

SUMMER 2022

CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org



## *Project Free* Offers Young Father a Fresh Start

Project Free gave Deontay the tools he needed to overcome his substance use.  
(see full story on page 3)





from the **BISHOP OF TRENTON**

**Dear Friends and Supporters of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton,**

The COVID-19 virus continues to affect our lives and to be an ongoing source of crisis, anxiety and fear

for many. Fortunately, there are signs of hope. Indeed, it is with deep appreciation that I recognize Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton has been a sign of hope to our brothers and sisters in need throughout this difficult time – they never stopped serving!

As Bishop of the Diocese of Trenton, I am so grateful to the board, administration, staff, volunteers, and benefactors who make the presence of Christ and the service of Catholic Charities possible for those most in need, not only in times of crisis but throughout the year! In fact, Catholic Charities has been serving those in need for nearly 110 years since the Most Reverend

James A. McFaul, then Bishop of the Diocese of Trenton, incorporated Catholic Charities as a non-profit in 1913.

Now, the pages of this 2021 annual report bear beautiful witness to the good work of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton. Work that reflects what YOU make possible each time YOU have made an amazing contribution. Through YOUR support, Catholic Charities will never stop serving while there are brothers and sisters in need.

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

Respectfully yours in the Lord,

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



from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

In his homily on the World Day for the Poor in 2021, Pope Francis recalled these words of the late Italian Bishop Don Tonino Bello, who was close to the poor: “We

cannot be content to hope; we have to organize hope.” Pope Francis explained it in this way: “Unless our hope translates into decisions and concrete gestures of concern, justice, solidarity and care for our common home, the sufferings of the poor will not be relieved, the economy of waste that forces them to live on the margins will not be converted; their expectations will not blossom anew.”

The charitable works of Catholic Charities organize hope in concrete ways. We improve the path for those

who are poor, the newcomers to our country and those who have been marginalized, faced trauma and are vulnerable. I am filled with gratitude when I hear the stories of those whose lives have been transformed even after immense and unimaginable adversity. I attribute this to their own strength and resilience – fueled by the gestures of our professional and compassionate staff, volunteers and generous donors.

When we each do our part freely, through the power of love we can indeed change the lives of those most in need.

God bless you.

**Marlene Laó-Collins, Executive Director**

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# PROJECT FREE

## Offers Young Father a Fresh Start



Deontay nearly died during a drug overdose. He remembers the exact date: August 28, 2020. “My friends couldn’t wake me up. My parents couldn’t wake me up.” The 24-year-old shakes his head when he tells the story. Thankfully, a friend started doing CPR on him. “My heart stopped.” A medical team was able to shock him back to life with defibrillator paddles. Deontay said he saw video of the incident from a doorbell camera. “I was like, damn,” he said softly, “that could have been it for me.”

When you’re in your early 20s, feeling invincible, it’s not hard to make poor choices or find yourself headed down the wrong path. Another situation Deontay found himself in resulted in an arrest and left him facing a four-year prison sentence. Fortunately, Mercer County Recovery Court (MCRC), a specialized term of probation offered to individuals whose crimes were motivated by drug addiction, was also an option.

Deontay chose MCRC and in September of 2021 enrolled in Project Free, a counseling program that helps people recover from addiction. The Director of Addiction Recovery Services Jim Keashon explains that his team provides the treatment component of Recovery Court. The counselors work closely and meet regularly with the judges and parole officers from Mercer County. “We offer a high level of care for these individuals. We provide education, support and structure so they can develop the skills needed to obtain long-term sobriety and insight into the process of recovery,” he said. “In the midst of

an opioid epidemic, we are fortunate to have this opportunity to impact the community.”

In the beginning, Deontay attended intensive counseling sessions three hours a day, three days a week. He also received individual counseling and had to submit to regular drug screenings. “At first, I was a little nervous,” he said. “Everyday they wanted us to talk about what we were going through. When they asked me, I would give them one-word answers.” He said after a few weeks, he began to feel more comfortable and started sharing more. “When I started answering the questions, I started making progress.”

