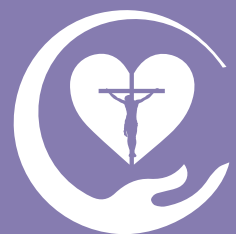


BUILDING ROADS TO HOPE

THE **CLARION**
NEWS FROM CATHOLIC CHARITIES

SPRING 2024 EDITION



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A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Catholic Charities,

Spring is all around us, but nowhere as much as in our Risen Christ and Easter joy! Easter is a celebration of hope, a reward for our days of spirituality in Lent. At Catholic Charities, we strive to be a beacon of hope and compassion for those in need right here in our diocese.

In 2023, we completed the design of our comprehensive strategic plan. This was an all-encompassing evaluation of every aspect of our organization and Board involvement. It is a five-year roadmap for us and will be our guidance during this time. We have sought community involvement throughout the process and presented the final plan in four open sessions in Fort Wayne, South Bend, Auburn, and Warsaw. Copies are available at www.ccfwsb.org/strategicplan.

Now in 2024, we have begun the execution of the first year of our plan. It provides insights on both disbursement of our current resources and plans for future fundraising. Our CEO Dan Florin, Controller Paula Kebel, and each member of our Board of Directors, functioning through our five Board Committees, use the plan as a baseline reference regularly.

As we continue to grow, our Board always remains thankful for the generosity given to Catholic Charities and continuously endeavors to be a faithful steward of those gifts. Your generosity goes directly toward helping those in need in our diocese. We are proud to report that nearly 90% of every dollar we receive goes toward those in need. This is one of the highest percentages of impact for non-profit organizations in our region and represents true value for our donors.



We are dedicated to serving individuals and families in need across the region. Rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ, we are committed to upholding the dignity of every person and building a community of love, solidarity, and service. Our goal is to provide comprehensive social services, advocacy, and support to individuals and families, regardless of their background or beliefs just as Jesus has taught us. Through our programs and initiatives, we aim to address the root causes of poverty, promote human dignity, and empower individuals to achieve self-sufficiency and fulfillment.

Catholic Charities of Fort Wayne-South Bend is a beacon of hope and compassion, serving individuals and families in need with dignity, respect, and love. Together, we can build a more just, equitable, and compassionate community for all. Join us in transforming lives and spreading hope today.

Yours in Christ,
John Fallon, MD, MBA

COUNSELING SERVICES

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR STUDENTS

Rooted in our Catholic faith, we currently provide counselors in 13 of our diocesan schools. Our services include classroom-based social emotional learning lessons in areas such as, showing empathy, being kind, bullying, learning to share, and coping with disappointment. We also provide individual counseling, as requested by parents and teachers. Our goal is to provide the best possible environment for growth for every student. If a student and/or family member needs additional mental health support, our Clinical Liaison networks with community providers to provide additional services.



Hear more from principals at two of the schools we are serving by visiting our YouTube page by scanning the QR code above.



CLINICAL LIAISON

A DIOCESAN RESOURCE TO NAVIGATE MENTAL HEALTHCARE

Navigating mental healthcare can be daunting and time consuming. A unique position within the diocese, and seated in Catholic Charities, is the Clinical Liaison Program. Our Clinical Liaison (CL) takes the “work” out of finding qualified and vetted Christian mental health service providers for school families and parishioners throughout the 14 counties in our diocese. The service is easy to access, and referrals can be made with a simple phone call or email to the CL by the parish staff, school staff, or the individual. Once contact is made with the CL, individuals and families usually have a referral to mental health services within 24 hours. During our last fiscal year, our CL helped 306 individuals access the mental health system. In addition, the CL provides training on a variety of topics for teachers and parish leadership.

Finding Hope in Self-Sufficiency

Candace had been living at The Upper Room Recovery Community in South Bend for almost two years. In this temporary community home, Candace was able to receive the support she needed to remain sober and continue through drug court. With a job in food services at a local hospital, Candace was on track to creating a life of self-sufficiency.

However, when she received a call that her two-year-old son had a medical emergency, she knew she had to be there for him. Despite the shelter not allowing children, Candace made the decision to leave and be with her son, knowing that she might not be able to return. It was a tough call to make, but as a mother, she knew it was the right one.

“I did not know what would happen when I left, but I knew I needed to be with my son at that moment,”

Candace recalls. “A year ago, I suddenly found myself homeless with my son to take care of. Luckily, The Upper Room helped make accommodations at a hotel until a spot at another shelter opened up.”

Candace and her son stayed at the shelter for four months. As soon as she arrived there, she met Latisa, Catholic Charities Homeless Services Case Manager. Latisa aids clients in goal-setting and obtaining the resources necessary to obtain those goals.

