

## MAKING HER MOTHER PROUD

By Prioritizing her Mental Health

Plenty of people like to joke that they gave their mamas migraines in their younger days.

That might be a bit truer for Nicole Jordan, who was diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. She lived with her mother, and together, they tried to manage her mental illness on their own.

“I was in denial of the mental illness, and I didn’t always take my meds. When I lived with my mother, it was a battle for us,” Nicole said. “But I realized as we both got older, I didn’t want to put her through any more stress. So I said, OK, I need to start over.”

That meant reaching out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton, where she moved into a group home in Burlington County in 2013. There, she got intensive support to learn how to manage her mental illness.

### A CONTINUUM OF CARE

Catholic Charities’ mental health services operate on a continuum, in which staff strive to move people toward independent living. So after two years in the group home, Nicole got her own apartment, enrolling in several Catholic Charities programs to continue her progress toward independence.

In Partial Care, she learned life skills and other tools to ensure her wellness and recovery. In Supported Employment, she built her resume, learned interviewing skills, and got several jobs, including her current maintenance position at Delaware House. At the Riverbank Self-Help Center, she socialized with other



▲ Nicole and Partial Care program Director Sandi Kolla at Catholic Charities Delaware House

clients and taught dance lessons. And because Nicole plans to move soon to North Carolina to be with her sister, staffers in Intensive Family Support Services are working to secure services for Nicole in her new hometown.



## A Message from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

It often seems like summers fly in the blink of an eye, and autumn always brings great change: Students hunker down for a new school year, we break out our sweaters and fuzzy socks as temperatures dip, trees lose their leaves, birds migrate south.

But the Old Testament message in Hebrews rings true: As much as things change, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. Our mission, inspired by our Catholic faith and shared values, remains unchanging as well. We work tirelessly to restore dignity and independence to individuals and families, especially the poor and vulnerable, regardless of their faith.

In the following pages, you'll read the inspiring stories of people who overcame adversity, after reaching out to us for help, to become thriving citizens full of hope for the future. Glenda broke down a language barrier, Nicole learned to manage her mental illness, Abussamaa refused to let his troubled past define him, and Jordan built a bright future for her children.

Indeed, while autumn brings great change, it's also a time for new beginnings. We congratulate all the people we serve for finding the courage and putting in the work to start anew and heal.

And we thank our supporters, whose generosity has empowered us to strengthen communities by helping families recover from addiction, homelessness, domestic violence, unemployment, mental illness, and other challenges.

Pope Francis said: "We didn't come into this world to 'vegetate,' to take it easy, to make our lives a comfortable sofa to fall asleep on. No, we came for another reason: to leave a mark."

Thank you for leaving your mark on a world in need of hope! I am eager to see how much more we can accomplish together in the next year.

*Warmly,*

**Marlene Laó-Collins**  
Executive Director



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**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.*

## **MAKING HER MOTHER PROUD** (CONTINUED FROM COVER)

What makes her progress especially remarkable is that she was diagnosed with – and beat – breast cancer while in Catholic Charities' care.

"She is a survivor of that and had a good attitude even when she wasn't feeling well," said Kelli Madison, a Partial Care case manager.

Nicole aims to get her general-equivalency degree and another job in North Carolina. She loves writing poetry, sketching, and wowing her counselors and coworkers with her eye-catching fashion choices and hairstyles.

"She's a fashionista," laughed her job coach Tegri Walls.

She has one regret.

"I wish my mom was here to see me now," Nicole said of her mother, who passed away in 2014. "I feel like I put her through so much, but I finally got it together."

Still, Nicole takes pride in her progress.

"I feel pretty good about myself," she said. "When I first came here, I wasn't very goal-oriented, and I didn't really have structure. It took a lot of counselors and job-coaching to get me to where I am today."

**FOR INFORMATION** call Partial Care Case Manager Kelli Madison at (609) 267-9339.

# LIFTING HER FAMILY

## Toward a Hopeful Future



Looking back, Jordan can see she had a tough childhood. Raised by a single mother who had mental health challenges, Jordan dropped out of school in the ninth grade and had her first baby at 17.

