



2019 Appeal Client Stories and Testimonials

Catholic Charities of Buffalo

www.ccwny.org



Dear Friends,

A gentleman came in to 525 Washington Street today. He gave me a check for \$1,000. Back in 1979, during a time when he was receiving unemployment, Catholic Charities aided him with food assistance and utility assistance, he was so grateful that he wanted to pay back. He returned to say thanks in person. He recently retired and as he said, "I am financially in a better place. It is time to share my blessings". He apologized for taking so long to come back but "this place has been on my mind" now you can help others like you helped me. Blessings on all involved in this good work!

-Holly, Catholic Charities Case Worker



Allegany Co.

Dear Friends,

Our trouble started with our family tragedy. Brian's dad was arrested and put in prison for 10 years. Skip to one year later, Brian turns 14 and begins to act out by being disrespectful, leaving the house without permission and started to become physically aggressive. I was at a loss as our family had always been a family with no problems. I tried getting Brian a mentor, took him for counseling, talked to our Priest, and nothing seemed to work. Then Father suggested Catholic Charities.

I called and Emily was here at my house two days later, my own social worker. Emily makes me feel very comfortable discussing Brian's problems and is starting to teach me ways to manage Brian's behavior. It is hard work but it is worth it to see my child return to his normal behavior. It wasn't easy for Brian or myself but I stuck with it and am very impressed with the results. I feel that 100 lbs. has been lifted off my back.

Brian is happy although he likes to say he's not perfect and will slip up and that's fine because I know all the tools for raising him in a peaceful harmonious life style.

Thank you so much!

Alice

Dear Sister Mary,

The hardest thing a mom faces is watching her own child suffer from something and not be able to help. My 15-year-old son, Michael, spent many of his younger years having problems and causing problems at school and home. His life—and ours—became one big problem. It was tearing our family apart.

I quit my job to concentrate on raising our children and support Michael. But he continued to have emotional outbursts and his temper was draining to all. Nothing helped. When Michael began to act out physically, it was time to take action again. Out of desperation, we called the police. Michael was designated a Person in Need of Supervision through a PINS Petition and offered MST* through Catholic Charities.

At first we said no. We didn't like the idea or want the embarrassment of a therapist coming into our home. We quickly changed our minds because we realized we had no more options. Week after week our therapist came to our home and helped us deal with our shortcomings and Michael's behavior issues. It was comforting to have her by my side at the school meetings she attended with us. We began to look forward to her visits! She put us all at ease and used her expertise to educate us. Most importantly, she helped us – all of us.

We came to understand what we can do and how to do it. We learned from her advice, encouragement and the tools she gave us to be better parents. She has deeply impacted our family (even our dogs love her!). We are thankful to have worked with her and come to know her as our friend.

I am sending our story to you because I want you to know where we are today – Michael has made the honor roll for the first time and is captain of the school wrestling team. There is decreased tension in our home and there is no more running away. One of the easiest things a mom can do is thank those who gave her the gift of her family back. Without Catholic Charities and our MST therapist, I don't want to think where Michael or our family would be. Our deepest, heartfelt thank-you doesn't begin to cover our appreciation. We will be forever grateful.

Sincerely,

Kelly

*MST (Multi-systemic Therapy) is an intensive, evidenced-based family treatment designed to help parents decrease children's (ages 12 to 17) behavior issues and preserve the family.

Dear Friends,

Catholic Charities saved my life! No, I wasn't suicidal. I really wanted to live but I am an insulin dependent diabetic and could not afford my medication. I am 19 years old. I work part time at Delta Sonic and I go to college. My dad lost his job and so I did not have any health insurance and I could not apply till the exchange opened on November 15th, four long months away! My Mom said "try Catholic Charities" but I knew it would be very expensive because I take insulin 4 time a day. I did not have much hope.

Your social worker was amazing! She said to me "Drake, no one has ever died on my watch and you are not going to be the first!" That simple statement boosted my confidence. Well, it was complicated! First she contacted the American Diabetes Association and they approved a grant to cover one month. The ADA told her how to contact the manufacturer of the insulin. After she filled out a very complicated application with me, I got another month of insulin in the mail direct from the manufacturer and a huge price reduction for two more months. We still had a month to cover!

Your social worker had a relationship with our neighborhood drug store, on Abbott Road, so she called them. The pharmacist used some discount she could get and we had to pay \$200 instead of \$2,000! When I was short \$75 to cover even that charge, Catholic Charities paid that portion of the bill.

What a gift! I am a friend of Catholic Charities for life!

Drake

Genesee County

Dear Sister Mary,

I wanted to write and tell you how much Catholic Charities helped me and my family. My husband and I asked the Catholic Charities in Batavia for help because we didn't know where else to go. We came back to this area because my husband has family here. We were living in a hotel and hadn't eaten. We had no food and I was pregnant. We both struggle with mental illness and had gone to a community health clinic for help. We didn't know where to turn because we had a bad experience with another agency and our other child got taken from us by the system.

