#### PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Dear Friends,



Peg Bravo | President and CEO

Growing up, I recall how much my siblings and I couldn't wait for school to let out for the summer. The last weeks of school dragged on more slowly than the entire year had to that point. My wise father would tell us, "Just wait – there will come a time when time flies by."

Fly it has at CSSW in 2023. Considering all that has happened at the Agency, it seems hard to believe that we're only at the halfway point of the year!

In this issue of "The Gift of Giving," you'll learn about the merging of the Marnee and John DeVine Foundation into CSSW's Board of Directors, the addition of a new Board member, and our

discernment efforts that led to the formation of a new mission statement. We are also introducing our new Parish Coordinator and sharing information about our work with one of our parish partners. We're also sharing a heartwarming adoption story, the experiences of a husband-and-wife respite care volunteer team, and one man's long-term commitment to retire the mortgage on our Packard Street building and the donors who helped make it a reality.

The work that we do at Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County is only possible through the support and investment from friends and donors like you. I hope you find this issue enlightening, engaging, and filled with examples of the love and presence of Christ in our community.

President and CEO

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#### THERE'S MORE TO THE STORY

#### All that Glitters at Lewis Jewelers

For nearly 20 years, <u>Lewis Jewelers of Ann Arbor</u> has regularly responded to CSSW's requests for support.

Perhaps it's because the company is an outstanding community partner to many local charities, or maybe it's because design specialist and veteran employee Keith Largin's parents welcomed him to their family in 1967, thanks to the Agency's adoption services. Maybe it's both.

Keith is one of five children in the Largin family – two are adopted. He shared that staff at CSSW remarked that his was the easiest birth parent connection ever.



Jewelry Designer Keith Largin's Parents

Continued on next page.

#### THE GIFT OF OUR SON

Each year since 1994, Al and Rosie Fellhauer have made a gift to Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County in gratitude for the



Rosie and Alan Fellhauer welcome baby Jeff to their family.

blessing they received when they adopted their son Jeff years earlier.

The Fellhauers both grew up in Maumee, Ohio, and met in high school. Al was working at McDonald's and attending Bowling Green State University. Al and Rosie married in 1967 and, soon after, Al was drafted and stationed in Berlin during the Vietnam War.

In those early years, it seemed unlikely that they would be blessed with children, so

the Fellhauers investigated adoption through Toledo Catholic Charities. Al was skeptical that the adoption would happen, but he kept his faith. Imagine how surprised he and Rosie were when, just nine months later, Rosie received a call one morning at work from

Toledo Catholic Charities asking her, "How would you like to pick up your son today?"

Rosie recalled, "We had nothing ready, and my family jumped in and gathered what they could. At 3:00pm that day, November 24, 1970, we picked up 11-day-old Jeff. It was love at first sight!" According to Rosie, Jeff spent five days in foster care before he came to them, adding that his birth mother wanted him adopted by a Catholic family.



From left: Marc, Alan, Rosie, Dan and Jeff Fellhauer.

Before long, the Fellhauers moved to Columbus for Al's work with McDonald's, and they were blessed with two more sons, Dan and Marc. Al credits the water in Columbus and Devine Intervention with the two pregnancies.

At a point in his career with McDonald's in Ohio, Al had a large territory and would often be gone overnight a couple times a week. Rosie gladly held down the fort with their three boys.

In time, with a move to Michigan, Al and Rosie became McDonald's Franchisees, eventually acquiring as many as 14 McDonald's franchises. The five Fellhauers worked in the family business, however, it was Jeff who Al says, "Like me, had ketchup in his veins!" Jeff spent many years working with his dad in the restaurant operations.

Al and Rosie retired after more than 50 years in the McDonald's System, the franchises were all sold, and Jeff has moved on to other opportunities, while Al and Rosie are enjoying their sons, daughters-in-law and seven grandchildren.

Al, who himself was adopted, called Jeff "the best thing that happened to him."

Al eventually learned about his birth family, but unlike his dad,

Jeff has no desire to do so. When asked by his mom about sharing their adoption experience, Jeff was all for it, and he quipped, "Be sure you mention that you weren't so happy with the 'no returns' policy!"

Rosie reflected that she's very blessed, that she got to experience becoming a mother with Jeff's arrival and the births of sons Dan and Marc. For women who are considering placing their children for adoption and for families looking to adopt, Al says, "Don't hesitate. God will make the decision for you."

There's More to the Story | Continued from page I

His birth mother remained in touch with the Agency and kept the "door open" should Keith wish to find her.

