

Providing Help. Creating Hope.

Breaking the Cycle of Poverty: *My Experience as a Sponsored Child*

Dr. Monit Cheung, PhD, LCSW, is a social work professor at the University of Houston who grew up in the slums of Hong Kong. By the grace of God and the assistance of charitable Christians, she obtained an education and left that life. Now she has dedicated her life to giving back. She and her husband Dr. Patrick Leung are authors and educators at UH and longtime supporters of Catholic Charities. Dr. Cheung is a former member of our Board of Directors and Dr. Leung is a current member. Below is an abridged version of her compelling story, which can be read in its entirety at tinyurl.com/drcheung.

I was poor but not helpless.

I was the fourth child among seven. In 1948, my father fled to Hong Kong to escape the Chinese Communists' rule. Thinking he could return home in a short time, he left his wife and newborn daughter behind. A year later, my mother rode alone on the back of a bicycle for three days to join my father in Hong Kong, with the help of a neighbor. Unfortunately, my father had been tricked by a businessman and lost all his money. That was the start of a poor family's struggle.

Adjusting to a new culture, language and limited ways to earn a living, my parents attempted many jobs in Hong Kong. Life was filled with financial struggles, but I was unaware of its complexity because I thought poverty was a "normal" part of living.

My parents never asked the government for help; my father felt our family was strong and we could support one another. Our strong family did receive help from the Catholic Church, including basic food items and milk powder.

An anonymous donor made it possible for me to attend a Lutheran school. I was very fortunate because education was not compulsory and many children worked as laborers. Our parents valued education and did not encourage us to find jobs. With the support of anonymous sponsors, five of us received free elementary education.

I wrote a letter to my sponsors monthly. At the time, and even to this day, I do not know who my sponsors were or whether they understood my letters, but I was grateful for them.

I spent my childhood in an environment clouded with drugs, murder, sex, gambling and domestic violence, but my father strongly warned us away from that way of life. He told us those things would "steal our soul."

Every day, when we finished our homework, we played at the community center. The social workers were friendly and provided us with guidance and support. When I was seven years old, I said to myself, "I want to be like them when I grow up." Studying was my family's lifelong goal so I continued with



my education. My mother was illiterate but she encouraged me by listening to my poetry recitals. My grades in elementary school allowed me to attend secondary school without cost. I went to college on a scholarship, and I obtained a work-study position at a social service agency that had sponsored me.

While I was in college, my father said, "Do whatever you can to study more. Don't worry about getting a full-time job too soon. We can manage." My family was financially poor, but spiritually rich.

I hope people understand the importance of investing in a child's life. I'd love for my sponsor parents to know how much they impacted mine. That's why my husband and I are proud to support Catholic Charities. We are honored to be in a place where we can give back and help those in need – and perhaps change a life the way mine was changed.



Closing the Poverty Gap Changes the Future

Dear Friends,

Poverty is a world most of us can't imagine. We say we care about "the poor" – and mean it – but who exactly do we care about? It's easy for "the poor" to become a nameless, faceless group; a stereotype; invisible people who are living in neighborhoods that most of us never really see.

The poor have names, they have joys, they have sorrows, they have strengths and they have challenges.

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, let's consider how we might make a difference in the lives of the people we call "the poor."

1) **Recognize that a great divide between rich and poor is bad for individuals** – and bad for our country. Without education, without hope, without resources, they cannot help us enact change or stem the tide of growing resentment between people living at the extremes.

2) **Advocate for systems, policies and programs that help break the cycle of poverty.** We need people who will speak in support of programs that ensure children see doctors and dentists who provide early-childhood education, that provide safe housing, food and job training.

3) **Get to know someone living in poverty.** It's easy to keep "the poor" at arm's length. Volunteer for an organization that introduces you to some of the people who lost their jobs, who struggle with health issues, or who are trying to turn their lives around.

4) **Realize the poor are your neighbors.** It's easy to miss the families sleeping in their cars. It's easy to forget that people in need might attend your church, be your child's school friend or be the friendly person at the retail counter.

5) **Help us close the gap.** Support programs that help young children learn to read and have books in their homes. Support programs that teach people how to find and keep jobs – and how to connect to resources. Support programs that offer scholarships to low-income students, that mentor young people and that help change the future.



Together and guided by God's love, we have enough resources, know-how, love and compassion to bring the impoverished fully into our communities. If we can come together to fulfill this moral obligation, we will lead the nation. We can completely change the future of more than 100,000 children in Houston alone. *Imagine that.*

In the Peace of Christ,



Cynthia N. Colbert, MSW
President/CEO
Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston



One in five people in the Archdiocese lives in poverty, and breaking the cycle of poverty is challenging. On Jan. 28, Catholic Charities coordinated the second annual kNOw Poverty Summit to discuss collaborative, realistic ways our community can work together to end poverty in Greater Houston. The power of hope was a key theme of the day.

The summit featured keynote speaker Dr. Shane Lopez, PhD, senior Gallup scientist and leading researcher on hope;

Cynthia N. Colbert, Catholic Charities president and CEO; and executives from the City of Houston and partnering agencies. During the event, participants convened in small groups to suggest solutions to some of the critical issues related to poverty.

The event, hosted at the University of St. Thomas and attracting more than 200 social workers, educators, public-policy advocates and community leaders, was underwritten by CHI

St. Luke's Health. Catholic Charities' partners in the event included UST, the Archdiocese, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, San Jose Clinic, Children at Risk, General One, The Metropolitan Organization of Houston and the Houston Food Bank.