The people at Catholic Charities helped us as soon as we got in their office. Heather worked with us and helped us to get a meal and some groceries. Heather also worked with some other agencies to find us a place to live so we didn't have to worry about that while we tried to fix some other things in our life. She made us feel good because she was willing to help us.

Before long, Heather got us help to work with us on our mental and physical issues. She was able to help us get more food and told us she would be able to help us if things got tough again. We are so happy they were able to help us when we didn't think we were going to make it.

Thank you.

"Karen"

Niagara Co.

Dear Friends,

Last year I met Sister Mary after she spoke at a Mass I attended. I told her about my brother who was having such a hard time since our parents died. He has some developmental disabilities and had lived at home all these years.

Well, Catholic Charities sent a social worker who really spent time with him and built trust and so Sean was able to move into an apartment where he has like-minded residents and some supervision for the apartment life. He loves his new friends calling them "my little brothers". He continues to come over every Sunday to spend the day with our family. So, Sean is pleased with the "new normal"! Many thanks to Catholic Charities for all you do!

Linda

Dear Friends,

I am writing to tell you how thankful I am for my new friend which came to me through the Catholic Charities Home Visitor program.

I am a disabled Vietnam vet and spend most of my days in my apartment. I have help when I need to see my doctor or shop but the trips aren't often because it's so hard for me. Before I got my volunteer visitor, I spent days alone looking at these same four walls. Boy was I happy when Catholic Charities found a volunteer who comes to see me on a regular basis. The biggest surprise is that he is a Vietnam vet, too. I can honestly say that Bob and I hit it off right from the start. Despite a lot of differences in our backgrounds, we have become friends. We have good talks about the books we read, what's going on in the world and enjoy the same music. I am teaching Bob how to play the guitar. He even helped me celebrate my birthday because I was alone on my birthday for many years.

Before Bob's visits, I had nothing to look forward to except a phone call from my daughter who lives so far away. The phone calls are few and far between. Now I look forward to my visit from Bob, too! So I want to thank Catholic Charities for having programs to help people like me. Bob's made a big difference in my life. I don't know where I'd be without my friend but for sure I would be lonely. It's the worst feeling in the world.

Sincerely,

Lionel

Chautauqua County

Dear Friends,

I have been raising my son alone since my wife died two years ago. I was working in Dunkirk, NY till the company I was working for moved out of the state. When I could not find work I went to Catholic Charities and the woman gave us some financial assistance to tide us over. I decided I'd be better to move in with my mother in south Buffalo and while I was looking for a job there, once again Catholic Charities came to my assistance. I was given assistance with food and referred to a dentist who did not charge me! I also went to the Bishop Kmiec food pantry where I received food and clothing for my sons, back to school supplies. When I was working and ready for an apartment, some household supplies, especially things for the kitchen-even a microwave!

At every point, I was awkward and ashamed at needing help but at every place I was warmly welcomed and felt respect and concern. You have a great team! Thanks for being there for me and my boys! Now I am back in Dunkirk and employed full time. I enclosed \$20 to help the next family in need. I will be a regular donor!

Mike

Dear Friends,

Hello. My name is Tina and I am writing a letter to explain some of the positives that Kelly (MST Program) has helped me and my family with.

When she first started coming, I initially thought, "I don't need help- it's my daughter with the issues".

But her job was actually to come in and help me (family unit), set plans in place, stay committed, stick to what I mean to say, don't let my daughter change me (work on her change). Come up with better ways of coping and keeping my authority.

Since we've been meeting she has helped me come up with good, positive plans on the direction that my daughter should take. Kelly has become like the support system that I needed. Now I feel like my best friend is gone.

I want to thank Catholic Charities for the support and steps in the right direction with how my family and I will reach success, stay together and solve any obstacles.

I was so frustrated and helpless, but Kelly was there to help me with the 'what ifs'. I didn't know that just having someone to push me when I was ready to quit would prove to be so encouraging for me. She never let me quit—even when I wanted to. I am amazed at all that we accomplished.

Thank you, Catholic Charities and all who contribute!

Tina

Dear Friends,

I visited Catholic Charities, the office on Washington Street, in early 2015 after two years of chronic homelessness. I am a single woman, age 45 at that time. I worked as a licensed practical nurse but left that career due to mental health issues that I could not get on top of. Your social worker helped me so much, giving me hope as she gave me concrete assistance. While I did not want to get into the county social service system to be another statistic, this worker convinced me to apply for food stamps and other resources, promising that I only needed to be on the system temporarily. After a few sessions and the encouragement of your social worker, I went to your Monsignor Carr Institute for counseling to address traumas in my past. The skills I learned helped me to see my "tunnel vision" and I began to reach out for help and listen to others in several areas of life, personal and financial.