Growing up in a happy, middle-class home with terrific parents, Keith didn't feel the need to find his birth mother. But after his adoptive mother passed away, and with encouragement from his wife Muffy, who wanted to learn of any medical history, Keith found his birth mother Jennifer.

For the next six or seven years, Keith had time to get to know Jennifer, who lived in the area and never married or had other children. And he was with her when she died in 2011. "God put me here to help her (in the end)," Keith shared. "I was in her life when she needed me most."

Learn more about our Pregnancy Counseling program at: www.csswashtenaw.org/bhs/pregnancy-counseling.



Keith Largin with his birth mother, Jennifer

#### **NEW BOARD MEMBER SARA ATWELL**



Sara Atwell CSSW Board Member

As a senior principal member of the IBM/Watson Health consulting team, Sara Atwell brings over 35 years of healthcare experience in hospital operations, clinical quality improvement, patient safety, service excellence, physician alignment and system transformational change.

While serving as the Chief Quality, Patient Safety, and Service Excellence Officer for Oakwood Healthcare System, Sara received Michigan's Quality and Patient Safety Leadership award.

Sara received her BS in Nursing from the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, and her master's in healthcare administration from Central Michigan University. She is certified in Healthcare Quality from the Institute of Quality Improvement at Intermountain Health, serves

on multiple nonprofit boards, and has been a member of the University of Michigan School of Nursing Board of Governance since 2016.

A certified yoga and Pilates instructor, Sara loves to move! In fact, she met her husband, Bill Atwell, at a gym. After 30 years of marriage, they still enjoy sports and the outdoors—and of course, each other! Together, they raised two daughters.

While physical health has dominated her professional life, Sara is keenly aware of the importance of mental health. Not only does she incorporate emotional well-being into her yoga and Pilates instruction, she also serves as a Stephen Minister and Leader, providing Christ-centered care to people experiencing difficulties in life.

Being on the Board is very important to Sara. She believes God made us "to care for each other and use our talents and gifts for giving back to our community in love, hope, and service." As a longtime supporter, Sara's proud of the positive impact CSSW has had on our communities. And, we're over the moon to have her onboard!

#### **OUR BOARD**

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CSSW President | CEO

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JIM BIRCHLER
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SARA ATWELL

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DCN. JIM KASPRZAK

FR. BRENDAN WALSH

#### PARISH PARTNERS

#### St. Joseph Catholic Church, Dexter

St. Joseph Catholic Church of Dexter has been a pillar of support for CSSW for longer than anyone can remember, including Ann Smart—a parishioner of 37 years, and it's been a busy 37 years. So busy, in fact, that Ann could easily be confused with paid staff. When we asked to learn more about the St. Joseph community, Fr. Brendan Walsh immediately sent us to Ann, and, after talking with her, we could see why. Her outsized heart is a perfect match for this uniquely generous congregation.

Ann told us she's worked with plenty of organizations, but she said St. Joe's is different. She's never encountered a group of people so eager to give. The parish regularly supports food pantries, soup kitchens, medical clinics, blood drives, and congregants in need. Fr. Brendan, as he's called, plays a pivotal role in the culture of giving at St. Joseph. As a vicar serving on the CSSW Board of Directors, Fr. Brendan has been a tireless advocate for the Agency. In addition to supporting CSSW through food drives, volunteering, and other collections, the church regularly includes a special envelope with their Sunday offerings, just for CSSW.

Ann explained that the work done at CSSW hits close to home for parishioners. Many members are impacted by overwhelming, and even life-threatening conditions. CSSW gives them a way to both help and be helped. "I wouldn't feel qualified to help someone in withdrawal, but I could call the priest and he would send that person to CSSW. That's how it works." Supporting CSSW allows any congregant to participate in the healing and restoration of their communities.

Continued on page 6

## BOARD MERGER

On March 31, 2023, the Marnee and John DeVine Foundation Board and the Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County Board approved the dissolution of the Marnee and John DeVine Foundation. Representatives of the Foundation Board will now serve as members of the Marnee and John DeVine Foundation Board of the CSSW board. They will provide direction for CSSW fundraising activities.

#### WE'VE RETIRED OUR MORTGAGE!

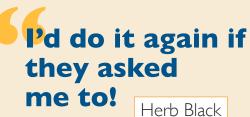
### **COMMITMENT IN ACTION**

Herb Black, a long-time donor, with his wife Chris, volunteer and former Chair of the Marnee and John DeVine Foundation Board, was honored and thanked when CSSW celebrated "Retiring Our Mortgage" at Barton Hills Country Club on May 11, 2023. Herb and Chris graciously hosted the event.

