

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



*A new mom and her three-week old baby visit with St. Margaret of Cortona program assistant Elena Starrantino.*

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## St. Margaret's Provides Safe, Welcoming Home for Moms and Their Babies

**E**VEN BEFORE THE SUPREME Court's Dobb's decision about abortion, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington was already working to address one of the dominant reasons very low income and homeless women cite as an obstacle to carrying a baby to full term.

Simply stated, the prospective loss or actual loss of housing is one of the factors women report when they consider an abortion. Keeping a roof over children's heads is a critical value to all parents, especially those who have experienced the bitterness of homelessness.

St. Margaret of Cortona began as Transitional Housing, a workforce development program. In its first 10 years of operation, 10 babies were born, while their moms also maintained full-time employment and simultaneously studied for their GED or undertook vocational training. While effective for stabilizing the family's future, the moms' progress was not without a cost. Infants entered daycare at six weeks, the earliest age at which childcare centers would accept them. The mother–infant relationship was strained by fatigue, revolving caretakers, and frequent illnesses contracted in multi-child centers.

In 2019, during St. Margaret's 10th anniversary, Program Director Veronica Roth proposed an alternative housing model focusing on single homeless pregnant women—this would include women experiencing a first-time pregnancy as well as mothers who already had other minor children.

The program began Jan. 1, 2020. The woman is eligible for housing from the date she moves in and an additional 90 days after she gives birth. Pre-natal care is emphasized, and mothers are supported as they continue to build their independence. Women entering in their first and even second trimester often want to work and save money,

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Dear Friends,

In this issue of our newsletter, you will encounter people who, through their service and generosity, are indeed ‘ambassadors for Christ.’ Each, in their own way, serve as an example and an inspiration to all of us.

A recent high school graduate, **JP Felmlee** volunteers in our Migration and Refugee Services ministry tutoring children of refugees and asylum seekers so that he may, in his words, “grow closer to God...and experience what he studied.”

**Mary Elizabeth Wuest**, may she rest in peace, lived a life of service and was a dedicated benefactor of Catholic Charities. Her generosity has touched countless lives and will continue to do so for many years to come.

One of our colleagues, **Kathleen Renfro**, has chosen to share her skills and compassion with us as an employee serving children of recently arriving refugees by ensuring

that they are quickly enrolled in school, and that they are as prepared as possible.

Many of you may know **Donald and Dona Dei**, who together, have served men and women who are imprisoned, and those who are returning to our communities, by personally sharing the word of God and providing material and spiritual assistance to people leaving prison.

These remarkable people remind us all of our own obligation, and opportunity, to live lives of service “as if God were appealing through us.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Gratefully yours in Christ,



**STEPHEN CARATTINI**  
*President and CEO*

*Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington*



### *MRS: welcoming angels, unawares*

Bishop Michael F. Burbidge recently blessed Catholic Charities’ new Migration and Refugee Services office in Woodbridge where staff welcome and assist refugees and other newcomers. Catholic Charities President and CEO, Stephen Carattini, presented the Bishop a small piece of art, “Angels Unawares,” a replica of the 20-foot bronze sculpture which features migrants, angels and the Holy Family that rests in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican. The Sculpture is modeled after Hebrews 13:2:

*“Be welcoming to strangers, many have entertained angels unawares.”*

*Continued from page 1*

### **St. Margaret's Provides Safe, Welcoming Home for Moms and Their Babies**

with their doctors setting healthy limits on work. They are offered all the opportunities that a mother in transitional housing receives – case management, counseling, children’s services, and life skills classes. Staff help mothers make birthing plans and identify supports from family and friends. SMC will secure new or gently used cribs, changing tables, baby clothes, and breast pumps and obtain new crib mattresses, bottles, car seats and donations of diapers and wipes to keep baby equipped on his/her return from the hospital.

Early in the mom’s stay, the case worker introduces the expectant mom to Catholic Charities Pregnancy and Adoption Services (PAS) to answer any questions the woman may have. The SMC case manager also reaches out to access other community resources for new mothers. The mothers with the newborns have the option to apply for the Transitional Housing program –

offering up to an additional 24 months of stable housing and intensive services.

SMC is a small homeless housing program, with only 12 apartment units. We are blessed in being one of several maternity housing programs in the Diocese. Our work as Catholics professing our support of life from the moment of conception means far more than opposing abortion. We also must advocate for family and provide an opportunity for children to grow and thrive free of hunger, with a safe place to sleep every night.

Five babies have been born to mothers living at SMC since our maternity program began, doubling our services to expectant mothers in two years over the first 10 years. We fully expect that number may grow. We pray St. Margaret of Cortona can help meet that need while holding fast to St. Margaret’s mission of helping homeless mothers and children. †

# A Church of the Lost and Found



*“We're following Jesus' instruction. There are many needs and we must help when we are able.”*

Thanks to Rose, Benedict and the Ghana Catholic Community of Queen of Apostles, Alexandria, for household supplies for our moms and kids at St. Margaret of Cortona Transitional Housing.



