

# CC Works

A Catholic Charities Quarterly

## Vincent W. Colonno Named CEO



In July of this year, Vincent W. Colonno joined Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany as Chief Executive Officer. Vince began his career with the county Department of Social Services in 1974, and he served for more than 37 years in positions of increasing responsibility in Albany County's social services delivery system. He returned to the department as Commissioner after serving as Commissioner of the Albany County Department for Aging since 2000. In these 37 years of progressively responsible positions in these agencies, he oversaw planning, implementing, directing, and evaluating the delivery of community and human services programs.

"Vince Colonno recognizes that the need for robust services does not shrink when the economy falters, and he has shown the ability and commitment to make difficult decisions and the creative adjustments we need to continue delivering services in an era of ongoing challenges to our resources," said John Murray, President and CEO of Rose & Kiernan, Inc. and President of the Board of Trustees of Catholic Charities.

Bishop Howard Hubbard echoed those thoughts adding that "Vince Colonno has been a tremendous and valuable asset since he took over the reins at Catholic Charities. He was able to hit the ground running as soon as he arrived. As a result, those who rely on Catholic Charities for so many vital services have already greatly benefitted from his leadership. We feel quite blessed to have him with us."

When asked about the opportunities and the challenges that lie ahead, Vince said, "I am very excited and grateful to have the honor and what I consider the privilege to lead the Catholic Charities family. These are very difficult times for those desiring our services. Resources are diminishing and the need for our services is increasing. Therefore, it is imperative to do whatever we can to provide to those in need, the necessities that will assist them in attaining a self-sufficient lifestyle. We can accomplish this by thinking outside the box and collaborating with our community partners and governmental agencies to design programs that will take advantage of the existing resources. It won't be easy. However, I am confident we can do this because of our dedicated Catholic Charities staff and volunteers. Their enthusiasm and commitment to our programs and the people we serve are unmatched. It is because of this dedication that we will continue to find ways to serve our poor and most vulnerable, in the most effective and efficient manner."

## Sharing Our Stories After Hurricane Irene

My name is Carol Lennon and I am a Kinship Caseworker for Catholic Charities of Schoharie County. I, like countless others, read or watched TV broadcasts about the Louisiana disaster known as "Katrina." I felt a pull at my heartstrings for the victims and at that time I thought I understood. Today, I can say with confidence that "Only NOW do I truly understand."

On day One, after Irene, as a co-worker and I drove to the shelter at the Cobleskill-Richmondville Middle School I wondered "What might this experience be like and what would I have to offer?"

As I walked the school's halls that in just a few weeks should be filled with laughing scurrying children I found instead, aimlessly wandering bodies that were once secure, confident individuals. Male or female, gender made no difference, had the look of shock on their faces, and it was unsettling to me. There was a boy in his pajamas waiting at the makeshift nurse's station, his face dazed and confused seemed to say, "How did this happen and what are we going to do now?"

The gym was filled with volunteers setting up beds in a homey fashion as best they could. Colorful quilts, blankets, cots and chairs were all orchestrated in rows. Children try to play games with flood victims to pass the time, all the while, waiting to find out about other loved ones, their pets or when they could return home. I noticed that it was particularly hard for the elderly to adapt to the loss of their routines. Some were in wheelchairs and some with oxygen tanks. One elderly man, who had an arm cast, struggled to assist his wife.

The student lunch room now housed the National Guard trying to quickly eat and get back to duty, and flood victims with volunteers comforting and servicing them when able. The staff were dishing out as much food as they were able to prepare and it was eaten as fast as they could make it.



Aftermath of flooding at Schoharie County CMS on Main Street in Schoharie

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# Board of Trustees Spotlight – Ken Raymond

Ken Raymond, who was born at the former Brady Maternity Hospital which is now part of the Diocesan Pastoral Center, has been a member of the Board of Trustees for more than five years. Ken



is the CEO of Prime Companies. Ken and his wife Pat have been married for 32 years and are the parents of Mary Ann, Michelle and Michael, all graduates of Siena College. Ken and Pat are looking forward to being parents of the bride to their daughter Michelle when she gets married this November.

