

# The Mission

Care With Dignity ... Life With Hope

CATHOLIC  
CHARITIES  
OF LONG ISLAND

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I'm  
retiring!



## “On the side of the angels...”

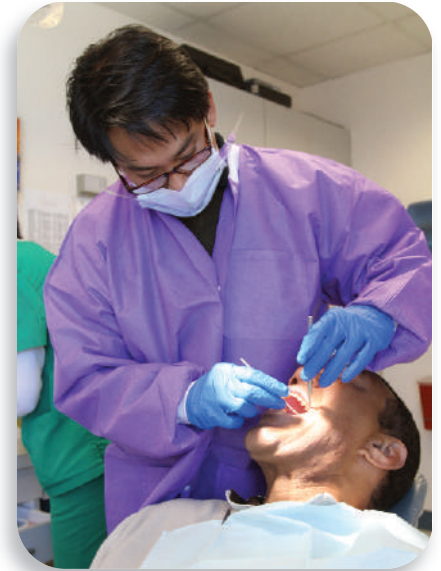
It's hard to imagine a Catholic Charities of Long Island without CEO, Laura Cassell. For those of us who work and minister here, it's almost impossible as her hands have shaped our “CC family” for 34 years.

Her tenure was characterized by a simple, crystal-clear outlook: *Catholic Charities would respond, no matter the crisis.*

That's no small task in the nonprofit world, where treading into unfamiliar territory with uncertain funding could spell disaster for bottom lines. No matter. We were, “on the side of the

angels” and would bring God's caress to whoever needed it, wherever they were.

One of the first challenges we faced was the HIV/AIDS crisis. Patients were routinely being denied dental services. So, we launched our own HIV Dental Clinic that served thousands from both Long Island and New York City. Then we established day programs, provided case managers, and even built special-needs housing for victims and their families.



After the 9-11 terrorist attacks, Laura immediately forged partnerships with Catholic Health Services and hundreds of volunteers at local parishes to help distribute \$3 million in emergency assistance. More significant was the comfort and psychological services our counselors provided to hundreds of bereaved families for years after, along with employment and medical assistance.

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**“On the side of the angels...”**  
*(continued from page 1)*

Two days after Superstorm Sandy battered Long Island, Laura could be found unloading emergency supplies from trucks in our parking lot. Although we had no such office at the time, under her leadership we would soon become the largest disaster relief agency in New York, with case managers fanning out across Long Island to rebuild homes and lives.



And when COVID brought life to a screeching halt, Laura refused to let it stop Catholic Charities. We instituted telehealth appointments, electronic benefits filing and online psychological consults. We made weekly calls to hundreds of seniors unable to attend our centers and delivered Meals-on-Wheels and groceries to hundreds more. Most important, we continued round-the-clock, face-to-face care in our homes for developmental disabilities, mental illness, frail seniors and unwed, young moms and their babies.



Through all these passing crises, Catholic Charities has always offered a full roster of human services, the “womb to tomb” care for every stage of life that people have come to depend on. We feed and house seniors, young moms and

children, veterans, and the developmentally and physically disabled. We welcome immigrants and refugees, provide mental health services, and even help the addicted start new lives. Nearly 500 staff and hundreds of volunteers serve an average of 53,000 Long Island neighbors every year at more than 50 sites, from Elmont to the East End.

We cannot adequately explain just how crucial Laura has been to this work these many years. She was, and remains, a humble but persistent voice for good and an eternal optimist in a world that desperately needs them. And she will be missed.



***On behalf of the Catholic Charities Board, staff, supporters and the more than 2,000,000 Long Island lives she’s touched, we thank Laura from the bottom of our hearts.***

**"You will have found Christ when you are concerned with other people's sufferings and not your own." —Flannery O'Conner**



## My Dear Friends,

**A**s you know by now, I decided to "hang up my boots." This year marks not only the 65th anniversary of Catholic Charities but also my 65th birthday. So, after 34 years here at Charities, I shared with Bishop Barres my intention to retire. It wasn't easy but I made my decision after much prayer and discernment, tremendously grateful for my time here and for the privilege of serving you, the good people of Long Island.

Unfortunately, not long after my announcement, my dear mother, Agnes, passed away. Although she was 96, it still sent us reeling. I found myself thinking about her impact on my life and especially my work at Catholic Charities.

You see, mom taught us a lot. First, she was a fabulous and creative cook. And whether it was a Thanksgiving feast or just leftovers, her special ingredient was LOVE. She insisted that we break bread as a family and was always super careful to waste nothing.

Our home was also the neighborhood hang-out. It wasn't just the good food. Everyone was guaranteed a warm welcome and hospitality from mom who loved to make people feel at home.

She also gave us the gift of faith. No matter the circumstances, the weather, or even our grumbling, we were dressed in Sunday best and out the door to mass. She was a prayer warrior, and sometimes late at night I would hear her quietly whispering her prayers in bed.

In so many ways, these lessons were the foundations for my work at Catholic Charities: to rely on God, share with others, extend warm welcome, be good stewards of our resources, and to marvel at the wonder and dignity of each person. If I have touched any lives in my work at all, it started with what this one remarkable woman taught me.

When all is said and done, there is nothing more powerful than the example of good people who LOVE one another. The formula for changing the world is right there.

**If you feel that way too or if you were blessed with someone who taught you how to LOVE, please honor them with a gift to Catholic Charities, today. Because I assure you, when everything is stripped away, Catholic Charities is merely good people loving one another.**

Thank you for letting me be the hands that did the work of your hearts for 34 years.

Don't stop believing,

Laura A. Cassell  
Chief Executive Officer  
Catholic Charities of Long Island



**CARE:  
DELIVERED**

From time to time, we share letters from those we serve. Their gratitude belongs to you, the good people who make our work possible.



*I want to properly thank Catholic Charities for what you did for me in 1973... I was still living in a violent, alcoholic home—where I was being physically and mentally abused. Catholic Charities in Mastic (at the time) came to my rescue, helped me find a home in Center Moriches, and helped me get onto public assistance. They saved my life...I was 22 at the time and will be 71 as of October 27 now. Thank you!*

**E.B.**

**Around and About**



Heartfelt thanks to the **Spina family** for hosting their annual pool party and barbecue for our developmentally disabled residents. Their joy inspires us.

Special thanks to the **Chaminade High School alumni** who spruced up our Neumann Residence for the Developmentally Disabled in June.



In July, our **Wantagh Senior Center** soaked up the sun of the Great South Bay on the Lauren Kristy Paddlewheeler. In August, this fun-loving bunch hosted their annual Hawaiian Luau!



**You're Invited!**

Come celebrate our **65th Anniversary Mass** with Bishop John Barres at St. Agnes Cathedral, October 23rd at 11 a.m. A reception immediately follows at the parish center and all are welcome!



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