*Showing the love of Christ through service to those in need*

Catholic Charities relies on our parishes and community partners to help show the love of Christ through service to those in need. Since 2020, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has been a wonderful partner in this, donating over 185,000 lbs. of food to the Saint Lucy Project.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus tells stories of a coin that was lost and found; a sheep that was lost and found; and a son that was lost and found. These are all parables which convey God's joy in finding us when we are lost, and forgiving us when we sin. In each story there is a response of extravagant love. St. Catherine of Siena put it this way: "God is crazy in love with us."

Many come to Catholic Charities who are lost. The men living in Christ House or the single mothers in residence at St. Margaret of Cortona Transitional Housing speak of how lost they felt while experiencing homelessness, legal issues, prison, a crisis pregnancy, or poverty. Through our ministries, they find new hope and are taught life skills and values that change their lives and those of their children. What a gift it is to be loved and seen as priceless by others, as well as in the eyes of God. At Catholic Charities, we not only put a roof over people's heads but a foundation under their feet and through the St. Lucy Food Project, we also put food on their tables.

Your financial support is essential for our mission of supporting, encouraging, and extending kindness to those who come to us lost and seeking transformation. Thank you in advance for your gift of generosity. May you know the joy of God in the experience of being lost and then found. Let us also be instruments of God's mercy and forgiveness to others, not by judging but rather by sharing the great love of God to them.

As we live our lives this week, let us remember that "God is crazy in love with us"... every one of us, even when we are lost.

Blessings,



*Fr. Bob Cilinski*  
**FATHER ROBERT CILINSKI**  
Episcopal Vicar for  
Charitable Works

## Back to School

By KATHLEEN RENFROE, School Liaison



Backpacks were loaded with school supplies appropriate for different grades.

**H**APPY SMILES FILLED THE Fredericksburg office of Migrant and Refugee Services (MRS), when school-aged children came by to pick up brand new backpacks and school supplies in preparation for the new school year. Our staff was elated to distribute 144 backpacks to refugee children from the Stafford, Fredericksburg, and Spotsylvania areas. We also delivered items to families who were not able to join us in person. Backpacks were also given out at MRS offices in Arlington, Manassas, and Woodbridge. All told about 400 backpacks were distributed.

In addition to supplies, parents could help their children choose an outfit to look their best on their first day of school.

Backpacks and supplies were provided thanks to the generosity of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Fredericksburg; St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Lake Ridge; Church of the Nativity, Burke; Rock Spring Congregational Church, Arlington; and the Interfaith Council.

Most of the families who attended the distribution arrived in the United States in the last 18 months. They often come with very little. But when children go to school with supplies that inspire learning, they feel welcomed and can more easily assimilate into a new school environment.

This is just one way in the which the MRS ministry has been able to encourage and promote enthusiasm for childhood education, which cannot always be taken for granted in other countries.

We were particularly touched by meeting two families whose daughters were unable to go to school in their native country. Like many refugee children,

**400**   
**backpacks distributed**

to refugee children from Stafford, Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, Woodbridge, Manassas, and Arlington areas.

**We also delivered items to families who were not able to join us in person.**

they'd never had a new backpack filled with supplies. It was wonderful to see their joy as they got to pick out their new backpacks! I know they'll face many challenges but being a part of that moment was unforgettable. It's just one of the reasons that this distribution is so important for the youth program.

We also celebrated the start of middle school for one of our refugee kids. She arrived in 2021 but was not able to attend due to a lengthy medical evaluation. This year, she finally joined her sister for the start of this school year. This is the first time she attended school since the 4th grade. We are so excited for her and for all our refugee children and look forward to seeing them all grow with joy and knowledge! †



### How to help

We rely on assistance from parishioners and friends to help welcome refugees.

Go to [ccda.net/helpimmigrantsandrefugees/](https://ccda.net/helpimmigrantsandrefugees/)

# Retirees Make Prison Ministry Their Latest Pursuit

A longer version of this story appeared in *The Arlington Catholic Herald*. Reprinted with permission.

**A**BOUT FIVE YEARS AGO, DONALD and Dona Dei, both 75, parishioners of Corpus Christi Church in South Riding, retired from their jobs and headed to the local prison.

“Don was looking for a place to put his energy,” Dona said. The retired nuclear engineer had heard about Catholic Charities’ prison ministry and joined a team of fellow parishioners providing Sunday liturgical prayer services at the Loudoun County Adult Detention Center in 2014. A year later, Dona, a retired registered nurse, began ministering to women in the jail.

