



# CONNECTIONS

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## CCST Officers (2021-2023):

President:

**Deborah Auclair**

Immediate Past President:

**Nancy Thorpe**

Vice President:

**Vita Balsino**

Vice Pres. Membership Chair & Chapter

Liaison:

**Dianna Balsamo**

Treasurer:

**Nancy Thorpe**

Board Members at Large:

**Bonnie Alberts, Pat Lunsford & Frances Smith**

## Our Red Wagon Fundraiser Was a Success (Deb Auclair, Pres. Tucson Chapter)

The Christ Child Society of Tucson (CCST) hosted a fundraising luncheon at The Highlands Clubhouse Ballroom in Marana, AZ on April 23, 2023. Over 125 guests attended.



Deb Auclair, President, Tucson Chapter

This Red Wagon Event accomplished many things such as helping to spread our mission to restore happiness and basic needs through personal services to God's children in need.

Literacy is one of the planks of CCST. One of our speakers, Principal Shakenya Gholson, from Our Mother of Sorrows Catholic School, and Julian, a 2nd-grade student spoke about their love of reading. Julian told us how he reads to his soon-to-be-born brother! Watch for this rising star, - there's no stopping him!



Julian and Shakenya

We were pleased to have members of the Phoenix Christ Child Chapter join us. Below is a picture of all members who attended (Phoenix members' names denoted with an asterisk\*).



Standing (L to R): Bernie Chuinard, Liz McCandlish, Julie Berkel\*, Pat Lunsford, Rosie Celentaro, Judy Chuinard, Nancy Jones, Angela Schneider, Dianna Balsamo, Marcia Wells, Fran Vicino, Vita Balsino, Nancy Thorpe, Bonnie Alberts, Eileen Geraghty, Judy Tucker\*, Edna Kvochak\*.

Seated: Janet Travis\*, Elida Desmond\*, Johanna Warner\*, Deb Auclair and Sue Jaros\*.

# 2023 Red Wagon Event shown in Pictures and Video



CCST Liz McCandlish & Pat Lunsford, show Margaret McNealy to her and Deacon Mc Nealy's seats.

**View CCST Video :  
Who We Are  
and What We Do**



Bernie Chuinard points out our banner of generous donors.



Judy Chuinard takes care of the raffle table (pictured below)



Gary Corbett, our Auctioneer, did an outstanding job of distributing our >\$15,000 worth of donated items in our live auction.



Dianna Balsamo and Vita Balsino sell raffle tickets to win over \$16,000 in donated prizes.

*BTW: Vita's Birthday was also this day.*



## 2023 Red Wagon Event Pictures, continued



Jr. Christ Child Members, who are also American Heritage Girls, conducted a opening flag ceremony as well as helped served at the event.



Nancy Thorpe, Past President and her husband, Jack, show off our CCST centerpieces.



Deb Auclair thanks Fr. Huy Vu (Pastoral Administrator, Santa Catalina Parish) for being such strong supporter of CCST's goals.



CCST Liz McCandlish & Pat Lunsford, show Margaret McNealy to her and Deacon Mc Nealy's seats.



The jobs not done until the paperwork is finished.  
L to R: Marcia Wells, Fran Vicino, Vita Balsino, and Dianna Balsamo complete the Thank You cards to our generous donors!



Chris Auclair places custom CCST decals on the Red Wagon Event centerpieces.

# CCST March Retreat at the Redemptorist Renewal Center

The Retreat was led by our Spiritual Advisor; Fr. Pat Grile at the Our Lady of the Desert Church.



Fr. Pat Grile, our CCST Spiritual Advisor, led the Retreat.

The theme was to have a spirit of gratitude and be good to others and yourself.

Psalm 95:8 Oh that today you would hear his voice! Harden not your hearts.