Deontay said participating in the program helped him learn to handle his emotions. “I’ve also learned how to avoid putting myself at risk.” These days, Deontay said he’s thinking more clearly. “I don’t put myself into those situations anymore.” He says his attitude is much better now. “I try to be positive. Life’s too short to walk around being sad and mad.”

continued on page 4 ►

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH  
SERVICES

## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

3,210

People served through our counseling/  
mental health-focused programs

574

Individuals received addiction-focused treatment

5,162

Hours of employment-related services provided

340

People served through housing services

439

People received transportation assistance

2,087

People received specialty psychiatric and  
nursing services

20,301

Individuals received COVID-19 education

25,969

Individuals received care coordination  
services through the Certified Community  
Behavioral Health Clinic

## Project Free Offers Young Father a Fresh Start *(continued)*

While Project Free gave Deontay the tools he needed to overcome his substance use, his six-month-old son Kairo motivates him. He said he loves watching his son grow. “I can look at him for hours, just moving around experiencing things. He is such a happy baby, and his smile is contagious.” He admits waking up for the 3 and 4 a.m. feedings is tough. “People always say that having a kid really changes you, and I thought it was just a saying. But it’s true...”

“What participants of Project Free in Recovery Court receive in addition to insight into addiction is an opportunity to clear the recent charges on their criminal record and the best chance at long-term success,” said Keashon. Individuals who successfully complete MCRC have their charges that led them there to be expunged. “Having an arrest record is such a barrier to gainful employment and when you are not eligible for positions because of that, it’s a great stressor,” he added.

Currently he’s working for his family’s landscaping and scrapping business. Since starting at Project Free, Deontay has obtained his driver’s license. He’s considering getting a commercial driver’s license and starting a career in trucking. He likes the idea of taking his family with him on long hauls. Deontay appreciates the help he received from Project Free and has recommended the program to other people he knows.

Project Free provides intensive and traditional outpatient addiction recovery services in a supportive and non-judgmental environment. Services are available in Spanish. Child care and transportation can be provided.

**FOR INFORMATION** about Project Free, call (609) 396-4557.

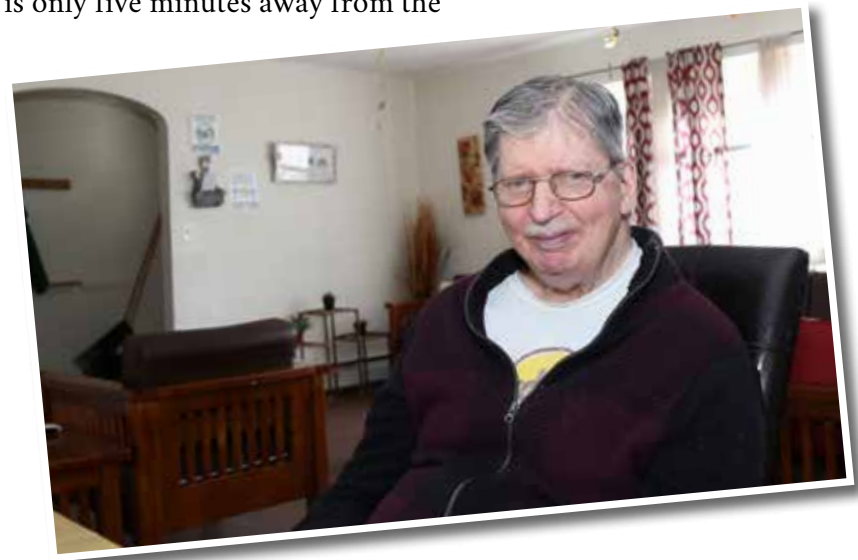
## BIDDING A FOND FAREWELL After 16 Years in Intensive Residential Program

On April 4th, Eugene’s housemates and caretakers held a party in his honor. They called it a Moving On Up celebration. There were gifts, plenty of food, including all his favorites, and a cake to mark the occasion. Eugene, who had been cared for at the Intensive Residential Program’s (IRP) Fern Lane campus in Hammonton for 16 years, was moving into an assisted living facility.

