



CHRIST CHILD SOCIETY OF SOUTH BEND

WHERE LOVE LEADS TO ACTION

2366 Miracle Lane
Mishawaka, IN 46545
574 288 6028
info@christchildsb.org

Fall 2023

"Nothing is ever too much to do for a child."

Calendar

September

5, 12, 19, 26 Open for members
Tuesdays, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

18 Board Meeting - Desmond
Conference Room 10:00 AM

25 In Memoriam Mass - Little
Flower 8:30 AM

Clothing Distribution

Wednesdays, **6, 13, 20, 27**
8:30-10:00 AM

Thursdays, **14, 28** 4:30-6:00 PM

Sunday, **17** 1:00-2:30 PM

October

3, 10, 17, 24, 31 Open for members
Tuesdays, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

12 **Fall Membership Luncheon**
Morris Park CC, 11:00 AM

16 Board Meeting - Desmond
Conference Room 10:00 AM

18 Deadline for United in Service

25 In Memoriam Mass - Little
Flower 8:30 AM

Clothing Distribution

Wednesdays, **4, 11, 18, 25**
8:30-10:00 AM

Thursdays, **5, 26** 4:30-6:00 PM

Sundays, **8, 15** 1:00-to 2:30 PM

November

7, 14, 28 Open for members
Tuesdays, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM

9 **Let Love Shine Gala**

13 Board Meeting - Desmond
Conference Room 10:00 AM

13 Winter Newsletter Deadline

20-24 Center closed for holiday

23 **Happy Thanksgiving!**

24 In Memoriam Mass - Little
Flower 8:30 AM

28 **Giving Tuesday**

Clothing Distribution

Wednesdays, **1, 8, 15, 29**
8:30-10:00 AM

Thursdays, **2, 16** 4:30-6:00 PM

Sunday, **5** 1:00-2:30 PM

Planning for *Let Love Shine* 2023 Is Well Under Way

The planning stages for this year's *Let Love Shine* event have officially begun! June brought the committee chairs and event co-chairs together for their first meeting. This year's event is chaired by Carolyn Sherman and Sue Montalbano. As usual, many members are very busy in individual committees making sure that this year's event will be better than ever.



This year's location will be the Ribbon Town Ballroom in the new Four Winds Hotel. The *Let Love Shine* fundraiser is one of the inaugural events in this brand-new space. Parking is a snap near the hotel entrance and the elegant and spacious atmosphere will provide the perfect setting for perusing silent auction items while enjoying the dual bar areas with your favorite beverage.

Entering the ballroom is a visual treat with state-of-the-art custom lighting and audio visual amenities. The \$125.00 ticket price includes hors d'oeuvres, premium open bar, gourmet meal and dessert, all while supporting a wonderful cause.

There are a limited number of hotel rooms reserved for CCS at a special

rate. A stay in the lovely hotel would be the perfect topper to a fabulous and memorable evening. Make a night of it!

Silent and live auction committees have outdone themselves this year with exciting and very unique ideas. There is even planning for a live artist event throughout the evening. Winning bids will be taking home beautiful and unique art.

Come be a part of the fun while supporting the over 4,500 local infants and children served by CCS. If you haven't come to the dinner yet - or for a very long time - please plan to join us this year. We will have an accessible space with valet parking, elevators, and escalators.

The Christ Child Society of South Bend is hoping to share its story throughout the community. Help by asking friends to join you and reserve a table. Sponsorships are available from \$250-\$15,000.



Eventful Autumn Ahead

Melissa Baltz
Co-President

I am looking forward to our busy 77th year! Our thoughts are turning to fall as school starts, we open the Center for families, and start distributing clothing to "our" children. We had a record opening week, and we won't be surprised if we exceed last year's total of over 4,500 children served.

We are excited about our new software. The computer room has been humming as Mary Liddell, Kae Sobczyk and their team have been training on how to use the new client database. We believe that this new software will help us better serve our clients and will be a reliable source of demographic and inventory information.

In the next few months, we will have our Fall Luncheon for members on October 12 and *Let Love Shine*, our major fundraiser dinner and auction, on November 9. This event is always fun, and we have some new and different live auction items as well as lots of good food and drinks.

