



PATRON

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

“O Father, in your Son, humbled, needy and homeless, you have humbled me. He was humbled in the womb of the Virgin, needy in the manger of the sheep, and homeless on the wood of the Cross. Nothing so humbles the proud sinner as the humility of Jesus Christ’s humanity.”
-St. Anthony of Padua



A heart (and feet) warming story

Last week, I had a three-year-old little girl come in with her mom to pick up formula for her baby sister. I watched them hustle across the street together. Mom was carrying her until they got inside. Mom's hands were full in more ways than one. She has four children, one of them a newborn.

I bent down to give a friendly hello to the child. She pointed at her feet and replied, "I wost my shoes!" There she was. Barefoot. Ten little piggies with no socks or shoes covering them, and it was chilly outside. Mom was quick to explain that she left her shoes at the last place they had stopped. I could tell she was a little embarrassed her daughter had blurted this to me. I chuckled, told her I have four children and totally understood. I recalled those days of losing shoes and saying whatever was on the mind all too well.

"Would you like to come get some new ones?" I asked. We have a small supply of donated new personal care items alongside our food pantry, and I was hoping to

have a pair on the rack that would fit.

She rushed over to the fancy silver sparkly shoes and said, "Princess!" Her mom was laughing and smiling from ear to ear. They looked a bit big for her, but she loved them and quickly put them on her tiny little feet. There was a decent gap



between her ankle and the shoe, but she was undoubtedly feeling like a princess and she did not mind that they were a little big. Her mom and I exchanged smiles and a good laugh. I adorned her head with a Hello Kitty stocking cap and we found a pack of socks just her size. If she put four pairs of socks on, the princess shoes may fit just right! :)

Her mom was thankful for the encounter, and I was, too. They came for a can of formula. They warmed my heart. I warmed their feet!

-April Boellstorff
Director of Social Services/Operations
Auburn

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Welcoming the stranger



Not just stats, but new starts



Serving up a "slice" of hope in Imperial



Welcoming the stranger

Mario Racicot
Vice President of Programs

As you have likely seen in the news lately, hundreds of refugees are expected to be resettled in Nebraska in the months ahead. Preparing for and resettling these newcomers can be a daunting task, and could not be done without the generosity and dedication of our volunteers and donors. I'd like to share the story of one such volunteer, "Celia", who has a special love for welcoming the stranger.

Celia's interest in refugee resettlement was awakened through her years of teaching math to English As Second Language students at a local high school in Lincoln. "Some of them have suffered much trauma," she said, noting that their experience sparked an interest to follow world events more closely. "You can teach them English but they need help in understanding how our U.S. system functions such as how to get a driver's license, take buses, where to go to school, how to get a job," she explained.

Through Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska, Celia said she felt called to be a cultural broker by volunteering to help refugees navigate the system and help welcome new arrivals. But her efforts, she said, are a drop in the bucket compared to what's needed in Lincoln.



Hundreds of evacuees from Afghanistan were expected to settle in Nebraska as part of the first group arriving in the United States, according to State Department data. State department officials said they hope to resettle 95,000 refugees in the United States by September 2022. Refugees are arriving from other countries as well. "We really need more volunteers," stated Celia, noting that she's arranged and taken refugees to receive medical care, helped them obtain food and clothing, and helped set up homes with furnishings for refugees before their arrival in Lincoln.

Celia shares that by helping refugees, she's formed new friendships that have enriched her own life. In addition, assisting refugees has helped her put personal issues in perspective. "My problems don't seem as important," she said. She's also realized that all people have God-given gifts that they are called to share with others. "Each of us has time, talent and treasure to help others in need." She said all Nebraskans can pull together to help. "I'm so thankful for how my experience helping refugees has helped my life."

Celia truly practices what she preaches as she has found many meaningful volunteer opportunities through CSS programs. Her first stop was St. Gianna Women's Homes. Because she had experienced domestic violence, Celia felt she had something to offer. Since then, she's experienced personal satisfaction in providing transportation, establishing a garden, tutoring, and sharing her experience with the women so they don't feel alone.

