

## Tidbits



### Jewel Food Stamps Donations Redeemed for Cookware for Those in Need

Thanks to everyone who saved and donated Jewel Food Stamps this winter — nearly 100 Cuisinart stamp books were collected. These donations allowed us to acquire 40 sets (two saucepans and large fry pan) of Cuisinart cookware to distribute to those in need, including those leaving Daybreak Center and moving into their own homes, and our veterans served through our Supportive Services for Veterans Program.

### Save Money, Help the Environment — Receive *The Connection* by Email

If you would like to help us save money (and trees!), then please sign up to receive your copy of *The Connection* by email.



It's easy! Just send an email to [info@cc-doj.org](mailto:info@cc-doj.org) and include:

- Your name
- Your home address
- The email address where you would like to receive the newsletter

## Seeking a Better Life for Her Children

**W**hen Chantal was 14 years-old, her mother tragically died in a car accident. Chantal was devastated in every sense of the word. “I felt like when my mom died, I died,” she recalls. The teenager, who had once felt so loved and cared for in her home, was sent to live with a 23 year-old family member. The family member who had custody of Chantal and her other siblings was overwhelmed and unable to care for the children. Chantal recalls wearing coats to bed at night during cold winters and struggling to find enough food to eat.

As a young teenager, Chantal realized that she needed to be responsible for herself. She got a job and used the income to pay for food. Years past and Chantal became a young adult, but she acknowledges that she had never learned the skills she needed to take care of herself. She switched jobs frequently and stayed with friends and family because she couldn't afford her own apartment. She gave birth to two beautiful daughters and escaped an abusive relationship.

One day, Chantal looked at her life and decided it was time for a change. She was very unhappy and occasionally felt suicidal. “I wanted a better life for my daughters,” she said. A family member recommended reaching out to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet for help. Chantal applied for the Transitional Housing Program in DuPage County.

Transitional Housing provides housing and supportive services to homeless families while they work toward permanent housing and a quality of life that supports their needs. Chantal was thrilled, but scared when she was accepted into the program. “I didn't want to fail,” she remembers. Chantal worked very hard for the duration of the two year program and certainly did NOT fail. She thrived.

During her time in the program, Chantal focused on repairing her credit, attending school for culinary arts, maintaining steady employment, and saving money. She attended several classes offered by Catholic Charities, including Out of Poverty and Parenting Plus. Chantal also started seeing a therapist from Catholic Charities' counseling services to help her cope with anxiety and work on her patience.

In January 2015, Chantal graduated from the Transitional Housing Program and moved into her own apartment. She describes her new space as nice, quiet, and affordable. She likes it and so do her five and seven year-old daughters. Today, she's enjoying her job as a cook in a high-end restaurant and plans to stay there while she finishes her associate's degree.

Chantal believes that she has gained a lot from her experiences with Catholic Charities. “They helped me learn who I am,” she said. “I was lost. I didn't know my purpose and now I feel motivated and special.” She said that she has learned to let go of her past and is looking forward to a bright future with her children. She is grateful for Catholic Charities: “They gave me the push I needed when I couldn't push myself.”

**To learn more about Catholic Charities' Transitional Housing Programs, visit [catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org).**



*They (Catholic Charities) gave me the push I needed when I couldn't push myself.*

# Dear Friends

## Affordable Housing

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet continually reviews the needs of our clients and the communities in which we serve. The Agency considers new programs and services when we know our clients will benefit. A significant need throughout our diocese is affordable housing.



The need for Affordable Housing is staggering. The shortage of affordable housing is so severe that people who are vital to our communities are finding themselves in great need. Many teachers, police officers, nurses, firefighters, and others in key occupations cannot afford to live in the communities where they work. Seniors are being priced out of the communities in which they've spent their lives, and young families cannot afford to return to the communities where they grew up to raise their own children. Home mortgages and rents continue to outpace incomes throughout the state of Illinois. And for our most vulnerable clients, access to affordable housing simply does not exist. Poor credit and eviction histories are increasingly leading to homelessness for families with children.

In the coming months, Catholic Charities will explore different types of affordable housing including low income, mixed-income, and senior living. We hope you will keep us in your prayers as we continue to do our important work.

May God bless you and your families, always.

Glenn Van Cura  
Executive Director



The Out of Poverty graduates are pictured here with Catholic Charities' Employment Counselor Don Randolph (left) and Catholic Charities' Outreach Support Specialist Yvonne Morongiello (second from the right).

## Congratulations to our Out of Poverty Graduates!

Out of Poverty is an eight week program (with graduation on the ninth week) with the goal of personal change. This program is intended for individuals whose lives are habituated and sustained in some form of poverty. Out of Poverty affirms that change is possible. Discussion within a group setting encourages honesty and focuses on the fact that life has not turned out the way you thought it would. Participants learn money management, job skills, self-esteem, and other important components to a successful life.