Throughout his many years of service on the Board of Trustees, Ken has been a member of the executive committee and the housing committee. Ken's most notable accomplishments and contributions that he has made to Catholic Charities can be seen on the campus of Camp Scully where he has spearheaded the construction and completion of the Director's cabin and the Main Staff cabin. More recently, Ken has launched a major project at camp, namely the construction of the Dining Hall which will be dedicated in memory of Sister Maureen Joyce and will serve as the centerpiece of the 20 acre campground. Ken stated that dealing with the loss of Sister Maureen has been very difficult for him and other Board Members. He said that Sister Maureen continues to inspire him to continue the work that he began under her leadership. One of his priorities is to finish the capital improvements that were designed for Camp Scully.

In addition to providing his expertise and leadership in the Catholic Charities community, Ken was involved in correcting structural problems at the Sunnyside Center and Lwanga House, along with other trustees. Ken looks forward to working with new CEO Vince Colonna and his fellow Board Members, as they continue the legacy begun by Sister Maureen. **By Marge Mineau**

## Food? Medical Expenses? Which to Pay? N.O.E.P. Can Help

With the leaves falling all around us and the cold starting to creep into our bones, it is hard to remember how the beginning of the summer felt. For most families it is a time to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables from the farmers market, maybe a trip to pick your own strawberries or blueberries and of course, summer is the season to enjoy family picnics and barbeques with friends. But this was not how the beginning of the summer looked for a couple in Columbia and Greene Counties this year. The husband had been temporarily laid off. His wife was battling stage IV cancer and the medical costs were just more than the couple could handle. So on a daily basis they had to decide whether or not to buy food or pay for medical expenses. Luckily, the couple was referred to Catholic Charities of Columbia and Greene Counties.

Since July 1, 2011 the agency operates the Nutrition and Outreach Education Program (NOEP) in both Columbia and Greene Counties. Staff promotes food stamps, performs "pre-screenings" for potential program eligibility, helps clients applying for and maintaining food stamp benefits, and advocates for individuals as they navigate the food stamp system. Catholic Charities of Herkimer County and Catholic Charities Schenectady Senior Services provide the same services to the residents in their particular county.

Lynette Livermore, NOEP Coordinator, helped the couple to fill out paper work and accompanied them to the Department of Social Services (DSS). With Lynette's help the couple was eligible to receive emergency food stamps by receiving their food stamp card right away at DSS. In addition the staff person connected them with local food pantries and made a referral to the local HEAP Program.

This example unfortunately is not an exception in the work of the NOEP staff. Due to the current economic situation, more and more people are unable to afford to buy the food their families need. In the past, Catholic Charities of Herkimer County received an average of 35 food stamps call a month. That average has increased to 55 calls during the last quarter, including 138 during one recent month. Between July and September 2011 Catholic Charities Schenectady Senior Services assisted 177 households with paper work including food stamp applications, recertification and change forms. Due to the flooding, the agency also assisted 12 households in obtaining replacement benefits.

The Nutrition Outreach and Education Program staff has not only seen a rise in number but also a change in demographics. All three counties have seen an increase in seniors who after many years of work have to rely on Social Security to meet their needs. With an increase in living expenses, gas, and taxes, many struggle to pay for food. Other examples of clients served include a recent Siena graduate who was the provider for his wife and newborn child and who could not find work immediately after graduation. His job at a pizza parlor did not meet their expenses and food stamps helped them through a couple of rough months before he was able to find a permanent job in his field of study.

A couple of weeks ago Lynette received a call from a gentleman she had helped in early summer. Not only did he thank her, but he also told her, that his employer called him back to work which certainly made it easier to meet the couple's expenses.

