

April Boellstorff New Director of Social Services/Operations-Auburn with Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska



APRIL BOELLSTORFF is the new Director of Social Services/Operations-Auburn with Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska.

April Boellstorff of rural Auburn has begun duties as the new Director of Social Services/Operations-Auburn with Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska. The center is located at 1014 Central Avenue in Auburn.

CSS of Southern Nebraska shut down operations at its Auburn facility in September of 2020, primarily due to factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the agency has reopened its storefront access to food pantry and emergency assistance, the reopening of St. Francis Gift & Thrift likely remains a couple of months away, according to Father Justin Fulton, Executive Director of CSS of Southern Nebraska.

Fulton currently anticipates an April or May reopening of St. Francis Gift & Thrift, but it remains heavily dependent upon how well the economy continues to recover. "Once we can safely have our employees and volunteers provide their valuable service, we will move ahead with reopening the store," he said.

Boellstorff Ready for Opportunity

Boellstorff said, "I am so excited by this opportunity. We have something amazing here that we're ready to bring to life and share with our community and surrounding areas! Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska is reopening in Auburn and ready to 'Bring Hope in the Good Life'."

"We trace our beginnings to 1932 when CSS was founded to respond to the needs of persons suffering the effects of the Great Depression. We have quite a history. We locally have been providing services in Auburn and surrounding areas since 2000. Our mission as Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska is to perform the works of mercy in response to the call of God. We don't just serve Catholics. We serve EVERYONE that we can because we are Catholic."

"We locally offer food pantries and personal care items. We also give out winter coats, gloves, hats, scarves, toys, diapers, etc. We offer assistance with rent, utilities, and other emergency needs. Anyone in need can reach out anytime for assistance by calling 402-327-6242. Please leave a message if there is no answer."

"Beyond the services offered in Auburn and surrounding areas, our Auburn location serves as a bridge connecting people to CSS services in Lincoln - telehealth, immigration, refugee resettlement, assistance for those fleeing domestic violence, and our vehicle donation program. CSS offers statewide outreach with offices in Auburn, Lincoln, Imperial and Hastings.

"We will be distributing food, coats, backpacks, and other items as available to local schools to share with families in need."

"We also have seasonal giving: Back to School, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas Baskets. A huge project every year is our Saint Nicholas Toy Shoppe, where families are able to choose toys or gift cards. We can always use

donations and volunteers to help with these heartwarming events.

"We are excited to bring service opportunities to our youth and adults - both locals and those in neighboring communities. We want to create encounters for the clients and volunteers. We clearly are a Catholic organization, but our services are for ANYONE in need in the five-county area (Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson).

"We look forward to working together with other local agencies, organizations, churches, and schools. We could not do what we do without the help of our amazing volunteers. We welcome all volunteers and hope to grow our services in Southeast Nebraska and invite you to join in our mission."

"You are welcome to seek assistance. You are welcome to volunteer. You are welcome to refer someone. You are welcome to donate your time and talents. You are welcome to donate monetarily or in kind. Let's come together for the good of our community. God called us to love and serve. You are welcome here."

April added, "I don't exactly have 9-5 hours for a variety of reasons. The continuing pandemic has created a new work away from work/work from home ability. It's made companies creative. It's changed the standard. My hours and availability fluctuate based on the needs of our mission. Generally speaking, I am available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. I will not always be physically "in office" and will not always be working those exact hours."

"PLEASE don't be discouraged by our locked front door. For the safety of staff and clients, it will remain locked. Currently, all in-person appointments have been replaced with over the phone and email correspondence. Most everything can be achieved this way with lots of behind the scenes work."

"Clients picking up food will be greeted at the door with a freshly sanitized cart of groceries and whatever other items they need that we have available to provide. However, if I have a client who cannot pick up a food pantry during normal business hours, I will do my best to accommodate their needs. I will be traveling to other towns providing services and outreach."

"I may spend a weekend training, work from home at various hours, or utilize an occasional Saturday to attain more available volunteers for a project. So, please know that although I may not physically be 'in office' with specific set hours, I am here for you - client, volunteer, donor. I can be reached via phone, email, or through our website forms. If I am unable to answer at the time, leave a voicemail, email, or send a request through our website, and I will respond as soon as I am able. I will do my best to keep my voicemail updated if I am truly "out of

office".

