to vacation. Monmouth County bought the five-acre site about 30 years ago, and Catholic Charities has operated the Linkages program since 2011.



## A Message From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Here at Catholic Charities, our mission statement urges us to be inspired by our Catholic faith and shared values as we work to restore dignity and independence to people, especially the poor and vulnerable.

At our recent 29th annual Guardian Angel Dinner Dance, Paul J. Hooker underscored that sentiment in an especially salient way. Paul, who along with his wife Margo received our prestigious Richard J. Hughes, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton Humanitarian Award, said: "We're human beings, and those of us in the Catholic Church have read in the last few months about the failings of human beings. We acknowledge it, we need to change it, we accept it, let's do something about it. But let's not forget ... what Catholic Charities is all about. The people of Catholic Charities, where all of this money is going tonight to serve those who for some reason are having trouble helping themselves, are the people who are doing the work of Jesus Christ here on earth."

Indeed, we are the hands and feet of Jesus, as we work to help

thousands of our neighbors heal and find stability after trauma or crisis. You can see that in the stories that fill the following pages of people like Stephanie, who was able to get her four children out of homelessness with the help of our Linkages program; Lawrence, who overcame his addiction and got housing help and psychiatric services through our Partial Care program; and Susan, who overcame the trauma of domestic violence through our Providence House Domestic Violence Services in Burlington County.

As we approach the glorious holiday season, it seems an especially good time to thank our staff, who carry out God's work on earth, as well as our donors, whose generous support enables them to do so. I wish you and your loved ones a blessed Thanksgiving.

*With warm regards,*

**Marlene Laó-Collins,  
Executive Director**



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383 West State Street  
Trenton, NJ 08618  
609-394-5181

Publisher: Marlene Laó-Collins  
Editor-in-Chief: Nancy Tompkins  
Writer: Dana DiFilippo  
Designer: Miroslav Farina  
Photography: John Bynum, Dana DiFilippo, Jeff Anderson

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*Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, inspired by our Catholic faith and shared values, restores dignity and independence to individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable; through service, advocacy and community building.*

## A ROOF OVER THEIR HEADS (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

Stephanie said it was a rough adjustment, initially, for her family.

"It was hard to accept the fact that I had nowhere to go," she said. "Even being here with a roof over your head, you're still homeless. You feel like you have failed your children in a lot of ways."

### A BRIGHTER FUTURE AHEAD

But Linkages gave her the stability and support she needed to turn their situation around.

She now works in a convenience store and is working to reinstate her New Jersey nursing license so she can

eventually bring home bigger paychecks. She found a home to rent in Marlboro and will soon retrieve the family's belongings from storage and move there with her children.

"It's alleviated some of our stress and put stability and consistency in my children's lives," Stephanie said. "I feel like the future looks better. I needed help to get there. Without the help we received at Catholic Charities, we wouldn't have had a chance."

**FOR INFORMATION** about the Linkages program, call Stacey DePoe, program director, at (732) 922-0400.

# TAKING CARE OF OTHER PEOPLE THROUGH LEGACY PLANNING

Charity is as ingrained in Vincent Mastrocola as his hazel eyes and his love of Italian and other ethnic foods. He attributes it to his upbringing. His grandparents, his mother and her siblings immigrated here from Italy. They joined the blue-collar, melting-pot masses in New York City and passed down their devout Catholic faith to their children and grandchildren.

“I was born and raised in midtown Manhattan when there was no such thing as prejudice – I don’t think I knew that word until I was an adult. It was a community, and everybody helped each other. And going to Catholic school for 10 years, things were hammered into you – almost literally,” he said, with a laugh.

His commitment to others deepened after he transferred from a predominantly white, middle-class school to a high school in Harlem, where most students were working-class kids of color – and where he saw firsthand the everyday struggles they endured. So when he sat down recently to figure out his affairs, there was no hesitation in deciding what he would do with his life’s savings. He’s giving it all to charity.

“It’s all about taking care of other people and being thankful for what you have,” said Mastrocola, who lives with his longtime partner Sue. “There’s nothing magical about it. I’m glad I was brought up the way I was.”

