

*Faithfully Serving in 100 Locations Across 21 Virginia Counties and 7 Cities!*

## After a Decade of Growth, President Art Bennett Retires from Catholic Charities



*Art Bennett poses with a former Christ House staff member.*

**ART BENNETT, WHO CAME TO CATHOLIC** Charities as president and CEO in 2010 and led the growth of the St. Lucy Food Project and the Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinics in Manassas and Woodbridge, will retire from his position in early January 2021.

Under Art's leadership, the Christ House on Wheels food program expanded to become the St. Lucy Food Project, a distribution operation that collects and sends food to feed families throughout the entire diocese. Catholic Charities, which had no experience in healthcare, opened the first Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic, providing healthcare for the most vulnerable, in space

once occupied by an abortion center. The clinic came to be after the members of the BVM Foundation, which had purchased the space after the abortion center closed, asked Bennett if Catholic Charities could use the space.

Among his most recognized achievements, diocesan and Catholic Charities leaders say, is Bennett's commitment to ensuring that all Catholic Charities programs – including those that provide housing, mental health counseling and medical care, immigration and refugee services, and pregnancy and adoption support – operate on the principles of Catholic social teaching.

"Art has always maintained the strong Catholic identity to Catholic Charities, and that is not always easy to do. But that has never been compromised," said Bishop Michael Burbidge.

"This has been the most rewarding, enjoyable and challenging job and decade of my life," Bennett said. "Usually when you work for a non-profit it is hard to identify clear goals and targets. But both Bishop Burbidge and Bishop Loverde were uncommonly clear: They want a Catholic Charities that is 100% Catholic and that transforms lives with charitable service in concert with the pastors, parishes and the faithful."

"At the time Art came, (the St. Lucy Project) was steel shelves in the basement of Christ

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## Bishop Burbidge appoints new CEO/President

Bishop Michael Burbidge has appointed Mr. Stephen Carattini President and CEO for Catholic Charities Diocese of Arlington, effective January 4, 2021. Bishop Burbidge expressed gratitude to the search committee, composed of members of the Catholic Charities Board of Directors.



Mr. Carattini is a Catholic leader with extensive experience providing strategic leadership and creating practical business solutions for both for-profit and faith-based, non-profit organizations. Since 2018, Mr. Carattini has served as the Director for the Department for Justice and Charity for the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown. Prior to his work there, Mr. Carattini served five years as the CEO for Catholic Social Services for the Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton. He has also held the position of COO for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Denver and Division Director for Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Houston. Mr. Carattini received a B.S. degree in International Relations from Georgetown University and a M.A. in Theological Studies from the University of St. Thomas.

Having both graduated from Georgetown University, Mr. Carattini and his wife Michelle are anxious to return to northern Virginia to be closer to family and friends. The Catholic Charities community looks forward to welcoming Mr. Carattini and praying for him and his family during this transition.

## President's Message

Dear Friends of Catholic Charities,

The pandemic has been a tremendous challenge for all of us, particularly for those who are poor and struggling. But for those in the Church, it has been a tremendous opportunity to show our love, service and support to our neighbors during these difficult times. As has always been the case in my 10 plus years of working at Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington, the faithful rise-up and make the sacrifice to help those who are suffering. You are the Good Samaritan that doesn't stroll by but rather, goes into the ditch to extend your hand to your brother in need.

We continue to see an increase in demand for food, mental health counseling, job assistance, rental assistance to avoid evictions and homelessness, healthcare for those without or losing their insurance, and those needing legal guidance on immigration. Yes, the needs have been great, but as you'll read in this newsletter, the response and service have been greater. Because of your unwavering support in our efforts, we have been able to answer the call for help.

These past months have been an opportunity and challenge to really test and live our faith. Do we only support people when it's convenient? Or do we give because so many are suffering? The latter has been the resounding answer as time and time again employees, donors, and volunteers have made the self-sacrifice to help serve the needy.

This is my final letter for the Catholic Charities *Mission* Newsletter as I will be retiring in early January. This has been the most wonderful job of my life but it's time for new energy and a new vision. I will be forever grateful to have worked in partnership with you and our staff to see if the faith the size of a mustard seed could move mountains. And as the gospel of St. Matthew (17:20) tells us, it truly does move mountains! It's been an honor to serve with all of you. God bless the priority that you place on charity and service and helping us at Catholic Charities to transform lives with the love of Christ.

