

“Lifting up those reaching out” Because of YOU!

I often listen to music as I write. And today is no different. The soundtrack of *Les Miserables* echoes in the background. It has been my “go to” for the last couple months. If you are one of those who experienced the longest running musical you might sense a strong connection with that story line and the theme of Catholic Charities Annual Mother’s Day Appeal.

Did you ever stop to reflect on how our choice to lift up those reaching out has not only a transformative effect but a redemptive value? We see in *Les Miserables* that when a kindly bishop extends mercy and compassion; he lifts up Jean Valjean when he needs it most. As a result, Jean Valjean’s life and so many others are saved; what an investment in hope and humanity!

At Catholic Charities we are called to serve the poor and those living on the margins. We are called to make an investment in the lives of those with broken hearts and broken spirits—those who are on the fringe of hopelessness—reaching out in desperation. At Catholic Charities we are called to go to places where our faith is put to the test. Do I simply pass by with a feeling of sorrow---or do I extend my hand, lifting up those in need with both dignity and respect?

If you are like me, there is someone in your life who lifted you up and gave you a second chance. Their face is embedded in your memory. Because of their compassion—your life was changed forever. That choice to lift you up created a spirit of hope in you that rippled to others in your life; maybe that hope even extended to strangers who have experienced your generosity and compassion!

Catholic Charities is the social service arm of our diocese. Because of your compassionate generosity we lift up those reaching out within the twenty southernmost counties of Minnesota. Your support of our mission makes all the difference! You provided help and created hope in 2016 for over 4,500 individuals residing in over 2,000 households; 59% of those households had an annual income at or below \$25,000. You lifted up families in crisis, vulnerable adults and seniors, and children in need.

Amira was one of those children in need. She arrived from a world of violence and destruction. Along with her siblings and parents Amira reached out to Catholic Charities for help. Because of your support, Catholic Charities lifted up her family. Today, Amira walks proudly through the doors of a classroom at a community college where she is studying diligently to become a nurse. Her dreams are to lift up others

reaching out for help and healing—in thanksgiving for the helping hand you gave her. The ripple of compassion continues to touch those you may not know personally. And, it started because of your choice to lift up those reaching out for help and hope.



The impact of your investment in the mission of Catholic Charities is invaluable. Just like that kindly Bishop in *Les Miserables*, when you lift up those reaching out with your compassionate generosity it provides both a transformative effect and redemptive value. When your support our Annual Appeal...

- You lift up families, couples, and individuals by helping them receive competent and compassionate mental health services from licensed individuals
- You provide a pathway for single mothers moving onward towards education completion and upward to gainful employment in a healthcare profession.
- You help make it possible to create innovative services through our senior volunteer program. One of those services provides support and appreciation to our active and veteran military men and women by sending letters of gratitude to our service members. In 2016 The Common Good Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) provided 109,817 hours of volunteer services in our communities.
- You assist low income individuals lacking prescription medications receive their prescriptions at reduced or no cost through our Medication Application Service.
- You welcome the stranger and bring the promise of new beginnings for children who were once surrounded by memories of death and destruction.
- You help our Guardian/Conservatorship Program provide competent and compassionate care for those individuals deemed unable to make decisions in their personal best interest.

Fifteen programs serving all ages, genders, ethnic backgrounds, and faith traditions within southern Minnesota lifted up those reaching out....because of YOU!

There is a quote from *Les Miserables* that is etched in my memory. "To love another person is to see the face of God." We are humbled to see the face of God in all those we serve. We are mindful that it is your support that makes it all possible—you lift up our efforts. We are grateful for your support of the Catholic Charities Annual Appeal. Heartfelt thanks and prayers for God's blessings to you and your loved ones.

~Mary Alessio

Catholic Charities-Director of Advancement