## “BE A DECENT PERSON”

As a devout Catholic who’s now an active parishioner at Our Lady Queen of Peace in Hainesport, Mastrocola has been a longtime supporter of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton and made sure to include the agency in his will. He also plans to leave money to other charities that help homeless people and those living in poverty, as well as animals. Mastrocola works as director of the Special Audits Unit at the New Jersey Department of Education in Trenton. He’s 74, but don’t even ask him about his retirement plans.

“Boy, that question gets old!” he said, laughing. “People have stopped asking me that. They used to say: ‘Don’t you want to retire and enjoy life?’ I said: ‘You know what? Every day I get up, I enjoy life, and every weekend is a vacation for me.’ People look at me



▲ Vincent Mastrocola and Nancy Tompkins, director of development and marketing

sometimes like I got three heads. But I love going into work and the challenges it brings. The people I work with are interesting and energizing. God willing, I’ll leave when I’m ready.”

George Bontcuc, Catholic Charities’ associate executive director of fiscal affairs, said bequests are a much-needed boost to the agency’s budget.

“Over the last 2 ½ years, we have received over \$780,000 from bequests,” Bontcuc said. “These unplanned gifts help support the services we provide.”

Mastrocola also spent much of his life giving back in other ways. He frequently volunteered for various causes, including at a state hospital for autistic adolescents and at St. Vincent de Paul Society. He also worked in a residential treatment center for emotionally disturbed adolescent boys as a counselor and teacher’s aide.

“I don’t need people to remember me by anything else other than that I truly contributed by helping,” Mastrocola said. “Look, we’re living in troubled times. But be thankful for what you have, and just be a decent person and respect others.”

**TO LEARN MORE** about leaving a legacy gift, please contact Nancy Tompkins, director of development and marketing, (609) 394-5181 x1161 or [ntompkins@cctrenton.org](mailto:ntompkins@cctrenton.org).



## CONQUERING ADDICTION After Trauma

Lawrence first started using marijuana at 15. After seeing his mother get shot, he developed post-traumatic stress disorder and turned to harder drugs to dull his senses. That spiraled into a decade-long battle against heroin addiction.

After surviving an overdose, he knew he wanted a different life. So he reached out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton’s Partial Care Program, an intensive outpatient program where he successfully detoxed through medication-assisted treatment. There, he also connected with mental health counseling, as well as employment and housing services.

“My life has really turned around. It was in shambles before,” said Lawrence, who’s now 32. “I tried other recovery programs. But nothing worked.”

### BELIEVE TO SUCCEED

His mother, who survived the shooting, found Catholic Charities for Lawrence.

“It felt like home,” Lawrence said of his recovery journey at Catholic Charities. “They didn’t judge me or look down on me. They had faith in me.”

Lawrence recently landed a landscaping job and is working with Catholic Charities to find stable housing.

“He’s doing amazing,” said Cheryl Smith, assistant director of clinical services.

It hasn’t been easy, Lawrence acknowledged. But he has hope in the future for the first time in a long time.

“I consider Catholic Charities like your parent: It teaches you how to grow up. It gets you on your feet,” Lawrence said. “They don’t always give you what you want. But they give you what you need. They believe in you, especially if you believe in yourself.”

**FOR INFORMATION** about the Partial Care program, call Cheryl Smith, assistant director of clinical services, at (609) 267-9339, ext. 5180.

# NEW FUNDING PROMPTS MENTAL HEALTH/ADDICTIONS

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has awarded Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton a \$4 million grant to expand its Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) program in underserved areas of Mercer and Burlington counties.

The highly competitive two-year grant, totaling \$2 million each year, will enable the agency to strengthen addiction and mental health services for those who most need it – vulnerable people whose complex needs have historically left them out of the system.

Catholic Charities will use the funding in two ways:

- To expand access and provide more comprehensive, family-focused, outpatient mental health services for adults and children and rapid access to the full continuum of adolescent and adult addiction treatment in eastern Mercer County.
- To provide access to critical services in Burlington County, especially for veterans. Burlington is New Jersey’s largest county yet has limited community-based crisis or substance-abuse services, relative to the community’s needs.



