

Early Fall 2024
Vol 24 | No 2

Catholic Charities
of the Archdiocese of Chicago



SPIRIT



**Welcoming
with arms
open wide**

Our inspiration

May this be a place of shelter for you.
When you come...
May all the weight of the world
Fall from your shoulders.

May your heart be tranquil here,
Blessed by peace the world cannot give.

May this be a safe place
Full of understanding and acceptance,
Where you can be as you are,
Without the need of a mask
Of pretense or image.

May this be a place of discovery,
Where the possibilities that sleep
In the clay of your soul can emerge
To deepen and refine your vision
For all that is yet to come to birth.

Adapted from "For a New Home" by John O'Donohue

On the front cover:

After a long journey, Alan and Apolo Rodriguez have a place to call home. Together with their parents, Andrea and Yarwin, they are being sponsored by Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity in Winnetka, one of 31 parishes active in our Parish-Family Sponsorship Program. This program represents a coordinated Catholic response—bringing together the Cardinal's office, parishes, and Catholic Charities—to welcome newly arrived migrants into our communities and provide housing. *Read more on page 12 about their story and their new home in Northfield.*



Spirit Magazine—Early Fall 2024

Spirit magazine is a triennial publication of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago that is designed to inspire our readers and offer a message of mercy and hope to a world in need.

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Help us improve lives and nourish spirits across Cook and Lake counties



“We’d set out 12 chairs in a circle but then 20 people would come, so we’d make the circle bigger.”

Tom and Donajean Steiner | LOSS Participants and Facilitators

In 1994, a family member sent Tom and Donajean Steiner a newspaper clipping about Catholic Charities’ Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide (LOSS) Program. At the time, they were receiving grief counseling for the loss of their son, Bill, but there was a disconnect. “It was different then,” says Tom. “People didn’t talk about suicide.”

“I called the number in the article and the woman I spoke with understood everything I was saying because she had been there herself,” recalls Donajean.

Both were apprehensive before their first LOSS meeting. “I was worried they were

going to judge us,” says Donajean, “but then we started to introduce ourselves and I realized they were all in the same place we were.” Tom agrees, “Someone would be talking, and I would think, ‘That’s exactly what I was going to say.’”

They kept returning to the meetings and, over time, they began to heal. In 1997, Tom and Donajean were invited to become LOSS group facilitators.

For nearly 25 years, Tom and Donajean offered the same welcome and acceptance to other survivors of suicide loss. “This was our way to give back,” they say. “Catholic Charities never asked anything

from us; they were just there to take care of us. They still are.”

As facilitators, the Steiners encountered hundreds of individuals seeking to find their way back to life. “It always amazed me how many people this had happened to,” says Donajean. “We’d set out 12 chairs in a circle but then 20 people would come, so we’d make the circle bigger. We wanted to make sure they felt seen.”

Tom and Donajean Steiner in front of a quilt square they made to honor and celebrate their son, Bill, at the 2024 LOSS Blossoms of Hope Brunch.

Dear Friends,

In the parable of the loaves and fishes, Jesus says to the Apostles, “There is no need for them to go away; give them some food yourselves” (Matthew 14:16). His message is clear: sharing is not to be rationed. The more we offer, the more there is to give.

As we at Catholic Charities live into our vision of who we will be in 2030, we embrace our calling to welcome—and to welcome deeply. We embrace the call to welcome with our arms open wide, without reserve, in a spirit of joy and abundance.

The spirit of welcome within our doors and programs is meant to be a source of nourishment, conversation, companionship, and rest for our guests. When we do it well, we provide not only safety and respite, but also relief from the loneliness and isolation of our time. And for ourselves, we may find the gift of discovery and renewal that comes with meeting new people, encountering new ideas, and finding new solutions.

So we must challenge ourselves to become better at welcoming, to eliminate any barriers that may exist within ourselves or within our physical spaces—anything that might block us from doing this radically well.

This extends to our neighbors in need, the strangers in our midst, our partners in mission, our team members, our funders, our donors...

We are dedicated to building programs and environments where welcome—and the acceptance, peace, and hope it inspires—might flourish.



Sally Blount
President and CEO



Sally Blount together with Catholic Charities team leaders and Kerry Alys Robinson of Catholic Charities USA.



Welcoming all to the table of life

Generosity is an opportunity for connection

Material poverty is a fact of daily life for hundreds of thousands of people in Cook and Lake counties. But there is more than one kind of poverty, and the poverty of loneliness has reached epidemic proportions in the U.S., according to the surgeon general.

Just as every person experiences some form of poverty at some point in their lives, so does every person have the capacity to cultivate abundance. Generosity, encounter, and connection with one another are not only ways to imagine abundance but also to bring it to life in the world.

These themes and more emerged as part of a discussion hosted earlier this summer by Catholic Charities' Saint Martin de Porres Society. Moderated by Sally Blount, *Imagining Abundance: Faith, Hope, and Charity in Today's World*, brought together Cardinal Blase Cupich of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Kerry Alys Robinson, President and CEO of Catholic Charities USA. Following are key takeaways from the conversation.

