

Blessings



Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio
Serve | Enlighten | Empower

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

Pandemic-Driven Changes Reveal New Potential for Vacaciones Útiles



The COVID-19 pandemic changed Su Casa Hispanic Center's Vacaciones Útiles (VU) program last year. Uncertainty and last-minute changes led to innovation.

In past years, VU was a multiweek, in-person summer program for Hispanic/Latino children. Now, VU has the potential to become a years-long relationship between the students and Su Casa.

"It's not just a snapshot anymore," says Karri O'Hara, Su Casa Education Services Supervisor. "Students are connected to our support for a more long-term outcome."

VU moved to an entirely virtual model last year. This summer, the program is a mix of four virtual learning days and a full day of enrichment. The program is seven weeks long, primarily focused on helping kids entering first through fifth grade improve their English-language skills. VU also develops math, Spanish and social-emotional skills.

Students' parents are required to complete an orientation program that helps them

understand the technology their children use each day. They also gain insight into the academic culture of the United States, and they are encouraged to get involved with their kids' academic lives. That's crucial for their children's success, Karri says.

"The parents are so happy to receive this key to unlock how to help their kids," she says.

Many of the parents have taken English classes through Su Casa, so they know and trust the team. And many of the VU participants continue with tutoring throughout the school year, then re-enroll in VU the following summer. All the pieces are in place for an approach to VU that goes far beyond a single summer.

"I want to follow these kids to see how well they do when they graduate from eighth grade and if they graduate from high school," Karri says. "Then, use that data to get students scholarships to go to college. We're really looking at this much longer-term now." ■

Make a Plan for Supporting Catholic Charities' Mission

Catholic Charities' mission to Serve, Enlighten and Empower, emanates from God's call to righteousness and justice.

We focus on our life together in Christ, in solidarity with all people of good will – regardless of faith and background. Our invitation is personal, transcendent, thoughtful and prayerful, rooted in participating in a life of communion through good works that make God's mercy tangible.

Catholic Charities provides professional social services that build skills, relieves short-term needs, and mobilizes the community to service. We facilitate therapy and place people in homes, jobs, and connect them to resources that help navigate life in the midst of difficulty. The community joins us through partnerships with other agencies, sponsorships from corporations, gifts of time from volunteers, grants from foundations, and yes, donations from individuals.

To ensure that our century-long legacy is sustainable for the next generation, including Catholic Charities in your will or estate planning is vital. Charitable gift planning is for both "now and later." Now, we need your regular support, sacrificial annual gifts, or easy monthly recurring gifts. Consider matching gifts available through your employer, or tax-saving donor-advised funds and IRA distributions. Later, leave behind a legacy that significantly empowers the poor and vulnerable through a charitable bequest or remainder trust. The gift plan that is right for you and maximizes your impact is specific to your circumstances. Please consult your financial adviser or attorney.

Please know you remain in our prayers of thanksgiving, and we ask for your continued prayers. Catholic Charities is here to empower you for service. Please also continue to sustain our mission through generous financial support. *Thank you.* ■



The Tradition of Faithful Service Empowering Us Today



This Summer, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati celebrated its bicentennial – 200 years of faith, hope and love in our corner of Ohio. As the official human services agency for 11 of its counties, Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio has faithfully persevered for 105 of those years to advance that mission through life-changing works of mercy. Such an occasion inspires us to give thanks for the visionary and generous legacies of our predecessors who’ve ensured that long-lasting institutions, as imperfect as they may be, dependably respond to the signs of the times across generations.

I hope you know that your participation today, whether as a client, employee, volunteer, donor or community partner, has a unique and welcomed part in this long tradition of good people striving their best

to love their neighbor and build a better world.

I’m convinced that it’s this strong foundation that equipped us to react so forcefully against the hardships and trauma of the pandemic in this, our time. After serving over **26,000 people** last year, we carried on through the first half of 2021, providing, for example, **over half a million meals, 1,200 sessions of mental health counseling, caregiver support at 13 sites** across the region, and **access to vaccines for hundreds** of hard-to-reach residents. We are also responding with wrap-around case management, mental health and legal services to unaccompanied children from our border.

This foundation has also prepared us to empower our clients for self-sufficiency, for instance, by **delivering educational advancement for nearly 500 parents and children** as well as offering new futures to refugees resettling once

again from across the world. I personally had the joy of welcoming our first new refugee of the year at the airport in June, a son rejoining his family whom Catholic Charities resettled here four years ago. Watching the happy tears of his parents and siblings as they heartily embraced him and his first steps in America, I prayed that a new day was dawning for many of us.

