

Blessings

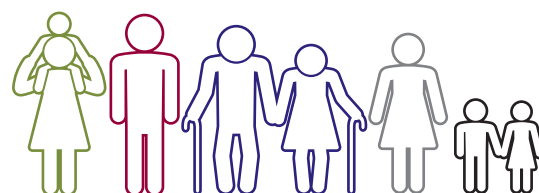


Catholic Charities
Southwestern Ohio
Serve | Enlighten | Empower

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

Serving Local Families, Empowering Local Lives in 2021

From pandemic at home to upheaval abroad, Catholic Charities responded locally to families in need. Together, we fed the hungry, strengthened families, protected the vulnerable, and welcomed new neighbors. 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.



25,649
People served in 2021

Family-Centered. Locally-Focused.

739,153

total meals served by
Food for All in 2021



1051

early childhood
mental health
consultations provided,

Up **29%**
from last year



203

caregiver support
group participants
served,

Up **64%**
from last year



2367

mental health
counseling sessions
served

359
clients

Families with No Where Else to Turn Find Welcome at Last



Community Empowerment and Engagement through Service



85

refugees and
humanitarian evacuees
were welcomed



Over

2100

individuals received
Su Casa emergency
assistance



296

people enrolled
in Su Casa
education services



225

immigration legal
case services



90,000

hours of
community service

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Archbishop of Cincinnati

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Subscribe to Blessings Today

Essential to Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio’s and Su Casa Hispanic Center’s mission is continuously inviting more neighbors to join us. Participation can be through prayer; becoming more aware of issues; getting involved as a volunteer; and yes, donating funds that fuel our works of mercy. Your participation is needed, and it can start by subscribing today to *Blessings*.

Blessings newsletter is our public address system for sharing the impact that Catholic Charities and Su Casa have on the lives of local families. Through these personal stories, readers can explore how our professionals, volunteers, and supporters work tirelessly to lift up families from dire circumstances and equip them with the tools for a more hope-filled future. Published three times a year, *Blessings* challenges all of us to stand in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable and advance justice and dignity in southwestern Ohio.

Subscribing to *Blessings* is free. Tear off the subscription coupon in this issue and send it in with the enclosed envelope, or subscribe online at www.ccswoh.org/subscribe. Already getting *Blessings*? Share your copy with a friend and invite them to subscribe today! ■



For People with Dementia and Their Caregivers,
Creative Connections Spark Joy



A pilot program between Catholic Charities’ Caregiver Assistance Network (CAN) and the Giving Voice Foundation is providing a much-needed source of connection and support for people with dementia and their caregivers.

Creative Connections, which takes place once a week for 10 weeks, offers a support group for caregivers while their loved ones socialize and participate in art, music, movement and other uplifting activities.

“It’s been such a joy, such a spot of light during the pandemic,” says Angie Homoelle, CAN Coordinator. “It provides a safe place for everyone.”

Creative Connections, which launched last summer, is the first program offered by CAN specifically for families dealing with dementia. Caregivers can enjoy 90 minutes of respite and camaraderie, secure in the knowledge that their loved ones are safely engaged nearby.

“Everyone participates at whatever level they can. If they don’t remember, it doesn’t matter,” Angie says. “There are no mistakes. No one tells anyone they’re doing something wrong.”

This year, the Cincinnati Opera has come onboard to offer a music program during the three-week break between the main sessions. The Opera also will facilitate the music portion of this fall’s Music and Movement program. Collaborations with the Contemporary Arts Center and the Cincinnati Museum Center are being explored, as well.

The goal is to grow Creative Connections so more caregivers and their loved ones can participate.

“I can’t explain how rewarding it is to accompany people experiencing a connection — a happy, familiar click,” says volunteer Laura West. “The spark ignited by Creative Connections is such a joy to witness.” ■



JOIN US!

The next Creative Connections program begins **April 4**.

Sessions for caregivers and participants will take place from **10:30 a.m.-noon every Monday for 10 weeks** at St. Clare Convent in Wyoming.

