



Pack a Backpack provides school supplies for children in DeKalb and Noble counties for the tenth year in a row

Catholic Charities is once again partnering with REMC energy/utilities company to provide school supplies for children in DeKalb and Noble counties through our Pack a Backpack program. For ten years running, we have equipped qualifying students with the supplies they need for a successful school year, thanks to the generosity of REMC customers participating in Operation Round Up.

How It Works

Throughout the year, REMC customers have the opportunity to participate in the company's Operation Round Up program, where they opt to "round up" their bill to the next whole dollar. The difference goes into a trust fund for grants approved by a volunteer grant review board. This year Catholic Charities – RSVP received \$1,000 for our Pack a Backpack program. Last year, we were able to provide 571 children with the supplies they needed for school, thanks to the generosity of REMC customers.

Who It Helps

The Pack a Backpack program provides backpacks and school supplies to children of families who qualify for the free and reduced lunch program in DeKalb County and the West Noble and Central Noble School Corporations in Noble County. Parents of children who qualify must show

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Catholic Charities
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Ber

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“...What better way to impact a community than to give children the tools they need to learn, which in turn produces adults ready to take on the world?”

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one of three things: a letter from the school stating they qualify, their food stamp or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) card, or a Hoosier Healthwise insurance card for each child wanting a backpack.

What We Provide

Each school and grade gives us a list of supplies, which we use to fill the backpacks. Most backpacks contain spiral notebooks, pocket folders, composition notebooks, pencils, pink erasers, pens (red, blue, black), crayons, colored pencils, markers, glue sticks, bottles of glue, scissors, rulers, index cards, post-its, and binders.

“The backpack program gives K-12 children the opportunity to begin school on even ground with their peers,” says Terri Pfenning, Volunteer Coordinator. “Teachers notice that children who have received backpacks and supplies from the program come to school with a better attitude and are ready to learn. What better way to impact a community than to give children the tools they need to learn, which in turn produces adults ready to take on the world?” ■

Backpack Distribution Locations

DEKALB COUNTY

We will distribute backpacks in DeKalb County during the month of July, beginning July 6, during food pantry hours: Mondays 4:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m., Tuesdays 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., Wednesdays 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

NOBLE COUNTY

In Noble County, we do one-day distributions as follows:

West Noble School Corporation:

Wednesday, July 29, 11:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. at the Ligonier Public Library, located at 300 South Main Street in Ligonier. Note: This distribution is for West Noble students only.

Central Noble School Corporation:

Thursday, July 30, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the Community Building in Wolf Lake just off of US 6.

Tuesday, August 4, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the Noble County Public Library, located at 813 East Main Street in Albion.

If you'd like to help with this program, by either donating supplies or making a monetary contribution, please contact Terri Pfenning, volunteer coordinator, at 260-925-0917 or tpfenning@ccfwsb.org.

National Mentoring Program Youth Do Their Part to Alleviate Hunger

Youth participants in Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA) National Mentoring Program celebrated National Volunteer Week this spring by feeding hungry people in their community. In keeping with the National Mentoring Program's theme, "Alleviation of Hunger," the youth ages 9 – 12 and their adult mentors participated in three different activities aimed at relieving hunger in DeKalb County.

Up first, the young people collected food and stocked shelves for the Catholic Charities Community Center of Caring Food Pantry during the "Cram the Van" event on Saturday, April 11. Next, they collaborated with Linda Huinker, Purdue Extension family nutrition program assistant, to learn about healthy nutrition and prepare and serve a healthy snack for Community Center of Caring Food Pantry clients on Monday, April 27. The youth also explained the benefits of a healthy diet to the 70 people they served during the "Meet, Greet, and Treat" event. Finally, youth participated in the national letter carrier's food drive, "Stamp Out Hunger," on May 9, collecting and sorting by expiration date 3,765 pounds of food in about 4.5 hours.

"Through all three events," says Shirley Johnson, program coordinator, "the youth gained first-hand experience in the power of volunteering and learned a great deal about hunger in our community from several different angles." The National Mentoring Program is supported through Catholic Charities USA and the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The program is always looking for more adult volunteers.

