



## Catholic Charities Mission Stories

*The following stories describe real life encounters by Catholic Charities staff with those who are “hungering” in many ways – for food, friendship, understanding, assistance with material needs, and more. Names have been changed for the sake of preserving each person’s dignity and privacy. During this catechetical year, these stories, and the accompanying reflection questions, can easily be used with young people and adults to catechize about how Jesus calls his disciples to live and to serve the poor. They can also be adapted for younger children. You may especially consider using these in conjunction with the [Eighth World Day of the Poor](#) (Sunday, November 17, 2024) and Pope Francis’ teaching on the poor and our obligation to minister with them.*

### Story #1

#### RUTH

Ruth’s family came to the United States from Pakistan when she was a young girl. Ruth had a mental health crisis and was hospitalized. Due to their cultural beliefs, Ruth was viewed as a disgrace to her family who disowned her at the young age of 15. This is when Ruth began residing at a Catholic Charities foster care program, the Heery Center. While at the Heery Center, Ruth began to thrive. She formed relationships with the staff at the Heery Center and began to see that her mental health diagnosis didn’t need to be a barrier. Through counseling and the services provided to her at the Heery Center, she began to derive strength from her hardships and was determined not to let anything stop her from reaching her goals. She confronted her childhood trauma and the loss of her family and began to work through the pain that they had caused her. Through our program she began to have some normalized experiences such as attending her high school prom, playing sports and spending time with friends.

Ruth graduated from Shaker High School and went on to attend Hudson Valley Community College. Ruth entered our Supervised Independent living program at just 17 years old where she continues to live in her own and work full time.

Below are some quotes from various who have worked with Ruth during her time at Catholic Charities.

One person said:

“I admire Ruth for her determination. When she sets her mind to something, she becomes unstoppable. Ruth is thoughtful and kind and perfect just the way she is.”

Another said:

“Ruth is a young lady who is extremely kind hearted and will help anyone with anything. In her time at CMS, she has found her voice and is determined to make sure that it is always heard. Ruth exudes a passion for being an independent woman, one so strong that it leaves you feeling the same way.”

Ruth is pure joy to be around. Despite the many hardships she has faced, her determination to overcome is unparalleled. It has been a pleasure for all of us at CMS to have a front row seat to this young woman’s tenacity and resilience. She is a staunch advocate for her future which we have no doubt will be bright.

## **Story #2**

### **MATT**

Matt’s well broke and it is the only source of water for his home. He is a senior citizen with a limited income and only receives Social Security. He has several medical conditions which have had him in the hospital in the last few months including diabetes and cancer issues. On top of the medical issues, Matt has had to repair his jeep a few times in the last couple months. The towing and repairs cost him more than he can afford each time. With all of this and paying all the property and village taxes on his home he does not have the savings to pay to have his well repaired. Matt is the only one in his family who is here in New York and doesn't have the help to make repairs and excavate on his own due to his age and medical issues. Right now, he has a friend who lets him fill up jugs of water at his house for Matt to use to drink, eat, flush his toilet, and bathe. Catholic Charities of Columbia Greene Counties together with the Office of the Aging combined resources to pay for Matt’s well to be repaired.

## **Story #3**

### **NATALIE**

Natalie was referred to our Agency by a HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) representative for assistance with her past due electric charges. She is in the final stages of kidney failure and her dialysis is 3 times a week. She does not drive and lives in area that does not have close neighbors and they are mostly vacation homes on the mountain top. The Department of the Aging only provides 4 trips a month car service and Natalie’s dialysis is 3 times a week for the rest of her life. She has no way to get to these appointments on top of having to go for labs frequently because she has had a shunt placed. The numerous appointments for labs use up all the trips that OFA are permitted to give. Unfortunately, she is ineligible for a kidney transplant so her only option is the dialysis three times a week. Due to not having the transportation for the dialysis her doctor may approve and alternative treatment which is administered in her home. This requires electricity for the water pump and the heat she will need in the winter. With all of the medical issues she has, her monthly medical bills are mounting and she couldn't afford to pay the back electric charges. Natalie was extremely distraught and fearful that this all will not work out and her health will continue to decline. Funding provided by National Grid allowed Catholic Charities of Columbia Greene Counties the ability to pay Natalie’s electric bill.

#### **STORY #4**

While doing outreach at the Gloversville Food Pantry Catholic Charities staff encountered a woman who was in need of a mattress. Her current mattress she had taken from the yard of a neighbor, as they were getting rid of it. It was only too late for her to discover the reason, it was infested with bed bugs.

She came to Catholic Charities seeking assistance with a new mattress and shared she was told by other entities no mattresses were available in the area.

After countless phone calls (6-8) to a furniture provider in the area, leaving messages and no follow up back to us, Catholic Charities heard from the client absolutely thrilled to share that service provider did indeed make contact with her thanks to our calls and delivered a new mattress, box spring and frame.

#### **STORY #5**

A man called seeking assistance to remove lead from his home. He owns a duplex with his grandchild and daughter living in one unit. The grandchild became ill and it was discovered this was due to lead paint. The homeowner was without funds to fix the problem. He called Catholic Charities looking for some assistance. After a few phone calls we were able to register him for a free lead removal certification program offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension. The homeowner passed the certification exam and was able to complete the lead removal himself.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Read Matthew Chapter 25: 31-40.

In this passage, we hear the question “Lord, when did we see you hungry?” How can we do this?

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What other ways does this passage in the Gospel of Matthew call on people of faith to respond and live?

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Have you learned about Dorothy Day? What similarities do you see between Dorothy Day and these stories?

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Can you think of a time that you needed help? Who did you turn to? What kind of help did you receive?

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Can you think of a time you helped someone in need? How did you respond? How did you feel offering help to someone?

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