Moral heroes are everywhere

Cardinal Cupich said his parents inspired him and his eight siblings to dedicate their lives to service by always giving what they could to uplift members of their community in Omaha, Nebraska. Taking care of others was how they lived their faith, whether by giving a family in need their last five dollars until the next paycheck, or by advocating for senior nutrition while managing their own infirmities.

"My mother and my father didn't have a lot of money, but they were spontaneously generous," he said. "And so, my hope would be that, for all of us, when we donate to various causes, we don't stop there. We try to engage real people who are poor, just to let them know they're not alone."

Robinson said she witnessed this kind of generosity as a volunteer with the Raskob Foundation, which her great-grandparents founded in 1945 to support the work of the Catholic Church around the world. She said she fell in love with the Church after seeing firsthand how her "moral heroes" on the front lines serve with

mercy and tenderness even in the face of great suffering. Every day in her work with Catholic Charities she says she encounters moral heroes like them—people who, with faith-filled joy, recognize the dignity of every person. They inspire her to seek and foster connections.

"I fell in love with the Church because of women and men—ordained, religious, and lay—who dared to stand witness to human suffering... and yet their faith compelled them to alleviate that human suffering."

—**Kerry Alys Robinson**
Catholic Charities USA



Generosity is humankind's birthright

In a rural, poor part of India, a novice joined St. Teresa of Calcutta in distributing buckets of rice, one per family. Upon learning that an elderly woman would be splitting her allotment of rice with her neighbors, the novice urged St. Teresa to give enough

(continued on page 6)



About the St. Martin de Porres Society

The St. Martin de Porres Society is a premier forum for learning and discussion around the intersection of economic growth, social justice, the mission of Charity, and the practice of mercy. It serves as a convener of partners, advocates, and champions of Catholic Charities and our broader community, providing opportunities for intellectual discovery and conversation about the needs of our region, nation, and world, and the power of faith in meeting those needs.

Saint Martin de Porres events are open to all.

To learn more, contact partners@catholiccharities.net.

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for both families. “These are among the poorest people you will ever encounter,” St. Teresa said. “Never take away the right for someone to be generous.”

Robinson recounted this story about St. Teresa and urged people to embrace a deeper understanding of generosity—to whom does it belong? Who benefits from it? Both she and Cardinal Cupich said generosity is not exclusive to the financially well-off; it is a privilege to which everyone has access.

“I truly believe that generosity is humankind’s birthright,” Robinson said. “We are all called to be generous and to serve as catalysts to inspire generosity in others.”

Cardinal Cupich added that generosity is reciprocal. When put into practice, everyone benefits. In other words, there is receiving in giving.

“There’s a two-way transaction when you help the poor,” said Cardinal Cupich. “They have something to offer us. And we have something more than our riches to offer them. We have our connection with them to let them know they’re not alone.”

Everyone has a place at the table

Abundance is the absence of poverty, and Cardinal Cupich and Robinson said connecting with others is the way to bring it into the world. “We need each other,” said Robinson.

“We’re going to make an inroad on fighting poverty by helping people, by building connections with people, and letting them know that they count—that they’re part of the table of life.”

—**Cardinal Blase Cupich**
Archdiocese of Chicago



Poverty and suffering are opportunities for people to become more human, be more present, reach across barriers, and encounter each other and God. And while it is vital to respond generously to material needs, Cardinal Cupich and Robinson both said they spend time reflecting on how to address the loneliness and isolation that impacts so many people today, regardless of their financial standing.

The hope and mercy that Catholic Charities is called to witness is not only in the support and aid it provides, Robinson said, “It is the way we as people of faith are called to a ministry of presence. We attend to the dignity of the person before us.”

We are part of a much larger constellation of witness and mercy

Catholic Charities USA represents a network of 168 humanitarian aid organizations (Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago is a member) serving millions of people in need every day across the nation.

It is one of myriad ministries working on behalf of the Church. In Chicago, partner organizations serving those in need include Misericordia, Mercy Home, Catholic Extension, and Maryville, not to mention parishes and the Archdiocese of Chicago. Cardinal Cupich said he wants each of these ministries to succeed—and he believes they will if everyone gets involved and embraces the call to generosity and abundance.

“If we all give to the degree that we’re able to make a sacrificial gift,” he said, “all of these causes can be met.”

“I realized it wasn’t just me. I wasn’t alone.”



Brittany | 2024 Graduate, Catholic Charities Family Self-Sufficiency Program

“My passion is cooking for others,” says Brittany, “and my dream is to open my own catering business.”

In 2019, Brittany made the decision to join Catholic Charities’ Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program for single parents. Her sons, Justice and Masiah, were 11 and five at the time. “I wasn’t where I wanted to be,” she says, “but I didn’t know how to change it.”

