

*Faithfully Serving in 100 Locations Across 21 Virginia Counties and 7 Cities!*



More than 100 people gathered for "Seeking Hope and Healing in the Midst of the Opioid Crisis," held at Good Shepherd Church in Alexandria. Photo Courtesy of Arlington Catholic Herald

## Catholic Charities Responds to the Opioid Crisis

**F**OR MANY IN OUR DIOCESE, the opioid crisis isn't another headline in the news. It is impacting their lives, too. **Fairfax County ranks highest in the state for the number of drug overdose deaths.** At parishes throughout the diocese, funerals are being held for its victims.

At the urging of Bishop Michael Burbidge, Catholic Charities took the lead on a diocesan response to this crisis. We began with a summer 2018 workshop for members of our Parish Liaison Network. In early fall at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, we co-hosted with Bishop Burbidge an all-day diocesan-wide conference that featured addiction experts and our director of clinical services, psychologist Michael Horne.

We are building partnerships with federal and state public health professionals to gather resources, including education, epidemiology, and addiction treatment best practices. Our effort will include a parish component to provide a spiritual and supportive response to individuals and families struggling with opioids addiction, as well as spreading awareness and resources to respond to the crisis.

Following discussion with pastors, Catholic Charities will conduct a landscape assessment of support services that are available throughout the diocese as well as identify gaps that need to be filled. This information will be distributed widely allowing pastors, families, schools, parishes, and

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communities to be better equipped to help those affected by addiction in their regions and will include:

- Outpatient counselors who can address this issue including Catholic Charities clinicians providing services at 16 parishes;
- Inpatient units or hospitals in our region that address opioid issues;
- Reputable pain management groups;
- Narcotics Anonymous and other addict support groups (like The Calix Society), including meeting locations and times;
- Peer support groups for families and loved ones;
- School programs;
- Community Resources; and
- Other recommended services. †

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,** contact Dr. Michael Horne, Director of Clinical Services, at [mhorne@ccda.net](mailto:mhorne@ccda.net).

# President's Message

Dear Friends,

As Christmas approaches we celebrate the Incarnation when Jesus came into the world to change everything, and to teach us how to adore God and to bring the dynamism of his self-giving love to everyone. **He taught us to see himself in each person we encounter.** This holy holiday season, and throughout the entire year, at Catholic Charities we commit to serve those in need, and we invite you to join us. Each time you serve – by volunteering, offering financial support, donating food and clothing, teaching an English class – you are transforming lives and showing Christ's love.

In this issue of **The Mission**, you will note the stories of transformation. Our programs are doing such wonderful things to help touch and change the lives of tens of thousands of people every year. You'll read about how we are recruiting participation by the various parishes and communities throughout the diocese to turn around the opioid crisis within our diocese. You'll read about a young woman who found our Pregnancy and Adoption Services just at the right time. You'll meet John McKusker, a hard-working volunteer making a significant impact and creating lifelong friendships with his students at Hogar. And you'll learn about our collaboration with the Knights of Columbus to bring a very Merry Christmas to those most in need in the heart of Leesburg, where you might expect it the least.

We are so grateful for our volunteers and donors who support us along the way. Thanks to your generous donations, we can provide compassionate care to thousands of men, women, and children right here in our communities. Through supporting CCDA's 20 programs, you are making a positive impact in the community and sharing Christ's love.

How can you help to spread these transformative services? In the spirit of giving rather than receiving, **I ask that you please consider a year-end gift to Catholic Charities.** Use the enclosed reply envelope or visit [www.cdda.net](http://www.cdda.net) and click the "Donate Now" button. Our programs rely heavily on your support of our mission. We could not do any of this without you.

Lastly, Bishop Burbidge and I invite you to join us at the annual Catholic Charities Ball, *God's Instruments – Renewing Lives. Restoring Hope*, on February 22, 2019. It is our most important fundraiser but it is also a wonderful and joyous celebration of the great gift of charity that transforms so many people who would otherwise be in despair. Please come and invite your friends, family, fellow parishioners and co-workers to join the celebration too.



May God Bless You,



**ART BENNETT**  
**President and CEO**  
Catholic Charities of the  
Diocese of Arlington

In 2018, your support of Catholic Charities has brought hope to those in greatest need...

**1.2 M**  
**pounds of food**  
given to the poor



**2,735**  
**people helped**  
with emergency  
assistance

**85¢**  
**of every**  
**dollar spent**  
goes to programs  
and services



Provided basic medical care to

**464**  
**uninsured**  
**patients**  
valued at \$446,100



With your continued support, imagine what we can do in 2019.





