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Vini and Joy Granados hold their adopted son, Lucas, and a photo of their first son, Mateo, who died in March. Photo courtesy of Leslie Miller

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Herndon Couple's Adoption Journey Intertwines Suffering and Joy

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

JOY AND VINI GRANADOS KNOW better than most couples how joy and suffering are so often intertwined.

After getting married in 2016, they wanted children — they'd both been married before and knew they were getting a late start. But Joy, 39, didn't think she could get pregnant, due to her cystic fibrosis.

She and Vini, 46, parishioners of St. Joseph Church in Herndon, approached Catholic Charities about adopting, but were told they had to be married two years to adopt through

the agency's infant pool. At their ages, "we didn't want to wait," he said.

They worked with Catholic Charities on the home study and background documents required for adoption, but also explored other agencies that match young women facing unplanned pregnancies with couples who want to adopt. Over many months, they were matched with birth mothers eight times. Each time they got their hopes up, in some cases meeting pregnant women and paying for housing, living expenses, maternity clothes and other pregnancy-related expenses for several months — only to be told at

the last minute that a birth mother had changed her mind and decided to keep the baby after all.

Meaghan Lane, program director of Pregnancy and Adoption Support at diocesan Catholic Charities, warns against the many "sketchy" adoption practices out there; the agency's commitment to fostering healthy adoptions includes counseling clients on how to evaluate ethical adoption practices that focus on "genuine counseling and assistance" for women and families.

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President's Message

“What is God asking of us at this time?”



– POPE FRANCIS

Dear Friends of Catholic Charities,

As we journey towards Bethlehem to bear witness to the birth of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, I can't help but reflect that God has asked a great deal of us this past year. In fact, Catholic Charities served more people in the past 12 months than at any period in our nearly 50-year history. A pandemic and the evacuation of thousands of people from Afghanistan, affected us in ways that we could never have imagined.

I am grateful to God for the work and commitment of our employees and volunteers who each day provided help, and created hope, to thousands of people throughout our diocese. Their dedication, creativity and resourcefulness were, and remain, remarkable.

This past year, the generosity of our community – *your* generosity – allowed us to keep people in their homes, to provide healthy and nutritious food, to dispense medical care, to find a child her forever home, and to welcome those seeking peace and permanence in a new, and often perplexing country. Our faith teaches us that all the people we served are, by the miracle of Christmas, our brothers and sisters.

Together we continue to answer the question posed to us by our Holy Father, each day, and with each and every person who comes to us for our care and consolation. Thank you for your continued prayers, and *let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.*

Gratefully yours in Christ,

STEPHEN CARATTINI
President and CEO
Catholic Charities of the
Diocese of Arlington



The Good We Do Lasts Forever

The end of November brings us to Thanksgiving. We are a grateful people, and that holiday gives us the opportunity to remember the many blessings God has shared with us. Then we honor Christ the King, bringing our liturgical year to an end. We give honor and loyalty to Christ by caring for one another. *Whatever you are doing to the least of these, you are doing to Me.*

These words are comforting and challenging because they teach us that the real proof of how much we love the Lord is found in how we treat those around us. It might be hard to see Christ in others. If we can't see Christ in others, then we can be Christ to others.

So we ask ourselves, “Are we Christ to others?” The answer to that question tells us the truth about ourselves and our eternal destiny.

Advent begins in December, marking a new beginning. And at Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Christ into our world. Jesus was born to poor parents, in a stable, and placed in a manger. He humbled Himself in becoming one of us, and living among us. He teaches us to have a special care for those who come to us in need.

I give thanks to God for each of you – the people of the Diocese of Arlington – for your goodness, your loving spirit, your generosity to the poor and needy, and for your support of the wonderful ministries of Catholic Charities. We would not be able to bring Christ to others without the sacrifices we make together. “The good we do lasts forever.”

