

Blessings



Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio
Serve | Engage | Empower

Newsletter of Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio – an Agency of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Jaysen's Journey: Growing beyond Early Childhood Challenges

When 2-year-old Jaysen started biting the other toddlers in his daycare center, his grandmother, Lisa, knew it was more than a simple case of misbehavior.

Lisa had previous experience with behavioral issues with her son (Jaysen's father), when he was a boy. He was expelled from five childcare centers and was eventually diagnosed with adjustment disorder, dyspraxia, speech delay, and ADHD.

Because of her experience with her son, Lisa was better equipped to assist her grandson years later. She learned about the Ohio Preschool Expulsion Prevention Partnership and submitted a request for help. That help came in the form of Megan Dailey, an Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) Consultant with Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio.

As soon as Megan got involved, Lisa says, "She never gave up on him — never. She followed him from the toddler room all the way to pre-K and was a consistent presence in his life for almost two and a half years."

Megan helped the family get referrals to pediatricians and outpatient therapy programs. She worked with the people in Jaysen's life to develop the best plan for him. Then, she consistently followed up to make sure parents, teachers, and other key players stuck to the plan.

Children, especially those under five, need structure and consistency to thrive. Yet children in childcare are being expelled at a higher rate than children in high school. One of the goals of ECMH is to help children maintain their childcare placements so they can

learn, grow, and be prepared to succeed in school and in life.

ECMH consultants consider biological, environmental, and genetic factors so they can refer families to the right specialists in those areas. Some families need counseling or parent education. Others might need speech therapy, environmental or classroom adjustments, or connections to additional community resources.

Recently, our region is seeing an uptick in cases of autism, speech issues, sensory issues, and aggressive behavior.

"Early intervention can make all the difference," says Family Development Services Director Pam Mortensen, "and the success lasts for the rest of that child's life."

With help from supporters like you, Family Development Services **served 1,326 children** in 2022. Thanks to these interventions, some **90% of those at high risk of expulsion** from their care center were able to keep their placements.

"Our services are very successful," Pam says, "and they are a great investment for our communities. Early interventions can close learning gaps and overcome behavioral issues, keeping those children out of the mental health or corrections systems later in life. They become healthy, productive adults."



Lisa, the proud and loving grandmother, agrees. "Jaysen has what he needs thanks to that support system during those crucial years," she says. "If you follow ECMH's advice, their recommendations, and their referrals, it really works!"



Need a Little Help?

If a young child you love needs some extra support, call Family Development Services Director Pam Mortensen at 513-867-7063.

LEADERSHIP

Most. Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr,
Archbishop of Cincinnati

Board of Directors

- John Geraghty, Chair
- Bill Goslee, Vice-Chair
- John Kronenberger, Treasurer
- Rebecca Johnson, Secretary
- Debbie Kokoruda, Emeritus Chair
- Robin Astifan
- Nikki Bialka
- Kelly Conner
- Tara Dahal
- Lucy Davila-Soto
- Fr. Tom DiFolco
- Ernie Rummler
- Katherine Sheridan, MD
- Jacqueline Rioja Velarde
- Tricia Williams

Staff

- Tony Stieritz, Chief Executive Officer
- Patrick Reynolds-Berry, Chief Operations Officer
- Ross Hallman, Chief Financial Officer
- José Nine, Quality & Innovation Director
- Stephanie Pittman, Human Resources Director
- Daniel Sarell, Mission Advancement Director
- David Taylor, Marketing & Communications Director

CEO Message



In each issue of *Blessings*, we welcome the opportunity to share vignettes of activity from across the broad Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio family. What a blessing in itself that, everyday, we serve and empower such a vast cross-section of humanity -- from early childhood to older adults and from cultural backgrounds across the world over. Thanks to the unwavering commitment of clients, staff, volunteers and supporters like you, we accompany thousands of families to overcome physical, mental and spiritual challenges.

At this time, I'm particularly mindful that it was two years ago when we were suddenly called to step in as the local refugee resettlement agency for those fleeing the collapse of

Afghanistan. We welcomed dozens of families and worked tirelessly to help them build new futures in our region. Then, less than a year later, we were responding to the exodus of Ukrainians forced from their war-torn homeland. In both these situations, staff, volunteers and supporters like you stepped up with a level of compassion and urgency that represented the best in all of us. Now, we offer you a couple of brief updates through the stories of Anastasia, Zaara and their families (p.4). While there is still so much work to be done and solidarity to be shared with these refugees, there are also monumental milestones being achieved. They are made possible by you.

