

Blessings



Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio
Serve | Engage | Empower

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

Su Casa Health Fair Connects Attendees to Life-Changing Care

Su Casa Hispanic Center's annual Spring Health Fair is about more than health and wellness — it's about connection.

This year's spring event, held in April at St. Julie Billiart Parish in Hamilton, connected more than 500 attendees to critically needed screenings, health services, and other vital resources.

Attendees accessed free doctor consultations, blood pressure tests, vision exams, mammograms, and more. Many also received hygiene kits that included soap, detergent, and other daily essentials.

The health fair is an opportunity to catch people who otherwise might fall through the cracks, says Juan Duran, Su Casa Health Promotions Specialist. Many participating organizations bring Spanish-speaking representatives or interpreters to help guests feel safe and comfortable. "It's a chance for people that don't have insurance and are scared to approach the medical system to get a screening or ask for some advice and connect with our Su Casa team," Juan says.

"It was hugely impactful. Lots of people got connected to the care they needed."

In one case, a man came to the fair with what he believed to be a hernia. The condition was so painful, it was keeping him from being able to work. Su Casa's partners at Mercy Health got him into their primary care service and connected him to a specialist. What the man thought was a hernia was actually a tumor. Fortunately, the cancer hadn't spread, and the man was scheduled for surgery in June.

That connection to care was nothing less than life-changing — if not lifesaving! It wouldn't have been possible without the support of friends like you and the health fair's generous sponsors: Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and the Ohio Commission of Minority Health.

Su Casa would also like to thank Procter & Gamble, Mercy Health, and the volunteers who helped make the spring event happen. *We are deeply grateful for your support!*



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Su Casa Hispanic Center's Fall Health Fair will take place at **1 p.m. September 22** at **St. Clement Parish** in St. Bernard.



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Archbishop of Cincinnati

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Thank You for Your Ongoing Support!

A Message from the CEO

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio serves and empowers people through God's love in their times of vulnerability. We do so through an array of programs focused entirely on the local needs present in our 11-county service territory. Our staff, volunteers and supporters have always served where other agencies cannot. Thanks to your help, we've established such targeted services as food pantries in under-resourced rural communities, mental health counseling to those who otherwise would not have access to care, and engagement and caregiving activities for seniors. We also host a number of programs for migrants and refugees, so that those who have already arrived in our area can be encouraged and empowered to contribute to a stronger region. In this issue of Blessings, I think you'll enjoy reading our most recent collection of articles and client spotlights that reflect the work our team does every day to put people in need on the path to success.

Tornado Recovery

I also want to report that Catholic Charities has directed nearly \$65,000 to long-term relief efforts for victims of the tornado disaster this March. These funds were generously given by parishioners across the Archdiocese of Cincinnati through a special collection, the entirety of which is helping people rebuild their lives after that fateful day.

In conversation with local agencies and the local Catholic parish in Logan County, St. Mary of the Woods, the majority of funds are supporting the case management recovery efforts of the Logan County Emergency Management Agency as well as those of our sister agency, Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley, in the other four impacted counties in the Archdiocese. We continue to keep all the affected families in our prayers.

As always, thank you for your prayers, learning, volunteerism and donations that support a vast portfolio of compassionate services. However you engage with Catholic Charities, we are in this together to assist those in times of vulnerability to attain stability and self-sufficiency.

In gratitude,



Tony Stieritz
CEO



Family Services Expand into Four More Counties



Young children born in the pandemic era are exhibiting increasingly challenging behaviors in childcare centers and preschool classrooms. Catholic Charities' Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH) consulting team is expanding its family services to meet our community's growing needs and better support local children.

With funding from Ohio's new Department of Children and Youth and in partnership with 4C for Children, the ECMH team is now serving Clinton, Clermont, Hamilton, and Warren counties, in addition to the existing program in Butler.

ECMH consultants support adults who are responsible for the everyday care of young children, including family childcare providers, center-based providers, preschools, parents, and other

early childhood professionals. The team will use the funding from the state to train more coaches to serve more care providers, ultimately impacting hundreds more lives.

