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Catholic Charities
Diocese of Paterson
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CONNECTIONS

SPRING 2025



A Morning of Generosity and Joy

A Brunch of Blessings to Connect our Community of Service



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A MORNING OF GENEROSITY AND JOY

Park Avenue Club | Florham Park

by Sofia Silveira

We are filled with gratitude following the success of the Catholic Charities Brunch of Blessings, held on Saturday, April 26, 2025. With the support of our generous guests, we celebrated not only a delicious buffet and warm fellowship, but also the life-changing programs that bring hope and help to countless individuals and families in need.

The morning was filled with joy and community spirit. Attendees enjoyed an elegant brunch spread, watched a moving video featuring our Catholic Family and Community Services (CFCS) staff, browsed and bid on an exciting array of tricky tray baskets, and a lively Visa Gift Card raffle, all to benefit the vital work of CFCS. The room was alive with laughter, conversation, and shared purpose.

A highlight of the event was the heartfelt recognition of our two deeply moved honorees, whose tireless commitment embodies the spirit of CFCS:

- Sharon Horvath was presented with the Bob Jacob Service Award for her extraordinary service and dedication to the Hope House Food Pantry.
- Joseph Rubino, surprise awardee, received the Heart of Gold Volunteer Award, honoring his compassion and years of volunteerism to the Senior Day Program, where he, diligently, plays piano for the seniors, among other tasks.



Sharon Horvath - Presented with the Bob Jacob Service Award

- Early Learning Programs
- Community Emergency Services
- Father English Food Pantry
- Immigration Services
- Partnership for Social Services
- Senior Day Programs

Thank you for making this day—and our mission—so meaningful.



Ana Calderon - HR Staff Member & Jonathan Jacob - Staff member and son of Bob Jacob, who inspired the Service Award

The Brunch ended with the drawing of the \$2,000 Visa Gift Card. Jenn Minervino, long time DPD volunteer for People Need Friends, and Fight for the Right was our lucky raffle winner.

We extend special thanks to our sponsors, volunteers, program recipients, and speakers, whose energy and passion made the day truly unforgettable.

Because of your generosity, CFCS will continue to provide essential support — food, shelter, education, counseling, and more — to those who need it most.

- Hope House
- Youth Programs
- Special Child Health Services
- Veterans Programs

CEO's Reflection on the Passing of Pope Francis

In the passing of Pope Francis, the world has lost a shepherd of peace, compassion, and humility.

His life was a testament to the quiet strength of mercy, the power of dialogue, and the beauty of serving others—especially the poor, the forgotten, and the marginalized.

Pope Francis reminded us, again and again, that faith is not just about words, but about how we love, how we listen, and how we walk with one another in our shared humanity. He challenged us to build bridges, not walls; to care for our common home; and to never lose hope, even in the darkest hours.

Let us not merely mourn his death, but honor his life by continuing his mission. May his legacy stir in us a deeper commitment to justice, to kindness, and to unity in a world that so desperately needs healing.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him.

Sincerely,



CEO of Catholic Charities,
Diocese of Paterson

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Providing Help, Creating Hope

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The Board Visits Straight and Narrow's New Building

by Hazel Yaptangco



Ivette receiving her award at the Catholic Charities Veteran's Services Office

EAST ORANGE, NJ – Join us in congratulating Veteran and SSVF Healthcare Navigator Ivette Caban on her award!

On March 21st, the City of East Orange celebrated Women's History Month on their annual WHM Awards Ceremony.

Ivette was selected as a Hidden Figure - someone who acts behind the scenes, making a difference. Ivette improves the lives of hundreds of veteran men and women who, like her, made their country their calling.

Veterans in New Jersey face a multitude of challenges that impact their well-being and quality of life. Financial instability is a significant concern, with nearly one in four veterans struggling to meet basic needs.

A report from the United Way of Northern New Jersey revealed that in 2019, 24% of the state's veterans lived below the ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) threshold. This highlights the economic hardships many veterans endure despite their service.