Please, continue to pray and contribute to our work. From what I get to see across our agency each and every day, I can truly affirm that your support translates to stability for those in crisis and self-sufficiency for those who are vulnerable. May God bless you.

Tony Stieritz, Chief Executive Officer

MARCC ID Drive Reaches Out to New Communities



Collaboration was the key to success at Su Casa Hispanic Center and Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio's recent event to get locally recognized identification cards into the hands of more immigrants to Greater Cincinnati.

Catholic Charities through its Su Casa Hispanic Center program administers the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati (MARCC) community ID drives, which are officially recognized within the City of Cincinnati, Hamilton County, the City of Covington, and other local jurisdictions.

While not granting additional legal rights, MARCC IDs allow cardholders to more easily access local services in Cincinnati and around our region. Cardholders can open a utility account, obtain a library card, access medical care, and much more.

On September 16, 96 people — most

from Mauritania and Senegal — acquired MARCC IDs during an event at the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati in West Chester.

Volunteers and staff teamed up to make the drive go smoothly. This was the first such event aimed at serving the newly arriving French-speaking, African community.

"These drives are always such a great success," says Heidy Cardona, Su Casa Bilingual Administrative Assistant. "It's a testament to the power of the community and the positive impact we achieve when we all come together to support our immigrant neighbors."

Officer Anthony Johnson, Immigration Liaison for the Cincinnati Police Department, and West Chester Police Chief Joel Herzog joined Heidy in helping attendees understand how to use their MARCC IDs and how to navigate

interactions with law enforcement officers.

Many immigrants have come from countries where people fear the police. They're reluctant to report when they've been victims of crime. In partnership with Su Casa, Officer Johnson works to build trust between law enforcement and our community's newcomers. The MARCC ID helps promote public safety and foster more productive, peaceful relationships.

"These IDs address a fundamental need in our community," Heidy says. "These events wouldn't be possible without the support of the volunteers and our law enforcement partners."

Subscribe to Blessings Today



Mail completed for to:
Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio
Mid-Pointe Tower
7162 Reading Road, Suite 600
Cincinnati, Ohio 45237

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Learn More

For more information about our next MARCC ID event, call 513-761-1588.

Finding Welcome After Fleeing the Ukraine



When 2022 began, Anastasia was living a happy, safe, middle-class life. She taught English at a local university. Her daughter, Kateryna, was

looking forward to officially becoming a teenager. But when Russia invaded Ukraine, everything changed overnight. The family's life was completely upended.

This past May, Anastasia made the difficult decision to leave her home in Ukraine in search of safety for her daughter, far from the bombs and gunfire. Her journey led her here, to Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio, where supporters like you have helped

the Refugee Resettlement Services (RRS) team empower Anastasia and Kateryna to begin rebuilding their lives.

"She came to us doubtful about her future," says RRS Supervisor Jeffrey Clare. "Now she is a shining example of how to thrive with the assistance of Catholic Charities case management."

Led by Case Manager Maria Mitrofanova, RRS helped Anastasia apply for public assistance, pursue her driver's license, enroll her daughter in school, and begin looking for a good job. Maria also connected Anastasia to the local Ukrainian community so she could feel a little closer to home.

After the trauma she and Kateryna had experienced in Ukraine, Anastasia had a hard time trusting anyone when she first arrived in the United States. She had a lot of questions and even more anxiety. But

Maria stayed by her side, cutting through the red tape and reassuring her every step of the way.

Today, Maria says, it warms her heart to see that Anastasia seems like "a different person."

"I see how happy she is," Maria says. "She's looking for work and thinking about next steps. She's more trusting, more relaxed. She can enjoy life not wondering about everything. This is what I'm proud of."

Thank you for supporting our RRS team as they walk alongside families who are creating brighter futures for themselves!

"I want to help people with all my heart."

— RRS Case Manager Maria Mitrofanova

Supporting Those Caring for Loved Ones is the Right Thing To Do

As we approach the end of 2023, and the holiday season of giving, we are highlighting stories of Catholic Charities' programs that serve young children (See Jaysen's story in this issue), families, and older adults in our Winter Appeal. We hope these stories inspire you to generously share your gifts, as Paul has shared his for many years. Your financial support ensures that Catholic Charities and Su Casa are able to provide best-in-class outreach services to people of all ages in their time of need.

