



The

SUMMER 2019

CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org



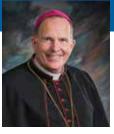




After Years of Darkness

lashell in front of Catholic Charities Guidance Clinic (see full story on page 3)

from the BISHOP OF TRENTON



Dear Friends of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton:

As a priest and Bishop of the Eastern Province of the Congregation of

the Mission, also known as the Vincentians, and as President of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, I am particularly mindful of the needs of our brothers and sisters who seek help and are able to receive it from our Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton. They would not be able to receive this vital assistance without the generosity of our donors who enable this Catholic social service organization to pursue its mission of service. Thank you!

It is heartwarming to read the stories of hope that are presented in this edition of The Spirit and all the editions that come out throughout the year. These stories give us just a little glimpse at the incredible

work being done throughout the Diocese of Trenton by Catholic Charities. Read on!

We are truly blessed to have such wonderful people leading and serving in our Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton. Everyone involved, from volunteers and staff up to the board, plays a significant role in making it possible to provide service to our neighbors in need and fulfill our mission. I thank them and you for responding, in charity, to so much need today.

May God bless you, Catholic Charities, and all those we serve!

Respectfully yours in the Lord,

Laws In Clamy Com

Most Reverend David M. O'Connell, C.M., J.C.D.

from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This has been an amazing year for Catholic Charities. Diocese of Trenton. Federal officials awarded us a \$4 million grant to expand our outreach and treatment for people

in need of mental health and addiction care. This funding empowered us to create innovative programs to help vulnerable people with complex needs that have historically excluded them from the system, including military veterans, pregnant women, and new mothers struggling with addiction.

Yet suffering persists, and we continue to look for help to support the ongoing work of our programs. In the following pages, you'll read about how our programs like Community Services, Family Growth, El Centro,

and Program for Assertive Community Treatment help reduce poverty, strengthen families, and empower people with mental health challenges to thrive in the community. We look to our friends for support to help us put people in crisis back on the path to stability and self-sufficiency. Pope Francis said: "Christ leads us to go out from ourselves more and more, to give ourselves and to serve others." Your support in the service of others has a life-altering impact for so many vulnerable people in need, and we thank you.

Warmly,

Marlene Laó-Collins **Executive Director**

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Thanks to our donors. Your support makes these success stories possible.



▲ Iashell and Catholic Charities Family Guidance clinician Yesenia Perez

In hindsight, hardship can be a transformative gift.

It didn't feel like it in 2014, when Iashell Brown got arrested for obstruction of justice and assaulting a police officer. The felony case – her first brush with the law – was like a bomb detonating in her life. It got her fired from her job. Without an income, she soon found herself homeless, living out of her car and sometimes a Trenton shelter with her two young children. That drew the attention of child-protective workers, who investigated. Her car got repossessed when she fell behind on payments. Then a boyfriend

FINDING THE SUN After Years of Darkness

assaulted her so badly she was hospitalized and missed a court hearing in the obstruction case, prompting a judge to issue a warrant for her arrest.

"Everything just piled up, and I felt like everything was stacked against me," Iashell said.

MOVING FORWARD

Then she heard about Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's Guidance Clinic. It's an outpatient mental health program that provides individual, group, and family therapy, as well as psychiatric evaluation and medication management for people ages 16 and up. The clinic treats people with all sorts of experiences, from those who have experienced significant trauma to those struggling with anxiety, depression, or other mental health symptoms, marital issues, and substance use disorder.

The judge had ordered Iashell to complete an anger management program. So she began seeing Family Guidance clinician Yesenia Perez for weekly counseling sessions.

"I had a very traumatic childhood. My dad died when I was 7, and I had a lot of unresolved anger in me because of that. Yesenia helped me cope with that," Iashell said. "Everything that could go wrong in someone's life happened to me from 2014 to 2017. But Yesenia taught me to treat those situations as temporary, and to focus on all that I have overcome. I learned that I'm not a victim. I'm a survivor. We can't change what happened, but we can move forward from it."

Jashell still sees Yesenia twice a month and has made meteoric progress.

She landed a good job. She bought a car. She got a second job, saved up, and bought a house, where she lives with her daughters, now 4 and 7, and her mother.