The United in Service project to distribute books and educational materials, which we do in connection with the National Christ Child Society, will also take place this fall. We have lots to look forward to at Christ Child.

I wish you a similarly fulfilling autumn.

New Board Sworn in to Begin 2023-24 Year

The Board In-Board Out meeting was held on July 17. The joint meeting was an opportunity to say goodbye to those completing their terms and to welcome incoming board members. New board members were familiarized with their duties and meeting procedures.

Patti Banet thanked outgoing board members with a beautiful custom CCS ornament.

Co-President Sue Seall presented outgoing Co-President Patti Banet with a garden art pole in thanks for her service.



President Elect Vickie Sleevei and Co-Presidents Melissa Baltz and Sue Seall



2023-24 Board members. Front: Judy Farrell, Mary Hazel, Sue Seall, Lisa Smessaert, Karen Van Meter, Melissa Baltz, and Parliamentarian Bridget Group. Back Row: Tricia Shafer, Barb Reihl, Sherri North, Patti Banet, Vickie Sleevei and Laura Trippel. Absent: Mary Liddell, Sue Kinnucan, Jean Fuehrmeyer and Past Presidents Representative, Sue Walsh.

2023-24 Executive Board

Co-Presidents
Sue Seall
Melissa Baltz
President Elect
Vickie Sleevei
Vice President (Fundraising)
Lisa Smessaert
Vice President (Membership)
Tricia Shafer
Vice President (Clothing)
Judy Farrell
Vice President (Communications)
Mary Hazel
Board Secretary
Karen Van Meter
Treasurer
Sue Kinnucan

Busy Opening Day with Record Crowd

The start of The Christ Child Society's 77th year serving the children in St. Joseph County has been record breaking!

Since the Center closed to clients last December, volunteers have been preparing for the 2023 clothing season by ordering clothing and shoes and restocking the shelves.

Clients began lining up at 4:30 AM on August 9, ready to clothe their children for the start of school. In the first two weeks, **1,000 children** were given shoes, coats and clothing.

The halls were full of families pulling their red wagons to each department. As usual, members and community volunteers were efficient. They greeted and interviewed clients and gathered clothes as quickly as possible. It is always rewarding to see the smiles on children's faces as they hug that new teddy bear or walk out wearing a brand-new pair of shoes.



Sue Seall and Sara Conroy show the long and short of opening day.



Above: Laura Trippel helps a mom pick the perfect coat for her daughter.
Below: Selene loves her new coat!



Above: Volunteers await announcements as clients line up outside. Below: Tadeo gives a shy smile as he waits for his clothes.



Alexandria kept her blue coat on while she picked out books.



Clients register and select sizes for their children. The display of clothing aids them in choosing the best sizes. This is the first step in the process. Once their data is entered into the database and sent to each department, clients take a red wagon to pick up their clothes, shoes, coats and used clothing before selecting a book and dental supplies. Then, they can stop at Mary's Boutique for some free clothes or housewares.

New Database a Step Into the Future

After 25 years of using Access database to register client data, The Christ Child Society upgraded to Apricot, a cloud-based software that better serves the demands created by additional programs, expanded clothing items and greater reliance on data to drive programming decisions.

Mary Liddell diligently researched available databases and teamed with Kae Sobczyk to work with Apricot designers on the best structure for capturing data. Monique Deguara and Beth Barrett served as test data inputters as the design was tweaked over the summer.

Training sessions, designed by Kae, taught Intake volunteers and department heads how to use the new software. Her clear instructions shortened the learning curve.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society helped with soft openings August 2 and 3 by sending 5 families each day. Executive Director Anne Watson



Is Mary Liddell expressing frustration brought on by opening day's 99 families? Laurie Seall, Laura Trippel, Mary Hazel and Terry Slamkowski focus on remembering to hit "Save."

dropped in to offer advice since they also use Apricot. These test runs were successful, although opening day's 99 families proved to be a challenge! Mercifully, the regular Intake crew was supplemented with Mary and Kae to speed the process.

Improved technology heralds better service for clients and clearer knowledge of program data as the basis for continued growth.