Mental health issues further exacerbate the difficulties faced by New Jersey's veterans. The 2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report points that in New Jersey, 53 veterans lost their lives to suicide that year, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support and services tailored to the unique experiences of veterans.

Thank you to the City of East Orange Department of Recreation and Cultural Affairs and all who made this incredible event possible.

Thank you, Ivette, for all your contributions to our Veteran's Programs.

Interested in joining our veteran community? Join us for Tank Pull on June 8th. Visit ccpaterson.org/sponsortankpull for more information.

55TH MURRAY HOUSE DINNER DANCE WORTHY OF DPD'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

The Brownstone | Paterson

by Sofia Silveira

On February 16, 2025, over 300 people representing the clients, staff and supporters of the Catholic Charities family gathered for a night of celebration, gratitude, and joy at the annual Murray House Dinner Dance — one of our most cherished and time-honored traditions. Hosted at the magnificent Brownstone, the event once again brought together supporters, volunteers, staff, and community members to recognize extraordinary individuals who embody the spirit of service that has made Department for Persons with Disabilities (DPD) such a staple of the movement for people with disabilities in New Jersey.

Congratulations to our honorees

Louis Tatti - Person of the Year

Rita Marzocca – Marilyn Murray Keenan Inspiration Award (Volunteer of the Year)

Marjorie Besemer – DPD Employee of the Year

Kathy Jackson – William J. Pascrell, Jr. Memorial Award

Gwendolyn, Valeria, Billy and William. – Jim & Kit Murray Outstanding Achievement Awardees:



Residents Enjoying the Delicious Buffet



Our Person of the Year, Lou Tatti

This year's honorees truly exemplify what it means to serve others with heart:

Lou Tatti – Person of the Year

Lou's unwavering dedication and impactful contributions to our mission as supporter and Murray House's first volunteer director made him a clear choice for this year's top honor. His leadership and generosity have touched countless lives, making a lasting difference throughout our community.

Rita Marzocca – Marilyn Murray Keenan Inspiration Award (Volunteer of the Year)

A beacon of kindness and commitment, Rita has selflessly given her time and energy to support our programs and those we serve. Her passion and warmth reflect the very essence of volunteerism.

Marjorie Besemer – DPD Employee of the Year

Marjorie's compassion and professionalism have made her a cornerstone of the Department for Persons with Disabilities. Her dedication uplifts not only her colleagues but also all individuals she works with.



Kathy Jackson - Winner of the William J. Pascrell, Jr. Memorial Award

Kathy Jackson – William J. Pascrell, Jr. Memorial Award

Kathy's long-standing devotion to Catholic Charities and the people we serve exemplifies the legacy of this prestigious award. Her deep empathy and consistent support are truly inspirational.

This distinguished award honors the legacy of Congressman William J. Pascrell, Jr., who faithfully served New Jersey's 9th District for over two decades. He was known for his passionate advocacy, deep compassion, and unwavering commitment to justice,

Congressman Pascrell was a staunch supporter of Catholic Charities and a tireless champion for the underserved. His life's work reflected a profound belief in the dignity of every person, and this award ensures that his spirit of service continues to inspire future generations.

We were also proud to honor four incredible individuals with the Outstanding Achievement Award: Gwendolyn, Valeria, Billy, and William offer contributions to DPD, greatly enriching our lives.



Residents smiling from the moment they enter the room



Each of them has demonstrated remarkable growth, strength, and achievement through their involvement with our programs. Their stories remind us of the powerful impact that compassion and support can have on a person's journey.

As always, the Murray House Dinner Dance was a beautiful reminder of what we can accomplish together. We thank all who joined us for this unforgettable evening—and especially those who continue to walk alongside us in our mission to serve with dignity, compassion, and love.



To learn more about the event and see photos from this special night, visit: ccpaterson.org/murray

Follow us on social media:



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S&N Alumnus Finds a Way to Give Back

By Erica Ackerman



At Straight & Narrow, the journey of recovery does not end with graduation, it transforms into a lifelong mission to give back.

