

#1 | SEPT 2023

CARITAS NOW

CATHOLIC CHARITIES BROOKLYN AND QUEENS MAGAZINE | THE CHILDREN ISSUE



**CATHOLIC
CHARITIES**
Brooklyn &
Queens
ESTABLISHED 1899

**CHILD-PARENT
PSYCHOTHERAPY**

**TRAINING THE
TEACHERS OF
TOMORROW**

AND MORE...

**EMPOWERING
YOUNG MINDS**

CATHOLIC CHARITIES EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS
EMBRACE MONTESSORI CURRICULUM

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LETTER FROM THE CEO

I hope this message finds you in good health and high spirits. I am writing to you today with great excitement and anticipation to introduce our latest initiative. *Caritas NOW Magazine* aims to keep you informed, engaged, and inspired by the work we do at Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens on a quarterly basis.

Our inaugural issue of *Caritas NOW* highlights our Early Childhood Development Programs, particularly our Montessori-Based Head Start Programs. This initiative is close to our hearts as it embodies our commitment to nurturing the potential of every child, regardless of their socio-economic background.

The Montessori-Based Head Start Programs provide a holistic, child-centered approach to early childhood education. Given the right environment and opportunities, every child can thrive and excel. This program is our way of ensuring that children from underprivileged backgrounds are not left behind but rather are given a head start in life. This statement applies to our teachers and parents too. For over 25 years, our Montessori Teacher Training Program has been training in this teaching method so that our teachers grow into experts.

In this issue, you will find inspiring stories of transformation and hope. You will read about our program to help parents and children struggling with mental illnesses, our youth employment program, and updates to the success of events you help make possible.

Your generosity and commitment to us are instrumental in our ability to serve those in need, and for that, we are eternally grateful. We hope you enjoy reading *Caritas NOW Magazine* as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Please share your thoughts, feedback, or any questions you may have. We value your input and look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you once again for your unwavering support and dedication to Catholic Charities. Together, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

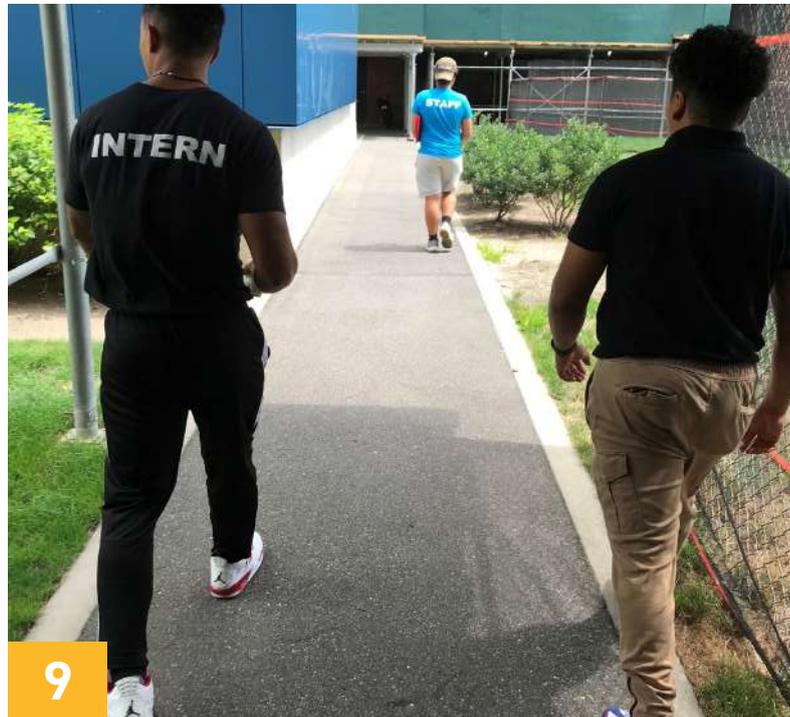
Peace,


Rev. Msgr. Alfred LoPinto

President and CEO

Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens





Empowering Young Minds 04
Catholic Charities Early Childhood Education Programs Embrace Montessori Curriculum