Read - Learn- Grow: A Nonfiction Book Drive

Who doesn't love the excitement of a child who just learned the coolest fact about her favorite dinosaur? Or a middle schooler's, "I bet you didn't know that meteors....?" Or a reluctant reader buried in a book on natural disasters? All evidence of a mind awakened and engaged by the joy of learning.

This is at the heart of the yearly NCCS service project, "United in Service," an opportunity for all 45 chapters to 'find a need and fill it' in honor of founder Mary Virginia Merrick.

Education is the one constant in challenging generational poverty. Most reading done throughout our lives is nonfiction. Exposing young readers to engaging topics in science, the natural world, mathematics and technology increases academic vocabulary,



broadens background knowledge and reveals patterns and cycles to help make more sense of our world.

Please help to impact lives through the gift of literacy, critical thinking and a love of learning. Donations of NEW nonfiction books will be accepted at the Christ Child Clothing Center through October 18. The CCS website features five grade groupings of age-appropriate topics drawn from a broad STEM focus. Lists are available at the Center as well.

For your convenience, shop on Amazon (get the wish list link at

Help Needed!

We need your help to better serve our clients at the Center!

Volunteers are especially needed the two Thursday nights and one Sunday afternoon a month that the Center is open.

Even if you can only help a few times a year we would love to have you see our Center in action and help us serve our families.

For more information and dates and times we are open see our website at christchildsb.org or email info@christchildsb.org.

Giving Tuesday is November 27

Watch the CCS Facebook page for a link to donate.

Support local children through The Christ Child Society programs.

www.christchildsb.org/unitedservice2023

or choose a family favorite.

Each book will be matched with an Activity Packet of puzzles and activities for that grade level as well as some tips for parents to foster learning at home. These will be distributed to children, PreK/K through grade 8, through the Center beginning November 1 to honor our founder's November birthday.

Monetary donations are also most welcome. All funds collected will purchase new books and materials for this project. Please indicate your donation is for 'Read - Learn - Grow'.

For more information, please contact Lexie (info@christchildsb.org or 574-288-6028).

*Challenging the effects of poverty
one book at a time*

Keeping the Shelves Full

When the Clothing Center opens every August, the shelves in the Clothing Department are overflowing, shoe boxes fill every space in Shoes and racks are stuffed in the Coat Department.

How does all that happen? The team of Buyers works all year finding the best sales, generous retailers and online bargains which Coat Buyer Mary Ann Chandler refers to as "a bit of a Scavenger Hunt that is rewarding when it all comes together."

Increased reliance on computers and digital data, the move to Town and Country, improved financial management, and the leadership of Buyers Chair Betsie Pendarvis have made the Buyers Team a well-oiled machine. Jeans, Joggers and Leggings Buyer Suzanne McMillion said, "Everything runs fairly smoothly; I can't say that I have a challenge that isn't resolved quickly."

Because inventory is stocked for the arrival of clients each fall, storage has consistently been an issue. With the cramped Center on Thomas Street, John and Marge Bycraft offered space at their business, Jack Post Corporation. For years, members stuffed cars and trucks and drove up to Michigan, only to reverse the trip when stock dwindled. The move to St.

Patrick's added storage area, but it wasn't long before shelves were overflowing again. Andrea Incropera was known to have a garage full of coats waiting for transport to the Center. Inventory was replenished as needed and as space allowed.

Not long ago, a few buyers (primarily Andrea), used their own credit cards and were reimbursed while many members grabbed items when they saw a sale, without central coordination. Now, CCS accounts and credit cards make the process more efficient. "Consolidating online and wholesale vendor accounts and giving access to the buyers who need them make [bookkeeping] easier." Of course, trips to Walmart, Costco and other stores still supplement online orders. "Local stores prefer we order online, so as to not deplete their stock - except at clearance time, when they're delighted to get their racks cleared!" according to Betsie.

Betsie noted inventories are updated periodically and communication is key. Shoes, Lattes and Coats manage their own purchasing. Clothing Chair Sharon James shares the inventory spreadsheet with clothing item buyers. Increased storage space and continual monitoring of inventory facilitate data informed purchasing.

Buyers can work from home on their own time, making it the perfect job for those who are not always able to volunteer at the Center, although, as T-shirt and Sweatshirt Buyer, Kelly Harrison, said, "My biggest challenge is not being at the Center because I work. I think I'd have a better handle on needs, sizing etc. if I was there." Luckily, Betsie works hard to keep her buyers up to date on needed items.

