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# Notes from the Heart

## News from Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans

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**Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans** provides life-giving programs that deliver health and human services to the most vulnerable and needy throughout 8 civil parishes in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. We serve people regardless of race, religion, age, ethnicity or economic status.

## Making Room for Hope

Dear friends of Catholic Charities,

Happy Easter!

We journeyed through Lent enjoying the favor of Jesus' mercy, love, and grace. Each of those forty days, whether or not we were true to our determined Lenten fast, sacrifice, or alms-giving, had the benefit of God's favor. That favor was the source of our service to our family members, our neighbors, our colleagues, or the many individuals we were unaware of as we daily met the challenges of Lent. Your support of Catholic Charities has had a positive impact on thousands of community members in need – community members that you may or may not know personally but are all our brothers and sisters worthy of compassion and respect.

Catholic Charities not only provides direct services, but works with individuals and families towards future self-sufficiency. In his most recent Easter homily, Pope Francis recalls Peter's reaction to the news of the empty tomb, "Without giving in to sadness or darkness, he made room for hope: he allowed the light of God to enter into his heart." When you support Catholic Charities and join us in prayer, you make room for hope.

How appropriate that Resurrection Church served as Catholic Charities' headquarters for disaster relief after



this spring's tornadoes in New Orleans East. Even in disaster, there is room for hope. Knowing that there is somewhere to turn when you have lost everything, when you are struggling, brings levity to our spirit.

Thank you for your continued support.

I wish you and your loved ones a blessed and peaceful Easter holiday.

*Sr. Marjorie Hebert, M.S.C.*  
Sr. Marjorie Hebert, M.S.C.  
President/CEO

## Jazz Brunch & Auction Benefits Pro-Life Services

On Sunday, March 26, 2017, nearly 300 guests gathered at the Audubon Tea Room for the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual ACCESS Jazz Brunch and Auction, which supports the Pro-Life Services of Catholic Charities. The theme for this year's event was "Live, Laugh, Love," which organizers and attendees thought perfectly expressed the importance of celebrating the gift of life.

St. Jane de Chantal was named the 2017 Outstanding Pro-Life Parish in recognition for their work promoting the sanctity of life. Respect Life Coordinators Neal and Loretta Naquin accepted the award on behalf of the parish.

Proceeds from this year's brunch, along with the generosity of private donors, will allow ACCESS to continue their life-saving work in the community.

ACCESS Pregnancy and Referral Center provided pro-life pregnancy support services to more than 800 abortion-vulnerable women and their families in the New Orleans community last year. The ACCESS Mobile Unit reaches even more women in underserved areas and serves as a pro-life presence in the community. ACCESS also operates a Diaper Bank and distributed an average of 9,000 diapers monthly to those in need.



# FIRST-EVER COUPLE COMPLETES HEALTH GUARDIANS PROGRAM TOGETHER

Jonathan was adopted from a Catholic orphanage in Vietnam and arrived in the United States in 1973. Because his adoptive father was a member of the Air Force, he was afforded the chance to travel the country and the world, learning seven different languages and a myriad of agricultural, culinary and other skills along the way. In 2001, he married his wife, Kaye.

He had suffered from multiple medical problems, including breathing issues, as long as he could remember, but it wasn't until 2007 that he learned he'd been exposed to Agent Orange as a child. From there, his medical state continued to deteriorate. In 2013, he had to have his right lung removed completely.

Jonathan and Kaye, who now found themselves homeless, began researching the best places to receive treatment and decided that New Orleans was best equipped to care for Jonathan's medical needs. They arrived in 2016 and connected with Health Care for the Homeless, an initiative of the City of New Orleans that offers primary health care to people in the area regardless of ability to pay for services. Shortly after, Jonathan's left lung collapsed and had to be surgically repaired. He spent 22 days in the hospital.

Because they were a stable couple trying to get their feet on the ground and their life back on track, Health Care for the Homeless referred Jonathan and Kaye to Catholic Charities' Health Guardians program. Thanks to a generous grant from the Humana Foundation, Health Guardians and Ciara Independent Living, another CCANO program, were able to work together to meet all of Jonathan and Kaye's needs.



a roof over their head and a place for Jonathan to recover from surgery other than a homeless shelter. The complex also gave them a sense of community and a support system during Jonathan's recovery and beyond.

Health Guardians helped the couple apply for Medicaid, find doctors, schedule appointments and meet copays for their medications. They also helped them acquire food stamps, a government-issued cell phone, bus passes, identification cards, cleaning supplies for their apartment, a nebulizer machine to ease Jonathan's respiratory problems and more. "They've been such a big help," Kaye commented. "I don't know where we'd be without them."

Jonathan and Kaye are grateful to the Ciara and Health Guardians programs for giving them a place to live and help in so many ways, but they're most grateful that this program allows them to remain together as a couple. If they'd had to live in a homeless shelter, they'd be forced to spend the majority of their time apart. "We've been able to accomplish so much together as a family," Jonathan said.

The couple is part of a group called "Krewe de Lose," which incentivizes residents to make healthy lifestyle changes. They were given bikes to use both for transportation and exercise. Jonathan also tends a small garden in the yard at Ciara, cooking with what he grows. He's hoping to help grow a new phase of Krewe de Lose, teaching residents to cook in innovative and healthy ways.