In December 2022, Herb Black's 2009 promise to the late John B. DeVine to pay off CSSW's \$1.2 million mortgage on 4925 Packard Street came to fruition. It took CSSW's monthly payments and the more than \$803,000 in generous contributions from 123 donors, to make this possible.

It was in 2009, with early help from friend and past DeVine Foundation Board Chair, Jay Hughes, the two got to work at Herb's behest, speaking with prospective donors who shared a common wish to help the Agency. "Herb saw a need and an opportunity—he was a real motivator," recalls Jay. "He brought new people into the CSSW family of donors, and it made all the difference."

Jay credits Herb with 99% of the work over the years and says Herb's enthusiasm and commitment are seen in the results of his efforts. In addition to the





From left: Judy Wilhelme, Frank Wilhelme, Tom Schriber, Ann Schriber, and Judy Johns

THE MISSION OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF WASHTENAW COUNTY IS THE WORK OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH; TO SHARE THE LOVE AND PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH ACTS OF COMPASSION AND MERCY IN A MANNER THAT RESPECTS THE INHERENT DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON.



Herb and Chris Black

Diocese of Lansing's matching funds and loan incentives of more than \$125,000, donors made 549 "Retire the Mortgage" gifts—in many cases, on top of their regular CSSW giving—to reach this milestone.

The impact of this successful fundraising effort will be lasting. Without the burden of a \$5,000 monthly mortgage payment, more resources will be available for counseling, stocking our Food Pantry, providing home services to seniors, and other essential services. In addition, resources will be available to help maintain and improve our facility to meet client and staff needs.

"It was a privilege for me to help CSSW fulfill their mortgage, and I took great pleasure in 'tearing up the mortgage' at our celebration that honored everyone who helped make this possible," remarked Herb. "I know how much Peg and her staff appreciate our support, and I'd do it again, if they asked me to!"



From left: Grandaughter Maya Black, Chris Black, Joann Green, Thomas Green, Stephen Black, and Herb Black

## **THANK YOU, DONORS!**

These generous suppporters contributed to our Retire the Mortgage campaign, from 2009-2022

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#### MEET CHERYL!

#### Parish Outreach Coordinator

A manager and engineer at Ford Motor Company, a substitute teacher for middle-schoolers with learning disabilities, and an avid church volunteer—Cheryl Ankenbauer can, apparently, do anything. That said, when she heard about an open position at CSSW for the Parish Outreach Coordinator, she knew this was the job she'd been waiting for.

Cheryl had developed an appreciation of what social workers do when her own daughter became one, however, she had never heard of an agency that offered the kind of wraparound services available at CSSW. Cheryl had adopted a child of her own, taken

care of a parent suffering from dementia, and endured mental health problems in her own family. She couldn't help but feel a tinge of regret as she came to realize what a difference CSSW would have made in her own life.

That regret has become her motivation. Since she was hired in February, Cheryl has done a deep dive into the Agency—methodically interviewing employees from



Cheryl Ankenbauer
CSSW Parish Outreach Coordinator

each program to get a full view of the work that's done every day. It didn't take long for Cheryl to come to the conclusion that she was surrounded by superheroes. Her mission now? To make sure everyone in the local parishes, and the wider community, knows they're not alone.

A convert to Catholicism, Cheryl's faith is intentional, resting on the cool logic of an engineer. But, she practices her faith with the urgency of a paramedic. Tireless in her advocacy, she considers the work of CSSW in Christian terms—demonstrating, for example, how the Offender Success program embodies Jesus's injunction in Matthew 25:36, "I was in prison, and you visited me." Needless to say, her presentations make an impact. After hearing her speak, one parish immediately organized a donation drive to provide wallets to returning citizens who do not have the ID cards they needed for jobs and housing.

Cheryl wants to see the relationship between CSSW and local parishes become more seamless. She envisions a network of support in which the churches and the Agency refer people back and forth. Each parish has a unique infrastructure, skillset, and resources. By tapping into that, Cheryl hopes to empower churches to work in tandem with the Agency, as colleagues with the same mission. She shared, "When all the parishes are working from their strengths and gifts there's so much more we can accomplish together."

If you'd like to learn more about the Parish Outreach program, Cheryl would appreciate hearing from you. Please contact her at (734) 971-9781 ext. 540 or <a href="mailto:cankenbauer@csswashtenaw.org">csswashtenaw.org</a>.