Adult-size Buyer Audrey Herzberg noted that her favorite part of being a buyer is being able to provide



Above: John & Marge Bycraft with an unloaded truck at Jack Post. Below: On July 25, 1,656 coats were delivered to the center; most will be gone by October.



fashionable clothing for children, but it is a challenge to find it at reasonable prices. Pandemic supply shortages and inflation have greatly impacted the clothing budget and made bargain hunting more difficult.

Knowing children are skipping in their new shoes and modeling their coats in the Center's halls makes the bargain hunting worthwhile.

The Buyers Team

SOCKS/BRAS - Anne Crowley
 T-SHIRTS/SWEATSHIRTS - Kelly Harrison
 BRIEFS - Joann Cunningham
 JEANS, JOGGERS, LEGGINGS (KID SIZES)
 Suzanne McMillion
 (ADULT SIZES) - Audrey Herzberg
 UNIFORM PANTS & SHIRTS - Sue Seall
 TODDLER SLEEPERS/OUTFITS/PAJAMAS
 Betsie Pendarvis
 COATS - Mary Ann Chandler, Margaret Schaller, Lynn Dzierla
 LAYETTES - Susan Wendowski, Diane Quinn
 SHOES - Barb Reihl, Barb Mickow
 FOSTER HOPE - Laura Trippel
 DENTAL HEALTH - Jean Fuehrmeyer
 FLOATERS - Sharon James/Chris Reilly



Betsie Pendarvis (right) reviews inventory spreadsheets with Buyers Barb Mickow, Chris Reilly and Sharon James.

Gifts and Memorials

The Christ Child Remembrance Card is a convenient way to send donations in any amount to The Christ Child Society to honor a memory or special occasion such as a birthday, anniversary or accomplishment. Deceased friends or relatives will be remembered in a perpetual monthly Mass. When requesting a Remembrance Card, please print legibly. The names will be printed in each newsletter with the donor's name in parentheses. Extra cards are available in the office or from Joan Hardig (574.277.7787).

SPECIAL OCCASION

Arlene Bruno – Get well (M/M James Holt)
 Sheila Dolan – Get well (M/M James Holt)
 Jean Fuehrmeyer – Blessings (Donna Rockin)
 Fr. Brian Florin – Ordination (Patti & Lowell Paschke)
 Peggy Gerstbauer – Thank you
 Jill Gerensher – Get well (Nancy Yohe)
 Peggy Gerstbauer – Happy Birthday (Kathy & John Seidl)
 Kathy Seidl – Happy Birthday (Peggy Gerstbauer)
 Joan Jaworski – Thanksgiving for 102 years of God's blessings
 Tyler Kripke, C.S.C. (Carol Bauer)
 Geoffrey Mooney C.S.C. (Mary Kubiak)
 Jean Mottet (Suzy Halloran)
 Ellen & Carl Neumann – Get well (Bette O'Malley)
 Claire Peters – Good health (Peg & Dean Riggs)
 Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades – Anniversary (Joe & Marie Burt)
 Jan Rody – Speedy recovery (Joe & Marie Burt)
 Joe Sabbe (Carol & James Holt)
 Jeanine & Dave Wideman – Happy Anniversary (Suzanne Cierzniak)
 Abbey Williams – Good recovery (Joe & Marie Burt)
 Arya Charlyn Young – Birth (Peg Riggs)

IN MEMORIAM

Roberta Bach (Patti & Lowell Paschke)
 Raymond Bachert (Janice Goossens)
 Jayn Barson (Joan Hurley)
 Joan Biltz (Margaret Hosinski, Wayne & Catherine Bishop, Jane Horning, Sharon James, Judy Kuzmich, Terry Slamkowski, Sharon Coahran, Val Sobecki, Craig Beutel, Bruce & Marcia Auger, Jerry & Betty Vascil, Peg Riggs, B. G. Butler, Ed & Joan Hardig, Kathleen Lawton, Beth Barrett, Sheila Emge, Jean Fuehrmeyer, Diane Quinn, Kathy & John Seidl, Janice Beutel, Cynthia Bodle)
 Diane Boehnlein (Esther Cyr, Marie Brady, Ann Jones, Kathy Seidl, Sue & Rick Seall, Ed & Joan Hardig, Susy Porter, Kelly Violi, Marlene Reilly, Marilyn Sibley, Jennifer Goumas)
 Rev. John Bower (Ed & Joan Hardig)
 Jamie Brown (Ed & Joan Hardig)

