



CONNECTIONS

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CCST Officers (2023-25):

President:

Deborah Auclair

Immediate Past President:

Nancy Thorpe

1st Vice President:

Vita Balsino

2nd Vice Pres. & Membership Chair:

Dianna Balsamo

Treasurer:

Nancy Thorpe

Recording Secretary:

Pat Lunsford

Board Members at Large:

Bernie Chuinard, Judy Chuinard, and Ann MacDonald, Liz McCandlish, and Frances Smith.

CCST 2024 Year in Review & April Fundraiser

CCST will be holding its annual fundraiser on Sunday, April 27, 2025. We are hosting a luncheon at The Heritage Highlands of Dove Mountain. Invitations will be available online and mailed out on March 15th.

As you prepare your 2024 taxes, there's still time to take advantage of CCST's status as a Qualified Charitable Organization (QCO). Our QCO code is #22131. Thank you to those who have already considered us for this credit!

A Look at What We Accomplished Together in 2024

Thanks to your generosity and support, we were able to make a meaningful impact:

- Distributed over 750 hygiene dignity bags to foster teens
- Provided over 600 layettes to moms of newborns, including 14,440 diapers

Promoted literacy by distributing 1,450 books to children and donating a book vending machine to San Xavier Mission School

Our Valued Community Partnerships

We proudly collaborate with eleven agencies to provide layettes:

- Answers for Life
- Casa de los Niños
- Catholic Community Services of Southern AZ
- Pima Health
- Pio Decimo Center
- Banner Health/Diamond Medical Center
- Aviva Children's Services
- MW Women's Center
- Hands of Hope



- New Life Pregnancy Center
- Reachout

For foster teen bags, we work with the following agencies:

- Children's Advocacy Center
- Aviva Children's Protective Services
- Casa de los Niños

To promote literacy, we partner with three schools and the nonprofit Make Way for Books:

- Santa Cruz Catholic School
- San Xavier Mission School
- Our Mother of Sorrows Catholic School

Spreading Christmas Cheer

During the holidays, CCST's Santa and Mrs. Claus visited:

- Santa Cruz School
 - Pio Decimo
 - Our Mother of Sorrows School
- (See inside for more pictures!)

Thank you for your continued support in making a difference in our community! 🙏



Would You Consider Supporting CCST this tax season at a net \$0 Cost to You?

St. Mark the Evangelist Feb 2, 2025 Bulletin Article

As we approach the 2024 tax season, there is an incredible opportunity to support vital charitable organizations in our community—without spending an extra dime! Arizona's tax credit programs allow you to redirect the money you already owe in state taxes to qualified organizations, at no additional cost to you.

Several organizations supported by St. Mark and its parishioners are approved by the State of Arizona to receive these tax credits. This is in addition to any CTSO (Catholic Tuition Support Organization) donation you may already be planning.

Here's How It Works:

Support a Ministry: Select one or more approved Qualifying Charitable Organizations (QCOs) from the list below (see AZ Dept. of Revenue for additional organizations), along with their 5-digit codes.

Maximum QCO Credit for 2024:

\$470 (single, married filing separately, or head of household)

\$938 (married filing jointly)

Deadline: April 15, 2025.

Enter the Code: Use Arizona tax form 321 to enter the code and donation amount. Cash donations are eligible for tax credits on your Arizona Personal Income Tax Return.

Christ Child Society of Tucson (#22131) (go to christchildtucson.org to donate)

Saint Vincent de Paul Tucson Diocesan Council (#20203)

Sister Jose Women's Center (#20826)

By participating, you ensure your tax dollars go directly to causes that reflect your faith and values while supporting those in need. ✚

We are very thankful that many people have helped CCST increase our outreach by 45% over the last 2 years. They have taken advantage of AZ's tax credit now that we are a Qualified Charitable Organization QCO.

