Faith in Action

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

A new year brings the promise of new beginnings, of second chances, and of the possibilities that lie ahead. Catholic Social Services, and the sites and programs we offer, is the beacon of hope heralding in opportunities for many individuals and families to start anew.

As we turn the corner leaving 2021 behind us, we look ahead with the confidence that this new year will bring about positive change—change that will bring with it boundless opportunities, a renewed sense of hope and an increase in faith. Faith that together, we can overcome and persevere, even in the midst of what appears unsurmountable.

Together, we can continue to be the change in the lives of those we have the privilege of serving. Yes, we cannot help every single person, but those whom we do help creates a positive ripple effect. We just celebrated the Christmas season and we all witnessed the many ways small acts of kindness can have a major impact.

When we think we cannot make a difference, just remember the story of the starfish and the commitment and innocence of a child. “One day, an old man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore by the high tide. As he walked, he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one. Puzzled, the man looked at the boy and asked what he was doing. Without looking up from his task, the boy simply replied, “I’m saving these starfish, Sir”.

The old man chuckled aloud, “Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?” The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, “It made a difference to that one!”

That is all that is asked of us, to make a difference—one person at a time. If there is one resolution you make this year, let it be to be the difference.

From all of us here at Catholic Social Services—
Happy New Year!

A New Year’s Prayer

Dear God,

Give me the courage to begin again — to overlook the difficulties, to overcome the obstacles and to stay open to the moment as best I can. Help me be patient enough to know it takes time to start over, and wise enough to ask for help from friends and family when I need it. As I look to the future, may I reflect on the past and remember the lessons it’s taught me. And God, may I always look to you for strength and guidance.

— Abbey Caskets

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

• Volunteers: We need your help to update your information, Email: rsaraiva@cssdioc.org or call 508-674-4681 Ext. 1111.

• Happy Birthday to all our volunteers who celebrated a birthday in December and will be celebrating in January. We would love to honor and recognize YOU! Email your name and birthday to rsaraiva@cssdioc.org or call 508-674-4681 Ext. 1111.
The Donation Room was a hub of activity during the weeks leading up to Christmas. Volunteers and staff busily “shopped” for clients and for families referred to us by local agencies and parishes. Catholic Social Services was definitely a satellite office of Santa’s workshop complete with elves working their magic.

As fast as donations were leaving our building, others kept pouring in—coats, clothing, winter apparel and toys. There were many local agencies, such as St. Vincent de Paul, the United Way of Greater Fall River, and several individual organizations as well, that would stop by with new items to be distributed to those in our programs.

In addition to the gifts, Catholic Social Services, with the help of many parishes and organizations, was able to give gift cards so that families could purchase what they needed for the holidays. The diocesan efforts raised over $24,000 in gift cards alone, which were distributed to the families in our programs and shelters.

The generosity did not stop there, we had corporate sponsors who “adopted” families from our programs. These sponsors provided clothing, household items, and brand new toys for the children. In one instance, the adults did not ask for anything and the sponsors took it upon themselves to guarantee that the parents would have something of their own for Christmas. The case managers that had the privilege of being Santa to those adopted families, said the recipients were beyond grateful and felt truly blessed by the kindness and care they were shown. When I reached out to the sponsors, their response was very similar, they felt blessed and overjoyed to have been able to brighten someone’s holiday—they had so much fun shopping for the families they adopted and plan to do it again next Christmas.

Often we look at our world and focus on all the negativity, fear, and uncertainty, and forget that there truly is so much good in our world. If nothing else, Christmas reminds us that there is hope, that love can and does conquer all, and that even the smallest of gestures can make a difference. For those who helped out in big and small ways, please know that your efforts, generosity and selflessness has truly made a difference. This difference not only impacted the beneficiaries of your compassion and kindness, but also to those of us who bear witness to the miracles of love in the midst of all of life’s messiness.

Our wish is that this spirit of love and hope continue throughout this coming year. Please know that your kindness and generosity is greatly appreciated all year long, as the need for compassion, caring and understanding remains. Thank you!

BEHIND THE SCENES—GIFT OF GIVING

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES...

Bilingual speakers to translate and interpret for clients.

Food Pantry Volunteers.

Volunteers to sort and organize donations at various sites.

Volunteers to serve our shelter guests and help with miscellaneous tasks.

Food preparers, cooks, servers, greeters, and clean-up crew for the Soup Kitchen.

There are many more opportunities throughout our agency and its sites.

