



## Our shared struggle: supporting each other on the journey

by Kim Plumb

**T**he recent events of Wall Street and the global financial crisis are not deterring advocate Sharyl Prom from raising awareness of CFCA and inviting people to make a difference by sponsoring a child, youth or aging person. She knows that shared struggle can bring people closer together.



Sharyl Prom hosts a sponsorship table.

Sharyl recently hosted a sponsorship table at her parish ministry fair and gave a presentation to the Confirmation class members and their adult sponsors. She spoke about the importance of CFCA sponsorship, and how they could make a lasting difference in someone's life by becoming a sponsor.

Sharyl was available for questions after her presentation. At a quiet moment, one person approached her and said, "How can I think about helping someone else during such uncertain times?" Sharyl's reply was simple. "How can we not? The poor are struggling to survive on so much less than what we have, even in our difficult times."

Sharyl's words remind us that in difficult times, it is the poor who suffer most of all. We all need hope

during difficult times. CFCA's model of sponsorship provides a trustworthy way for people to demonstrate solidarity with the poor and participate in creating a better world. CFCA sponsors and staff share in the struggle by continuing to focus on the needs of those we serve. Grateful for the shared struggle, sponsored families take the encouragement they receive from sponsorship to remain strong.

Just as our sponsored friends gain strength from being part of their local CFCA community, sponsors gain strength from meeting with each other. By working together to find new sponsors, hosting letter-writing parties and sharing sponsorship stories, we can inspire each other as we continue our commitment to walk with the poor. ■

### Advocates can provide ongoing CFCA presence

It's very likely that you became a sponsor after a visiting CFCA priest made a presentation at your parish during a weekend sponsorship event. Historically, this is how 80 percent of our sponsors heard about CFCA. It may be several years before CFCA visits the parish again.

But advocates can be a CFCA presence year round. There are many ways advocates can help sponsors in their parish strengthen existing sponsorship relationships as well as invite more parishioners to become sponsors and join the CFCA community.

In addition to letter-writing events as a way to build and maintain sponsor interest, consider one of the following:

- Host a social gathering so sponsors can meet each other. Ask sponsors to bring a friend, and have folders available.
- Schedule a panel discussion with several sponsors who have traveled on CFCA mission awareness trips.
- Have a sponsorship table during a parish fair or

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# Letter-writing parties bring sponsors together

by Drucie Peterson

Advocates Ellen Johnson and Rose Thorsky work together to organize letter-writing parties and are excited by the growing community of CFCA sponsors in their parish. They both attend Ascension Church in Overland Park, Kan.



Ellen Johnson and Rose Thorsky

If you would like to meet with other CFCA sponsors in your parish and promote a letter-writing party, Rose and Ellen recommend the following steps.

- After selecting the event date, place a notice in the diocesan paper and your church bulletin about a month in advance.
- Hang posters around the church or make an announcement during Mass.

- Be sure to include the date, time and location of the event and remind sponsors to bring their CFCA mailing labels, pictures and letters from their sponsored friend.

Ellen and Rose agree that early in the Advent and Lenten seasons are good times to host a letter-writing party. During Advent,

sponsors enjoy making Christmas cards for their sponsored friends. At Lent, sponsors write messages in celebration of the Resurrection.

Ellen recommends including a table with CFCA information and folders of children waiting for sponsorship. She and Rose encourage sponsors to bring other parishioners to the event and introduce them to sponsorship.

In their experience, attendance grows with each event. Sponsors enjoy visiting with each other and say that writing a letter makes them feel more connected to their sponsored friends. A parish event is especially helpful for sponsors who don't know what to write or have difficulty finding the time. ■

## Consider privacy when organizing meetings

CFCA protects sponsors, donors and sponsored members with a comprehensive privacy policy. This means that we do not identify you as a sponsor to another person or organization through e-mail, phone or written communication, without your consent. We value your privacy and trust in us. Therefore, CFCA does not sell or rent your personal information. Ever.

Maintaining our commitment to sponsors' privacy does provide some challenges when advocates wish to organize gatherings. To help sponsors connect, we provide sample bulletin announcements and encourage advocates to make an announcement at

Mass. Many advocates provide a sign-up sheet at the gathering for sponsors who wish to be notified of future events.

When creating an attendance list at a sponsor gathering such as a letter-writing party, inform sponsors how you will be using their name and contact information and give them the option of keeping their information confidential.

We trust that you will not use these names or contact information to promote personal or non-CFCA activities, or to sell goods or services. ■

## Together we can carry the load

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another parish event you feel would be a good opportunity to share folders and information.

As always, we are available to help you or answer any questions you may have.

We also have a number of resources to help you in your advocacy, including sample announcements to place in your church bulletin. Please feel free to contact the advocacy team at [CFCAOutreach@cfcausa.org](mailto:CFCAOutreach@cfcausa.org) with questions or requests.