To sign up, please contact Angie Homoelle at ahomoelle@ccswoh.org or 513-672-3834.

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



WANT TO HELP?

We are seeking volunteers interested in working with people with dementia. We also need individuals who have experience with creative outlets — such as music, dance/movement, art, writing and storytelling — to help provide programming for 10-week sessions and the three-week breaks between sessions. Please contact Angie Homoelle at ahomoelle@ccswoh.org or 513-672-3834.

Immigration Legal Services Reunites a Mom with Her Young Child in Time for Christmas



A domestic violence survivor was reunited with her young daughter on December 2 after two years in detention — all thanks to Catholic Charities’ Immigration Legal Services (ILS) and the kindness of generous supporters like you.

Alicia’s odyssey began in November 2019, when she was arrested while defending herself against her abusive husband. Because Alicia had been born in Mexico and brought to the United States as a baby, she was transferred to Immigrations

and Customs Enforcement custody to be deported.

Most distressingly, she was locked away from her 3-month-old daughter she was still nursing.

“I cried the times I met her in jail, listening to her story and the trauma she’d been through,” says Elizabeth Clapp, Catholic Charities ILS Director. “I really wanted the system to do right by her. It’s often very difficult to win these cases, because the laws are extremely harsh.”

ILS helped Alicia apply for cancellation of removal as a survivor of domestic violence at the hands of a U.S. citizen. Though the judge found her story credible, he ordered Alicia deported. ILS appealed that ruling and called in a therapist from Catholic Charities’ Mental Health Services Department to provide a psychological evaluation. Furthermore, a domestic violence expert established that Alicia’s conviction was related to the abuse she had suffered.

Finally last Fall, Alicia’s cancellation of removal was granted and she was released. Catholic Charities is now helping her secure her green card to become a legal U.S. resident. She can apply for citizenship in five years.

For now, Alicia has her old job back and is focusing on getting to know her daughter, who’s now a toddler.

“As time passes, Alicia is more energetic, more positive and hopeful,” Elizabeth says. “Seeing this case finally reach the proper outcome was really rewarding.” ■

About ILS

Immigration Legal Services provides pro bono and low-cost legal services for most types of immigration cases, including removal cases, green cards, citizenship and DACA renewals. Learn more and contact ILS at ccswoh.org/programs/immigration-legal-services/

A Su Casa Success Story: ‘You Helped Me Achieve a Better Quality of Life’

Because of caring neighbors like you, a single mom like Gabriela can now say, “You helped me achieve a better quality of life!”

Your support of Catholic Charities allows us to provide wraparound services that empower individuals and families in our community to create better lives for themselves.

Gabriela is the mother of a young man with cerebral palsy. When her husband left them five years ago, Gabriela struggled to provide for her son, who has complicated medical needs. As his sole caregiver, she couldn’t work outside the home. When she needed surgery in 2018, she was referred to Catholic Charities’ Su Casa Hispanic Center for case management. That’s when everything began to change for Gabriela.

Su Casa connected her to Hamilton County Developmental Disability Services so she could get daycare services for her son, allowing her to work. She also learned self-care skills through Catholic

Charities’ Powerful Tools for Caregivers program.

Motivated and hardworking, Gabriela needed just one more thing to move forward: help with her electric bill.

Gabriela and her son live in a two-bedroom mobile home. In winter, their bills could be as high as \$500 to heat their home and power machines critical to her son’s medical care. Su Casa offered financial assistance with funds allocated by United Way. And this past Christmas, through our Adopt-A-Family Program, Su Casa connected Gabriela with an individual donation specifically to cover two months of electric bills, plus the cost of work to improve her home’s electrical system and insulation.

Gabriela now has the resources to care for herself, to care for her son and to create a brighter

future for them both.

“Everything she’s been through, she’s been able to get out of it,” says Adriana Rodríguez-Irizarry, Su Casa’s Emergency Assistance and Case Manager Supervisor. “She’s done amazing.”