At 68, Eugene said he was ready for the next chapter. His new home is only five minutes away from the

house he shared with four others. “I will miss everyone,” he said, “but I’ll be close by.” For the past five years, Eugene’s eyesight has been getting blurrier and blurrier, to the point where he is now legally blind. In his new living situation, he’ll have more support.

Heather Alexander Mark, the Director of Partial Care Services, worked with Eugene when she was the Program Director for the IRP South Residential and Partial Care



▲ For 16 years, Eugene lived in one of the ranch-style homes of the Intensive Residential Services program.

CHILDREN AND FAMILY  
SERVICES  
**2021 HIGHLIGHTS**

**1,161**

Families received crisis intervention and stabilization services

**2,999**

Children and adults received counseling and support services to help with trauma

**1,866**

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

**979**

Individuals received immigration support and counseling services

**131**

Individuals participated in English as a Second Language classes

Programs. She noted the seven group homes on the Hammonton campus provide housing services with 24-hour supervision, seven days a week for individuals with severe mental health issues. Staff members help the residents with their independent living skills, they help them manage their mental illnesses and they help them put the skills they learn in the Partial Care program into practice in day-to-day situations.

“We serve a population that is often marginalized and stigmatized,” said Alexander Mark. Many of the residents in the IRP program are transitioning from hospitalization in a psychiatric facility. “It can be difficult to make that transition. We provide them with a home — a place where they can make decisions and choices in a safe atmosphere,” she said.

Eugene said he’s going to miss the people who have been caring for him. “The whole staff is great. There are four people here who could be chefs. The lunches and dinners are amazing. They really go all out. I will definitely miss the



▲ Eugene has fond memories of taking day trips in the van with his housemates.

food,” he laughed. He will also miss Housing Specialist, Jeanne Echols who has been working with Eugene since he first arrived. “Jeanne has always been interested in whatever I am doing. And when I really needed help, she was there,” he said. And the feelings are mutual. “I am going to miss Eugene,” said Echols. “I am glad this move is finally happening; he has been waiting for a long time. I wish him the best.”

Eugene has fond memories of his days in IRP. “I remember going to Atlantic City and listening to a concert on the boardwalk. One time, everyone was dancing. It was fun,” he said. “And we used to go to the marina at Fortescue. I never did catch a fish, but I loved being

outside by the water. I liked to feed the seagulls the little clams.” There were also outings to the mall, the Berlin Farmers’ Market and to Cannoli Express, where Eugene would make his own cannoli.

Before moving into the IRP group home, Eugene had been a patient at Ancora Psychiatric Hospital. “This was a good place to be after a bad situation,” he said. “Everyone here treated me like a person.”

**FOR INFORMATION** on Catholic Charities’ Intensive Residential Program, contact the Program Supervisor Raqia Crawley at (609) 561-7670 or email [rcrawley@cctrenton.org](mailto:rcrawley@cctrenton.org).

# ADVOCATE SHARES HIS STRATEGIES for Managing Mental Health

Nine months ago, Evan Spaeth joined Program of Assertive Community Treatment (PACT) Team 1 as a Mental Health Peer Advocate. The 11-member team provides community-based integrated rehabilitation, treatment and support to 75 individuals diagnosed with serious mental illnesses in Mercer County.

Evan's journey with mental illness began at 11 years old when he began inflicting harm upon himself. "I was hospitalized many, many times," he recalled. As a young adult, he spent two years in Trenton Psychiatric Hospital (TPH). "They had to protect me from myself," he said. "I wish I had this kind of a program when I was a kid." In 1993, two weeks after he had been released from TPH, Evan committed a crime. "I hurt someone, and I did 26 years in prison for it."

It is not lost on Evan that the pain he inflicted during the incident and the pain he suffered

during incarceration might have been avoided if he had access to the care a person needs when they are released from a psychiatric facility.

