On November 18, 2022, Catholic Charities had a staff convocation day at the 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.

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
Adoption Reunion Story
Written by Mark Landy, 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 she was surprised to find out she was adopted. I was little nervous, but I was fully aware of the excitement and enthusiasm my sister’s mother had when she found out. My sister’s mother 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 was 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. I wanted 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 Bert 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 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. Only my real connection with this woman was 66 years ago. She was old, but I expected that. But what I got was a woman who was honest with me about her journey that brought me into the world.

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How do you break the news to a man who is fairly well known that you may be his brother? I asked Charlie, “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 message 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 she found out. My sister’s mother 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 was 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.

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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 grandson.

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 new 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. Of just sit with a woman whose accomplishments during her life would astound me, even if she were not my birth mom.

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