



NOVEMBER 2023

CEA NEWSLETTER

Introducing CEA's New Executive Director

Meet Caitlin Kirby, CEA's new executive director. And while she's new to CEA, she has deep roots in Catonsville, having lived here for more than 16 years and worked and volunteered here as well. Her children go to school here, and she is thrilled to be able to live and work in Catonsville. "I love the idea of working in my community and being able to literally help my neighbors," she said.

As executive director, Caitlin is responsible for CEA's day-to-day operations, and she serves as an ambassador to raise awareness about CEA throughout the community. Caitlin is eager to make CEA as well-known as possible throughout the Greater Catonsville area and beyond.

"It's a challenge that I'm ready to undertake to make sure that everyone knows the need we have, and the great work CEA does. I love the mission, and I want to expand our support network, so in turn we can help as many people as possible," she said.

Engaging volunteers is important to her vision. "Volunteers are the backbone of CEA, without them we can't exist," she said.

Previously she had been assistant to the executive director of the Catonsville Chamber of Commerce, working with businesses and managing networking events, and she chaired the Community Leadership Board at the YMCA of Catonsville for four years. She was also a board member of More Than Moms, a social group for new mothers, and assisted with event planning and fundraising for the March of Dimes Charity Gala. She also created and managed an online resale clothing business. She is currently on the board of the Catonsville Arts District.

During the pandemic, to balance her family and professional life (she has three school-age children), Caitlin started her own consulting business, managing the social media and marketing needs of small businesses and non-profit organizations in the community.

Caitlin received her bachelor's degree from Gettysburg College, and her master's degree from the University of Maryland University College. In her free time, she enjoys participating in a cross-fit workout group, supporting her children's arts and athletic interests and spending time with friends. Her experience, enthusiasm and great communication skills will be a tremendous asset to CEA.

WELCOME Caitlin!





A New Building Offers New Opportunities and Room to Grow



On May 18, 2023, CEA purchased the building at 23 Bloomsbury Avenue next to our current location. Owning two buildings side by side will allow us to significantly streamline and expand our food operation, enhance privacy for clients, extend our parking, welcome more volunteers and most importantly, increase our ability to meet the needs of greater Catonsville residents.

We've begun to move our offices to the new building, which will be followed by moving our client intake office to the new building to provide more privacy for clients.

We're working with an architect on plans for renovations to 25 Bloomsbury. Once the renovations are complete, we can add an additional freezer and have our bag packing operation and major food storage on the same floor. A big bonus of the move is that we will be able to have more volunteers working in the building at the same time.

Stay tuned for additional updates!

Portrait of a Neighbor: Amy

Amy came to CEA several years ago at the suggestion of a church pastor. "I'm disabled and receive a disability benefit and a little alimony, but it is not enough to make ends meet," Amy said. Before finding CEA there were even times when she had to borrow money from friends but said she knew "that couldn't continue." She sometimes had to choose between food and rent or food and gas. Her son was still in high school and living with her.

"That was such a hard time," Amy said. "CEA is such a blessing, just knowing there will be food in my cupboard each month helps me to not worry about having something to eat," she said. "I'm tearing up just talking about it – it really is a blessing to have CEA in our community."





Dan Bitzel, CEA Volunteer Extraordinaire!

Dan Bitzel likes volunteering at CEA so much that he's there each day it's open. "It's a joy to work here," he said. A former social worker and administrative director with the Johns Hopkins Health System in East Baltimore for 32 years, he says he found CEA at just the right time.

After retiring from Hopkins, he spent six years volunteering with the Franciscan Center in Baltimore. When Covid hit, the center wasn't able to continue with a majority of its services and he had to stop volunteering. Then he seriously injured both his knees in a fall. After months of physical therapy, he wanted to volunteer again. He felt he had more to give but this time he wanted it to benefit his own community. "I called CEA and in 2021 began volunteering," Dan remembered.

He finds that each day at CEA holds something different. For example, on Mondays he and another volunteer pack bags of food that will be distributed during the week. On Tuesdays he helps distribute bags for a large contingent of senior citizens while on Wednesdays he drives the CEA van to the Maryland Food Bank to pick up CEA's food order. Throughout it all, is the interaction with the other volunteers. "We all get along so well, that's what makes it fun," he said. "We enjoy great camaraderie."

And CEA isn't the only recipient of Dan's caring and giving nature. You may have noticed the Adopt a Highway sign on Frederick Road at the Beltway indicating that the street is being kept clean thanks to Robert and Dan Bitzel. For 24 years, every other week from early spring to late October, Dan and his husband Robert are out early on Sunday mornings clearing the street of trash. CEA is fortunate to count Dan among its volunteers.



HOW TO HELP

Tuesday, November 28th is Giving Tuesday, an annual day of generosity. Save the date and support CEA!

**GIVING
TUESDAY**

Consistent donations of food and funds are critical to achieving our mission!

Food donations can be dropped off:
Monday - Thursday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm at
Catonsville Emergency Assistance
25 Bloomsbury Avenue, Catonsville, MD 21228

Financial donations can be made online at:
catonsvillehelp.org