Christmas blessings,



FATHER ROBERT CILINSKI
Episcopal Vicar for
Charitable Works

In 2019, Joy and Vini joined Catholic Charities' infant adoption pool. At the same time, they consulted with Tepeyac OB/GYN, a pro-life medical practice in Fairfax, to see if natural techniques could increase their chances of conceiving. They felt God was calling them to be parents — but didn't know how it would happen.

Then in July 2020 they put adoption on hold — amazingly, Joy was pregnant.

But they soon learned the baby had a genetic abnormality: Trisomy 18, associated with serious birth defects. Doctors gave the child a 50 percent chance of dying in utero or being stillborn; if he survived the womb, the likelihood that he would die before his first birthday was 90 percent.

"Termination was not an option for us," Joy said. She had seen medical miracles in her own life and the life of her brother, who also has cystic fibrosis controlled by medicine; now he is a priest in Maryland.

Their tiny son Mateo was born by emergency C-section Feb. 18; but he was in distress and not breathing.

The baby remained on a ventilator in a neonatal ICU for 36 days. Joy and Vini visits every day to hold him in their arms. Not knowing how long he would live, Vini baptized Mateo when he was two days old. "That was one of the best days," he said.

After a week, doctors tried to remove the breathing tubes, but had to reintubate him. In another three weeks they

"I can see God's hand through all of that. We had so much joy in those 36 days. The pain of burying a child is indescribable. But so is the joy of being a parent."
— JOY GRANADOS

tried again but that night the hospital called to say he had to be reintubated yet again. Joy knew he was going to die.

Suddenly it was important to bring him home, where family could come meet him, where they could sing him songs and read to him. "I wanted our family of three in our home," she said.

The hospice team juggled complicated medical requirements so Mateo could be at home with his family for his last hours. He died in Vini's arms March 26; he is buried in a cemetery down the street, where they visit often.

"I can see God's hand through all of that," Joy said. "We had so much joy in those 36 days. The pain of burying a child is indescribable. But so is the joy of being a parent."

And now, "we have a son in heaven who we can pray to, to intercede for us."

In June, they traveled to Spain to hike the Camino de Santiago, and prayed at the tomb of St. James.

"I felt very lost," Joy said. She prayed, "Lord, what are you doing? Do you not want us to be parents? If this desire is not of you, take it away."

In July, Catholic Charities determined that Joy and Vini were ready to go back into the adoption pool. Soon after, they were notified they'd been chosen as a match by a young unmarried couple facing an unplanned pregnancy, who wanted the baby to be raised by a married Catholic couple.

Lucas Nicolas, a healthy baby boy, was born in August. Their open adoption agreement includes monthly photos and letters and occasional visits by the birth parents.

Most infant adoptions in the United States today are open adoptions, now considered a "best practice" in the field. "Children are much better adjusted, with better self-esteem in their own identity," Lane said.

Joy and Vini clearly dote on Lucas, but they haven't forgotten Mateo. They call him Lucas' big brother and attribute the adoption to his intercession.

In Spain, "we talked to him every day," Joy said. One of the reasons the birth parents said they picked them for adoption was Mateo.

"They saw how much we loved him." †



Learn more about Pregnancy and Adoption Services

Catholic Charities believes that adoption is a lifelong journey, one that impacts all members of the adoption triad (birth family, adoptive family, and adoptee). Therefore, we remain a lifelong resource for all of our clients.

Learn more at <https://www.ccca.net/need-help/pregnancy-and-adoption-services/>

Celebrating
40
YEARS

Catholic Charities Ball 2022

*Remembering the Past
with Gratitude*



Join us to celebrate!

Friday, February 11, 2022



In 1982, friends of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington organized and hosted the first Catholic Charities Ball. For the past 40 years the Ball has been a volunteer-led effort and annual winter tradition in the diocese – a beautiful, elegant evening dedicated to celebrating the work of Catholic Charities and raising the critical funds needed to serve vulnerable men, women, children and families who need our care.