Joining FSS was not a light decision. When Brittany signed up, she made a five-year commitment to achieve financial, career, and personal goals that she set for herself and to which she would be held accountable. Every step of the way,

she received intensive support from her case manager and other members of her parent cohort.

“When I started, I felt ashamed about my situation. Then I realized it wasn’t just me. I wasn’t alone,” says Brittany. Joining the program was only the first step, however. FSS is a five-year commitment for good reason: Transformative outcomes take time. For Brittany, two years passed before she started to make progress toward her goals. “I realized I was the one who had to do the work to see any changes. I had to make myself a priority.”

Brittany focused on securing steady employment to build her resume. She

learned about money management to get her credit and finances in order. She worked on her relationships with her boys, checking in with them every day to see how they were feeling. She built up her savings. She bought a house and started to make it her own.

Even though she graduated from FSS this past April, Brittany’s not resting on her accomplishments. She’s taken the first steps in setting up her catering business and is building her brand.

“I know what I have and what I’m doing. Anything that comes to me, I’m grateful and blessed to have it.”

Many more people are struggling than official government counts show

Ariana¹ couldn't drive her car. It failed emissions testing and she wouldn't be able to renew her registration until she got it repaired. Not being able to drive wasn't just an inconvenience (she lives in Antioch and public transportation is scarce), but it also meant she couldn't drive for Uber, which she does to make the extra income she needs to pay her rent.

Economists and policymakers often gauge financial security with this question: "Would you be able to pay for a \$400 emergency car repair?" For 37 percent of U.S. residents, including Ariana, that answer is "No."² Why are so many families in this position?

A more realistic picture of financial hardship and its scope

While the official poverty measure is currently set at an annual income of \$15,060 for a single person and \$31,200 for a family of four, roughly twice that amount is actually needed to pay for the bare minimum of household essentials in Cook and Lake

counties, according to research from United for ALICE, a project of United Way that Catholic Charities is proud to partner with (*see Chart 1, right*).

In addition to the 740,000 individuals in Cook and Lake counties who live below the official federal poverty line, **we estimate 1.3 million more are financially vulnerable, even though they work one or more jobs.**³

It's important to note that survival budgets vary depending on age, family composition, and zip code: Seniors have greater healthcare costs; parents with young children have childcare expenses; and, like Ariana, residents in Lake County have the added expense of a car because public transportation is limited.

We all know someone who is struggling

"It's widely recognized that the federal poverty measure doesn't

capture the full picture of need in our communities," says Emma Landgraf, Catholic Charities' Senior Director of Program Excellence and a member of United for ALICE's Research Advisory Committee. "The ALICE data shows that people all around us are struggling, whether that's a family member who lost shifts at work, a widow living down the street, or the cashier at your grocery store" (*see Chart 2, right*).

Being there for these families is core to Catholic Charities' mission, as was the case with Ariana. Without emergency savings or family to turn to, Ariana reached out to Catholic Charities for emergency financial assistance. She used it to fix her car, pass her emissions test, and get back to work.

Informing the conversation. Catholic Charities is committed to advancing the understanding of poverty and financial hardship in our communities. We are partnering with United for ALICE to share our insight, feedback, and perspective at the regional and national levels.

¹ Named changed for privacy.

² U.S. Federal Reserve System, *Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2023*, published May 2024.

³ United for ALICE Threshold 2010–2022 and U.S. Census American Community Survey 2010–2022.

Chart 1

Looking at what it actually costs to survive in today’s economy, we estimate 1.3 million employed people in our region live above the poverty line but still struggle to make ends meet.

Household Survival Budgets for Cook and Lake Counties, 2024

The United for ALICE survival budget is calculated for each county and updated as costs and household needs change over time. Estimates are based on the bare minimum cost of household basics necessary to live and work in the current economy.

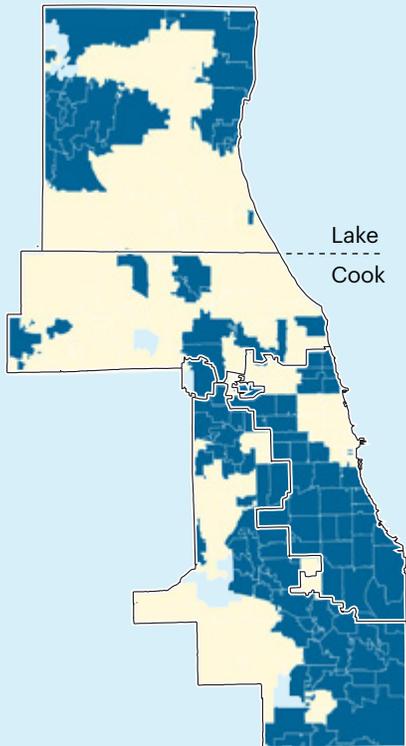
Monthly Costs and Credits	Cook County			Lake County		
	Single Adult	2 Adults, 2 Children	Single Senior	Single Adult	2 Adults, 2 Children	Single Senior
Housing—Rent	\$896	\$1,030	\$896	\$938	\$1,084	\$938
Housing—Utilities	\$163	\$310	\$163	\$163	\$310	\$163
Child Care	\$0	\$548	\$0	\$0	\$530	\$0
Food	\$501	\$1,546	\$463	\$507	\$1,563	\$468
Transportation	\$88	\$353	\$88	\$406	\$1,057	\$342
Health Care	\$188	\$640	\$545	\$188	\$640	\$578
Technology	\$86	\$116	\$86	\$86	\$116	\$86
Miscellaneous	\$192	\$454	\$224	\$229	\$530	\$258
Tax Payments	\$378	\$945	\$464	\$477	\$1,150	\$555
Tax Credits	\$0	(\$433)	\$0	\$0	(\$433)	\$0
Monthly Total	\$2,492	\$5,509	\$2,929	\$2,994	\$6,547	\$3,388
Annual Total	\$29,904	\$66,108	\$35,148	\$35,928	\$78,564	\$40,656

