About Us

The Christ Child Society is a membership based non profit, serving the needs of children in the DC area. The foundation of our Society is our members, who not only set the direction for our programs, but lend their time, talent, and treasure to execute that vision. Members of the Christ Child Society come from across the DC metro area. Mostly women, our members range in age from early 20’s to early 90’s. The membership is organized into smaller groups called guilds. These guilds often share a common interest such as neighborhood, age, or history. The guild structure is a great way to make friends and network while supporting the work of The Society.

Founded over 125 years ago by Mary Virginia Merrick, The Society retains much of the same mission and structure as it did in the beginning. The spirit of Mary Virginia Merrick is alive in our work with children. While steeped in tradition, we are committed to looking ahead and changing to meet the evolving needs of children in our area.

Membership in this Society has only one requirement– a passion for our mission to meet the needs of children.
At an early age, Mary Virginia Merrick, the Christ Child Society’s founder, aspired to, “take care of all the little children who had no one to take care of them.” But a fall at age 14 left her partially paralyzed, confined to a bed or wheelchair.

Despite her disability, she devoted herself to taking care of children in need. At age 18, learning of a mother who had no clothing for her expected child, Mary gathered a group of friends to sew a layette, a complete set of clothing and accessories for the newborn. A young boy’s request for a red wagon in a letter to the Christ Child – whom Mary described as “the Giver of all good things” – was the beginning of a tradition of Christmas gifts to families who otherwise would have nothing. In 1887, the group became the Christ Child Society.

Mary Virginia Merrick’s enthusiasm and dedication inspired many individuals to join her in providing a number of programs for destitute children in the Nation’s Capital. They included a camp for children to enjoy a respite from city heat. The Merrick Boys Club was established in a remodeled stable near the US Capitol. A convalescent home for sick children and a residential care facility for emotionally disturbed youngsters became part of the Society’s work. All of these programs have changed and evolved over the years to meet contemporary demands.

“Miss Mary,” as she was known to her friends and the thousands of children she helped during her lifetime, was honored by church and civic leaders for her dedication to serving the Christ Child by serving His children. On April 2, 2003, the Congregation for the Cause of Saints in Rome declared Mary Virginia Merrick a Servant of God.

Miss Mary’s words, “Nothing is ever too much to do for a child,” continue to be brought to life today. The Christ Child Layette Program, begun by “Miss Mary” in 1884, continues to provide layettes to needy mothers and their babies. The School Counseling Program provides mental health services to inner-city Catholic school children and their families. Volunteer tutors help children learn to read and hundreds of children go to school in new uniforms provided by the DC Chapter. Proceeds from the sale of the camp were used to build a recreation center in Southeast Washington. Named “The Mary Virginia Merrick Center,” its goal is to enhance the recreational and social experiences of the area’s at-risk youth through sports, art, music and other organized programs. The DC Chapter now runs programs for girls and their families at the Merrick Center.
From the President

Dear Members:

The success continued in our 126th year of serving children in the Washington area. As you saw in our summer newsletter, our members have been very busy donating their time and talents for a number of worthy projects on behalf of the Christ Child Society. This edition of our Annual Report highlights you and your generous donations that enabled us to continue our programs during this past year (2013-2014).

As we launch the 127th year, I thank you for your generosity and support.

Warmest regards,

Tricia Boland Jones

From the Executive Director

Dear Members and Friends,

Thanks to your support, the Christ Child Society of Washington DC had a very successful 2013-2014 fiscal year. In this report you will find the names of those who supported us last year with their leadership, ideas, time and generous donations. We could not continue to meet our mission of providing for the material, emotional and educational needs of children without you. Thank you.

Also, in this Annual Report you will be introduced to our newly restructured programs. The Society has refocused programmatically in three areas (the Big Three): The Beloved Babies Layette Program; The Girls on the Rise Empowerment Program (at the Merrick Center); and the Student Success Program (which includes School Counseling, Tutoring and Adopt a School). You will read about the over 5,000 children and families whose lives you have touched through your volunteerism and financial support of these programs.