Ashley LaRiccía and Tyler Lloyd at El Comedor, a one room building located right before the border checkpoint for entering the U.S. from Mexico.



Ashley meets with a man and his young daughter at El Comedor to learn more about their story and chance of coming to the U.S.



Collection of crosses were placed on the Mexican side of the border wall between Nogales, AZ and Nogales, Mexico.

## Catholic Charities Attorneys Help Those Facing Grave Harm

**TWO CATHOLIC CHARITIES ATTORNEYS** spent a week at the U.S. border between Nogales, Mexico and Nogales, Arizona, to provide legal assistance to those who qualified.

Ashley LaRiccía and Tyler Lloyd, who work in Charities' Hogar Immigrant Legal Services office in Alexandria, spent five days conducting immigration screenings and asylum orientations for individuals and families. LaRiccía and Lloyd worked alongside the Kino Border Initiative, a Catholic organization that provides humanitarian assistance to migrants.

Their October trip was organized in partnership with the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) following an appeal for attorneys to provide legal advice for those who qualify. CLINIC reimbursed partner agencies for the expenses.

**“While many of the stories did move me to near tears,** I returned energized and ready to advocate not only for my individual clients but for more humane policies at our borders,” LaRiccía said.

She interviewed migrants to determine if they met the legal standards required to apply for asylum in the United States. Simply “fearing violence” in their home country is not sufficient, their lives must be threatened. Consider the case of a Central American grandmother whom LaRicca assisted instead.

**Her pregnant daughter had been murdered by a cartel** and her granddaughter also had been shot. Despite the cartel having control of the region, she risked her own life and reported her daughter’s brutal murder to police. They were unwilling or unable to assist and as a result, the grandmother

had nowhere in her home country to find shelter. With this additional information, LaRiccía now could help the grandmother understand her claim in the context of asylum law and apply legally.

**In Nogales the pair also witnessed the Catholic Church in action.** The Missionary Sisters of the Eucharist and volunteers provide meals, distribute clothing, and offer medical assistance to the migrants. They also run a shelter for women and children waiting to cross the border.

“If it were not for the Catholic Church and the Kino Border Institute these migrants would be left completely on their own,” LaRiccía said. “(The sisters) live day in day out feeding these people and it seems like with each group they come in to meet, they treat them with the same exact level of kindness.” †

## Men Overcome Homelessness at Christ House



Christ House offers transitional housing to homeless men. Its recently renovated facilities afford a safe, clean, and welcoming environment to single men reclaiming their self-sufficiency and independence.

**N**O OTHER SERVICE LOCATION FOR Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington provides as much help and hope to the poorest of our neighbors as Christ House. It is unique among our facilities in that it houses **five integrated programs**:

1. Transformational housing for men;
2. Emergency financial assistance for those facing eviction or loss of utilities;
3. Evening meals provided by parishes and other volunteers 365 days a year for the homeless and hungry including families;
4. A food pantry through the St. Lucy Project; and
5. Gently used clothing at the adjacent thrift store.

Christ House is the **only transformational shelter for men** in the City of

Alexandria. Unlike “rapid rehousing” programs, our model provides long-term housing; case management; mental health counseling; and religious, psychological, and spiritual support for the men living there. *The goal of the program is self-sufficiency through stable employment and permanent housing.*

**With your support, Christ House recently pursued a new strategic direction** that includes more intensive case management, clinical service, and workforce development. Adding a second case manager and a Catholic psychologist enables Christ House to provide longer-term care and a greater intensity of services that lead to improved outcomes.

The workforce development component helps clients increase their earning capacity and maintain their independence. This is essential to reduce their risk of

### And the changes are making a difference.

Of the **19 clients** who exited the program in the last year:

-  **15 “graduated”** by completing the recommended course of services;
-  **13 achieved their employment goals;** and
-  **12 secured affordable housing.**

returning to homelessness. Supporting a client while they are in a vocational or other educational program grants them the time needed to complete a degree or certificate program. Doing so increases their odds of securing a job (or jobs) that pay \$15/ hour, which is what the City of Alexandria considers the **minimum livable wage** for the region.

Program Director John Croft shared that the “entire program runs more effectively” with these changes. It allows for more intensive, more frequent, and more meaningful change for the clients and incorporates additional life-skills coaching. The case managers can provide direct, hands-on guidance and real-time support for the men who live there.

