

making every penny count

PHILANTHROPY REPORT | FEBRUARY-MARCH 2023

SEARCHING for a Match



Augusta-area volunteer (and CCM Creative Service Manager) Pomie Costell (left) and Joe Q. (right) are both artists, which made their SEARCH match a beautiful success.

In honor of Valentine's Day, we are celebrating the great matchmaking skills of Project Manager Lynn Kidd, who pairs volunteers with isolated seniors in several Maine counties through Seek Elderly Alone Renew Courage & Hope (SEARCH). This program provides friendly companionship, help with errands, and other outreach that can help older neighbors feel more connected while remaining independent. The program is also known to build life-long friendships, community support systems, and a lot of joy. How does this happen?

"With the seniors we serve, I spend some time with them before matching them to a volunteer. **Beyond what they need for help, I get to know who they are,**" Kidd explained. "What are their interests, their personalities, their likes and dislikes. It sounds simple, but SEARCH is about more than running errands. It really is about spending time with another person, and both people in the match should feel good about their time together."

Kidd recently paired two artists together after arranging a meet-and-greet and seeing how they both spoke passionately about working with color. Kidd admits that she doesn't bat a 100 every time, but she is happy to make new matches as needed. And, when people click, they click! Many of her matches create decades-long friendships and overwhelming gratitude.

"I often hear, **'You could not have made a better match for me,'** and that's when I'm really happy," Kidd said.

A "Suite" Donation in Fairfield

Late last year, our IT vendor, Systems Engineering, donated funding to equip a new telehealth suite at Catholic Charities Maine (CCM) Behavioral Health Network's (BHN) Fairfield office. The Network provides comprehensive, multi-disciplinary services for individuals with a mental health diagnosis, substance use disorder, and/or behavioral disorders. With services in Portland, Fairfield, Augusta, Auburn and Brewer, interconnectivity is vital to serving more approximately 1,500 adults and children each year, and the telehealth suite is helping to provide more access for those living in the rural areas around Fairfield.

"Maine is experiencing a severe shortage of behavioral healthcare services, and that's especially true of medication management, which plays a critical role in the continuum of community-based mental health support," said Jeff Tiner, CCM's chief clinical officer, who noted that the lack of access to qualified prescribers can create six-to-nine-month-long waitlists in Maine. "For individuals dealing with serious and persistent mental illness, this can be a devastating delay in effective, coordinated treatment. We are so grateful to our partners at Systems Engineering for this targeted funding."



The suite has all the essentials for private telehealth care.





Showing Warmth to Newcomers

Since we were called to work on a pilot project with the City of Portland and the State to provide on-site services to asylum-seeking families at a Southern Maine hotel, the outpouring of community support has been overwhelming, especially through the holidays. We were contacted by Connecting Across Cultures, a Midcoast-based network of volunteers who celebrates diversity, produces educational programming about immigration, and holds fundraisers. One member of this group, Parfaite, is an asylum seeker who began her journey in the United States at a hotel in the Portland area. She lives in the Midcoast now but has clear memories of her first Christmas in a hotel with young children.

"It was wonderful to be in a safe place, but celebrating that first holiday when we had left everything behind and with most of our family still in the Congo was difficult. I know how that feels, and I wanted to make sure that this group at least had gifts for everybody, especially the children, and a celebration because I know this would have helped me," said Parfaite.

CAC quickly pulled together more than 200 gifts for the children living in the hotel, and their celebration together was incredibly special for everyone involved.

"This group brought the spirit of joy, celebration, and levity to every single family living in our program at the hotel. My words fall short, but the images have stayed with me. This showed so much care, effort and investment of time, thought, and precision!" Joanna Testa, program director, Asylum Seeker Hotel Project (ASHP), said.

After the holidays, when the winter cold really started to hit, Deacon Frank Daggett, director of our Parish Social Ministries, secured a \$4,500 donation from the Parish of the Holy Eucharist (Falmouth, Yarmouth, Freeport and Gray) to be used to provide warm winter boots for the families.

"I'm stunned! I cannot believe this materialized so quickly," said Testa. *"Most of our residents have been in desperate need of warm boots. This is really incredible, and I am so thankful to learn about this type of generosity."*

A Year-round Effort

As reported the December-January Donor Newsletter, our annual Wall of Warmth provided more than 500+ volunteer-knit hats, scarves, mittens, and baby items to Portland area people in need. Now, Wall of Warmth 2023 planning is already underway for November 28, 2023. Generous local knitters like the friends, residents, staff, and volunteers from Park Danforth and many other groups are already busy creating more warm accessories for next year. If you want to knit for a good cause, contact organizer Kelly Day at kday@ccmaine.org.



Pictured (left) is Heather, the Park Danforth Social Work volunteer and (right), Peter Vachon the resident assistant coordinator at Park Danforth.

Welcome Aboard new Board Members



CCM's Board of Directors has announced two new members joined the Board in January 2023. Welcome to Paula Moses of Wells and Innocent Binwa of South Portland, and thank you for your service!

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