

Blessings



Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio
Serve | Enlighten | Empower

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

Powerful Proof of Our Impact: Catholic Charities Receives COA Reaccreditation

Catholic Charities has received reaccreditation from the Council on Accreditation (COA), an organization devoted to championing quality among social and human service providers.

"It's a powerful stamp of approval to all our stakeholders for the quality of our services," says Chief Executive Officer Tony Stieritz. "Most importantly, it's an affirmation for the work that we do and its impact on the lives of our clients."

Receiving this reaccreditation assures supporters that an organization is trustworthy and effective and that it operates with best practices.

Catholic Charities received high scores in all categories.

Chief Operating Officer Patrick Reynolds-Berry and Director of Quality and Innovation José Nine led the reaccreditation process, which involved nearly a year of diligently gathering information to provide evidence of individual program's success. Organizations also must demonstrate solid overall systems, including governance, finance and human resources.

"We have to evidence to them that we have a sustainable and well-functioning



organization from top to bottom," Patrick says.

Catholic Charities has received COA accreditation since the 1980s. Organizations can apply every four years. Though the process is time-consuming, also a valuable exercise,

Patrick says.

"One requirement of COA is to have an established quality improvement process," he says. "Applying always helps reinvigorate the quality improvement process and refine it, which ultimately leads to a higher quality of service."

Refugee Resettlement Writes a Recipe for Success

Today, Ibtisam Masto is a thriving business owner with big dreams and even bigger potential. And her success story started with Catholic Charities' Refugee Resettlement program.

Ibtisam and her family arrived in Cincinnati in June 2016, after fleeing the ongoing conflict in Syria and living for several years as registered refugees in Lebanon.

Thanks to your support, Catholic Charities provided the family with the resources they needed to begin their new life here, everything from housing and household essentials to English classes and training on how to use the bus system.

The objective of the Refugee Resettlement program is to empower refugees to become self-sufficient. Ibtisam and her family far exceeded that goal!

Ibtisam is now the chef-owner of Olive Tree Catering, a successful Syrian catering company and food stall based in Oakley

Kitchen. And her three oldest children are in college, studying nursing, pre-med and engineering. Her daughter Amal even graduated from Aiken as salutatorian.

Ibtisam plans to grow her catering company and wants to open a larger restaurant someday.

"I want to go to college to learn how I can make my business very special and successful," she says. "You learn every day, and you want more every day."

Ibtisam is quick to thank the many people who have helped her family resettle. Dan Sarell, Catholic Charities' Director of Mission Advancement, says he's grateful for the way Ibtisam and refugees like her enrich Greater Cincinnati.

"When you meet somebody as personable and ambitious and lively and talented as Ibtisam, you really get the sense of how much better we are as a community for providing safe haven for those who literally



have nowhere else to turn," Dan says.

"Through the grace of God, we're able to provide an opportunity not only for them to live in freedom but to thrive and succeed."

With your support, we will continue to welcome refugees like Ibtisam and strengthen our community!

To learn more about our Refugee Resettlement program, please visit ccswoh.org/programs/refugee-resettlement-services/ ■

The Power of Welcome



There are times when hospitality is the greatest gift imaginable. To prove it, we only need to remind ourselves of a time when we felt lost or alone, unsure about our safety or our fate. I can recall a time myself, long ago when I was traveling in a foreign land and wound up lost. Walking alone for hours as night descended, I felt the panic of not knowing if I would end up sleeping on the roadside. But, hopefully, we can also relate to the experience of someone appearing, perhaps like an angel, to offer hospitality in such uncertain moments. I'll never forget the feeling I had when a stranger noticed my predicament and helped me find shelter for the night.

My stories compare little to what so many displaced and homeless people around the world experience every day. Still, for what it's worth, I know the feelings of relief and gratitude when someone has shown up to guide the way. I can only imagine how much grander those feelings are for a refugee when a harrowing journey is answered with hospitality. It's a spiritual lesson, and it's no surprise that the Bible is replete with stories of people seeking welcome: Abraham and Sarah's hospitality to the three strangers (Gn.18), the Exodus and journey to the Promised Land, the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt (Mt.2), to name a few.

I feel blessed to work with such a community of clients, staff, volunteers and supporters who understand what it means to extend welcome. Recently, I joined the refugee resettlement team to greet our first Afghan evacuees as they walked off the airplane. Young parents with two toddlers, their livelihoods were packed into just two duffle bags. What does one say to such an uprooted family who's fled unspeakable turmoil? We start with, "Welcome. May you find peace and safety in your new home."

Once they leave the airport, the rest is up to all of us, together. I want to thank every dedicated supporter of Catholic Charities for making us a community of hospitality. We've completely lost count, for instance, of how many concerned people have called these past couple of months to offer help to support refugees in need.

And, whether one is an Afghan family being resettled, an unaccompanied minor served by Su Casa Hispanic Center, an isolated senior seeking friendship in our Senior Companions, or a despairing parent joining a Parent Project group, our message is the same: "You are not alone. You are welcome here." This is the faithful response of your and my Catholic Charities community, longing to hear the same words from our God at the end of all our journeys.