Thank you for helping to give people like Gabriela the tools they need to succeed! ■



Empowering Parents to Transform Their Families’ Futures

Imagine changing your family’s entire life in just 10 weeks.

That’s exactly what happened for Jason and his parents when they participated in Catholic Charities’ Parent Project. Made possible through your support, this program organizes concurrent classes for both parents and their children, so that both can learn to better relate and work together as a family.

Jason, 12, had been acting out. He’d even gotten violent with his father. His parents are divorced and couldn’t stand to be in the same room together. Though they were court-ordered to attend the classes, Jason tried to manipulate his mom into quitting after just one session. That’s when Patsy Bolden, Catholic Charities’ Parent Project Coordinator, stepped in. She met with the family and encouraged them to keep going.

“By the fifth week, the parents were telling the class how Jason couldn’t wait to get

there,” Patsy says. “Coming to class was his favorite night of the week.”

The Parent Project Senior class empowers parents to adapt and grow their parenting skills. They learn how to discipline strong-willed children with love.

“Every parent that comes through there says, ‘Oh my gosh, this changed my life,’” Patsy says. “When they hold their ground with their kids, they see immediate results.”

Kids ages 11-17, like Jason, have a separate class just for them: Why Try.

“The whole essence of the class is in the name: ‘Why should I even try?’” Patsy explains. “We teach young people that your life is on YOU. We want to get them to a healthier place to make better choices.”

Today, Jason and his parents are thriving. His mom and dad learned to communicate with each other so they can effectively co-parent. They also made changes to their children’s visitation schedule with their dad.

Now, Jason loves to spend time with his father. His behavior has been transformed, and so has his future.

“The parents learned that they have to have common ground, even as divorced parents,” Patsy says. “You can see the love between that family now.” ■



LEARN MORE:

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

Introducing Young People to Catholic Charities

Empowering young people to put their faith into action is at the heart of Catholic Charities’ growing collaboration with local Catholic schools.

Over the past several months, Catholic Charities has conducted presentations about poverty, immigration and other topics at Mercy McAuley, St. Ursula and McNicholas High Schools, helping students and staff better understand some of the major issues Catholic Charities addresses in our community.

Catholic Charities also recently partnered with St. Gertrude School. For their service day, students made Thank You cards for Catholic Charities’ many volunteers.

Through each of these efforts, young Catholics are learning about Catholic Charities and being inspired to give back, along with their families.

“It’s special to work with kids and let them see what we’re doing,” says Mary

Anne Bressler, Parish and Community Engagement Coordinator. “When we get young people involved, their parents often learn about our mission as well.”

As a result of the collaboration, for example, several McNick students volunteered at a Food for All pantry in Bethel. For many of them, learning about the challenges faced by their neighbors has been eye-opening.

“You can make an impact on a child and they’ll remember you later. Kids really take stuff to heart.”

—Mary Anne Bressler, Parish & Community Engagement Coordinator

“Many young people are becoming aware there are hungry families in Southwest Ohio. Others are now discovering there are refugees coming here to save their very lives, with virtually nothing to their name,” Mary Anne explains. “People not that far away from them are really struggling, and we are called to help them.”

Mary Anne is eager to find more ways for Catholic Charities and Catholic schools to work together. It’s a win-win-win, she says. Our neighbors in need have more helping hands in their corner; young Catholics experience the joy of service to others; and Catholic Charities can make an impression that hopefully will lead to a lifetime of volunteering and support. ■

Soup's On! New Partnership Adds to Food for All's Nutritious Offerings



The Food for All program can now officially say it offers everything from soup to nuts to nourish our neighbors who live in food deserts.

In September, Food for All began a partnership with La Soupe, a local nonprofit that rescues perishable food from grocers and wholesalers and transforms it into fresh and frozen soups and other nutritious dishes. La Soupe donated 200 quarts of soup and 50 family-sized casseroles for each of two food pantry distributions last year.