When you donate the Christ Child Society of Tucson you can reduce your AZ state tax obligation by the same amount. The Arizona QCO state tax program deductions (see table below) come directly off the taxes you owe. For example, if you owe \$1,000 in state tax and are married filing jointly, you can donate \$938 to CCST (22131) and you will pay the state only \$62!

How to Donate to the CCST?

Go to www.ChristChildTucson.org and click on

the "I'd Like to Donate" button for

the details. On the website you can donate by credit card, PayPal or check. Our mailing address is PO Box 36212, Tucson, AZ 85740.

How to get the 2024 AZ Tax Credit?

AZ Tax forms you will need:

Form AZ301 link: [Arizona Form 301](#)

Form AZ321 link: [Arizona Form 321](#)

Always check with your tax professional regarding Arizona Tax Credit eligibility."



[I'd Like to Donate!](#)

The Christ Child Society of Tucson is both a 501(c)3 organization and a Qualifying Charitable Organization (as of 9/1/2023)
QCO code: 22131



ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

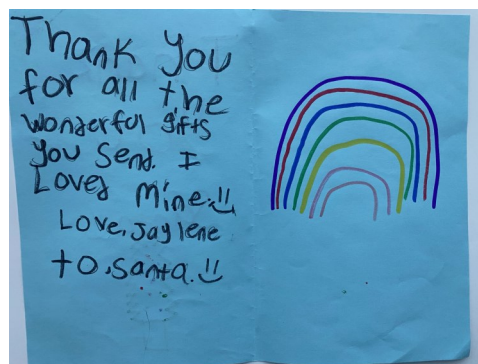
Christ Child Society Brings Christmas Cheer to Tucson School Children

The spirit of Christmas shined brightly in Tucson as members of the Christ Child Society spread holiday joy to children at Our Mother of Sorrows School (OMOS), the Catholic Community Services Pio Decimo Center, and Santa Cruz School. Dressed as Santa Claus, Mrs. Claus, and Santa's helpers, volunteers brought gifts and festive cheer to the students, making the holiday season extra special.

Each year, the Christ Child Society works tirelessly to ensure that children in need experience the magic of Christmas. Through generous donations earmarked

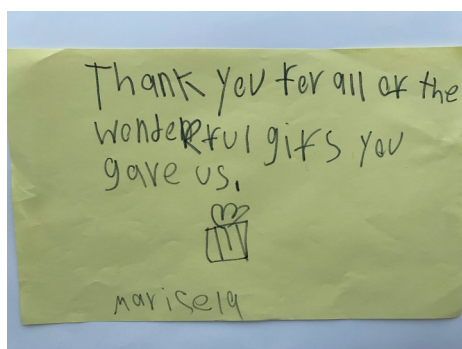
specifically for Christmas gifts, the organization was able to purchase presents for the children, bringing smiles, laughter, and a sense of holiday wonder to the schools they visited.

One particularly touching moment highlighted the true impact of these visits. In December 2023, a young boy at OMOS hesitated to approach



Santa. He stood quietly with his aide, too shy to step forward. A Christ Child Society volunteer gently knelt beside him, introducing herself and asking his name. "Blessed," he answered softly. She reassured him that he didn't have to sit on Santa's lap, but perhaps he could say hello and take a picture just like the other children. Encouraged, he

continued on page 5



Bonnie Alberts, Santa, Mrs. Claus, Karl Schneider, Judy VanderLinde, Angela Schneider, Pio Staff Member, Renata Kaiser (seated) (Renata sewed all of the stockings - over a hundred - for the children).



Our Mother of Sorrow's children are excited to see Santa.



Elves, Angela Schneider and Judy Vander Linde are enjoying the day at OMOS.



Santa and Mrs. Claus wave to their fans!





The children at Santa Cruz School pose with Santa and Mrs. Claus

took a small but brave step toward Santa, creating a special moment that left a lasting impression on those who witnessed it.

