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Notes from the Heart

News from Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans

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Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans provides life-giving programs that deliver health and human services to the most vulnerable and needy throughout 8 civil parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. We serve people regardless of race, religion, age, ethnicity or economic status.

Dear Friend,

December is a time to reflect on this year and the many blessings we hopefully have received. It is also a time to look forward to what is coming next in this new year!

Here at Catholic Charities we are truly celebrating a "New Dawn" and looking forward to being able to work with more families by bringing them from crisis to stability. Our goal is to guide the family to a place of personal strength and resilience, so that when they face their next crisis, they have the tools to work through it.

Thanks to the hundreds of generous donors, like you, we were able to serve **55,879 seniors food boxes; 4,396 bags of groceries to hungry families; housing was provided for 452 individuals; and diapers for 1,981 families.** Our lists grow longer with increasing success stories of needs being met. You are part of the success stories we share for your generosity **'makes it all happen'**.

Your donations provide the CCANO staff opportunities to provide a "New Dawn" throughout the year.

I extend a heartfelt thank you to each of you who are reading this newsletter. Thank you for your interest and your support of our programs and staff. May the warmth of generous giving provide you and your family the blessings of many **new dawns in the New Year, 2023.** God bless you and your loved ones with a very Merry Christmas and a joyful start to the New Year!

God bless each of you!

Sister Marjorie Hebert, M.S.C.
President & CEO



Clothe a Child

The Council of Catholic Schools Co-op Club holds the Clothe a Child fundraiser each year.

The members collect donations from their schools and turn them in to the CCSCC. Then all the parent organizations are invited to participate in a morning of shopping.

We appreciate all the work and shopping these ladies did this year to support our Head Start program!



CONVOCAATION 2022



CONVOCAATION 2022

November 18, 2022
@ Airport Hilton

On November 18, 2022 Catholic Charities had a staff convocation day at Hilton Hotel by the airport. Beginning with a continental breakfast we celebrated the theme, "One Mission, One Spirit, One Voice". Sister Judith Gomila, M.S.C. was the keynote speaker with an inspirational and lively speech. Followed by the Director of Food for Seniors, Renee Davenport's "One Voice" talk. After some prize giveaways, Stephanie Laurent, Director of Administration at CCANO introduced the staff to the strategic plan. Following lunch and a team building exercise conducted by Dr. Lisa Surrency, a success story video from Bethlehem Housing's client, Catherine Poree was shown. A spirited day was had by all.

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NEW ORLEANS



Adoption Reunion Story

Written by Mark Landry, Esq.

I always knew I was adopted. I never felt the need to find my birth parents, not until my sister, who is also adopted, told me the joy she brought to her birth mother when she found her. My parents, the father and mother my sister and I knew, who had been our parents since we were born, were more than most children could wish for. I could go on for pages about the man and woman who raised us.

After my sister found her birth mom, I was curious, and thought I might be able to bring some joy and answers to the woman who had given me life.

I was born in 1956, and was adopted from St. Vincent Infant and Maternity Home, in New Orleans. That was all I knew.

After much research and because I am also a lawyer, I had happened to see a new law that had been passed in the last Louisiana legislative session. The law allowed people who have been adopted to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate when they are at least 24 years of age. So, I sent off the application, and in the middle of September, I got a copy of my original birth certificate. I now knew my birth name, Charles MacIvor Mortimer, and I knew my birth mother's name, Elizabeth Mildred MacIvor Mortimer. According to my birth certificate, my mother was 36 when I was born, and I am now 66. So, my mom is 102!!

I kept my sister advised of what I had found, and one evening my sister sent me a text message with several web links that both surprised and shocked me. She had searched the internet and told me she thought she found my mom, and a brother. My mom, Elizabeth "Betty" Mortimer Roberts, was alive and was well known for her accomplishments. After getting her BPHE from the University of Toronto in 1943, mom received her M.S. from the University of Wisconsin in 1950, and in 1960, she received her PhD from the same university. She had been a full professor of Biomechanics in the Department of Physical Education at the University of Wisconsin, until she retired. The article told me that it was Betty's research that led to a more flexible hockey stick, and to the wide adoption of the soccer style kick by football place kickers.

And it looked like I had a brother, Charles W. Mortimer Roberts, M.D. PhD, who was Executive Vice President of St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, and Director of its Comprehensive Cancer Center. He is also on the faculty of its Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. So, WOW!!! I had to reach out.

How do you break the news to a man who is fairly well known that you may be his brother? I asked him, "Do you have any idea what this call may be about?" He said, "I think I do." I said, "I think I may be your brother." He said, "That's what I thought this may be about."

Charlie called mom, and she was thrilled. He reached out to the assisted living community, and they set up a Zoom call with mom in Madison, Charlie in Memphis and me in Metairie. I was a little nervous, but I was fully aware of the excitement and enthusiasm my sister's mother had when my sister found her. My sister's mom could not have been happier. She was so glad to find out what had happened to the daughter she had given up for adoption. I also knew that many women who have given a child up for adoption are afraid that the child will be angry that they were seen as "unwanted." And my mom is 102. Charlie has assured me that she had all her faculties, but did I want to do something that caused her to become distressed? No, absolutely not.