Training the Educators of Tomorrow 06
The Caritas Teacher Training Center

Child Parent Psychotherapy 08
Helping Children and Families Recover and Heal

Summer Youth Employment 09
Giving Young Adults a Jump Start on Careers

Promoting Language Development 10
Program Embraces Dual Language Learners and Families

Coat of Arms + Golf Outing EVENTS 11

Save the Date 12

For over 124 years, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has been providing quality social services to the neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens and currently offers 160-plus programs and services for children, youth, adults, older adults, and those struggling with mental illness. Since 1975, Catholic Charities Progress of Peoples Development Corporation, the affordable housing developer of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens, has been transforming vacant land and buildings into affordable housing units and transforming the lives of individuals and families. We've completed more than 4,567 units with supportive services for seniors, families, veterans and the formerly homeless. Since the pandemic began, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has provided much-needed food packages and services at 60 Catholic Charities parish-based food pantries and has distributed over \$15 million in food.

CARITAS NOW Magazine will bring you quarterly insight into the programs and services offered by Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens.

For more information, or to be removed from our list, contact:

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CARITASNOW@ccbq.org or 718-722-6202

EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS

Catholic Charities Early Childhood Education Programs Embrace Montessori Curriculum



In April, parents gathered with their children for a Montessori-Based activity at the Charles F. Murphy Early Childhood Development Center

In the bustling boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens is playing a crucial role in providing quality early childhood education services. In the past year alone, the agency has nurtured 1,448 children and provided them with more than 453,000 meals at our Early Childhood Centers and Family Child Care Programs.

For families like Miglie, Frantzso and their daughter Chanayel, the Parkside Family Child Care Center has

been a lifeline as they adjust to their new country. After fleeing their native Haiti due to political upheavals and economic hardships, they traveled to Brazil and then through South and Central America on their way to the USA. Fortunately for them, they have relatives in Brooklyn who were gracious enough to house them. But being pregnant, with an energetic one year old, in a new country, unemployed, not able to speak the main language, comes with its share of challenges. Catholic Charities met with the family, helped them identify their priorities, and created a Family Partnership Agreement to help the family realize their goals, one after the other.

Miglie and Frantzso's main priority was finding the right placement for their young daughter and setting her on the right course for her future in the US. At the Parkside Family Child Care Center, Chanayel has adjusted well and loves learning. Catholic

Charities also connected mom Miglie with social services, enrolled her in our Prenatal Program and in the Women, Infant and Child (WIC) Program, and even provided the family with a turkey, pie, stuffing, cranberry sauce and other items for their first Thanksgiving in the country.

At the Parkside Family Child Care Center, Chanayel has adjusted well and loves learning. Catholic Charities also connected mom Miglie with social services, and enrolled her in our Prenatal Program and in the Women, Infant and Child (WIC) Program.



Last December, Miglie welcomed her healthy baby boy. The expanded family of four are doing well, adapting to their new home and life with the help of Catholic Charities. They are but one example of the countless families that find a strong foundation through our Early Childhood Programs.

Early Childhood Education

Early Childhood Education isn't just for the children. At Catholic Charities, we welcome the parents into our centers so that they can connect with their little ones and contribute to their child's early development. Our Early Childhood Services serve children from birth to 5 years old, with our Early Head Start Program serving infants to children age 2.11 and our Head Start Program serving children ages 3 to 5 and transitioning them into Elementary School.

Over the past several years we have adjusted

our services to continue to meet the needs of our children and families. This has included hybrid and remote instruction models, which has been used to ensure continuity of services where there would otherwise be interruption due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic.

"We are pleased that children enrolled in our Early Childhood programs regained developmental ground that was lost during the pandemic, with our child performance outcomes now meeting or exceeding the pre-pandemic levels of performance," said Desiree Jackson-Fryson, Vice President of Early Childhood Services. "We utilize the Montessori educational philosophy, which emphasizes a child-centered approach that promotes independence, self-directed learning, and respect for each child's individuality. This approach aligns perfectly with the goals of Catholic Charities, as it focuses on nurturing the whole child - intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically."