Here are some of the key thoughts he shared:

*Fr. Pat thanked God for this day, a day we've never lived before and will never live again. Fr. Pat suggested that we try to be like Henri Nouwen. When you interact with someone be the face of Christ to them. Henri Nouwen taught theology at the University of Notre Dame, Yale and Harvard before leaving academia to become the pastor at L'Arche Daybreak, a community for people with intellectual disabilities. He washed and clothed an invalid every day. We should try to be there for someone.*

*Become a bigger person. Accept and be kind to yourself, because until you do, you will not be a force for good and accept others.*

*At the end of each day, make it a habit to ask yourself: "Did I make a difference for good today?"*

*Be kind because everyone you meet has their own baggage and you don't know what battle they are*

*fighting. Find someone that needs a friend and be that person for them. Be there for someone.*

*Society asks "What have you done? Show me your accomplishments!" God asks "Are you going to bear good fruit?"*

*We each need to see our own beloved-ness. Meet others where they are at (like Jesus when He met the Samaritan woman at the well).*

*Throughout Fr. Pat's presentation, he praised the members of the Christ Child Society. He reminded us that we should appreciate each other. Each of us is a person that God is working through.*

*Affirm each other. Be encouraging. Be kind. Build each other up. Don't take others for granted.*

*Gratitude helps us see God in all of creation. We are good because God made us good. Gratitude bring peace, draws us closer to Him and makes us more content.*

We shared a meal afterwards:



Pictured L to R: Judy van der Linde, Deb Auclair, Pat Lunsford, Liz McCandlish, Dianna Balsamo, Vita Balsino, Judy Chuinard, Bernie Chuinard, Nancy Thorpe and Bonnie Alberts (not pictured Eileen Geraghty)

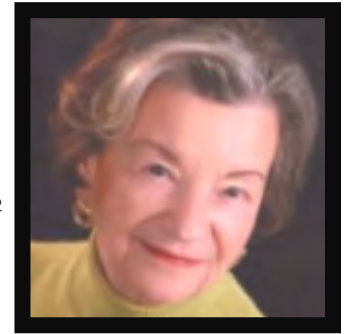
# In Memory of a Dear Friend

Carolyn Marie Mergel (known to us as Marie Edwards) of Lake Orion, a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, passed away on March 23, 2023. She was born on January 10, 1938, in Detroit, Michigan,

She met her pipe-smoking, organ playing husband John W. Mergel while attending Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They were married for almost 50 years until John's death in 2007. Carolyn was a loving mother to her five children and a proud grandmother to twelve grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Carolyn was a dedicated volunteer, serving on many educational and religious organization boards over the course of her life. She served as President of the Christ Child Society of Detroit

and President of The National Christ Child Society. Carolyn received the Woman of the Year Award by the Christ Child Society of Detroit in 1992 and also the



Mary Virginia Merrick Award for meritorious service by the National Christ Child Society in 1998. She was a devout Catholic & lived her life with grace & a deep sense of faith.

Carolyn's family and friends will always remember her as a woman of compassion, integrity, generosity, and style. She touched the lives of countless people and children as "nothing is ever too much to do for a child." Her memory will be cherished forever and she will be deeply missed.

## Program: Literacy (Bonnie Alberts / Deb Auclair)

Verna Sak is a member of a small group in Sun City/ SaddleBrooke called PEO Group II (Philanthropic Education Organization). It is an international organization. Verna said their members support women who want to get an education and cannot afford to do it. She said her previous chapter just finished supporting a young single mom to get her degree in nursing.

This year Verna asked her group to support CCST after she heard the need at Mass one Sunday in February. Her group is mostly snowbirds from other chapters and usually pick one charity to help while they are enjoying the warm weather of Arizona. Last year they did a



drive for McDonald house. This year our women were happy to support CCST instead.

