

New name, same ‘healthy process’

The Annual Appeal for Catholic Ministries, formerly known as the Archbishop’s Annual Appeal, changed its name to better reflect its mission.

“This actually gave us the opportunity to better represent what the annual appeal had always been about: our parishes, programs and ministries of the archdiocese,” said Terry Brashears, senior director of stewardship and administration, and interim director of annual appeals, for the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

Following the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report, some are skeptical of donating money to an appeal organized by the archdiocese, and question whether any of the funds are used for insurance or anything related to clergy sexual abuse.

The answer is, “No, absolutely not,” according to Brashears.

Parish donations and beneficiaries of the 2018 appeal were outlined in the December issue of the Catholic Review.

Beneficiaries

Parishes, collectively, are the largest beneficiaries of the appeal. Even if a parish does not meet its goal, it receives a rebate of 25 percent of its donations. Parishes that don’t meet their goal are not responsible for covering the difference.

The second largest portion, just over \$1.2 million in 2018, goes directly to Catholic Charities of Baltimore.

Ministries that benefit range from local Catholic schools to the Holy Father, considered an obligation of a diocese. Those funds could be used to support the poor or financially struggling dioceses.

Requests for the use of discretionary funding are among the duties handled by the Annual Appeal Allocations Oversight Committee, a group of clergy and laypeople dedicated to overseeing stewardship.

The committee is chaired by Jim Hamilton, a CPA and founder and managing

director of David-James, LLC, as well as a parishioner of St. Joseph in Fullerton, where he chaired the appeal before being asked to join the archdiocesan team in 2011.

Lay Involvement

“It’s important now more than ever to have laypeople involved,” Hamilton said. “We see things from a different viewpoint.

“It’s a healthy process to have more eyes, more views, more thoughts being put into how the funds are being distributed. It’s also ... a way that we’re acting as good stewards of the funds.”

The committee gathers twice a year to review the appeal’s progress and to determine how money is allocated. It is comprised of lay volunteers (many being financial experts), pastors and representation from the archdiocesan fiscal department.

That process, Hamilton said, has been around as long as he can remember.

“We’re not changing anything (in 2019) other than the name of the appeal,” Hamilton said. “We’re just shining a light on the fact this year that this is what it’s always been.”

“It never really was about the archbishop. ... The appeal has never been about one person, it’s always been about the mission and the ministries that need support.”

It is not just laity making those decisions, but a system of checks and balances that includes the archbishop. The Allocations Committee can approve, challenge, modify or deny recommendations.

“We do not rubber-stamp the requests that come in,” Hamilton said. “We have very lively discussions; we’ve oftentimes reallocated funds to various ministries based on the recommendations that come out of our committee.”

Hamilton and his wife, Elisa, served as the annual appeal lay chairpersons in 2017. This year’s chairpersons are Glenn and Beth Falcao, parishioners of St. Louis in

Clarksville, and John and Roslyn Balch, parishioners of Our Lady of the Mountains in Cumberland.