Catholic Charities has focused on engaging fathers, with more than 530 males taking part in the Fatherhood Initiative Program in 2022. Male ambassadors participated in parent meetings and workshops, virtual open houses, Dad Bring Your Child to School Day and school readiness meetings. Parent Workshops are held regularly, including informative programs on nutrition and effective alternatives in child discipline.

In addition to our Early Childhood Development Centers, our Family Child Care Programs are home-based early childhood education programs which provide developmentally appropriate day care services to children 2 months to 5 years of age in the private homes of qualified New York State licensed providers. These programs are funded by Federal Head Start and Early Head Start.

A Love for Learning

As the demand for quality early childhood education continues to grow, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens is stepping up to provide innovative and inclusive programs. By embracing the Montessori curriculum, we are empowering young minds, fostering independence, and nurturing a love for learning. The impact of these programs extends far beyond the classroom, positively shaping the lives of children and their families, and contributing to the future success of our society.

Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens provides quality services for our children and parents and for our communities. Call us at 718-722-6001 to learn more. ■



"St. Malachy ECDC came into my life when I needed to find child care for my oldest son Aiden, followed by Liam and Christian. I was so grateful to them and participating in the Policy Council gave me the opportunity to have a voice and learn more about how important it is to volunteer. With the help of St. Malachy ECDC, I finally attained my GED diploma, and I am currently pursuing a Certified nursing assistant license (CNA). Catholic Charities was a savior for me and my family and I will always appreciate the help they gave us.

-Tandika Lloyd



"When I came to the United States from Mexico, I arrived with many dreams and the desire to work hard to support my family back in Mexico. A friend told me about the Parkside Early Childhood Development Center, and I was able to enroll both my daughters. When staff members learned I was looking for a job, they helped me join the center as a Housekeeper. Both of my girls are excelling in school, and I am so thankful to Catholic Charities Parkside ECDC for giving my family this wonderful opportunity for me to make a living and for my children to learn and be ready for the next level.

-Rufina Castaneda-Garcia

Training the Educators of Tomorrow

Caritas Teacher Training Center Offers Certification Program in Montessori Teaching



The Caritas Teachers Training Center (CTTC) at Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has trained Montessori Teachers since 1995. The thousands of children who have come through our early care educational programs experience a real-world setting developed in our innovative Montessori teacher education curriculum, known for its unique approach to learning and child development where children can think critically, solve problems, and become more independent. The Caritas Teachers Training Center prepares educators in the transformative process of traditional Montessori methodology utilizing innovative training modalities in a modern, virtual classroom.

Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator, developed the Montessori method of education in the early 20th century. Maria Montessori was

raised in a Catholic family and deeply respected her Catholic faith. The spread of Montessori schools was facilitated, in part, by the collaboration between Maria Montessori and prominent Catholic educators and clergy. Many Catholic schools and educators embraced the Montessori method due to its focus on the holistic development of the child and its alignment with Catholic values. Catholic priests, nuns, and educators were among the early adopters of Montessori education, helping to establish Montessori schools in various parts of the world.

“Catholic Charities began training their teachers in the Montessori Method twenty-eight years ago and continues to be a leader in Montessori education for underserved communities,” said Carrie Parker-Gastelu, Professional Development Manager. “While a Montessori education remains out of reach for many families, Catholic Charities has a long history of providing training, resources, and support to schools and educators, ensuring equitable access for all children, regardless of socioeconomic status. The Caritas Teachers Training Center is the foundation for training and professional development for Montessori teacher education at our Early Childhood Development Centers and Family Child Care Providers Network.”