Chart 2.

In nearly half our communities, approximately 1 in 3 households earn less than what it takes to afford essential household expenses.

Zip codes where households earn less than a survival budget, 2024

- 30% or more households with annual incomes below the United for ALICE survival budget



Source for both charts above: United for ALICE (2024). See unitedforalice.org/methodology.

Aging in place with dignity

With fully accessible units, well-kept grounds, and staff that greets everyone warmly, it is not surprising that there's a four-year waiting list for one of the 75 units at Frances Manor in DesPlaines, one of Catholic Charities' 19 affordable senior housing properties.

"Our residents want to lead fulfilling and independent lives for as long as they are able," says Gregg Fucik, Catholic Charities Senior Property

Manager. "It's our mission to help make this happen."

As with all Catholic Charities senior properties, Frances Manor's apartments are available exclusively to very low income seniors. Even as market rents rise, they know they will never pay more than 30 percent of their income on their housing. A full-time, on-site care community coordinator is available to provide trusted advice on benefits, connect

them to additional resources, and bring in special programs that promote healthy living.

While all these supports promote better outcomes and prevent premature transitions to nursing homes, they are only part of what makes Frances Manor so special. "It's the community," says Gregg. "When you live with neighbors who care, life is better. We all could benefit from more of this."

Frances Manor's in-house dance troupe, the Wonder Girls, provided the entertainment at July's monthly birthday party and bingo game. The troupe, which started out as a way to get exercise, has become one of the community's most popular activities. Members practice every Tuesday and Thursday evening.





“Everyone who works here has become our family.”

-**Ignas Mcwan**

Ignas Mcwan and his wife Mable were one of the first tenants at Frances Manor and have lived in their sunny corner unit for 27 years. Now in their 90s, they receive daily visits from their children and grandchildren.



“We get together and talk about all the things you’re *not* supposed to talk about.”

-**Pyung Yoo**

Twice a week, residents meet up for coffee in the community room to connect, laugh, and catch up on current events. They credit Yoon Park (pictured, left), Frances Manor’s Community Care Coordinator, for bringing them together.



“My favorite thing about living here is that I feel safe.”

-**Ok Ja Hwang**

Building security is important, but so are safe living environments. Every unit at Frances Manor is accessible. That means no-step entries, doors and hallways wide enough to accommodate walkers and other mobility devices, and bathrooms designed to mitigate falls.



“We’ve evolved our staffing and community partnerships to meet the needs of a changing demographic.”

-**Gregg Fucik**

Approximately 85 percent of Frances Manor’s current residents come from the Korean community, but this was not always the case. “As the surrounding area has welcomed more Asian families, so have we,” he says.

“They came with two bags and four smiles.”

—**Ian Larkin**, on meeting the Rodriguez family for the first time

To date, Catholic Charities has connected 167 families with 31 participating parishes in the Parish-Family Sponsorship Program. “There are so many beautiful stories of helping families navigate immigration, employment, schools... not to mention all the weddings and baptisms,” says Marilu Gonzalez, Director of Catholic Charities Regional Program Operations on Chicago’s southwest side. *Pictured:* The Rodriguez and Larkin families together with Marilu (back, left), and Father Marty Donovan, Pastor at Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity Parish in Winnetka (back row, center).



Lending a hand, creating a home

Since August 2022, the City of Chicago has welcomed more than 47,000 new arrivals from the southern border, including the Rodriguez family.

The Rodriguez family

Just over a year ago, Andrea and Yarwin Rodriguez and their sons, Apolo and Alan, left their home in Los Teques, Venezuela, with two bags—one with food and the other with clothing and medicine for the children—and headed to the U.S. Asking for advice and directions along the way, they traversed 3,000 miles across Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico, primarily by bus and by foot.

“It was not easy to leave our loved ones,” says Andrea through an interpreter. “It is the hardest decision we ever made. But we feared for our safety, and both our children have medical issues that put them at risk in our country.”