When she started counseling, she set three goals - lose weight, go on vacation, and buy a house. She's achieved all three.

continued on page 4 ▶

CHILDREN AND FAMILY 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Families received crisis intervention and stabilization services

2,406

Individuals received support, case management, and other services through El Centro

3,006

Children and adults received counselina and support services to help with trauma, including 1,586 children who were at risk

766

Individuals were provided with immigration support and counseling services

Individuals were provided with English as a Second Language (ESL) classes

Finding the Sun After Years of Darkness (continued)

CHANGING HER REALITY

"If you would have asked me if I was capable of accomplishing any of these things in 2014, I would have said: 'Not me!'" she said. "I was hopeless. I had no faith in myself. I figured I would just fall into the cracks of the criminal justice system and work the rest of my life for minimum wage. I thought that was my reality, that my life would be doomed forever."

As a first-time offender, she was able to get her record expunged by completing community service and the anger management program.

Growing up, Iashell dreamed of becoming a meteorologist. Getting a college degree is a new goal.

"My oldest daughter wants to be a doctor. In order for her to see that as a reality, I need to set that example for her," said Iashell, who recently started a women's empowerment group whose members meet monthly to share their struggles and successes.

She regards the hardships she overcame as a necessary step to build the bright future she now anticipates.

"Without me going through all of that, I wouldn't be where I am today," she said. "I needed that to shake me up and show me how strong I am. I ended up finding myself. I'm never going back. I see the sun, and I have the will to fight. Nobody can take this away from me."

FOR INFORMATION about the Guidance Clinic, call Joleen Benedict, program supervisor of the clinic's outpatient services, at (609) 394-9398, ext. 2119.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

Hope Doesn't Cost a Thing

Oh how I wish I had a wishing well, toss a penny in and it appears if my dreams will come true.

But I'm older and wiser now and a wishing well will just not do.

So I clasp my hands together bow my head and pray instead.

I prayed to the master Carpenter the Creator of all things. He who does not ask for a single cent. Your Hope and Faith is all He asks for.

In your time of joy He too is content. In your sorrow; your darkest hour, He sits beside you to give you comfort and strength.

And when you call out His name Abba Abba. please help me?

The Lord our God whispers in your ear "Trust me as you have always and together we will get through this."

> 11/17/2018 Tricia Risley

Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, with 129 people on average taking their lives every day, according to the National Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

In the conversation about this public health crisis, you often hear from the experts and the grieving loved ones left behind. Yet because of a persistent stigma, you rarely hear from the suicidal person.

Tricia Risley wants to change the conversation. Tricia has lived with multiple mental health disorders since childhood, including severe recurring depression, borderline personality disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), panic attacks, self-harming, and bulimia.

"Suicide has always been a onesided conversation. It's always been about the people left behind and their grief. I'm not invalidating their grief, but who's speaking up for the person who passed away?" said Tricia, who has two children who don't currently live with her because of her illness.

About a Taboo Topic

Talking about what it's like to be suicidal and live with mental health disorders can help smash the stigma, she said. Tricia keeps journals and writes poetry about living with mental illness. In May, she selfpublished a book of her poetry, called "When Prozac Fails." Her goal is to be that "missing voice" in the conversation about suicide.

Tricia is in treatment at Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's **Program for Assertive Community** Treatment in Burlington County. The program, known as PACT, serves people with severe, persistent mental illness who have a history of hospitalization and risk returning to institutional settings. The goal of treatment, which includes psychiatric medical intervention, counseling, vocational training, recreational outings, transportation, and case management, is to help a person live successfully in the community. Catholic Charities has one PACT team in Burlington County and three in Mercer County; combined, they serve more than 300 people.

A DAILY STRUGGLE

Tricia wants people to know how much mental illness steals from the people who experience it.

"I was diagnosed at 15, so I was in the hospital from 15 to 18, so I didn't date, I didn't go to my senior prom, I didn't get to graduate with my cap and gown. I had to drop out of college because I couldn't stay out of the hospital long enough to finish my classes. I've lost jobs because of it," Tricia said. "It takes a lot away from you. Having to deal with those consequences, along with the daily task of getting up every morning and actually caring to brush your teeth and shower and get dressed when you don't want to, and the side effects of medication, is a real challenge."

Because she was in psychiatric hospitals from a young age for so much time, "hospitals feel like home to me," she added. "So when I'm depressed and nothing seems to be working, I go 'home.' I go back to the hospitals."