“I can remember meeting Latisa on my first day at the shelter,” Candace said. “She was welcoming, friendly, and absolutely amazing. She is the one who shared life-changing resources that allowed my son and I to find a home. To think exactly a year ago, how different my life was is what fuels me each day with hope.”

Because Candace has a son, Latisa encouraged her to apply for the Rapid Rehousing Program through Youth Bureau Services in South Bend. Focused on assisting homeless youth, the program finds affordable, safe, and sanitary housing.

“We would probably still be living at the shelter if it wasn't for Latisa,” Candace stated.

“I would have never known about the Rapid Rehousing Program if it wasn't for her help.”

Despite all these ongoing challenges, Candace remained employed. However, given her situation, transportation was a concern. Fortunately, Catholic Charities stepped in to provide her with bus passes when needed, ensuring that she could continue getting to work. Latisa went above and beyond by providing transportation to a food bank, ensuring Candace and her son had access to basic needs.

It wasn't just emergency needs Latisa helped with, but also provided emotional support to this single mother. When trying to figure out her financial future, Latisa helped Candace create a budget and explained the importance of savings. Latisa taught Candace how to stack her checks so she could save more while working two jobs. Candace continues to meet with Latisa weekly to discuss goals.

“Latisa taught me a lot about having a positive mindset,” said Candace. “During each meeting, we start off by making a gratitude list, so I can see all the positive things happening in my life. That really changed my outlook.”

Looking at the next year, Candace is already blazing a path on her journey to self-sufficiency. Just certified as a surgical sterilization technician, she is hoping for a future career in the operating room. With a bump in pay, Candace is making plans to become a homeowner. Most importantly, Candace is continuing to commit to her sobriety so she can be the best parent for her son.

“By the grace of God, I have had human service professionals 100% on my side along the way, and I wouldn't have been able to get where I am right now without both,” Candace exclaimed.

Homeless Services in the East Region

Not only do we serve individuals at the Center for the Homeless in South Bend, but we also provide case management for residents at The Rescue Mission, Charis House, and St. Joseph Missions in Allen County.

As a resident's time at the shelter nears its end, a Catholic Charities case manager assess the needs and barriers of the client to successfully re-enter the community. The case manager then makes a plan to break down barriers that could stand in the client's way of becoming self-sufficient, such as shelter, clothing, food, hygiene, insurance, and healthcare.



Q&A WITH MEGAN

OUR NEW REFUGEE VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Joining the agency at the end of 2023, Megan is our first volunteer coordinator focused on developing a network of volunteers to support our refugee clients. Read as she explains what led her to this work and what she has learned since.

Q: Why did you want to be the agency's first refugee volunteer coordinator?

A: Catholic Charities' mission really spoke to me – the idea of being a part of “where hope begins” was very exciting. I have previously worked with volunteer programs, but in this position, I knew I would help volunteers do something impactful and create change in the community.

Q: What is the most surprising thing you learned during your first few months on the job?

A: I didn't realize how in-depth the resettling process was! From setting up an apartment, transporting clients to health appointments, helping read mail, enrolling children in school... There are a lot of small things our case managers do to ensure all the big things work out for a family down the road.

I went to a doctor's visit with one of our case managers and I was impressed with the professionalism and diligence of our staff. The time and patience she took with interpreting each sentence to ensure the client and doctor truly understood each other... That level of care and responsibility is inspiring.

In our ESL class, I had the chance to help a client who was studying for their citizenship class. As a U.S.-born citizen, I was amazed at how much this refugee client knew about American history and legal system... I am not sure if I could pass the test!! And to top it off, the client had to memorize all of these facts in her non-native language.

Q: What is something you want others to know about Refugee Services?

A: Our case managers do a lot of work to ensure families feel safe and settled by helping them get all the resources needed – whether they have been here for five days or five years! I am amazed that the case managers can do everything on their checklist within 90 days – on top of all the paperwork.

I have lived in Fort Wayne since 2018 and even worked with refugees at a previous job. I didn't realize that Catholic Charities was so involved in refugee services, or that they were the only resettlement agency in northern Indiana. I get to see firsthand how this agency is quietly making a huge impact. The case managers aren't doing this job for glory, but because they care for the dignity of those who are trying to make a new life in a new country.

Q: Why should people volunteer with Refugee Services?

A: Volunteering with the refugee services team will give you a window into the beauty of cultural differences. Volunteers also help refugees feel like they are a part of the community because they gain another friend. It is a hard transition for these families that know no one except their case manager... They need a mentor who can teach them about U.S. culture, laws, and basic everyday living in Indiana.

Q: What is the biggest volunteer need in the refugee program?

A: Homework Help Program! We would like to hold it once a week and then build it out to additional days. We need retired teachers and others who can help out after school.

Q: How can people start volunteering?