Paul has been surrounded by caring influences. He witnessed and supported his wife, Nancy, as she cared for her aging mother, just as he did with his sister in Michigan, who cared for his mother. Paul also saw how difficult and stressful it can be to serve as a caregiver, the toll it can take mentally and physically, including feelings of guilt and helplessness. Having spent his career selling industrial machinery, Paul developed a knack for problem-solving and connecting the people around him to available resources. Six years ago, when Nancy saw a call-out in the parish bulletin that Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio's Caregivers' Assistance Network (CAN) was looking for volunteer facilitators for caregivers' support groups, she encouraged him to apply.

Paul shared, "I care about people ... We are all in this together ... And getting involved is the right thing to do." As a CAN support group facilitator, Paul gives his time to be present and provide a confidential space for caregivers to share their challenges and blessings. Their sense of solidarity is evident when the members of the group support one another by attending funerals when their fellow caregivers' loved ones die. "It is a very touching experience to be together, praying and kneeling with one another," at those times. According to CAN Coordinator, Angie Homoele, "Paul appreciates the sacredness of the space they have created together and honors that."

Paul assists his support group members to "connect the dots" and help caregivers seek solutions when they are faced with various challenges, which could be related to when the caregivers themselves



need care, while balancing the care they provide for their loved one. Angie adds, "Paul is a dedicated volunteer who embodies servant leadership. He empowers the support group members to help each other and care for each other. Whenever there are challenges with the meeting time or location, he is flexible and makes sure the group has an opportunity to get together each month."

The bond of support goes further than just the day-to-day logistics of caregiving, as many members will remain in the group after their loved one passes away and continue to support those with whom they have shared so much. This is a place where "people can laugh and cry and support one another," Paul states.

Over 200 caregivers receive support monthly in groups like Paul's in 18 locations, like churches and senior

centers, across Southwestern Ohio. CAN partners with community partners to offer Creative Connections, an art and movement program for people living with dementia. Powerful Tools for Caregivers help caregivers cope with stress and care for their own wellness. Senior and Caregiver Support Services is just one department among many at Catholic Charities that actively support and uplift people of all ages to manage life's challenging circumstances and honors the experiences of older adults, their families and those who sacrifice to care for their loved ones.

Afghan Women Speak Up and Speak Out

With your support, Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio's Immigration Legal Services (ILS) is helping Afghan families seek asylum in the United States — and empowering Afghan women to find their voices.

Immigrants from Afghanistan make up about 20% of ILS' current caseload, and many are part of large, multigenerational families. Many were evacuated in August 2021 because their relationships with the U.S. military put their lives in danger.

In many of the cases, a woman is the principal applicant for her family. Because of cultural norms in their home country, women like Zaara — who was recently granted asylum thanks to ILS — find themselves in an unusual position.

"Being Afghan women, they are not used to being asked to speak or represent their families," says Elizabeth Clapp, ILS Director. "It's just so different from what the expectations are in Afghanistan. Some of these women are starting to find

their voice and realizing that people will listen to it."

Zaara's mother, father and brother were killed by the Taliban 13 years ago. She is part of an extended family of 20 working with ILS. Six different applications were filed on her family's behalf, and 14 individuals have been approved for green card eligibility over the next year.

For now, she's focusing on ensuring her children continue their education — something she was never allowed to do. Back at home, she was a tailor who made beautiful wedding dresses and special-occasion items. The current government has since restricted the right for women to work. Zaara wants all her children, including her daughters, to have the opportunities they deserve.

Thanks to caring friends like you, Zaara and her family have taken their first steps to a brighter future that's full of new possibilities.



"It took some getting used to for Zaara to use her voice outside her home and think, 'OK, I can do this. I can help my family in a completely different way than I've ever done before.'"

— Elizabeth Clapp, ILS Director

Is your car driving more stress than miles?

Donate it to Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio!



Put It In The Rearview. Donate Your Vehicle.

Give Today

We provide **FREE** and convenient pick-up for almost any type of vehicle.

Call 855-500-RIDE (7433) or go to careasy.org/nonprofit/catholic-charities-southwestern-ohio/ to learn more.



Senior Companions Illustrate the Power of Friendship

Everyone needs a friend who will be there for them through thick and thin. For older adults in Hamilton and Clermont counties, the volunteers they meet through the AmeriCorps Seniors Senior Companion Program become those dear, trusted friends who truly transform their lives.

“The Senior Companion Program has a profound impact on both the client, and the volunteer. Clients receive the services they need while allowing the volunteer to remain active,” says Senior and Caregiver Support Services Director Aaron Glauberman.