If you think you or somebody you know has questions about food stamps, you can reach the Catholic Charities Nutrition and Outreach Education Programs at the following numbers:

Herkimer County: 315-894-9917

Schenectady County: 518-372-5667

Columbia and Greene Counties: 518-828-8660 **By Grit Bernhardt**

**Don Berens finishing up his 2nd cycling tour for the benefit of Catholic Charities Emergency Services. Don biked 1,600-miles from Portland, Maine to Daytona Beach, Florida. Don is pictured here in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida.**



# Opportunities to Provide Help to Those in Need During the Holidays

The hustle and bustle of the holidays are upon us, that hectic time between Thanksgiving and New Years. For some, this holiday means doing a little bit extra for someone in need, but you may ask yourself, "How can I assist this holiday season?" Well, Catholic Charities has the answer to make your holidays and that of others a little brighter.

The 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of Trees sponsored by Catholic Charities of Saratoga, Warren & Washington Counties will take place from November 30<sup>th</sup> to December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Saratoga Springs City Center. Proceeds from the event will assist the agency in providing services to individuals and families in the tri-county area. *For more information please call (518) 587-5000.*

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, Catholic Charities of Columbia/Greene Counties is hosting a "Community welcoming Community event" called the "Moveable Feast". It is an evening of great food and fun in support of the Kinship Families Program. For \$75.00 a person, individuals, couples, and groups can enjoy an evening that includes cocktails and hor d'oeuvres, followed by a full dinner. All guests start at one residence for the Cocktail Party and then are given instructions to the next home where all will enjoy a gourmet meal prepared especially for them. *For reservations, please call Joanne Knauss at 392-1529.*

With the help of parishioners, community members and residents, Catholic Charities of Columbia/Greene Counties will also be distributing Christmas food baskets as well as Holiday gifts through the Adopt-a-Family program. Donations of food as well as the "adoption" of a family or child for gifts are needed. *Contact Catholic Charities of Columbia/Greene Counties for more information at 518-828-8660.*

Many of Catholic Charities AIDS Services' clients have limited, fixed incomes, and struggle to cover their family's basic needs. Donors can adopt a family or individual, purchase personal items like socks and undergarments in all sizes, purchase sheets and blankets in sizes from twin to king or provide a cash donation and we'll do the shopping for you. *Please call Lillian Lasher at (518) 449-3581 x100, or email her at [lillianl@ccalbany.org](mailto:lillianl@ccalbany.org).*

The Holiday Help Program at Community Maternity Services provides an opportunity to extend hope to families by allowing them to request items that may not be necessarily related to meeting basic needs. *If you would like to join our "community of angels" and contribute to helping a child or family in need this holiday season, please contact either*



**A previous award winner from the Festival of Trees to benefit Saratoga, Warren & Washington Counties**

*Michelle Schwenzfeier or Diann Ford-Lewis at 482-8836.*

In the summer of 2011 Camp Scully, located on Snyder's Lake in North Greenbush, provided 320 underprivileged children a great opportunity to experience the fun and excitement of going to camp. Consider a monetary gift this holiday season to assure that a child will be able to attend camp next summer, even though their family cannot afford to send them. *Contact Colin Stewart at (518) 453-6650.*

Diocesan Housing, Services & Property Management offers several opportunities for holiday giving. Dayhaven in Schenectady needs volunteers to make the holidays brighter for the seniors with memory impairments and other disabilities served by our adult day services program. Join us for holiday decorating, craft activities, dancing, singing or serving refreshments at our holiday parties. Catholic Charities Meals on Wheels in Schenectady needs volunteers to deliver Christmas meals to clients throughout the county. Volunteers are needed to assist in the meal preparation and

to join guests for Christmas meals at the Catholic Charities Housing Offices homeless shelters for men and women. Volunteers are also needed for gift sorting/wrapping for our homeless housing programs in Albany the week before Christmas. Gift cards, in small denominations, for grocery stores, discount stores (e.g. Target, Wal-mart), pharmacies, and Stewart's Shops are requested to provide gifts and to help fund holiday meals and parties for the families and individuals served by our Senior Housing, Senior Services, Homeless Housing and Refugee Services Programs. Winter coats, hats, scarves, gloves, boots, children's bedding, and toys are also requested to provide gifts for families in our homeless housing program. *Contact Kathleen at Diocesan Housing, Services and Property Management for more information on any housing volunteer opportunities listed above at (518) 459-0183 or [idek@rcda.org](mailto:idek@rcda.org).*