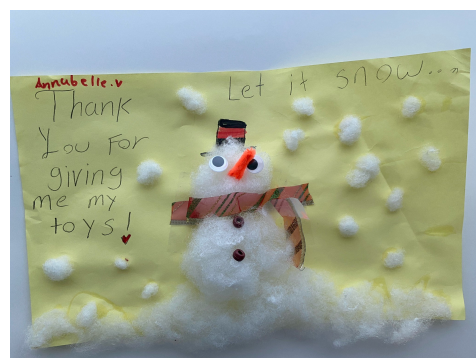
Fast forward one year to December 2024—this same little boy, now filled with confidence, ran up and leaped onto Santa's lap with excitement. Santa asked him his name, and he proudly responded, 'Blessed.' It was a heartwarming transformation—one that brought tears to the eyes of the volunteers who had seen his growth over the past year.

The joy shared by both the children and volunteers was captured in photos from each of the schools, depicting the magic of the season. Smiling faces, warm embraces, and excited children opening their gifts tell the story of a holiday made brighter through the kindness of others.

In a touching show of gratitude, many of the children created heartfelt thank-you notes, expressing their appreciation for the gifts and the visit from Santa and his helpers. Some of these beautiful notes are depicted here, showcasing the children's joy and gratitude in their own words and drawings.

Moments like these exemplify why the Christ Child Society continues its mission year after year. It is not just about delivering presents, but about creating experiences that instill joy, comfort, and a sense of belonging for children who may need it most.

The Christ Child Society remains deeply grateful for the generosity of donors and volunteers who make this annual event possible. Their efforts ensure that every child receives not only a gift, but



also the warmth and love that the holiday season represents.

As the Christmas season fades into memory, the impact of these visits lingers in the hearts of both the children and the volunteers, reminding everyone involved of the true meaning of giving. †



Layettes by Dianna Balsamo

I am incredibly proud to share that our Layettes Program is growing beautifully, thanks to the dedicated committee, Fr. Huy Vu, Pastor of Santa Catalina and the generous contributions from the SaddleBrooke communities of seamstresses, who provide items like blankets, balls, bibs, and more. A heartfelt thank you to everyone involved.

In addition, with Dr. Ana's invaluable support, we are extending our reach to help even more mothers. We are also working to increase our involvement with the "Walking with Moms" program. Looking ahead to the new year, we are hopeful for even more progress and continued success. †



Dian Gowan of SaddleBrooke Ranch's Creative Giving group gives a car load of exquisitely made bibs, receiving blankets, and burp cloths. Their in-kind donations amounted to over \$6,000 in 2024.

Marcia Wells delivers Layettes to the delightful ladies at Hands of Hope. On Marcia's left, is Luce from Hands of Hope and Marcia's right is her husband, Chris.



On February 4th, Vita Balsino, Marcia Wells, Dian Gowan, Deb Auclair, Dianna Balsamo and Sandy Ghetter celebrate Creative Giving's accomplishments over the last year and discuss what is needed for 2025.



Marcia Wells delivered layettes to New Life Pregnancy Center in Tucson. Pictured is Marcia Wells with Alex who Marcia calls such a sweet and grateful lady.

Layettes by Dianna Balsamo

The Layette Committee is on track to give out 600 layettes by the end of our physical year in June.



L to R: Dick and Betty Ryan stop by to donate to the Wings foster teen collection. Pictured above with Dianna Balsamo.

“Thank You” to the Ryans! Dianna Balsamo helps with the Wings foster teens collection at Santa Catalina the weekend of February 8th. Dick and Betty Ryan were there not only to give donations to Wings, but they also provide beautiful crocheted blankets, almost weekly for the layette bags. ✚



Dianna Balsamo and RJ Saavedra from our partner, Reachout, display the bags for moms which are added to the Layettes!

“Thank You” from Reachout RJ Saavedra picked up Reachout’s layettes at the storage unit on February 12th. She was delighted with the “moms bags”. The idea of including toiletries, etc. for the moms came about at Dr. Ana’s volunteer event. The Reachout ladies saw the Wings foster teen hygiene bags and said “our moms could really use this type of stuff, too!” Dianna worked with Dian Gowan of SaddleBrooke Ranch Creative Giving to come up with a bag for moms. ✚



Bonnie Alberts proudly displays a crocheted blanket beautifully made by Pat Lundsford.