Still, she never dreamed she'd be homeless, because she'd been making money doing hair since she was in middle school and knew she could support herself. Yet at 23, she found herself facing life on the street with a baby and a toddler when her boyfriend's cousin, who they'd been staying with, got evicted.

So Jordan reached out to Monmouth County Social Services, which placed her in Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's Linkages program. Linkages is emergency transitional housing in Tinton Falls for individuals and families in crisis. Staff there link clients with wraparound services and community resources while the clients work to overcome whatever hardships led to their homelessness.



▲ Catholic Charities' Linkages housing in Tinton Falls

For Jordan, Linkages represented a safe, stable home base for her and her two youngest children to stay while she pursued her general-equivalency degree and employment. She also got her driver's license through referrals from Linkages – a skill that became critical to her self-sufficiency after the county moved her and her family into low-income permanent housing in Ocean County, where she needed a car to get to the store, work, and more.

After leaving Linkages, she continued working to lift her family toward a better future. She became a certified nursing assistant, landed a job in January 2018, and bought a car.

Every stride she made toward stability carried her closer to her goal of regaining custody of her oldest child, who was in his grandmother's care. Last year, a judge restored her son to her custody.

### HONOR-WORTHY PROGRESS

In September, Catholic Charities will honor Jordan at the 30th annual Guardian Angel Dinner Dance with the 2019 Client Achievement Award. Jordan sees the accolade as worthy recognition of all that she has accomplished.

"I'm glad that y'all see me trying, so that's cool," she said. "I came a long way. I like who I am today."

But, she emphasized, she's not done trying.

"I want to have a house, own a hair salon, and have my own trucking business by the time I'm 40," said Jordan, who's now 26, smiling as she added: "I want an in-ground pool, and I need a little firepit in the corner."

Linkages inspired her to look forward to the future, she said.

"I've always been about money, always thinking where I can get the dollars to do what I need to do," Jordan said. "But now I'm all about good vibes. I'm thinking better. I'm thinking not just about today's dollars. I'm thinking about tomorrow's dollars. I don't want my kids to grow up how I did. I don't want them to have to worry about bills. I don't want to tell them 'no' because I can't or I'm broke. I want to be able say 'no' because I said 'no.' I want to take them out to eat without having to check my bank account. I want them to be comfortable. I want my kids to be kids as long as they can. And I plan on doing everything I can to make that happen."

**TO LEARN MORE** about Linkages, call Program Director Stacey DePoe at (732) 922-0400.



TOP RAFFLE  
PRIZE  
LAST YEAR  
\$1,015

MORE THAN  
100 GIFT  
BASKETS

PROVIDENCE HOUSE  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES

25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

TASTE

*of Burlington County*



**WHEN:** WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9  
6 TO 9:30 PM

**WHERE:** The Merion — 1301 Route 130,  
Cinnaminson, NJ

**WHAT:** This annual fundraiser for Catholic Charities Providence House Domestic Violence Services of Burlington County features more than 20 local restaurants, a fabulous gift basket auction, and 50/50 cash raffle. Proceeds from the event benefit victims of domestic abuse and help us provide services to people in need.

**COST:** Tickets are \$55 each.

**TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW**

[www.catholiccharitiesrenton.org/events](http://www.catholiccharitiesrenton.org/events)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** about the event, contact Barbara J. Katz at (856) 824-0599, ext. 8622, or [bkatz@cctrenton.org](mailto:bkatz@cctrenton.org).

## Seizing a Second Chance TO CHANGE HIS DESTINY

Abussamaa Ramziddin was just 8 when he went into New Jersey's foster care system.

"We had some troubles in my home, so I was removed from the home," Abussamaa said. "Once a child, especially a black male, enters a state system, your life is never the same."