Once a month, they lead the Sunday Bible and prayer service with fellowship afterward, and Dona, a Eucharistic minister, also brings communion. They minister to Catholics, people of other faiths and people of no faiths. Once, Don ministered to a pagan.

“We are meeting the inmates where they are,” Dona said.

“It’s tough. It’s the hardest work I’ve ever done,” Don said. Many inmates struggle with drug and alcohol addiction and many other problems. Recidivism is high. “You go in. You do what you do at that time. And you go on. If you get frustrated, it’s not the job for you.”

“That one Sunday a month refuels your spiritual life — just to sit there with those individuals,” Don said. “They’re there to hear the word of God and that’s what we bring them. Each of us feels the Holy Spirit present when we go in there.”

Soon after Don joined the prison ministry, he helped begin another



*Dona and Don Dei pose for a photo outside the Loudoun County Adult Detention Center where they volunteer.*

ministry, a 24-hour rapid response team for men and women getting out of prison. The Transitional Assistance Program is designed to offer 24 hours of intense help to returning citizens as they walk out the prison doors. Many inmates have no one to greet them. They have no clothes but the ones on their backs, and no idea of how to find housing, food, or employment.

“The primary thing we were focused on: We would show up when they’re released,” Don said. They hand over a backpack loaded with hygiene supplies, socks, hand sanitizer, bus passes, Bibles and, more recently, cell phones. They take the returning citizen out to a local restaurant for their first hot meal

“It’s tough. It’s the hardest work I’ve ever done.” – DONALD DEI

outside of jail. TAP volunteers work on helping them secure a place to sleep and the necessary identification cards, and provide resources for other social services help, including through Catholic Charities.

Dona felt compelled to join Don because of TAP. “TAP relies on case management, which nurses are pretty good at doing. It is a calling, I guess.” †



## How to help

For more info on prison ministry and the Welcome Home ministry, go to [ccda.net/give-help/serve-those-in-need/prison-ministry/](https://ccda.net/give-help/serve-those-in-need/prison-ministry/).

# “She Never Looked at Giving as a Burden”



Commander Mary E. Wuest, USN (1939-2021). Photo courtesy of the National Archives.

**MARY ELIZABETH WUEST'S LIFE** was defined by service – to her family, her country, and her community.

Born and raised north of Detroit, Mary grew up the eldest of seven in a large Catholic family. Her generous spirit and dedication to family were apparent early on. After earning a degree in Mathematics from the University of Detroit, Mary traveled as a young professional for a large corporation. When domestic challenges arose, Mary had a knack for correct answers and good decisions to benefit her siblings. For example, when two siblings suddenly needed a home, Mary immediately said *Yes, I'll help* – regardless of any inconvenience to her busy, successful career. In addition, when her mother's health deteriorated, Mary stepped up and took on the role of mother for her youngest brother and sister.

Seeking a new career that allowed her to serve her country as well as her family, Mary entered Navy training and was

“She would help and encourage others always... I owe my military uniform (USAF) to her.”

– DAVID WUEST, MARY'S BROTHER

commissioned an officer. Applying her passion for accuracy, Mary excelled at several jobs and later joined an important and critical mission of enemy ship surveillance during the Cold War. She worked for three years in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, where she tracked enemy vessels to prevent submarines with nuclear weapons from entering North American Sea Lanes. As lead analyst, Mary earned a reputation for impeccable competence. Her Canadian counterparts said, “no submarine ever slipped past Mary undetected.”

Selected for Navy graduate school, Mary earned her master's degree in Oceanography from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. She later worked as an analyst at the Navy Annex in Arlington. An esteemed Executive Officer, Mary's command leadership style demonstrated the nicest sense of personal honor and meticulous courtesy.

She continued to stay active into retirement with many activities including writing, painting, and participation in the German American club. Mary wrote a book titled *Spessart Roots: A History of the People of a German Forest* about the land of her father's ancestors. Her research and accuracy were admired so highly that local historians translated the book into German!

Mary was a member of St. Ann's Parish in Arlington, and for many years, she supported Catholic Charities by donating over 10% of her annual income. Mary also

named Catholic Charities as a beneficiary of her estate. “She never looked at giving as a burden,” says her brother, David Wuest.

When asked to describe Mary in one word, her brother answered, “Angelic. It may seem odd to describe a warrior that way, but that's who she was... that's just how she lived. She would help and encourage others always... I owe my military uniform (USAF) to her,” says David.

Mary's death was unexpected but, in a sense, she was prepared. Not only did she have an Advance Medical Directive, she also had a will that generously benefited her favorite nonprofits, such as Catholic Charities.

Because she was prepared, her legacy of helping others continues! †

## Planned Giving

**You can leave a gift to the Catholic Diocese of Arlington and Catholic Charities in your Will or Trust with as little as one sentence.**

For information view our website [ccda.net](http://ccda.net) or contact John French at (703) 841-3819 or at [john.french@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:john.french@arlingtondiocese.org).