"We'll build the skills of the coaches, so they can ultimately build the skills of the children and families they're working with," says Pam Mortensen, Family Development Services Director.

Pam's Catholic Charities team was specifically chosen by the state based on their excellent outcomes. The team, which has grown from four to six members, focuses on promoting children's social emotional development. That includes training on trauma and early brain

development, both of which are key to caring for toddlers and preschoolers who were isolated because of the pandemic.

"We focus a lot on wellness, mindfulness, and calm-down strategies for children that we also encourage adults to use," Pam says.

As the ECMH team helps build the capacity of the coaches who will help build the capacity of the caregivers, Pam says each link in the chain is marked by a spirit of collaboration and supportiveness.

The work of early childhood education is hard, and too many caregivers don't get the appreciation they deserve for the incredibly important service they provide.

We can really support their efforts," Pam says. "We're stronger together."

Volunteers Needed! Find Your Fit at Catholic Charities



Volunteers are the heart of everything Catholic Charities does. They make our programs possible, and right now, they are needed across all our ministries. **Here's where you can make a difference today:**

CAREGIVER ASSISTANCE NETWORK

Support Group Facilitator: Lead support groups and other programs for those caring for loved ones.

- **Peer Mentor:** Support caregivers by sharing your "been there" experience, skills, and knowledge.

FOOD FOR ALL

- **Distribution Volunteers:** Help distribute food to families in Adams, Brown, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, and Highland counties. (The food pantry schedule is available at ccswoh.org/food-for-all.)

SU CASA HISPANIC CENTER

- **Welcome Area Receptionist:** Support our programs by greeting visitors, answering calls, and completing intake forms.
- **Health Promotions General Volunteer:** Assist our health promotions team with data entry, filing, preparing for health fairs, and assembling hygiene kits.
- **ESOL Instructor:** Facilitate English for Speakers of Other Languages classes. Training and materials are provided.

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT SERVICES

- **Mentors:** Support a recently arrived youth or young adult to promote civil and social engagement and help them achieve their educational and vocational goals.
- **Appointment and Welcome Drivers:** Provide transportation to refugee families for medical or social service appointments, or welcome a newly arriving family at the airport.
- **Housing Setup Support:** Join our housing team to deliver and set up furniture in a home for newly arrived refugee families.
- **Warehouse Support:** Work alongside our housing team to maintain the order and inventory of the warehouse and accept donation drop-offs.
- **Furniture Donation Pickup:** Help pick up furniture donations for refugee families. Having a truck, trailer, or van is helpful but not required.
- **Lawncare (seasonal):** Support refugee families by offering lawncare services. Volunteers must provide their own lawn mower.
- **Employment Readiness Instructor:** Facilitate employment skills classes for refugees. Materials are provided.
- **Financial Literacy Instructor:** Facilitate financial literacy curriculum classes for refugees.

IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES

- **Volunteers with a Legal Background:** Help provide a variety of urgently needed services for immigrants.

To discuss available volunteer opportunities that fit your schedule and align with your talents, contact Volunteer Coordinator Tonicia Green at tgreen@ccswoh.org or 513-672-3836.

New Program Gives a Powerful Voice to Refugees and Other Immigrants



If you do a quick Google search for the word “immigration,” you’ll find no shortage of articles politicizing the issue. What’s so often missing are the stories of the people who are coming to the United States — the full picture of who our new neighbors really are.

Catholic Charities’ Voices Project seeks to elevate the voices and stories of refugees and other migrants, empowering them to educate others, process their experiences, and advocate for their needs.

“Immigrants are often defined by society in a way that doesn’t show their full humanity and dignity,” says Dan Sarell, Mission Advancement Director and coordinator of the program. “We want to get to know them as creative people, as parents, as people with ambitions.”

The Voices Project launched last fall. Phase one has focused on using

workshops and coaching to train people how to tell their stories. One of the program’s goals is to create a speakers bureau that Catholic Charities can draw from for public events to help humanize and personalize sensitive issues.

Voices Project participants from Bhutan, Syria, and Ukraine took part in a panel discussion at an assembly at Seven Hills School in March. Participants also spoke at Xavier University in April as part of a global migration event. They have also presented at local parishes, schools and religious communities.