Rebecca, one of the recent Out of Poverty graduates, says that these classes provided her with a much-needed support system. When she graduated from the program, she had gained genuine friendships and an understanding of what she could achieve in life. "I can do anything I want to do," she explains with excitement and confidence. Today, Rebecca is taking classes and working toward earning her G.E.D. She is also working on her physical health and makes better food choices to control her diabetes.

Out of Poverty sessions are held at various times and locations throughout the year. For more information, visit [catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org).

## What gift would you give to the person who has everything?



How about a Gift from the Heart? Make a donation through this program and it will be used to buy diapers, food, milk, toiletries and cleaning products for low-income families and seniors.

You can even make your gift in honor of someone special and we'll send them an acknowledgment telling them about your thoughtful gift on their behalf.

Shop for your gifts today at [catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org).

# Welcome, Mary Bannon!

**M**ary Bannon recently joined the Catholic Charities team as the Director of Major Gifts. Mary will manage the major gifts portfolio of the Agency and will report to Kathleen Langdon, Director of Development and Communications.



Mary comes to us directly from the Franciscan Sisters of Chicago. She brings with her 10 years of Development experience.

Mary can be reached at 630-495-8008 or [mbannon@cc-doj.org](mailto:mbannon@cc-doj.org).

## eBay Giving Works

**D**o you have items collecting dust in your basement or a closet that desperately needs to be cleaned out? Are you ready to de-clutter after the holidays? Wouldn't it feel good to donate these items and know that you're helping someone in need? We're seeking donations for our eBay Giving Works Program.



We're looking for new (or gently used)

- clothes
- collectables
- games
- electronics
- knick knacks
- jewelry

...and anything else that you think may have value!

These donated items will be sold in our eBay Giving Works online store and all proceeds will benefit our programs and services.

If you have items to donate, please drop them off at 203 N. Ottawa Street in Joliet Monday – Friday from 8:30am – 4:30pm or call 815-723-3405 for more information. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. To learn more about Catholic Charities and to shop our Ebay Giving Works online store, visit [catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org). If you have any questions, contact Lori at [lvitullo@cc-doj.org](mailto:lvitullo@cc-doj.org) or 815-723-3405.



*Debbi Baldauff (center), Catholic Charities' Division Director of Aging and Disability Services, receives the generous check from representatives from Fifth Third Bank.*

## Fifth Third Bank Donation Assists Money Management Program

**F**ifth Third Bank donated \$5,000 to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet to help fund our Money Management Program! Catholic Charities' Money Management Program offers eligible older adults basic assistance with money management tasks such as balancing checkbooks; organizing and keeping track of bill paying; identifying scams and advocacy with creditors. Volunteer opportunities are also available. The Money Management Program is offered in Kankakee, Grundy, Iroquois, and Will Counties.



## Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet's Board of Young Professionals

**O**n December 3rd, the Board of Young Professionals held their first service project, a Christmas party for clients at Daybreak Center! Everyone enjoyed cookie decorating, bingo (with gift card prizes), and dinner. The Board of Young Professionals served 117 clients.

Interested in joining Catholic Charities' Board of Young Professionals? Visit [catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org) or email [evailaolea@cc-doj.org](mailto:evailaolea@cc-doj.org).



*The Joliet Catholic Academy Senior Student Council dropped off a HUGE number of Christmas gifts for our Head Start students from low-income households.*



*ComEd's Regulatory department employees "adopted" a family from Catholic Charities' First Light Permanent Supportive Housing Program. They provided gifts for all six members of the household and food for a delicious Christmas dinner.*

# Our Clients Were Blessed by Your Generosity at Christmas!

## Holiday Appeal

Our annual Holiday Appeal benefits clients in all our programs (Community Services, Aging and Disability Services, Counseling and Head Start) throughout the seven counties we serve. Donations made to our Holiday Appeal helps us meet the needs of all of our clients year round, not just at Christmas time.

— *It's not too late to donate to this effort! Please visit [catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org) or send a check in the enclosed envelope.*

## A Gift of Christmas

Catholic Charities' A Gift of Christmas campaign invites donors to sponsor a specific family or an individual client by making a cash donation which is used to purchase Christmas gifts or other items the client has indicated that they need.

— *219 individuals received Christmas gifts through this program!*

## Sharing the Warmth

Sharing the Warmth provides gifts to needy seniors in Kankakee County. Case managers identify our neediest senior clients who then make their Christmas wish lists. Senior clients are matched with donors in the community who receive the client's wish list and purchase and wrap the items and drop them off at Catholic Charities in time for Christmas delivery. Sharing the Warmth is in its 13th year and it continues to grow.

— *This Christmas season, donors provided gifts to 237 seniors in Kankakee County.*

## Holiday Outreach Program

The Holiday Outreach Program serves low-income families in DuPage County who have recently received our services. Churches and businesses are the biggest supporters of this program. We received donations of gift cards, clothing, winter jackets, hats, gloves, and toys for children.

