

Blessings

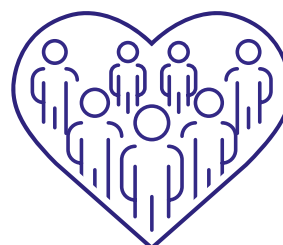


Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio
Serve | Engage | Empower

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

Catholic Charities Serves and Empowers Local Families in Need in 2022

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio serves and empowers people through God's love in their times of vulnerability. We do so through a full range of local services that engage the community in building solidarity. Serving more than 17,000 last year, we provide food assistance, senior and caregiver support, mental health counseling, family and parenting education, comprehensive services for migrant and refugee families, and much more. To all of our volunteers and supporters, thank you! Please continue to pray, learn, volunteer and donate to support the vital work of Catholic Charities.



17,618
served

Stepping Up to The Growing Need



362,436
Total meals served by
Food for All in 2022

Refuge and Hope to Those Escaping War



158

Refugees and humanitarian
evacuees welcomed

Welcoming New Neighbors



948

Individuals received
Su Casa emergency
assistance.



1,635

Health
consultations
services

Improving Mental Health



316

Clients received mental
health care through

2,257
sessions



519

Guided through the
legal immigration
process



268

Learning through
academic and
ESOL classes

Increased Its Overall Service Activities to Seniors by 28%



Foster Grandparents and Senior
Companions provided

93,000 hours of service.

CEO Message

As the Community Changes, Su Casa Continues to Meet the Need

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The Faithfulness Behind Our Work

Over 17,000 people served and empowered last year, thanks to the dedicated work of staff, volunteers and supporters. At Catholic Charities, we track a lot of numbers like those on the front cover of this newsletter — outputs of numbers of people helped; outcomes that strive to measure the transformative influence that we have on their circumstances; and satisfaction rates, just to name a few. Such numbers speak to the needs in the community and how well we're responding. They help us determine how efficiently we're directing the

resources under our stewardship to make effective impacts on people's lives. As your Catholic Charities, we are committed to success in accompanying people from crisis to stability and from vulnerability to self-sufficiency.

Having said this, I'm also reminded of the famous words of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "We are called upon not to be successful, but to be faithful."

Faithfulness is what the numbers can't fully convey. What makes Catholic Charities truly unique among social services is the faithfulness of our staff, our volunteers, our supporters, and our clients. Their faithfulness to living out our mission, to serving as agents of God's love, and to boldly trusting that their tireless efforts will make a difference for those in need.

This issue of *Blessings* celebrates some of these examples of faithfulness behind the numbers. I'm truly moved by "Grandma" Lillian Smith, may she rest in peace. In honoring her 25 years of service in our Foster Grandparents Program, we're inspired by her faithfulness to the countless children at Rockdale Academy who benefitted from her compassion and care. You'll also read about several of our staff members, who once walked in similar shoes as our clients and who have now chosen to faithfully give back through their work at Catholic Charities. As our new employee, Javi exclaims, "It's been kind of like a whole circle." We highlight here too an example of the faithfulness of our clients, their commitment to their own success by sticking with the demands of our programs. "Just trust the process," our Parent Education Coordinator Patsy encourages. "You will see a difference."

Thank YOU for learning more about our work at Catholic Charities through this newsletter. The faithfulness of your prayers, concern for our work, volunteerism, and donations are true keys to our success.

In gratitude,

Tony Stieritz
CEO



Greater Cincinnati is seeing an influx of asylum seekers from Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua. They're making the long, difficult journey in search of basic needs like food, jobs and safety that they simply can't find in their home countries.

Miro Perez, Emergency Assistance Supervisor for Su Casa Hispanic Center, knows just how they feel. She left Venezuela in 2011 seeking the same opportunities.

"I love my job, and I love the Venezuelan community," Miro says. "I really understand their situation."

Historically, Su Casa has worked with immigrants from Latin America, primarily from Mexico and Guatemala. But growing economic and political turmoil throughout Latin America has changed the demographic picture. Now, half of the 200 clients served each month by Su Casa's Emergency Assistance program

come from Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua.

Regardless of their country of origin, people share many of the same needs.