When they arrived in Chicago, the Rodriguez family slept on the floor at a police station in the city’s Lakeview neighborhood. Every week, they visited nearby Saint Mary of the Lake Catholic Church, which hosts weekly

suppers for all. This was where they met Father Manuel (Manny) Dorantes.

The Rodriguez family impressed Father Manny. “I witnessed great love through tough times, hard work and ambition, a yearning to belong to a community, and two children, both with medical issues exacerbated by their current living situation.” Knowing they needed more stable shelter, Father Manny recommended them to the Parish-Family Sponsorship Program, a joint response of the Archdiocese of Chicago and Catholic Charities.

The Parish-Family Sponsorship Program

“The sudden and unexpected surge of new arrivals to Chicago required an immediate community-based response from the Catholic community,” says Father Manny, who advised on the development of the Parish-Family Sponsorship Program together with other stakeholders from the Archdiocese, parishes, religious orders, and Catholic Charities.

“Participating parishes from across the Archdiocese are helping alleviate migrant families’ struggles by accompanying and supporting them as they

build new lives,” says Father Manny. One of these parishes is Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity in Winnetka.

The Larkin family

The Larkin family—Ian, Nora, and their seven children—are parishioners of Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity. While active in their parish and community, they had never worked with migrants or refugees. That didn’t stop them from inviting the Rodriguez family to live rent-free in their suburban Northfield property and helping them navigate a brand-new life.

“Offering our rental property to asylum seekers wasn’t planned,” Ian says. “It also wasn’t exceptional. I’d like to think that anyone in our position would do the same thing.”

His wife, Nora, concurs. “We had an empty house. We could not in good conscience charge someone to live here when families with small children, right here and now, were surviving outside in tents. We aren’t activists. We simply had something to provide, and we did it.”

Two families: A shared future

The Larkins readied their house before the Rodriguez family moved



“When people say they can’t do something like this because they are busy, I think they may be underestimating themselves,” says Ian Larkin, noting that friends and fellow parishioners from Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity have helped welcome the Rodriguez family in all sorts of ways. “A lawyer friend has provided trusted legal advice, a congregant who is a dentist provided free care, plus others who have offered translation help and transportation to the food pantry and activities for the children.” Pictured: Move-in day for the Rodriguez family. Nora shares children’s books and other supplies and Alan and Apolo try out their new trundle bed.

in last October. They’ve also helped guide them through immigration, schools, insurance, health care, and more. “I know it sounds difficult, overwhelming, but it really wasn’t,” says Ian. “We have a big family, and we divvied tasks.”

As the Rodriguez family has settled in, neighbors and members from Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity have welcomed them with open arms. “No one has turned down our requests on behalf of the Rodriguez family,” says Ian. “This has been such a beautiful community response.”

Reflecting on their desire to stay in the U.S., Ian adds, “Andrea and Yarwin understandably are worried about the situation in Venezuela: the recent election, protests, violence, and

deaths. A lawyer friend has helped the family apply for asylum. With each passing month, they have become more comfortable, more self-reliant, more carefully optimistic.”

The Rodriguez family is grateful for the support they have received from the Larkins and the community.

“We love our home and our neighborhood,” says Andrea. “It makes Yarwin happy to take care of our home. Since he has found work, we are paying for our utilities and this fall, we will cover the rent. We are so joyful that the boys are healthy and thriving. Alan is starting fifth grade and his English is really good! He has made friends and is on the baseball team. He loves school and activities. Little Apolo is content to stay at home with me for now.”

Reflecting back, looking ahead

Asked which memories stand out the most from this past year, Andrea replies without hesitation, “Just being together. Being safe. All four of us sitting on the couch when my husband comes home from work. Watching a movie. Not having to look over our shoulder.”

Kindness has changed the Rodriguez family’s life. “This journey has been so difficult, but we have been blessed to meet so many generous and compassionate people,” says Andrea. “People who have never met us, who have never experienced what we have, they have come forward to help us.”

“As Catholics, are we doing all we can to welcome the stranger as our faith calls us?”

—Father Manuel Dorantes, Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

A Coordinated Catholic Response: The Parish-Family Sponsorship Program

“The Catholic Church in Chicago has a long tradition of welcoming newcomers, including many of our own families,” says Father Manuel (Manny) Dorantes. “Catholic social teaching is very clear that Jesus calls us to this work—and that we must do it with compassion, mercy, and respect for the dignity of all.”

This was what he and other members of the Parish-Family Sponsorship Program’s advisory group sought to center in the program’s design.

First, they determined that shelter was the most pressing need migrant families were facing. “When a family finally has safe housing, they can begin to focus on other needs. We’ve been firm that this is where our financial assistance must be focused,” says Father Manny.

Beyond housing, accompaniment provides a warm welcome

The Parish-Family Sponsorship Program differs from government-led responses in how it couples housing with accompaniment to help migrants adjust to their new life in Chicago.