"I feel we're called to help others," she said. "To whom much is given, much is expected."

"It was the scariest and hardest day of my life"

One of our recent Afghan refugees worked at the Presidential Palace as it was being taken over by the Taliban. He knew if he was going to get out alive, he had to leave immediately. In what he described as the scariest and hardest day of his life, he hid his government ID card in his socks near the bottom of his shoes and left for the airport. By the grace of God, he was able to get rushed out and onto a plane. Since he had to flee immediately in order to save his life, he had to leave his fiance, siblings, and parents behind in Afghanistan. He asked to be resettled in Texas but was quite disappointed to be located in Lincoln. Since his arrival, he has fallen in love with Lincoln and wants his family resettled here as well. He's been in contact with his family and fiance and hopes to get them out of Afghanistan as soon as he can. Please keep him and his family in your prayers.

Not just stats, but new starts

Mike Fitzgerald

Emergency and Employment Specialist

Working with hundreds of clients each year, it would be easy for me to get lost in the numbers. But that person or family sitting across from me is so much more than just a statistic. They are a brother or sister in Christ looking for a new start.

Recent examples of people coming to CSS for a new start include two different women escaping domestic violence with their families; restoring electricity for a couple who rely on medical devices in their home; and providing a bed for a gentleman's new apartment when he left a physical rehabilitation facility.

St. Gianna Women's Homes is a successful CSS program which assists women and their families fleeing domestic violence or who are being coerced into having an abortion. Each family is provided a safe and secure environment to deal with the trauma caused by the abuse, become self-sufficient, and learn to develop healthy relationships in the future. In addition to receiving housing, SGWH provides education, employment, and counseling services for those families.

However, some women escaping domestic violence who contact CSS are seeking assistance with a new start in an apartment near their job or a school for their children. CSS received two such calls on consecutive days. We provided both families housing for a week in a hotel which supports our work by providing rooms at a discounted rate. "Jennifer" continued working and also used that time to find an apartment. CSS provided her first month's rent and the landlord allowed Jennifer to pay the deposit on an installment schedule. "Crystal" escaped domestic violence in a smaller Nebraska city by moving to Lincoln. After staying in the hotel, she and her three children stayed with her mother until a landlord

approved her application for an apartment, based in part on CSS providing a month and half of rent.

Also recently, a senior couple on a fixed income called CSS late one afternoon seeking help getting their electricity restored. It had been turned off earlier that day, and both of them have health conditions for which they rely on medical devices. "Beth" requires an oxygen machine to help her breath adequately. CSS completed an assistance request application over the phone and then contacted Lincoln Electric Services. With a commitment that CSS would pay the \$385.35 bill, LES was able to restore their electricity that same afternoon.

"Arthur" called CSS to ask if we could provide a bed for his new apartment when he was discharged from a physical rehab facility. He had been hospitalized for multiple surgeries and then admitted to a rehabilitation facility. During the process he moved out of his apartment and sold belongings, including his bed, to help pay some of the medical expenses. CSS delivered a bed to his new apartment.

In addition to helping these families with their recent immediate needs, the families will participate in the CSS Adopt-A-Family Christmas program. CSS asked the families for a list of a couple of Christmas wish items from each person. CSS volunteer families will purchase wish list items and deliver them directly to the recipient families shortly before Christmas.

These are just a few of the many real examples of how CSS donors, volunteers and staff focus on being the hands of God to support individuals and families with their urgent needs, including dignity. Thank you for helping us bring Hope in the Good Life!



Thankful to provide services based on our Catholic faith

Dr. Courtney Miller,

Licensed Psychologist, Vice President of Clinical Services

Greetings from the Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center!

As we head towards the end of the year, we are reminded that Advent is a fitting time for us to reflect on our blessings and give thanks for what we have been given. We at the IHMCC are thankful for the religious freedom to provide faith-integrated services consistent with Catholic Church teaching. We believe the ability to incorporate religion, faith, and spirituality into the therapeutic environment allows us to provide the highest level of care to our clients. Guided by mission and evidence-based psychological principles, we can provide the highest quality of care that recognizes and supports both the psychological and spiritual aspects of an individual.