To learn more about how you can get involved, contact Shirley Johnson at sjohnson@ccfwsb.org. ■

(From top to bottom) Jasmine Brandeberry and Matthew Wilondek carefully chop vegetables to prep for the mini ham and cheese quinoa cups that were served at the Meet, Greet & Treat. Tori Hall and Clayton Maurer serving mini ham and cheese quinoa cups to clients in the Community Center of Caring Food Pantry.



"You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than

Hard work and persistence pay off for Zugey Acha Vargas

How Catholic Charities is helping a Peruvian immigrant achieve her dream of becoming a United States citizen



Life is good for Zugey Acha Vargas and her two sons. Thanks to help from Catholic Charities' immigration services, Zugey has been able to

gain training and secure employment as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), is saving up to buy a house, and is in the process of becoming a United States citizen. But life wasn't always so pleasant for this single mother and native of Peru.

Growing up in a very poor community, Zugey longed for greater opportunities, which she discovered upon visiting her family living in the United States.

Unfortunately, one of those opportunities—her relationship with her husband, whom she met after moving to Fort Wayne, Indiana—turned abusive after the birth of their two sons. That's when Zugey reached out to the Center for

Nonviolence for help. Thanks to a provision through the Violence Against Women Act, Zugey was able to apply for a work permit. Finding steady employment, however, proved difficult. When the Center for Nonviolence referred Zugey to Catholic Charities' immigration services for help, she was ready to do her part to make a change for herself and her family.

Luz Ostrognai, immigration supervisor, helped Zugey find the opportunities she was looking for. "Zugey worked very hard," remembers Luz. "She knows that in this country it pays off to follow the rules, work hard, and have integrity in order to reach your dreams and get what you want." And while Zugey certainly did her part, she believes that meeting Luz and working with Catholic Charities was a real turning point in her life. "Catholic Charities gave me hope," she says. "They opened many doors for me and my sons. They helped me heal from my violent marriage, and they helped me achieve my dreams, my life in the USA." ■

"She knows that in this country it pays off to follow the rules, work hard, and have integrity in order to reach your dreams and get what you want."

Luz Ostrognai, immigration supervisor, and Zugey Acha Vargas pictured together while celebrating Vargas' 2015 Citizenship Graduation.



the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself"

-Leviticus 19:34 (NABRE)



Catholic Charities Celebrates World Refugee Day

The United Nations' World Refugee Day is observed on June 20 each year. This event honors the courage, strength, and determination of men, women and children who are forced to flee their homeland under threat of persecution, conflict, and violence.

On June 19, Catholic Charities celebrated World Refugee Day at the Archbishop Noll Catholic Center, where we commemorated the accomplishments of refugees and showed our appreciation for all the support our community has shown for these brave people. Special features of the day included Burmese music, dance, and singing, as well as Burmese ethnic food. Each year, Catholic Charities helps people resettle from places such as Burma, Russia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Iraq.

Immigration Services Now Available in South Bend!



Congratulations to the 2015 Citizenship Class, pictured here after their graduation on Tuesday, May 26, 2015.

We are thrilled to report that our immigration services are now available locally to clients in Saint Joseph and Elkhart counties through our South Bend office.

Location

1817 Miami Street in South Bend

Office Hours

Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m. to noon.

Contact

If you or someone you know could benefit from our immigration services in the South Bend area, please give us a call at (574) 234-3111.

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Strategic partnership consolidates resources, strengthens outreach

Dear Friends,



One of my roles as the executive director here at Catholic Charities is to form strategic partnerships within the community, partnerships that will help us achieve our mission in a way that makes

the best use of the resources available to us. I can't think of a stronger partnership—or better way to realign our resources—than the upcoming transition for Villa of the Woods Senior Residential Living and our partnership with fellow service provider Saint Anne Communities.

As many of you know, beginning in July 2015, Catholic Charities' Villa of the Woods Senior Residential Living will become part of the Saint Anne Communities. This transition will create a partnership that will further the faith-based missions of both organizations. As we move toward this change, it's important to note that we will be providing a seamless transition for Villa residents, with each individual receiving the same high level of care to which they have become accustomed.

And while it's been an honor and a joy for us at Catholic Charities to provide accommodations and care at Villa of the Woods for many years, we came to the conclusion during our strategic planning process that what we do at Villa of the Woods is a better fit for Saint Anne's mission, which is to provide multiple living

options and care to older adults of all denominations. Catholic Charities, on the other hand, will continue to focus on what we do best—providing programs and services that have a positive impact in the lives of people of all ages.

