



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.

A Mother's Love

Dear friends of Catholic Charities,

During this month of May, the month of Mother's Day and the month of Mary, I've reflected on what a mother's love means. Following the Feast of Mary, Mother of God, Pope Francis offered that mothers are indispensable to society and the church; they show the world what it means to generously give of oneself, respect life, and show tenderness and moral strength in times of trouble. Pope Francis went on to add that a world without mothers would be "inhumane."

A few weeks ago, New Orleans had the privilege of hosting a conference of Catholic Charities Diocesan Directors from around the country; 83 different Catholic Charities Directors were in attendance. These events are always so energizing. Sharing best practices, unique struggles and successes, and taking stock of the vast network of resources that we share can only bring positive growth to our individual organizations and Catholic Charities as a whole. What I was not expecting and what really struck a chord with me was in speaking

with the conference staff, which put on a wonderful event, I found many hotel employees expressing gratitude for the work of Catholic Charities in the community. Some of the men and women I spoke with shared with me that they or someone they loved had been directly affected by Catholic Charities' work.

I share this with you first to demonstrate how your support makes a tangible difference in the community. The more than 70,000 people assisted by Catholic Charities each year come to us from all walks of life, at a time when they need the help and hope that the organization provides. I also share this with you to bring full circle the idea of a mother's love. We are all brothers and sisters in the eyes of the Lord and it is an undeniable fact that each person is

some mother's child. In Catholic Charities mission of respecting each person and serving those in need, as we are impelled to by the love and teachings of Jesus Christ, we emulate Mary in her faith and motherly love. Thank you for joining with us in this mission. Throughout this month we pray to our God's Blessed Mother, Mary, for all the mothers, living and deceased, in our Catholic Charities community.

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



Pat Quinlan, Natasia Kissinger, Sr. Marjorie, and Lisa Baynham

Thank you to the students from St. Paul's School in Covington who volunteered at PACE and Greenwalt!



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www.ccano.org
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New Location for Food for Families

FFF is moving the Commodity Supplemental Food Program distribution from Our Lady of Sacred Heart 1720 Saint Bernard Ave at the end of April. The new location is Our Lady Star of the Sea, 1835 Saint Roch Ave. The first distribution will be Tuesday May 10. The new distribution schedule is Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm. For more information call (504) 245-7207 or (504) 343-3417.

**Our Next Volunteer
Information Session
will be on
Tuesday, May 17
at 4pm**

AHCA

End of Campaign Reception

More than 120 past and current volunteers, chairpersons, board members and major donors to the campaign were on hand at Palace Café to celebrate the success of the 50th Anniversary Archbishop Hannan Community Appeal. The campaign raises unrestricted funds to support the important work of Catholic Charities through a network of more than 30 ministries, programs and community partnerships which serve the homeless, feed the hungry, and care for the elderly, at-risk youth, pregnant women, individuals with developmental delays, and many others. Archbishop Aymond congratulated guests on a successful 50th Anniversary Campaign and recognized chair couples Clifton and Elizabeth LeBlanc and Price and Christine LeBlanc for their dedication and leadership to the Archbishop Hannan Community Appeal. The 50th Anniversary Archbishop Hannan Community Appeal campaign surpassed its \$1.7 million goal, raising \$2,002,406!



Regina Templet, Tommie Vassel, Sr. Marjorie Hebert



Jerry Bologna, Penelope O’Krepki, Fred Sigur



Price & Christine LeBlanc, Archbishop Aymond, Clifton & Elizabeth LeBlanc



Anne & King Milling



The Palace Café

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

The 2016 hurricane season is quickly approaching, and being prepared is the most crucial element to staying safe! Now is the time to make an emergency plan for you and your family. Identify where your family will go in case of an evacuation, which may include finding pet friendly locations. Establish a meeting place and communication methods in case your family becomes separated.

Once your family’s plan is in place, make sure your home is also ready. You can do so by securing and cleaning gutters, trimming or removing large tree limbs and securing all doors and windows. Be sure to have enough supplies, including clothing, nonperishable

food, and clean drinking water, to last several days. Additionally, you should prepare a disaster supply kit, including the following items:

- Flashlight
- Radio
- Extra batteries
- First aid supplies
- Cash
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, medical records, wills, etc.)

Follow Catholic Charities on Twitter (@cathcharitiesNO) and Facebook (Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans) as we share tips and resources during Hurricane Preparedness Week, May 15-21, and throughout

hurricane season.

For more information on preparing your family and your home for hurricane season, visit www.ready.gov/hurricanes. Remember, hurricane season begins on June 1st!

Volunteer Spotlight:

Kallin Zehren

Kallin Zehren is currently a Junior at Tulane University, where she works as the Service Chair at Tulane’s Catholic Center. When she took on the role, she wanted to expand the Catholic Center’s service initiatives, and turned to Catholic Charities to ask about their areas of greatest need. She put together a volunteering initiative for the children at Baronne St. Housing, a transitional shelter for homeless families.