The soups and meals are made fresh in the La Soupe kitchen and then frozen. They contain far less salt and sugar and fewer preservatives than store-bought frozen dinners or the shelf-stable products often associated with food pantries.

"It's really cool that we're able to give people homemade soup in addition to what food pantries can generally offer," says Mary Anne Bressler, Parish and Community Engagement Coordinator. "There's something really special about the supply chain that produces this food."

Most of the recipes — including lentil soup, chili and chowder — are vegetable-based, hearty and filling. "And the soup is fantastic!" Mary Anne adds.

For La Soupe, which is based in inner-city Walnut Hills, partnering with Food for All



helps the organization expand its reach into rural places like Clermont and Clinton Counties.

"La Soupe and Catholic Charities share the same goal of feeding people and meeting their integral needs first," says Katy Nardolillo, La Soupe Partner Relations Manager. "A group like Catholic Charities is wonderful for La Soupe to have a relationship with, because we can combine our networks and really reach out to as many people as possible." ■

WANT TO HELP?

Food for All needs volunteers with vans, minivans or trucks who can pick up food from La Soupe once a month and transport it to one of our pantry distributions. If you can help, please contact Food for All Coordinator April Hoak at ahoak@ccswoh.org.

Volunteer Spotlight: Santiago Gutiérrez-Buchting

Growing up in Nicaragua, Santiago Gutiérrez-Buchting saw too many families living in poverty, with no opportunities to get the help they needed to create new lives for themselves.

So when he learned how Su Casa Hispanic Center empowers families in Cincinnati, he knew he wanted to deepen his involvement with the annual Adopt-A-Family program.

"Seeing what I've seen in the past, I know how a little help can make a huge impact on people's lives," Santiago says. "I feel really touched by the results Su Casa achieves with these families."

Santiago leads Procter & Gamble's involvement with Adopt-A-Family through the company's Hispanic Leadership Team. For the past two Christmas seasons, he's coordinated the P&G group's donations and organized a day-long gift-distribution event. In light of COVID-19, that has also meant pivoting the celebration from an elaborate indoor party to a drive-through model.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Santiago has ensured that the distribution event still includes Cincinnati Circus acrobats performing in the Su Casa parking lot, a visit from Santa Claus and plenty of opportunities to safely connect on a personal level with the families.

Adopt-A-Family means as much to the team from P&G as it does to the participating families, Santiago says. His group of about 100 colleagues adopted 354 children this past Christmas.

"I want to say thank you to Su Casa and Catholic Charities for trusting us to pull this off every year," Santiago says. "If you help 100 people, and one person helps somebody else, you create a chain reaction. That's what keeps me going."

In addition, the Adopt-a-Family program has been very fortunate to receive sponsorship, support and participation not only from P&G, but also from other business partners such as 5/3's Bank Latino BRG (Business Resource Group), co-chaired by Nikki Bialka; 5/3 Executive Sponsor Paul Martini, who leads WAM (Wealth and Asset Management Team); Immaculate Heart of Mary; Sims-Lohman Fine Kitchens; and individual donors. ■



Global Crisis. LOCAL HOPE.

Listen. Learn. Act.

A livestreamed update on refugee resettlement, family reunification and migrants' contributions to a stronger community.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
Sr. Donna Markham,
President & CEO of
Catholic Charities USA

Mark your calendars for
Thursday, March 10
at 7:00 PM.



Register today on our website
at <https://www.ccswoh.org/migration-awareness-outreach-2022/> or scan
this QR code.





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"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall
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Empowering New Neighbors For Success

Catholic Charities welcomes new neighbors and accompanies them on their path to a new life. As the official refugee resettlement agency for Southwest Ohio, Catholic Charities has resettled over 12,000 refugees since 1980. We provide job readiness and placement, cultural orientation, English as a second language, case management, youth mentoring, mental health counseling, legal assistance, interpretation services, and more. All of it coming together to promote success for our families and a stronger community for everyone. **DONATE TODAY at ccswoh.org/donate.**