Wrapped in Love: The Knit Wits' Heartfelt Creations for CCST

Nancy Jones, a devoted member of the Christ Child Society and a recipient of our Red Wagon Award in 2013, continues to be a passionate advocate for our organization. She has played a key role in keeping the knitting group informed about our needs.

Peg O'Connell, the dedicated leader of the Knit Wits—a vibrant knitting group at All Seasons—recently shared a heartwarming photo showcasing some of the beautiful handmade items they created for CCST. These talented women pour their skill and care into knitting and crocheting baby items,

which are deeply cherished by the mothers who receive them.

Each handcrafted piece provides warmth and comfort, wrapping little ones in a cocoon of kindness and love. The artistry of the Knit Wits not only brings joy but also serves as a heartfelt reminder that every stitch is woven with compassion. ✝



Crocheted Blankets Play A Significant Role In Layettes

Pat Lunsford, a dedicated member of our CCST team, has embraced numerous leadership roles over the years. Currently serving as our Recording Secretary, she also lends her talents to Layettes for Newborns through her beautiful crochet work. Her exquisite blankets, crafted with creativity and care, are featured below and throughout this newsletter. Pat's ingenuity shines through in the unique patterns she selects, making each piece a cherished gift for little ones. ✝



Recognition of CCST at the Reachout Gala in December of 2024

Thank You” to Reachout!

We are deeply grateful to **Reachout** for honoring us with the opportunity to attend the **Reachout Gala** in recognition of our support in providing layettes for expectant mothers in need. It is truly a privilege to contribute to their incredible mission of empowering women and families during such a critical time in their lives.

From Reachout’s website: <https://reachoutwomenscenter.com>:

“An unexpected pregnancy is a life-changing event. We believe you should know all the facts about your options before making a final decision. You do not have to go through this difficult time alone. Be empowered to make the best decision you can make based on the facts and not fear. We are here to walk with you through the initial steps of your pregnancy, through the first 36 months of your child’s life. All services are free and confidential.

Reachout offers pregnancy testing, limited obstetrical ultrasounds, peer counseling & referrals, and material



Eleven members of CCST were able to attend the Reachout Gala. Pictured from left: Vita Balsino, Fran Vicino, Judy Chuinard, Bernie Chuinard, Liz McCandlish, Pat Lunsford, Dianna Balsamo, Eileen Geraghty Standing :Ann MacDonald, Deb Auclair and Marcia Wells.

assistance.” We are proud to partner with Reachout in helping expectant mothers feel supported, informed, and cared for as they embark on their journey into motherhood. ✝



Dianna Balsamo and RJ Saavedra from our partner, Reachout, at the Reachout Gala 12-08-24.



Bernie Chuinard is happy to greet Fr. Liam at the Reachout Gala.

Bringing Christmas Joy to Kinship Families

CCST was honored to play a small role in making the holiday season brighter for twenty-eight kinship children, ensuring they experienced the joy and warmth of Christmas. These children, ranging in age from 6 to 14 years old, each received a homemade drawstring bag thoughtfully filled with customized gifts tailored to their needs and interests.

The boys each received a jacket, a blanket, a game, and/or earbuds.

The girls each received a jacket, a Lego flower kit, and a blanket.

This year, thanks to the incredible generosity of one of our dedicated members, Karen Znamenacek-Baker, each child also received a wonderful, age-appropriate toy—adding even more excitement to their Christmas. The generosity was so overwhelming that each child received two large bags filled with Christmas surprises!

Additionally, Chris Wells and CCST member Marcia Wells played a key role in securing 50 coats from St. Mark The Evangelist's Knights of Columbus, all of which were distributed to children in need, ensuring they stayed warm during the winter months.

What is a Kinship Family?