The year 2021 brought many changes to the Caritas Teachers Training Center. While virtual and hybrid training was already gaining traction, COVID-19 accelerated the adoption and exploration of online

Benefits of Montessori Curriculum:

- 1. Individualized Learning:** The Montessori programs at Catholic Charities recognize that each child has unique strengths, interests, and learning styles. Children are encouraged to explore and learn at their own pace, fostering a love for learning that lasts a lifetime.
- 2. Hands-on Learning:** Classrooms at Catholic Charities are filled with engaging, hands-on materials that promote sensory exploration and cognitive development. Children are encouraged to manipulate objects, solve problems, and develop critical thinking skills through self-directed activities.
- 3. Social and Emotional Development:** Our Montessori programs emphasize the importance of social interactions and emotional intelligence. Children learn to collaborate, communicate, and resolve conflicts in a respectful and peaceful manner, fostering empathy and building strong interpersonal skills.
- 4. Independence and Self-Discipline:** A Montessori education at Catholic Charities empowers children to take ownership of their learning and daily routines. Through practical life activities, such as pouring, dressing, and cleaning, children develop independence, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility.

teaching and training methods. It was the perfect time for Caritas Teachers Training Center to modernize its approach, allowing teachers to engage in a professional learning community while taking less time out of the classroom. Caritas Training adopted a blended learning approach combining asynchronous learning with live, virtual instruction. Asynchronous learning allows learners to access educational resources and materials at their own pace and convenience. Recorded lectures, online discussion boards, and pre-recorded instructional videos allow our learners to access educational resources and materials with maximum flexibility and continuity of learning. The Caritas Teachers Training Center is continuing to modernize with new technologies and innovative training methods while maintaining Catholic Charities' original mission of providing the highest quality Montessori education for the children in our care by ensuring exceptionally well-prepared educators.

During the 2022-2023 program year, 21 teachers graduated and received Montessori certification. In addition, the Caritas Teacher Training Center provided more than 400 hours of classroom instruction within Early Childhood Services to 90 teachers and 132 family child care providers. ■

**Hands On Learning
Beyond the
Classroom: The
Catholic Charities
Caritas Teacher
Training Center
Produced a Series
of 50 Web-based
courses to support an
extensive curriculum.**



*On July 7, 2023, The
Catholic Charities
Brooklyn and Queens
Caritas Training
Center Celebrated
the 24th Graduating
Class.*

Catholic Charities Child-Parent Psychotherapy

Helping Young Children and Families Recover and Heal After Stressful and Traumatic Events



Children who have been through scary or painful events such as the loss of a loved one, separation, serious medical procedures, abuse, or violence at home or in the community often experience difficult behaviors and need help adjusting and learning to recover. Through the Catholic Charities Child-Parent Psychotherapy Program, young children from birth through age 5 and their parents/caregivers find support, respect and healing after stressful or traumatic experiences.

"Our program supports family strengths and relationships and helps families heal and grow after stressful experiences," says Rebecca Herman, LCSW, CASAC-MC, Clinical Director of the Flatbush & Rockaway Recovery and Wellness Centers, Assistant Director of Field Operations for the Flatbush Behavioral Health Center and Program Manager of the Flatbush Certified Community Behavioral Health Center. "Our goal

is to help the parents and their child to understand each other, respond to difficult feelings and create a family story that leads to healing."

Therapists work together with the parents and child in three stages. Phase one is getting to know the child and family, understanding their needs, strengths and experiences. Then, staffers connect families with resources and services and create a plan for how Child-Parent Psychotherapy can help the family.

"He knows now that he can talk to me, he can come to me, he can trust me. He truly believes that, and in the beginning, he didn't. It's a big difference to the little boy who was so afraid."

- caregiver

Once a plan has been created, staff members begin addressing the families' needs by meeting with the

parent/caregiver and the child (both together and separately). Utilizing toys that help children show their feelings and share their thoughts, we help the children understand who we are, why they are coming and what we will do together. Phase two places great emphasis on healing and strengthening the attachment between parent and child so that they can help each other heal from the shared trauma experience.

"Catholic Charities is the only one that explained how trauma is affecting my daughter and I'm so grateful," said an adoptive mother to her CPP Therapist.

Another caregiver who completed the program raved about how life-changing it was for their young child, saying "In time we started to see that it's ok to trust people, to be honest in therapy, to talk about the bad things that happen, to feel our sparkle inside that we thought was lost. With help, we are finding out just how bright our sparkle really is."