A few months later, I returned to your office on Washington Street and the same great social worker helped me to slowly return to the workforce, providing free clothing from Ladies of Charity thrift store, hygiene products from your pantry a free haircut that boosted my self-esteem tremendously, Holly also referred me to your workforce development program who provided me with resume assistance and transportation to work.

It is now 2018 and I want to tell you how this all came out. I am full time employed since late in 2015. I purchased a home from the foreclosure list and qualified for the first time homebuyer grant I have been a homeowner for two years and recently bought a car. I went back to Washington Street one time for some additional assistance, graciously given. I thank you for helping me at the right time, I never told anyone but the day I came to Catholic Charities in 2015 I had a plan to commit suicide but after meeting Holly, hope was restored and I never followed through. Thank you for keeping me alive and giving me a reason to live. I show my gratitude by doing good for others, as good was done to me.

Shelly

Dear Friends,

I am safe! My child is safe! We have a new beginning! This is a whole new life! I owe so many thanks to Catholic Charities. I had followed my boyfriend to Rochester. He beat me up and threatened to kill me and our child, so I ran back to Buffalo. I was in a shelter and they called Catholic Charities to see if Catholic Charities could help me.

Boy, did they! The social worker helped me to find an apartment and paid for the deposit I needed and the extra month's rent. The social worker called Catholic Charities in Rochester and they found a firm that would move my furniture here. I am safe now and so is my little girl. We have a small apartment, furnished, clean and safe. I am back in contact with my family here and will soon be back at work.

Thank you for my new beginning. I will not mess this up, I promise!

Sincerely,

Sandy

Genesee County

Dear Friends,

I don't think I can thank Catholic Charities enough for all the help they gave me when I needed it the most about three years ago. I was about to give up even though I was just out of treatment for my substance addiction, which the court said I had to do. I was afraid to try counseling at another agency because I didn't feel anyone would listen to me – just like the other times I was in counseling. I have a mental health diagnosis and had been in and out of counseling for that.

When I went to the Catholic Charities office in Batavia, I had lost my job as a health aide a few months before and had no relationships with anyone, even my mom because of my drug abuse. I was having money problems. I was mad and sad and didn't see a future for me.

I really didn't think Catholic Charities could help and I don't know what made me open that door, but I'm glad I did. As soon as I walked in, I was greeted by friendly workers. It felt much different there than other places and I felt like I was welcome. They got me in to see a counselor, "Ann", who really listened to me. It was hard but she helped me learn to trust and I was able to talk about what had happened to me in my life. For the first time I could remember, I felt like someone was really listening to me talk about my problems and wanted to help me.

I felt a connection with my counselor and the other staff. I felt like I was a human being and that I mattered. If it hadn't been for them I don't know where I'd be today. I am still clean and sober and I'm working through my past. I have hope for being happy again, working and for having people in my life.

Thank you to Catholic Charities. I know I still have a lot to do but I know I have help to get me there.

Sincerely,

Friend of Catholic Charities

Dear Friends,

This letter has been years in the making but still timely to express my thanks for all Catholic Charities has done and is still doing for me.

My story will sound familiar because now I know I am not alone and only one of probably thousands of DV survivors Catholic Charities has helped. I was abused by my husband. Like so many women, it took a long time for me to admit what was happening and ask for help. I was ordered by the court to attend a domestic violence survivor's group at Catholic Charities but despite being ordered to go, I didn't want to. I was ashamed and embarrassed. When I finally did get the courage to attend, it was at the New Hope Partners Support Services. The person who led the group and the other women in the group were lifesavers for me. They understood what I was going through and provided support. They listened. They cried with me. They cared. Even when I wasn't ready to leave my husband, they didn't judge me. They had been there. Among the many violent things he did to me to hurt me, he burned me and tattooed his name on me. I was afraid he would kill me, so I stayed. Within a few months of going to my survivor's group, I found out my husband had been sexually abusing my young daughter. That was the final straw for me. As afraid as I was, I knew I could not stay and make my daughter his victim any longer.

Catholic Charities came to my and my daughter's rescue! When we finally ran from my husband, we left with absolutely nothing. Catholic Charities was able to get us both into a shelter and hidden from my husband. They got us shoes and clothes and helped me get another job because I couldn't stay at the one I had. When we were ready to leave the shelter, your agency helped me get an apartment, furniture and groceries.

I am happy to tell you my husband was found guilty and sentenced to 20 years in jail. He has been in for two years. My daughter is 13 now and decided she wanted to get trauma counseling for what she went through. She is getting counseling through Catholic Charities. It has been four years but I am finally able to talk about what happened to us and say thank-you. Catholic Charities saved our lives and gives us hope. I cannot thank you enough for these services.

Sincerely,

Tracey