Tricia has been in PACT treatment since December 2014. Her counselor Cathy Porubsky said Tricia's experience shows that "every day with mental illness is a struggle."

Still, PACT Director Crystal Smith said, "Tricia shows positive and continual, steady improvement, and typically rebounds from any setbacks that she may have."

Tricia's goal is to be hospital-free for a year. She started a cleaning business, is saving money to buy a car, and also aims to return to school to learn phlebotomy. More than anything, though, she wants to regain her independence.

"There's no 'cure' for mental illness," Tricia said. "There's only medication to manage it. The rest is on you – you have to have the desire and willpower (to recover). You have to decide what you really want from this life and whether or not you believe you can do it."

FOR INFORMATION about

the Program for Assertive **Community Treatment** (PACT), call PACT Director Crystal Smith at (609) 396-9777, ext. 2216.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

3,489

People served through our counseling/ mental health-focused programs

Individuals received addictionfocused treatment

6,407

Hours of pre- and post-employment-related services provided

354

People served through housing services



▲ Tricia at Catholic Charities **Burlington County PACT**

GIVING BACK After the "Blessing" of Help

There are all sorts of reasons immigrants come to America. Some flee violence, oppression, or poverty. Others want to reunite with family here.

Maria Esther Rodriguez emigrated from her native Dominican Republic 15 years ago because of her husband.

"He decided to come to the United States, because he was seeking better opportunities, and I had to be where my husband was," Maria explained.

But marital troubles led to divorce, and Maria found herself alone in a foreign country with no family, friends, or job – a predicament made tougher by her inability to speak English. She reached out to Catholic Charities. Diocese of Trenton's Community Services in Lakewood.

Community Services offers food, clothing, job-skills training, financial aid, immigration services, and other basic-needs assistance to people in crisis. With bilingual staff,

> the office is a go-to referral for vulnerable people who shoulder the added burden of a language barrier.

At Community Services, Maria connected with program director Carmen Pagan and Family Reunification Program Coordinator Marilyn Zeno, bilingual staffers who referred Maria to divorce services in the community and signed her up for Community



▲ Carmen Pagan, program director of Catholic Charities Community Services in Ocean County, and Maria at the Lakewood food pantry

Services' food pantry, ESL classes, and immigration assistance to pursue citizenship.

A SUCCESS!

"We were able to get her food, furniture, and other support," Pagan said. "She really needed a social group, because she was removed from her whole family. Here, she found a place to talk to people and get the referrals she needed, and

from there, she's been a success!"

Maria agreed: "I'm so happy now. God used Marilyn Zeno and Carmen Pagan in a potent way with me. I was in a very bad situation, and I received a blessing from God by coming here."

After she got back on her feet, Maria landed a job in a nursing home, where she worked for 10 years before retiring.

Now 66 and a grandmother of three, she was so thankful for the help she received at Community Services that she became a dedicated volunteer there, both to give back and to sharpen her English-speaking skills. She volunteers in the food pantry, serves as an interpreter when needed, and learned how to navigate the computer system when Community Services automated its records.

Volunteering, Maria said, "feels marvelous. This is what I most enjoy doing. It moves me emotionally to know that I can give my time and energy to others."

Maria recently became a U.S. citizen, and her two grown sons live here now and are pursuing their citizenship. She has her sights set on a new goal – getting a driver's license. Pagan has no doubts she'll do it. "This woman can learn anything - she could fly a plane in a week, I think," Pagan laughed.

FOR INFORMATION about

Community Services in Ocean County, call Carmen Pagan, program director, at (732) 363-5322, ext. 3232.

Big Changes at Community Services



▲ Mount Carmel Guild in Trenton

Community Services, the branch of Catholic Charities that focuses on poverty reduction and essential needs like housing, has seen big changes this year.

The Burlington County program expanded into a larger space at 450-460 Veterans Drive in Burlington, where staff will be able to connect clients with wraparound services. Several innovative changes are in the works there:

- Shifting to a "client-choice" model in the food pantry that allows clients to pick needed items rather than receiving pre-packed bags of food items
- Creating an eBay venture, an increasingly common strategy nonprofits are embracing to maximize donations

In Mercer County, our food pantry relocated to Mount Carmel Guild nearby, a move that allowed our operations to expand, while also lightening the overall burden of operational costs for both agencies. This pantry is also moving to the client-choice model, to give clients more dignity.