During the 2020-2021 fiscal year, we provided 5,198 individual therapy sessions services and 255 family/marital sessions. These services were provided through both in-person and telehealth delivery, covering over 12 additional service areas in Nebraska outside of Lincoln and three service areas in Kansas. Through a CARES grant, 84 individuals were able to receive services free of charge for a total of \$45,923.17. The IHMCC continued to provide group therapy, conduct vocational and psychological assessments, maintain the adoption search

program, support Project Rachel counseling, and offer two online programs (Loving Hearts & Little Feet, a mom-and-baby group, and Partners on the Journey, a marriage enrichment series) throughout the challenges of the continued pandemic.

In addition, the IHMCC offers the only Catholic APA-accredited pre-doctoral internship program in the nation as part of the Nebraska Internship Consortium in Professional Psychology. This internship program affords us the opportunity to train young professionals in faith-integrated psychology, both in theory and in practice. Since our internship program officially began in 2003, we have had the privilege of training 31 predoctoral interns. Two past predoctoral interns, myself (2005-2006) and Peter Martin (2007-2008), currently serve in leadership roles within the agency while other graduates now practice across the nation.

As we enter into Advent, we would like to extend our heartfelt thank you for your support, both financial and prayers. It is with humble gratitude that we look ahead to continued growth in service in the New Year.

May God richly bless you and your family this Advent & Christmas Season. Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us!



Catholic Social Services- Imperial

Serving up a "slice" of hope

Feeding the hungry is on the menu at our St. Isidore Gift & Thrift in Imperial thanks to our partnership with Pizza Hut through their Harvest Program. Pizza Hut has a strong legacy with food donations, dating all the way back to 1992 when they became the first company to create a national surplus food donation program. Their Harvest Program feeds hungry families while reducing food waste. They donate error pizzas, no-show pizzas, and leftover buffet items that are safe to eat. Partner charities like CSS make weekly pickups and deliver the food to families living in the area. This means Bill Sullivan, St. Isidore Gift & Thrift Store Manager, regularly shifts gears and sets out to make local families' dinner time delicious. We choose families needing a little boost and who are known to us through our mission and community connections. Bill delivers a hot pizza to their door at dinnertime. Thanks to Pizza Hut, we're sharing Hope in the Good Life one slice at a time.

A chance to encounter Christ

CSS Lincoln Adopt-A-Family program offers the opportunity for an interaction with those in need, not just a transaction

The holiday rush is upon us. Whether it's requests for food pantries, help with utility bills or whatever life may throw one's way, this is the time of year when all four of our Catholic Social Services sites see a surge in those coming to us for help. As we do each day throughout the year, we see each request as an opportunity for an encounter, not just a transaction of services.

Adopt-A-Family is a program where we invite clients in Lincoln whom we personally know to create a wish list for their family. Members at parishes are invited to collect an angel, shop for a family and then personally deliver the gifts to their home. If they would rather have the

family pick up their gifts at our CSS Lincoln location, that is also an option. The angels are on Advent giving trees at Cathedral, North American Martyrs, St. Michael's, St. Peter's, St. John's and St. Joseph's in Lincoln.