As a teenager, Abussamaa fell into criminal trouble. For 30 years, he cycled in and out of prison. In 2012, he had an epiphany.

"You just have enough. You wake up one day and say: 'I can't do this,'" he said. "Life doesn't stop when you're in prison. Each time you get arrested, time stands still. When you return to society after leaving that social graveyard, you're psychologically set back even further."

A tough-talking probation officer kicked him into gear.

"He said: 'If you don't give yourself a chance and go to counseling, you're going to find yourself locked up again.' His threat played loud in my head. But he didn't hound me, because I didn't give him that opportunity – I was determined I wouldn't go back," Abussamaa said. "So I went to counseling, and it turned out to be the best move I ever made. Because that second chance that I always said I wanted and didn't give myself? I gave myself. I came to the program, and I met good people."



▲ Abussamaa with Kia Macon, care coordinator, at Catholic Charities' Guidance Clinic

Abussamaa did both one-on-one counseling and group therapy at Catholic Charities' Guidance Clinic, where he focused twice a week on improving his mental health.

"It was simple, like basic mathematics," he said of his recovery. "I grew, and I continued to grow. I've become a productive member of society. I'm not out here committing crimes. I'm a registered voter. I don't have any probation. I don't have to look over my shoulder or worry about a warrant, because I served. I did what I had to do to get back on track. It wasn't easy. But I did it."

### FINDING JOY IN THE LITTLE THINGS

He still goes to the Guidance Clinic twice a month and credits his counselors and other clinic staff with keeping him on a positive path.

"Catholic Charities has been a great support. Throughout your recovery, you have to continually face yourself. Your enemy doesn't always appear as an aggressor. Your enemy might be the devil inside you," he said. "Catholic Charities helps you get past that by staying in your ear, reminding you to remind yourself: 'This is what you gotta do. Go do it.'"

Abussamaa got his commercial driver's license and plans to go to school to become a paralegal, in hopes of advocating for people coming out of the foster and criminal justice systems.

"I want to do something to help people who are similarly situated like me," he said.

Seven years after leaving prison behind, he now lives with his dog Blanco and finds joy everywhere he goes.

"I enjoy everything being out of prison. Life is wonderful. I got a saying for you: 'Man asked God: Give me everything so I can enjoy life. God said: I gave you life so you can enjoy everything.' If you appreciate the little things, you can appreciate everything. There's not one thing I don't enjoy. Every breath I take is phenomenal. A lot of people don't get a chance to say that. Your worst day could be somebody's best day. I'm happy for every opportunity I get. And I'm going to keep trying to reach for every opportunity I can."



▲ Abussamaa with Kia Macon, care coordinator



**FOR INFORMATION** about the Guidance Clinic, contact Drew Wisloski, Behavioral Health Service Area Director, at (609) 267-9339.



# Sharpening her Language Skills FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE IN A NEW HOME

A hurricane blew Glenda Padín Rodríguez to New Jersey. A Puerto Rico native, Glenda and her husband decided soon after Hurricane Maria ravaged the island in September 2017 that they needed to move to the mainland.

“Everything changed,” she said of the deadly storm, which was so catastrophic that her husband, who worked in construction and agriculture, lost his job, and her daily commute to the university where she worked grew to three hours, each way. They picked Pittsburgh, where her husband’s brother lived, but relocated last February to Central Jersey, where they had more family.

A native Spanish-speaker, Glenda could speak English – but found her mouth couldn’t always keep up with her brain when it came to communicating here. So she reached out to El Centro, Catholic Charities’ program that serves the Latino community in Greater Mercer County. There she enrolled in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes to improve her English – and quickly moved from the beginner and intermediate classes to the advanced class.

In Pittsburgh, the language barrier cost her several job opportunities. At El Centro, as she sharpened her English, she enlisted the ESL teachers to review her resume and cover letter and help her practice for job interviews. After just three months, Glenda applied for a job as a bilingual case manager at Catholic Charities’ Family Growth Program in Ewing, a counseling program for children, adults, and families. In May, she landed the job.

