



The Mission

Care With Dignity ... Life With Hope

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“People count on us...”

One program brings food to 10,000 Long Islanders each month

It's a bright and brisk March morning but the sun won't find Bette Miller, who is tucked away in her office in the rear of a Wyandanch warehouse.

“I'm sorry to keep you but the trucks have to be loaded at eight,” she hurriedly explains. Bette's obvious energy and dedication are crucial to her work. As coordinator of Catholic Charities Commodity and Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) she is responsible for getting free, nutritious foods to more than 10,000 Long Islanders each month. The program is a collaboration of Catholic Charities, the New York State Department of Health, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In its 21 years as a partner, Catholic Charities has distributed more than two million packages of food.

Efficiency is key as Charities' certifiers speak with potential participants to determine if they meet guidelines and then give them a list of food to choose from which can be brought home immediately. This happens at sites in Freeport and Wyandanch or at 70 mobile unit stops made throughout Long Island. There's even a nutritionist to help plan healthy meals. Much of the program was designed with seniors in mind. Bette explains:

“By choosing their foods seniors select what's healthiest for them. It also keeps their dignity intact.

Seniors won't participate in anything they feel insults their pride. Mobile units are vital because seniors don't have the funds or health to travel long distances. Many don't qualify for other food programs. I've seen cases where a meager savings account set aside for funeral expenses prohibits them from receiving food stamps.



Imagine your parent being forced to choose between a dignified burial and feeding themselves. That's the kind of decisions some have to make.”

With seniors making up 95% percent of CSFP cases, the importance of mobile units is evidenced by the shopping carts greeting the truck at a low-income housing facility for seniors. Martha is one of 75 people who await the delivery. Her husband suffered a paralyzing stroke three years ago and she is his caregiver. His small pension covers monthly medical expenses and much of their social security goes to rent. She's left stretching very few dollars and confesses the strain is unbearable. “For people like us, with backs to the wall, this food is a blessing.” Another senior, Gregorio adds, “The economy is down and prices are up. Who's looking out for us?”

All donations received from this issue of The Mission will go to our LI food programs!



Catholic Charities is and so is Bette Miller. “Food is the most basic of needs and people count on us to deliver it.”



Stories of Hope

“I must hear ‘I love you’ a thousand times a day.

I guess that’s why I do it.” Sara Gardner, a 14-year Catholic Charities veteran, explains why she organizes the communal meals at St. Anne’s Gardens, one of Catholic Charities’ housing sites

for low-income seniors. “Everybody needs the human touch and a bit of attention. Senior citizens appreciate everything and are not afraid to show it.”

The concept is simple: each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, 20 to 30 residents gather together in the community room for a meal. While many people take sharing a meal for granted, these seniors know it means much more. For those who don’t have families or whose families are far away, it’s a priceless outlet. Here, they swap stories, discuss current affairs, develop friendships and even get into heated political debates—all of which keeps them healthy and happy. Sara elaborates, “It’s not just about healthy meals. Staying involved and active is as important to their quality of life and sense of well being as anything else.”

Antoinette, now in her 80’s, is a regular attendee who sums it up best. “Nobody likes to eat alone. This is so pleasant that if they had it, I’d be here every day.”



Adjacent to the beautiful property of St. Anne’s Parish in Suffolk County, Catholic Charities has lovely, sunny apartments available for low-income seniors 60 years of age and older. St. Anne’s Gardens offers safe and affordable housing with elevators, laundry on each floor, and picturesque gardens. To apply for yourself or a loved one, please call (516) 733-7076.

“There is not just hunger for a piece of bread, there is hunger for understanding love...”

Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta



On The Front Lines

Parish Social Ministry reports from Long Island’s neighborhoods

Times are indeed hard. Foreclosures, unemployment, and the rising costs of just about everything are taking their toll on Long Island. But there is one thing that we don’t hear much about:

Hope.

That’s what Long Island’s Catholic parishes are keeping alive in our neighborhoods. We know this because 115 Catholic parishes respond to calls for assistance through social outreach programs that provide support right to their own communities. Catholic Charities’ Parish Social Ministry (PSM) partners with them to provide training, technical support, and to connect staff to the social services that can help. It’s a network of care that stretches from Elmont to the East End and it allows us to better understand what the needs are in our neighborhoods. Here are a few notable details from PSM’s recently published report, *Companions on the Journey*:

- **Last year, an estimated 93,000 people were served by PSM/Outreach programs on Long Island.**
- **These PSM offices receive a combined total of approximately 17,087 visits per month. That’s a 20% increase since 2005. Many people come several times a month for assistance.**
- **Our parishes now provide a combined average of 34,000 unique services per month. It could be a bag of food, help applying for food stamps, or guidance to local employment programs.**
- **The most frequently requested assistance is food.**

While the numbers are startling, the response is heartening. It reveals what we at Charities already knew: that we are part of Long Island’s resilient communities, blessed with the incredible generosity of God’s people, who faithfully share their time, talent and treasure.



From Our Mailbag



Meals-On-Wheels delivers!