The third phase of the program is planning for the future, in which we celebrate the changes families have made, consider how endings and goodbyes may bring up different feelings and talk about what will be needed in the future. Ultimately, the child should leave the program seeing improvement in mood, problem behaviors, learning, trauma symptoms and biological stress response.

In addition to the Child-Parent Psychotherapy Program, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens operates our Behavioral Health Clinics in Jackson Heights, Jamaica, Flatbush, Far Rockaway and Glendale. These programs provide a comprehensive array of primary and mental health care services for children and their parents who are stressed out about homework, graduating, family-life, bullying, social media, or just need to talk to someone. We also offer Catholic Charities Wellness Centers within Challenge Charter Schools, helping students reach their full potential in school and at home.

For more information on these and other programs, please call 718-722-6001. ■



SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM: GIVING YOUNG ADULTS A JUMP START ON CAREERS

Summer employment is not just a way for young people to earn extra cash during their break from school; it is a crucial opportunity for personal and professional growth. In New York City, especially after the effects of the pandemic, summer employment holds even more significance for our youth. Summer employment gives them valuable experiences, skills, and a chance to contribute to their community.

At Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens, we recognize the importance of summer employment for youth in NYC and have been sponsoring the New York City Funded Summer Youth Employment Program for over 35 years.

Summer employment allows young people to gain practical skills they can't learn in a classroom setting. Whether working in a retail store, a restaurant, or an office, these jobs expose youth to real-world situations and challenges. They learn how to communicate effectively, work in a team, and solve problems on the spot. These skills are valuable not only for their future careers but also for their personal development.

That type of hands-on work experience is what young people gain through the Catholic Charities Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), which provides 25 hours of work each week in a variety of internships with animal rescue organizations, art and recreation centers, automotive repair shops, community service centers, daycare, day camps, hair salons, information technology, legal services, retail and more.

For the students in the program, valuable lessons are learned, and new strengths are discovered. For the summer of 2023, our Brooklyn program has enrolled 657 young adults, while our Queens SYEP program enrolled 357. Once placed in jobs, 72% remained engaged in 2022 due to the ongoing monitoring of staff to ensure "good matches" and help youth problem-solve.

It's been a great experience and I've learned so much that will help me in college and in my career." --Alyssa Reid

Since 1990, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has put over 20,000 youth through summer employment training and enrichment. For Brooklyn Heights resident Alyssa Reid (pictured above), working at Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has been a great start to her career. "I work in the Office of Development and Communications, and I do everything from answering phones and organizing mailings to graphic design and event planning," says Alyssa. "It's been a great experience and I've learned so much that will help me in college and in my career."

Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens is proud of the work we put into summer employment. Summer employment also fosters a sense of responsibility and civic engagement among youth. When young people can contribute to their community through employment, they develop a sense of pride and ownership. They understand the importance of their work and how it impacts the lives of others. This sense of responsibility can translate into active citizenship as they become more engaged in their communities and strive to make a positive difference.

The Catholic Charities Summer Youth Employment Program is funded by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. ■

The Crucial Role of Language Development for Immigrant Children and Families in New York City

Catholic Charities Early Childhood Services Program Embraces Dual Language Learners and Families

Language development plays a pivotal role in the lives of immigrant children, particularly in a diverse and multicultural city like New York City. In Brooklyn and Queens, a melting pot of cultures and languages, communicating effectively is essential for learning success, social integration, and overall well-being.

At our Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens Early Childhood Development Programs, we understand the importance of language development for immigrant children in New York City and how it benefits their lives and academic success. During the 2022-2023 academic year, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has welcomed and engaged with 612 dual language learners and their families across the Early Childhood Services Program. The children's primary home languages are Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, French-Creole, Tagalog, and Chinese. Despite the language barriers that may exist engaging dual language learners, these children meet or exceed expectations by 80% in social-emotional development, 78% in physical development, 77% in cognitive development, 75% in literacy development, and 74% in math development. In addition, a large number of the Early Childhood Services staff are multilingual and contribute to the progress of dual language learners across our Early Childhood Services Program.

At Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens Early



Childhood Development Programs, language development is crucial for academic success, as it is the foundation for learning and understanding various subjects. Proficiency in English enables immigrant children to comprehend instructions, engage in classroom discussions, and express their thoughts and ideas effectively. By developing strong language skills, immigrant children can fully participate in educational activities, leading to improved academic performance and opportunities for future success. Language development allows immigrant children and their families to connect with their peers, teachers, and the broader community. By learning English, families can build friendships, engage in conversations, and participate in extracurricular activities. Language proficiency fosters a sense of belonging, reduces feelings of isolation, and promotes cultural exchange, enabling migrant children to embrace their new environment and form meaningful connections. Language proficiency empowers immigrant families to access healthcare services, understand medical instructions, and communicate their needs to healthcare professionals, ensuring their physical and mental well-being.

To support language development among immigrant families, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens refers families to our English to Speakers of Other Languages Program (ESOL), which provides free English classes for

parents interested in learning the language. Students receive social services and legal referral information about U.S. citizenship and other immigration services. Assistance also includes employability skills through job training and career preparation, computer classes, development of advanced college-level English, and financial literacy. Our approach to providing quality education and comprehensive social services surpasses those directly offered in the classroom. It embraces the family as a whole to improve the quality of life for our communities.

Since July 2022, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens has seen an influx of migrant families seeking assistance. Recognizing an increase in immigration and the plight of asylum seekers, Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens continues to organize a collective response in both boroughs to welcome and provide services to new arrivals and their families. For new arrivals with children, in addition to Women, Infant and Children's Nutrition Program (WIC), Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens also offers resources, information and referrals to Catholic Charities Early Childhood Services Program.

Our approach to providing quality education and comprehensive social services surpasses those directly provided in the classroom and embraces the family as a whole to improve the quality of life for our communities. ■



New Members Inducted in Coat of Arms Club Features Mass and Brunch at the Bishop's Residence

In 1972, the Coat of Arms Club was founded by Edgar Debany and William Scalzo to help the less fortunate in the Diocese. The membership has grown each year since, with current participants inviting others to join this select group.

Following a Mass in April at the St. Joseph College Chapel, a brunch was held in the Bishop's residence where this year's new members were welcomed. The new members are Mr. and Mrs. Jim and Dolores Bittel, Mr. Robert C. Marese, Mr. and Mrs. Bob and Diane Pape, Mr. John F. Ragano, Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Lynn Scott, Mr. John Spagnuolo, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony and Michelle Stumbo and the Victoria Loconsolo Foundation.

"We are so grateful for the support of our long-time and new members, who are collaborators in a sacred human enterprise for the needy children and families, older adults, the mentally ill, homeless and the isolated throughout Brooklyn and Queens," said Msgr. Alfred P. LoPinto, President and CEO of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens. "Their support helps Catholic Charities fund its vital programs, which permanently change and enhance the lives of real people with complex challenges."

\$130,000 Raised at Annual Golf Classic Proceeds to Benefit Programs and Services

In June, 140 golfers hit the links and helped Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens raise \$130,000 at the 2023 Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan Memorial Golf Classic in honor of the late retired Auxiliary Bishop and former executive director. Bishop Sullivan was a tireless leader, mentor and friend who dedicated his life in service to our neighbors in need.

The event, which was held at North Hills Country Club in Manhasset, NY, featured a day of golf, breakfast buffet, cocktails and dinner, raffles and a live and silent auction. All proceeds from the event benefit the programs and services of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens.





CATHOLIC CHARITIES
Brooklyn & Queens

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SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, September 28, 2023: Bishop's Humanitarian Award Dinner, Cipriani Wall Street, NYC. We hope you will join us!

Thursday, October 26, 2023: Planned Giving Webinar. A discussion on Estate Planning, Annuities, and Donor Advised Funds
Featuring Michael Connors, Esq., Connors and Sullivan, and Christian Tempelman, Morgan Stanley Wealth Management.

Wednesday, November 15: Jazz and Cocktails at Russo's On The Bay, Howard Beach, NY.

For details on all events visit www.ccbq.org or contact the Office of Development and Communications at 718-722-6202 or ccbq.events@ccbq.org



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much
more.**