

**Commonwealth
Catholic Charities**

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Commonwealth
Catholic Charities is
a 501(c)(3) nonprofit
social service organiza-
tion aiding residents of
central and southwest-
ern Virginia. Services are
provided to all people.



CCC Honors Incredible Volunteers at Community Service Awards

A record crowd gathered for the 14th Annual Community Service Awards at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden on the evening of Thursday, April 22. Guests enjoyed the gardens in full bloom, great food, drinks, and an awards presentation honoring CCC's four very special winners below:

- Stevens Jewelers
Community Service Award Winner
- Deborah J. Johnston
Community Service Award Winner
- Joan Wallace, Samuel H. Dibert
CCC Volunteer of the Year Award
- St. Bridget Catholic Church
Parish Recognition Award (new award)

Your support of the CSAs is so important to us, and we're grateful for the 300 attendees who came out to applaud these remarkable people and organizations who are making Richmond a nicer place! As one of CCC's largest fundraisers, your help makes the difference between a little or a lot of funding toward valuable programs.

The Community Service Awards were created out of the idea that local folks doing outstanding work should have the chance to be recognized. Community Service Award winners are nominated publicly by friends, peers, or family and then submitted to CCC for a vote by a CCC-organized selection committee. The Samuel H. Dibert Volunteer of the Year Award is chosen internally to distinguish an agency volunteer

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Q: *Is there someone you know who's making a difference in our community? You can nominate them now! Visit www.cccofva.org for the CSA nomination form. Winners won't be chosen until 2011, but it's never too early to nominate!*

Chronicle

Did you notice the purple accent on your newsletter? This shade represents CCC's Foster Care program! As we

Community Service Awards

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who has exceeded expectation and duty, exhibiting passion and deep commitment to helping CCC clients. This year, the Parish Recognition Award was added to the lineup to honor a parish/religious organization which has invaluable aided both CCC and the community.

Deepest thanks to our event sponsors for their support of a wonderful evening!

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Bliley's; Hugh and Sue Dibert; Midlothian Junior Women's Club; Financial Accounting Services, Inc.; Tony and Sandra Puccinelli; SunTrust Bank



CSA guests happily applaud the winners

CASA holds vigils for abused and neglected children

Most of us, whether parents or not, can't imagine mistreating a child. However, 34 Virginia children died last year as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Hundreds more are victimized every day. To mark Child Abuse Prevention Month (April), CCC held several candlelight vigils through our CASA program in Norton to remember these children and raise awareness of the tragedy of child abuse.

Vigils were held in Norton, Lee County, and Scott County. Many thanks to those who helped plan the events and to the folks who attended—despite the harsh weather. Your attendance sent a powerful message against the sickening perpetuation of child abuse and honors the memories of the children we've lost.

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates) volunteers are judge-appointed and empowered to stand up for an abused or neglected child in court proceedings. They're in a unique position to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children, staying with each case until it's closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused kids, their CASA volunteer will be the one consistent adult presence—the one adult who cares only for them. If you'd like to become a CASA volunteer and are a resident of Lee, Wise, or Scott County please call (276) 679-2272.



A young attendee keeps the flame burning



Judge Elizabeth S. Wills reflects for a moment

Are You a Member of Our Legacy Society?

Is there something you've been meaning to tell us? Commonwealth Catholic Charities is fortunate to be the recipient of trusts or estate gifts established by faithful and wonderful friends. While many have shared their generous intentions, others have kept their gift a secret.

If you have named CCC as a beneficiary, or you're thinking about doing so, please share your plans with us. We'd love the opportunity to thank you for your gift and honor you as a member of our **Legacy Society**, CCC's recognition society for planned givers. If you prefer to remain anonymous, your gift will be kept confidential. Please contact Ed Smith (ed.smith@cccfva.org) or Hugh Dibert (hugh.dibert@cccfva.org) if you have any questions or call (804) 545-5941.

move ahead we'll be highlighting all of CCC's services by using their specific program color on our newsletter.

RIS Hampton Event a Delicious Success

Your support led to a terrific evening for Hampton's Refugee and Immigration Services (RIS) second annual Community Dinner and Silent Auction on Saturday, April 24. Two hundred guests enjoyed music from classical guitarist Robin Welch, plus a musical performance by Thair Sajed, an Iraqi refugee. Nadia Arshad, another Iraqi refugee, spoke to the crowd about how RIS helped her rebuild her life after she fled war-torn Iraq.

The executive chef of Embassy Suites Hotel loaned his generous talent in creating dinner, dessert, and wine pairings at the Hampton Roads Convention Center. A silent auction completed the evening, with over 55 items fetching enthusiastic bids from the crowd on hotel packages, wine baskets, jewelry, and more. Overall, RIS raised \$7,000 from ticket sales, auction proceeds, and donations. Thanks to everyone who organized, contributed to, and attended this year!



