



OCTOBER 2019

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.

In Giving, We Receive

Dear Friend of Catholic Charities,

In October, we celebrate the feast of St. Francis who reminds us, "It is in giving that we receive." So often, we are told to acquire more – a larger salary, a bigger house, a new car, etc. However, this quest to attain a powerful appearance can be harmful, leading to a spiritual emptiness. In giving love, forgiveness, and patience, we ultimately receive more – a more peaceful existence, closer relationships, and an improved community. Instead of viewing our resources as limited and hoarding our possessions, giving our spiritual goods multiplies our inner wealth. Those who are more welcoming and loving become richer and more adorned with values.



This is the heart of Catholic Charities. We hear the cry of those in need, and because we care, we respond. The client journeys featured in this month's newsletter inspire me to continue to give my service to our community. So let us embrace abundance over scarcity, open our hearts, and give to one another. As St. Francis says, "Peace on earth begins with me," and I encourage you to bring that peace to others!

God bless you and give you peace,
Sr. Marjorie Hebert, M.S.C.
Sr. Marjorie Hebert, M.S.C.
President/CEO

COLLABORATION ON THE NORTH SHORE

When Reverend Rodney Bourg from Most Holy Trinity Church in Covington encountered Rita, a parishioner who was 89 years old with no living family and a home she could no longer afford, he reached out to Stephanie Dupepe from CCANO's North Shore Pastoral Center. Rita lost her husband and her son within the last two years and was left with massive credit card debt and medical bills. Stephanie quickly determined that Rita's housing costs were far above her means, and she was struggling to keep up the house. CCANO first assisted with covering some immediate needs such as utilities and helped Rita apply for SNAP benefits. However, there were more complex issues to address, so Stephanie reached out to community partners.



of her fixed income. Once the house sold, volunteers from Stepping Stones Ministry (Family Promise) secured a storage unit for her furniture and personal items, packed everything up, and moved everything out over multiple days. A local congregation in Lacombe had a house on their property and let Rita stay there until her apartment at Rouquette Lodge in Mandeville was available. Through Stepping Stones Ministry' advocacy, Rita was awarded a monthly pension from Veteran Affairs due to her deceased husband's years of service in the Army. Rita then used the sale of her house to pay off her debts and her car note.

This community collaboration lifted Rita out of a potentially dire situation and blessed her with long-term affordable housing and a stable budget. Catholic Charities strives to build strong, effective relationships with other providers so that clients like Rita can thrive.

Learn about the North Shore Pastoral Center at <http://www.ccano.org/north-shore-pastoral-center/>.

Fostering Love

Alice Skinner has been a foster parent for over twenty years, welcoming many children into her home. In October 2013, CCANO's Therapeutic Family Services (TFS) approached her about fostering an eight-month-old boy who had been hospitalized with medical issues. Alice disclosed, "I was nervous after I saw all of the tubes connected to his small body, but I learned how to take care of him." Five years later in March 2019, the courts finalized Alice's adoption of Kaiden. "He's been here since he was eight months old. This is the only house and home he's known, so when we went to court to finalize the adoption, nothing changed between Kaiden and me," Alice revealed. Things went on as usual; a piece of paper did not make the love and care Alice has given Kaiden since he was an infant more real or legitimate.

As Alice shared this, Kaiden walked closer to hear her speak about him, sat crossed-legged on the edge of the coffee table, and reached out his small hand to offer her an onion ring. "See," Alice pointed, "other foster kids I've had in the past would never just sit down like that on my coffee table. I've had foster kids ask me if they could have a cup of water because their previous foster families wouldn't let them go into the kitchen or open the refrigerator. In my house, Kaiden is made to feel like he belongs here, not like he's a guest who doesn't feel comfortable enough to really live in the space. I want him to know this house is his home just like my other children."

Kaiden then proudly pulled out a thick album with his name on the side filled with photographs of him growing up, evidence that not only was someone there for him throughout all of those moments, they took the time and effort to document these family memories and print them out. Kaiden points out pictures of Paw Paw, Alice's next-door neighbor who has built a strong bond with Kaiden as if he was his grandfather. Paw Paw appears in photos throughout the years at Kaiden's birthday parties always with a protective stance. Kaiden even calls Alice's daughter "Mama" and called her daughter's late husband "Papa."

There are 4,000 children in foster care in Louisiana; 140 of these children are waiting for adoptive families. Children enter foster care because they or their families are going through a crisis. Adoption is not necessarily the end goal for all foster children, though. Removal from parents creates feelings of

mistrust, abandonment, and a sense of constant upheaval. Despite the severe circumstances that led to a child being removed, the biological parents are still extremely important to the child, so all efforts to help the bio parents regain custody are made. Foster care is intended to provide temporary/short-term care for a child. For instance, Alice still has a very close relationship with a former foster child of hers who aged out of the system. It was not in the cards for her to adopt him, but he has received a consistent and stable source of love and support. Kaiden now has two younger siblings, and Alice tries to keep him connected to his birth mother. He is proud to be a big brother and has pictures in his photo album of his siblings and biological parents.