All this and more wouldn’t have been possible without the prayers, financial support and 31,000 hours of volunteer service you’ve provided so far this year. Thank you for being with us to serve and empower the vulnerable in our community through both the difficult and hopeful times noted here and shared in this issue of Blessings. Let’s pray that our shared work strengthens the Catholic Charities foundation that many future generations will need to achieve the same and more.

Gratefully,
Tony Stieritz, CEO

Heart of Mary Respite Program Needs Volunteers for In-Home Visits

Seniors, veterans and people with disabilities need our love and friendship more than ever coming out of the pandemic. That means our Heart of Mary Respite & Companion Services urgently needs volunteers!

Heart of Mary volunteers are trained to provide in-home, non-medical support to clients who benefit greatly from companionship and socialization. Volunteer visits also allow caregivers much-needed time away to handle personal matters or simply to take a break.

Volunteers must be 18 or older and able to dedicate at least three hours a week to Heart of Mary. No special skills or experience are required — just a desire to reach out and connect with a new friend.

Volunteers can spend time with clients in any number of ways, from simply chatting to watching a movie or even driving the client to run errands or have lunch.

Stephanie Slack, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator, says the volunteer training provides tips on what to talk about with clients, what to do on a visit and whom to contact if there’s an issue. Heart of Mary also provides personal protective equipment for both clients and volunteers, so everyone can feel safe.

The Heart of Mary program began in March 2020, just before the pandemic took hold locally. Originally intended as in-home outreach to seniors in rural areas, the service quickly pivoted to reassurance calls that kept adults throughout Southwestern Ohio from becoming isolated and depressed.

Now, as our community reopens, Heart of Mary is able to add the in-person visits that mean so much to seniors and other homebound neighbors.

“I’m excited for clients to get the face-to-face time,” Stephanie says. “We get new clients every day. We just need volunteers.” ■

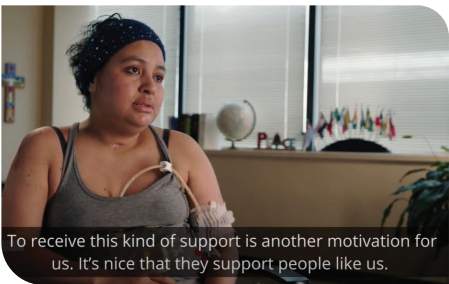


GET INVOLVED!

Can you set aside three hours a week to make a friendly visit to a neighbor in need of companionship? Heart of Mary Respite & Companion Services needs you!

To learn more and sign up for volunteer training, just visit ccswoh.org/heart-of-mary-respite-and-companion-services/.

Gala Raises Nearly \$70,000 to Support Su Casa



It’s been a difficult year for nonprofits. But Su Casa Hispanic Center Director Giovanna Alvarez says supporters have been particularly generous throughout the pandemic.

In fact, Su Casa’s virtual gala May 6 netted the second-highest total in the event’s history — \$69,916.26. That includes \$32,000 raised through the live appeal during the event broadcast!

All funds help fuel Su Casa’s work to provide social, case management, family reunification, educational and health services to Greater Cincinnati’s growing Hispanic/Latino community.

“I’m so grateful to the individuals, corporations and foundations that realize the importance of ongoing support for our services, especially during these times,” Giovanna says. “They know we serve a vulnerable population, and they have a spirit of solidarity with them.”

The gala paid special tribute to five award winners for their exceptional support of Su Casa over the past year:

- Welcoming Organization Award: Community Action Agency
- Latino Education Advocate Award: Leyla Pena, Cincinnati Public Schools
- Latino Health & Advocate Award: UC Physician and Society students
- Supportive Foundation Award: P&G Foundation
- Latino Leadership Excellence Award: Lilleana Cavanaugh, Ohio Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs

The online event also showcased Hispanic/Latino culture through dance performances. When the gala is held in person again in 2022, Giovanna says attendees can expect more captivating cultural displays, and delicious food from a variety of different countries.

“We’re excited to say thanks to our supporters in person,” Giovanna says. “And we want everyone to experience the richness of Latino culture.” ■

SAVE THE DATE Next year’s Su Casa Hispanic Center gala will take place **April 29** at Xavier University’s Cintas Center. See you there!