Catholic Charities operates four PACT teams in Mercer and Burlington counties. Members provide direct services to people who have been hospitalized in the past and are at risk of returning to an institutional setting. The team supplies psychiatric medical intervention, medication management, nursing, counseling, vocational aid and case management services. Every client gets an in-person visit at least once a week. Some clients are seen daily, some are seen two or three times a week. Support from the team is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year through an on-call system.

## RELATING TO THE PEOPLE HE SERVES

As a peer advocate, Evan likes being able to share the tools he uses to manage his mental illness with the people he serves. "Sometimes I



▲ Evan takes pride in his role as a Mental Health Peer Advocate.

can say, 'I've been down that road and I used this or this.' Not every tool will work for everybody, but I give them samples of things they might try," he said. Evan realizes not everyone wants to know or needs to know his story. "I'm a peer advocate. That says it. I've been

diagnosed and sometimes we just leave it there."

Evan enjoys connecting with clients. Recently, he was driving a client to a medical appointment and the two were able to talk. "It was unusual for him. We didn't get too deep, but it was good to have

# 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

46,467

Visits to our food pantries

408

Families enrolled in Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program

850

Households received assistance during the holidays

142

Individuals received immigration support services

872

Elderly residents received help with home repairs

467

People obtained permanent housing

1,863

Rent/utility assistance payments made

47,973

Individuals received crisis counseling for COVID-19



him engage. I feel like if he feels comfortable, in the future he'll ask if he needs help."

The impact of his work is not always obvious. Evan says sometimes it is a tiny tweak or a little change that lets him know progress is being made. "In a team meeting I might report that I saw a client and they smiled, or they said respectful things. Then I know we've made a crack in the wall they've built up around them. And if we can make a crack, one day maybe we'll be able to help them chop that wall down."

### THE PERFECT FIT

"It took a long time to find Evan," said Stacie Ruloff, Supervisor of PACT Team 1. The team spent over a year trying to fill the vacancy. "We interviewed so many candidates for the position." She explained that the Peer Advocate on a PACT Team is a very special role. "Once we met Evan, we knew he was the one. He was the puzzle piece that fit. He had that certain je ne sais quoi we

were searching for." She said all 10 members of the team came to an immediate agreement about getting Evan on board.

"Everyone has been so patient with me. This is my first real job ever. When I got here, I didn't know how to use a computer. I keep having to ask for help. But my co-workers don't get mad or frustrated with me. They just explain it again. It is because of my co-workers and my supervisors that I am able to do this job," he said. "The whole team is awesome. They are like family."

Evan is open about his mental illness and not afraid to discuss it with people who will benefit from

his experiences. That includes the clients he works with and a wider audience as well. He has regularly scheduled speaking engagements at the Ann Klein Forensic Center in Trenton. Sometimes he speaks to the administrative staff and nurses; his talk has become a part of the officer training program too. Sometimes he speaks to the patients. "I tell them my story and it gives them hope. There is life outside of Ann Klein."

Catholic Charities offers a variety of services for individuals who have mental health issues. If you or someone you know needs help, call (800) 360-7711.

# FORENSIC NURSES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSE TEAM

## Help Ensure Survivors' Long-term Health

Strangulation is a particularly brutal and dangerous means of assault. The long-term health consequences are not always immediately apparent, and victims can die of complications days or weeks after being attacked.

Last October, the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office created a Domestic Violence Strangulation Response Team (DVSRT) to help encourage victims of domestic abuse who suffer strangulation, choking or smothering to get the medical attention they need. The team includes forensic nurse examiners (FNEs), members of the Ocean County Providence House Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) and law enforcement officers.

In Ocean County, when a victim of domestic violence reports they have been strangled, they are read a statement outlining the possible complications of strangulation and urging them to visit an Emergency Department for medical evaluation. If the victim consents, the DVSRT is activated and an FNE and DVRT member meet the victim at the Emergency

Department. "This program pioneers protocols in an area that's often overlooked," said Director of Children and Family Services Mary Pettrow. "Strangulation has been a longstanding concern for us."

