

## A Word From the CEO



Sister Betsy Van Deusen, CSJ

Hello,  
In the midst of this Advent season, I need only look around to see just how blessed we at Catholic Charities truly are. I am grateful to have been called to serve in this ministry, and I feel blessed to

spend this time surrounded by my Catholic Charities family.

I recognize that the holidays can be difficult for many of our neighbors. For some, the expectation of gift giving can add undue financial stress. For others, social isolation and loneliness are felt even more acutely in the dark winter months.

That's why, at Catholic Charities, our staff and volunteers continue to reach out and provide services across the Diocese. Our food

pantries are prepping special holiday baskets for the families we serve. Our Aging Life Services Program is working with older adults in Columbia and Otsego counties to see their needs are addressed, while our Emergency Assistance Programs continue to provide assistance to our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet as a result of inflation and other unexpected costs.

One thing is clear: our neighbors need us this Christmas. And thanks to your help and support, we here at Catholic Charities are blessed to be in a position to help.

I hope you enjoy reading more about the work of Catholic Charities in your communities, and know that we are so grateful for your support—both during the holiday season and throughout the year!

In Peace and gratitude,

*Sr. Betsy Van Deusen, CSJ*

## In This Issue



Our pantry in Montgomery County preps for the holidays with food baskets for families



Marlene Hildenbrandt sits down to discuss Catholic Charities' Aging Life Services Program



A life remembered:  
Honorable Judge Leonard  
A. Weiss

# Board Member Profile

By Jason Carnegie



**Ann Dejnozka** comes from a large Italian family where Catholic faith and family ties were each a formative part of her childhood. Growing up, she fondly remembers the big Sunday dinners at her grandmother's house, surrounded by loved ones. Love of family and religious values ultimately

motivated Ann to give back to her community at large and lead her to inspire others to do the same.

After graduating from Gloversville High School, she attended Siena College where she received a degree in Accounting. Ann continued her education at the University of Albany, where she graduated with a Master's Degree in Organizational Communication. With her degree in hand, Ann would spend the next three decades of her career in the world of philanthropy and development. Beginning at Siena College, Ann went on to work for Albany Medical Center and Skidmore College prior to joining her current position at Emma Willard School as the Head of Advancement.

After learning more about the mission and work of Catholic Charities, Ann knew she wanted to give back. Following a discussion with Ken Raymond, Board president, and Bill McGoldrick, fellow board member. She knew this role was exactly what she was looking for: an opportunity to give back to the community at large. Ann feels philanthropy—and inspiring philanthropy—in support of the mission of Catholic Charities is her greatest motivator.

*"My hope is that we continue to engage with community leaders, volunteers and with donors to give back and deepen the resource pool that allows us to do this good work,"* said Ann.

Ann understands that meeting financial needs as funds get low can be difficult, but truly believes inviting the community into the mission of Catholic Charities can inspire them to give back. When they see the difference they can make firsthand, they'll not only support the community, but will feel wonderful doing so.

Now one year in, Ann celebrates the Board's integrity and thoughtful decision making. She feels the Board's understanding and appreciation of the many facets of Catholic Charities are true assets to the organization.

# Pantry Prepares for Busy Holiday Season

By Tom Schwendler



Above: Alice Burgado readies bags for the Thanksgiving food drive, which served dozens of local families.

Some 50 families in Montgomery County will receive Thanksgiving food baskets this year as part of an annual holiday food distribution effort led by Catholic Charities of Fulton & Montgomery Counties.

"Our volunteers have just finished putting the food baskets together," says Catholic Charities' Alice Burgado who has been involved in the food drive for more than three decades.

Each basket features a variety of non-perishable food items as well as a gift card for a turkey that can be redeemed at an area Price Chopper/Market 32. Families are scheduled to pick up the baskets at Catholic Charities' food pantry in Amsterdam during the week of November 14. After that, the pantry staff and volunteers prepare for a Christmas food basket distribution for approximately 50 families on December 15.

In addition to the holiday food distributions, Catholic Charities serves

an average of about 121 households a month from its pantry which is open year-round three days a week (Mondays, 9am-noon, Wednesdays, 12-3pm, and Thursdays, 1-4pm).

"The food pantry provides a three-day supply of emergency food for individuals and families who temporarily lack the resources to purchase food," says Burgado. "Our food pantry is client choice, which allows clients to choose what food they are receiving."

Mass distributions of food or drive throughs are held the third Thursday of each month from April through October.

Catholic Charities of Fulton and Montgomery Counties solicits monetary donations each year as part

of an advertising campaign in the Amsterdam Recorder and welcomes contributions of food at its pantry located at 1 Kimball St., Amsterdam, NY 12010. Non-perishable food items needed include: peanut butter, jelly, pasta and jar sauces, tuna, soups, canned vegetables, cooking oil as well as household items such as laundry detergent.

Catholic Charities of Fulton and Montgomery Counties is a multi-service agency that meets the needs of the entire community. We recognize the inherent value of human life and the need for individuals to continually strive towards their potential.