▲ Marlene Laó-Collins, Catholic Charities executive director, Susan Loughery, director of operations, and Anthony C. Ferreri, regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, listen to Dr. Adriana Torres-O’Connor, Behavioral Health services director, as she leads a tour of our ambulatory detox center.

# A PRESTIGIOUS VISITOR WORK TO EXPAND

CCBHCs are a new provider type in Medicaid, part of a national initiative to expand Americans' access to mental health and addiction care in community-based settings.

Catholic Charities now serves nearly 600 people in several CCBHC programs targeting four populations – people with serious mental illness, those struggling with substance abuse, veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder, and children with a serious emotional disturbance, said Susan Loughery, director of operations.

## REDUCING TREATMENT BARRIERS

“Our goal is to fill the gaps in community health systems, so that access is available to all those who need it,” Loughery said. “We are thrilled to receive this funding, which will allow us to grow our services and help more people lead healthy lives.”

The grant will empower Catholic Charities to remove barriers to treatment for any more people who struggle to overcome addiction, Executive Director Marlene Laó-Collins said.

“This new funding has enabled us to partner with other community groups and break down the ‘silos’ of care, so that we are able to help people not only recover, but to also move on with their lives – to get housing, to get employment, to finish their schooling, to do any number of things you need to not only survive but thrive,” Laó-Collins said. “It takes a whole village of people to make this work. We all are working together to serve the community better.”

The new funding prompted a visit from a federal health official, who toured Catholic Charities' ambulatory detox program in late September.

Anthony C. Ferreri, the regional director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), applauded the holistic program as a model of community collaboration that can be replicated to reduce overdose deaths and addiction overall.

New Jersey, where about 2,500 people have fatally overdosed so far this year, has one of the fastest growing overdose rates in the nation.



▲ Sabrina and her baby

## A LIFE-SAVING PROGRAM

Ferreri heard from Sabrina, who enrolled in a Catholic Charities CCBHC program called For My Baby and Me last spring. Several community groups, including Catholic Charities, Capital Health, and HomeFront, coordinate care in the program to holistically serve pregnant women struggling with addiction who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Sabrina said the program helped her find sobriety and stability after years of addiction. She had her baby, Alyssa, in August and now plans to marry her boyfriend.

“I brought my baby home, which was the greatest thing I could have imagined. We are hopefully going to be getting our own place, with the help of the program. I really don't know what I would have done if my family hadn't found this program. They've been so supportive, there for us every step of the way,” Sabrina said. “If this grant wasn't here with this program, with all this support I've received here, I'd probably be dead, especially with all the fentanyl out there.”

Sabrina cradled her baby, adding: “I know I did most of the work, but if it wasn't for everybody's help, I wouldn't have her. And she's awesome.”

**FOR INFORMATION** about Catholic Charities For My Baby and Me program, call Lisa Merritt, director of nursing, at (609) 396-4557, ext. 2445.

# DECLARING VICTORY OVER VICTIMHOOD



The last man Susan Grady dated abused her emotionally and never contributed a dime to her household.

“He would treat everybody else like they were a ray of sunshine, but he treated me like I was garbage,” Susan said.

She stayed with him for seven years.

“I thought it was normal,” she said. “If that’s all you know, you think abuse is normal.”

When the emotional abuse turned physical, Susan’s sister urged her to get help. So she reached out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton’s Providence House Domestic Violence Services in Burlington County.

## THE UGLY ROOTS OF ABUSE

There, she attended weekly domestic-violence education classes for two months, where counselors helped her identify a pattern of abuse in her life suffered at the hands of male relatives and partners going back into her childhood. She also learned to recognize red flags in a partner’s behavior to help her avoid falling back into that pattern.

“As women, we try to look past the abuse, because you think your abuser will change,” said Susan, 53, a mother of eight grown children (the youngest is 17). “But abuse is not normal. Abuse is just that – abuse. It’s not right, it’s not normal, and nobody should have to go

through that.”

She continued healing in weekly support-group meetings she attended at Providence House for six months. Catharsis and healing came as she learned how to love herself again.

