

February 14, 2015

Dear Friends,

Love is in the air and I woke up thinking of **you**! Everywhere I look there are candied hearts and red roses calling us to express our love and thanks to those we hold dearest to our hearts.

Sometimes the advertising and displays can be overwhelming. I don't know about you, but one of the greatest gifts I've received on the 14th of this month simply involved a pen and a piece of paper. ***You are a major part of my fond memory: I'd like to share it with you.***

A Bhutanese father arrived from a refugee camp a few years ago with his wife and young daughters. I will never forget the humility in his eyes when he walked into his modestly furnished- low income apartment. What you and I might consider basic housing and a mediocre living space; he tearfully looked upon with the deepest appreciation. That evening no one in the family could sleep. Jet lag had settled in, along with the reality that they were living in a new country and knew no one except me and a few other staff from Catholic Charities. That evening while you and I were sleeping at 3a.m., this father and his family huddled together around their cherished miss matched table and chairs and proceeded to write a "love letter" to me. With basic English skills and pen in hand, they thanked me for being like family to them and expressed how they felt honored to be treated with such compassion upon arrival to this country. They told me they loved me and would never ever forget my kindness. They said I would forever have their loyalty and service. I still have that tattered, loose leafed love letter. When days get challenging, I pull it out and reread the words. Those sentiments still mean more to me than all the red roses or diamonds in the world.

Today that Bhutanese father is studying to become a nurse, along with his eldest daughter who graduated last year from a high school in Rochester. The two have expressed their desire to help and heal others. The family still lives in their modest and immaculate apartment. When I look into his eyes I see those remarkable virtues of humility and gratitude. But, in addition to those virtues, I see a transformed spirit of hope and a confidence that assures me that this noble father will be a ripple of transformation in the lives of others who are in need.

***When I see a heart shaped box of chocolates or a bouquet of roses, I am reminded of that cherished love letter and you!*** Your support of Catholic Charities is a gift beyond measure. It is because of you that we are able to create opportunities to replace the obstacles of the poor and marginalized. You are a blessing to Catholic Charities and all those we serve!

Our love and gratitude,



Mary Alessio  
Catholic Charities-Director of Advancement

P.S. Thank you again for your life changing kindness and generous support. Please take a peek at our video "Love Never Fails" on our home page and see the lives of those **you** change!