YOUR IMPACT

Here’s what your generosity makes possible ...

2,156

immigrants provided with emergency assistance during the pandemic

311

people enrolled in online classes

110

children in summer enrichment and tutoring

- LEADERSHIP**
Most. Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr, Archbishop of Cincinnati
- Board of Directors**
- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| Debbie Kokoruda, <i>Chair</i> | Tara Dahal |
| Jacqueline Rioja Velarde, <i>Vice-Chair</i> | Lucy Davila-Soto |
| Joel Handorf, <i>Emeritus Chair</i> | John Geraghty |
| John Kronenberger, <i>Treasurer</i> | Bill Goslee |
| Dave Lohbeck, <i>Secretary</i> | Rebecca Johnson |
| Marc Alexander, MD | Claver Pashi, PhD |
| Robin Astifan | Katherine Sheridan, MD |
| Kelly Conner | Jim Wahl |

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

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Kate and Larry Schutte



Service has been the cornerstone of Kate and Larry Schutte’s relationship for more than four decades.

The Schuttes met in college at the University of Cincinnati, when both signed up to volunteer as tutors through the Newman Center at St. George Catholic Church. Now, after 41 years of marriage, the couple is active in a variety of ministries, including Catholic Charities’ Food For All program.

“It’s a way of showing gratitude to God for the good things we have in our life,” Larry says. “We’ve been so blessed.”

When Larry retired in late 2019, he and Kate looked for ways to volunteer together. They became involved with Food for All just as the pandemic was forcing the program to transition to a drive-through pickup.

At times, 30-40 cars would line up in the parking lot before the pantry was even open. That gave Kate the opportunity to walk from car to car, meeting new neighbors and building new friendships.

“We love getting to know the people in the community,” Kate says. “That interpersonal connection is the big draw.”

Through her conversations, Kate collected countless prayer requests she included in Catholic Charities’ Praying in Solidarity program, a live reading via Facebook of petitions from throughout the Archdiocese.

Not only did Kate and Larry collect prayer requests, they decided to join the effort of reading them — something that originally gave Larry some pause.

“I don’t like to read in public,” he explains. “But when you go outside yourself and try something new and feel a little challenged by it, God just gives you the grace and talent to do what He wants you to do.”

Kate says Catholic Charities has a volunteer role for everyone, regardless of expertise or background.

“Just try different things until you find your niche,” Kate encourages. “Once you find the right one, you won’t want to let it go.” ■

“It’s a way of showing gratitude to God for the good things we have in our life.”

LEARN MORE

To explore Catholic Charities’ numerous volunteer opportunities, please visit ccswoh.org/get-involved/volunteer/ or contact Cathy at cboston@ccswoh.org.

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: Leticia Davis, The Power Within

Eighteen months ago, Leticia Davila was a different person. The “old Leticia” was frightened and resigned. After 16 years in an abusive relationship, she had lost herself.

Leticia says her breaking point came when her partner choked her and left her mouth bloodied — in front of their children. She knew something had to change. The next day, Leticia met with her bilingual Catholic Charities social worker, Maggie Waddell, and got the support she needed to make the life-changing decision to leave her partner.

“Maggie said, ‘You are in danger and need to do something now,’” Leticia recalls. “She told me, ‘You have the solution in your hands.’” Maggie helped connect Leticia to organizations like Women Helping Women and Casa de Paz, which provided Leticia with safe shelter, personal items, clothing and other necessities to begin rebuilding her life. Leticia also received access to Legal Aid and had the chance to take exercise and yoga classes to improve her overall wellness.

Earlier this year, Leticia secured a new apartment, achieving her goal of moving her family out of the shelter and into a permanent home. Her children were surprised when she showed them their new place — but they shouldn’t have been, Leticia says. “They said, ‘We didn’t think you were going to do it, Mom,’” Leticia explains. “I told them, ‘If your mom says she’s going to do something, she’s going to do it.’”

Leticia has taken back control of her life. She’s even serving as a role model, giving advice to empower other women to break free from abusive situations. And she continues to receive counseling from Maggie, who says, “The ‘new Leticia’ isn’t actually so new at all. She’s always had it within her.”

Now settled into her new home, Leticia has her eyes on her next goal: owning her own Mexican food truck. ■



Leticia has taken back control of her life. She’s even serving as a role model, giving advice to empower other women to break free from abusive situations.

