



Greater Cleveland  
Food Bank

“Mom was an angel.” It’s the best way Charlie Marotta could sum up the impact his mother, **Ann Marotta**, had during her time on earth. Ann raised six children, helped her husband, Vince Marotta, manage his self-made Mr. Coffee empire, and, when she had time to rest, decided to start what would become the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

So, how did a mother of six do it? Passion. Effervescence. And just a pinch of stubbornness. “She did have a great stubborn quality about her. If she believed in something, she dug in and would get it done in one way or another,” explained Charlie, her eldest son. “Once she saw that the last two of us were headed to junior high school, she needed to share the love she had with people other than her family.”

Ann was truly passionate about serving people in need. Before working to start the Food Bank, Ann worked alongside Sister Henrietta, a nun in Cleveland, to deliver donated groceries to pantries throughout the city of Cleveland every week. As her daughter, Jane, explained, “So Mom drove over to her local grocer and he would fill her Buick station wagon to the brim with leftover



food for the food pantry.

“After several months of running what she called her ‘bread and broccoli route,’ a friend and retired businessman named Ben Hauserman suggested she start a food bank to distribute food in a more organized way with far greater scale.” Ann jumped at the opportunity, and the rest was history. The Greater Cleveland Food Bank was incorporated on July 13, 1979. “The date on the incorporation papers is my son Charlie’s birthday,” Ann said in an oral history to Ed Worley in 1992 – it’s a date she couldn’t forget.



Ann and Vince Marotta with Sister Henrietta

Along with other founders and leaders including Ben Hauserman and Tom



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Greiner, Ann met weekly to start to discuss their wish to have a food bank in Cleveland. Along with her fellow founders, and eventually Ed Worley, the Food Bank's founding Executive Director, Ann researched, negotiated, and dragged friends along to make her dream a reality. "She got trucks out of Anthony Rego like crazy," Charlie explained with a laugh, "She was worried about money, space, and transportation. Mom really believed in the Food Bank."

Part of what made Ann so successful in bringing friends along with her was her great persuasive skills. "She could be charming," Charlie remembered, "She could go into offices of downtown Cleveland executives with her hat in her hand and they wouldn't want to talk to her. And she would stand for 45 minutes and they'd give her the money. She didn't weep or cry. She just made them see that it was the right thing to do. Mom was charitable and forceful and she was friendly and loving."

Ann's work with the Food Bank brought her satisfaction that launched her into even more charitable work. "It gave her purpose, it gave her peace, and it gave her satisfaction. At the heart of it all was her religion," Charlie explained. Ann was



The opening of the Marotta Montessori School

Catholic, and her passion for her religion led her to serve others, including starting the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and later, the Marotta Montessori School. Eventually, Ann would also sit on the board of Second Harvest, which is now known as Feeding America, the nation's network of food banks. The Greater Cleveland Food Bank was one of the first members of Second Harvest.

At home, Charlie remembers his mother as the loving, forceful presence that she brought to her work with the Food Bank. "Mom was the spiritual backbone of our family, including governing my dad and all six of us

kids. She was truly a blessed mother at heart. She was selfish for her six kids, but also for the rest of the world." Amongst the chaos of raising six children, Ann and her family kept one thing sacred - family dinner. "We always - six kids, mom, and dad - had dinner every night," Charlie remembers fondly. Ann Marotta knew - personally - the importance of food.

And while Charlie and his siblings suffered the loss of their mother just less than three years ago, they still feel an incredible connection to her - and admire the impact she had on her community. "I like to think that some of my ways and some of my brothers and sisters qualities and attributes are because of mom. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. I like to think that I emulate Mom's desire to share. I



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don't need credit or publicity, but just the inner warmth and satisfaction that a good thing happened and that I was a part of it.”

Much like his mother, Charlie has a giving spirit. He and his family still strongly support the Greater Cleveland Food Bank – out of love – not a need for recognition. “It’s the right thing to do. We’ll stick with it,” explained Charlie. “Don’t build something and then just walk away from it. It is a charity that we are tied to because of Mom’s effort.”

Charlie believes his mom would be happy to see that the Food Bank is still going. “She was never satisfied, but never displeased either,” he remembered. “She would say, ‘how many more can you help?’ And she never really took any honors for what she did. It was always ‘we should do more’ and ‘what great people, they need more help.’ She would be gracious and thank everyone.”

While Ann didn’t seek recognition, she certainly received plenty. Her wit and grace are obvious in one particular response. In her oral history about the Food Bank, Ann recalled a conversation with Dominic Visconsi. “When Dominic said, ‘Here come’s St. Ann,’ I told him, ‘Dominic, not yet, but God has hopes.’”

“Mom was a saint. She helped a lot of people in this world,” Charlie remembers, a thoughtful tone in his voice. “Help people so they can help others was always sort of a mantra of Mom’s.” Charlie believes that Ann would love to hear that many of the

people once served by the Food Bank are now contributing their time and treasure to support others in need.

Ann’s effervescence and strong, but loving, will are what she’s remembered for among the vast number of people she brought to the Food Bank. Without her, there wouldn’t be a Food Bank. Her hard work to get the Greater Cleveland Food Bank off the ground and to maintain it, won’t ever be forgotten.

Ann Marotta, as her daughter Jane, so aptly described it, “was a champion fighter for the poor and vulnerable.” Above all, anyone who knew her was better for it, and for Charlie, “To know mom was a great experience. To be one of her kids was crazy great.”



Ann and Vince Marotta