And in Ocean County, the hunt is under way for a new location that will enable Community Services to move into a larger space to expand its reach in the community.

FOR INFORMATION about Community Services programs, call Service Area Director Arnold Valentin at (609) 599-1246, ext. 3103.

COMMUNITY 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Visits to our food pantries

Visits for non-food essentials, such as clothing, appliances, and furniture

Individuals received assistance with food stamps

Households received assistance during the holidays

Individuals provided with assistance through immigration support services

Elderly residents received help with home repairs

People assisted in obtaining permanent housing

Rent/utility assistance payments were made

Grateful Client Shares Her Experience at El Centro

Our El Centro program in Trenton has been a trusted resource in the Spanish-speaking community for 20 years for those seeking help with basic needs, job training, English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes, parenting classes, and mentoring, after-school and summer camp programs for children.

El Centro also provides experienced, Department of Justice (DOJ)-accredited immigration services and has helped many residents achieve citizenship and naturalization.

No appointments are required and most services are offered free of charge.

Gloria Juarez Esculante reached out to El Centro for assistance last year and wrote a beautiful letter to Bishop David M. O'Connell expressing her gratitude for their services. We felt it was worth sharing.

Before coming to USA, when my husband and I knew that we would live in Trenton. I looked on El Centro in internet. I was sure that the catholic church could help us to begin a new life in this country.

My husband arrived first. In that week, he visited El Centro for information. They gave him some directions with places to get used furniture and other information, for example, the English clases.

I have been studying English at El Centro since November 2018. I have found excellent teachers, who are generous with their knowledge, time and nice heart. For example, Mr. John on Christmas carried his guitar and sang for us and Mr. Rue, always spends time listening to our issues, she is very empathic, and Mrs. Ans has a lot of patience when we can't understand the first time. She also gives us many examples until we get it! Also, Mr. Bob and Mrs. Karen always give us things like candies, chocolates, etc.

I love all my teachers! They are kind people who do their best for us! I am greatful for them.

I think Mr. Roberto does excellent work in El Centro. He always is busy and worried for the people. For example, he got for us turkeys for Thanksgiven Day, and always there are in the hallway free things that he get for us, like food, personal articles, also free visual exams, etc.

I value the work from El Centro and Mr. Roberto.

I hope one day I might serve El Centro that helped me, teaching, making friends and the opportunity to know that God is present through El Centro staff.

Gloria Juarez Esculante

June 1th 2019

FOR INFORMATION about El Centro, call (609) 394-2056.

Building a Tool Chest

A few years into John's marriage, things soured. His wife shunned intimacy, and John had an affair. The couple argued all the time. Still, John hoped to work things out.

But in 2010, John ended an especially volatile argument with his fists, a fit of violence that landed him in jail on domestic violence charges and later, in court, where a judge ordered him into anger management counseling. (John is a pseudonym to protect his identity.)

John tried three other programs before reaching out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's Family Growth Program in Mercer County. There, he joined the Domestic Violence Treatment Group, a six-month therapeutic program where members meet weekly to learn how to transform their anger, violence, and controlling behaviors into compassion for themselves and others.

"Of all the programs I went to, Catholic Charities' program was the most transformative, empowering, and life-equipping," said John, now divorced. "It gave me a skill set and tool chest that I am able to use

for **HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS**

to this day. This program told me to love myself – and how to love myself. It's one thing to know the language of anger. But it's another, powerful thing to learn how to speak back to yourself through those moments and to not operate out of anger in an unhealthy way."

Program Supervisor David J. Thomas said men who assault women often are condemned as unfeeling monsters unwilling to take responsibility for their actions. But the violence, dominating personality, and exaggerated manhood an abuser may exhibit typically mask "core hurts" – hidden shame and pain that often are rooted in childhood trauma, Thomas said.

"The men need to learn how to heal these core hurts," Thomas explained. "No one is responsible for the hurts they suffered as a child, but each person is responsible for repairing the hurts and healing the damage before it drives him to hurt others.'