No one embodies this like Robert "Mr. B" Fields, an alumnus who walked through our doors in the 1970s in search of healing and, decades later, has become a pillar of strength, wisdom, and service to the men who now stand where he once stood.

After a 35-year separation, Mr. B's recent reunion with his son has deeply impacted him, reinforcing his commitment to family and his desire to give back to those he loves. His great contributions to Straight and Narrow have brought a wave of change.

After all, Mr. B is not the only service recipients who wants to give back. Thanks to him, 13 other men, who have successfully maintained their sobriety and rebuilt their lives, recently returned to share their experiences, offer encouragement, and show our current residents that life after recovery is possible.

The event was more than just a gathering, it was a testament to the lifelong bond of recovery, the enduring connection to Straight & Narrow, and the support of a brotherhood committed to healing.

The event was catered by an alumnus, reinforcing the idea that recovery is not just about personal growth but also about finding community and fulfillment through giving back. As a symbol of comradery, strength, and connection, each participant received a bracelet as a reminder that, especially at Straight and Narrow, no one walks this journey alone.

Mr. B's dedication to providing a safe, honest, and transparent space for healing is an invaluable gift to our agency. His work ensures that our residents hear the truth about recovery, not just from textbooks or professionals, but from those who have lived it, fought for it, and continue to thrive in it.

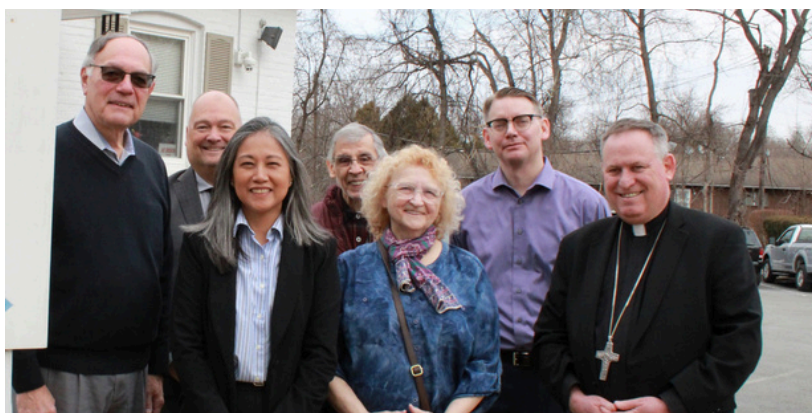
Catholic Charities would like to extend our deepest gratitude to Mr. B for this event (one of many) as he and these alumnus gatherings continue to support and uplift our residents in their healing journey.

March for Meals Celebrates Essential Support for Sussex County Seniors



On March 4th, we celebrated March for Meals with volunteers, partners, and supporters of our Meals on Wheels program.

We would like to thank our sponsor, iHeart media's Shawn Stinnett and DJ Steve Allan, Bishop Kevin Sweeney of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Paterson, CEO Scott Milliken, Commissioner Jill Space and Louis Crescitelli from Assemblywoman Dawn Fantasia's office.



Thank you for your support and for joining our outreach to deliver hot, nutritious meals to seniors across Sussex County.

Thank you to the Sisters of Christian Charity for their Hot Meal Outreach and the packed bags from the Reverend Brown school in Sparta. Your donations make a difference!

Thank you to our partners at Atlantic Health Systems, Sussex County and Sussex County Division of Senior Services.



Together, we can create a better tomorrow for our neighbors.

Thank you to Kathy Talmage and the volunteers and staff at Franklin's Partnership for Social Services. Your efforts are inspiring!

60 Years of DPD

On March 5th, DPD Celebrated its 60th Anniversary!

In the words of Fr. Jack Wehrlen, DPD founder, when asked why he started this initiative: "Quite simply, no one was doing anything for them. The Catholic Church should always be there to help the most vulnerable in our society. Our Church should be an all-inclusive church."