I began the call by introducing myself and by telling mom that my expectation from this call was joy. I wanted her to feel joy, and to know that her decision to give me up for adoption was a decision that had made me the person I was, and that my adoptive parents were wonderful and giving people, who had given me everything that any parent could hope to give their child. Mom's smile was beaming. Charlie told me later that she was experiencing the joy I hoped for, and he had not seen her this happy in months. And I know she appreciated it when I told her that if she had not given me up for adoption, I may have been rooting for Bart Starr, instead of Archie Manning.

I got to tell mom that she now had a granddaughter and a fifth grandson. Charlie and his wife, Diane, have four sons, and I had a son and a daughter. At 102, Betty now has a new granddaughter. We made plans to visit Betty in Madison on October 10, when Charlie and his wife could meet us there.

When we got to Madison, we met Charlie and Diane at the hotel, and then went to visit my mom. It was surreal, at first. My only real connection with this woman was 66 years ago. She was old, but I expected that. But what else was I expecting? To be honest, I was not sure. This had started out as a kind of puzzle, that would be neat to figure out. But what I got was a woman who was honest with me about her journey that brought me into the world.

We talked about the difficulties that women faced in the 1940's and 1950's, and the fact that mom was able to obtain her advanced degrees and conduct significant post-doctoral research. I told her again that her decision to give me up for adoption was a good decision for me, and I hoped she would feel only joy with meeting me.

We have made plans for the entire family to go to Madison in mid-December, for a face-to-face visit. On the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, I was able to set up a Zoom call with mom, and my son, Francis, and my daughter, Gabrielle. We visited and they got to talk with their new grandmother, and she got to talk to her new grandkids.

So far, I am still in shock about meeting a new mother after 66 years. I wanted to ask mom to stay around to meet her grandkids. But that is selfish. And not something that is really in our control. I still have a lot of questions to which I hope I can get answers. Or just sit with a woman whose accomplishments during her life would astound me, even if she were not my birth mom.

But what I got was a woman who was honest with me about her journey that brought me into the world.



Catherine Poree

A success story from our Bethlehem Housing Program

Catherine first contacted Catholic Charities on the urging of a neighbor. She was under the threat of being evicted. This was a difficult time for this single mother of three children, one just a year old. The constant fear of not having a place for them to sleep or have enough to feed her family was overwhelming.

Then Trinna Stanford, Bethlehem Housing's current director, called. Trinna said, "Everything's gonna be fine." Catherine said, "From the start Trinna was very supportive."

"It helped so much. I was able to reset, make plans, make goals, and get the help I needed. I was able to enroll in school, which I just finished and graduated! I'm excited I'm gonna be a hair teacher. I've accomplished so much with just those months of getting a reset." Catherine continued.

When asked, "what is it about Catherine's story that you want us to know", Trinna replied "Never give up. Keep the faith and trust that the goals you set with happen. Put a timeframe on your goals that is reasonable. If you don't reach it, get up and give it another try."

You can watch this interview by going to: <https://www.ccano.org/bethlehem-housing/> and select the success story link.



New!! Youth Mentor Ally Program

A need that has been identified through our Immigration and Refugee services is a mentor to help our clients navigate our culture, assist with educational goals and practice speaking English.

Michael Hitch is director of this program and says, "This is a unique opportunity as both the mentor and the mentee will grow through this experience. Mentors will gain a new perspective and understanding about what our clients are working toward and what obstacles they are needing to overcome to reach those goals."

We are looking for volunteers to mentor clients from our Immigration and Refugee services. The mentees are 15 years old to 24 years old. The hope is that this program will help refugee youth become confident in their skills and empowered to be responsible for their own brighter futures. The planned programing and training will help volunteer mentors accomplish 2 meetings a month that will total 4-8 hours each meeting, for a period of 6 months with their matched mentee. Activities will help groups accomplish educational, social, and general wellness goals. Volunteers will need to complete a program application, attend training sessions, and complete a background check. Speaking a second language is not a requirement of this program.

If you or someone you know is interested in supporting this program as a volunteer, please reach out to Michael Hitch at mhitch@ccano.org or call 504-491-3211 to learn more.



— P A C E —

On October 19, 2022, our PACE (Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly) program, along with Passages Hospice and Beacon Behavioral Health put on a networking event. This event was held at New Orleans Hamburgers on St. Charles Ave. and was well attended. A CEU, Continuing Education Unit, was offered titled "Compassion Fatigue: When Caring Starts to Hurt".

Primarily geared toward social workers that help find resources for caregivers this event allows PACE to educate others on exactly what we do. Our PACE program's focus is caring for elderly that would traditionally have to move into a nursing home due to the caregivers becoming overwhelmed with the care of their loved one. Pace services include transportation to and from doctors' appointments and the PACE clinic along with two adult days centers to provide much needed socialization. The day centers assist the caregiver by allowing them time to work and take care of other daily responsibilities.

To qualify for PACE the participant needs to fall into an income bracket that usually would also qualify the participant for Medicaid and Medicare. They must be nursing home qualified and have the ability to live in their own home with the support of caregivers.

For more information on PACE go to: www.ccano.org/pace.