Thanks to caring supporters like you, the Emergency Assistance program empowers clients and prepares them for independent living by offering services such as:

- Assistance with financial support and child care,
- Partnership with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to equip newcomers with clothing, furniture and other essentials,

- Interpretation and translation ,
- Connections to potential employers and school enrollment,
- Referrals to other organizations, both internal and external, including Catholic Charities' Immigration Legal Services.

As the Su Casa team continues to welcome these new neighbors, donations and volunteers are always greatly appreciated.

"New arrivals are coming every single day," Miro says. "The most important thing to Su Casa is to always take care of the client."

How YOU Can Help

To learn more about ways you can support Su Casa Hispanic Center and Catholic Charities, contact Dan Sarell at dsarell@ccswoh.org.

At AccuracyNow, This Artist Is Creating a New Kind of Masterpiece



Javi Geer’s heart was telling her she needed to be of service to others.

“There was a calling,” she says. “I felt it was time for me to find that part of myself.”

Javi left behind a career in the art world to give back to Catholic Charities — and to the Hispanic/Latino community she cherishes. Today, she works as a Recruitment Specialist for AccuracyNow Language Services, a social enterprise of Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio.

“It’s been kind of like a whole circle,” Javi says. “I wouldn’t have been able to experience what I’ve experienced, expand within myself and stay in contact with the community if it wasn’t for Catholic Charities.”

Su Casa Hispanic Center helped Javi navigate the immigration process when

she came to Cincinnati from Chile about seven years ago. She didn’t have money for a lawyer, so Catholic Charities’ Immigration Legal Services team assisted her in getting her green card and beginning to build her new life.

Javi studied art at Cincinnati State and soon began working at the Cincinnati Art Museum. She would later work her way into management at an auction house. Through it all, she always felt a pull to engage with the local

“I wouldn’t have been able to experience what I’ve experienced, expand within myself and stay in contact with the community if it wasn’t for Catholic Charities.”

— Javi Geer, AccuracyNow Language Services Recruitment Specialist

Hispanic/Latino community.

She began working as an interpreter as a side job and immediately loved the role. She interpreted for clients delivering babies and for others going to physical therapy. Sometimes she worked in homes; other times, she helped patients in hospitals.

“It just clicked with me. It was like, this is what I have to do, where I have to be,” Javi says. “It was so rewarding and felt so natural.”

She jumped at the chance to apply for a full-time position with AccuracyNow, even if it meant moving on from her art career. Her job today, she says, is the “perfect balance between all of my interests and all of my inspiration.”

Javi still paints as a hobby. But the work she does every day at AccuracyNow might prove to be her life’s true masterpiece.

Another Family Transformed by the Parent Project

When Sandra arrived at her first Parent Project class, she made it clear she didn’t want to be there.

Her son, Kaden, had been getting into trouble, and the two had been fighting a lot at home. Still, Sandra knew she loved her son more than anything. She couldn’t understand what a court-ordered class could tell her about her own child that she didn’t already know.

But by the end of the 10-week class, Sandra had become the Parent Project’s biggest cheerleader.

“I LOVED THIS CLASS,” she wrote in all caps on the post-class survey. “This class made me realize I needed to stop and breathe and be more consistent as a parent, and others are going through the same thing. After completing this class, I realize we communicate better and now spend more time doing fun things again.”

Patsy Bolden, Parent Project Coordinator, has seen this kind of transformation before — and she never tires of it. The classes empower parents of children ages 11-17 to support their children in making healthier, safer choices so they can become successful in all aspects of life.

For many parents, Patsy says, it’s eye-opening to learn that even teens still need to hear their parents say, “I love you.” The class provides foundational principles for expressing love, navigating conflicts, setting boundaries and more.

When parents like Sandra apply those principles at home, things not only change for the better ... *the change lasts.*

Today, more than a year after Sandra completed the Parent Project and Kaden completed the corresponding WhyTry program for teens, the difference in their lives is nothing short of amazing.

Kaden, 17, is doing well in school. He’s pursuing his passion as a baker and cake decorator, and he even got his first job. Plus, he and his mom enjoy Mother-Son Nights regularly.