A kinship family is one in which relatives, such as an aunt, uncle, or grandparent, take on the responsibility of raising a child. For example, a family adopting a niece, nephew, or grandchild would be considered a kinship family. These families provide love, stability, and support, often stepping in to care for children during challenging times.

We are grateful for the opportunity to support these children and their families during the holiday season, making their Christmas a little brighter and their hearts a little warmer. ✝



CCST member, Marcia Wells, Cath. Comm. Svs. Liaison, Molly Quale, and Chris Wells made Christmas real for Kinship families.

Molly Quale wrote... The Christmas bags and jackets were a hit! We not only were able to spread Christmas cheer to the 28 children with presents, homemade bags, and jackets, but we were also able to help an additional 20 children with jackets for the winter. The families absolutely loved the bags and presents and the jackets were very much appreciated and needed. Your thoughtfulness went a long way and we are so very grateful you chose CCS to help spread that thoughtfulness. **Molly Quale, B.S.** ✝

Program Supervisor, KSS and Foster Care



Each child received a hand sewn drawstring bag and age appropriate toy!

Deb Auclair Thanks the Parishioners of Santa Catalina Church

Dear Parishioners of Santa Catalina Church,

On behalf of the Christ Child Society of Tucson, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your overwhelming generosity in response to our request for support for our Foster Teens Backpack Program.

Your contributions of toiletries, underwear, personal items, and monetary donations have once again demonstrated the spirit of kindness and compassion that defines our parish community. Because of your support, we are able to continue meeting our monthly goal of supplying 30 backpacks filled with essential items to foster teens in need.

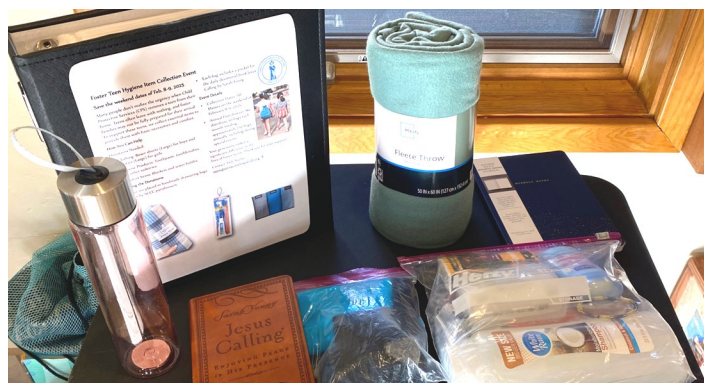
Your generosity not only provides these young individuals with necessities but also reminds them that they are cared for and valued. May God bless you abundantly for your kindness and support.

With sincere gratitude,

Deb Auclair

Chapter President, Christ Child Society, Tucson

<https://christchildtucson.org/>



DEPICTION OF THE CONTENT THAT GOES INTO EACH HAND SEWN BACKPACK: BLANKET, WATER BOTTLE, TOILETRIES, UNDERWEAR, JOURNAL, PEN, PACK OF CARDS, COPY OF "JESUS CALLING"

...and Aviva Thanks Us

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your generous gifts to Aviva. Your contribution truly makes a difference—bringing smiles, a sense of dignity, and much-needed relief to the children and families we serve.

We are deeply honored that you have chosen to support our community through the programs at Aviva. Your kindness and generosity enabled us to distribute over 17,700 clothing items, nearly 3,000 hygiene kits, and countless other essential items to the children and families in need last year. Because of you, we can continue to provide hope, comfort, and critical resources to those who need it most.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Steve Guthrie, Cristina Greenberg, Dina Scalone
CEO, Executive Director, Chief External Relations



CCST member, Ann MacDonald collects hygiene products before 7 AM Mass on a cold February morning.

