

# COMING IN LIKE AN ANGEL

## *How One Girl Turned Her 10th Birthday Party into a Small Miracle*

Ayla Venkatesan, a fifth-grade student at West Towson Elementary School, may be among Caroline Center’s youngest contributors and, it’s clear, she is certainly one of the kindest and most-creative thinking.

Last April, when Ayla was about to turn 10 years old, she had a thought. “I was talking with my mom,” she said, “and, I told her that I was thinking that I didn’t really need any presents for my birthday. I thought I could ask my friends for donations instead that we could give to someone who needed help.” At first, Ayla shared, “my friends didn’t understand why I wouldn’t want presents, but when I explained that giving even little things could really help a person, they started to understand.”

An important inspiration to Ayla for her giving came from one of her school’s traditions – the 4th-grade “Kindness Project.” When I spoke with Ayla for this story, she and her classmates recently had made gift bags for patients undergoing chemotherapy at Mercy Hospital. Ayla said she “liked making the gift bags and visiting the patients.” Then, she thought that she would like to carry on this kindness in some way as her birthday approached.

Ayla reached out to family, friends, and parishioners at her church to see if they had any suggestions for how she might be able to help. A member of Ayla’s church and friend of the family also happened to work at Caroline Center. She suggested that Ayla might want to help a Caroline Center family that she knew about – a mom and her children, who were struggling to find a place to live in Baltimore and had very few resources.

Ayla was ready. She had her friends on board. She had a plan. And, she knew a thing or two about how to do her research. “Some of my friends and I looked online for what people might need who were just getting started in a new place. Then, we made a list. Then, we asked for donations of those things for my 10th birthday.” Ayla knew that she and her friends might



*Ayla Venkatesan with her “birthday gifts” — the donations she requested from her friends and family in honor of her 10th birthday — to help meet some very real and immediate needs of a mom and her children.*

## ANGEL CONTINUED

never get to meet the family that they had helped, but Ayla said, “It’s okay. I feel good that I could help someone – even if just a little.”

When I asked Ayla if she would say that she had always been a kind and generous person, she said that she didn’t really know the answer. “Well,” I replied, “I think that’s one of the mysteries of giving – sometimes we really don’t know who we are and what we’re made of until we give. And, I personally think there’s a very good chance that your kindness may be one of your very special gifts.” Then, I asked Ayla the hard question, “What’s your impression of Caroline Center? What do you tell your friends about Caroline Center?” Ayla replied, “It’s good. I tell my friends that Caroline Center is a place that really helps people. It’s a good place.”

Well, Ayla may not have gotten the chance to meet the family she and her friends helped, but she did receive an amazing and true-to-the-word thank-you note from a grateful mom that said, among other nice things, “You really have an amazing heart.” And, “You came in like an angel.” We couldn’t agree more.

Thank you, Ayla, so very much for your kindness and generosity. We hope and pray that you always have a heart for Caroline Center and for making the whole world just a little better for everyone in it.

## Introducing Development Director MIKE JONES

It’s hard to believe that we just welcomed Michael Jones to Caroline Center in June because it feels like he’s been with us a long time. Mike is a terrific professional – knowledgeable, personable, hard-working, and truly committed to Caroline Center’s mission. Readers should also know that Mike brings his great sense of humor to our organization. We are thrilled to introduce him to you in this edition of *Good Work*. We hope that you will take the opportunity to get to know him better. You can reach Mike at [mjones@caroline-center.org](mailto:mjones@caroline-center.org) or at 410.563.1303 x31.