Tony Stieritz, Chief Executive Officer

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A Passionate Voice for Her Community

Imagine you are at the hospital. You are in pain or sick. The medical staff wants to help you, but they don't speak your language. What do you do?

For non-English speakers in our community, language can be a major barrier to receiving the care they need. That's where interpreters like Suleima Dimas come in.

Suleima joined Catholic Charities' AccuracyNow Language Services two years ago. What she originally lacked in professional experience, she more than made up for in passion. Today, she is a skilled interpreter.

"I saw her become so passionate about interpreting. I watched her journey from the first training session, asking so many questions, to being so confident about how she would go out and represent us," says Litz Main, AccuracyNow Language Services Director. "She has done a fantastic job."

Suleima, 27, is a native Spanish speaker who grew up in the United States before moving to Mexico and then returning to the U.S. as an adult. She had spent her life informally translating for friends and family members. But she quickly realized that professional interpretation requires a larger skill set — and a larger vocabulary.

Suleima might help a laboring mother sign a consent form for an epidural one day, then help a senior neighbor navigate complex hospital paperwork the next.

"There were so many technical terms and medical terms, words that not even a native English speaker might know," Suleima recalls. But the initial challenges were far outweighed by the joy Suleima feels helping members of her community obtain vital services, such as medical care, or enroll their children in school.

Suleima joined AccuracyNow at a critical time: the beginning of the pandemic. When volunteers were scarce, Suleima filled the void. "I felt like, regardless of the pandemic, people need to be taken care of," Suleima says. "It was hard, but I was never afraid to step in."

To learn more about AccuracyNow Language Services, visit [accuracynow.com](https://www.accuracynow.com)



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Welcoming New Neighbors in Southwestern Ohio



The Current Situation in Afghanistan

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio is deeply pained by the recent events in Afghanistan. We join with Pope Francis in praying for the day when “the battered population of that country - men, women, elderly and children - return to their homes and live in peace and security in total mutual respect” (Angelus, August 15, 2021).

In 2006, Congress first authorized a bipartisan humanitarian program to provide Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) for Afghans and Iraqis, which included resettlement services and legal permanent residence for the applicants and their families. The White House has announced the emergency relocation of 50,000-65,000 Afghan SIV applicants. Furthermore, thousands of additional evacuees have been taken to U.S. military bases after vetting by the federal government for eventual resettlement. For most displaced persons, an abiding hope for eventual peace and return to their home country remains. For those who are resettled as refugees or asylees, return is not possible.



Steadfast in Our Mission

When the headlines show people fleeing en masse from the most dangerous situations, this is usually just the first perilous step on a journey that may take five to eight years, or more, before less than 1% are permanently resettled. There are over 26 million refugees worldwide.

We have been blessed to resettle and support several SIV Afghan families in recent years, including those who have assisted our military. We are in the process of welcoming new families, SIV’s and up to 50 evacuees, directed to us by the federal government. Our staff are now dedicated to finding affordable housing with access to public transportation. Ambitious targets have been set nationally to move from record lows in 2020-21, to record highs in welcoming refugees, from less than 7,000 to a hoped for 125,000, by October 2022. Locally, we are expecting 225 refugees from around the world from October 1, 2021 through September 1, 2022.

Catholic Charities At the Ready

As the official refugee resettlement agency for the Greater Cincinnati area, Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio has resettled over 12,000 refugees since 1980. Catholic Charities is ready to welcome and support them to rebuild a new life in Greater Cincinnati. There is already a pipeline of refugees fleeing from other countries whom we are resettling, including the Congo, Syria and Sudan. We know Cincinnati is a welcoming and generous community. Your participation in our mission is a living testament that our region is world class in compassion and hospitality.

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HOW CAN YOU HELP?



DONATE

Gifts of all sizes are welcome online at www.ccswoh.org/donate or by check payable and mailed to:
CCSWOH
162 Reading Road, Suite 600
Cincinnati, Ohio 45237

The first step in empowering the lives of refugee families is to support Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio’s Refugee Resettlement Services. Catholic Charities welcomes donations of all sizes to empower our staff and community to provide the essential services of welcoming families and helping them get on their feet and longer-term assistance, such as English, job readiness and computer / digital literacy classes.



VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are needed at all levels of time commitment. Explore service opportunities at ccswoh.volunteerhub.com. Help set up housing, welcome families when they arrive, teach classes, mentor youth and young adults, pick up donations, and drive families to and from medical and other appointments.



ADVOCATE AND NETWORK

Stand in solidarity by your voice and participation. We need caring advocates to spread the word and mobilize supporters. Please invite Catholic Charities to share our mission with your group, class or faith community.