We're so fortunate to have an organization as fine as Saint Anne ready to work with us to enhance the lives of older adults, and we'll continue to provide our support and be engaged during the transition and beyond. In fact, staff members at Villa of the Woods will be invited to apply for positions with Saint Anne Communities at the Villa location.

I should also note that, in many ways, this partnership is hardly new. Catholic Charities and Saint Anne already share a common bond, operating under the auspices of the Diocese of Fort Wayne–South Bend. In fact, Saint Anne was once under the Catholic Charities umbrella of programs and services.

Clearly, this re-alignment creates a winning strategy for both organizations and is a success story for each. To quote Saint Anne administrator Dave Deffenbaugh, "this new collaboration — a winning combination — really makes sense for both our organizations and the people we serve." We wish God's richest blessings on everyone at Saint Anne and Villa of the Woods during this transition time and throughout the years to come. ■



“This new collaboration – a winning combination – really makes sense for both our organizations and the people we serve.”

Desiree Sims, 2015 ECHO Client of The Year, is pictured here with her daughter. She received this award for strength in adversity and dedication to personal growth.

Congratulations, ECHO Program Graduates!

Catholic Charities' ECHO program is helping young parents graduate from high school and pursue their dreams.



Lawyers, veterinarians, nurses, actors, chefs, probation officers, even animal care and control officers. These are the dreams of our clients. Certainly, each profession presents a worthwhile career choice. What makes this list unusual is the people who aspire to these occupations. They're teenage parents, people who are trying to stay in school while caring for a child. When they became parents, achieving their goals got a lot tougher — tougher, but not impossible.

That's what ECHO is all about. ECHO stands for Education Creates Hope and Opportunity. Our goal is to provide support to young parents so they can stay in school and create a better future for themselves and their children. In the words of Kwajalein Dodd, ECHO case manager, "The ECHO program has added value to the lives of those it has touched. Many young people believe that their dreams of college and a career are gone because they had a baby when they were young. That is not true at all. They are able to achieve their goals; they just have to find another, more creative way of getting there."

Through Catholic Charities' ECHO program, parents—young women and men—receive school and home-based case management services which include monitoring school attendance and grades and intervening as necessary to safeguard their school success. ECHO case managers help the students set appropriate goals and provide them with the support and resources needed to achieve them. ECHO staff also work closely with parents, school administrators, teachers, nurses and guidance counselors all in an

effort to help the teen stay in school and graduate. Across the nation, only about 40% of teen parents graduate from high school, but for our ECHO participants, the graduation rate exceeds 90% every school year. A high school diploma significantly reduces the risk of the teen and child living in poverty in the future. With the support and encouragement of their ECHO case managers, many of our program graduates are also pursuing post-high school education.

By all accounts, the program is working. This year alone, 19 parents who participated in ECHO through our Fort Wayne and South Bend offices graduated from high school. Several plan to remain in the program and pursue higher education opportunities. As long as they are enrolled in some type of educational program, clients are eligible for support until they turn 24. While some remain in the ECHO program until that age, others voluntarily leave the program because they feel stable and secure on their own.

We are so proud of all that our clients have achieved. According to Michelle Story, ECHO case manager, "I am so often struck by the resilience of our clients. In times of trial and hardship, they persevere. I believe that ECHO offers them that additional support by being a constant presence and a voice of encouragement and hope. It is always my desire to remain a source of calm when the rest of their world can feel like chaos." ■

It is with great pride that we offer congratulations to all our graduates. We wish you much success in your future endeavors!

To learn more about Catholic Charities and how you can help, visit us at www.ccfwsb.org

YOUR GIFTS GO A LONG WAY!

Even small, one-time contributions to Catholic Charities can make a big difference. Consider the following:

\$25

given to one of our food pantries feeds a family of four for four meals.

\$35

pays 25 percent of a winter utility bill, keeping families warm and in their homes.

\$50

provides employment training for one month for two older adults.

\$100

provides up to six hours of pro-life pregnancy counseling.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Special thanks to everyone—both parishes and parishioners – who gave so generously during our recent Mother’s Day donation request. We value each contribution and thank you for the gifts given in honor of mothers everywhere!

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