

## A Word From the CEO



Hello, Catholic Charities Family and Friends! I am delighted to have been chosen to serve in the ministry of CEO for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany and excited for the work ahead.

Sister Betsy Van Deusen, CSJ As I enter into this ministry, the world is a different place and it seems that there is still more to come: the war in Ukraine, inflation, gas prices, mass shootings, and a diminished food supply are all factors in this continuing malaise. Yet, at Catholic Charities, our staff and volunteers continue to offer kindness and love by feeding (through our pantries, soup kitchens, CC MOVE and Meals on Wheels), housing (in our shelters, residences, apartments), counseling, caring, encouraging and simply being a beacon of hope for all those who come to us for help. I am excited to share their work with you through this newsletter.

Why do we do it? We are called to by our Mission – “committed to active witness on behalf of the Scriptural values of mercy and justice... respond to all persons regardless of race, creed or lifestyle, with special emphasis on the economically poor and vulnerable.”

We may be motivated by different things. Some are kind because we were taught to be as children; others because of kindness done to us; still others are kind for religious or humanitarian reasons. The bottom line is that we need more kindness in the world.

Remember: hand in hand with kindness is love. Not romantic love, but love of community. And kindness and love, no matter the motivation can and will change the world. So whatever your motivation, thank you and let's keep being kind.

Peace in your day!

*Sr. Betsy*

## In This Issue



Get to know CEO Sister Betsy Van Deusen, CSJ



Learn more about Catholic Charities' Summer Lunch Program in Oneonta



Roger and Maria Markovics give back in a unique way

# Board Member Profile

By Jason Carnegie



**Christopher Y. Wright**

Born and raised in Philadelphia, PA, Christopher Y. Wright grew up in a large family. As the youngest of 9, Chris learned the importance of family and religion early on and was instilled with compassion towards others. Living in an underserved neighborhood, Chris saw first-hand the significance charity could have on a community and knew he wanted to help others as well.

Residing in Ballston Spa, Chris has 5 children and is currently a licensed associate real estate broker and department head with Coldwell Banker Prime Properties. Along with selling real estate, Chris assists with recruiting, training, and agent development. Chris graduated from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia with a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice prior to joining the Navy in communications for 10 years from 1984 to 1994.

Chris joined the Catholic Charities Board following a discussion with Ken Raymond, founder of Prime Companies and Coldwell Banker Prime Properties. Chris hoped this opportunity would be a great way to give back to his community at large as he was previously involved in social change and community action boards.

*"I like the ways that Catholic Charities gives back to the community by helping the poor, mainly through avenues of food, clothing, and shelter." Chris said, "It feels good to work with an organization who tirelessly works every day to make our world a better place with Christian values."*

Reflecting on his childhood, Chris became particularly drawn to the issues of housing and shelter for those in need after seeing individuals struggle first hand.

Chris acknowledges the challenges that Catholic Charities faces. He notes that we are in a polarizing time with everyone having their own platform. This, he notes, can make it difficult for organizations like Catholic Charities, as they ensure all voices are heard and represented.

Though there are challenges, Chris finds himself hopeful and optimistic for the future. *"My hopes are that our mission is better known. Many people are not aware of the good work we do as an organization. I would love to see more people get onboard and support the cause."*

## Summer Gallery



**Pictured Above: (From Top)** Bench dedication honors domestic violence survivors in Montgomery County. | Honoree Dr. Josh Lynch and Executive Director Candace Ellis at Care Coordination Services' Garden Party. | St. Pius X Church and School honored at this year's Night at the Museum. | Camper enjoys zipline while spending the summer at Camp Scully. | A child enjoys a horseback ride through Sunnyside Center's Summer Program.





## Sister Betsy Van Deusen, CSJ

***Q: Welcome to your new role of CEO! How have you been settling in so far?***

A: It has been great! I sort of feel like I worked on a micro level, and now I have the privilege of getting involved at more of a macro level. At both levels I have seen, met and talked to so many of our extraordinary staff and volunteers. I am honored and humbled to be leading this organization.

***Q: What is something surprising you have come across as a CEO?***

A: That someone else, (Jerri Young) manages my calendar far better than I ever have!

***Q: For the past couple of years, you've been extremely active in the community, working the front lines in addressing food insecurity. How has this changed?***

A: Many people have asked me, "are you going to be stuck behind a desk every day?," and my response has been, "do you think that would work out?" My being out in the community looks a little different now, but I will be visiting programs, meeting new funders and present to what is going on.

***Q: You've worn a lot of hats in your career. Which learned skill or behavior has been the most beneficial in this role so far?***

A: My ability to listen, understand, sympathize, network and plan.

***Q: What do you see as one of the biggest challenges facing our community as we try to rebuild in a post-pandemic world?***

A: I wish there was only one! It is really important that Catholic Charities be part of the conversations happening in our communities around housing, food insecurity, and violence, to name a few and be a catalyst for positive change.

***Q: How do you see Catholic Charities adapting to support these emerging needs now that you're CEO?***

A: When we're talking about needs like housing, food insecurity, or violence prevention, we're talking about community problems. And community problems require community solutions. I see Catholic Charities being a part of those solutions, working with community partners, leaders, and our neighbors to identify what services Catholic Charities can provide – or is already providing – that might lift people out of those cycles of hunger, homelessness or violence.