We thank you for your commitment to the children and families and to the vision of Mary Virginia Merrick who began this organization more than 125 years ago. Her words "Personal contact with the poor is the element of true charity,” inspire us today. Thank you for playing a part in that service.

Kathleen Curtin
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2013-2014

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2013-2014

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What We Do

The mission of the Christ Child Society is to provide for the material, emotional and educational needs of children. We serve the children in the DC area through a variety of program initiatives. We have a mix of both volunteer based and professional based programming.

While our programs have changed over time to meet the evolving needs of children in our community, our focus has always remained the same – serving children in need.

The following pages will give you a sense of our work and its impact on children.
Our Programs

Beloved Babies Layette Program
Swaddling babies in gifts of love

Girls on the Rise Program
Empowering girls and their families

Student Success Program
Supporting student achievement
Beloved Babies Layette Program
Swaddling babies in gifts of love

The Layette Program is the cornerstone program of the Society. It has been a constant since our founding over 125 years ago. The Layette Program provides material assistance to babies born to low income mothers in the DC area. Many of these mothers face motherhood with added challenges of poverty, single parenthood, unemployment. The Layette Program provides material assistance in the form of ‘starter kits’ known as layettes. Each layette contains the essentials every newborn needs: onesies, sleepers, receiving blankets, diapers, bottles, a children’s book and a handmade blanket. The handmade blankets are the most beloved part of the layette because it is truly a gift of love. The layettes also include educational material for the new mothers on topics such as: breast feeding, immunizations, home safety, and SIDS prevention.

We work with the following agencies to distribute layettes:

A Woman’s Choice
Adelphi Langley Support Center
Adolescent Single Parent Program
Bright Beginnings
Capitol Hill Pregnancy Center
Community of Hope
DC Healthy Start
The Family Place
HHS Germantown Health Center
Healthy Babies Project
Healthy Families Arlington
Healthy Families Montgomery Co.
Howard University Hospital
Mary Center
Montgomery County Head Start
Mont. Co. HHS
SS Health Center
Northwest Center
Northwestern High School
Child Development Center
Pregnancy Aid Center
P.G. County Health Department
P.G County Infant at Risk
Providence Hospital
Queen of Peace Missionaries
Rockville Pregnancy Center
Sanctuaries for Life
Shady Grove Pregnancy Center
United Medical Center
United Planning Organization
Unity Healthcare East of the River
Unity Healthcare
Upper Cardozo
V. Williams Family Resource Ctr
Washington Hospital
Youth Professional Development

The Layette Program is one of our most intensely volunteer driven programs. Over 200 volunteers knit or crochet the handmade gifts of love that are included in the layettes. Regular volunteers come to the office to attach a prayer card and medal to the blankets, and collate educational materials. Our guilds pack layettes 5 times a year. Over 2,000 volunteer hours are dedicated to the program each year.
The Student Success Program encompasses our efforts in local schools to help make children more available for learning. The Student Success Program provides services that include counseling, tutoring, and adopt-a-school initiatives. Our 2013-2014 partner schools were Don Bosco Cristo Rey, Sacred Heart, St. Anthony, St. Augustine, St. Francis Xavier, St. Thomas More and the Washington School for Girls.

Counseling services are provided to children in our partner schools by licensed social workers who work for the Society. These counselors help the children through tough times, crises, relationship challenges, bullying, academic problems, abusive home lives, and violent communities. The social workers provide support and guidance so the children can work through obstacles and succeed in school.