*A Special Note... 2/1/09
Dear Catholic Charities:
My enclosed check is only a small token of my huge appreciation for supplying my 93 yo Mom with hot meals last winter. I returned home to Fla for Jan-Apr and knew my Mom would hardly eat as she would not cook for herself. She loved your meals, the variety, and*



*Mike's coming. She would wait for him by the window. I would always hear how she ate something different and how good it was. When I returned she actually gained much needed weight - 4 lbs. This winter she cannot stay alone & I am cooking for her. But she still mentions your meals and secretly, I think, she misses them and the visits from your drivers. You certainly are a hard act to follow. Thank you all again for being there when I needed you.
Sincerely,
L*

“Bring them here to me...”

Catholic Charities has felt the impact of the worsening economic crisis. While more and more people are seeking our help, fewer and fewer funds are becoming available for this good work. I'm sure the same can be said for businesses and for many of us in our personal affairs as well. There is undoubtedly a collective anxiety as we wonder how things will ever work out.

As we are well into the Lenten season, I turn to scripture to find some direction in these uneasy times and I was struck by a new awareness as I reread the miracle of the loaves and fishes. You know it well: our Lord took five loaves of bread and two fish and multiplied them — enough to feed 5,000. What I hadn't noticed before was the initial anxiety of his apostles who wanted no part of feeding so many with so little. In fact, they implored Jesus to dispel the crowds and complained, “five loaves and two fish are all we have.” Jesus' response to their anxiety: **“Bring them here to me.”**

How many of us feel like the apostles, overwhelmed by the daunting task of helping others when there seems little enough for our own needs? But Christ knows this and He asks only that we bring whatever we have and lay it at His feet. He will do the rest, just as He did with His apostles.

This Lenten season, let us hold that lesson near to our hearts. It's of no use to complain of our “five loaves and two fish,” but rather, bring what we have to Him and ask for His blessing.

Might I ask that you offer that gift to Catholic Charities? It will be multiplied many times over by the compassion of our volunteers and staff. Keep in mind that every dollar raised by this issue goes directly to our local food programs and that the Feinstein Foundation will match a percentage of those gifts! **Tax deductible donations can be made in the attached envelope or securely by credit card when calling (516) 733-7028.**

Thank you for allowing Catholic Charities to walk among the needy to deliver your love. May you and your family know His love this Lent and share in His joy this Easter!

With gratitude,

Laura A. Cassell

**Laura A. Cassell
CEO, Catholic Charities
Diocese of Rockville Centre**



“There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves.” Matthew 14:16

Responding...

Our special thanks to these friends for helping us provide
Care With Dignity...Life With Hope.

Newsday Charities, a fund of the McCormick Foundation, contributed \$65,000 to Catholic Charities' Christmas Help-A-Family Fund. Their readers' donations were combined with the \$46,582 from **our supporters**, including \$621 from **students of Holy Trinity High School**. One hundred percent of the \$111,582 raised went directly to assisting 2,301 local individuals with food, clothing, medical bills, and even toys for little ones.

Brown Delivers! The Women's Leadership Development Group of UPS on Long Island tapped the generosity and holiday spirit of their co-workers to raise more than \$5,000 and deliver Christmas gifts to children in Catholic Charities' Teaching Family Homes.

The Emerald Association of Long Island (right) graciously presented Catholic Charities with a check for \$15,000 in keeping with their tradition of providing financial aid to programs for dependent children. Pictured from left are Michael Walsh, past president of the Association, Brendan Cahalan, vice president, Bishop Murphy, Marguerite Peck, president, and Laura Cassell, CEO of Catholic Charities.

King Kullen Supermarkets continued its support for Long Island's children with a gift of \$1,000 to our Gift of Reading program, which provides new books to each child in our Commodity and Supplemental Food Program. King Kullen's ongoing support for this program now totals more than \$12,000.



Photo by John M. Kirrane

The Feinstein Foundation will match a percentage of any funds raised for Catholic Charities' food programs between March 1st and April 30th. Please consider a gift through the envelope provided in this *Mission*.

AROUND and ABOUT

Members of the **Sacred Heart Youth Group** in Cutchogue took part in a recent visit to the developmentally disabled adults living in Catholic Charities' Caritas House in Aquebogue. After sharing a buffet lunch, the teens helped create "memory books," personalized keepsakes that document the life story of each resident.

Congratulations to these Catholic Charities staff members:

- **Paul Engelhart**, our Chief Operating Officer, on receiving the Molloy College Caritas medal for giving "voice to the voiceless, knowledge to the uneducated, and strength to those in need."
- **Kathy Ayers-Lanzillotta** for having been appointed by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) to co-chair a new task force on the residential needs of those

recovering from chemical dependency. Ms. Ayers-Lanzillotta also led the recent formation of the New York State Coalition of Addiction Crisis Centers.

- **Carmen Maquilon**, our Director of Immigrant Services, was honored by the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) for her 15 years of service to the immigrant community on Long Island. Ms. Maquilon also plays leadership roles in the New York Immigration Coalition, the Long Island Immigrant Alliance, and Long Island Wins.



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