### In a phrase – it works.

When you donate to Catholic Charities, **you can do so confidently knowing that every dollar goes to delivering and supporting our work serving the poor.** All donations stay with us and are not used for any other purpose locally or anywhere else. And with programs like Christ House Men's Transformational Housing, you gift really is making a difference. †



# Helping Birthmothers with Support and Information

BY MEAGHAN LANE

**WHEN MARIA REALIZED SHE WAS PREGNANT**, she felt alone, scared, and worried. (Client name changed.)

Tragically, her pregnancy was the result of a brutal physical attack and rape. She was terrified at the prospect of raising a child conceived this way, and she was already struggling to provide for her other three children.

Maria had considered adoption already, however, she was misinformed by a nurse who told her that if she did place her baby with another family that she would also lose custody of her older children. **Fearing this outcome, she thought she had no choice but to abort the child.**

Thankfully, at the recommendation of a close friend, she contacted Catholic Charities to learn how to make an adoption plan. Within 24 hours, a caring and professional pregnancy and adoption counselor met with her at a coffee shop near her home. They explained the process to Maria and reassured her that choosing adoption would not result in losing custody of her children.

Maria's experience demonstrates the most significant barriers women face when considering adoption – **information about adoption is not presented,**



**and when it is, it is often inaccurate or biased.** Catholic Charities' Pregnancy and Adoption Support program exists to ensure women are more comfortable discussing adoption and that they receive accurate information.

**Maria has given her child hope. She has chosen life.**

Maria's feelings are normal. Uncertainty in birthmothers is common, whatever the circumstance. Our counselors encourage

all our clients to explore their feelings and help them evaluate the options to make an informed decision for what they feel is the best life for herself and her child. Should it be required, Catholic Charities will provide pre-natal assistance or make referrals for services to stabilize her life and promote healing.

Our program remains a lifelong resource for all our adoptive families, adoptees, and birth parents. Adoption is a lifelong journey. Let us walk with you. †



## Call for Volunteers!

Catholic Charities Pregnancy and Adoption Support program needs volunteers!

Please contact Margot Chavez at [margot.chavez@ccda.net](mailto:margot.chavez@ccda.net) to learn more about how you can get involved in our work.

## Helping the Unemployed Find Good Jobs

**M**ANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO COME to Catholic Charities seeking help are unemployed or underemployed. Most often, it is because they lack the skills required to be competitive in the marketplace. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, there are 500,000 unfilled jobs in the U.S. and only 43 percent of Americans possess the “middle skills” required to fill them. **Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington’s Hogar Education Services is working to close that gap.**

To address this issue, Catholic Charities has three new courses to help our students secure job readiness certifications.

These are:

1. GED Mathematical Reasoning;
2. Internet Core Competence Certification (IC3) preparation; and
3. National Retail Federation’s Retail Industry Fundamentals preparation.

These three courses significantly expand the impact on those looking for work. As a result, the **number of students enrolled quadrupled** in a single semester and **the total credentials they earned tripled** in less than nine months.

Throughout the Spring 2018 semester (the most recent term student outcomes are available), there was a 94% student retention rate in the classes, 50% of students increased at least one English level (far surpassing the state’s goal of 43%), and many of the workforce development students earned an industry-recognized credential or passed a GED subject-area exam.

In just ninety (90) days after course completion, many of the unemployed



*Students in a GED Mathematical Reasoning Course receive focused instruction in a small groups during a breakout session. ZOEY MARAIST | CATHOLIC HERALD*

students gained jobs, and some of the underemployed students were working full time. Of the students who remained unemployed, nearly half re-enrolled in courses for the Fall 2018 semester.

The student success stories show the strong impact these classes are having. As a direct result of her studies with Catholic Charities, particularly the computer skills she gained from the Computer 1 class, **Milagros** had a resume, marketable computer skills and secured a job, her first in 10 years. In addition, these new skills allowed Milagros to help her children in school because she could now better communicate with their teachers.

**Naileth**, who used the knowledge and skills she gained from the customer service course, started her own business in baking, which was her area of expertise in her home country. Finally, we are extremely proud of **Henry, Helder, Fausto, and Maria**, who passed their GED math exams on their first attempt over the summer, and are one step closer to providing better lives for their families. Because of these classes, these individuals (and many others) are now serious contenders in a competitive job market, and can bring skills to the interview and organizations to ensure employment and a better life for them and their family. †



## Meet John McKusker



**JOHN MCKUSKER** is a dedicated Catholic Charities volunteer for more than three years who is currently teaching GED Math at Hogar Education Services.

### ➔ Tell me about your background. How does it transfer to your volunteer role?

I served in the U.S. Navy for ten years aboard submarines in the Pacific and then I ended up working for over 30 years as a government contractor. This included the design of computer systems projects and the management of their installation for the U.S. Navy, the Pentagon, Washington, DC Court system, and the U.S. Departments of Treasury and Housing and Urban Development.