For more information, contact Rose Mary Saraiva, Volunteer Coordinator at 508-674-4681 Ext. 1111 or via email at rsaraiva@cssdioc.org

It is with a heavy heart that we mourn the loss of one of our volunteers—

Bertha LeBarre

Thank you for the many years of service at St. Clare’s.

Celebrating a January Birthday:

Michael B.— January 2
Elaine S.— January 29
Judith D.— January 29
“GIFT OF GIVING” - THANK YOU!

This year’s Gift of Giving program helped hundreds of individuals and families. But what would this program be without the selfless kindness so many of you displayed. Through your generosity and kindness, our parish and community outreach was able to make a difference.

In a special way, we would like to thank you for saying “yes” and opening your hearts to those in need:

- St. Mary Parish, Mansfield
- St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Swansea
- St. Julie Billiart, Dartmouth
- St. Joseph & St. Michael, Fall River
- Corpus Christi, E. Sandwich
- Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Seekonk
- Santo Christo, Fall River
- St. Joseph, Fairhaven
- Our Lady of Grace, Westport
- Our Lady of Purgatory, New Bedford
- St. Mary’s Knights of Columbus, Mansfield
- Our Lady of Perpetual Help, New Bedford

And all the generous donors who donated anonymously.

NEW YEAR’S RESOLUTION

Dedicating your time and talents by volunteering with a cause you’re passionate about is rewarding in so many ways. A few of the fabulous benefits received from volunteering include:

- **Increase Happiness.** Volunteer work has been shown to increase endorphins, a hormone in the nervous system that causes an analgesic effect when activated. It can also decrease the risk of depression by increasing social interaction, creating a support system and building relationships.

- **Decrease Stress.** Volunteer work has been shown to decrease stress, as it provides an outlet from a busy life and leaves people feeling accomplished.

- **Become Healthier.** A Corporation for National Community Service report noted that volunteering leads to better overall health. It stated that people who volunteer have lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life, compared to those who don’t volunteer. Additionally, a study conducted by Harvard University has shown that those who volunteer regularly experience similar health benefits to those who exercise regularly.

- **Develop New Skills.** Skill based volunteering in a new and unfamiliar area is an excellent way to develop new skills and talents in areas of interest, whether professional or recreational. From graphic design and event planning to creating website copy and fundraising, you’ll gain valuable skills that you can use in other areas of your life.

CORRECTION:

In the last article, the school name was incorrect.
The recipients of toys were the students at the Pacheco School in New Bedford.

“Remember our former product, ‘The Resolution’, that people only used on January 2nd of each year?”

“*All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence.*”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.
Community in Action -

We would like to thank all those who helped us make the holidays bright for so many.

To support Catholic Social Service’s mission to collect gift cards for families in need for Christmas, Bishop Stang High School hosted a “gift card drive” to collect gift cards and/or cash during lunch waves from Monday, November 29th to Friday, December 3rd.

As part of Bishop Stang’s FIAT (Faith In Action Together) program where students participate in a community service their Junior and Senior year, Bishop Stang had 11 students offer their time during lunch waves to collect donations from other students, faculty, and staff. Thank you, your efforts raised $1000 in cards and cash.

Community Partners:

Rockland Trust and their staff—thank you for making a difference to the communities your serve.

All Security and their staff—thank you for being the difference to those in need.

East Bay Surgery Center—thank you for sharing and caring about your sister and brother in need.

Freetown-Lakeville Middle School Student Council—thank you for your caring and generosity.

Special Thank You:

Alexis Pacheco—a college freshman who secured a grant last year for her high school senior project to purchase new toys for children in our programs. She applied this Christmas and secured the funding to once again help out with the “Gift of Giving” program. Thank you for your selflessness and dedication.

“For a Good Cause” - Glow Golf ‘21—for their generous donations, proving once again that generosity is truly a team effort.

CORI FORMS

We are required to complete a CORI form for all volunteers annually.

I will be sending out the required form and ask that they be returned no later than February 1st.

The form and a photo ID can be emailed to rsarai-va@cssdioc.org; if you choose to mail in the form and ID, please make sure the envelope is addressed to my attention and sent to CSS, 1600 Bay St. Fall River, MA 02724. If you wish to fax it in, also make sure my name is in the attention line and fax it to 508-675-2224.

If you have any questions, call me at 508-674-4681 Ext. 1111.

“IT’s very nice. I still have to run all volunteers through a background check.”