

A 'GODSEND' AT THE RIGHT TIME FOR A BOY STRUGGLING IN SCHOOL

Kids who fidget in class often get written off as behavior problems, or diagnosed with a learning disorder like attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

But Aurora Blackwell is an experienced educator, and she knew something deeper lay behind her 7-year-old son Bronx's school troubles.

"He's the youngest in the class, since his birthday falls so late in the school year, so his school blamed it on that, saying he didn't know how to sit down or pay attention," said Blackwell, of Willingboro, who teaches kindergarten at St. Cecilia's in Pennsauken. "But he would be falling asleep in the car after school every day. He exerted himself so much trying to focus on what his teacher was saying that he burned himself out."

So Blackwell took him to the pediatrician, who diagnosed central auditory processing disorder, or CAPD. Students with CAPD have normal hearing ability but experience difficulty processing the information – especially in a noisy room or when a child is listening to complex information.

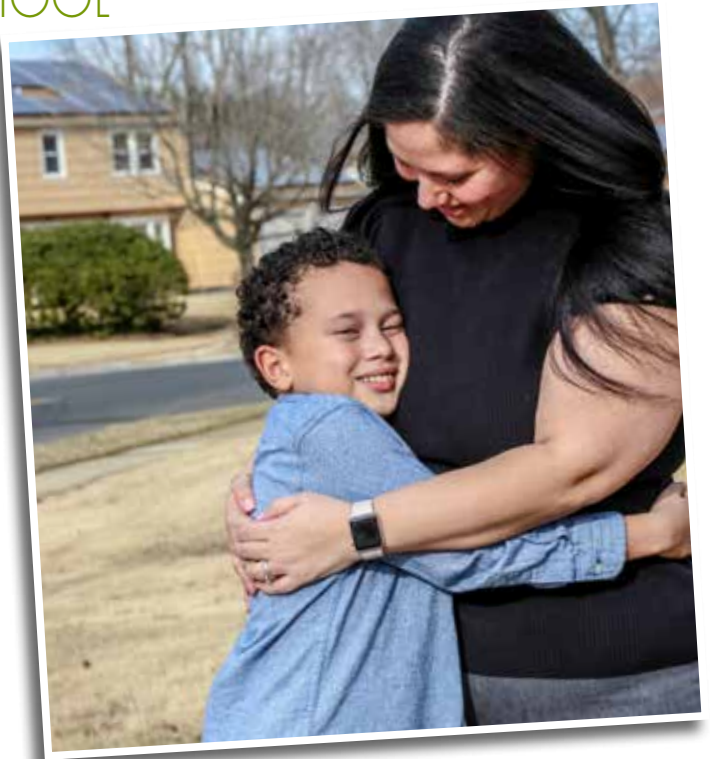
AN EXPENSIVE REMEDY

An FM system – consisting of a microphone the teacher wears and a headset the child wears to enhance the teacher's voice and eliminate background noise – would help Bronx overcome the disability, the doctor said. But the system cost \$1,800. It wasn't covered by insurance, and Bronx's school in Moorestown balked at paying for it.

"We're a family of five. And I'm not a public schoolteacher - I don't get paid the big bucks," Blackwell said. "So when I hear \$1,800, I'm thinking: 'Oh my gosh!'"

Lisha Loo-Morgan had a different reaction.

"I was more than happy to take this on, considering she couldn't find assistance anywhere else," said Loo-Morgan, who oversees Parish Services, a Catholic Charities,



▲ Bronx and Aurora

Diocese of Trenton's Community Services program. "Many agencies can only help with things like rent and utilities, so people don't get evicted or lose heat and electricity. But we have the flexibility to help with other needs."

The Parish Services program provides support for individuals and families referred by parishes in Burlington, Mercer, Monmouth and Ocean counties, including financial assistance, counseling, case management, and referrals to community services. People don't have to be Catholic or go to church to get help; the program helps anyone in need.

"Kids are easily mislabeled in ways that can impact their learning for life. Imagine if Bronx had to go on to middle school and high school without this critical tool he needs



A Message From the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Spring is almost here! It's one of my favorite times of the year. It's the time of Christ's resurrection, a miracle that holds lessons for us all. In this season of rebirth and renewal, we know that each day is a new start and holds the rare beauty of a clean slate.

Nowhere is that more evident than in these pages, where you'll read the stories of people like GS Moore, who has become an eloquent advocate for domestic violence survivors since leaving her abusive spouse, and Ernest, who is now thriving after years of institutional living. You'll also hear from Walter, a war hero living down the shore, and Aurora, a mother who made sure her son could succeed in school – with a helping hand from Catholic Charities.

Each new day is a new opportunity for us to serve those in need, and we approach that task with joy.

I want to thank you for your generous support of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton. You empower us to deliver the highest quality of social service programs to all members of our community, regardless of their faith or socioeconomic status.

Have a blessed Easter season.

With warm regards,

**Marlene Laó-Collins,
Executive Director**



The Spirit is published quarterly by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's Development and Marketing department.

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
Photographer: John Bynum

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

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 'GODSEND' AT THE RIGHT TIME (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

to succeed in school," Loo-Morgan said. "How could we not help this child?"