Since 1965, the Department for Persons with Disabilities (DPD), a Catholic Charities agency of the Diocese of Paterson, has been a beacon of hope and compassion for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.

What began as a single residential program—Murray House—has grown into a thriving network homes and numerous support services, all centered on dignity, faith, and community.



DPD was founded during a time when individuals with disabilities were often institutionalized and isolated. Instead, DPD pioneered a different path—one grounded in inclusion, respect, and love.

Thanks to the generous support of donors, supporters and volunteers like you, DPD now operates multiple supervised residences, provides vital support coordination, and offers spiritual, vocational, and recreational programs that enrich the lives of the people we serve. Each person who walks through our doors is met with personalized care and the opportunity to live a fulfilling and independent life. Your contributions help make that possible—creating homes, not just housing; opportunity, not just assistance.

Celebrating the Team Behind the Rebuilding Hope Rehabilitation Center

April 17th | Paterson, NJ

Catholic Charities joined labor leaders, AFL-CIO HIT, Natoli Construction, and Building America to celebrate the dedicated workers constructing the new state-of-the-art Straight and Narrow Treatment Facility in Paterson. Union leaders and partners shared powerful stories about addiction recovery, the remarkable resilience shown since the devastating 2019 fire, and the renewed hope this center brings to our community.

Special thanks to the many organizations making the construction of the "Rebuilding Hope Treatment Facility" possible:



Natoli Construction
Passaic County Central Labor Council
AFL-CIO HIT
Building America

Passaic County Building Trades Council
United Union of Roofers Local 10 President
IBEW 102
Plumbers Local 24

Now Hiring: Join Our Mission

Career Opportunities at the Rebuilding Hope Treatment Center



We're proud to announce an exciting new chapter in Straight and Narrow's mission of healing and recovery: the upcoming grand opening of the Rebuilding Hope Treatment Center—a state-of-the-art facility designed to offer comprehensive substance use disorder treatment in a supportive, dignified environment. As we prepare to open our doors, we are launching a major hiring campaign to expand our compassionate, highly skilled team that will help carry out this lifesaving work.

This Treatment Center will serve individuals from all walks of life, offering both residential and outpatient services rooted in clinical excellence, spiritual care, and a commitment to long-term recovery. To bring this vision to life, we're seeking passionate professionals to join us in roles ranging from licensed clinicians, counselors, and case managers to medical personnel, recovery specialists, and support staff. Each team member will play a crucial role in fostering a space where hope, healing, and transformation can take place every single day.

Your support helps make all of this possible. Donor generosity has fueled the creation of New Hope—and now, we ask for your help in spreading the word. Whether you share our hiring campaign with your network or know someone called to this work, you can be part of building a team that will change lives for years to come.

Please visit ccpaterson.org/careers and apply today.

National Vietnam War Veterans Day Ceremony Dedicates the Catholic Charities NJSOS Veteran Stakeholders Soldier's Cross

On March 29th, at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Park, we joined in the National Vietnam War Veterans Day Ceremony and our hearts are full.



Thank you to all the veterans, veteran families and advocates who took part in this incredible day, honoring the soldiers lost in the conflict.



We are grateful to the Board of County Commissioners, Passaic County and NJ SOS Veteran Stakeholders group for making this permanent memorial possible.

The ceremony ended with the unveiling of the Fallen Soldiers Battlefield Cross. As the crowd stood in solemn silence, the unveiling of the statue served as a powerful reminder of the cost of freedom and the enduring legacy of those who never returned home.



The Battlefield Cross, a symbol of ultimate sacrifice, now stands as a place for reflection, remembrance, and honor for families, friends, and community members alike.

In these fast-paced times, a memorial to the brave men and women of Passaic County who gave their lives for our country will help tell future and present generations of their sacrifice.

This day was not only about remembrance, but also about unity and support.

Seeing veterans of all generations come together, joined by community leaders and supporters, reaffirmed our shared commitment to never forget.