What “accompaniment” looks like takes many different forms. “The Archdiocese is so diverse, so big... we wanted parishes to embrace creativity in their response,” says Father Manny.

For example, Father Manny’s parish, Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes, expects the five families they are sponsoring to become involved in parish life, regardless of their faith. “We host a community meal for 300 of our neighbors every week and we ask them to volunteer. Serving others is a way to share their gratitude.”

Parishes participate in multiple ways

Parishes in the Archdiocese of Chicago have multiple pathways to support migrants through the Parish-Family Sponsorship Program: They can provide financial funding to cover a family’s housing expenses for up to six months (approximately \$10,000 per family). They can provide accompaniment to a family as they orient and adjust to their life in Chicago. Or they can do both.

Due to its success and continued need, Catholic Charities is expanding the Parish-Family Sponsorship Program to sponsor and accompany at least 50 more families. “Cardinal Cupich has called all of us to join in this response,” says Father Manny. “This is our opportunity to show what it means to be Catholic in today’s world.”

Participating Parishes

Vicariate I

Holy Family, Inverness
Saints Faith, Hope, and Charity, Winnetka

Vicariate II

Our Lady of Mercy, Albany Park, Chicago
Saint Clement, Lincoln Park, Chicago
Saint Edward, Mayfair, Chicago
Saint John XXIII, Evanston
Saint Josaphat, Lakeview, Chicago
Saint Simon of Cyrene, North Lawndale and Austin, Chicago
Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes, Buena Park and Uptown, Chicago
Saint Vincent de Paul, Lincoln Park, Chicago

Vicariate III

Blessed Miguel Pro, Berwyn
Cristo Rey, Little Village, Chicago
Holy Name, River North, Chicago
Mother of the Americas, Pilsen, Chicago
Old St. Patrick’s, West Loop, Chicago
Our Lady, the Mystical Rose, Cicero
Saint Agnes of Bohemia, Little Village, Chicago
Saint Rita of Cascia, Gage Park, Chicago

Vicariate IV

Ascension and Saint Edmund, Oak Park
Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Elk Grove Village
Saint Catherine of Siena-Saint Lucy and Saint Giles, Oak Park

Vicariate V

Our Lady of the Woods, Orland Park
Saint John of the Cross, Western Springs

Vicariate VI

Christ the King, Beverly, Chicago
Our Lady of the Heights, Chicago Heights
Saint Barnabas, Beverly, Chicago
Saint Cajetan, Beverly/Morgan Park, Chicago
Saint James, Bronzeville, Chicago
Saint John Fisher, Beverly, Chicago
Saint Sabina, Auburn Gresham, Chicago
Saint Thomas the Apostle, Hyde Park, Chicago

Opportunities for service and encounter

Throughout his pontificate, Pope Francis has invited Catholics to work for a “culture of encounter.” Encounter, he argues, returns to each person “their dignity as children of God.”

What is encounter? It is not indifference. It is not passing people by, but stopping with them; not feeling pity, but sharing compassion and hope.

As part of Vision 2030, Catholic Charities is inviting its Partners in Mission to reinvigorate their call to serve... to lean in more deeply and open their hearts to encounter.

Providing more opportunities for deeper encounter

Catholic Charities team members spoke with more than 100 volunteers, priests, and other partners from across the region to get their feedback and perspective as it developed a refreshed Faith in Action strategy to promote high-quality pathways of service.

Brittany McGhee, Senior Director of Mission Engagement, says, “Through deep reflection and planning, we centered what makes service at Catholic Charities truly special and unique, and that was the opportunity for encounter.”

“Together with meaningful impact and lived faith, encounter is one of the key elements of our Faith in Action strategy.”

—Brittany McGhee, Senior Director of Mission Engagement



Guiding principles for mission engagement

Keeping encounter at the forefront, Catholic Charities developed a set of principles to ensure that service opportunities center the needs of the people it accompanies and, at the same time, are meaningful for volunteers and partners.

The first of these principles is that **the service experience should foster spiritual and cultural growth**, recognizing that the mission of charity is a lifelong commitment. In addition, **service should provide positive engagement** with the rich diversity of God’s people, Catholic beliefs, and Catholic Charities as an organization.

As important, volunteers should be confident they are helping **deliver substantive impact for the people Catholic Charities serves**, being truly of use to those in need. To do this, the volunteer **programs should be high-quality and accountable**, with thoughtful design, quality oversight, and performance goals.

Finally, and most importantly, **service opportunities must be open to all**. Financial means should not determine who serves or is served, how volunteers are engaged, or with whom Catholic Charities partners. All are welcome in this place.

“I am giving to them but they are giving back to me. Holy moments everywhere.”

—Carlos Fernandez

Carlos and Mary Jane Fernandez | Volunteers, Sr. Joyce Dura O.S.F. Community Supper Program

With a warm smile and welcome, Carlos Fernandez serves nearly 150 guests every Tuesday at Catholic Charities community suppers in downtown Chicago, including many from his native Venezuela. His wife, Mary Jane, is also a volunteer.