REACHING HIS POTENTIAL

Through Parish Services, Loo-Morgan gave the Blackwell family \$900 toward the cost of the system.

"It made my day," Blackwell said of the support. The family used their tax return refund to cover the other half of the cost.

"This is the gold standard for children with this disorder," Blackwell said. "Without it, it's very hard for my son to block out any ambient noise and focus on one thing. If someone is shuffling their feet or tapping their pencil while the teacher is teaching, it's very hard for him to hear the teacher. His classroom was near the gym –

imagine trying to learn subject-verb agreement, and you have all that noise going on."

Bronx is now 8 and a third grader at St. Cecilia's, where he transferred for this school year. His FM system has helped him earn second honors at school.

"His grades have improved a great deal, and he's not tired anymore. Without this system, he wouldn't be at his full potential," his mother said. "This help from Catholic Charities was a godsend. It was exactly what our family needed when we needed it."

FOR INFORMATION about Community Services' Parish Services, call program coordinator Lisha Loo-Morgan at (856) 764-6940, ext. 6119.

DISCOVERING LIFE LESSONS AFTER SURVIVING TRAUMA



GS Moore thought separating from her abusive husband would end the violence she had endured at his hands for years. But then she told him she wanted a divorce.

“It triggered something in him, and he became progressively more aggressive,” she said, recounting abuse that escalated to death threats. “That really frightened me because I knew he had three guns, and I knew he was watching me. So I called Providence House and said: ‘I’m coming!’”

GS and her three children, then just 9, 11 and 12, stayed three months in the safe shelter run by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton’s Providence House-Domestic Violence Services in Ocean County. That was 27 years ago.

But GS’s experience as a domestic violence survivor made her a passionate advocate for others trapped in abusive relationships, and those just starting out in recovery.

She wants women to know “there is hope.”

NO JUDGMENT

For GS, hope bloomed when her family moved into the shelter. It became a sanctuary, where GS regained her confidence and found support from staff and other survivors who didn’t judge.

“They really listened,” she recalls. “They had a wealth of experience, so what I was saying did not scare them or make them uncomfortable. There’s a lot of secrecy in domestic violence, so being able to talk to other women about the things we went through – and finding out they experienced similar things - was valuable too.”

She found the shelter’s strategy of fostering self-sufficiency especially powerful.

“It wasn’t like a hotel where someone served us lunch and dinner,” GS said. “We took care of ourselves. Having normalcy in our lives was really important for me, because I felt I needed to take care of my family. I wasn’t just sitting around. I was actively taking control of my life and my children’s lives.”

After her ex-husband died in 1996, GS moved her family to another state, eager to escape the traumatic

memories New Jersey held for them. But the legacy of violence was hard to shake.

“It wasn’t like I moved away and everything was wonderful,” GS said. “It affected our family’s subsequent relationships Recovery is a process, and my children still must work through some of what they experienced and saw.”

PAYING IT FORWARD

GS knew she could help other domestic violence survivors in the same way the women at Providence House helped her.

So for years, she paid it forward and volunteered at shelters, sharing her story in hopes that it would help others. She encourages other survivors to do the same: “Give back. Go back to the shelter and volunteer. Do what you can.”

She found lasting stability after she returned to school for her master’s degree and became a schoolteacher. Now 65, she’s retired but keeps busy with her adult children and nine grandchildren, still volunteers, recently wrote a fiction novel and two children’s books, and is republishing a poetry book she wrote about domestic violence.

“I grew up with domestic violence, so I never realized how much of it was transferred to me. Had I not gone to Providence House, I might still be living that way,” she said. “Your experiences help you grow.”

TO LEARN MORE about Catholic Charities Providence House Domestic Violence Services, call Mary Pettrow, associate service area director of Providence House, at (856) 824-0599 in Burlington County or (732) 350-2120, ext. 8415, in Ocean County.

A "LIFE-SAVER" IN QUEST FOR INDEPENDENCE

Ernest has struggled with multiple mental health conditions since he was 20. He moved in and out of psychiatric hospitals for years, unable to find any lasting stability.

"I was suicidal, homicidal, any-cidal – you name it, that was me," Ernest said.

His mother found Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, where he connected with a Behavioral Health Services PACT team in 2006. PACT stands for Program for Assertive Community Treatment. It's outreach for people with serious, persistent mental illness who have a history of institutionalization and are at risk of returning to an institutional setting. Catholic Charities has three PACT teams in Mercer County and one in Burlington County, and they work hard to help people live independently in the community.

Ernest, now 56, has become a devoted PACT participant, attending recreational outings, Illness Management Recovery Group meetings, and regular gym workouts with a staffer every week.

"Before, I was in the hospital, say, a good 50 or 60 times. One year, I was in there like every other month – they knew me by name," Ernest said. "But since I've



been at PACT, I've never been in the hospital since. PACT taught me how to get along and communicate. I feel pretty good about how I am now. I believe I'd have been in prison or dead, if it wasn't for PACT. It was a real big life-saver in my life."

