

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

Chronicle

Altoona Office: Blair, Bedford and Huntingdon Counties • Bellefonte Office: Centre and Clinton Counties • Johnstown Office: Cambria & Somerset Counties

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TO LOVE AND SERVE OUR NEIGHBORS AS OURSELVES

Putting Faith into Action

Catholic Charities Allows Volunteers and Donors to Practice the Fundamental Golden Rule: Do Unto Others as You'd Have Them Do Unto You

Serving as treasurer of the board for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Gerry Pontzer puts her faith into action. She works with other volunteers to advance Catholic Charities' fundamental mission: to serve all community members in need, regardless of religious affiliation.

"People are often surprised to hear that the majority of people we serve are not Catholic," she said. "But we serve everyone regardless of faith because we are

Catholic, not because they are."

She began volunteering for Catholic Charities nearly 10 years ago in part because of the impact that the organization makes on our community.

"It's unique in that it can respond to personal and individual needs," she said. "Our hands aren't tied by rules and regulations like you'd find in many government organizations."

Because of this, Gerry says that there would be a noticeable gap in service in

central Pennsylvania if Catholic Charities ceased to exist.

"We are in a strong position to help those in need that might not be able to get assistance elsewhere," she said.

But, as treasurer, Gerry intimately knows that Catholic Charities' budget can sometimes stretch thin, and that the agency relies heavily on financial support from local residents to support more families in need.

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In This Issue...

*Catholic Charities at Work
in Your Community*

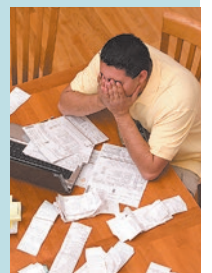
So Much More than a Shelter

The Martha & Mary House helps 21 individuals secure their futures.



Who We Help

Thousands of households in our area are in financial crisis.



Making an Impact on Our Neighbors in Need

Sharing the Stories of Those in Our Community Who Count on Us

In an effort to portray the neighbors of our community who seek our help, and whom your donations help to support, we share the stories of those who leave a lasting impression on us (while respecting and protecting their anonymity).

Gerry Pontzer shares her most memorable story of helping a neighbor in need:

"I was answering the phone at the office when a young man in his early 20s walked in. He obviously had recently been sick; his color was poor, he was very thin, and he was on the shaky side. He shared his story. He had been working in construction when his appendix ruptured, causing him to be out of work for some time. His family ran out of money and needed rental assistance.



Among the many services offered by Catholic Charities, we help to feed the hungry in their time of need; one of the corporal works of mercy.

He never thought he'd have to ask for help for his family, he explained, as his eyes filled with tears.

Tears ran down my eyes too."

Gerry explained that after his interview she watched a case worker fill two bags with food, and another with diapers for the baby. Then, a few items were added to the top of each bag: stuffed animals

and a book for the kids. He was also given a Sheetz gift card to help with gas.

"We were feeding the hungry in their time of need; one of the corporal works of mercy.

I knew that he would probably never be back. He was so embarrassed. But I'm so glad that we could help him in a way that maintained his dignity.

It just struck me how vulnerable he was. He could have been my son. And if one of my kids ever needed help, I would hope that an agency like Catholic Charities would be there for them, to not only help, but to treat them with dignity and respect.

I was overcome with witnessing the kindness and generosity the Catholic Charities staff showed to him. I will never forget that."

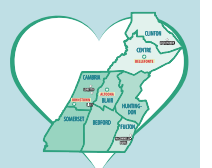
Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Altoona Knights of Columbus selects Catholic Charities as golf tournament beneficiary.



Humanitarian Award Winners Celebrated

Seven local individuals recognized for serving the poor in our community.



The Martha & Mary House

Cambria County Emergency Homeless Shelter Program
Operated by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown

By the Numbers

21

Individual households served since shelter's opening on March 2

6

Residents who have obtained permanent housing

7

Residents who have obtained or maintained employment

8

Residents who have engaged or re-engaged in mental health services

Show Your Support of Martha & Mary House

Contributions can be made online at www.catholiccharitiesaj.org or by earmarking part of your Catholic Charities contribution to the Martha & Mary House using the form on page 3. You can also mail your donation directly to the shelter at 899 Bedford St., Johnstown, PA 15902.