A: They can send me an email at malvarez@ccfwsb.org or fill out an application on our volunteer page at www.ccfwsb.org/volunteer. We provide an orientation before volunteers begin meeting with clients to ensure they know what to expect and have the opportunity to learn more about our programming.

VOLUNTEER TESTIMONY

JOELLEN WITH ST. PIUS X REFUGEE MINISTRY

“When I joined the refugee ministry at St. Pius X Catholic Church, I thought I would be changing a refugee family's life, but they have changed mine...,” recalled Joellen, a refugee mentor. “They are my friends and a part of my family – this is nothing short of God and the Holy Spirit working in both our lives.”

In August 2023, Joellen attended a parish information night about the newly formed ministry serving recently resettled refugee families through a partnership with Catholic Charities. She signed up to mentor a French-speaking family of six originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“I thought they would be overwhelmingly sad because of everything they had to leave behind, but instead they have been walking in grace every moment of their new life,” said Joellen. “This ministry has blessed my life in so many ways. The mother always shares pictures of things she finds beautiful. It helps me to resee the simplest things as beautiful, and that makes me so much closer to Christ.”

Continue reading Joellen's testimony on our website at bit.ly/joellenstory



LAUNCHING THRIVE

A NEW FAITH-BASED LIFE SKILLS COURSE

As the Catholic Charities team began to work on a new strategic plan, the need to give a more intentional hand up to those we serve became a focus. Quickly uncovering the lack of basic life skills as the main inhibitor to self-sufficiency, the idea of creating a faith-based life skills class was born.

The group met with other Catholic Charities organizations across the country, as well as other nonprofits to understand how they were approaching similar issues. Drawing on expertise from other courses with similar goals, our team spent six months drafting a 12-week course covering 11 topics focused on the whole person to aid them in overcoming common barriers to self-sufficiency.

Built on a culmination of studied best practices with a proven correlation to higher rates of self-sufficiency and overall wellness, the goal of the class is to educate and equip our neighbors with the skills needed to move beyond their immediate needs and build a foundation for long-term stability.

Enrollees will be referred to the course from current Catholic Charities programs or from partner organizations. Qualifications will include whether the client is either currently employed or looking for employment, is self-motivated, and is committed to attendance for the full 12 weeks.



“Having served those in need for over 100 years, Catholic Charities understands many of our neighbors were never taught how to balance their household finances or how to develop and cultivate healthy relationships,” said Tiffany Goble, East and North Region Director at Catholic Charities. **“Through no fault of their own, many families are struggling due to a lack of education around basic skills, not a lack of motivation.** Going beyond temporary relief, these classes are aiding the development of healthy habits, relationships, and a growth mindset.”

The classes will be piloted beginning in Spring 2024, and we expect to open enrollment this summer. We want to thank the 1st Source Foundation for their \$10,000 grant to get our classes started.

THRIVE LIFE SKILLS

COURSE TOPICS

CREATING A POSITIVE MINDSET AND RESILIENCY

Developing a growth mindset is vital to overcoming obstacles in life. Students will learn how to make a shift in their outlook and thinking so they can grow into the person who can accomplish their dreams, even when hardships occur.

GOAL SETTING AND ACTION PLANNING

There is a science behind goal making that includes breaking large goals into small, attainable checkpoints. Students will learn how to achieve personal and professional growth through SMART goals and action planning.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

We may not be able to control who is always in our life, but we can control the boundaries created to keep out toxicity. Students will learn all about healthy relationships both with their self and others.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

This school year will be the first-time students are required by the state of Indiana to have taken a basic financial literacy course before graduating. Many individuals do not know the difference between a credit card and a checking account, let alone have a savings account. Students will learn how to set a realistic budget, healthy financial habits, and concepts surrounding credit and interest.

FAITH AND FAMILY

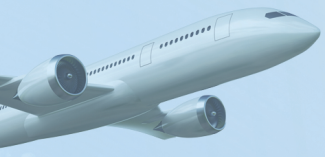
Each class begins and ends with prayer, and includes a scripture reading, time for reflection, and conversation about blessings and concerns.

CAREER PLANNING

One of the best ways to become self-sufficient is through career development. Students will learn about how to grow, plan and prepare for employment opportunities.

LIFE WHEEL

The course takes an in depth look at the seven dimensions of well-being. Students will learn how a healthy balance is needed to thrive in the future. Each area is important and if one is lacking, it can impact the other six. Students will have the opportunity to identify and understand how their core values influence everyday decisions.



FAST FORWARD: AHAD REUNITES WITH FAMILY

In last year's Clarion, we reported on Ahad, an Afghan Second Lieutenant Aviation Officer with a bachelor's degree in science. After the fall of the Afghan government in August of 2021, he was forced to flee from his country without his pregnant wife. Resettled by our Refugee Department, Ahad quickly began working with our Immigration Department to file for asylum for him and his family.