Some speakers are eager to talk about their journey to the United States and how they’re adjusting to life here. Others want to focus less on past events and more on who they are and who they are becoming. Whatever a speaker’s aim might be, their story is their superpower.

Sharing that story benefits the community by helping to open hearts and minds and encouraging listeners to volunteer, donate, or advocate to assist newly arrived migrants.

For the speaker themselves, sharing their story in a safe space before a supportive audience can build their self-confidence and give them a greater sense of agency as they move forward.

“An important part of the Voices Project is not just to dwell on the negative and the tragic aspect of it, but rather that these are people with a great deal of hope to build a new future,” Dan says. “Part of that journey is being able to pick up the pieces of the best parts of their lives, not just continually reliving the worst parts. If we can help them reflect on the best aspects of who they are, that helps them build a new future.”



WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY?

Catholic Charities seeks to connect with any immigrants or refugees interested in telling their stories. Please contact Dan Sarell at dsarell@ccswoh.org or 513-672-3710.

Thank you Immaculate Heart of Mary for Celebrating Christmas in July!



Forget about those temperatures outside. Ignore that humidity. We recently celebrated Christmas in July here at Catholic Charities!

For more than 10 years, Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Parish has included Catholic Charities in its Christmas in July collection. IHM parishioners donate a variety of gifts ranging from gift cards to household items that are given to resettled refugee families, as well as others served by Catholic Charities.

"It's wonderful!" says Mary Anne Bressler, Parish and Community Engagement Coordinator. "It means so much to know they trust us to be doing good work on their behalf."

Those served by Catholic Charities are blessed to receive help from a number of parishes and schools across the archdiocese. IHM has a long history of involvement with Catholic Charities. The parish hosted a Beacons of Light Love in Action series; it offers a caregiver support group as part of the Caregiver Action Network; and its part of the Mental Wellness Ministry pilot that Catholic Charities and the archdiocesan Office for Persons with Disabilities are collaborating on.

"IHM has so much going on, and they always have," Mary Anne says. "We're engaged with them across the spectrum of our services."

Mary Anne encourages other parishes to explore the many ways to work alongside Catholic Charities and provide

parishioners with more opportunities to live out their faith.

In particular, Mary Anne would like to recruit parishes to co-sponsor refugee families moving into our community. She also frequently visits parishes to speak about issues like migration, food scarcity, and mental health to inspire greater support for all the work of Catholic Charities.



FEELING INSPIRED?

There are so many ways to get your parish or school involved with Catholic Charities! To learn more, please reach out to Mary Anne Bressler at mbressler@ccswoh.org or 513-672-3714.

A Year of Transformation

On a spring Saturday morning, you can find Tesfagiorgis (tesfa-gior-gis) outside playing with his children, kicking a soccer ball around and enjoying being a dad.

Tesfagiorgis and his family immigrated to Cincinnati last June. Originally from Eritrea, the proud father wants to see his young children get a good education and lead happy lives. He's grateful to have Catholic Charities' Refugee Resettlement (RRS) team helping him create the future he dreams of, for his kids and for himself.

"I need to tell Catholic Charities, 'Thank you very much for everything,'" he says. "Before, I was scared. I did not have anything. Now, I'm happy and can start my life."

With support from friends like you, RRS helped Tesfagiorgis find housing, get a driver's license, and secure a job

at Good Samaritan Hospital where he is an Environmental Services Technician. He enjoys creating safe environments for those staying at the medical center. RRS also helped him navigate the healthcare system to provide for his wife, who's dealing with health issues.

Laney Powell, RRS Case Worker, says Tesfagiorgis deserves all the credit for everything he's achieved since coming to the United States. He is highly self-motivated. He wants to apply for his greencard as soon as possible, get a higher-paying job, and take classes in computer maintenance. He also wants to pursue work as a photographer, something he did before coming to the United States.

The anxiety Laney saw in Tesfagiorgis a year ago has now been replaced by



greater self-assuredness and self-sufficiency.