Thomas has worked for Catholic Charities, specializing in family violence, since 1977. He teaches the men "the four Rs" – Recognition,

Responsibility, Regulation, and Reparation – to help them identify triggers and change their behavior and outlook. One goal of therapy is to stop the intergenerational cycle of abuse. Another is to stop emotional and verbal abuse, which can be just as damaging as physical violence, and replace it with compassionate, responsible behavior, no matter what the other person does, Thomas said.

So many men who complete the program want to share what they learned that about half return for "Passing it On" night, where they support new group members.

That includes John, who has not only returned to mentor men in Thomas' program, but also teaches the strategies he learned at Catholic Charities to other men he counsels as a church pastor.

"Anger is nothing but a checkengine light. Anger is telling you that something else is going on, and you need to check under the hood to figure things out," John said.

"David creates a climate of learning, vulnerability, growth, reflection, and self-responsibility, a climate where you can check your engine and fix it."

FOR INFORMATION about the Family Growth Program's **Domestic Violence Treatment** Group, call David J. Thomas, program supervisor, at (609) 394-5157.

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PROVIDENCE HOUSE DOMESTIC **VIOLENCE SERVICES**

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

19,991

Counseling hours provided to individuals and their children impacted by domestic violence

Individuals impacted by domestic violence and their children were provided shelter

3,582

Calls fielded by the domestic violence hotline

5,453

Individuals received domestic violence training/education



Program Supervisor David J. Thomas, Catholic Charities A Family Growth Program, Mercer County

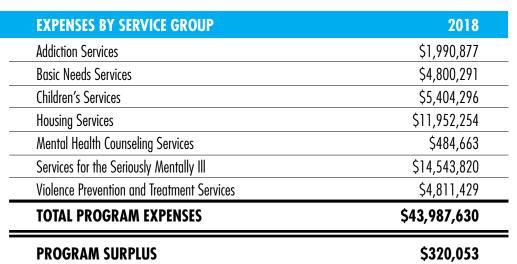
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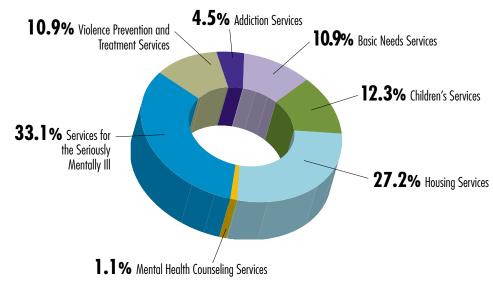
REVENUE + EXPENSES. Following is a pre-audit summary of revenues and expenses for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2018.* Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton continues to be fiscally responsible, fulfilling the stewardship expected by our funders and donors. Approximately 12.5% of our budget is spent on centralized administrative costs.

\$44,307,683
\$637,368
\$525,247
\$220,892
\$622,509
\$4,063,799
\$4,835,402
\$14,195,789
\$19,427,569
2018

	The Po Diocese of Heilion	
1.4% Client and Third Party Fees	1.4% Other	
9.2% Contributions and Donations		43.8% Medicaid and Medicare
10.9% Other Federal, State, County and Municipal Funds		
		32% New Jersey Department of Human Services

1.7% Diocese of Trenton





^{*} A full financial statement may be obtained by writing to: Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton; Attn: George Bontcue, Associate Executive Director/Fiscal Affairs; 383 West State Street, PO Box 1423; Trenton, NJ 08607-1423; GBontcue@cctrenton.org



Here is the sample language for making a bequest to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton:

"I give and bequeath to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton:

the sum of \$ _____ percent of my estate; or the property described herein to establish/add to the

Fund.

The principal is to be endowed and the distributions, as established by the Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton Board of Trustees, shall be used for

TO DISCUSS leaving a legacy gift, contact Nancy Tompkins, director of Development and Marketing, (609) 394-5181 ext. 1161 or ntompkins@cctrenton.org.

2018 DONORS

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, would like to thank the individuals, corporations, and foundations that supported our mission in 2018. The following list contains donors who contributed \$250 or more to the mission of Catholic Charities.

The giving levels indicated reflect those of our 2018 Circle of Friends Annual Gifts Campaign. We extend our sincere gratitude to ALL who gave generously throughout the year. Please know that each contribution is valued and appreciated. We would also like to thank our more than 1,300 volunteers for donating more than 19,000 hours in 2018.

LEGACY CIRCLE

Planned Gifts to **Catholic Charities**

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