We hope that you will join us this year in person on Friday, February 11, 2022, to celebrate an extraordinary year of providing services to more people than ever before, and 40 wonderful years of the Ball!

Please visit ccda.net/ball to make a reservation or to donate to help us meet our goal of \$1.3 million.

“For 16 years, the Catholic Charities Ball has been a part of my life. The evening itself is full of people who value life and faith...and like to have fun! There are so many ways that working on the Ball has shown me people living the gospel, not just talking about it. I am the one who has been enriched by being involved with the Ball.”

– JOAYN BAHR, FORMER BALL CHAIR AND CURRENT BALL COMMITTEE MEMBER

“The Ball, through its generous donors and fundraising efforts, plays a very important role in allowing all of the Catholic Charities ministries to become stronger and to thrive. I have been a part of Catholic Charities since my teenage years, following in the footsteps of my mother and my aunt, and I have been fortunate enough to bring my 5 children on board. I can think of no better team to be on!”

– LAURA TRAMONTE, FORMER BALL CHAIR AND CURRENT BALL COMMITTEE MEMBER

“I am grateful to work with so many friends on the Ball Committee who have committed their time and talent for a wonderful cause. Through their actions they express their love of the Gospel, finding concrete ways to love those who are needy and without hope, and giving of themselves in a way that imitates and reveals the love of Christ’s heart.”

– LOUISE KUGLER, FORMER BALL CHAIR AND CURRENT BALL COMMITTEE MEMBER



Giving Trees Help People to Have “A Real Christmas”



Giving Trees help provide gifts for residents of Christ House like José, and other Catholic Charities clients.

- ✓ \$40 Gift Card Outback Steak House
- ✓ 2 or 3 Black T-shirts XXL
- ✓ Toothpaste

THESE ARE A FEW OF THE GIFT requests from men residing at Christ House in Alexandria. Many of these men have not received a gift since childhood. But on Christmas morning, they’ll each find a bag of gifts – which have been hidden off-site – waiting for them under the Christmas tree.

John Croft, Christ House program director, remembers that last year a resident asked for roller blades so he could exercise after a car accident left him unable to run. “He was shocked that he got them as one of his gifts. He was outside all Christmas week skating all over Alexandria.”

Giving Trees are a beautiful tradition. For the past ten years, Catholic Charities’ Community Services programs have worked closely with many parishes, giving people the opportunity to be

generous for those in need throughout the Diocese.

These Giving Trees work in various ways. At St. Bernadette’s in Springfield, it takes the form of a request for cold weather sleeping bags for the homeless. An average of fifty are donated each year.

At St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Lake Ridge, gift cards are collected. These are particularly helpful in filling in gaps, notes Gregory McKinney, of Migration and Refugee Services (MRS).

McKinney adds that because the people served might not be Christian, the gift cards aren’t necessarily tied to Christmas. They could even be used later in the year, on a case-by-case basis. “Parishes who have Giving Trees with gift cards realize that they’re not necessarily contributing for a particular individual,” he says. “But they know that it will go to someone who needs it.”

For example, Walmart gift cards which were donated at Christ the Redeemer in Sterling were given to someone who

used them to purchase a prescription. Gift cards are useful because people in need can be dealing with more than one issue: lack of food, a car in need of repair, difficulty paying for medicine.

Lourdes Sandoval, also of MRS, has seen online wish lists become competitive in a sportsmanlike way, with offices competing against each other to purchase items. “One advantage with Amazon is we are able to get items that are already wrapped,” she adds.

And people are grateful for what they receive. Veronica Roth is program director at St. Margaret of Cortona Transitional Residences, which usually hosts about eight or nine families. She notes that the families who have received gifts send thank you notes to those who’ve helped them. One young child, eager to thank a donor, instead addressed the card “Dear donut”!

Thanks to Catholic Charities’ generous “donuts,” many people in the Diocese will experience joy on Christmas morning, and receive assistance long after that.