"I very prayerfully considered this opportunity. I left my job at Auburn State Bank - a workplace, friends, and customers I knew and loved - because I felt called to do this. I have taken this new role in honor of my mom, Lana Fulton, who selflessly worked for the good of this community all of her life. She ran the CSS St. Francis Gift & Thrift store for many years and was an integral part of Catholic Social Services."

"One of her favorite things to be a part of at CSS was taking all 21 of her grandchildren Christmas shopping. Each grandchild chose a gift they loved, she purchased it, then donated the gifts to the CSS St. Nicholas Toy Shoppe to be given to children in need at Christmas-time. She enjoyed knowing that if her grandkids loved it, so would another child. My mom exemplified Christ to others and taught me the value of giving. That's just how she lived... her simple way of life. She was an only child, but had so many brothers and sisters in Christ."

"My mom quickly and unexpectedly passed away from this earth in August 2019. She ran the thrift store right up until that time. Even in her last days she thought of others and not herself. She would not want recognition, but I recognize the blessing she was and want to use my remaining years to live, give, and love like she did. We need to care and show compassion, using our time wisely and not being afraid to live bigger. We never know how long our time on earth will be."

"This is OUR community. Let's work together to bring 'Hope in the Good Life' to our Nebraska neighbors in need. Consider whatever capacity you may wish to serve. Whether it be organizing a personal care items drive or a diaper drive at your church or place of work. Or perhaps buying a little extra next time you are shopping and dropping it by for us to help fill our shelves and move it on to a family in need."

"Perhaps a monetary donation or purchasing gift cards is easier for you. Consider donating gas gift cards, grocery gift cards, or a gift card to a local store. We are all so busy, but many of these things can be easily done. If you don't have time to volunteer, perhaps you have finances to share. Perhaps you can tell someone in need about us. Or, simply offer your prayers for our mission."

How can YOU help? One can help by volunteering at the food pantry -- stocking, cleaning, sorting, preparing a bag of groceries for a family in need. Deliver food to the homebound. Help distribute food to schools. Purchase coats or school supplies for children in need. Share your blessing with someone else! I believe I have been placed here by God, in my mom's honor, and it's my privilege to serve the underprivileged. I would



NEW DIRECTOR OF Social Services/Operations-Auburn with Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska April Boellstorff, (middle) stands beside volunteers who help with organizing the emergency food, clothing and personal care items which are available to anyone needing them. Also pictured are (from left) Jeanne Degraw, Wendy Fulton, Kristine Swanson and Beth Casey. The women are pictured with some of the free food obtained through the Lincoln Food Bank and also winter coats and games which are available for those needing them.

Nemaha County Herald photos by Darrell Wellman

LOVE to have you join me!
"If you would like to be a part of bringing Catholic Social Services back to life in Auburn for the good of southeast Nebraska, please let us know. If you are a client in need, we are here for you."

The burning question... "When will the thrift store reopen? What a great thing to know that it is so missed in the community! We hope to be able to reopen, maybe late spring to summer when the weather is better and once

we have our social services regained and thriving again. Time will tell. The economy, vaccine outcomes, volunteer interest and availability are all considerations."

"It's a tough situation. We want staff, volunteers, and customers to be safe. We also need to know that there is sustainability. We are focusing on our primary mission of social services first," Boellstorff said.

Here are some statistics from over the years: Figures on Local Impacts

According to William Meduna, CPA, Vice President of Operations, said Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska - Auburn has provided over \$1,950,000 of food and services since it first opened an office in the parish hall in 2000. This includes the value of over 832,000 pounds of food distributed from our local food pantry or from our traveling trucks. It also includes 40,000 bottles of water and \$49,000 in cash for food victims in the Peru area.



RECENT VOLUNTEERS were (from left) Lori Parrish, Kathy Florence, Jeanne Degraw and Bill Fulton. photo submitted



Kick the winter blues to the curb this year.

Eat well, exercise and stay connected to your loved ones. It can be tempting to eat heavy comfort food, snuggle up on the couch with a warm blanket and rant about the cold weather.

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