Deceased Members

Joan Biltz
 Diane Boehnlein
 Florence Duesterberg

Deceased Spouses

John Christianson
 Dennis Troester

Paul Buehler (Marie Brady)
 Greg Campbell (Joe & Marie Burt)
 Jim Cerney (Ed & Joan Hardig)
 Mary Connolly (Ed & Joan Hardig, Peg Riggs)
 Joe Dahm (Jerry & Judy Kearns)
 Joyce DeLarville (Patti & Lowell Paschke)
 Anna Maria Dits (B.J. O'Brien)
 Tom Dits (Marti & Frank Moriconi)
 Dan Falvey (Sheila Emge, Howard Hanson, Claudia Maslowski, William & Alicia Redinger, Harold & Eileen Yoder, Mark McDonnell, Michael Kelly & Bob Hohl, Melissa Baltz)
 Pam & John Frasor (Marcia & Tom Blum)
 Patricia Ann Gault (Jerry & Betty Vascil)
 John Gruber (Esther Cyr, Janice Goossens)
 Brandon Hall (Marcia & Tom Blum)
 Mike Hanson (Janice Goossens)
 Pat & Bill Haulik (Marcia & Tom Blum)
 Don Heppeler (Patti & Lowell Paschke)
 Ken Horvath (Joan Hurley)
 Florentina Igarta (Pat & Joe Corcoran)
 Kathleen Kelly (Marcia & Tom Blum)
 Bill Kessler (Pat & Joe Corcoran)
 Harry J. Kilroy (Peg Claesys)
 Bernie Kress (Ed & Joan Hardig)
 Ed Leininger (B.J. O'Brien)
 Frank Lloyd (Dorothy H. Mady)
 Kathlynn Lytle (Art & Julie Zelinski)
 Gerald Mittendorf (Esther Cyr)
 David Mount (Janice & Joe Goossens)
 Ronald Munn (Peg Claesys)
 Ernestine Raclin (Bette O'Malley)
 Barbara Scalise (Mary Hintz)
 Royal "Ray" Schmitt (Art & Julie Zelinski)
 Millie Seal (Patti Banet)
 Paul & Margaret Sergio (Catherine Sergio)
 Kay Sinclair (Greg & Jean Mee)
 Raymond Sommers (Esther Cyr)
 Dennis Troester (Ric & Bonnie Oswald, Gilbert Eastman, Daniel Kelly, Ed & Joan Hardig, Richard Walsh, Judy & Hugh Kuzmich, Betty Ann Gibbons, Pat & Joe Corcoran, Angela Montford, Bridget &

David Lesinski, Daniel & Mary Ann Rogers, Kevin & Mary Jo Albert, Peg & Dean Riggs, Dan & Marcie Berry, Richard S. Dennen, Nancy Geary, Sue & Ben Hurst, M/M Ray Schmitt, M/M Michael Bramlett)
 Vivian Vargo (Toni Pikuza)
 Daniel Vespo (Janice Goossens)
 Dick Wasoski (Toni Pikuza)
 Robert Zimmerman, Jr. (Patti & Lowell Paschke)

Christ Child Society Book Club 2023-24

SEPTEMBER 20

Palazzo by Danielle Steel

Discussion and Host:
 Louise Anella

OCTOBER 18

Dictionary of Lost Words by Pip Williams

Discussion and Host:
 Mary Ann Chandler

NOVEMBER 15

Apples Never Fall by Liane Moriarty

Discussion: Marge Hosinski
 Host: Pat Falvey

DECEMBER: No book, possible lunch
JANUARY 17 (skip if weather is bad)

Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt

Discussion and Host:
 Melissa Baltz

FEBRUARY 21

Alternate date for January

MARCH 20

The Mitford Affair by Marie Benedict

Discussion: Mary Jane Chase
 Host: Terry Slamkowski

APRIL 17

Hello Beautiful by Ann Napolitano

Discussion and Host: Judy Kearns

MAY 15

Firefly Lane by Kristen Hannah

Discussion and Host:
 Mary Lou Mullen

JUNE 19

The Measure by Nikki Erld

Discussion and Host: Pat Short
 Questions? Contact: Terry Slamkowski

Student and Community Volunteers Always Welcome

The Christ Child Society relies heavily on members to support programs serving families and children each year. As the number of families has increased, so has the need for volunteers outside of the membership. The hope is that these volunteers will embrace the mission and make volunteering part of their personal routine.