From Collection to Care: The Journey of Hygiene Kits for Children in Need

When it comes to making a difference in the lives of children, every small effort adds up to something significant. Recently, through the generosity of Santa Catalina Parishioners, the Christ Child Society received a substantial donation of essential hygiene items, including **over 40 blankets, 150 tubes of toothpaste, more than 500 toothbrushes, and over 300 pairs of boys' and girls' underwear.** But collecting these items is just the first step in a process that ensures they reach the children who need them most.

Sorting and Organizing: A Labor of Love

Once the donated items are collected, they are transported to our storage unit, where a dedicated team of Christ Child Society members and volunteers carefully count and categorize each item, ensuring that everything is properly inventoried and ready for distribution.

Each piece—whether it's a warm blanket, a tube of toothpaste, or a fresh pair of underwear—is more than just an item. It represents comfort, dignity, and care for a child who may be facing difficult circumstances. Volunteers work diligently to ensure that all items are in good condition and properly organized for efficient packing. Items we can't use are given to other agencies CCST

Cont. next page



Donated items are transported to the storage unit in multiple trips after each of the 5 Masses.



Nancy Thorpe meets Nancy Colombo at Santa Catalina Ministry Fair in 2024 and she has become a great member of our Wings team.



L to R: Nancy Thorpe and Karen Znamenacek-Baker help inventory the over \$7,000 in donations received from the generous Santa Catalina parishioners.



L to R: Mary Barrios, Sue Bishop and Georgia Crissy help sort through the over \$7,000 in donations received from the generous Santa Catalina folks.

Cont. from last page... From Collection to Care

support. Everything finds a good home!

Preparing for Monthly Deliveries

Following the sorting process, the team begins preparing for the next monthly delivery. Each hygiene kit must be thoughtfully assembled to ensure that every child receives what they need. Every drawstring bag is carefully packed, containing items our agency partners recommend for a teen's health, hygiene, and well-being.

The impact of these hygiene kits goes beyond just providing necessities—they give children a sense of confidence and self-worth. For many, something as simple as a fresh toothbrush or a clean pair of underwear can make a significant difference in their daily lives.

The Power of Community Support

The success of this effort is a testament to the power of Santa Catalina Church's generosity and volunteer dedication. Without the kindness of donors and the hard work of our volunteers, these hygiene kits would not be possible. Every contribution, whether big or small, plays a role in ensuring that children in need receive essential care.

As we continue this work, we are grateful for everyone who has made it possible—from those who donated items to those who dedicate their time to sorting, packing, and delivering. Each step of this process is fueled by love and a shared commitment to serving children with dignity, compassion, and kindness.

If you'd like to get involved, consider donating, volunteering, or spreading the word about the Christ Child Society's mission. Together, we can continue to bring comfort and care to children who need it most. ✝



Sorting the various items prior to starting the assembly line. (Carly Auclair, picture.)



Bags being received at Casa de los Ninos



Edith Lenz, a Santa Catalina parishioner, models a Wings drawstring bag, before Mass.

Meeting to Spread Christmas Cheer

The Tucson Chapter has long enjoyed a special tradition—holding its monthly meetings at **Scordato's Pizzeria**. More than just a gathering place, Scordato's has been a generous supporter of our organization as well as a key sponsor of our annual fundraiser, helping us make a greater impact in our community. Their support, combined with their excellent service, has made them an integral part of our chapter's success.

While most of our meetings focus on committee reports, financial updates, and organizing support for various events, the December meeting was different.

This time, there were no agendas or schedules—just the simple joy of gathering together to celebrate the

holiday season and wish one another a Merry Christmas.

One tradition did change this year: Instead of exchanging gifts among ourselves, we chose to donate our Christmas gifts to the hardworking waitstaff at Scordato's. It was our way of showing appreciation to the team that always ensures our meetings run smoothly with their attentive service and warm hospitality.

As we look ahead to another year of meetings, events, and community involvement, we are grateful for the partnership and friendship we share with Scordato's Pizzeria. Here's to another great year of working together! ✚



L to R: Judy, Nancy and Dianna pictured. Nancy Thorpe won the large poinsettia.