### CAN YOU TELL READERS A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO COME TO CAROLINE CENTER?

Baltimore resonated with our experience, and we like Baltimore – it translates for us. I went to Br. Rice High School (Christian Brothers of Ireland) in Bloomfield near Detroit. So did my brother, my wife’s brothers, and our son. My wife, Joanne, went to one of our sister schools, Mercy High School (Sisters of Mercy). We met at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. After college, we got married and moved back home to raise our family. My mother passed the day our youngest (Colleen) went off to college, and Joanne’s father passed the following Easter. Joanne had the call-

**MIKE JONES CONTINUED**

ing to expand our scope and that spirit has brought us here. That, and the vision of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

**IN SERVING CAROLINE CENTER AS A DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL, WHAT ASPECTS OF YOUR WORK ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT?**

Development is about channeling resources to achieve potential. I am most passionate about empowering the women of Baltimore who possess “the will to be more” and need a path. Caroline Center provides that path and I facilitate resources for Caroline Center.

**THERE ARE HUNDREDS, IF NOT MORE, WONDERFUL QUOTATIONS ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF GIVING. WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE QUOTATION? WHY?**

“The fragrance always remains in the hand that gives the rose.” That is philanthropy in its purest form. The reward is in the act...and the benefit to the giver is enduring.

**IF YOU COULD SHARE ONE PERSONAL PROMISE TO A DONOR ABOUT WHAT HER/HIS GIVING TO CAROLINE CENTER WILL ACCOMPLISH, WHAT WOULD THAT PROMISE BE?**

Promises are serious business, especially when they are personal...however, I serve a serious mission that empowers a women “to reach the fullness of her potential thus creating a future of hope for herself and her family.” I promise our donors this, when you generously support our mission – guided by the School Sisters of Notre Dame’s charism and holistic approach to education – you will empower women in Baltimore and set them on a path toward greater fulfillment. This I have witnessed.

**WE KNOW YOU HAVE PLANS AND A VISION FOR MAKING 2019-2020 ONE OF THE MOST MEANINGFUL AND REWARDING YEARS FOR CONTRIBUTORS AT EVERY LEVEL TO GET TO KNOW CAROLINE CENTER BETTER. COULD YOU GIVE US A LITTLE PREVIEW OF SOME OF THE OPPORTUNITIES YOU MIGHT HAVE IN MIND FOR PEOPLE TO CONNECT?**

Yes. We are already increasing our social media presence, and recently the Academic and Career Advancement office “live-streamed” our graduation ceremony for Class 73. Our Communications and Marketing office continues to raise awareness of our programs, initiatives, and achievements through our quarterly newsletter, annual report, and more. And, in new development initiatives, we will be introducing monthly and online giving programs as well as #Giving Tuesday and Text-to-Give into our traditional year-end campaign, which accounts for more than a third of our annual giving.

**IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH READERS?**

Yes. SAVE THE DATE! We hope everyone will join us at THE WINSLOW on APRIL 30 for this year’s gala benefit event. SCRUBS ON A MISSION 2020 will be an elegant evening of socializing and support for the Caroline Center community. More details to come. You really won’t want to miss it.





Save-the-Date

# Scrubs on a Mission!

We are looking forward to seeing you at Baltimore's chicest venue for an all-new benefit event celebrating

## Caroline Center

Thursday, April 30, 2020

The Winslow, 333 W. Ostend Street



Early bird table discounts will be available online in December 2019 at [www.caroline-center.org](http://www.caroline-center.org).



Individual ticket sales, based upon availability, will open on January 31, 2020.

Early reservations are encouraged as space is limited.



## The Winslow

### Celebrating Baltimore's Industrial Past

One recent guest called The Winslow at the Parker Metal Building "a mix of rugged, industrial, and modern architectural elements that is stunning inside and out."

Founded in the early 1920s, the Parker Metal Decorating Company was well-known for fabricating Baltimore's iconic tin roof ceiling tiles and the first Old Bay seasoning cans. The Parker Metal Building – now, The Winslow –

is a restoration that celebrates Baltimore's industrial past. When you join us in April, you will enjoy a unique and truly beautiful setting,

featuring exposed original brick and steel; floor-to-ceiling windows with sight lines to M&T Bank Stadium;

a second-story wrap-around mezzanine;

and, a spectacular built-in bar.



# Caroline Center



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[caroline-center@carolinecenter](mailto:caroline-center@carolinecenter)

410-563-1303

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