Many organizations, schools, businesses, families and more realize the need to help others. On any day that the Center is open there are at least 75 members and as many as 15 to 20 community volunteers available. A Thursday evening or Sunday afternoon often brings as many as 30 additional volunteers.

This past summer The Christ Child Society was approached by a coordinator from the Office of Pre-College Programs at the University of Notre Dame. Pre-Service Students are upcoming Juniors and Seniors in high school from all over the United States. The two weeks on campus are an opportunity for students to participate in college level classroom instruction, experience campus life, and volunteer with organizations in the South Bend area. Students live in dorms, eat in the Dining Halls, and participate in educational and fun opportunities. CCS hosted three groups, two in June and one in July. Students were given a tour of the

building and a host of historical facts about founder Mary Virginia Merrick and local founder Puddy Crowley. The students were curious about CCS and amazed at the needs of the community and how CCS fills them.

The students were so helpful with bundling socks, sorting shirts, pants, sweaters and more by size and gender. Members interacted with the students, learning about their future plans as they finish high school. It was a joy to have these students at the Center helping to prepare for Opening Day.

Throughout the weeks that clothing is distributed, St. Joseph, Marian, John Adams, Penn and Trinity High School students volunteer in clothing departments, pull wagons and guide clients. They bring enthusiasm and energy to the distribution process.

CCS would be lost without this community support.



Suzanne Wiwi, Community Volunteer Coordinator, explains the check out process to St. Joseph High School students.



Above: Pre-College Students pose after a long day volunteering at the Center and at left, they do the heavy lifting.

Kroger Shoppers Can Help CCS

Would you like to help Christ Child raise funds just by buying groceries?

If you shop at Kroger and have a rewards card you can designate The Christ Child Society of South Bend to receive a percentage of the price of your purchases. It is easy to do but you do need to renew your designation each year.

How to do it? Go to Kroger.com and click on "Account." If you already have an account, you can add your rewards card to it if you haven't done so yet. If you don't have an account, you can create one.

Next, click on "Account" again and, on the left-hand sidebar, click on "Community Rewards" and find Christ Child in the search bar. Select it as your chosen charity. Use your rewards card or phone number when you check out and just like that, Christ Child will receive money from Kroger!

A Story Worth Sharing



Every CCS client has a story. Sometimes, the stories break your heart. Others are full of hope.

A woman browsed through Mary's Boutique, looking for business clothes for her new job in an office. She was excited about moving forward, but lacked the clothing needed for an office setting. Sherri North helped her find several new outfits and she left feeling positive and better prepared to take on her new responsibilities.



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OF SOUTH BEND
WHERE LOVE LEADS TO ACTION

2366 Miracle Lane
Mishawaka, IN 46545

NON-PROFIT ORG.

U.S. POSTAGE
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SOUTH BEND, IN
Permit No. 239

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Scenes from the Center. Left: Mark Wiwi loads a client's car with clothes for her children and foster children. Above: The Shoe Department needed more shelves! Bottom: Family fun at the Center.



Fall To Do List

- Send in check for Fall Luncheon
- Make reservation for *Let Love Shine* and/or be a sponsor
- Donate gift cards for LLS Bubble Grab
- Buy books for United in Service
- Mark *Giving Tuesday* on your calendar
- Sign up to volunteer!

Come join the fun!

Let Love Shine

Thursday, November 9

**Drinks, Appetizers,
and Silent Auction**

5:30 pm

Dinner and Live Auction

7:00 pm

**Ribbon Town Ballroom
Four Winds Hotel
South Bend**

For information, go to
www.christchildsb.org/let-love-shine-2023