Back at Christ House last year, a resident took his bag of gifts up to his room after opening only one item. When asked if he was going to open his gifts, he explained that he was taking them to his room. He would open one gift each day – to make the joy last as long as possible. He hadn’t experienced a real Christmas in a long time, he said, adding, “This is a real Christmas.” †



How can you help?

You may contact Catholic Charities ministries at ccda.net, or go to volunteer.ccda.net.

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: EVELYN KILEY

“The closing words of the Mass remind us to “go in peace to love and serve the Lord!” Supporting CCDA was a natural decision to make” - EVELYN KILEY



Meet Evelyn Kiley

Evelyn Kiley and her husband Tom first moved to Northern Virginia so that he could take a job as a mathematics professor at George Mason University, where he stayed for 43 years. Evelyn spent a similar amount of time working for Fairfax County Government. Tom passed on to be with God in 2018.

How did you become aware of Catholic Charities? What motivated your decision to support our ministries?

Catholic Charities has a reputation for seeking out and alleviating the distress of humanity. Our attention was drawn by well-run, effective channels for heeding the Good Shepherd’s command to “feed my lambs!” A recent gift was inspired by the parish Knights of Columbus council’s commitment to increased collections for the St. Lucy Food Project during the COVID pandemic.

Father Bob Cilinski recently visited the parish, and I asked him if a particular diocesan project was in need of funding. He mentioned

the Mother of Mercy Free Medical clinics. This work for the poor is of particular interest to me, as a member of a family whose members have treated, healed, and cared for the poor both professionally and as volunteers.

What role does your Faith play in your decision to support CCDA?

Our Faith is cornerstone of our life. We engaged in parish activities over the years: Tom with pancake breakfasts and counting of the Sunday collection; and I volunteered as an organist and keyboardist. Most recently I was very much blessed to play the organ/keyboard at St. Clare of Assisi parish in Clifton, Virginia for

approximately 20 years. Currently, I enjoy singing in the choir there.

As Catholics, we have learned that, “Faith without works” is incomplete or insufficient. *Whatsoever you do for the least of my brothers, that you do unto me.* Many of the hymns played and sung as part of our Catholic liturgy, as well as the closing words of the Mass remind us to “go in peace to love and serve the Lord!” Supporting CCDA was a natural decision to make.

Why is Catholic Charities worth people’s support?

Charitable giving is twice-blessed. “It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.” (*The Merchant of Venice, Act 4*). †

TBG

IN NOVEMBER, young people came together at Tucked Away Brewing in Manassas for “T.B.G.” – an evening of truth, beauty, and goodness, sponsored by the Office of Young Adult Ministry.

Attendees got to experience Truth in a story of faith told by Bishop Michael Burbidge. Beauty was represented with live music and an art display by noted sculptor Dony McManus. And Goodness came in the partnership with the St. Lucy Food Project, which was next door to the venue. Guests were invited to bring canned soup, and were given tours of the St. Lucy’s warehouse. †

Clockwise from top left: Young people listen to a speaker; Bishop Burbidge shared a story of faith with the crowd; Guests get to visit the warehouse..



Meet Bob Horner

“I find it especially rewarding to be able to help migrants and refugees succeed in the U.S. So much has been given to me over the years, I really want to give back.”

– BOB HORNER, VOLUNTEER



Talk a bit about your background.

I graduated from Cal State Los Angeles with a BA in Latin American Studies. I was drafted during the Vietnam War and chose instead to join the U.S. Navy. I spent 21 years in the Navy, and then worked for nearly 30 years as a defense contractor. I'm mostly retired now but work occasionally as an independent contractor.

I met and married my bride, Maria Eugenia (Maru) Rosas Castro, in Mexico City. We have been married more than 41 years and have two wonderful children, Julián and Ana Sofía, and an 11-week-old grandson, Allen Ogura Horner, whose mother is from Japan.

