



Branches on the Vine

MARCH 29 - APRIL 4, 2025



From left, Barbara Ciotti and Jackie Roe of St. Margaret Church and Sue Croce of St. George Church at the Little Miracles warehouse in North Branford. Photo courtesy of Joe Pisani

PUTTING A SMILE ON THE FACES OF CHILDREN

LITTLE MIRACLES MINISTRY PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR FAMILIES.

Story by Joe Pisani

At Christmas time, Barbara Ciotti called 20 families whose children probably wouldn't find toys from Santa under the tree. Then, she and her volunteers from the Little Miracles ministry of St. Margaret Church in Madison and St. George Church in Guilford performed a little miracle of their own.

They scoured their warehouse, taking toys and stuff animals off the shelves, and delivered them to the families in time for the holiday.

"If we hadn't done that, they probably would've had nothing to celebrate at Christmas," says Ciotti, coordinator of the respect-life ministry, which for almost 30 years has helped needy families and single parents with young children by providing diapers, clothing, car seats, strollers, toys and other baby items donated by parishioners and community members.

"We distribute them to people in about seven towns from West Haven to Westbrook," she says at their Branford storage facility, where volunteers unpack donations and prepare them for delivery. "We take in donations and give out donations to anyone who needs them, and the need is great."

People drop off things at the parish center or come to the warehouse. Social service agencies often refer their clients to Little Miracles.

At Christmas, clients receive a Walmart gift card; at Thanksgiving, St. George Church supplies turkeys; and at Easter, holiday baskets are passed out to families.

Little Miracles assists some 100 families a year with children usually up to 6 years old.

"I recently got a call from a social service agency about a woman who has five children, and were probably living in a shelter," Ciotti says. "They all needed something. We try to make it better so the kids can smile."

She recalls a woman Little Miracles has helped from the time she had her first baby. Now, she has four children, three who are suffering medical issues, and no husband. She also lost her housing.

"She is a wonderful person and a great mom who has had terrible luck," Ciotti says. "Those of us who have money often don't realize the need. It's hard to look the other way."

Little Miracles was started in 1996 by a group of women led by the late Lily Molloy. Ciotti has volunteered for 18 years and been coordinator for 15.

"We store a lot of these items in a small warehouse space that has been donated to us," Ciotti says. "But we need to move again and are looking for a space approximately 1,000 to 1,500 square feet in the Guilford-Branford area that can be our 'forever home.'"

The volunteers are kind-hearted people who want to do their part, Ciotti adds, but more are needed. Also, a new coordinator is needed for one day a week.

Sue Croce, who began volunteering at Thanksgiving, says, "I'm a grandmother who has a soft spot in my heart for babies, and I wanted to give back."

Her colleague, Jackie Roe, has been with the ministry a year and describes the work as "pure fun." Volunteers also include Fran Aquarulo, Judy Shauk, Margaret Healy and Paula Filippone.

(Little Miracles volunteers meet on Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at a storage area in Branford to organize donations and package items for distribution. For information about making donations or volunteering, contact Barbara Ciotti at (203.464.2644.)



Upcoming Events



03/29 SATURDAY 1PM

FACES OF HOMELESSNESS

St. Augustine Church, 55 Hopewell Rd.,
South Glastonbury

You are invited to a FREE program called Faces of Homelessness, sponsored by SS. Isidore and Maria Parish and Hands On Hartford. We'll hear from two individuals who have experienced homelessness, sharing their journeys, struggles, and triumphs. Visit www.isidoreandmaria.org/faceshomelessness to register.



04/4 FRIDAY 6:30PM

HEALING MASS AT ST. ANTHONY CHURCH OF PROSPECT

St. Anthony Church, 4 Union City Rd,
Prospect

This Mass is for everyone who would like to experience spiritual, physical or emotion healing. God is doing the healing; we are the instruments used to make a prayerful environment. In addition to the beautiful Celebration of the Eucharist, the powerful rites of the Anointing of the Sick and the Laying on of Hands will also be offered. All are welcome!



04/4 - 04/6 WEEKEND

SAINT BRIDGET DRAMA CLUB PERFORMANCE OF ALADDIN JR.

Saint Bridget School, 74 Main Street
Manchester

Come to Agrabah where a genie grants your wishes and carpets fly! Buy your tickets for Disney's Aladdin Jr. performance to be held on April 4th, 5th and 6th. This is a show you don't want to miss!

Tickets are \$8. Scan the QR code to purchase or send payment to the school office with a note of how many tickets you would like for which show.

04/4 Friday 7PM
04/5 Saturday 7PM
04/6 Sunday 2PM



04/6 SUNDAY 3PM

LENTEN REFLECTIONS CONCERT

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, 785
Highland Avenue, Waterbury
Handicap accessible elevator
(America Street entrance)

Elm Street Brass (Yale University students)
The concert will feature music written by Palestrina, Tallis, Victoria, Allegri, Bruckner, Brahms, Pergolesi, Dubois, and more. Free-will donation

2025 ARCHBISHOP'S ANNUAL APPEAL

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Total Goal: \$10M

30.45% as of 3/18/25
\$3,045,034 pledges from
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www.archdioceseofhartford.org/appeal