For more information, visit: [www.catholiccharitiesfmc.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesfmc.org)

## Aging Life Services

By Jack Karl



Marlene Hildenbrandt

Marlene Hildenbrandt, Executive Director of Catholic Charities Senior & Caregiver Support Services, sat down with our team to talk a bit about Aging Life Services.

Aging Life Services, a program of Catholic Charities Senior & Caregiver Support Services in Columbia and

Otsego Counties, is designed to support older adults within the homes and communities of their choosing. Through the Aging Life Services program, Catholic Charities helps older adults to maintain the best possible quality of life as they age.

"What do I do? I never expected to be here... Suddenly, I can't pay my heating bills and I've always been able to, how do I get those services? How do I get food stamps? How do I look into other living arrangements?" —These are just a handful of the questions facing older adults today, according to Marlene, who emphasized a strong need for elder care management services in our region.

When our older neighbors and friends hit a point of crisis, Catholic Charities has resources to support them in their time of need. The older adult population we serve often faces

non-medical, yet essential needs that require additional services and attention.

To fill the gaps in case-management staffing, and to serve more people, the Aging Life Services Program relies on volunteers. These volunteers lend a hand by transporting clients to medical appointments, assisting with grocery shopping and other small but vital tasks that allow people to remain in their homes as they age.

It's not just tasks and errands: our volunteers also make friendly calls and visits to older adults.

"One volunteer has been calling this woman for nearly three years now," said Marlene. "The client really enjoys the calls and whenever she calls, they have a nice conversation together."

Through the Aging Life Services Program, Catholic Charities works to support every aspect of our client's lives within a broad scope of services, whether addressing isolation, food insecurity, or medical needs.

"There's a component of the Aging life model that is really about looking at the whole person. So we want to look at every aspect of the person's life and that doesn't have to just be when they're in crisis," explained Marlene.

Kathleen Scanlon, an Elder Care Manager with Aging Life Services, is constantly reminded of the everyday value of her work.

"My Aging Life Services clients have told me that they are appreciative of having someone who listens to them and takes action to resolve their concerns. Often I find that clients are without a person who looks at the 'Big Picture' of their lives. Because of my familiarity with concerns facing older adults and my knowledge of available resources, I am often able to navigate to a resolution more efficiently."

Here at Catholic Charities we are proud to continue to look at the big picture, as we move towards better resolutions in the lives of every older adult we serve.



Photo: Canva.com



# Being an anchor in a time of crisis

By Grit Carotenuto



Many of our neighbors have to work more than one job to make ends meet. Even with a second and sometimes a third job, too many are just one setback away from not being able to pay their monthly bills. A couple of sick days might mean a reduced paycheck that month, while emergencies like a flat tire or broken-down car might add another bill to the list. Now, a decision must be made: do I pay the utility bill, the rent, or the co-payments at the pediatrician?

Clients who reach out to our Emergency Assistance Programs across the Diocese often face these stressors and are already in crisis when they come to our doors. Our dedicated Community Navigators meet with them first to assess the situation. As part of this assessment, staff

will create a household budget with the client to determine if the household might qualify for certain benefits such as SNAP and/or HEAP (the Home Energy Assistance Program). Catholic Charities staff can directly help with the application process or they may refer the client to the appropriate community resources. Community Navigators will also make suggestions around saving opportunities, such as utilizing a local food pantry to reduce meal-related costs.

Once this assessment has been completed, staff will determine if direct financial assistance will be beneficial to the client. For example, Catholic Charities might make an initial payment to a utility company to prevent a shut off. Once immediate needs have been addressed, staff

will set up a monthly payment plan to help the client catch up on outstanding balances. Other times, Catholic Charities might provide assistance for an ID card, so a client can apply for benefits at their local DSS. In all cases, funds will be directly sent to the receiver such as a landlord.

Catholic Charities has strong relationships with other community partners, including other nonprofits and religious organizations. Oftentimes the funds needed to help a client are shared between multiple agencies. This allows each organization to stretch their financial resources and help as many people as possible.

Within a three-month time period, the Community Navigator will follow up with each client to discern if the assistance provided met the need of the client. For example, did the payment to the utility company and payment plan prevent a shut off notice? A review of these follow up calls show that **more than 90% of clients report that their needs have been met**. If any referrals were helpful to the client or if any additional support is needed, staff will have access to this information to best serve clients' needs in the future.

# Invest Monthly, Impact Daily

Becoming a monthly donor in our Community Sustainer program is the easiest & most effective way to ensure our community's most vulnerable individuals and families receive a helping hand when they need us most.



## Hunger

**\$10** a month feeds morning snacks to 30 children at Sunnyside Childcare Center.



## Health

**\$25** a month helps four people with disabilities find a job through coaching and support.



## Families

**\$150** a month purchases baby formula for a mother and infant in poverty for a year



## Housing

**\$250** a month covers the cost of a security deposit and first month's rent for a family of four moving from shelter to their own home.



## Emergency Assistance

**\$100** per month keeps the house warm for 10 families who have fallen behind on their energy bill.



## Community Outreach

**\$50** per month provides case management to neighbors in our LEAD Program.



Scan to donate or text **FallHelp** to **41444** to join the Community Sustainer monthly giving program.



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A Catholic Charities Quarterly

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