Last January, after practicing medicine in the Chicago area for 46 years, Carlos, 78, decided to retire. He turned to a trusted friend and spiritual advisor who recommended he volunteer at Catholic Charities, and he's glad he did.

Born in Caracas, Venezuela, Carlos remembers growing up in poverty. His father, a truck driver, and his mother, a

homemaker, had emigrated from Spain after the Spanish Civil War. His faith was inspired by a neighbor who took him to Mass every Sunday. He carried forward that faith foundation through medical school in Venezuela and his medical practice in the United States.

In 1974, he joined the residency program at Mercy Hospital, where he met Mary Jane, a nurse in labor and delivery. He went on to open a private practice on the North Side, specializing in care for many Spanish-speaking women in Chicago. During the last 10 years of his career, he specialized in gynecological

ultrasound for childbirth, fertility, and cancer patients.

“I always like to help people because of my profession,” Carlos says, adding that faith also plays a role. “Take care of your neighbor as yourself, and I have no problem taking care of the poor, that’s where I came from.”

Mary Jane has also found joy in serving. “I love the sense of community... and I love the guests, they all have a story,” Mary Jane says, adding how volunteerism has enhanced their lives. “This is very special for us, it’s brought us closer together, we both love it.”



In his poem, “For a New Home,” the Irish priest, poet, and philosopher John O’Donohue describes what the experience of welcome enables. We reached out to Catholic leaders to share ways they express welcome through ministry.



Father Carl Gales, SVD

Pastor, Our Lady of Africa Parish
Bronzeville, Chicago

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” (MATTHEW 25:40)

The vision statement for Our Lady of Africa Parish is “Growing in Holiness, with a Mission to Serve.” We are blessed with parishioners who are truly committed to this vision. Our Food Pantry Ministry feeds those most in need; parishioners package 300 to 400 meals monthly for the homeless and migrants; our HIV/AIDS Ministry tends to those on the margins; plus, our partnerships with Catholic Charities and Margaret’s Village: these are just a few of our ministries that impact our community.

Within our parish, we also educate and raise awareness by having ecumenical and interfaith prayer services led by our Social Justice and Peace Ministry. We make sure our parishioners have medical screenings and provide opportunities to exercise their civic duties by registering to vote. These are actions that speak to our evangelization by active participation in the Mass as we are sent forth to “glorify the Lord by our lives.” Lives committed to loving God by loving our neighbor and seeing Jesus in our encounters.



Father Derek Ho

Pastor, Mary, Seat of Wisdom Parish
Park Ridge

While we’re taught that the Mass is the most essential part of our Sunday, I feel like the time immediately afterwards can use more attention.

I watch our people flood out of the church doors. And while I smile at all those leaving, I’m particularly attentive to those who put their heads down and head into the parking lot. I also notice the few that linger but do not talk to anyone. I believe God invited them to church but not just for Mass. They want to belong and to be known. They want connection. They want to find in this place a home.

Who will say hello and welcome them? Who will ask them their name? Who will invite them to be a part of their small group or offer a prayer for them? Who will help carry their load so that “the weight of the world” could fall from their shoulders?

Some of my favorite parishioners are those who came here and didn’t know anyone. And now they’re standing next to me at the same door smiling and inviting others to be a part of our family.



Dan McGrath

President, Leo High School
Auburn Gresham, Chicago

When I first read “For a New Home,” by John O’Donohue, I thought he might have been referring to Leo High School.

We’re hardly “new,” but our humble little school on Chicago’s South Side represents a new “home” to the young men who enroll here. Making sure they feel welcome is a vital first step in helping these Children of God become the best version of themselves, which has been our mission for the 98 years of Leo’s existence.

A welcoming environment takes many forms. At Leo, we strive to provide one that is safe, nurturing, encouraging, and designed to promote learning and self-discovery, a sense of well-being. Our students are looked after and loved, but they’re also challenged to achieve and excel.

By the time they leave us, they’re ready to enter the world as responsible, productive, caring citizens, eager to make a difference in the lives of those around them.

Facta non Verba is the Leo motto—Deeds not Words. It’s more than a slogan; it’s a badge of honor. And the young men who come to us are welcome to wear it, once they earn it.

Recent and upcoming events

Saint Martin de Porres Society: Imagining Abundance

May 16, 2024

Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier
Parish, Wilmette



The Catholic Charities community joined **Cardinal Blase Cupich**, Archbishop of Chicago, **Kerry Alys Robinson**, Catholic Charities USA, and **Sally Blount** to discuss the intersection of social justice and the mission of Charity ([more on page 4](#)).

2024 Charities Golf Classic

July 15, 2024

Knollwood Club, Lake Forest
Shoreacres, Lake Bluff



More than 180 supporters joined to raise a record-breaking \$615,000 to support Catholic Charities programs. Special thanks to event chairs **Matt Davis**, **John Cortesi**, **Fred Marks**, and **Tim Finnegan** for making the event such a success.