Hilltowns Community Resource Center is looking for food for their Christmas baskets, toys and new clothes for children and teens. HCRC will also be providing Christmas baskets for seniors. The location will be at the Reformed Church in Westerlo. *For more information please call Kathleen Speck at 797-5256.*

The Consens-U Holiday Store will be open December 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> at St. John's Parish Center at the corner of East and Herrick Streets in Rensselaer for residents in Rensselaer County. Items needed include new items of socks, undergarments and pajamas for infants to age 17, hoodies for teens, board games for

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# Anne Ogden Named Executive Director of Disabilities Services



In 1998, Anne Ogden was hired as the Director of Residential Services at Catholic Charities Disabilities Services (CCDS). At the time, she made a two year commitment. Two promotions and thirteen years later, Anne was named the Executive Director of the agency on April 1, 2011. Anne is only the second Executive Director CCDS has ever had since its' inception in 1984. She replaced Gary Siegel who retired after 28 years.

Anne is a LMSW graduate from the University at Albany School of Social Work and also from Skidmore College with a Bachelors Degree in Psychology. Like many executives in the field of developmental disabilities, Anne began her career as a direct support professional and diligently worked her way up the management ladder. However, the key principle Anne began with has stayed with her throughout her entire career: *"What is best for the individual being served."* All of Anne's decisions are based on this simple, yet sometimes forgotten, edict. Anne has a

deep passion to meet the needs of the individual in a way that is meaningful to them and their families. This also carries over to the people who work for the agency. She doesn't always look at why the individual employee failed, but rather how the agency, who is charged with supporting them, may have failed too and what we can do together to make corrections. These unique perspectives make CCDS a quality agency that provides excellent services. Anne fully understands that a great workforce equates to great services.

In addition to her responsibility at CCDS, Anne also serves as the Chairperson for the New York State Catholic Conference Council of Catholic Charities Directors Developmental Disabilities Committee. She is active in the state, national, and international Prader-Willi Syndrome Associations, and the New York State Association for Community Residential Agencies and various other provider associations and advocacy groups. Outside of work Anne serves on the Committee for Special Education in the Scotia-Glenville School District.

Anne and her husband of nineteen years, Darren, have two sons, Keith (10) and Jared (8). She is also a proud "soccer mom". The Ogdens live in Scotia. **By Jeff Covington**

# Deborah Damm O'Brien Named to State Committee Dealing With Medicaid & Affordable Housing



Deborah Damm O'Brien, Executive Director of Catholic Charities and Diocesan Agencies, operating emergency and permanent housing for formerly homeless individuals and families and housing communities for seniors has been appointed to the State Medicaid Redesign Team's Workgroup on Affordable Housing. The workgroup will develop a multi-year statewide plan for increasing access to

affordable housing, so that New York State Medicaid beneficiaries are not forced into institutional settings because

they cannot access affordable housing. At the same time, this workgroup will also discuss assisted living redesign, a topic which has long been of concern to Catholic Charities because of our commitment to affordable housing for very low income seniors. The workgroup includes representatives from throughout New York State from housing and supportive services providers, housing advocates, and consumers.

Catholic Charities and the Diocese of Albany have a significant commitment to developing and operating affordable housing throughout the Diocese. Our housing agencies operate 38 units of emergency shelter, 164 units of permanent single room occupancy housing, 21 apartments for families, and over 1000 units of senior housing, both affordable and market rate. Our housing is located in five counties within our Diocese.