The School Counseling Program provides the following school-based clinical services:

◊ Individual counseling  ◊ Classroom workshops  ◊ Clinical consultations for teachers and administrators
◊ Group counseling  ◊ School-wide programs  ◊ Referrals to community agencies
◊ Crisis intervention  ◊ Family support  ◊ Mediation
◊ Drop ins  ◊ High school transition  ◊ New student groups
◊ Lunch bunch groups  ◊ Classroom workshops  ◊ School-wide programs
◊ Book clubs  ◊ Family support  ◊ Mediation

Tutoring services are provided by volunteer tutors who are specially trained in a phonics based reading curriculum, Phonics Boost. Volunteers commit to weekly sessions with struggling readers in our partner schools. Each year, the students show significant improvement in reading.

The adopt-a-school initiative is an effort to provide material support to our partner schools. Our guilds meet a variety of needs for the students such as uniforms, coats, sports equipment, field trip funding, classroom technology and sponsorship of special events.
Girls on the Rise
Empowering girls and their families

The Girls on the Rise Program is a multifaceted empowerment program for girls in Ward 8 and their families. Operating at the Mary Virginia Merrick Center in Southeast, D.C. the program provides a safe, enriching after-school program for girls ages 8-18. The majority of the girls who attend the program reside with their mothers in this very underserved area of the city. The girls rarely miss a day and come eager and ready to fully participate in the program. Program activities offer the Girls on the Rise an opportunity to discover who they are as young ladies - their dreams, desires, capabilities, skills, and talents. Over the course of the year, the girls are able to improve their life skills and self-esteem in a fun, safe and nurturing environment. The Girls on the Rise receive academic support from local high students from Bishop McNamara High School and participate in structured recreational activities such as Girls on the Run and Girls on Track. In addition, the parents and families of the girls receive comprehensive support services such as case management, crisis counseling, mentoring, job coaching, parenting groups and training and referrals to outside agencies. The program provides Wellness Workshops for the families as well as special community event days.

The Girls on the Rise Summer Camp is a day camp for at risk girls at the Merrick Center in Ward 8. The camp serves approximately 60 girls ranging in age from 7 to 14 years old. The camp serves many of the same girls from the After School Program. Throughout the six week session, the girls work through weekly themes such as Self Discovery, Positive Body Image, Making Choices, Understanding Emotions and Self-Identity. They participate in activities such as team building, Zumba, self-defense, healthy eating, creative writing, arts and crafts, yoga and field trips.
Donations

The Christ Child Society is blessed to have wonderful support from many generous donors who give to the Society in a wide range of ways. We have three major fundraising initiatives: The Annual Appeal, The Opportunity Shop, and the Gala. We also receive memorial donations and bequests.

On the following pages are those people who have generously supported us in the 2013-2014 year.

We Thank You.
The Merrick Legacy Circle is to honor those who have given planned gifts in the following ways: bequest intentions, realized bequests received, irrevocable deferred gifts such as charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder unitrusts, gifts of property, and other planned gifts. If you have a correction to this list, please contact Kara O’Brien at kobrien@christchilddc.org.

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Each February, members and friends of the Christ Child Society gather for a festive evening of celebration to raise money for our programs. We want to thank our sponsors, live auction donors and winners, and Red Wagon Fund donors for their generosity. And thank you to Meghan Quinn for chairing this year’s event!

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The Opportunity Shop is one of the oldest and most unique fundraisers for the Christ Child Society. What started as a rummage sale in the 1930’s has now become an upscale consignment store in historic Georgetown. Filled with antiques, jewelry, artwork, furniture, and silver, there is truly something for everyone! The following are our Opportunity Shop Staff Members:

Jay York – Manager, Gaby Van Massenhove, Dot Gates and Scott Charney

In addition to our dedicated staff, a great deal of the Shop’s success stems from our team of dedicated volunteers. Over 70 volunteers staff the Shop 7 days per week. Working in shifts, volunteers work the cash register, assist customers, design the window displays, help with consignments and monitor inventory. We could not be so financially successful without our dedicated volunteers and staff.

Where good deals become good deeds.

To consign, donate, or volunteer, contact The Op Shop at opshop@christchilddc.org

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Donations were made in loving memory of the following people:

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