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Faith in the Future



FEBRUARY 2026

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



I recently had the chance to spend the afternoon at a special event hosted by the **Fore!Kids Foundation**, where Catholic Charities was one of the recipients of funding this year made possible by the 2025 Zurich Classic of New Orleans.



I was taken aback by the number of people and organizations that filled the gym at St. Michael Special School. More than 80 nonprofits throughout the metro New Orleans area were represented. Seeing the number of organizations not only made me realize we all have a hand in doing God's work, but it also brought home for me the impact Catholic Charities has had on the community through not just one program, but nearly two dozen touching the lives of children, seniors, families, and the disabled.

For instance, last year alone, our **Head Start & Early Head Start** program provided more than 55,000 meals to students at four locations. **Cornerstone** provided year-long case management for 313 men and women, setting them up for success by helping them thrive post-incarceration and reducing recidivism. For our **PACE** program, 225 seniors in the community were recipients of nearly 100,000 in-home care visits, CNA visits, pastoral care visits, nursing care provisions, rehab programs, nutritional counseling sessions, and free transportation and meals. **Project SAVE** assisted 125 domestic violence survivors escape abusive relationships. **Pregnancy Services** distributed nearly 130,000 diapers and wipes to 844 households.

Numbers only tell part of our story.

In this year's annual report, we recounted the story of **Fred Washington**, who sought assistance from our Bridges to Self Sufficiency Homeless Services program.

In the article, Fred said he poured his heart out to director Johnell Williams, sharing, "From that point on, Ms. Williams did everything in her power to help me and my family. I'm getting goosebumps



just talking about it. She saw something in me and my kids and knew that I am a really good person."

What dawned on me was that everyone's story is unique and doesn't always fit a simple narrative with easy solutions. I believe Fred's testimony is indicative of the impact of our programs and illustrates that our program staff are always prepared to find the answers and give 110% of themselves to set people up for success. It's not just a job to them, but a personal mission to raise people up.

The numbers that accompany our programs are strengthened by the stories of hope that are passed down throughout generations. Everyone's tale carries lessons, resilience, and inspiration. Together, let's celebrate these narratives that inspire change!

With gratitude and blessings,

Cynthia T. Hayes
President and CEO

Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans



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.

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at all Masses

February 21 and 22

Please donate today to help Catholic Charities continue our mission of helping our neighbors meet immediate needs and face long-term challenges! Use the QR code or go online to make a secure donation at www.ccano.org/secondcollection



THANK YOU to our incredible community for your unwavering support of the Archbishop Hannan Community Appeal. Together, we've raised an amazing \$1.2 MILLION toward our \$2 million goal! Your generosity is truly transforming lives and creating a lasting impact in those around us. Join this journey of hope and change—every gift counts. Scan the QR code or visit www.ccano.org/ahca to make your difference today.



'Grandma Bridges' Brings Hugs and Mentorship to Foster Grandparents Program

Stepping into the classroom in New Orleans, the group of two-year olds was small, but their energy seemed limitless. Much of their attention was centered on 88-year-old Bobbie Bridges, who was sitting down, patiently spending time with each child as they brought her toys and peppered her with questions.

Bobbie, or Grandma Bridges, is enrolled in Catholic Charities' Foster Grandparents Program, which provides a way for low-income seniors to stay active through volunteer service with children and youth in their communities. Foster Grandparents can be found throughout the New Orleans area at several preschools, including Catholic Charities' Head Start locations.

For 22 years, Grandma Bridges has been waking up each weekday to spend quality time with children as a Foster Grandparent. Grandma Bridges exemplifies and shares her lifelong experience of nurturing and guidance with the children, who come from vulnerable communities where families often experience economic hardship and limited resources. The Foster Grandparents Program is not a babysitting job for seniors, but an opportunity to provide mentorship while reinforcing learning and supporting student engagement and confidence in the classroom.

"Just as families trust schools to nurture their children's growth,

they also turn to the Foster Grandparents Program for that special bond. Having a caring adult—a grandparent figure—brings warmth and stability, creating lasting impacts on young lives," says Ana Mendieta, director of the Foster Grandparents Program.

This additional support also empowers foundational skills and fosters positive learning behaviors.

Lashawn McCaskill, one of two co-teachers in this classroom for the past decade, has seen how these positive learning behaviors are implemented in the classroom, including when the children help give Grandma Bridges a hug at the start of the day and guide her with her cane to her chair.

After more than two decades, it's not surprising to learn what keeps Grandma Bridges coming back.

"The children make my day! I love getting up every morning coming here and being with them. Every day is a joy to be with them," Grandma Bridges says.



Grandma Bridges with teachers Annette Blankenship Warner and Lashawn McCaskill.



Fore!Kids Foundation Supports Catholic Charities

Catholic Charities is honored to be among 83 local charities receiving a generous donation from the Fore!Kids Foundation this year. Together, we're part of the Foundation's \$800,000 overall donation, made possible by the \$3.6 million raised at the 2025 Zurich Classic of New Orleans. These funds will uplift thousands of children & families in our community.



L to R: Tom Long, 2025 Tournament Chair, Cynthia Hayes, President and CEO of Catholic Charities, Torie Kranze, 2026 Tournament Chair.

New Administrator at Padua Announced

Padua House is proud to welcome Cassandra M. Toumba as its new Administrator. With more than 30 years of experience in nursing, Cassandra brings a deep wealth of knowledge, leadership, and compassion to the Padua House community. Cassandra has been at Padua for two years, first serving as RN Consultant, then as Director of Resident Care.

Cassandra is a Charity School of Nursing graduate and earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from William Carey University. Her diverse background in bedside care, education, management, and community service uniquely positions her to lead Padua House with both clinical excellence and heartfelt dedication.



St. Rosalie Women Attend Special Mardi Gras Parade at Walmart

The residents from the St. Rosalie Community Home created unforgettable memories during a Mardi Gras parade inside Walmart in Slidell.

Each year, the Krewe of Walmart #2665 transforms the store into a colorful celebration, with associates crafting amazing floats from pallets and shopping carts. Costumed associates spread happiness by tossing beads and delightful treats to everyone, including our friends from STARC of Louisiana, who work tirelessly to uplift those with disabilities across St. Tammany and beyond.



Happy Mardi Gras from PACE!



Seniors gathered at the PACE Benson Center to hold their annual Mardi Gras Ball, complete with live music, king cake, and an unforgettable second line celebration and presentation of this year's Mardi Gras Court.

Cast members Connor Sullivan and Robert Tully from the touring musical production of *Water for Elephants* got in on the fun too, volunteering their time during the stop in New Orleans.

Congrats to this year's PACE Mardi Gras court, which included Stanley Taylor (King), Beverly Brown (Queen), Irma Allen, William Clark, Leroy Dabney, Linda Moore, Louise Martin and Barrie Williams.