Questions? Want to get involved? Call Dan Sarell, Director of Mission Advancement, at (513) 672-3710 or dsarell@ccswoh.org. ■



Teen Trafficking Survivor Creating a New Life — with Your Help



It's hard to comprehend everything Emilia* went through before she even turned 18. She was taken out of school in Guatemala at age 12 and forced to do domestic labor. At 15, her father sold her to a neighbor. When she was just 17, Emilia managed to escape her abusers. She made the long, dangerous trek to the United States border — all while carrying an unborn child. But in the detention center, she miscarried her

baby and was deprived of proper medical care. Yet today, Emilia is thriving. And Catholic Charities supporters like you have helped make it possible! Through the Su Casa Hispanic Center Trafficking Victim Assistance Program (TVAP), Emilia has created a new life for herself. "This little girl has been in survival mode all her life," says Adriana Rodriguez-Irizarry, Su Casa's Emergency Assistance and Case Manager Supervisor. "For an 18-year-old who has been through everything she's been through, she's doing beautifully." The TVAP team helped Emilia obtain a Social Security Number and access public benefits as a victim of human trafficking. They also connected her to a primary care physician through our Su Casa Health Promotions Program. Emilia received mental health services through Catholic Charities and obtained legal representation

from our Immigration Legal Services. The TVAP team also helped Emilia enroll in school and English classes. While she awaits the next step in her immigration process in 2022, Emilia is reaching out to other people going through similar difficult situations. She wants them to know their struggles are temporary and that they have the strength — and the help of Catholic Charities supporters like you — to get through it. "She wants to provide others with the person she needed who wasn't there for her," Adriana says. "She's aware that she can use her life story to help others. For me, that's an example of empowerment and self-sufficiency." *This client's name and image has been changed to protect privacy.

To learn more about trafficking and what you can do to help, visit ccswoh.org/trafficking-victims-assistance-program/ ■

Catholic Charities Saved Her Life

Lleny Alvarez could talk for hours about the difference Mental Health Counselor Rosa Reyes-Santana has made in her life. But she sums it up succinctly: "I could say she saved my life." Lleny was trapped in an abusive marriage and battling depression when she sought help from Catholic Charities in 2015. She knew things needed to change, for her own good and for her children. But after enduring trauma after trauma, Lleny needed a helping hand to pull her up into the life she deserves. Rosa was there for her. "She never told me what to do," Lleny says, "but she gave me motivation to do a lot of stuff and to make some decisions that would be best for my kids. She pushed me to see the best of me." With Rosa's support, Lleny got her GED. Rosa also connected Lleny to legal services

to help her manage her immigration status. Now, Lleny has a job and a home for her family, and she has been approved for a resident card. Most importantly, she freed herself from the abusive relationship so she and her kids could start over. "Lleny is an amazing human being, and she has been putting her life together like a beautiful puzzle," Rosa says. The next pieces of that puzzle include enjoying watching her 14-year-old son play football, and preparing for her daughter, who just turned 18, to join the U.S. Navy. When her resident paperwork is completed, Lleny plans to visit her father in Mexico for the first time in 20 years. The Lleny he'll see will be a powerful, determined woman with a bright future ahead for both herself and her children. As Lleny puts it, thanks to Rosa, Catholic Charities and supporters like you ...



"We are living our best life now." **To learn more about Catholic Charities' Mental Health services, visit ccswoh.org/programs/mental-health-services/** ■

Families Find Hope for the Future through the Parent Project

Sabrina was at her wits' end. Her 5-year-old son's behavior at home was getting worse. The boy would even hit his mother when he got angry. A single mom, Sabrina blamed herself. She thought she was just a bad parent and that things would never get better. But Catholic Charities' Parent Project program, supported by caring people like you, completely transformed life for this family. After just three classes, Sabrina said, "I love this class and I am seeing a huge improvement so far! I remember thinking I couldn't handle him anymore. Now everywhere we go, I get compliments on his great behavior!"

The Parent Project offers free 10-week classes for Butler County parents of kids 5-10 or 11-17. Each age group includes families from a variety of backgrounds who find themselves in the same place: worried about their children and feeling lost about how to move forward. The weekly classes provide training on parenting skills and creating support systems. They also connect parents to resources such as therapists and counselors.

"It's all about empowering the parents to take back control of their home, but doing it without yelling, screaming and threatening," says Patsy Bolden, Parent Project Coordinator. Patsy says the classes also become a support network for the parents, many of whom desperately need to know they're not alone.

This summer, the Parent Project launched its first ongoing support group so parents, including Sabrina, could stay connected and continue to be there for one another. "It's amazing to see these parents that come from different walks of life reaching out to each other," Patsy says. "They come together and see, 'It's not just our family. We are not alone in this.' It's amazing to see them change and give them hope again that they can turn their child's life around. It's never too late."

Discover more about Catholic Charities' resources for parents at ccswoh.org/programs/family-parenting-services/ ■

"I love this class and I am seeing a huge improvement so far! I remember thinking I couldn't handle him anymore. Now everywhere we go, I get compliments on his great behavior!"



"It's all about empowering the parents to take back control of their home, but doing it without yelling, screaming and threatening."



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

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Serving Local Families. Empowering Local Lives.



Every day, Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio serves and empowers local families in Greater Cincinnati. It is through your generous contributions we are able to provide food assistance, mental health counseling, family and parenting classes, refugee resettlement, immigration legal services, and much more.

Please prayerfully consider making your annual gift now for people in need.
Your support is essential in sustaining our works of mercy.

DONATE TODAY at ccswoh.org/donate