Ernest has been hospital-free for over a decade, said Crystal Smith, director of PACT services in Burlington and Mercer counties. "He really embodies what PACT is – getting people to the point of wellness and recovery," she said.

FOR INFORMATION about Catholic Charities' Behavioral Health Services PACT teams, call Crystal Smith at (609) 396-9777, ext. 2216.

The Unexpected, Appreciated Aid of Legacy Gifts

Last year, a generous donor left Catholic Charities thousands of dollars in her will, directing that it be used specifically to support the anti-poverty work of Community Services. The money helped fill the shelves for months at our food pantries in Mercer, Burlington and Ocean counties. It also funded a new computer lab at Community Services' Trenton office, where clients without home access to the Internet or a computer can work on their resume and expand their cyber skills.

The bequest was one of several bestowed upon Catholic Charities last year. Legacy gifts from five people added \$360,000 to Catholic Charities' budget in

2018, unplanned-for donations that covered everything from basic needs to domestic violence services.

"We sincerely appreciate the generosity of people who have left legacy gifts to Catholic Charities, because it truly enables us to meet our mission of helping those who come to us in need," said Nancy Tompkins, director of Development and Marketing. "We serve everyone. Bequests of any size really empower us to improve our communities."

TO DISCUSS the possibility of making Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton a future beneficiary through a bequest, life insurance policy, or trust, please contact Nancy Tompkins, director of Development and Marketing, at ntompkins@cctrenton.org or call (609) 394-5181, ext. 1161.

MOTHERS AND BABIES THRIVE

in addictions program for homeless women

First Lady of New Jersey Tammy Murphy and other officials met in February with women enrolled in For My Baby and Me, a unique community collaboration intended to improve the long-term recovery and health outcomes of two vulnerable populations – pregnant women/new mothers who are struggling with addiction and are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their babies.

Catholic Charities partners with five community agencies – Capital Health; HomeFront; Rescue Mission of Trenton; Henry J. Austin Health Center; and Trenton Health Team – to deliver specialized, outpatient care to that overlooked demographic.

Mrs. Murphy wanted to learn more about the program because she is interested in improving maternal and infant health statewide. At HomeFront’s Family Campus in Ewing, where program participants live, four women shared their stories.

“I’ve been clean for seven months,” said Tanicqua, who recently gave birth to twins who “probably wouldn’t be here right now” without For My Baby and Me. “I’m a wonderful mother. I love my babies. I’m happy that I’m clean.”

She’s now studying to become a home health aide.



▲ First Lady of New Jersey Tammy Murphy pictured with some of the clients and staff of the For My Baby and Me program at HomeFront’s Family Campus in Ewing

For My Baby and Me was designed to remove barriers to recovery by addressing participants’ every need in one place. Participants receive safe housing; food/clothing; drug treatment (including medicine to treat withdrawal); clinical services; educational and employment support; child care; legal assistance; transportation; and other supports.

TO LEARN MORE about For My Baby and Me, call (609) 256-7801.



**SPRING LAKE
BATH & TENNIS CLUB**
1 JERSEY AVE
SPRING LAKE, NJ

Cocktails, Dinner, Dancing,
Gift Auction,
Mega 50/50 Raffle

**Live Music by
BRIAN KIRK
& THE JIRKS**
TICKETS \$150

Tickets and sponsorship information
will soon be available online at:
CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org

Or contact Jenn Leip, Development and Marketing manager
at (609) 394-5181, ext. 1137.

ALL PROCEEDS SUPPORT CATHOLIC CHARITIES
PROGRAMS IN MONMOUTH COUNTY.



383 West State Street
PO Box 1423
Trenton, NJ 08607-1423

Non-Profit
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Trenton, NJ
Permit No. 109

SAVE THE DATE

Hyatt Regency Princeton


30TH ANNUAL
**Guardian
Angel
Dinner
Dance**

Kick-off Reception
Thursday, May 23, 2019
6 to 8 PM

Dinner Dance
Saturday, September 21, 2019
5 to 10 PM

This year marks the 30th anniversary of our Guardian Angel Dinner Dance! This signature fundraiser attracts more than 350 attendees and generates about \$300,000, crucial support that empowers us to serve 100,000 people each year, regardless of religious faith. Each year, we honor individuals, parishes, and corporations from our community who have positively impacted our ability to help the poor and vulnerable. Join us on September 21st to applaud these community partners who, in their own unique way, inspire and offer hope to those in need.

Sponsor. Volunteer. Attend.

2019 HONOREES

**RICHARD J. HUGHES,
CATHOLIC CHARITIES,
DIOCESE OF TRENTON
HUMANITARIAN AWARD**

Marianne Earle

**CORPORATE CITIZEN
OF THE YEAR**

The Bank of Princeton

LIGHT OF HOPE AWARDS

Burlington County: Jesse DeSanto

Mercer County: Francis Taylor

Monmouth County: Stanley Koreyva, Jr.

Ocean County: Joseph Leone Introna

For tickets, event sponsorship or to donate to the auction, please contact Barbara Yuson, Volunteer and Events coordinator, (609) 394-5181, ext. 1159.