She noted that last July, Governor Phil Murphy signed a law elevating the crime of strangulation assault to a second-degree crime, punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment, a fine up to \$150,000 or both. Pettrow explained the FNE conducts a medical forensic examination, collecting evidence to strengthen the survivor's case against her abuser. "The reports and photos generated by the FNE are sent to the court as part of the chain of evidence," she said. "So many times, a case rests on the word of the survivor. This program strengthens the ability to prosecute."

The role of the DVRT responder is to provide emotional support to the survivor and act as an advocate. They offer education, resources and referrals. The DVRT members also encourage survivors to get medical



▲ Mary Pettrow, Director of Children and Family Services

screenings to identify any potential neurologic injuries or damage to the carotid artery. Pettrow said a survivor who does not have insurance or who is on her attacker's insurance may be reluctant to agree to a CT scan or MRI since these tests are so expensive. "Often times with strangulation, there are not visible signs," said Pettrow "and the survivor assumes they are okay. But issues can arise weeks after the incident. That is why medical intervention is critical."

Providence House Domestic Violence Services in both Ocean and Burlington counties are recruiting for DVRT members. These are volunteers who are trained and respond directly to police or emergency departments to support victims after an incident of domestic abuse.

.....  
**FOR INFORMATION** about joining a DVRT, call (732) 350-2120.



# FAMILIA ADELANTE HELPS FAMILIES

## Navigate the Cultural Divide



In 2021, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton was chosen as one of five providers around the country to roll out a new youth-development practice intended for academically challenged and at-risk Latino children ages 10 to 14 and their families.

In partnership with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Network to Eliminate Disparities in Behavioral Health (NNED), Catholic Charities implemented the pilot program called Familia Adelante with children and families at our Family Access Center in Hightstown. SAMHSA and NNED will use lessons learned from this curriculum as a framework for national prevention initiatives.

Familia Adelante, Family Forward in English, is a 12-week, evidence-based curriculum developed to address cultural barriers and stress. Studies published by the National Institute of Health show it's effective in improving students'

academic performance and school attendance, reducing substance use and high-risk behaviors, increasing communication among family members and decreasing acculturative stress.

Areas of focus include: negative peer pressure; school-related, economic and occupational stress; gang prevention; substance use education; parenting; and reduction of risky behaviors in adolescents.

Upon completing the 12-week program and its overwhelming success, we are proud to announce that Familia Adelante will now be offered permanently at our El Centro location in Trenton. "The Familia Adelante program is off to a great start. We have a very diverse Latino population that will be facilitating our groups and we have already reached out to the parishes and schools who are excited about the possibility of working with us," said Roberto Hernandez, El Centro Director.

### BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP

Familia Adelante clinicians will work to bridge the cultural gap, both between immigrants and their new

country and between parents and their children.

"One of the biggest benefits of the program is that it incorporates parents," said Sully Soto, who supervised the program when it first began. "I found that the parents and the children are living two different cultural lives. This program really gets at educating the parents and helping them to understand what their children are going through being raised in a different culture, and getting the parents and children to meet in the middle and successfully navigate their different experiences."

"Such a preventative approach is key to ensuring the long-term stability and success of at-risk youth," said Susan Loughery, Associate Executive Director of Catholic Charities.

"We will work with the whole family unit on prevention and care coordination, engaging the family before they get to the point where they need crisis intervention," Loughery said.

**FOR INFORMATION** about Familia Adelante, call (609) 394-2056.

PROVIDENCE HOUSE  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
SERVICES

## 2021 HIGHLIGHTS

13,274

Hours of service provided to individuals and children impacted by domestic violence

656

Individuals and children impacted by domestic violence were provided shelter

3,443

Calls answered through the domestic violence hotline

6,602

Individuals received domestic violence training/education

4,359

Individuals received life-saving domestic violence services

36,428

Nights of shelter provided

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021

**REVENUE + EXPENSES.** Following is a pre-audit summary of revenues and expenses for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2021. Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton continues to be fiscally responsible to our funders and donors. Approximately 11.2% of our budget is spent on centralized administrative costs.