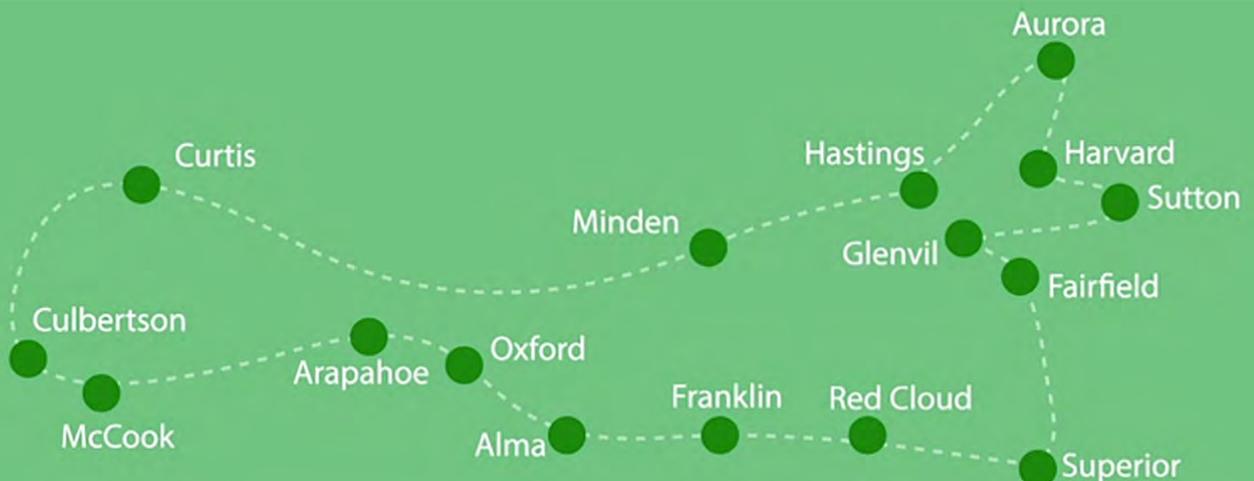


Alongside the angels there are also decorated gift card sleeves for cash donations and gift cards. All can be placed in the collection baskets at the parishes throughout December.

These continue to be difficult times for our neighbors who come to us for assistance. Thank you for bring Hope in the Good Life to those served by Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska. God bless!

CSS Hastings Food Recovery Program redistributed 209 tons of food

Catholic Social Services Hastings site is proud to be an Enabled Partner with Food Bank for the Heartland. Enabled Partners are responsible for pickup and distribution of recovery food from select grocery stores. Our staff and volunteers recover perishable and nonperishable items from two Walmart locations and Sam's Club in Grand Island and from the Hastings Walmart. This food is then redistributed on a weekly basis to the public, at Crossroads, and food pantries around the Hastings area. In one year, this program distributed 209 tons of food to 16 communities.





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#HopeintheGoodLife



(S.A.G.)

The Patron

Advent/Christmas 2021

Year-end giving options

John Soukup
Development Officer

As we approach the end of the year, there are a variety of ways you can partner with Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska to help bring Hope in the Good Life and also benefit from your tax-deductible donation:

Gifts of grain become the gift of choice for many farmers because they provide attractive benefits. When a load of grain is hauled to the local elevator, the grain is transferred by the donor into a Catholic Social Services grain account, thus completing the gift. The farmer does not collect a check for a grain sale, **and therefore avoids income tax**. There is no income tax deduction because there is no income. He is also able to deduct the business expenses associated with raising the donated crop and avoids paying self-employment tax.

For 2021 under a COVID-19 relief law, you're allowed to claim a limited deduction on your tax return for **cash contributions** made to qualifying charitable organizations. You can claim a deduction of up to \$300 for cash contributions made during this year. This deduction increases to \$600 for a married couple filing jointly in 2021.



By transferring your **stock** to CSS, you can enjoy the benefits of tax savings on this year's tax return. In addition to your charitable deduction, you will avoid paying capital gains tax that would otherwise be due on the sale of your appreciated investment.

IRA owners and beneficiaries who've reached age 70½ are allowed to make cash donations of up to \$100,000 a year to qualified charities directly out of their IRAs. You don't owe income tax on these qualified charitable distributions.

You can also count the gift against your required minimum distribution, which lowers your taxes each year.

Consider establishing a **donor-advised fund (DAF)** through the Catholic Foundation of Southern Nebraska allowing donors to make a charitable contribution to CSS, as well as receive an immediate tax deduction.

For more information on these options, contact me at (402) 327-6235 or jsoukup@cssisus.org.

Donations can also be mailed in the enclosed envelope, or made online at csshope.org. Just click on the "Donate" button. Whatever form you choose, your gift is gratefully appreciated as you help us bring Hope in the Good Life to those we serve together throughout southern Nebraska.