Patsy says stories like this are a testament to the power of the program — and to the families doing the hard work to get their relationships back on track.



“Just trust this process, and if you start following it, you will see a difference.”

— Patsy Bolden, Parent Project Coordinator

Providing ‘a Blanket of Protection’ through Mental Health First Aid

Mental health is a growing concern, but it can be a difficult topic to discuss. That’s why Catholic Charities is now offering Mental Health First Aid classes.

Since the pandemic began, more people — adults and children alike — are experiencing mental health challenges.

Mental Health First Aid is an international, evidence-based program offered through the National Council for Mental Well-Being. It is designed to help individuals recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health concerns so they can engage someone in a conversation, listen non-judgmentally and encourage the person to get help if needed.

“We want to create a blanket of protection against mental health crises in our community,” says Mary Anne Bressler, Catholic Charities’ Parish and Community Outreach Coordinator.

Mary Anne, who co-teaches the class, says Mental Health First Aid also helps reduce stigma around mental health issues. Open communication supports early intervention. And just like with a physical illness, the sooner a mental health challenge is identified, the better the outcome is likely to be.

“All of us encounter people who are having mental health challenges,” Mary Anne says. “The class gets you to think: ‘How would I have a conversation with someone who appears to be struggling? How can I be that person who reassures them that there’s help out there?’”

Mental Health First Aid offers a variety of programs for specific communities, including older adults, teens, residents of rural areas, Spanish speakers and people who work with children.

Similar to Red Cross First Aid for physical health, Mental Health First Aid is open to anyone who wants to learn how to help someone in need.



Volunteer Spotlight: “Grandma” Lillian Smith

To the students and faculty at Rockdale Academy, Lillian Smith was more than a volunteer. She was “Grandma.”



IN MEMORIAM
“Grandma” Lillian Smith

For 25 years, “Grandma,” or “Granny Smith” as she was also known, dedicated 35-40 hours each week to serving first-graders and teachers at Rockdale through Catholic Charities’ Foster Grandparent Program. She helped students with reading and math, but she wasn’t just a tutor. She soothed children when they were upset. She provided clean, dry clothing to children who were experiencing homelessness or other challenges. And she let every child know they were loved.

“Grandma” Lillian Smith passed away Dec. 4, 2022, at the age of 82, but her legacy lives on in the hearts of the children whose lives she touched.

“Students got the opportunity to not only experience comfort, love and motivation,” says former Rockdale Principal Belinda Tubbs-Wallace, “they also got someone to inspire them to stay in tune with their education.”

Grandma Smith, who graduated from the University of Cincinnati and Western Carolina University, also helped with the Rockdale Academy Community Garden and spent more than 40 years volunteering throughout the Avondale community. Among her many good works, she collaborated with local organizations and friends — including former Bengals players Andy Dalton and A.J. Green — to raise money to purchase Christmas gifts for Rockdale students.

“She always maintained a very positive and nurturing attitude toward all the students at Rockdale Elementary through the years,” says Aaron Glauberman, Director of Senior and Caregiver Support Services. “She epitomized all the great aspects of a Foster Grandparent volunteer at Catholic Charities.”

Catholic Charities is deeply grateful for all of Grandma Lillian Smith’s incredible contributions over the decades.

“I believe as a Christian that you have to give back. I received help as a struggling single parent of two when I was young, and when someone helps you, you need to pay it forward.”

— “Grandma” Lillian Smith

FOR MORE INFORMATION on Catholic Charities’ parenting classes, email pbolden@ccswoh.org or call 513-867-7072.

Interested in signing up for a class?

Contact Mary Anne Bressler at mbressler@ccswoh.org or 513-479-3504.

After a Long Journey, He's Found His Place at Catholic Charities

Like the people he serves, Jared Alexander navigated a long, winding journey before he arrived at Catholic Charities. Now that he's here as a Mental Health Counselor, he knows he's exactly where he's supposed to be.

"I love to see the growth in people, and I feel like I'm doing what I can to help people get to a healthier place," Jared says. "It feels really rewarding."