Brittany Simmons, Program Coordinator of Ciara Independent Living, commented, "Them being here has really helped foster a sense of community. They help out a lot; they're just great residents." Helping others is important to Jonathan and Kaye, who are grateful for the help they've received and want to pay it forward to others in the community. They hope to soon begin volunteering with other Catholic Charities programs. Since he's been in their shoes and knows their struggles, Jonathan wants to work with English as a Second Language students and refugee families.

Moving forward, Jonathan and Kaye have a bright future ahead full of possibilities and opportunity. Health Guardians is working with them to secure disability and unemployment benefits so they can branch out on their own, and Jonathan

is researching online education programs in the hopes of becoming an electrical engineer.

Paula Stewart, a Health Guardians Patient Navigator who's had the privilege of working with Jonathan and Kaye, commented, "They're a motivated couple; they have the desire to be self-sufficient and successful. They're the perfect example of what we do and what we stand for."

*Working as a team, these two programs and other community organizations have helped Jonathan and Kaye medically, financially, socially, emotionally and so much more.*

Ciara Independent Living is an independent living apartment complex for adults that creates a stigma-free and safe living environment and fosters a sense of community. Health Guardians is an intensive, integrated care model that addresses and removes barriers to health care, helping patients achieve self-sufficiency and better quality of life.

Working as a team, these two programs and other community organizations have helped Jonathan and Kaye medically, financially, socially, emotionally and so much more. Ciara Independent Living gave the couple

## CCANO AmeriCorps Member Recognized for Outstanding Service

As part of the 5th annual Mayors and County Day of Recognition for National Service, Mayor Mitch Landrieu presented Danielle Metz, a CCANO AmeriCorps member since December 2016, with the Joseph Massenburg Memorial Award for Excellence in National Service. The award is given to participants of AmeriCorps, AmeriCorps Vista and Senior Corps who demonstrate an exemplary commitment to service in the New Orleans community.

In 1993, Danielle, then 26 years old and a mother of two, received three life sentences plus an additional 20 years for conspiracy to distribute cocaine. President Obama's efforts to commute and grant clemency to non-violent drug offenders inspired Danielle to fight for a chance at life outside the prison walls. Never giving up hope, she fought for clemency and the chance to see her children again.



With the help of a letter written to President Obama from U.S. Attorney Kenneth Polite, Danielle was granted her freedom on August 30, 2016, after 23 years behind bars.

Danielle has dedicated her life to telling her story so others can learn from it. Since her release, she has spoken to participants of St. Vincent de Paul's Re-Entry 72 program, Loyola University New Orleans' Jesuit Social Research Institute, Catholic Charities' annual Symposium for Systemic Change and Criminal Justice Reform and more.

As a CCANO AmeriCorps member, Danielle serves with our Food for Families/Food for Seniors program, packing monthly food boxes to be delivered to low-income senior citizens. In addition to this, she is actively seeking full-time employment and receiving workforce development training.

Her greatest joy since being released, aside from reuniting with her family, was being able to write President Obama a letter personally thanking him for her freedom. Danielle believes that her freedom is a gift and shows her appreciation to all who helped and supported her throughout the process by helping others and giving back to the community.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Foster Grandparent Essie Theyard

Essie Theyard has completed 17 years of service to Catholic Charities' Foster Grandparent Program! She began volunteering in 1999 as a tutor, mentor and volunteer at the Methodist Home for Children, which provided a broad range of services including therapeutic foster care, home-based services, out-patient counseling and residential treatment services for children and families experiencing crises, emotional stress and relationship problems.

In 2007, Ms. Essie began volunteering at James Singleton Charter School, where she still serves today. She works one-on-one with students in a classroom setting, assisting them with literacy skills, social and emotional issues, developmental skills, self-esteem and engagement. She spends 6 hours every school day tutoring the children and providing positive reinforcement, which increases their self-esteem and makes them feel loved and supported.

Ms. Essie, who has a college degree in English and Speech, taught English to ninth and tenth graders for years before becoming a foster grandparent. Her experience and knowledge allow her to help the students improve both their written and spoken English skills.

For Ms. Essie, it's the little things about being a foster grandparent that are the most enjoyable. She says, "The best part of the day is just sitting down right next to them while they do their seat work. I help them with their letters and their words. I can help them get their handwriting straight!"

In her time at James Singleton Charter School, Ms. Essie has received an outstanding rating every year from the teachers there. One teacher commented, "Ms. Essie is a pleasure to work with. She helps the children complete their work very effectively and improves their self-esteem. She understands the needs of children with special problems."

A wonderful person both inside and out, Ms. Essie truly understands the commitment of helping others and always shares her joy for the work with those around her. Thank you for your service, Ms. Essie!



## SAVE THE DATE:

**April 20**  
Volunteer Information Session, 4PM

**April 25**  
Peace Prayer Walk, 6PM at the Hispanic Apostolate

**May 2**  
GiveNOLA Day

For more information on all of Catholic Charities' upcoming events, check out our website [www.ccano.org](http://www.ccano.org)!