As soon as our immigration team received the asylum approval for Ahad, they began to focus on helping him reunite with his wife and child. Working together, the team filed for the Asylee Relative Petition. They were told the processing time for the initial part of the petition could take close to two and a half years to then be transferred to the U.S. Consulate abroad. With the chaos facing those in Afghanistan, the application was sent with a hope and prayer that the petition would be approved quickly for Ahad's family.

"This was the best chance I had to reunite with my family safely in the United States," said Ahad. "I didn't know how long it would take, but I hoped I would see my wife and baby soon."

Ahad spent almost two years separated from his family before he received the news that his relative petition had been approved and he would soon be contacted by the U.S. Embassy for his family's interview details.

"When I called my wife to tell her the news, she could not believe it," Ahad recollected. "After living through so much turmoil after I left, having her rights stripped away for being a woman and managing to give birth to our child alone without me there, she never thought I would have the chance to see my son while he was still a baby.

She hoped that maybe when he was five or six the dream of being reunited would be possible. She was awestruck when I told her she needed to go to Pakistan for the visa interview."

To file for an Asylee Relative Petition in the case with Afghans when the petition is approved by USCIS, the family members have to go to another country for their interview. Therefore, his wife, Damsa, had to go to Pakistan, which has the closest U.S. Embassy. After many barriers, she was finally allowed passage with her father and son.

"I had to act fast," remembers Damsa. "Once in Pakistan I had to secure a medical exam for my son and me prior to the interview. Once at the interview, I was told we could not receive our visas because I did not have my original marriage license with me. Ahad had taken it with him to the United States."

"I anxiously waited and waited for the phone call from Damsa to hear the news about the interview," recalled Ahad. **"When she called me and told me they had denied her visa because they were requesting our marriage license, I contacted Catholic Charities Immigration Department. We worked together to find the best solution to make sure my wife would receive the marriage license. I knew we were so close to being back together as a family, I could not give up.** We mailed the documentation and within a few days Damsa returned it to the Embassy. It felt like eternity. I would check the status on her visa, and it showed no change. Finally, my wife called me to say she had received the visas."

Ahad was finally able to reunite with his family in Chicago.

"I drove up to Chicago to meet them. When I saw them at the airport, it was an unforgettable moment. It didn't feel real. I finally was able to hug and kiss my baby. I had seen him in video calls, but nothing compares to holding your son in your arms and truly being there with him. I am truly happy now that my family is here and joined together. When they were in my country, I was always worried about them. It was hard to be alone here, and to miss the birth of my child. I am happy now my family is safely together in Fort Wayne."

When asked about the future, Damsa answered, **"We can make anything work now that we are together; we can face any challenges."**

She hopes to continue her schooling and become a licensed midwife.

Ahad said his only focus had been on bringing his family here, "Now I can begin building my career as a pilot again, but this time in the United States."

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ACCREDITATION AWARDED

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend is thrilled to announce Immigration Services Case Manager Maria Sutherland's Application for Partial Accreditation has been approved by the United States Department of Justice Office (DOJ) of Legal Access Programs!

As an Accredited Representative, Sutherland is now permitted to provide legal representation as a non-attorney through Catholic Charities, a DOJ Recognized Organization. The DOJ accreditation is issued through the Recognition and Accreditation Program, a process developed by federal regulations with the intention of expanding competent legal access to low-income and indigent individuals in their immigration journey. As a Partially Accredited Representative, Sutherland can now practice immigration law before the Department of Homeland Security.

The accreditation process is a vital tool that allows DOJ Recognized Organizations to provide safe, accurate and affordable legal advice and representation to immigrants in our community. The ability of qualified non-attorney staff to provide legal aid for clients allows Catholic Charities to keep services affordable, while the level of training and oversight involved in the process of receiving accreditation ensures that clients receive accurate and up-to-date legal information and guidance from staff.

Catholic Charities has been a DOJ Recognized Organization for over 20 years. As our newest Partially Accredited Representative, Sutherland joins Luz Ostrognai, a DOJ Accredited Representative since 2002 and Director of Immigration Services.



thanks to your *generous gifts*

we were able to serve more than
21,000 INDIVIDUALS
in 2023

PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT OF:

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- \$1,000** PROVIDES 600 FOOD PANTRY MEALS
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- \$250** PROVIDES JOB TRAINING FOR LOW INCOME PARENTS
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- \$50** HELPS A LOW INCOME FAMILY KEEP THE HEAT ON
- \$25** GIVES A CHILD A WARM COAT

Any gift, big or small, helps hope begin for families across the diocese!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO MAKE A DONATION ON OUR WEBSITE NOW.



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where **hope** begins.

To learn more about our Pro-Life, Migration, Counseling, and Stability services, please visit our website at www.ccfwsb.org.



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