## Meet JP Felmlee

“Faith is rooted in community, the daily connections we make, and the lives we change through small acts of altruism.”  
– JP FELMLEE, VOLUNTEER



### Tell us about your background.

I graduated from Gonzaga College High School in Washington, D.C., in June. I begin my studies at Bowdoin College in the fall of 2023. I'm taking a "year off" from academia to acquire a better understanding of our world, and to engage in activities I couldn't pursue because of the pandemic.

During high school, I volunteered at The Father McKenna Center, Gonzaga's on-campus day shelter and food pantry. I was first exposed to the reality of poverty through serving DC's homeless men and women; my family had been helping to stock their pantry since I was 11 years old. In addition, I conducted a clothing drive as my Eagle Scout Project during the pandemic, where I was able to collect over one hundred pairs of jeans and thousands of other articles of clothing.

I helped tutor middle and high school students at the International Rescue Committee's (IRC) Summer Academy in Maryland. I'm also the Chair of Advocacy for the IRC Alliance, an outreach organization led by young professionals in the DMV area.

But I wanted to do even more: I wanted to go further out of my comfort zone to do something greater than myself. Catholic Charities gave me that opportunity.

### How did you get involved with Migration and Resettlement Services?

I wanted to involve myself with tutoring refugee and asylee children. When I learned of VRSAP – Virginia Refugee Student Achievement Program – I knew I could make a more direct impact on my local community and the families

who decided to start their next chapter in the US. I joined in August and was assigned my first client family the same day. Since then, I have been tutoring children from two separate client families, and I hope to soon help at least one more family.

### What do you find rewarding about what you do?

I find my work rewarding through the boosted confidence on the children's faces after each session, the satisfaction in knowing I was able to better my community, and the rapport I develop with the families. The stories I have heard from the children have been both heartbreaking and heartwarming. Put it this way: it's one thing to hear about a terrible world event in the news or online, but it hits harder when you're told the same story by a teenager who experienced it first-hand. Being able to hear those stories takes trust, which is something I most value in our developing relationships.

### What role does your faith play?

One of my goals in volunteering was to grow closer to God and His ministry through selfless service. A lot of my life is rooted in faith. I grew up in a Catholic family and attended a Jesuit high school where I took courses in religious studies. By taking these religion classes at Gonzaga – particularly those related to social justice – I wanted to go out into the real world and experience what I studied.

I have grown stronger and more understanding of my faith because of my time with Catholic Charities. I learned that faith is rooted in community, the daily connections we make, and the lives we change through small acts of altruism. My work with

VRSAP has been the closest thing I have experienced to true social justice.

### Could you share a story of your experience?

I recently started online tutoring sessions with two children – a young boy and girl – who are brother and sister. Before our first session, I had learned that their mother died in the August 2021 Kabul airport attack, where they had been separated from their father and older brother for quite some time. Though the two children are being taken care of by their aunt, I am to some extent finding myself a welcome extension to their family.

I first had the opportunity to host tutoring sessions for the boy. I'm teaching him proper reading comprehension, pronunciation, and grammar, to help him gain more confidence in his English language abilities before he enters high school. I believe I'm having a positive impact on his academic and social abilities. The time spent dedicated to helping this young man grow in knowledge reaffirms my own confidence in making a difference in the community, one step at a time. †



## Volunteer!

Are you interested in being a mentor for the Virginia Refugee Student Assistance Program?

To learn more, email [newcomer.volunteer@ccda.net](mailto:newcomer.volunteer@ccda.net), visit [bit.ly/3LwtD8p](http://bit.ly/3LwtD8p), or scan the QR code.



## Price hikes hurting neighbors in need

Food prices have gone up and everyone has been affected, none more than our neighbors struggling to make ends meet. Food donations to St. Lucy Food Project also have been impacted: they've **declined 20 percent** since July!

### Catholic Charities needs your help!

Please consider donating food or funds to Catholic Charities' St. Lucy Food Project Fall Harvest Food Drive. Go to [ccda.net/give-help/donate-and-distribute-food](https://ccda.net/give-help/donate-and-distribute-food).



## Mark Your Calendar for These Upcoming Events!

Nov. 13, 2022	World Day of the Poor
Nov. 29, 2022	Giving Tuesday
Dec. 10-11, 2022	Parish Christmas Collection
Feb. 10, 2023	Catholic Charities Ball



## Workplace Giving

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

You can be a 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.

Please remember to 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 of our work.**

## ABOUT CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

*Together, We're Transforming Lives!*

21 ministries across 21 Virginia counties and 7 cities

Serves all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance

89 cents of every dollar spent goes to ministries and services



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Arlington, VA 22203

## Join Our Online Community



Our Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 24770.