## REVENUES BY MAJOR SOURCE

2021

Medicaid and Medicare	\$18,828,906
New Jersey Department of Human Services	\$18,298,832
Other Federal, State, County and Municipal Funds*	\$10,732,712
Contributions and Donations**	\$7,890,882
Client and Third Party Fees	\$1,977,518
Diocese of Trenton	\$411,377
Other	\$902,933
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM REVENUE</b>	<b>\$59,043,160</b>

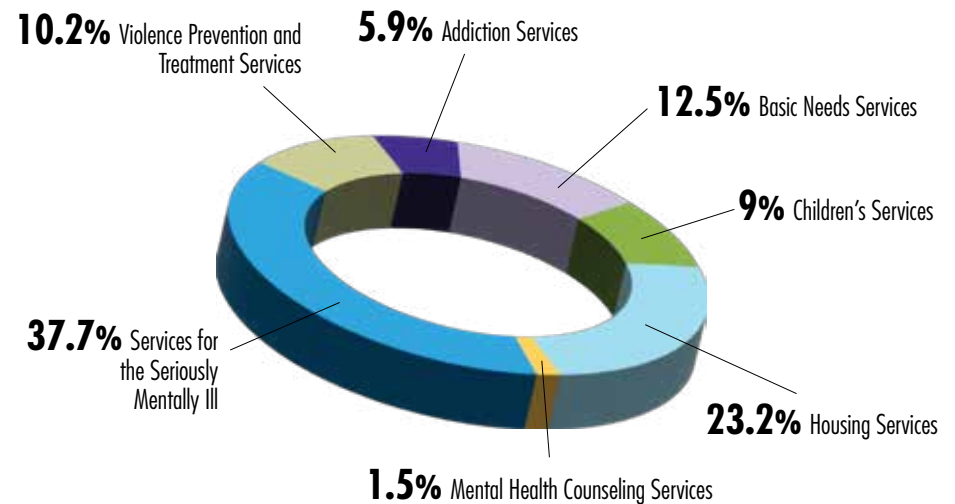
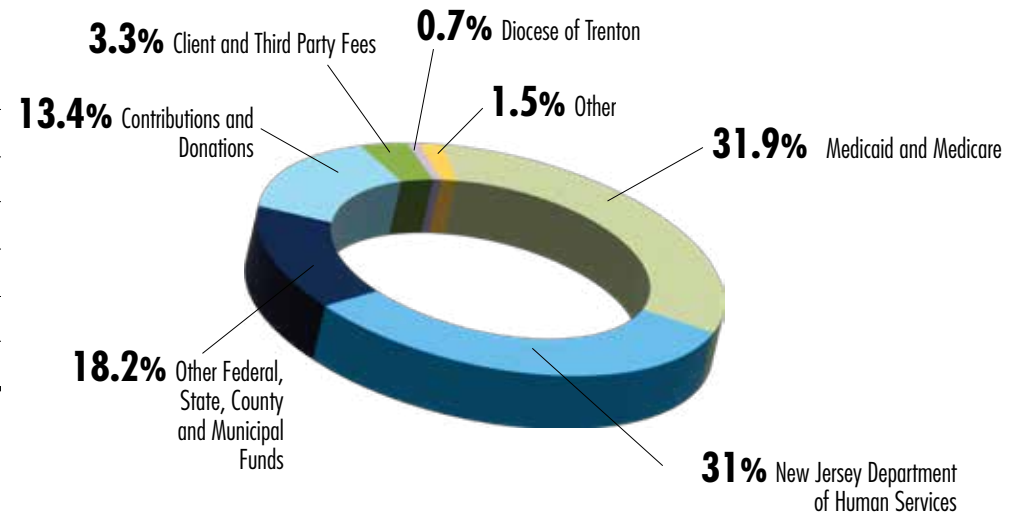
## EXPENSES BY SERVICE GROUP