Jared's path began in corporate marketing, where he built a long, successful career after graduating from Ohio State. But something was missing.

"I enjoyed what I was doing, but I never felt like I was fulfilling the things I was supposed to be doing, contributing to the greater good," Jared says.

So, in 2015, Jared enrolled in Xavier University's Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. He continued working full-time and participating in church mission trips to Nicaragua once or twice a year. That's when his road came to another fork: The organization he volunteered with offered Jared a full-time job. He and his wife sold everything they had, Jared put school on hold, and the couple moved to Nicaragua in 2017.

After three years, Jared's journey led him back to Cincinnati and back to his studies at Xavier. When he graduated in 2022, he found his way to Catholic Charities, where he serves Spanish-speaking clients every Tuesday in addition to his work in private practice.

"One of the reasons I'm passionate about serving in this community is because I was the foreigner when I was in Nicaragua," Jared says. "I'm not comparing my circumstance to an immigrant coming from Central America, but I can understand a little bit. I know what it's like to be in a place where you don't speak the language, don't understand how the medical system works ... to feel silly asking questions. That's really the reason I wanted to do this."



In his work with Catholic Charities, Jared appreciates that he can refer clients within the organization for services like legal assistance so immigrants have the tools they need to build secure, successful lives for themselves.

"There's something near and dear to my heart about how, when somebody feels under-resourced and doesn't understand how to get where they want to go. There are people who are native to the area who want to help," Jared says. "There's something really warm about that."

Part-Time Therapists Needed

Our mental health services are in high demand. If you're a licensed counselor who would like to help, please contact Laura Hershberger at 513-672-3715 or lhershberger@ccswoh.org.

Refugee Resettlement Services Helping Ukrainians Rebuild

As the war in Ukraine enters its second year, Catholic Charities is empowering Ukrainians to create new lives for themselves in Greater Cincinnati.

Catholic Charities added two staff members to meet the needs of the individuals and families fleeing the violence in their home country. The team helps newcomers apply for work authorization and access public benefits like Medicaid and SNAP. They also provide employment services, help enroll children in local schools and register people in English classes when needed.

Annie Scheid, Refugee Resettlement Services Director, says most of the Ukrainians coming to Cincinnati are highly educated, with college degrees or professional certifications. Many speak English proficiently and hope to find jobs in the fields where they worked back home.

Legally, Ukrainians do not have refugee status. Instead, they are considered "humanitarian parolees" for two years. Because their status is temporary, they face unique challenges trying to settle in and start over after the trauma of being forced from their homes.

To help with the transition, Catholic Charities is working to connect Ukrainian migrants with one another and with organizations like the Ukrainian Society of Greater Cincinnati & Dayton.

"Folks need a sense of community," Annie explains.

With the help of supporters like you, Ukrainians are finding a welcoming home away from home in Ohio.



Maher Massakhi, Employment Specialist and Maria Mitrofanova, Case Manager for Refugee Resettlement Services

A Family Reunited

Catholic Charities recently helped reunite a Ukrainian family that had been separated upon arriving in the United States after having just fled the horrible war with Russia.

In mid-December, a married couple was traveling with the husband's 17-year-old brother. When they landed in Minneapolis, a bureaucratic mix-up left the younger brother in detention at the airport while the rest of the family was moved on to Cincinnati, where their sponsor lived. (As humanitarian parolees, Ukrainians must have an approved sponsor to enter the U.S.)

Members of Catholic Charities' Refugee Resettlement Services and Immigration Legal Services teams stepped in to help locate the teenager, ensure his well-being and work through the process alongside the family. In January, the boy was safely reunited with his brother and sister-in-law!

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"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall
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SERVING LOCAL FAMILIES

With more than 374,000 people living in poverty in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio tackles food insecurity head-on by offering mobile food pantries. Catholic Charities staff and volunteers distribute food to struggling families in rural Adams, Brown, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton and Highland Counties. We also provide nutritious food to low-income students in seven inner-city Catholic and public schools. Together, let's overcome hunger in our communities!

Interested in volunteering at one of our pantries? Call (513) 672-3720 or visit our website at www.ccswoh.org/get-involved/volunteer/.