I've worked in many fields – making kosher pickles and industrial dyes, singing in musicals and in a mariachi group, flipping burgers, janitorial work, teaching GED classes and GWU college extension classes to US Navy personnel, taught English and naval subjects to Mexican Naval Academy cadets, and worked in a wide range of shipboard jobs related to weapons, radars, boilers, engines, and radio communications.

How and when did you get involved with Education and Workforce Development?

After retirement in 2018, I needed something to do – I don't play golf – so I started looking for volunteer

opportunities and found that Catholic Charities has a wonderful program providing assistance to migrants and refugees.

What you do in your role as a volunteer?

I started out helping as a tutor and mentor for Migrant and Refugee Services (Hogar) clients looking to improve their English and prepare themselves for the workforce. After that, I taught Beginning and Intermediate Spanish courses, substituted for GED Math, and, most recently, taught GED Language Arts. I've developed and delivered a presentation in English and Spanish on how to create a resume and prepare for a job interview – this was part of the most recent CCDA job fair. I'm also helping people one-on-one to create their individual resumes and working with a client to improve his writing ability and raise his GED score. With the arrival of COVID, this has been done virtually.

Tell us about one of the people who was helped.

One of the people I particularly enjoyed was working with a trained doctor from Bolivia who had also practiced medicine for several years in Chile before she and her husband moved to the U.S. We worked together to learn and practice writing and pronounce medical terms

in English, to help her prepare for the very rigorous US certification process. When her first child was born, this woman took time off to be with her baby and is now taking English classes through Hogar services.

I find it especially rewarding to be able to help migrants and refugees succeed in the U.S. So much has been given to me over the years, I really want to give back.

Anything else you'd like people to know about The Education and Workforce Development (EWD) ministry?

This is a volunteer, non-profit organization. It will only work with dedicated volunteers and the generosity of donors. EWD staff is limited and they count on volunteers and interns as a “force multiplier” to provide quality services to support the success of their clients. †



Call for Volunteers!

To learn more about our volunteer opportunities and ways you can get involved, please visit volunteer.cdda.net or email Debra Beard at debra.beard@cdda.net.

St. Martin de Porres Seniors Reunited after 20-Month Hiatus



Seniors gathered to plant a tree in memory of those who'd passed away while St. Martin's was unable to be open.

WHEN COVID-19 forced a lockdown of businesses and community centers in Northern Virginia it struck the frequent visitors of St. Martin de Porres Senior Center on Taney Avenue in the city of Alexandria particularly hard. Because the elderly clients are a vulnerable population, the center remained closed as the coronavirus ebbed and flowed. St. Martin's is operated in partnership with the City of Alexandria.

After a 20-month break, the center re-opened to 20 participants who work masks and followed other safety protocol. Senior Center Program Director Anne

Coyne says the center hopes to slowly rebuild to the 60 or more participants who attended before Covid.

The seniors played games, took a group walk through the neighborhood, and ate lunch together. They were especially excited to welcome the return of longtime volunteer "Chef" Phillippe Bruno, a retired international trade attorney and Blessed Sacrament parishioner, who came to teach a cooking class.

"We have been separated for so long time due to the Covid19 pandemic," participant Tseggai Gide said in a letter

he read to his friends at the center. "We give thanks to Catholic Charities and Alexandria government who made (the re-opening) a reality benefitting the world's elder community regardless their belief and ethnicity."

On a beautiful blue sky Veteran's Day, St. Martin's staff and friends paid tribute to the 10 friends who passed away during the year-and-a-half absence. They planted a maple tree in the center's back yard, shared memories, and prayed for those who have gone on before. †



Volunteer "Chef" Bruno gave the seniors some tips on meal preparation.

ABOUT CATHOLIC CHARITIES, DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

Together, We're Transforming Lives!

21 programs across 21 Virginia counties and 7 cities

Serves all regardless of background, faith, or circumstance

85 cents of every dollar spent goes to programs and services