On Saturdays, she brings out a team of 12 students and local volunteers for three hours to spend time reading, doing arts and crafts, and dancing with the children living there. The younger children are easier to work with and more ready to accept volunteers with open arms, she says, while the older children can sometimes be less trusting because of the tough life experiences that they have gone through. Zehren’s team of volunteers is versatile, however, and volunteers are able to take one-on-one time with older children to get through to them. According to Zehren, one of the most rewarding parts of the job comes when an older or shy child finally opens up to a volunteer and starts to have fun.

Zehren and her team are doing more than just having fun! Recently, she has emphasized talking to young female children about more than their looks, and complimenting them on their crafts, abilities, and skills. As she and her team have made that a priority, she says the young girls are even happier and more excited to have the volunteers around.



According to Zehren, one of the most difficult parts of the job is leaving at the end of the day. “Sometimes I have to physically remove children who are hugging on to me and asking me not to go,” she says. Furthermore, because the shelter is transitional, she often does not get to see the same children from week to week, and it is hard for her not to get attached. Zehren realizes that not seeing a child again can be a positive thing, perhaps meaning that their family has been lifted out of the cycle of homelessness and poverty. Join us in giving a big thank you to Kallin Zehren and all of her wonderful volunteers who are providing the children at Baronne St. Housing with hope, confidence, fun and most importantly, LOVE! To read more volunteer spotlights, visit our website at <http://www.ccano.org/blog/>.

Baronne Street Housing is a shelter that offers transitional housing for women or men with their children. It can accommodate 16 families and is one of the few family shelters where men are accepted. Services provided include case management, counseling, advocacy, referrals for additional services, therapeutic and educational groups.

ACCESS Pregnancy

Pregnancy is an exciting time full of nursery preparations, gender reveals and showers, and shopping for baby items. However, it can also bring feelings of anxiousness and concern. At ACCESS Pregnancy and Referral Center, trained client advocates recognize the financial, personal and family concerns that are often experienced by expecting mothers. These advocates are trained to help both during and after pregnancy with individualized support, counseling and referrals for any pregnancy-related needs.

Ashley Sinceno experienced this roller coaster of emotions first-hand. After learning she was pregnant about a year ago, she instantly became concerned about her new future. Then, she came



across the ACCESS mobile unit out on its daily route and decided to schedule an appointment. Ashley boarded the mobile unit a few days later and was greeted by a friendly staff of trained professionals ready to help however they could.

First, Ashley was administered a pregnancy test. Once her pregnancy was confirmed, the staff began working closely with her to ensure all of her needs and her

baby’s needs were met over the next nine months and beyond. ACCESS offers a full range of pregnancy education including nutrition, parenting, childbirth, breastfeeding and newborn care. Staff members can also offer referrals for additional services such as counseling. All services offered are free and confidential.

For Ashley, the mobile unit was convenient, and she appreciated the one-on-one attention and support that the staff gave her throughout her pregnancy. The confidentiality experienced at ACCESS also made Ashley feel more at ease seeking help. She commented, “ACCESS is a great resource, and I hope they continue to be there for other women with situations like mine.”

Ashley continues to visit ACCESS once a month to pick up diapers for her daughter, Macey Lynn, who is now two months old. ACCESS operates a Diaper Bank, which allows families to pick up a supply of diapers and wipes once a month to help defray the cost of raising a newborn. Catholic Charities’ Director of Pro-Life Services, Michelle Black, shared, “It is a privilege to walk with clients like Ashley throughout the journey of pregnancy and to be able to continue offering support through the diaper bank program as she adjusts to life with her beautiful new baby.”

In addition to the mobile unit, ACCESS also has a stationary location in Metairie where clients can receive resources and services. To learn more about the services offered by ACCESS and view the mobile unit’s current schedule, please visit www.ccano.org/accesspregnancy/.

CiARA HOUSE: 33 Years of Service to the Mentally Ill

Catholic Charities' Ciara House program took in its first clients, homeless individuals with a form of mental illness, in April of 1983. During this time, New Orleans was housing most of its citizens with mental illnesses in state mental health hospitals and was in great need of a housing program. The original group of Ciara House clients had been living in a mental health hospital for more than 20 years. Over time, Ciara House also began to serve individuals who had not been hospitalized for an extended period of time and saw great success transitioning these clients to live a more independent life.

A New Model for Mental Illness

Under the leadership of Sister Anthony Barczykowski and Monetta Clark, the Ciara House program expanded. Sister Anthony, the executive director of Catholic Charities at the time, began to move clients capable of independent living from Ciara House into empty Archdiocesan-owned buildings to create a safe housing community for the mentally ill. A new model for housing the mentally ill was born.

The state of Louisiana referred individuals to Ciara House, where staff worked with clients to educate them about mental illness, the need to effectively take their medication, and how to avoid hospitalizations. After a year or two, many clients "graduated" from Ciara House and moved into the independent apartments. These apartments were funded solely by Catholic Charities and the residents who paid a modest rent to cover building costs. Residents were able to utilize the support services of Ciara House and thrive in a community of individuals with similar shared experiences.

