As we kick-off 2021 with this newsletter, we at Catholic Charities Atlanta (CCA) want to take a moment to thank you for your support of our mission to enable families to achieve self-sufficiency. Although the pandemic has
brought many obstacles, we continue to persevere and have chosen to use this as an opportunity to think of new and creative ways to give back in the virtual world.

-CCA Staff

Volunteer Spotlight: Margaret Wilkerson

Over 30 years ago, Margaret Wilkerson worked as a receptionist for Catholic Social Services. Around the holiday season, she would begin to receive calls from single mothers asking if the organization did anything to assist families for Christmas. At that time, the answer was no. So Margaret, after feeling what she described as the Holy Spirit leading her, decided to take things into her own hands. Instead of an annual office-wide gift exchange, she asked all the staff to pitch in $10 to support families in need of gifts; they served three families that year. After hearing word, the next year Tom and May May Bickes came to join the effort. Together they took the calls and gathered the information and Tom brought two trucks filled with clothes and gifts that they unloaded behind the CSS building. From there, the event carried on with
more community volunteers and families helped during each Christmas season that followed.

Even after retirement and Catholic Social Services became Catholic Charities Atlanta, Margaret continues to play a major role in what is now known as Christmas Connections. Why does she do it? “I love doing it, I love serving people—I think as Catholics, that’s why we were put here on Earth—to serve.” To those that want to serve but aren’t sure where to start, Margaret advises them to organize. “Get together a group of people and put the word out; because people will hear about it and they will come.”

The value in this type of service, according to Margaret, is following the call of God. “We need to pass this love on to one another because God made one race and that’s the human race” she said. “Helping our fellow man, to do whatever we can do for someone; it’s the reward of giving someone something and seeing the appreciation on that person’s face.” Margaret’s service goes beyond small acts of kindness. She recalled that one year during pick-up it was pouring rain, so badly that it was difficult to see; but that didn’t stop her from personally delivering the uncollected gifts to families. Why? Because she wanted those children “to wake up on Christmas morning and everybody have a gift.” She also spends time caring for and feeding the homeless. Ms. Wilkerson is devoted to helping those in her community live a better life. She exemplifies the level of service, devotion, and love for others that we should all aspire to reach.

As for the future, Margaret hopes to carry her work past Georgia. After Hurricane Katrina, a relative living in the Atlanta area requested services for their family. But before it could be offered, she discovered that they were still
based in Louisiana and the distance was too great for services to reach. After the encounter, she prayed for a way to be able to travel to New Orleans and start a similar project for those in need. She hopes that someday that vision will come to fruition. With her sights set on that project, Margaret shows no sign of slowing down. As for when her mission will end, in her own words, “not until the Lord calls me home.”

Written by Mary Cloyce Collins
AmeriCorps VISTA - Mission Advancement Coordinator

Upcoming Events
TIE UP THOSE LACES!

CATHOLIC CHARITIES ATLANTA

SCOTT'S RUN

RUN FOR LOVE

February 7-14, 2021
5K Virtual Run

This year Scott’s Run will be a virtual 5K, starting Sunday February, 7th through Sunday, February 14th.

All participants will receive a t-shirt upon registration commemorating the run.

All proceeds from Scott’s Run go directly to benefit the Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services program.

For more information, visit: http://bit.ly/ScottsRun2021

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Project Refugee Youth Mentoring Program

by Anya DeLaremore, CCA Volunteer
Recently, I was reminded of the dark underbelly lurking inside our country. I'm not here to go into my feelings about my situation or how it feels to live through the aftermath. I just think now is a great time to remind ourselves that we started the year on an exhausted, yet hopeful note. In times like this, I tend to think about other experiences. I am living through a tense time, but I know I’m not the only one.

I feel the most compassion for children living through all this. Going through school, seeing their parents stressed, is a lot to take in. So today, I am reaching out to promote Catholic Charities’ Refugee Youth Mentoring Program. The program focuses on connecting kids between 9 and 17 years old with advisors who
can help with growth, adjusting, or self esteem. This volunteer opportunity is open to all adults. We are a diverse group. Here’s a rundown of how the program works for future mentors:

- Before you get started, you’ll undergo a training session. CCA will teach you how to grow closer to your mentee and avoid certain situations.
- After completing the training session and formal application packet, the program specialists will match you with a refugee child. CCA performs a needs assessment with the family, which you will go over.
- Then Go!

You and your mentee meet 2 hours a week (or more, up to you) and how you two spend that time is completely up to you. Share hobbies, watch movies, go on walks, the possibilities are endless. Don’t worry if it’s a little awkward at first. You both have the full support of the program specialists to guide you.

But Alas! Covid still exists. For the time being, all meetings between you and your mentee must be virtual. Don’t let that stop you from having fun. Other mentors in the program found ways around in person visits. Technology is a powerful tool or you can keep it classic. Catholic Charities needs more mentors in 2021. 2020 left many families in a tough place. Come create some lasting memories with a child in need. You’ll thank yourself for making a difference.

Interested in becoming a mentor? Contact Taylor Smith, Refugee Youth Mentor Specialist, at tsmith@ccatlanta.com
VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Support a Refugee Youth through COVID-19

With COVID-19, social distancing, and virtual learning, many refugee youth are feeling isolated. Community members like us can help by mentoring – empowering, caring, and being a friend.

Through Catholic Charities Atlanta’s Refugee Youth Mentoring Program, mentors and mentees are matched one-on-one and meet weekly. Currently, mentors and mentees meet virtually, with plans to transition back to in-person as soon as it is safe. Most of the refugee families we serve live in Clarkston.

Mentors must be 21+ years old; willing to meet with the mentee for two hours per week for one year; and willing to complete an application, background check, Safe Environment training, and additional training on refugee youth mentoring (6 hours total).

We work hard to match each mentee with a mentor with whom they can really connect, and to do that we need mentors with all kinds of interests, talents, and backgrounds! We need you!

To learn more and get involved, email Taylor Smith at tsmith@ccatlanta.org before February 15!

Teach English to Adults!
Volunteers with excellent English language skills and a desire to help others learn are needed to teach adults English as a Second Language (ESL). Classes are currently virtual and held Mondays through Thursdays in the mornings and evenings.

If you are interested or have questions, contact Christie at ccrane@ccatlanta.org
SPRING CLEANING PROJECT

Help us provide refugee families with cleaning essentials!

Start with a new, empty mop bucket or laundry basket, then add:

- White/Cleaning Vinegar
- Bathroom Cleaner
- All Purpose Cleaner
- Pinesol
- Anti-bacterial Cleaner
- Toilet Bowl Cleaner (Liquid or Powder)
- Toilet Brush
- Window Cleaner
- Broom and Dust Pan
- All Purpose Scrub Brush
- Baking Soda
- Anti-bacterial Hand Soap
- Large Laundry Detergent (Liquid or Powder)
- Sponges
- Hand Sanitizer
- Cleaning Gloves

For more information on this project or any other project CCA has going on, please contact Christie Crane at (404) 920.7785 or email: ccrane@ccatlanta.org