In addition to technical services, I provided training to system users. My

**“I also get great joy when, during class, I see the light bulb turn on and a smile comes to their faces when they learn a concept we were studying.”**

technical background (John earned an engineering technical degree and an MBA) and training transfers very well in teaching adult students with very different backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles, much like the clients I trained as a consultant.

### ➔ When did you get involved with Catholic Charities and why?

When I retired, I knew that I wanted to do four things

1. Learn a foreign language;
2. Learn to play guitar;
3. Travel; and
4. Volunteer.

By trying to learn a new language, I can understand the perspective of students in my classes. It is difficult, and can be challenging, but it also rewarding to make progress. **I get great joy from volunteering at Hogar teaching English and GED Math.**

### ➔ What do you do in your role(s)? What interested you in this specific program?

In August of 2015, I started teaching English at Catholic Charities' Hogar in Manassas. I was teaching at all levels. Then there was a need for someone to teach GED math, so I volunteered and have been doing that for the past two semesters as well.

Math can be troublesome, especially with a language barrier. I try to bring real-life applications to the students when teaching. I am very interested in bringing American culture to the students, and equally so in learning their very different cultures from their countries. **I believe they have a lot to offer to their new communities and I want to capture that experience.**

### ➔ What do you find most rewarding?

I have made a lot of new friends at Hogar, both staff and students. I really enjoy when I see a former student that has moved on to the next class level and is succeeding. Somehow, I have been a part of that process. I'm so proud of them.

I also get great joy when, during class, I see the light bulb turn on and a smile comes to their faces when they learn a concept we were studying.

*We are so incredibly grateful to work with such devoted, giving volunteers like John. †*

### TO LEARN MORE

*about our volunteer opportunities, and ways you can get involved, please visit [volunteer.ccca.net](http://volunteer.ccca.net) or call Sally O'Dwyer at 703-841-3838.*



· GOD'S INSTRUMENTS ·

Renewing Lives • Restoring Hope

✠ JOIN US ON FEBRUARY 22, 2019 ✠



## Santa Claus is Coming to Town

BY ELIZABETH A. ELLIOTT,  
Catholic Herald Staff Writer

**WITH THE RING OF JINGLE BELLS** and a hearty “Ho-Ho-Ho” from his bowl full of jelly, Santa Claus greeted the good girls and boys last December at the Catholic Charities Leesburg Regional Office (LRO) and St. Lucy Food Pantry.

**Tom Hudes of the Knights of Columbus (Virginia District 18) played Santa.** One by one he asked the children, “Do you know whose birthday we celebrate on Christmas Day?” They answered, “Jesus,” and shared with Santa their wishes. The giving tree from **St. John the Apostle Church in Leesburg** provided small gifts for Santa to distribute. He brought joy and a focus to Christmas, and he will be back to spread Christmas cheer this year on December 17 & 20!

This year the pantry will be decorated with a beautiful crèche depicting the birth of

baby Jesus surrounded by his loving mother and father to help remind all who see it the origin and true meaning of Christmas. In addition to distributing essential food items, LRO for the third year will have a Christmas shop of donated new clothing items and other gifts from **Christ the Redeemer’s Advent Giving Tree.** Clients can choose one item for each member of their family, and Catholic Charities staff and volunteers will be there to gift wrap the items.

“This is more about showing the community how we at Leesburg understand the reason for the season and how we help people through hard times,” said Kenna Cuomo, Catholic Charities staff member who attended the event in 2017. “Seasonally, it is always difficult because parents don’t have gifts or food to buy their children. Being able to give that to them is truly the reason for the season.”

Catholic Charities is incredibly appreciative of our partnership with **the Knights of Columbus, St. John the Apostle Church, and Christ the Redeemer Parish** to make this a memorable event for so many families who otherwise might not be able to celebrate the season. †



Last year,  
**185 families**  
shopped the Giving  
Tree Thrift Shop.

**More than 1,000**  
items of clothing, blankets,  
toys, jewelry, shoes, coats,  
and household items were  
distributed to those in need.



## ABOUT CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON (CCDA) *Together, We’re Transforming Lives!*

100 direct and affiliated service locations across 21 Virginia counties and 7 cities

Serves all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance

85 cents of every dollar spent goes to programs and services



Visit our blog and sign up to receive weekly or monthly updates at  
**[www.arlingtoncatholiccharities.com](http://www.arlingtoncatholiccharities.com)**

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Our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 24770.