## LEARNING TO LAUGH AGAIN

“Before him (her partner), I was very outgoing, outspoken, jovial. I was always laughing,” Susan said. “But he took away my self-worth, my self-respect, my self-esteem. He took away my laughter. I had to learn how to be that person all over again, because when I was with him, all that disappeared.”

Susan feels so strong now that she finds power in sharing her story of recovery.

“I don’t see myself as a victim anymore. I’m victorious,” she said. “Now I know what to look for. If I don’t feel right about something, I won’t take it. I’m not going to let someone else define me. I define myself.”

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**FOR INFORMATION** about Providence House of Burlington County, call associate director Mary Pettrow at (856) 824-0599, ext. 8609.

## A Tasty Benefit for Domestic Violence Recovery

About 400 people attended the 24th annual Taste of Burlington County, raising \$60,000 to benefit Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton’s Providence House Domestic Violence Services.

The event was held Oct. 10 at The Merion in Cinnaminson. It featured samplings from more than 20 local restaurants, a gift auction, and raffle drawings.

“We deeply appreciate the tremendous community support for Providence House and those impacted by

domestic violence,” said Mary Pettrow, associate director of Providence House. “This is our biggest, single annual fundraiser and helps us to continue to provide confidential, life-saving services free of cost.”

Money raised will support counseling for adults and children, education and legal advocacy, a 24/7 hotline, sheltering, and specialized children’s services at Providence House in Burlington County, which marked 40 years of service this year.

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**FOR INFORMATION** about Providence House of Burlington County, call associate director Mary Pettrow at (856) 824-0599, ext. 8609.

# GUARDIAN ANGEL DINNER DANCE

raises money, honors volunteers

More than 350 people attended our 29th annual Guardian Angel Dinner Dance on Sept. 22 in Princeton, raising \$252,000 to help us transform the lives of people struggling with addiction, hunger, mental health challenges, homelessness, domestic violence, and other crises. The prestigious celebration is our signature annual fundraiser. All proceeds benefit our 58 programs that help vulnerable people, regardless of religious affiliation or ability to pay.

The gala served as a way for Catholic Charities to honor the volunteers who help us succeed in our work.

“The Guardian Angel Dinner Dance is a grand celebration and a great way to honor our inspirational volunteers and clients,” Executive Director Marlene Laó-Collins said. “The support of our sponsors and event participants means we can continue to supply groceries to feed children and adults, cover housing costs for our survivors of domestic violence, and invest in job training, employment searches, homelessness prevention, and English (ESL) classes to move people toward independence and stability.”



▲ (from left to right) Rev. Msgr. Joseph N. Rosie representing St Paul Parish, Princeton, Light of Hope Award for Mercer County; Jim Knipper representing J. Knipper and Company, Inc., Corporate Citizen of the Year; Guy, Client Achievement Award; Paul and Margo Hooker, Richard J. Hughes, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton Humanitarian Award; Mary Lee, Light of Hope Award for Monmouth County; Audrey Edelhauser representing Opdyke Furniture, Inc., Light of Hope Award for Ocean County; Rev. Robert Holtz representing Church of the Sacred Heart, Riverton, Light of Hope Award for Burlington County; Gigi and Lynn Opdyke also representing Opdyke Furniture, Inc.



**TO LEARN MORE** about the Guardian Angel Dinner Dance, call Charissa Buskirk, development events coordinator, at (609) 394-5181, ext. 1159.

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# #GIVINGTUESDAY

## What Is Giving Tuesday?

On November 27, 2018, our community will come together for 24 hours of unprecedented giving to support the amazing work of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton through #GivingTuesday. Just as Black Friday and Cyber Monday kick off the holiday buying season, Giving Tuesday kicks off the giving season, highlighting the true meaning of this time of year.

## Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton

- ✓ provides food and housing
- ✓ offers mental health services
- ✓ has domestic violence services
- ✓ supports children and families
- ✓ helps 100,000 people annually
- ✓ serves all people regardless of faith
- ✓ nearly 90¢ of every \$ goes to programs

**You can support us by donating to our #GivingTuesday campaign, sharing it on your Facebook, Twitter and visiting us at [www.catholiccharitiestrenton.org](http://www.catholiccharitiestrenton.org).**