***Q: What advice do you have to community members who are looking to help meet these challenges?***

A: Let's trust in one another's goodness. We need to accentuate the good in one another and learn to let unimportant things go in order to move forward together.

***Q: How have you been managing your work/life balance as you move into a larger role?***

A: I am very aware that this ministry is only possible when I take time for prayer, time for exercise, and time for friends, family and play. I also like to cook and bake, which are great outlets. And at the end of the day, I know that God is in charge and my job is to listen.

***Q: What is the best piece of advice you've ever received, or a piece of advice you'd like to give people who share Catholic Charities' mission?***

A: Love. Even if you don't like, love. Learn people's names, especially those who are in service – the cleaner, the attendant, the administrative assistant. They deserve as much respect as any CEO.

***Q: What inspires you?***

A: I am inspired every day by the heroic efforts of our staff, from our front-line team to our agency and system directors. Each day, they serve our sisters and brothers in all corners of the Diocese. It is a testament to the validity of the mission, and they are a shining example of how the mission is lived in our day and time.

# Coming Home



Standing in his apartment, with newly hung curtains and a matching sofa, it's clear that Jeff has found his home at The Delaware.

The Delaware, a new housing complex in Cohoes, is one

of a kind. A partnership of Catholic Charities and Prime Companies, it hosts a mix of affordable and supportive housing units, where older adults can receive help to remain independent as they age. It offers a wide range of amenities, including a fitness center, on-site laundry, and a community lounge.

Jeff has lived a colorful life – a former college basketball star, Jeff attended beauty school and built a successful career in New York City. Moving to

the Capital Region, he found sobriety and a second career in the Troy restaurant scene.

But hard times left him without a home. After struggling with his sobriety and returning to alcohol to cope, Jeff relied on family and friends for places to stay. Eventually, his family recommended Catholic Charities' St. Charles Lwanga Center, a shelter for men. Through the support of Catholic Charities, Jeff was able to get his substance abuse under control once more, applied for disability and is now able to make ends meet.

He moved in to The Delaware in 2021 and hasn't looked back! He spends his free time with family or enjoying a scary movie. Thanks to the supporters who make this work possible, he is happy, he is safe, he is home.

## Driven to Give Back

When her home became unsafe, Carol and her two children fled to upstate New York, with nowhere to turn. Carol didn't even know where her sons would sleep that night. When the family came to our doors, they received the domestic violence support they needed to restart their lives. Our staff gave the family warm beds to sleep in, helped the kids enroll in school, and supported Carol as she navigated insurance options to ensure she could access her medication and stay healthy.

Each year, people right here in our Catholic Charities community choose to support families like Carol's in a unique and unexpected way. By donating their vehicle – be it a car, truck, motorcycle or even a boat – to Catholic Charities, they are directly helping their neighbors in need as all proceeds are put to good use helping people right here in the Albany Diocese.



**"We have been a part of Catholic Charities for over 40 years and believe strongly in its mission of social justice and helping those most vulnerable. When our old van finally gave up the ghost (to be replaced by another "less old" van), we were pleased to learn Catholic Charities would not only take it but would actually receive money for recycling it. Supporting the good work that Catholic Charities does by donating your vehicle is certainly a win-win situation."**

– Roger and Maria Markovics

You can learn more or start your vehicle donation today!

→ Contact Laurie Beach at [laurie.beach@ccrcda.org](mailto:laurie.beach@ccrcda.org) or visit [bit.ly/giveCARS](https://bit.ly/giveCARS) ←



# It Takes a Whole Village

By Grit Carotenuto



Like clockwork each June, children get more and more excited as their long awaited summer vacation approaches. But at the same time, an increasing number of families worry how they will feed their children without access to school meals.

This is where the Summer Food Service Program, operated by Catholic Charities of Delaware, Otsego, and Schoharie Counties helps by providing free lunches. The program provides food to all children in the city of Oneonta regardless of family income.

Prior to 2020, lunch was served in Neawha Park. However, with the restrictions from the pandemic, this delivery model was not possible and the program quickly pivoted to a delivery model where food was dropped off at

central locations and families would bring the food home.

This year, the program is running a hybrid model with meals delivered to five locations throughout the community in addition to lunch served at the park. The meal includes a sandwich, fruit, vegetable, milk, and yogurt. Drop off locations are in areas where there is the highest need including local mobile home parks, as well as at two centrally located Oneonta schools. Neawha Park is a popular place for many families in Oneonta and the summer lunch program is a welcome addition to their time at the park. The lunch site also offers enrichment activities such as visits from Oneonta World of Learning and Fidelis. While the USDA funding provides the means to feed the

children, Catholic Charities has secured additional funding to be able to also offer lunches to any adults accompanying the children.

Although funding is vital, this program would not be possible without the collaboration with the First United Presbyterian Church of Oneonta (the Red Door Church). Close to 30 volunteers from the church are involved in food preparation, delivery, and serving the meals at the park.

Due to inflation the program has seen an increase in the numbers of participants this summer and Catholic Charities' team of staff, volunteers, and community partners are ready to serve them all.

*If you want to learn more about the program, scan the QR code to see the program in action!*





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