Wish List

In addition to financial contributions, The Martha & Mary House actively seeks donations of everyday items to assist us in operating the shelter. Our most current in-demand items include:

- Laundry detergent
- Bleach
- Dryer sheets
- Lysol
- Coffee
- Tea
- Napkins
- Board games/card games

Contact Missy Kreutzberger, Director/Lead Case Manager of The Martha & Mary House, at 814-254-4413 or MKreutzberger@dioceseaj.org for information on how to donate items on our wish list.

Bearing Witness to Perseverance

The Martha & Mary House Helps to Shape the Lives of Cambria County's Homeless Individuals and Families



Thanks to overwhelming support from an outstanding staff and within our Diocese and community, The Martha & Mary House, Cambria County's emergency homeless shelter operated by Catholic Charities, is making an impact on the lives of those who seek our help.

Since its official opening on March 2, The Martha & Mary House has served 21 individual households, mostly single men and women and a single mother who needed a place to stay with her children. We are happy to report that of the 21 adults served so far, six have obtained permanent housing, seven have either obtained or maintained employment, and eight have engaged or re-engaged in mental health services.

"Our shelter provides so much more than a roof over someone's head," said Missy Kreutzberger, Director/Lead Case Manager of The Martha & Mary House. "People need to know that what is happening here is life changing and an inspiration."

The Martha & Mary House pairs residents with case managers who help them to set goals and plan for their futures following their 30-day stay at the shelter, in addition to solidifying life skills that will boost their chances for success.

"Our shelter provides so much more than a roof over someone's head. People need to know that what is happening here is life changing and an inspiration."

"We continue to strengthen our relationships with community providers," said Missy. Several residents are attending AA and NA meetings along with receiving other drug and alcohol treatment, and several have attended parenting classes. Bible study and personal finance programs will be implemented soon.

Additionally, the staff has established a rigid routine and schedule, including Sunday night dinners and weekly game nights, to provide opportunities for skill building and development.

"Meal planning and preparation allow our staff to work on instruction in skills like budgeting, time management, and cooking," said Missy. "Game nights allow staff to work on skills such as teamwork, conflict resolution, and negotiating."

"These activities also provide a framework for our residents to develop some healthy routines that they can take with them when they leave the shelter," she added.

Each morning starts bright and early with "Breakfast with Jim," the third shift staff House Manager who helped conceptualize the shelter (he's a US Veteran with 10 years of experience in corrections). Around the table and over fresh cups of coffee, the newspaper is shared and everyone is prepped

for their day. During the morning, service plan meetings occur both formally and informally in order to assist with resources and direction. The day is filled with case management activities like meetings and phone calls for individual resident needs, and intakes are planned during this time. A typical evening involves debriefing with residents and reworking plans based upon the events of the day, and a weekly formal house meeting allows for assigning chores and reviewing important announcements.

Missy feels blessed to be able to work to change the lives of our neighbors in need, and sincerely thanks the community for their ongoing support of The Martha & Mary House.

"By far, the biggest achievements are seeing the residents who arrived with little hope that they would be able to stabilize their situations walk out of the shelter with keys in hand to a new apartment and a fresh start!" she said. "The other amazing thing is the resilience displayed by our residents. To be faced with so many obstacles and challenges and persevere is an awesome thing to bear witness to."

Thousands of Households in Central PA Need Help

Thousands of households in our community are in crisis. Here are just a few of the ways we've helped your neighbors in need, by enabling them to:

- Purchase life-saving medications or medical equipment.
- Pay utility bills, including excessively high heating bills from this bitterly cold winter.
- Avoid eviction when a financial downfall causes them to fall behind on rent.
- Seek emergency shelter following eviction, disaster, or a domestic dispute
- Receive professional counseling to overcome major personal, family, or career obstacles.
- Receive critical pregnancy support, promoting the physical and mental well-being of a mother and her child during the pre- and post-natal periods.



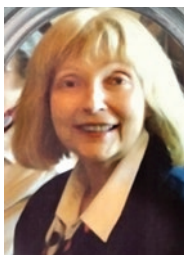
Your gift helps a growing number of households in our area who need assistance to overcome tough times.