Judy Chuinard brought Randi's gift card holder.



Randi (of Scordato's) shows off her gifts.



Vita won the Scordatos gift card. L to R. Michele, Bonnie and Vita



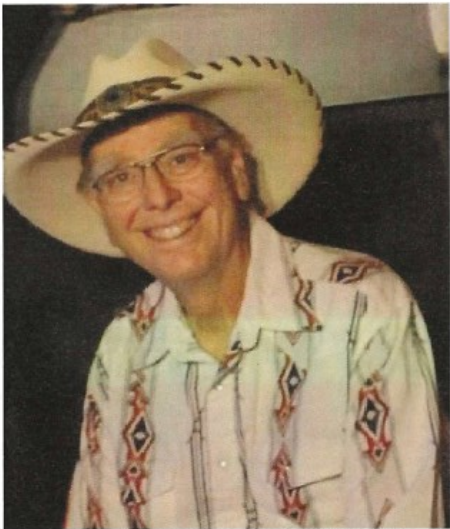
CCST Members L to R:

Vita Balsino, Ann MacDonald, Bernie Chuinard, Elmer Klavetter (our QCO guest speaker), Liz McCandlish, Judy Chuinard, Nancy Thorpe, Pat Lunsford, Dianna Balsamo, Michele Way.

Pat Celentano's (Rosie's Husband) Funeral Mass was January 23, 2025

Dear Rosie, we are here for you,

In Memory Of
Pat Mario Celentano
December 31, 1951 – December 2, 2024



Hanging Up His Saddle

It's been a long and dusty ride
Life's mountain trails he's seen.
He's known its gentle rivers
And valley ever green.

He's hanging up his saddle
He's given it his best.
The final roundup's over
And he's ready for a rest.

So he's hanging up his saddle
No longer will he roam.
There's a smile beneath
That cowboy hat
For now he's headed home.



*Your CCST Friends &
Team Members*

CCST Key Dates:

week of 3/3		Read Across America Week at SXMS	Mar-25																	
3/10/2025	CCST Our Lady of the Desert Church Retreat		S	M	T	W	T	F	S											
wk of 4/7	Wings assembly at Immaculate Heart Academy		1																	
4/26/2025	Walking With Mom's Baby Shower St. Alfon Kit.		2	3	4	5	6	7	8											
4/27/2025	Red Wagon Fare @ The Highlands noon-4 PM		2	3	4	5	6	7	8											
5/2/2025	Fostering Hope - Catholic Comm Svs - St. Andrews		9	10	11	12	13	14	15											
5/17/2025	Shower of Love at Dianna's		16	17	18	19	20	21	22											
			23	24	25	26	27	28	29											
			30	31																
CCST meetings at Scordatos			Red Wagon Event			Layette assembly at Storage unit			Wings assembly at storage unit											
Apr-25							May-25							Jun-25						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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27	28	29	30				25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					




CCST members make the National Christ Child Society Newsletter

Bernie and Judy Chuinard pose with our Jr. CC Members after working a full day collecting and assembling bags of food for donation to Pio Decimo in Nov. of 24. Angela Schneider arranged for her generous neighbors at the Heritage Highlands to drop off food for collection.

Tucson

Members gathered for a Food Drive Collection, supported by members, their families and American Heritage Girls (some are junior CCS members). With 1,000 flyers distributed, they collected donations and coordinated driveway pickups. In the end, 100 families and 250 children were served, making this effort a celebration of community and love in action!



CCST members celebrate Read Across America Week March 2025

This year, it takes place from March 4 to March 8, 2025. To support educators and students during this week-long celebration, a variety of resources are available to enhance reading experiences and foster a love for literature.. CCST spent time at San Xavier Mission School.



Deb Auclair reads to Kindergarteners



Nancy Thorpe reads to Kindergarteners



Neil McCaffrey reads to Kindergarteners



Fireman arrived to read to the Children.



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Principal@sxmschool.org
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In Closing ...

ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE (in honor of March 17th)