# Literacy, continued

CCST members met the goal of Principal Shakenya Gholson and had the Our Mother of Sorrows' library ready for the students at Easter. Shakenya wrote Deb and email to thank CCST for the job we did:

*Dear Deb,  
These new library space brought tears to my eyes. Thank you so much for your commitment and your kind words about our lovely staff. It means a great deal to us for you to come and to bring this space alive again!*

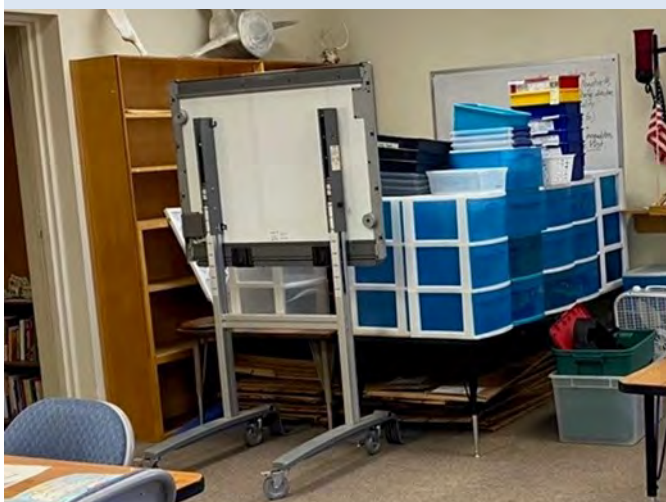
**Shakenya**

Shakenya Gholson, Principal OMOS



OMOS Staff removes Covid plexiglass and makes room for the prayer corner.

Before CCST:



Karen Klavetter and Selena, an OMOS staff member, put a Bible timeline on the white board.

After CCST:



## Program: Layettes (Dianna Balsamo)

**T**he pack the playpen at St Augustine during Lent was a success. We are really grateful to all the students and faculty at that school. We want to thank our fellow member, Frances Smith, for picking us all of the items.

Vita Balsino and Dianna Balsamo attended a pro-life meeting at Saints Peter and Paul. We are very excited to be working with them again to help our mothers who choose life.



St. Augustine's student and staff member pack up all of the donations from their Pack-the-Playpen Lenten event.



Marica Wells and Eileen Geraghty proudly display the toys received from St. Mark for our Layettes.

Kathy from Cactus Comfort Ladies has crocheted lovely sets of blankets and sweaters.

Sue Wolf is a member of a sewing group in SaddleBrooke (with Judy Bodor, a CCST member). Each month, these talented seamstresses & crocheters do a fantastic job making items for the layettes! We are so thankful.



Sue Wolf proudly shares Montessori balls.



Here is an example of the beautiful quilts made by the wonderful ladies of Dove Mountain's Sip & Sew Quilt Club.

## Program: Wings Foster Teens (Deb Auclair)

**W**ings' Drawstring Bags for Foster Teens continues to deliver 50 bags each month to our agency partners. Cristina Greenberg and Kelsey Leitel.



**Kimberly Gutierrez, Development & Public Relations Coordinator of Casa de los Ninos, accepts a delivery of bags.**



**Kelsey Leitel and Cristina Greenberg, director of Aviva Protective Services, accept a delivery of bags.**



**Claudia Perez , who volunteered to sew Wings drawstring bags after hearing about CCST at Santa Catalina's Wing's collection weekend in February of 2023, shows off her first completed drawstring bag.**



**Brenda Craft, part of the Aviva Childrens Services team, always is so helpful receiving drawstring bags and storing them in their warehouse.**

## In Closing...

*“Life is an opportunity, benefit from it.”*



Life is a beauty, admire it.

Life is bliss, taste it.

Life is a dream, realize it.

Life is a challenge, meet it.

Life is a duty, complete it.

Life is a game, play it.

Life is costly, care for it.

Life is wealth, keep it.

Life is love, enjoy it.

Life is mystery, know it.

Life is a promise, fulfill it.

Life is a sorrow, overcome it.

Life is a song, sing it.

Life is a struggle, accept it.

Life is a tragedy, confront it.

Life is an adventure, dare it.

Life is luck, make it.

Life is too precious, do not destroy it.

Life is Life, fight for it!.”

*Mother Theresa*



If you would like to become a member or learn more about The Christ Child Society of Tucson, please visit our webpage:

<https://christchildtucson.org/750-Contact-Us.html>

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*choose  
joy*