Examples of those we assist include:

- A father who secured a job after a period of unemployment and needs to purchase a required uniform and work boots.
- An elderly woman struggling to survive on a single income following the death of her husband, and about to be evicted.
- A single mother who is unable to put food on the table until her next paycheck arrives.

Please continue your support of Catholic Charities so we can help a growing number of households in central Pennsylvania who need us.

In Memory of Marjorie Plosky



It is with great sadness that we inform you of the death of a member of the Catholic Charities family. Marjorie Plosky, 63, of Bellefonte, passed away Thursday, May 7, 2015, at her home. Marjorie worked as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker for Catholic Charities for 25 years, and also served as director of Catholic Charities' Parent Assistance/Student Support (PASS) program at Our Lady of Victory Catholic School in State College and St. John the Evangelist Catholic School in Bellefonte, where she was lovingly referred to as "The Friendship Circle Lady".

At St. John School, Marjorie attended Mass regularly with students and facilitated valuable social skills groups over Wednesday lunch hours with all children in grades K-5. "Our students delighted in participating in lunchtime 'friendship circle' with Mrs. Plosky and their peers," said Principal Kristina Tice.

Marjorie was a member of Our Lady of Victory in State College. She is survived by her husband Tom Rishel; two daughters, Lauren Plosky Rishel of Jacksonville, NC and Alexa Plosky Rishel of Indiana, Pa.; one sister, Gloria Scaltz of State College; and one nephew, Jamie Scaltz of Pittsburgh.

From the Executive Director:

Catholic Charities Fulfills the Unique, Personal Needs of Local Individuals and Families



The past few months, we've put a lot of focus on our two biggest areas of need: The Martha & Mary House (Cambria County's emergency homeless shelter), and emergency financial assistance for local households that needed help to pay high heating bills during this brutally cold winter. I sincerely thank all of those in our community who generously opened their wallets to make these programs a success.

While these efforts support a large percentage of local individuals and families who seek our help, it is important to remember that our neighbors in need come from all walks of life. They have

different stories to tell. And they have different reasons for needing our help.

That's what makes Catholic Charities so unique. Unlike so many government-run charities, we are in a position to help our neighbors in need, regardless of their race, religion, gender, or financial status, who each have a unique, personal request for assistance.

From low- to no-cost counseling services, to emergency financial assistance for a variety of needs, including food, utilities, fuel, or items required to obtain or maintain a job, to emergency shelter for homeless individuals and families, Catholic Charities offers services and programs that our clients may not be able to get anywhere else. The stories to the left are just a few examples of the many various ways that Catholic Charities helps to make a difference in the lives of people in our community when they are at their most vulnerable.

We are able to help a growing number of neighbors in need thanks to financial support of those in our community. If you haven't yet made your donation, please consider giving to Catholic Charities this year, and every year. We can't do it without you!

In Sincere Gratitude,

Jean Johnstone
Jean Johnstone, Executive Director

The official registration and financial information of Catholic Charities may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Yes! I want to help my neighbors in need.

I want to make a difference to people in our community who need it most.
Please accept my contribution of:

☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$35 ☐ Other \$ _____

☐ I'd like to earmark \$ _____ of my gift to the Martha & Mary House

☐ I'd like to receive more information about joining the Guild of Guardians

☐ Check enclosed, made payable to: Catholic Charities

Donate online: www.catholiccharitiesaj.org

☐ Please add me to upcoming email communications:

Name: _____

Email: _____

**Catholic Charities of the
Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown**

1300 12th Avenue
P.O. Box 1349
Altoona, PA 16603

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

7th Annual Knights of Columbus – Altoona Council #551 – Golf Tournament

Catholic Charities was honored to be the special beneficiary of an annual golf tournament held by the Altoona Knights of Columbus. This year's event was held June 20.

"Event fundraising is an effective way of generating larger donations to organizations at key times throughout the year," said Terry Anderson, organizer of the golf tournament. "Particularly for organizations that provide financial assistance to others, event fundraising can help replenish funds that are disbursed seasonally to get ready for the next season."

Terry explains that the unique



impact that Catholic Charities makes in our community is the reason our agency was chosen as beneficiary in 2015.