The dedication ceremony was a moving tribute and a promise that the stories and sacrifices of our heroes will live on.

Special Visitors Bring Learning and Laughter to the Senior Day Program

By Nayeli Espinoza

A heartfelt THANK YOU to our amazing community partners who made the first week of May at the Senior Day Program extra special!

Mr. Hunter, from the Paterson Fire Department, delivered an eye-opening presentation on fire safety—sharing life-saving tips on how to prevent and respond to a fire emergency.

We also welcomed five dedicated nursing students from William Paterson University, who gave insightful presentations on managing medications, living with diabetes, and staying safe as older adults.



Our seniors were all smiles and full of gratitude after having their questions and concerns answered with such care and expertise.

We LOVE when volunteers from the community show up and share their knowledge and hearts. You're making a difference!

Gruenert Center Client Wins Honorable Mention in New York Art Show



Members of DPD's Gruenert Center Day Habilitation Program participated in the 24th Annual Festival of the Arts held at St. Francis of Assisi in Haskell, NY. Here is Scott with his award-winning acrylic painting Space Flight.

Congratulations to Scott and all the participant artists!

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who made this day so special!

The Festival of the Arts gives an opportunity for artists from all walks of life to proudly share their work with family, friends, and the wider community.

Events like these remind us of the power of art to inspire, connect, and uplift. We are so proud of our Gruenert Center artists for their hard work and the beauty they bring into the world.



WE ARE THERE.
We offer a hand up.



There is always a Catholic Charities near you.
wearethere.us

Beginning Our IT Transformation Journey

By Mike Liberatore

We're excited to share that our organization is embarking on a transformative journey to consolidate IT operations, with a unified vision and strategic game plan.

This significant step forward will enable us to better support our mission, improve efficiency, and enhance the digital experience for our staff and partners.

In 2025, we:

- Launched a **centralized IT helpdesk** and ticketing system, improving responsiveness and support for staff across all agencies.
- Rolled out a **new cybersecurity awareness training** program for all staff to better equip our team against evolving digital threats.
- **Partnered with an industry-leading e-mail security platform** to significantly improve e-mail security across the entire organization.

This is just the beginning. As we continue to roll out improvements, our focus remains on building an IT environment that is secure, unified, and built to support the critical work we do every day.

Straight and Narrow Goes on a Relaxing Adventure Outside

By Nancy Nahkle

Spending time in nature can foster a sense of connection with the natural world, which can be beneficial for overall well-being.

Our Straight & Narrow clients enjoyed their time outdoors by engaging in a nature walk, swimming, in the pool and practicing social skills during a BBQ.

Clinical services, including a process group, were completed to address a variety of needs, including providing support, encouragement, and feedback in the safe environment of the day's activities.



Our Flagship Summer Events:



Attend or Sponsor: ccpaterson.org/tankpull



Visit, Golf, Sponsor.

Other upcoming events!



John Taggart Memorial Golf Outing

**May 9th, 2025, Friday
Great Gorge Golf Club**

Join the Taggart Family for a day of joy and friendship on the beautiful Great Gorge Golf Club.

ccpaterson.org/JTMGO

12th Corpus Christi Food Drive

June 21st & 22nd 2025, Sat. & Sun.

Parishes across the Diocese join in - contributing to the stability of many communities! Help get our food pantries the supplies they need.

ccpaterson.org/corpus



Beefsteak for S&N

**September 19th, 2025, Friday
St. James of the Marches Parish Hall
Totowa, NJ - 6:30pm**

Save the Date! Incredible tricky-tray prizes, a Delicious Dinner and a program dedicated to the men and women who make Straight & Narrow a unique, strong and beautiful community.

Caritas Gala

**November 13th, Thursday
The Meadow Wood
Randolph, NJ - 6:00pm**

Save the Date! A wonderful dinner at the sumptuous The Meadow Wood. Our biggest event of the year honors the changemakers that help Catholic Charities Diocese of Paterson reach thousands of neighbors in need.



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