## Opportunities to Provide Help to Those in Need During the Holidays

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children ages 8 to 17 and assorted toys for all ages. *For more information please contact Colleen Pidgeon at 463-8571.*

The Catholic Charities Christmas Program for Albany County is looking for new unwrapped toys, books and games for children aged newborn to age 17 or send a monetary donation and we will do the shopping for you. *For more information please call Anne Patnode at 453-6650.*

The Center City Food Pantry in Albany, the Roarke Center and the North Central Troy Food Pantry both in Troy are providing Christmas food baskets for their clients and are looking for food and/or monetary donations. *For more*

*information please call Anne Patnode at 453-6650.*

The Wheels and Ways to Work Program accepts donated vehicles to help working parents in our family car loan program. All donations are considered a charitable contribution, and are therefore tax deductible. *To donate a vehicle, contact (518) 346-3861 and ask for Michelle Abel.*

It is through the generosity of you, your gifts of time, talent and treasure, that these agencies will be able to give a little bit of brightness to those in need this holiday season. Catholic Charities is grateful for whatever you can do.

# Grant Awards

- **Catholic Charities Caregivers Support Services** – Adopt US Kids - Respite Program - \$5,000
- **Catholic Charities** – Walmart Foundation - Wheels and Ways to Work Program - \$50,000
- **Catholic Charities of Columbia & Greene Counties** – Rheinstrom Hill Community Foundation - Emergency Assistance Program - \$2,000
- **Community Maternity Services** – SEFCU - \$10,000
- **Catholic Charities of Fulton & Montgomery Counties** – NYS Office of Children and Family Services - Family Resource Center - \$38,750
- **Catholic Charities of Herkimer County** – Mary Kay Foundation - Domestic Violence Program - \$20,000
- **Catholic Charities Housing Office** – The Howard and Bush Foundation - St Peter's Residence in Troy - \$10,000

## Harvest of Giving Campaign



Since 1917 Catholic Charities has helped the less fortunate among us in the 14 agencies and 14 counties that we serve. The need has never been so great as it is this year. Our Harvest of Giving Campaign allows you the opportunity to generously donate so that we can serve all those that need our help. Last year over 123,000 people reached out to Catholic Charities and we were able to be there for them through your monetary support of the Harvest of Giving Campaign. Please send your donation to Catholic Charities, 40 North Main Avenue, Albany, New York 12203 or donate securely on-line at [www.ccrda.org](http://www.ccrda.org).

## Sharing Our Stories After Hurricane Irene

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Dogs and cats were kept in cages in a separate area and their owners worried over their pets' safety and comfort. The entire scene was almost too much to take in.

Then I met Millie....

Millie was somewhere in her eighties, although she will only admit that if you tell her how great she looks; she is slight of build, with curly gray hair that she wears atop her head with a hairband. The twinkle in her eye seemed diminished at times, but never really disappeared. Millie had a few simple needs; she wanted to see her preacher, she worried about her cat's safety, and wanted someone to feed him. Mostly, she entertained the troops. She smiled and sang and told the most wondrous stories of her youth. She had been in the theater and she spoke as if her every word was a great secret she was letting you in on. I was hooked from our first conversation. She called me and anyone else "baby." I would bring her something to wear and she would turn it into a grand fashion show just for her. She would direct me to hold up an article of clothing saying "Yes, yes I like that or No Baby, that's not me take it back" I began to look for Millie each time I worked and she was easy to find as someone always knew exactly where she was. She cried when they told her that her return to home had been postponed a day. And said "Please stay with me, don't leave me" She laughed when we told her that the 20 something young man who was volunteering had taken a shine to her. So she called him over to ask his age and then confided that "He is cute but way too young". Millie kept everyone's spirits up. You could ask anyone, volunteers or victims alike and they knew who Millie was. She taught others with style and grace to make the best of a bad situation and that things will be ok if you just have some faith and trust.

So my contribution became listening and assisting anywhere I could, but Millie's contribution was by far and away much sweeter. She was the little light of hope that all could see during one of the darkest of times for our community.

Another little light of hope, was six-year old Maya Rivers of East Greenbush, who, after watching on television how people were suffering with their losses due to the vast flooding, wanted to donate her allowance to Catholic Charities to help.