The program empowers older neighbors to remain living independently in their homes. Senior Companions can provide transportation, offer medication reminders, help around the house, go on outings with their clients, and much more.

In the spotlight this fall are two volunteers who are making a life-changing impact on their clients.

Anthony, Hamilton County



Anthony’s mother was once a Senior Companion, and today he now follows in her footsteps. Like his mom, he wanted to make a difference in someone’s life. That’s exactly what he’s done for Robert.

Anthony and Robert attended the same high school, one year apart. They even worked together for a while when Robert left the Marine Corps. In 2018, when they were both living in the same senior housing development, Anthony noticed that Robert was lonely. He approached Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio and asked if Robert could become his client.

“They’ve been two peas in a pod ever since,” Aaron says.

Sometimes they play pool together in their building’s community room. Other days, they’ll hop on the bus and enjoy an adventure. They watch sports and love to grab the occasional meal out after a game. When they dine in, Anthony is a great cook — a huge relief for Robert, who’s not quite so handy in the kitchen.

Their friendship has enriched both men’s lives. And best of all, Robert says that because of Anthony, he’s not lonely anymore.

Brenda, Clermont County



On her first visit to her client, Brenda identified a major concern and took immediate action. Her client didn’t have a bed to sleep in. Instead, he was sleeping on an old, worn-out loveseat with a threadbare quilt for a cover.

Brenda alerted the Catholic Charities team, and soon the client received a proper bed, complete with sheets, blankets, pillows, and a comforter. He told Brenda he couldn’t remember the last time he’d slept in a bed.

“Brenda is not just providing assistance with meals, housekeeping, and socialization,” says Jeanne Cairns, Senior Companion Coordinator for Clermont County, “her resourcefulness and proactive response have changed the quality of life for her client.”

Catholic Charities is deeply grateful for all the volunteers like Anthony and Brenda who care for our most vulnerable neighbors. Thank you for blessing our community through your service!

Empowering Children to Help Neighbors in Need



Young children can’t always understand the concepts of hunger or food insecurity. But when you tell them someone needs help, they want to do whatever they can. That innate sense of being called to do what’s right is what leaves Mary Anne Bressler feeling inspired and hopeful every time she visits a local school to talk about Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio.

“Kids are very empathetic,” says Mary Anne, Parish and Community Engagement Coordinator. “They always want to share things and tell their own personal stories.”

On September 29, Mary Anne participated in Make a Difference Day at St. Gertrude School in Madeira. She spoke to approximately 100 kindergarteners and first-graders about food insecurity in Greater Cincinnati

“I’m hoping that it plants a little seed in the children’s heads about empathy. Depending on where our neighborhood is located, we might not see people who are in need or we might drive past them and not notice them.”

— Mary Anne Bressler, Parish and Community Engagement Coordinator

and the Food for All pantry program you help support.

She started by showing a map of Hamilton County, highlighting where the many nearby grocery stores and supermarkets are located. Then, she showed a map of Adams County, with major grocery stores marked – just two.

After her presentation, Mary Anne left the students with a fun assignment: decorating cards to be used during Food for All distributions. Soon, every car

arriving for food at Food for All events will receive a card.

“I think it will be really touching for the people who come to the pantries,” Mary Anne says. “For the students, it’s the whole of idea of noticing when people need help and then doing what you can to help.”



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cincinnati, Ohio
Permit No. 6657

Serving Hamilton, Butler, Clermont,
Warren, Brown, Adams, Highland, Clinton,
Champaign, Logan & Clark Counties

Mid-Pointe Tower
7162 Reading Road, Suite 600
Cincinnati, Ohio 45237
513-241-7745

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall
obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

*If you choose not to receive further communications
from Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio,
please contact Spring Duncan at 513-672-3736
or sduncan@ccswoh.org to be removed from our
mailing list.*



SERVING & EMPOWERING LOCAL SENIORS

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio offers multiple opportunities to volunteer and care for those in need in our community. Our Caregiver Assistance Network provides valuable resources

and support groups to family caregivers as they care for their chronically ill, disabled or aged loved ones. AmeriCorps Senior Companions serve other seniors in need, veterans and developmentally disabled adults to help them remain independent in their homes. AmeriCorps Foster Grandparent volunteers mentor and tutor youth to set children on the path to successful futures.

► **To learn more about our AmeriCorps Seniors and Caregiver Assistance Network opportunities, visit our website at ccswoh.org.**