Thair Sajed beams before playing



Guests enthralled by the diverse program

A Special Boy Finds a Special Home

Very recently, CCC took custody of David, a six-year-old little boy with Down Syndrome. David's mom had struggled, unable to speak English, moving several times throughout the country to find work.

For six years she'd tried to keep David in the programs he needed in order to thrive. She'd considered the gut-wrenching possibility of placing David with another family but didn't know how to begin the process. She started working with a counselor at Richmond Behavioral Health Authority, who recommended CCC as a resource for her and her son.

It's rare for us to accept an older child into our custody for adoption because of an array of issues placing them. However, CCC had a family just approved for a third special needs adoption, who were specifically hoping to be matched with another child with Down Syndrome. They had no idea their wish was about to be granted!

Expecting to adopt an infant, the family was asked to adopt six-year-old David. The answer was a heartfelt and resounding YES! On May 17th, David went home with his new family.

Many, many days, nights, weeks, and months of transition for both David and his adoptive parents await. But soon this little boy will begin to learn, speak, and thrive in ways he may never have been able to otherwise. His selfless birth mother deserves gracious respect and thanks for putting her sweet son before herself and her own feelings, making sure his needs will be met and his future is bright. Much luck and love to David's new forever family...and many thanks to the forces that brought everyone together!

Looking to Donate or Volunteer?

We need you!! CCC is always in need of volunteers, and right now we are looking for thoughtful folks like you to lend time to our Supervised Visitation Program and Independence for Seniors programs in **Roanoke**. Call if you'd like to become a valued volunteer for either of these meaningful programs!
(540) 342-0411

Supervised Visitation (SVP) offers a safe, child-friendly place for children and non-custodial parents to interact. Volunteers are needed for weekdays, evenings, and Saturday mornings to help monitor visits.

Independence for Seniors links adults over aged 65 to community resources and services as well as companionship and connection. Friendly volunteers are needed to interact with older homebound adults living alone.

Brown paper bags piling up at home? Bring them to us! Be green and reuse/recycle your brown paper bags by donating them to CCC. Our food pantry goes through approximately 420 bags *per month*, and we're always in need of more. Your donations of bags save money, staff time, and enjoy a new life carting home nourishing food for hungry folks in need!

Roanoke Volunteer Recognized

Congratulations to Roger Fortney, one of eight individuals and groups who were honored for their exceptional service at Volunteer Roanoke Valley's Awards Reception on April 20th. Fortney, a volunteer monitor for the Supervised Visitation Program (SVP), was recognized for his work with youth. The winners were determined by three external judges, and entries were submitted from across the Roanoke Valley. Alison Jorgenson, Director of Volunteer Roanoke Valley, noted "Roger absolutely deserves this award due to his great dedication to children and their families." Roger has been a volunteer monitor with SVP since 2008 and we're so grateful for all of his help.

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The Chronicle is a publication produced for the employees, volunteers, contributors, clients, and friends of Commonwealth Catholic Charities. If you are interested in sharing comments or contributing story ideas, please contact the editor by email at Morgen.McElroy@cccofva.org. The CCC Annual Report is available online at www.cccofva.org.

Independent Living Teaches Valuable Life Skills

How did you learn to write a check, pay your rent, or go grocery shopping? For kids in foster care, sometimes there's no parent to teach the life skills we often take for granted. Independent Living (IL), a component of the foster care program, includes monthly workshops during the school year for kids aged 14-19. Public speaking assignments and equine-assisted activities were added this spring to give students a more well-rounded learning experience.

IL will host monthly activities this summer until official workshops start up again in September. Team building, apartment hunting, and a tour of Virginia Western Community College in Roanoke will all be part of summer offerings.

"Even if they are reluctant, they still try," said Candy Witcher, IL Program Coordinator, which is what life is all about.

May—National Foster Care Month

Certainly nothing will truly express the thanks our foster parents deserve for the dedication, caring, and compassion they bring to lives of the children who need them. CCC staff work with some of the most awesome, selfless people in our community, and we're honored to know them and witness the joy they've brought to so many young lives. Though you're only 'officially' recognized once a year, please know what you do is amazing!

CCC is always in need of foster families. If you'd like to change a child's life, please contact us today to learn more. www.cccofva.org



Some of CCC's Foster Care staff

About Foster Care

Thousands of kids are placed in foster care each year—in fact, almost half a million children reside in the foster care system nationwide. In the last 10 years, the number of kids placed in foster care has increased nationally, however, the number of homes available has decreased over the same period of time.

Foster care affects hundreds of thousands of children and families and society as a whole. Child welfare issues arise in families of every race, ethnicity, culture, and age group. Children and youth are placed in foster care when their parents (or guardians) are no longer able to ensure their essential wellbeing. These young people need stable, loving care until they can either safely reunite with their families or establish other lifelong relationships with a nurturing adult.