Sincerely,



**ART BENNETT**  
*President and CEO*  
Catholic Charities of the  
Diocese of Arlington

# Love

## Always Looks Like Something



I remember listening to a discussion on National Public Radio about "things we believe in but we cannot see." For example, we believe that "time" exists, but we can't see it. We have watches, clocks, sundials, but they are not time, only instruments of time. Then they said "we believe that "love" exists, but you can't see it. There are embraces, hugs, holding hands, (before the pandemic), but they are not love, only expressions of love.

I know they were not doing a theological treatise on love that day, but we are as we celebrate Christmas. And Christmas tells us that "Love always looks like something." Its incarnate. The Word became Flesh and dwells among us. God, who is love, is an enfleshed presence and now always looks like something. It is the embrace, it is feeding the hungry, giving a cup of water to the thirsty, visiting the imprisoned, caring for the sick, welcoming the stranger....and a tiny baby born 2000 years ago in a humble stable to poor parents in Bethlehem.

In Catholic Charities "love" is providing transformational housing at Christ House and St. Margaret of Cortona. It is upholding the dignity of life in pregnancy and adoption support. Love is the Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic and Family Counseling services, Prison Ministry, and the St. Lucy Food Project.

Christmas is the birth of love into the world. Because of that event, the incarnation, we proclaim that "love always looks like something". Our Christmas giving to support Catholic Charities is more than the check we write. It is love. We are united with Christ and the Church in serving the least among us as Jesus taught us. In Catholic Charities "love always looks like something."

A Merry and Blessed Christmas!



**FATHER ROBERT CILINSKI**  
*Episcopal Vicar for*  
Charitable Works

## After a Decade of Growth, President Art Bennett Retires from Catholic Charities

House,” said Board Chairman Richard Kaplar. “But since then, we’ve created a whole operation with a warehouse out of Manassas, all sorts of delivery vehicles and a whole network of volunteers to help make this happen.”

“Art is a great manager, he has a great way of working with people, but he’s also a great visionary, a man of very deep faith,” Kaplar said.

Bennett’s work leading to the establishment of the Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic was an example of leading by faith, said BVM Board member Jim Koehr. There were many obstacles, including lack of funds and no experience in health care.

“But before we knew it, the thing was open all week long. And now there’s a second clinic,” said Koehr. “It is the story of Art

following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

A native of California, Bennett trained in philosophy as a student at Santa Clara University before receiving his M.A. in counseling psychology. A licensed marriage and family therapist he spent almost 15 years as a Division Manager and Vice President at SAIC, including years in Heidelberg and Stuttgart, Germany, managing and developing various international mental health programs for the military and civilian sector in Europe. After settling in Virginia, he founded the Alpha Omega Clinic, with outpatient mental health clinics in Maryland and Virginia.

Along the way, Bennett wrote 5 books integrating mental health with the Catholic faith, with his wife, Laraine Bennett. With Laraine, Bennett has four adult children, their spouses and five grandchildren.



Art Bennett thanks volunteer Christopher Cowardin as he unloads backpacks for the Prison Ministry Program.

After taking a couple months’ break, Bennett plans to start anew.

“I plan on doing marriage therapy, this time enjoying it with my psychologist daughter, Lianna, in her private practice,” he said. “I hope to pray more, read more and help out where I can so I can join Bob Dylan’s My Back Pages refrain: ‘Ah, I was so much older then, I’m younger than that now.’” †

## MOTHER OF MERCY FREE MEDICAL CLINIC

# Drive Thru Food and Coat Distribution, Flu Clinic Launch 'World Day of the Poor' Observation



Catholic Charities staff and volunteers distributed winter coats, hats and gloves to people in a drive-thru distribution.

**B**EFORE IT OFFICIALLY OPENED ITS doors on Nov. 23, Catholic Charities’ Mother of Mercy Free Medical Clinic in Woodbridge hosted its first event to help members of the local community meet critical needs brought on by COVID-19 and the approaching winter.

On the Church’s 4th annual World Day of the Poor, observed this year on Sunday, Nov. 15, Catholic Charities teamed up with parish and medical volunteers from the diocese to hold a drive-thru food and winter coat distribution, and a park-and-receive flu vaccine.

Volunteers from Our Lady of Angels, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Holy Family, St. Bernadette, St. Timothy, All Saints, St. Agnes, and Nativity parishes, Paul VI High School and Kaiser Permanente, among others, welcomed the families.

Pope Francis established World Day of the Poor and called on Catholics to focus on serving our neighbors, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

“This responsibility to serve our neighbor is essential to our Faith,” Bishop Michael Burbidge said in a World Day of the Poor letter to the faithful. “Our worship sacraments and prayer, and living in solidarity with the poor and suffering, are inseparable.”