"He has become a lot more confident in himself and his abilities to take care of his family," Laney says. "He's doing the leg work and just asking for help when he needs it. He's very empowered to tackle challenges on his own

before he reaches out to me. He's so willing to learn. It's very inspiring to me to watch."

Another of Tesfagiorgis' goals, once he and his family obtain their greencards, is to take his wife to visit her sister in Canada. Being far from home and far from extended family has been difficult. But Tesfagiorgis says he's finding his way, thanks to you, Laney, and the rest of the RRS team.

"I don't have family in America," he says. "Catholic Charities is my family."

She's Translating Her Gratitude into Help for Others

Sifa Ndusha remembers all too well the feelings of frustration when she arrived in the United States in September 2011 as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

She had come with a bachelor's degree and spoke French, Swahili, and multiple other languages — but not English. Thirteen years later, Sifa is now fluent in English. But, she can still recall how hard it was not only to find a professional job, but simply to be taken seriously as a well-educated person.

Fortunately, there's something else Sifa will never forget: the way Catholic Charities empowered her to rebuild her life and create a better future for her family here in Cincinnati. That memory is one reason Sifa will soon start working as an interpreter for AccuracyNow, a social enterprise of Catholic Charities, that provides interpretation services throughout the agency's service area.

"Catholic Charities is like my second home," Sifa says. "I want people to know I'm here to help everyone who is in need because I have been there and I know what they're feeling."

Violence in the DRC forced Sifa's family to flee their home in search of safety. Sifa spent four years in a refugee camp in Uganda with her three children before resettling in Kentucky with her kids and four of her 14 siblings. When she moved to Cincinnati, she reached out to Catholic Charities for help finding her father, from whom she was separated in 2007.

Catholic Charities helped Sifa locate her father, initiate his immigration process, and take up her immigration case, as well. When you ask Sifa what Catholic Charities did for her, she has a one-word answer: "Everything!"

When her father arrived here, Refugee Resettlement Services helped him find an apartment. Catholic Charities helped enroll members of Sifa's family in English classes and managed all their paperwork and documentation. One of Sifa's brothers was connected to IT courses through Catholic Charities and now has his master's degree.



And since 2019, Catholic Charities has been working to help bring two more of Sifa's siblings to the United States.

Today, Sifa and her children are U.S. citizens. Sifa lives in Lockland and enjoys reading, camping with her kids, and attending church at St. James of the Valley in Wyoming. She's also pursuing a doctorate in

public administration with a focus on nonprofit organizations.

Helping people is Sifa's passion. Working for AccuracyNow will give her the chance to do just that while also showing her appreciation for the many ways Catholic Charities has helped her transform her life.

"I want to say thank you so much for Catholic Charities," she says. "They really don't know how much they're impacting lives. They think they're impacting one person, but there are a million people behind that one person — a whole village. May God bless them forever and ever."

Submit Your 2024 Caregiver Mass Nominations Today!

This year's Caregiver Mass is scheduled for November 17, 11:00 AM, at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter in Chains. Caregiver Masses honor all those who work or volunteer as a caregiver — from nurses and physicians, to dietary staff and lab workers, from those who care for a sick or elderly friend or relative, to those who volunteer at healthcare facilities, retirement communities or parishes. These Masses aren't just for Catholics. People from all faiths are welcome.



You can nominate an individual for this year's Mass and Reception here:

<https://forms.office.com/r/EfH3z03cEC>

All nominations are due by 9/20/24.



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

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please contact Spring Duncan at 513-672-3736
or sduncan@ccswoh.org to be removed from our
mailing list.



Su Casa Hispanic Center of Cincinnati's 27th Anniversary Gala Celebration

Friday, September 27
6:00 - 10:00 pm | Bell Event Centre

Su Casa Hispanic Center & Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio support a wide-range of
services benefiting the vulnerable Hispanic/Latino
community in Greater Cincinnati.

6 pm Reception with appetizers and drinks
7 pm Dinner with presentation and live appeal
9 pm After party with DJ and dancing

RESERVE YOUR SEAT TODAY
at <https://trellis.org/sucasa2024>



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