World Refugee Day Celebrates Inspiring Stories of Hope, Healing

For Young Children, a Brighter Future Starts Now



TOGETHER WE HEAL, LEARN & SHINE

World Refugee Day 2021



Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio
Serve | Enlighten | Empower

Refugees who come to the United States to build new lives for themselves and their families are used to overcoming obstacles. So, when the COVID-19 pandemic prevented Catholic Charities from observing World Refugee Day with an in-person event, our Refugee Resettlement team knew they too wouldn't let anything stand in the way of honoring their clients and volunteers.

On June 19, Catholic Charities hosted the second virtual World Refugee Day celebration via Facebook Live. "Canceling was never really an option," says Rachel Burgess, Refugee Resettlement case management supervisor. "We always make it a priority to celebrate World Refugee Day for the clients to celebrate and be with each other. This year, we wanted to highlight their stories."

The program, centered on the global theme of "Together We Learn, Heal and Shine." It featured two young refugees, Ida and Mario, both about to begin their college education thanks to Catholic Charities Refugee Youth Mentoring program. The event also allowed Mekonnen, a refugee from Eritrea, to share his story. Since coming to Cincinnati, Mekonnen secured a good job as well as learned English and how to drive — all with the

help of Catholic Charities. Now, he hopes to be reunited with his family as the U.S. government plans to increase the number of refugees welcomed into the country. Rachel says that having a renewed sense of hope is an important part of the healing process when refugees settle into their new homes.

"We see healing of the body, soul and mind," she says. "And we view World Refugee Day as a day to celebrate the past with clients like Mekonnen. We join in sharing their hope for future healing." If you missed the livestreamed event, it can still be viewed on our Facebook page at fb.watch/v/3cDxlQY3X/.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Refugee Resettlement team hopes to resettle more than 200 refugees in Cincinnati in 2022 — and to celebrate our new neighbors as a community with an in-person event next summer. To learn more about how you can help welcome refugees in Cincinnati, visit ccswoh.org/programs/refugee-resettlement-services/.



In Luke's Gospel, Jesus tells us: "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me." Through Catholic Charities, you welcome and support our community's most vulnerable children.

Children like Adam who was on the verge of being expelled from daycare before Catholic Charities' Early Intervention Consultant, Maribel Gonzalez, stepped in. Maribel found a therapeutic preschool program that could provide Adam with proper behavioral and emotional supports. Then she worked with the child's parents, local social services agencies and the daycare providers to get Adam into the new program while also keeping him at his current daycare.

"It was a journey. But the family has made such strides. It's so rewarding to see!" says Maribel.

Thanks to a grant received in December 2019, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation last year expanded its services to partner with the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities to help children birth to 3 years who are engaged in Early Intervention services. The goal of the grant is to assist families of very young children with disabilities or developmental delays access Early Childhood Mental Health services.

Maribel partners with therapists and family members to ensure that even the youngest children are getting the care they need in the way they need it. Sometimes, that means identifying when a child has a medical issue manifesting itself as problematic behavior. Other times, it's training parents to create



"It was a journey. But the family has made such strides. It's so rewarding to see!"

strategies and routines that play to their strengths as caregivers. Maribel says she functions as "an extra set of eyes" to support families, many of whom are in crisis. Part of her work focuses on helping families know when, where and how to ask for help — and to give themselves the grace to ask for help in the first place. Through collaboration, consistency and patience, Early Interventions can make an

impact today that changes a child's entire future. "One of our goals is to ensure children are receiving the help they need rather than being labeled as bad behavior and being expelled from school," Maribel says. "At the end of the day, for a student to be successful in a fifth-grade classroom, they have to have a strong foundation much earlier in life."

Is your car driving more stress than miles?
Donate it to Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio!
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.



**Put It In The Rearview.
Donate Your Vehicle.**

Give Today



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cincinnati, Ohio
Permit No. 5645

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 LOCAL PARENTS & FAMILIES. EMPOWERING LOCAL LIVES.

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio strengthens families with support and solutions. Our **Parent Project®** and **WhyTry** programs empower parents and teach social and emotional skills to youth. Our **Parenting Education classes** offer a variety of courses to help parents develop appropriate discipline techniques. And our **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation** program provides consultation and educational training services to childcare providers and families.

**TO LEARN MORE
about our family &
parenting services,
visit ccswoh.org.**



AGENCY
PARTNER