2021

Addiction Services	\$3,098,355
Basic Needs Services	\$6,543,456
Children's Services	\$4,683,981
Housing Services	\$12,102,572
Mental Health Counseling Services	\$790,298
Services for the Seriously Mentally Ill	\$19,709,275
Violence Prevention and Treatment Services	\$5,354,812
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$52,282,749</b>

\*Unanticipated additional funding in 2021 for Behavioral Health Services \$2,775,648

\*\*Restoring Dignity, Giving Hope Campaign 5-year pledges \$4,473,612



A full financial statement may be obtained by contacting George Bontcuc, Associate Executive Director of Fiscal Affairs (609) 394-5181, ext. 1112 or gbontcuc@cctrenton.org.

# 2021 DONORS

2021



2026

Over the next five years, the Restoring Dignity, Giving Hope campaign seeks to raise \$10M.

One person and one family at a time, we will conquer food insecurity, homelessness, and domestic violence.

\$4,936,162 raised so far



[www.catholiccharitiestrenton.org/restore](http://www.catholiccharitiestrenton.org/restore)



Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton would like to thank the individuals, corporations and foundations that supported our mission in 2021. The following list contains donors who contributed \$500 or more to the mission of Catholic Charities.

We extend our sincere gratitude to ALL who gave generously throughout the year. Please know that each contribution is valued and appreciated.

## LEGACY CIRCLE

### Planned Gifts to Catholic Charities

- Estate of William P. Cunniff
- Estate of George McLeer
- Estate of Lillian D. Olup
- Estate of Helen Radack
- Estate of Marie Radack

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### \$100,000+

- Anonymous\*
- Community Foundation of New Jersey

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### \$50,000–99,999

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### \$25,000–49,999

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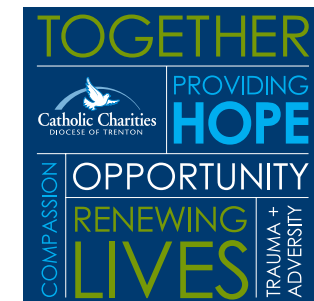
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\* All or some of these donations were designated to the Restoring Dignity, Giving Hope campaign.



▲ The "Driven Women" of the Jersey Shore got together to indulge in some great food, network and give back to their community at their wonderful event in November. Held at Porta in Asbury Park, the "Driven Women" event, coordinated by Christen Sachs & Rose Montano, raised over \$1,200 for Providence House Domestic Violence Services!



*If you made a contribution to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton and it is not listed here, please contact Jennifer Leip, Director of Development and Marketing, at (609) 394-5181 ext. 1137 or [jleip@cctrenton.org](mailto:jleip@cctrenton.org). We sincerely regret any errors or omissions.*

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# THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton could not accomplish all it does without the support of dedicated volunteers. We extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who gave generously of their time and talents throughout the year. In 2021, nearly 1,100 volunteers provided over 11,600 hours of service.

There are many ways to share your passion and energy with Catholic Charities. You could:

- Join a County Board and have a direct impact on your community.
- Assist with groups or recreational activities in a behavioral health services program.
- Organize donations in one of our three food pantries.
- Perform minor home repairs for seniors in Ocean County.
- Help in one of our Safe Houses in Burlington or Ocean counties.
- Become a Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) member.
- Teach an ESL or computer skills class at El Centro.
- Provide clerical assistance in one of our offices.
- Organize a Day of Caring event.

For volunteer opportunities, contact Michael Okafor at (609) 394-5181, ext. 1157 or [mokafor@cctrenton.org](mailto:mokafor@cctrenton.org)



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# 33rd Annual Guardian Angel Dinner Dance

# Saturday, September 24

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*Ocean County:*  
Josephine Esquivel

We are excited to announce the 33rd Guardian Angel Dinner Dance will be LIVE. Join us for a night full of entertainment, raffles, a silent auction and much more! We can't wait to SEE you!

**RESERVE YOUR SPOT NOW!**  
[www.CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org/GADD2022](http://www.CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org/GADD2022)