Cynthia Colbert, MSW with Keynote Speaker Shane Lopez, PhD

Mission of Love Gala: St. Laurence Pastor Honored

The third-annual Mission of Love Gala in early February attracted more than 450 guests and raised over \$160,000 to benefit Catholic Charities' Mamie George Community Center and the Rio Bend Foster Care Community. The football-themed event honored Rev. Drew Wood, longtime pastor of St. Laurence Catholic Church in Sugar Land and fervent football fan. The Most Rev. George A. Sheltz, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, led the invocation.

"We are blessed to have such wonderful supporters of our mission in Fort Bend County," said Cynthia N. Colbert, president and CEO of Catholic Charities of Galveston-Houston. "Their generosity helps families put food on the table, helps seniors live independently and stay active, and helps dramatically change the lives of orphaned refugees from war-torn countries."

We are especially thankful to event chairs Lucy Maldonado, Joan O'Daniel and Michelle Porth; to presenting sponsor Tamara and Andrius Kontrimas; and to the Fort Bend County advisory board.



The Rev. Drew Wood chats with Catholic Charities Board Directors Nancy Z. Evetts and Andrius R. Kontrimas. Photo courtesy of Sylvia Garza.

One Community, One Body of Christ

Last fall, the Basic Needs Program in Galveston opened a small food pantry. Word spread, and the shelves were soon empty. People spread the word about the need and the community responded. In December, the program received a generous donation of non-perishables from the congregation of Moody Methodist Church, just in time to help struggling families and individuals have a more secure Christmas.

"Our response to our brothers and sisters in need – regardless of their religion or circumstance – is what unites us as Christians," said Elizabeth Kinard, director of Community Services for the Galveston and Bay Area. "It's what Christ told us all to do."

A Cardinal's Christmas

Kids, babies, parents, a donkey, goats, a llama and, of course, a cardinal were guest stars of the seventh-annual A Cardinal's Christmas luncheon held Dec. 12 at Lakeside Country Club. The event raised over \$250,000 for the children and family services programs of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston. More than 350 guests – including 130 children – were on hand for the festivities, which included a Nativity petting zoo and young musicians from The Regis School of the Sacred Heart's Bell Choir, St. Michael Catholic School Choir and St. Anne Catholic School Choir.

Share Your Blessings program a huge success!

Your gifts provided Christmas joy to about 4,500 people during the 2015 Christmas season! "God bless the hearts that made this possible," one thankful mom told us. Thanks to you, she was able to place gifts under the family's Christmas tree.



2016 SPIRIT OF CHARITY GALA
MAY 6, 2016 • 6:30 P.M.

all agency programs. This year's Gala honors the Harvey family.

Learn more at www.SpiritofCharityGala.org

Thank You for Your Generous Support!

Through the loving support of our friends, including nearly 100 new donors, we raised more than \$449,000 in our 2015 Christmas fundraising campaign – more than \$100,000 over our 2014 campaign! Special thanks to the Scanlan Foundation for its \$100,000 matching grant. We are grateful for the giving hearts across our community.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo
Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

John M. Kafka, *Chair*

George Henry Brueggeman, Jr., *Vice Chair*

Kevin Rech, *Treasurer*

James "Jeb" Bashaw, *Immediate Past Chair*

Cynthia N. Colbert, MSW, *President/CEO*

John R. Allender

Deana Blackburn

Michael H. Covert

Percy Creuzot, III

Mary A. Cronin

Nancy Z. Evetts

Lisa M. Ganucheau

Ellen Ginty

Chuck Gremillion

Thomas "Tommy" Hernandez

Arnold Johnson

Albert Kasumaj

Andrius R. Kontrimas

Patrick Leung, Ph.D.

Stan Marek

Commissioner Richard Morrison

Gene Reed

Laura M. Robertson

Marlene C. Williams

Michael W. Youtt

ADVISORY DIRECTORS

Most Rev. George A. Sheltz

Auxiliary Bishop

Ken Buckle, Psy.D.

Cynthia Cisneros

Robert Corrigan, Jr.

Donald Earthman

Joseph Earthman

Harriet Foster

Michelle M. Fraga

Keith Fullenweider

Oscar Greenleaf

Colin F. Hageney

David Harvey, Jr.

Harold Hidalgo, Sr.

Lution B. Hill

Elizabeth Hussein

Paul Layne

Cheryl Malden

Dennis M. Malloy

Rev. Charles R. Millikan

Deacon Arturo Monterrubio

William "Bill" Neeson, III

R. Gregory Turner

Teresa Valderrama

Jamie Vazquez

Karen B. White

Preston H. Young

CARITAS CIRCLE

Cathy and Giorgio Borlenghi

Burquières Family Foundation

Ann and Clarence Cazalot

Jerrie and Donald Earthman

Ellen and James Ginty

Michelle and Hector Herrera

Ginny and Dennis Malloy

The Marek Family

Ally and Burt Martin

Trinidad Mendenhall

Carol and Odis Peavy

Pat and Gene Reed

Sally and Bill Slick

**93¢ of every
\$1 donated
goes directly to
Programs and
Client Services.**

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston VEHICLE DONATION PROGRAM



CONTACT:

866.915.GIVE (4483) seven days a week.

TOWING:

We will tow your vehicle at no cost to you.

TAX DEDUCTIBLE:

Get a tax-deductible receipt and help our cause.

FOLLOW US ON:



/CatholicCharitiesGalvestonHouston



@CCharities_GHTX



youtube.com/user/CCharitiesGHTX



CCharities_GHTX