Mass and Mission

Sunday, October 20, 2024

11 am: Mass

12 pm: Reception with program leaders

Holy Family Catholic Community,
Inverness



Join in worship and meet with Catholic Charities program leaders to learn about how we are serving our neighbors in Cook and Lake counties. [Register at catholiccharities.net/events/mass-mission](#).

House of the Good Shepherd Glow of Hope Brunch

The Secret Garden

Sunday, November 3, 2024, 12 pm

Four Seasons, Chicago



HOUSE OF
THE GOOD
SHEPHERD

The Women's Board of House of the Good Shepherd invites you to raise awareness and essential funding for our domestic violence residence and programming on Chicago's north side. [Register at hgschicago.org/glow-of-hope-event](#).

SAVE THE DATE!

Spirit of Saint Nicholas Ball

Friday, December 6, 2024
HILTON CHICAGO

Chicago's most beloved
black-tie gala of the
Christmas season

Mark your calendar to join Catholic Charities for a festive evening in support of our programs. Thank you to this year's Chairs, Tim and Sue Sullivan, and Vice Chairs, Quinn and Debbie Stepan.



Scan to learn more and view photos from past gatherings or visit catholiccharities.net/attend-an-event.

Join us to improve lives and nourish spirits
across Cook and Lake counties

Ways to give

Donate online, or by phone or mail. Secure donations can be made by visiting catholiccharities.net/give or calling (312) 655-7525. Checks made out to Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago can be sent to P.O. Box 7154; Carol Stream, IL 60197-7154.

Make a planned gift. The Legacy of Hope Society honors people who include Catholic Charities in a will or trust to help ensure our programs flourish for years to come. Contact Andrea Wynne, Planned Giving, for more information at anwynne@catholiccharities.net.

Saint Katharine Drexel Society. The Drexel Society recognizes individuals and families who have

contributed \$10,000 or more during the past fiscal year. The society convenes our most generous and loyal donors through exclusive events and communications.

Make a corporate gift or sponsor an event.

Catholic Charities offers sponsorship opportunities for fundraising events throughout the year. Visit catholiccharities.net/attend-an-event for more information.

Questions? Contact our Donor Relations team at (312) 948-6864 or donor.relations@catholiccharities.net, or visit catholiccharities.net/give.

Ways to serve

Faith in Action Team. Catholic Charities welcomes all to serve with us and provide vital supports to individuals and families across Cook and Lake counties. We invite you to live your faith in the world, engage with your neighbors, and deliver meaningful impact to your community.

Opportunities are available for individuals or groups at varying levels of commitment and duration. These

include serving at community meals, delivering meals to seniors' homes, assembling care packs, setting families up for success in new homes, and providing essential undergarments and diapers to adults and children in need.

To inquire about how you or your group can get involved, contact Kelsey Rodriguez, Director of Volunteer Engagement, at krodriguez@catholiccharities.com.



Answering the Call to Serve

“Being a social worker is who I am. It is as fundamental to me as being a wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend. I can’t *not* do it.”

Laura Kuever | Associate Vice President, Family Empowerment

Like many 18-year-olds, Laura Kuever went to college not really knowing what she wanted to do. “I randomly took an intro to social work class,” she says, “and was like, ‘Wait, you can do this as a *job*? This is who I am!’”

Laura went on to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees in the field. “The beauty of social work is that there are so many options for what you can do. There are hundreds of different populations you can serve.”

Her first career-track position was with the Lake County Health Department’s Addictions Treatment Program. “I loved working with the substance

use population,” she says, explaining that people suffering from addiction respond to authenticity. “If I didn’t show up for them personally and wasn’t genuine, I wasn’t going to gain their trust. I liked that accountability,” she says.

When Catholic Charities recruited her in 2005, Laura says she thought she would be with the organization for a year, but the mission and culture resonated with her. Now, 19 years later, she says, “I can’t imagine another employer that would do the work the way we want to do it.”

As she has advanced in her career, Laura has led many different teams,

from overseeing the Family Self-Sufficiency Program for single parents, to working with individuals with HIV, directing Catholic Charities services in Waukegan, overseeing child welfare programs, and now, leading the organization’s Empowering Families programming. Each role has provided an opportunity for her to grow as a leader.

“We have so many people who need us, and there is always more we can do,” she says. “I wake up every day thinking of those we serve. They are who inspire me to be the best I can be.”



721 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Scan the QR code or visit catholiccharities.net to support our vital work

Live your faith in the world

The mission of Catholic Charities is brought to life through the prayers, service, and financial support of thousands of individuals every year.

All are welcome to join us in our witness of hope and mercy!



Pictured: Leticia, a Catholic Charities volunteer, helps host a senior breakfast at St. Clare of Montefalco in Gage Park on the southwest side of Chicago.