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# Donors Respond While Need for Food Continues to Grow



A volunteer prepares a to-go dinner for a client at Christ House's evening meal program.

**S**INCE THE PANDEMIC HIT VIRGINIA, our St. Lucy Food Project has been working hard to keep the food pantry shelves stocked to meet an ever-increasing need to feed families throughout our diocese.

Parishes continue to work with St. Lucy to schedule no-contact drive thru food drives and Sunday food drives. St. Lucy has also set up a 24-hour food bin at the Manassas warehouse for drop offs and an Amazon wish list where people can order food from their homes.

But keeping up with the need remains a challenge as the pandemic continues to wreak economic havoc. Families who have long struggled to make ends meet continue to seek food assistance, and now families who never needed help find themselves not able to afford food to feed their families.

In October, St. Lucy Program Director Vince Cannava put out an urgent call

for people to contribute food or funds when he reported food donations were down 45 percent over the same period last year. St. Lucy urged people to donate food either at an upcoming food drive, through the Amazon wish list, or by donating directly to Catholic Charities St. Lucy Food Project.

Parishioners, friends and donors have responded generously. The first week of October Amazon delivered 416 pounds of food to the St. Lucy warehouse in Manassas. In the last week of October, Amazon delivered a hefty 5,026 pounds of food – 12 times more than it delivered at the beginning of the month. Additionally, five October food drives – at St. Clare of Assisi, Clifton; All Saints, Manassas, St. Luke, McLean; St. Rita, Alexandria; and Holy Spirit School, Annandale – garnered another 18,908 pounds of food.

“We’re so grateful for this rapid response,” Cannava said. “This starts to put us on track to recover where we should be from last year before COVID. Every time Amazon pulls up to our warehouse or we hold a food drive, we’re reminded of the generosity of our friends.”

“Our urgent need continues. We haven’t yet made up the deficit in food donations,” he said. “The coronavirus has impacted many people in our diocese, both those who look to us for assistance, and those who provide it. We’re just entering the colder months, and many people are still out of work or struggling to get by. We hope the good people of our diocese will continue to remember those who need to feed their families.” †

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## Drive Thru Food and Coat Distribution, Flu Clinic Launch 'World Day of the Poor' Observation



Medical volunteers gave free flu shots to people who didn't have to get out of their cars.

St. Lucy Food Project food drives held at Nativity, St. Ambrose and Good Shepherd parishes also marked the day.

50 pre-registered participants pulled up to the winter coat distribution to find coats specifically selected for each member of their family. An additional 150 people arrived day of, and volunteers selected winter coats, gloves, hats and scarves for their family members as well. Volunteers loaded boxes full of food for more than 100 families.

The flu clinic was staffed by local medical volunteers. Following temperature checks and completing a medical questionnaire, almost 60 uninsured men, women and children received their flu shots without having to get out of their vehicles.

The drive-thru event took place almost a week before Bishop Burbidge was scheduled to bless the new clinic and celebrate Mass in its chapel.

“There are so many people, especially now in this time of COVID, that are not able to get a flu shot, or not able to get some food – so being able to get food and coats and get a flu shot all in one place is so important,” said Clinic Director Alexandra Luevano, BSN, RN, CCM. †

## ST. MARTIN DE PORRES SENIOR CENTER



### St. Martin de Porres Senior Center's Outreach Continues, Though Doors Remain Closed

Staff (from left) Luis Angel and María Mellor pray the rosary with Chong Brandenstein outside the Senior Center.

**B**EFORE THE PANDEMIC, ST. MARTIN DE Porres Senior Center in Alexandria, in partnership with the City of Alexandria, was providing a variety of activities, field trips, and meals for senior citizens, and typically had been serving 55-60 clients a day.

But when COVID-19 reached Virginia in March, the Senior Center had to close its doors. The staff sent the clients home with six to nine meals worth of shelf-stable food and the Senior Center quickly began to adapt their services to provide remote case management and distance care.

This meant the staff of three were in regular contact with all the active participants in making sure that they had necessary supplies and food. Additionally, the Senior Center coordinated with the City of Alexandria to connect their clients with regular meal delivery.

In July, the Center was able to open on two consecutive Fridays to allow seniors to visit and have their phones and tablets set-up with email and Zoom, which then allowed seniors to participate in socially distanced exercise classes led by an online instructor. Services were provided to 110 seniors from July to September.

