



Vita et Caritas Award

Description and Nomination Process

The Bishop of Manchester will annually award the *Vita et Caritas Award* (For Life and Love Award) to a volunteer of a non-profit organization who makes significant contributions through service to the non-profit agency where they volunteer that help transform the lives of women, children and/or families, and who exemplifies, in his or her service, the Gospel message to love one another. This award will be given out annually in memory of Ruthie Ford.

Bishop Libasci established this award to emphasize the importance of volunteers to our organizations and communities and to honor a volunteer who unselfishly provides countless hours of his or her time. New Hampshire's network of non-profit organizations is able to serve those most in need because of the dedication of volunteers who give of time, talent and treasure to the mission of their organizations. Through the *Vita et Caritas Award*, the Bishop hopes that more volunteers will come forward to join in the effort to help those who rely on the services of our non-profit organizations.

Nominations for the Award must come from a New Hampshire not-for-profit agency, whose mission is compatible with Catholic teaching in its operations and policies. The nominee must be a volunteer, not a paid staff member of the organization, and does not need be Catholic.

The recipient of the *Vita et Caritas Award* will be honored for his or her contribution. The recipient will receive a special plaque and be recognized at the annual Bishop's Summer Reception. The organization with which the recipient is associated will receive an award of \$2,500 that can be used to support the organization.

A nomination form is available on the Diocesan website (www.catholicnh.org/bcaf/vca) under the Bishop's Charitable Assistance Fund page. The nomination must be submitted by the chief executive officer of the non-profit.

Background

This annual award is given in honor of the memory of Ruthie Ford, whose life reflected Catholic ideals and tireless dedication to service in the cause of helping women, children and families.

Ruthie was a gentle person with a deep inner strength. Guided by the principle that life was a gift from God, she used her beliefs to create social action. As a young mother at the age of twenty-six, she began taking pregnant women into her home. Working with Catholic Charities of New Hampshire, Ruthie provided for the well-being of these women while counseling them and teaching them the skills of motherhood.

Ruthie was a regional director for Birthright International and for over twenty-five years saw to the expansion of their counseling centers for women with unplanned pregnancies throughout New England.

Perhaps Ruthie's greatest achievement was co-founding New Generation, a shelter for homeless pregnant women in Greenland in 1987. Since its inception, New Generation has served over 800 women and children in crisis with shelter and support.

After Ruthie's death in 2012, her family worked with the Bishop of Manchester to establish the *Vita et Caritas Award*. Ruthie was one of the first supporters as well as a director of what today is the Bishop's Charitable Assistance Fund. As a member of the Board of Directors of the Bishop's Charitable Assistance Fund, Ruthie met with non-profit organizations to present grants on behalf of the Bishop of Manchester. Due to Ruthie's and her husband, Pat Ford, long association with the Fund, the family asked to have the annual award be given as part of the Bishop's Summer Reception, which marks the end of the annual campaign to raise funds to support organizations that provide for basic needs.

Eligibility and Nomination Criteria

The award is presented annually to a volunteer associated with a non-profit organization and who makes significant contributions that help to transform the lives of women, children or families.

Individuals nominated will fulfill the following criteria:

1. Nominee is a volunteer for a non-profit agency or organization.
2. Nominee is a champion of helping women, children, or families.
3. Nominee and organization operate in such a fashion as to not be in conflict with Catholic teaching and traditions.
4. Nominee reflects the love of God in caring for women, children, or families.
5. Nominee demonstrates respect for life from conception to natural death.
6. Nominee does not have to be Catholic.

The recipient is expected to attend the Bishop's Summer Reception, scheduled for Tuesday, September 10, 2024, 5:30-8:30 pm, at the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, to accept the award. The recipient, and their immediate family, will receive tickets to the Reception. The organization submitting the nomination will also receive two tickets to the Reception.

Process

An application form and information is available on the Diocesan website (www.catholicnh.org/vca). Nominations may be submitted electronically.

The Bishop's Charitable Assistance Fund will evaluate all applications and recommend the Award winner to the Bishop for final approval. **For 2024, applications are now being accepted.** The committee will forward its recommendation to the Bishop and the Board and the Award winner and the nominating organization will be informed of the selection in June or July.