"We have donated to Catholic Charities in the past through

smaller fundraising events and we see how appreciative the organization has been for the assistance, which tells us that every little bit helps," he said. "We've witnessed the effect the organization has on

those it benefits. Their people and programs are crucial to helping those in need in our community."

The Knights of Columbus hope that the golf fundraiser, combined with other financial support from

our community, will enable Catholic Charities to continue serving our neighbors in need. After all, Catholic Charities relies heavily on community support to fulfill our mission.

If you were not able to participate in this "fun-raising" fundraiser, Terry encourages you to still support Catholic Charities by making a financial contribution.

"Every little bit helps," he said. "Most people don't realize the impact that smaller donations have on an organization and the vital role that small donations have in the overall financial structure of the organization."

Humanitarian Award Winners Celebrated at Annual Recognition Dinner

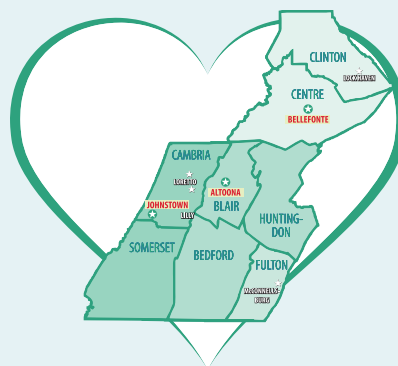
Seven community members were recognized with humanitarian awards at Catholic Charities' 2015 Annual Recognition Dinner on June 3.

We are honored to recognize three outstanding community members with the Msgr. William M. Griffin Humanitarian Award, for demonstrating a significant, long-term commitment (professional or volunteer) to serving the poor, marginalized, and most vulnerable within our diocesan community:

- David Greene (St. Peter's Church, Somerset, PA)
- Mercedes & Nicholas Smith (St. Benedict Church, Johnstown)
- Janet Criste (Our Mother of Sorrows, Johnstown)

Three area students were presented with the Matthew 25 Youth Humanitarian Award, given to elementary and/or high school students for demonstrating exceptional service to their communities, specifically the poor and needy:

- Ashton Truby (12th grade, Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School)
- Nikolas Suckinos (12th grade, Bishop Carroll Catholic High School)
- Olivia McCafferty (12th grade, Philipsburg-Osceola Senior High School)



Pictured (L to R): Fr. John Gibbons of Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church; Catholic Charities Executive Director Jean Johnstone; Matthew 25 Youth Humanitarian Award recipient Nik Suckinas; Matthew 25 Youth Humanitarian award recipient Ashton Truby; and Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown Mark Bartchak. Not pictured, Matthew 25 Youth Humanitarian Award recipient Olivia McCafferty



(L to R): Humanitarian Award winners Janet Criste and David Greene, Catholic Charities Executive Director Jean Johnstone, Humanitarian Award Winners Mercedes and Nicholas Smith, and Bishop Mark Bartchak (in back).

Putting Faith into Action

—continued from page 1

"I think you're always concerned that you'll be able to meet the financial obligations to keep the agency at its maximum level of benefiting the community," she said.

Which is why, she says, she encourages her fellow neighbors to donate to Catholic Charities, whether or not they're Catholic either.

"When it comes down to it, we're just neighbors helping neighbors," she said.

A Longstanding Legacy of Giving Back

Recently named Hollidaysburg Citizen of the Year for making significant contributions to the community, Gerry has a longstanding history of serving people in need in central Pennsylvania. She spent her career as a nurse and has served on the boards of multiple local charities, always one at a time.

"There's a strong sense of satisfaction of using my talents to do good," she said. "I was blessed to get a very fine education, and now I'm using that talent to help others."

While Catholic Charities is benefitted by Gerry's strong spirit of volunteerism, she says that she gets an equal reward in exchange.

"Catholic Charities allows me to put my faith into action; to do unto others as I would have them done unto me," she said. "Volunteering here allows me to demonstrate that."

Gerry and her husband Peter live in Hollidaysburg, where they are members of St. Michael's Catholic Church. (Gerry runs the parish outreach, appropriately named the Matthew 25 program, leading volunteers to visit all home-bound parishioners, sometimes bringing them flowers or cards, or helping to provide meals for the sick or transportation for those who have none). They have six children and 10 grandchildren.