During this time, Ciara House had staff on call 24 hours a day, in order to be a resource for both the in-house clients as well as those in the independent



Monetta Clark

living apartments. Monetta Clark, a founding member of the program, recalls receiving a phone call from an apartment resident one morning who said that she had been struggling with depression and was not sure that she could make it to work. Clark convinced the woman to attempt to go to work and spoke to the woman throughout the day to make sure she had the support that she needed.

The caring staff and tightly knit community was truly life changing for a group of people often seen as outcasts. By 2004, the program had 12-15 clients in its group home and over 50 people in independent apartments.

The ultimate goal for the Ciara Independent Living residents is to reach the highest level of independence, which starts with the way other people interact with them.

Hurricane Katrina

When Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, the group home clients and three staff members evacuated to Brandon, Mississippi. Due to a lack of time and resources, the apartment residents were forced to make evacuation plans on their own. When it was apparent the destruction of the Hurricane would make it impossible to immediately return to the city, the residents moved into an empty house owned by a parish church in Brandon.

"The parish was so wonderful," said Monetta Clark, who had travelled with the clients to Brandon. "They really took care of these people. The state of Mississippi provided all of the necessary medical treatment and the parish provided meals and stability in an uncertain time."

When the group returned to New Orleans nine weeks after the storm, they found the damage to both the group home and the apartment buildings was manageable. The program was the only state-funded mental health group home that survived Katrina.

With a grant from the Red Cross after Katrina, Ciara House was able to buy a house on Dante Street where the program is currently located. The house next door was owned by a local bank who generously donated it to the program for an office location.

Ciara Independent Living

Due to state budget cuts in 2010, the Dante Street location transitioned into an independent living apartment complex for single adults with



New Dante St. location

mental illness. Using their federal disability income, residents pay rent, provide their own meals, and live a relatively independent life. Bob Wardlaw, who has been with the program since 2007, has been running the Dante Street apartments since 2010. Now called Ciara Independent Living, the program has expanded to include a location in Metairie and serves 34 residents. Residents are referred to the apartments by a multitude of sources including case managers, hospitals, and the National Association for Mental Illness (NAMI).

The residents of Ciara Independent Living are already working with case managers when they enter the apartments to ensure they are stable and getting the treatment that they need. The average resident is middle-aged and usually suffers from a disorder like schizophrenia. Wardlaw, along with a former resident who now provides maintenance services, serve as both property managers and problem solvers for the residents.

"It really helps the residents just to know that I am there and I care about their situation," says Wardlaw. "Ninety percent of my job is listening to people." The residents also look out for each other, helping one another with food when funds run short, and providing a stigma-free safe community.

The ultimate goal for the Ciara Independent Living residents is to reach the highest level of independence, which starts with the way other people interact with them. When Wardlaw started working with the program, he had no experience with mental illness.



Mike Lomax

"My idea of mental illness when I came to work on my first day and when I left were worlds apart," he says. He quickly learned that the most effective way to reach his residents was to treat them like normal adults. "It's really rare for them to have those types of interactions, and they really respond to it," he adds.

Ciara Permanent Housing

At the same time the state budget cuts transitioned Ciara Independent Living into a housing-only program, Catholic Charities sought other sources of funding to continue to provide case management to people with mental illness in New Orleans. Alongside Ciara Independent Living, they formed Ciara Permanent Housing using funding from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Ciara Permanent Housing provides both housing and intensive case management to people with mental disorders around New Orleans using HUD funding. It differs from Ciara Independent Living because the Ciara Permanent Housing residents not only receive case management, but they are also spread throughout individual apartments around the city and not in a shared community building.

Mike Lomax, Ciara Permanent Housing Program Director, serves as the case manager for all 15 clients the program serves. He helps them with home management, budgeting, doctor visits, medication checks, and makes weekly home visits. Lomax says it was difficult for him to build trust with his clients at first, because they are all accustomed to stigmatization and isolation. Because these clients are spread out in apartments around the city, they do not have the same community resources as the residents of Ciara Independent Living. Lomax makes himself available to his clients 24 hours a day to ensure they always have a person willing to listen and help. Lomax and Ciara Permanent Housing have been wildly successful with treating their clients. In their five years of operation, only one person has left the program. Lomax says he has almost no crisis calls to the emergency room or psychiatric wards, which were regular occurrences for many of the clients before they joined the program.

Mental Health Today

Both Ciara Independent Living and Ciara Permanent Housing have proven amazingly successful resources for the mentally ill around the city, but these programs combined only serve 50 individuals due to housing space limitations and requirements to receive federal funding.

Dr. Elmore Rigamore, the Medical Director for Catholic Charities, explains the problem with effectively serving the mentally ill begins with lack of medical institutions and funding for treatment. Many primary care physicians are uncomfortable with seeing the mentally ill, he says, and most mentally ill people cannot afford primary care in the first place. Furthermore, the mentally ill who go untreated wind up on the street. He estimates that up to one half of the homeless population in New Orleans suffers from some form of mental illness.

With no state funding available, Catholic Charities is doing everything it can to help this vulnerable population through private and foundation donations. "Catholic Charities and Ciara House have been really heroic in dealing with the mentally ill and homeless," Dr. Rigamore proudly says. "We have never been out of the business of taking care of the homeless."