— *This year we served nearly 205 households (assisting more than 743 individuals).*

## Adopt a Family and Sponsor a Holiday Food Basket Programs

Daybreak Center in Will County brought Christmas cheer to its shelter clients (and those in the Supportive Services for Veterans Families program) through the Adopt a Family Program. Clients make wish lists and donors purchase items to fulfill their requests.

Daybreak also conducted the Holiday Food Basket program.

— *This year, 105 adults and children were adopted through the Adopt a Family Program.*

— *Generous donors provided 63 food boxes to emergency services clients and low-income veteran's families.*

## Thank You!

Thanks to all of our supporters, donors, volunteers and friends. You truly made it a bright Christmas for hundreds of needy individuals and families this year. We appreciate your generosity!



Dan Gibbons (left) presents the check to Amy Palumbo, Catholic Charities' Director of Community Services in DuPage County.

## Dan Gibbons Turkey Trot Donates \$25,000

Thank you to the Dan Gibbons Turkey Trot for the \$25,000 check they donated to feed the hungry in DuPage County. 8,075 runners and walkers took to the streets of downtown Elmhurst on a very cold Thanksgiving morning.

## Thanks Secret Santa!

We received the following note from a client who received gifts from a "secret santa" in our *Sharing the Warmth* program:

Thank you, thank you, thank you. I cried and cried when I opened all of my gifts. I wish I knew who you are — I'd hug you and hug you. So many great gifts and everything was special. I still can't get over it. It's like you know me because, if I was shopping, I'd pick out the same things. Unbelievable — I was in shock.

God bless you and you will always be in my daily prayers. God is good and so is Santa. I hope you had a great holiday — I know you must be very special and you deserve the best.

Peace, love, and prayers,  
Midge

## 2014 Employee of the Year: Maria de Jesus Martinez

Each November, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet presents the Employee of the Year award to a member of the staff who demonstrates excellence in his or her work and a commitment to our mission. In addition, the recipient must exhibit a positive attitude, creative problem solving, professional skills and the ability to work as an effective team leader.



The recipient of the 2014 Employee of the Year is Maria de Jesus Martinez, a teacher at Broadway Early Childhood Center. Maria has worked at Catholic Charities in the Early Childhood Services Division for 16 years. She has dedicated her career to preparing young children from low-income households for a lifetime of success.

Maria's co-workers describe her as someone who demonstrates reliability, exhibits flexibility, and treats others in a respectful and supportive manner. She never shies away from a challenge. One co-worker described Maria as "easily the most compassionate person I know — the kind of person who goes out of her way to help anyone with any problem."

We are so glad to have Maria de Jesus Martinez as a part of the Catholic Charities family. Congratulations, Maria!

## Leaving a Legacy of Hope

Sometimes people remember Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet through a bequest or will. Oftentimes we do not learn of that generosity until after their death. We are so grateful to those who believe in our mission and work, but wish we could have expressed our gratitude while they were still living.

If you decide to include Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet in your estate planning, please let us know. We want to say "thank you!"

To learn more about planned giving opportunities, please contact Kathleen Langdon at 815-723-3405.

### The following wording is suggested for including Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet in your will:

"I give, devise and bequest to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet, Inc., an Illinois not-for-profit organization located administratively at 203 N. Ottawa, Joliet, Illinois 60432, the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_ (or specifically described property)."



203 North Ottawa Street  
 Joliet, Illinois 60432  
 Administrative Office  
 815.723.3405

For giving opportunities and more information about our programs, visit our website.

[catholiccharitiesjoliet.org](http://catholiccharitiesjoliet.org)



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Visit us Online



*Working to Reduce Poverty in America.*



**Glenn Van Cura**, Executive Director  
 gvancura@cc-doj.org

### Catholic Charities Development Staff

**Kathleen Langdon**, Director, Development & Communications; klangdon@cc-doj.org

**Maggie Snow**, PR & Communications Coordinator; msnow@cc-doj.org

**Susan Parker**, Grants Manager; sparker@cc-doj.org

**Mary Bannon**, Director of Major Gifts; mbannon@cc-doj.org

**Edith Avila Olea**, Parish Outreach and Board of Young Professionals Coordinator; eavilaolea@cc-doj.org

**Stephanie Ambrose**, Agency Volunteer Coordinator; sambrose@cc-doj.org

**Marianne Melcher**, Agency Event Coordinator; mmelcher@cc-doj.org

**Claudia Browne**, Data Development Administrative Assistant; cbrowne@cc-doj.org

**Lori Vitullo**, eBay Analyst; lvitullo@cc-doj.org

*If you have any questions about this publication, please call Maggie Snow at 815.724.1165.*

### Our Mission

*We are a faith-based organization providing service to people in need and calling others of good will to do the same.*

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## Save the Date!



The Human Race® is a 5k run/fitness walk in support of over 50 charity organizations serving DuPage County, including Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet.

**Saturday, April 25, 2015  
 9:00 AM**

**The Esplanade  
 1901 W. Butterfield Road, Downers Grove  
 dupagehumanrace.org**

*Be sure to designate Catholic Charities to receive the donation from your race fee!*