“I feel like this is home, because from the first person who tried to help me (El Centro receptionist Sacha Landaverde), everyone was very kind,” Glenda said. “All the teachers are so kind, always paying attention if a person needs assistance or has a question. I felt very good at El Centro. I was hungry to learn the language better.”

## THE WORLD’S A CLASSROOM

El Centro’s ESL classes no longer fit her schedule, but her new job essentially provides full-time ESL lessons, as she daily interacts with people of all backgrounds.

“All my coworkers are my teachers now. When I take lunch, I make conversation with the counselors, and I



▲ Glenda with El Centro Director Roberto Hernandez

learn,” she said, adding with a laugh: “And they learn too, because I teach them a word or two in Spanish.”

A mother of two, Glenda said her teenage son has honed his English skills in school and likes to tease her when she mispronounces words. Glenda just shrugs it off. Harder to ignore are the people she encounters who assume her accent means she’s not American.

“Some people look at you like you don’t belong here,” she said. “Day by day, I try my best to speak the correct way.”

Roberto Hernandez, who has headed the El Centro program since it started in 1999, said bigotry can silence native Spanish-speakers.

“Some people who don’t speak English well tend to be quiet and not speak at all,” Hernandez said. “But people who speak with an accent have the ability to speak two languages. We have to give up the misconception that because someone speaks with an accent that they’re ignorant. On the contrary, they are very smart. They know two languages!”

.....  
**FOR INFORMATION** about El Centro, call  
Director Roberto Hernandez at (609) 394-2056.

# GREAT FUN FOR A GREAT CAUSE



in Monmouth County



Spring into Summer was a smashing success, raising more than \$50,000 for the programs in Monmouth County. Nearly 200 people attended the event, held June 20th at the Spring Lake Bath and Tennis Club and featuring live music by Brian Kirk and the Jirks. The event was organized by the Monmouth County Board, under the leadership of board chair, Anthony Tamburri.

“We are so grateful to the local businesses in Monmouth County, as well as our sponsors, for their support and generosity,” said Tamburri. “The funds raised will benefit individuals and families in our local communities, regardless of religious affiliation, by helping them achieve self-sufficiency and restoring hope to their lives.”

WIN A NIGHT ON THE TOWN


OR


Buy your ticket today for a chance to win TWO tickets to Hamilton OR Dear Evan Hansen in New York City, Limousine, and Dinner.

Winner will be announced on October 20th at 10:00 PM at the Manasquan River Golf Club.

You DO NOT need to be present to win.

Only 200 tickets are being sold so HURRY!

**TO BUY RAFFLE TICKETS**, contact Jennifer Leip at (609) 394-5181, ext. 1137, or visit [CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org/broadway2019](http://CatholicCharitiesTrenton.org/broadway2019).



*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 \$ \_\_\_\_\_; or \_\_\_\_\_ 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](mailto:ntompkins@cctrenton.org).



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**30<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**  
**Guardian Angel Dinner Dance**

Hyatt Regency Princeton  
 Saturday, September 21, 2019  
 5 to 10 PM

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

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> 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 religion.

Each year, we honor individuals, parishes, and organizations from our community who have positively impacted our ability to help the poor and vulnerable. Join us on September 21<sup>st</sup> to applaud these community partners who, in their own unique way, inspire and offer hope to those in need.

**2019 HONOREES**

**RICHARD J. HUGHES HUMANITARIAN AWARD**  
 Marianne Earle

**CORPORATE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR**  
 The Bank of Princeton

**CLIENT ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**  
 Jordan

**LIGHT OF HOPE AWARDS**

*Burlington County:* Jesse DeSanto

*Mercer County:* Francis Taylor

*Monmouth County:* Stanley Koreyva, Jr.

*Ocean County:* Joseph Leone Introna

A special thank you to our Anniversary Sponsors:

Judith M. and  
 the late Honorable Anthony J.  
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**Walter R. Earle**  
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