Delfina Vargas had never missed a Friday at the Senior Center. In good weather, the 80-year-old Alexandria resident walked from her condo, where she lives with her husband and daughter, to the Senior Center to socialize, play games, join exercise classes and pray. When the pandemic suspended the program and halted her daily visit to the Center, the staff managed to bring a little piece of the Center to her — in the form of personalized activity kits.

These kits can include cotton masks, board games, puzzles, recipes, reading material, a personal gift, candy, toiletries and clothing. Each kit is personalized based on individual needs.

Chong Brandenstein is 90 years old. She lives alone and hadn't seen anyone since the Center closed. She nearly cried when staff dropped off an activity kit at her home. She has no family close by and has only limited contact with them through phone calls. She said in a phone interview it was hard to explain just how difficult and lonely it's been.

"They are so happy to see us," said Anne Coyne, director of senior services. "When we deliver the kits, they usually meet us at the door or (we) drop them



Anne Coyne (left), director of the Senior Center, and María Mellor (right), activity coordinator, deliver a kit to Mildred Walker

off on the porch." But the smiles, and sometimes tears, go both ways.

Staff at the Center continue to be available by phone, and proactively are calling the most vulnerable participants to be sure they are doing well. "Our hope is that we'll touch base with everyone every couple of days," said Michael Horne, director of clinical services for Catholic Charities. "And that they can call us as well if they need something." As for how the Senior Center will look once the doors can open again, Michael said, "We'd like to have a hybrid approach. Many seniors may continue to have difficulty getting to the Center, especially in bad weather. So being able to serve people both in person and virtually would allow us to reach the largest possible number of participants."†

# Finding a Permanent Home in the United States

**MWAJUMA BILUBI, ORIGINALLY FROM** the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), had lived in a refugee camp with her seven children before arriving in the United States just three months ago.

Since the ousting of its president in 1997 by rebels, DRC has had civil conflict and war over political leadership without resolution. Mwajuma, her husband, and two young sons had to flee from the country due to dangerous circumstances arising out of political power struggles amongst faction leaders and the targeting of various ethnic groups vying for power.

The Bilubi family took refuge in the Nyarugusu refugee camp in Tanzania, one of the largest refugee camps of the 21st century. They lived in this camp for over 21 years, during which time they had 5 more children.

On September 3, 2020, through the US refugee resettlement program, Mwajuma and six of her children arrived safely at Dulles Airport, greeted by Catholic Charities Migration and Refugee Services (MRS) staff as well as their family sponsor.

Before their arrival, MRS worked to secure housing for the family and provide basic household items and furniture. The family was provided with culturally appropriate groceries, PPE, and cleaning supplies. In October, the Bilubi's met Bishop Burbidge at an MRS event where the family received backpacks, school supplies and warm coats to prepare for their first American winter.

MRS staff has also provided cultural orientation in their native language and will continue to orient them to life in the US throughout the coming weeks. With abundant resources in hand and collective effort from MRS staff and the



*Mwajuma Bilubi and six of her children arrive at Dulles airport.*

agency, the family is expected to do well as they move forward in their new home.

The newly-arrived family has four employable adults eager to explore job opportunities once they receive their social security numbers. These four adults were assisted with enrolling in Catholic Charities ESL classes, and provided with donated laptops, internet, and smart phones to enable them to join online classes, cultural orientation, pre-employment training and other necessary training sessions. With the assistance of MRS, the three minor children were enrolled in public schools and started attending in-person classes in October.

Sadly, Mwajuma's husband and eldest son have not yet been able to join the family.

Her son is still living in the refugee camp with his wife and two children, desperately waiting to come to the US and reunite with his mother.

When the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was registering the refugees in the camp, her husband had left to seek employment in order to earn money to help the family survive. Refugees are not allowed or authorized to leave the camp to Mwajuma and her six children miss their father and brother terribly. MRS continues to work through legal and international channels to find options to help reunite this family. †

If interested in supporting this family or other refugees resettled by MRS through donations or volunteering, please contact Emily Wood, Volunteer Manager, [Emily.wood@ccda.net](mailto:Emily.wood@ccda.net) or 703-851-6388. **You can also find our Amazon wishlist at:** [ccda.net/MRSWishList](https://www.amazon.com/ccda.net/MRSWishList)