As a result she was asked to come in and present her funds directly to Bishop Howard J. Hubbard and Vincent W. Colonno, CEO of Catholic Charities.

In expressing his appreciation to her, Mr. Colonno noted that this contribution demonstrates how even a young child can recognize the need that so many people are now facing. "It is donations such as this one that allows Catholic Charities to continue to provide so many vital disaster relief services."

Bishop Hubbard noted that, "Once again these donations from our community come pouring in whenever and wherever disaster strikes. Whether due to tsunamis or earthquakes halfway around the world, or hurricanes and tropical storms here at home, the people of the Albany Diocese can always be depended upon for their deep compassion and their incredible generosity."

"Especially impressive in response to the present disaster," he said, "is the number of parishioners, along with priests, parishes and Catholic Charities staff all involved in assisting victims directly."

Donations from all sources have approached \$275,000 to help those impacted by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. Catholic Charities has been able to provide assistance including food, housing, medicine, clothing and other of life's necessities throughout the storm recovery effort.

Next steps will include strategizing with our Community Partners in order to catalog needs and design an appropriate plan of intervention, which ultimately will allow us to use the resources dedicated specifically to this cause.

If you would like to make a secure on-line monetary donation, where 100% of all monies raised will go to the areas impacted, please go to [www.ccrda.org](http://www.ccrda.org). If you would like to mail in a donation, make your check payable to Catholic Charities-Irene Relief, 40 North Main Avenue, Albany, NY 12203.

**By Carol Lennon & Ken Goldfarb**



From L-R Catholic Charities CEO Vincent W. Colonno, Maya's Mother Laura White-Rivers and sister Shelby, Maya Rivers and Bishop Howard Hubbard

## DID YOU KNOW?

The FURNITURE WAREHOUSE, run by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany, serves hundreds of families throughout the Capital Region and surrounding counties each year who do not have the funds to purchase necessary household items for their apartments. Almost all the furniture is donated by individuals and families looking to downsize or who would like their gently used furniture to assist a needy family. To donate, just call Catholic Charities at 453-6650.

## CC Works

A Catholic Charities quarterly committed to active witness

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# Catholic Charities Disabilities Services Hosts 4<sup>TH</sup> Annual Oktoberfest

*"There's an old saying, "All dressed up and no place to go". That certainly was not the story recently as people were dressed up and had a nice event to go to. However, imagine being all dressed up, having a place to go; but no one to communicate with? That was the circumstance of one young man. He wore a nice suit and tie along with a big smile. After brunch, his brother approached me wondering if there was someone who communicated using sign language. His brother had a hearing impairment and that was the way he communicated, and he had no one to talk to. He recently began receiving MSC services from Catholic Charities Disabilities Services (CCDS). I sent people out searching for someone. We quickly found a young woman we serve who communicates through sign language. For almost the entire rest of the event, these two talked up a storm. The young man is supported by his older brother and the young woman is supported by her Community Supports Professional. Upon leaving, the brother thanked me for making the connection, he learned a lot about the services his brother may be eligible for and his brother had made a friend."*



Cutting the rug at the 4th annual CCDS Oktoberfest

On Sunday, October 2, 2011, approximately 250 individuals with developmental disabilities, the staff who offer them support, and their families gathered at the Fourth Annual CCDS Oktoberfest. It is an annual event of brunch and dancing for the individuals served by Disabilities Services. The tables were decorated with centerpieces created by individuals who are served by the agency.

Another highlight of the event was that an individual we serve was able to DJ the event for an hour under the tutelage of the main DJ. The look of accomplishment and sheer joy on his face once he finished was indescribable.

CCDS has faced unprecedented budget cuts this fiscal year. However, the leadership team was firmly committed to hosting this event due to the deep meaning it has to those we serve and their families. It meant having to do without other things during the year, but the commitment was shared by all.

Oktoberfest 2011 was a huge success and speaks to the character and culture of Catholic Charities Disabilities Services. **By Jeff Covington**

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