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DIocese of SPRINGFIELD—CAPE GIRARDEAU, MISSOURI

Our Church Led by Bp. Lori Ann, Serving All, Awakened

September 21, 2023

## Youth Lenten donation benefits Stockton Area Ministerial Alliance

2023 ANNUAL Lenten Youth Mission of Mercy



**2023 LENTEN YOUTH MISSION OF MERCY**—Bishop Rice presented the Stockton Area Ministerial Alliance (SAMA) with a check for \$24,524.98 on Aug. 11, 2023. This impressive amount was raised through the diocese's 2023 Lenten Youth Mission of Mercy fundraising efforts of diocesan youth in Catholic schools and local Parish Schools of Religion (PSR). Pictured were Fr. Tuan Nguyen, CRM, Pastor of St. Peter, Apostle Catholic Church in Stockton; Michael Tunnel, president of SAMA and pastor of the Stockton Christian Church; Ann Felker, a SAMA board member and 15-year volunteer; Bishop Rice, and Sr. Janine Tran, CMR, diocesan Director of Faith Formation and Respect Life. The charitable ministry was nominated to be the recipient of the lenten fundraising efforts by Fr. Nguyen because of its impactful outreach to so many in the community. (Photo by Grace Tamburo/The Mirror)

by Paula Wright Stockton, MO

**B**ishop Edward M. Rice presented the Stockton Area Ministerial Alliance (SAMA) in Stockton, MO, with a check for \$24,524.98 on Aug. 11, 2023. This impressive amount was raised by the diocese's 2023 Lenten Youth Mission of Mercy fundraising efforts.

"It was an incredible donation we received! We are dedicated to helping people. This very generous donation will assist us magnificently," said Ann Felker, a Stockton Area Ministerial Alliance (SAMA) board member and volunteer of 15 years. Felker is a member of St. Peter, Apostle Catholic Church, in Stockton.

Every year, Bishop Edward Rice issues a special invitation to all the children of the diocese to join him in a collaborative work of mercy during Lent. Donations collected by the Catholic Schools and Parish Schools of Religion go to help the poor, the marginalized, or those in need of special assistance during a time of crisis in their life. A specific community organization within the diocese, that is doing work to support those in need, is chosen as a recipient of the donations collected.

Fr. Tuan Nguyen, CRM, who is the pastor of St. Peter, Apostle Catholic Church, Stockton, submitted SAMA for consideration based on their impactful outreach within the community.

As reported in the *Cedar County Republican*, Michael Tunnel, president

of SAMA and pastor of the Stockton Christian Church, stated, "We were told by the local Catholic Church representative that we were the organization they had selected to give to over their season of Lent. ...This is the first time that we have been selected for such an honor."

The SAMA food pantry helps an average of 150 families, approximately 250 individuals, each month who are food insecure. The donation from the diocesan Lenten Youth Mission of Mercy will go to support the SAMA food pantry, supplementing food needs and helping families and children within the Stockton R-1 School District. In addition, \$5,000.00 from the total donation will be used to support the Tiger Tasters Backpack program. This program provides weekend backpacks with food supplies for children in Stockton public schools who need additional nutritional support.

For over 25 years the ministries that operate under the SAMA umbrella have been made entirely possible by volunteers and donations. SAMA also operates a thrift store and all profits generated go to the SAMA Benevolence Fund. This fund provides immediate financial support for those in need, including



**HER 'TWO CENTS'**—A woman shopping at SAMA during the charitable donation generously offered Michael Tunnel and Bishop Rice the two pennies necessary to get the donation "up" to the round number of \$24,525! Thank you generous bystander! (Photo by Grace Tamburo/The Mirror)

vouchers for medicines, clothing, gas, and utilities. In addition, SAMA offers a Back-to-School event to provide school supplies, a Christmas Basket program that provides people in need a Christmas meal to prepare, a children's Christmas gift sponsorship program, and volunteers take part in the Salvation Army Bell Ringer drive to raise money that also supports SAMA. Nine churches take part in the Stockton Area Ministerial Alliance donating money and volunteer time to make all the programs possible.

The SAMA food pantry is open on Mondays from 9 a.m. until noon, and the thrift store is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For more information, call (417) 276-4631. @TAM