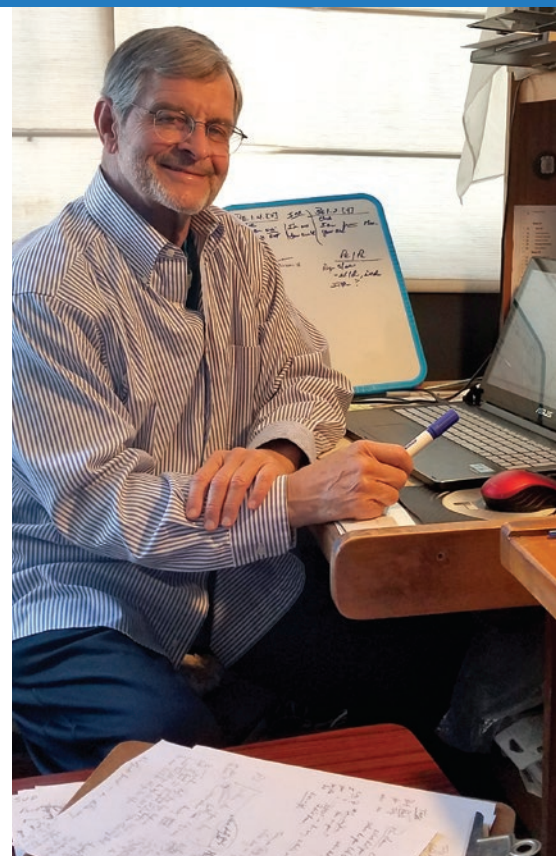


# ESOL Teacher Volunteers from Peru

BY EMILY WOOD, VOLUNTEER MANAGER, NEWCOMER SERVICES

**NINE MONTHS AGO, THE OUTBREAK** of Covid-19 made life incredibly unpredictable. Rick Loerch, a volunteer ESOL teacher with our Education and Workforce Development Program, experienced this unpredictability firsthand while abroad in Peru.

the world. We have some volunteers from other parts of the country, like a cohort of University of Northern Florida Education students, and some volunteers from other parts of the world, like Rick.



**“If we can encourage more people to be involved in small ways...there are other program dimensions that we can explore.”**

– RICK LOERCH, VOLUNTEER ESOL TEACHER

Rick has volunteered with Catholic Charities, Diocese of Arlington’s Education and Workforce Development Program since 2015, when he taught English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) at the Queen of Apostles Church in Alexandria.

During the winter months, Rick and his wife travel to their second home in Lima, Peru. When Rick made those trips in previous years, he would take time off from teaching ESOL for Catholic Charities. As Rick was gearing to come back to Virginia earlier this year, Covid-19 hit, and Rick was stranded in Lima for the foreseeable future. Instead of taking more time off from volunteering, Rick decided to volunteer with our virtual ESOL classrooms.

Through the Education and Workforce Development Program’s virtual classroom, volunteers now have the option to volunteer from anywhere in

When asked about the biggest challenge that the virtual classroom poses, Rick’s answer was quick – technology. He stressed the importance of embracing technology in our ever-evolving world. Our virtual classroom doesn’t only teach English; we help our students feel confident using technology in the classroom, so they can bring that confidence into other aspects of their lives, whether it be for work, helping their children with school, or even Zooming with family.

Rick expressed support for our use of team-teaching in the classroom. Each of our Education and Workforce Development classes has at least two teachers in each room, giving teachers a chance to split up work, and give individualized support to students. “It’s good to step back and learn from other teachers too,” he stated, adding that co-teaching brings a valuable lesson to other aspects of life: we can always learn something from our peers.

“(Collaboration) makes for a better product.”

When asked about how our classes can improve, Rick expressed the need for further volunteer support of our program. “If we can encourage more people to be involved in small ways... there are other program dimensions that we can explore.” †



## Volunteer!

Interested in volunteering as a virtual ESOL teacher with our Education and Workforce Development Program?

Email  
[volunteer.newcomer@ccda.net](mailto:volunteer.newcomer@ccda.net)



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**February 5, 2021**

**A Video of Generosity and Service**

We invite you to join us for a special video premiere on February 5, 2021, which will take the place of our annual in-person Ball and present an inspiring perspective on our programs and people we serve.

Please visit [www.cdda.net/ball](http://www.cdda.net/ball) for more information and to make a gift. Your generous support is critical to helping us continue to meet the needs of the poor and most vulnerable during these difficult times.



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Every day, Catholic Charities brings transformational services, delivered with compassion, to meet the needs of those who seek our help, regardless of background, belief, or circumstance.

Be part of this transformation by making a pledge to Catholic Charities during this CFC campaign season.

**Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington's CFC number is #24770**

The CFC also allows:

- You to pledge volunteer hours to help Catholic Charities serve tens of thousands of clients each year; and
- Federal retirees to make a recurring donation by deduction from their annuity.

Check "YES" to share your pledge information so we can keep you updated on the impact of your gift.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT!**

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