Parish Partners | Continued from page 3



Ann's explanation helped us understand why the church was so motivated to give. She further explained that generosity is woven into the church's identity. Giving is reflexive—it's not their last resort; it's their first move. She told us that to be effective, people can't waste time deliberating about whether they're giving enough, or too much. "When you see a need, you respond however you can," Ann explained.

She pointed out that accepting limitations is key to turning

generosity into a habit. No single person can do it all, and we're not even supposed to. If a person feels stretched too thin, they can and should ask for help. Ann confessed that even she's had to curtail some of her volunteering. For example, she now leaves activities that involve driving at night to others.

Even in the worst circumstances, like the pandemic, the parishioners of St. Joe's didn't give up. When they couldn't see each other in person because of lockdowns, they sent out greeting cards and prayed for the sick. As Ann pointed out, when you can't do anything else, you can still pray.

The giving spirit at St. Joe's not only builds trust—it establishes relationships. Ann noted that it's difficult to get to know your fellow parishioners while attending Mass. People shake hands, share the peace, maybe chat for a few minutes after Mass, and that's about it. But, when you're washing dishes, serving hot dogs, weeding in the garden—that's when you really get to know people. That's when you find out what's happening in their lives. People come together when they're working toward a common goal.

Ann believes this is what Catholicism is all about. She said it's one thing to believe in the faith, but to be a Catholic, we must live that faith. "We are Jesus's hands and feet and face in the world. We project his image to others by what we do for others." Ann believes that service to others is the faith. It's putting the prayer book into action. We couldn't agree more. After all, it's what we do at CSSW every day.

If you'd like to learn more about St. Joseph in Dexter, visit https://stjos.com or call (734) 426-8483.

#### **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

## Mary Breida | Volunteer Caregiver Respite

Mary Breida's mother worked full-time in a factory while raising a family, but she still carved out time to help anyone who needed it. Mary says her mother defined "family" broadly: Anyone who needed help was her family. Inspired by her mother's example, Mary knew she would become a volunteer once she retired.

As the years passed, Mary's mother grew more frail. Mary saw just how difficult it can be for a previously active, healthy person to deteriorate—not just for that person, but also for their loved ones. Mary was no longer the "child" in their relationship; she had become one of her caretakers.

While the task was difficult, it wasn't impossible because Mary's manager position at Ford Motor Company ensured she had the resources needed to keep her mother comfortable. She wondered, however, about all the families that don't have those resources.

To help others, she and her husband began to volunteer for Meals on Wheels. That was a good start, yet Mary wanted to do even more. In October of 2014, a web search introduced her to CSSW's Volunteer Caregiver Respite (VCR) program. For Mary, it was a perfect fit.

The VCR program provides family caregivers with three hours a week to rest, run errands, or take care of personal needs. Volunteers spend time with homebound adults—playing games, doing crafts, watching movies, reading books, or just chatting. A one-on-one job like that can feel intimidating, but Mary explained that CSSW provides excellent training. Strict rules about interactions, roles, and responsibilities establish clear boundaries to protect both clients and volunteers.

The three hours a week you spend with the person,

## it's gonna mean a lot to that person...

I think that people will get more joy out of that than they realize.

And the program director plays a strong supportive role in establishing and building relationships.

Mary was quickly matched with a family, and she soon realized how relaxing it was to take a break from her high-octane job to work on puzzles, crafts, and other activities with her client.

Her volunteer assignment has remained the same for almost a decade, and Mary feels like they're family now—just like

her own mother once felt. Thankfully, Mary is not alone in supporting this family. Other family members visit and help often. One neighbor walks the family's dog every morning, and another mirrors Mary's role, giving the caregiver a break when she needs it.

The strength of community inspires Mary, but like any family member, she worries. Luckily, the family is connected with a CSSW social worker to help them through future transitions.

Still, Mary always wishes the family had more helpers to rely on. "It's really important for us to find a way for people to come together to help other people," she explains. When asked what might convince others to volunteer for VCR, Mary suggests, "The three hours a week you spend with the client, it's going to mean a lot to that person. It's going to help that person... I think that people will get more joy out of it than they realize."

After the pandemic lockdowns, so many people felt isolated and disconnected.

Mary thinks volunteering helps alleviate the loneliness and isolation so many of us still experience, even after the pandemic. As it turns out, engaging and connecting is easier than people may think. In fact, it can take as little as three hours a week—working on puzzles and sharing a cup of tea. And, after all, isn't that what family is for?

CSSW is so grateful to have people like Mary on our team. If you'd like to learn more about our VCR program please visit: www.csswashtenaw.org/volunteer-caregiver-respite, call (734) 971.9781 ext. 511, or email

imatthews@csswashtenaw.org.





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