TFS supports foster parents by offering supportive services and trainings including workshops about abuse and neglect, communication, socialization, conflict resolution, and more. These sessions allow foster parents to unite as a community for support and advice. Shacidy Hadley-Bush, Program Director of TFS, shares, "Seeing the children find security in a loving home with someone who has proven trustworthy is the most rewarding part of this work. It can be a difficult and long road to get there, but in the end, it's all worth it to know that these children now have committed family members who will support them." To learn more about becoming a foster parent or about Therapeutic Family Services, visit www.ccano.org/tfs.

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Care for Caregivers

After her parents' divorce as a baby, Patricia Davidson did not meet her father, "Pops," until she was 22 years old and did not have much contact with him since. It was only after a phone call from her aunt that led her to reconnect as an adult. Patricia's aunt shared that Pops had been living with her but that she could no longer care for him, so Patricia decided to travel to California to see him in person. She found him isolated and taking out his frustrations on others due to his dementia diagnosis. Patricia thought that he might be happier in his hometown and made a proposal: either move to a nursing home in California or go back to New Orleans with her. Although this was a huge step in their relationship after so many years apart, she remembered what her mother always said - no matter what, he was her father.

After a few months of living together, Patricia did not know how to make things work. She had converted two rooms in her house for his bedroom and television room, but they were not familiar enough with each other to communicate effectively. Additionally, people with dementia like Pops get anxiety from new environments and routines. After five months, Patricia recognized that she needed help, and a friend suggested she try PACE.

At PACE, Patricia met Trisha Ventura, an occupational therapist certified to deliver Skills2Care, a research-tested occupational therapy program that benefits both people with dementia and their caregivers. It aims to improve the well-being and skills of caregivers and to reduce challenging behaviors and slow the decline in daily function of people with dementia. "When I first met Patricia, she was frustrated and overwhelmed with Mr. Davidson and the daily care routine," Ventura says. "They were constantly arguing, and he resisted her attempts to assist him."

The Skills2Care occupational therapy sessions emphasized education about dementia, strategies to help calm Pops and his resistance to care, and caregiver wellness and relaxation. Patricia has also learned how to communicate more effectively with Pops and recognize what would upset him. These new strategies improved their lives, easing the burden Patricia felt as Pop's primary caregiver.

Patricia is also benefitting from Skills2Care with time to go to the gym and shop without worrying about who is watching Pops. He now loves the back deck of Davidson's home in the upper 9th Ward where he spends his mornings and evenings before watching his favorite TV shows. He has also established a new routine by attending the adult daycare center close to home. Patricia shares, "The program has been a true blessing. God helped to provide a great solution to a problem I previously found hard to manage."

Learn more about PACE's support of both patients and their caregivers at <http://www.ccano.org/pace>.



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Youth on the Rise

As a pilot site for the National Council for Behavioral Health's CONNECTED grant, our Immigration and Refugee Services team has made great strides in creating a support group and space for youth to express themselves. They have gauged local youth interest and availability, organized outreach, contacted community partners, and planned excursions for youth bonding. Our three youth innovators have learned how health and human services programs operate, how to conduct interviews, administer surveys, collect responses, and understand data.

Our three youth influencers; Danny, Richard, and Sam; originally received legal and/or social services from Immigration and Refugee Services and were nominated by staff who recognized their intelligence, drive, and capacity. Anna Karina Delage, Supervising Case Manager, shares, "I have known Danny since 2017. He always preferred to try to speak in English. He has grown from a timid, shy teen to a young adult with dreams, goals, and a strong voice. Richard has been openhearted, brave, and excited since the project started. Sam has presented our project to community partners, started the ball rolling on many ideas, and is always ready to ask questions."

The group recently traveled to Denver for a conference where they presented their project to other CONNECTED grantees and health professionals. "At her first training in Denver, Sam started off shy but ended up expressing her truth about how her family's status influences her identity. I saw Richard interacting more with others, telling his story, and speaking from the heart. He is a born leader. The entire room felt the power of their warm presence. They have SO MUCH to contribute!" says Anna Karina.

Danny hopes to provide opportunities for young people to spread their wings. He reveals, "I hope to create a space where young people can express themselves - where they can understand the importance of mental health and lead happy lives by being themselves, not just what others expect them to be. I knew that this project was going to reach many people and change lives like how it has changed mine. I have learned to tell my story and create a platform for others who may not have the courage to tell their stories yet. Because being different is not bad. Porque ser diferente no es malo."

We look forward to witnessing Danny, Richard, and Sam's growth as they bring more local youth into this project.