

Compassion in crisis

A recent significant donation has enabled Catholic Charities to provide direct assistance to families living beyond the agency's centers in Fort Wayne and South Bend. The need, however, continues to grow everywhere.

In early April, Elkhart County, home of the cities of Elkhart and Goshen, earned the dubious distinction of having the fourth worst unemployment rate in America. Dubbed the "RV Capital of the World," Elkhart County has lost nearly 7,000 jobs in that industry in just the last year to generate an 18-percent unemployment rate.

But Elkhart County is just one place in Catholic Charities' 14-county service area where people are struggling during this economic malaise. Elkhart leads the state in unemployment, but the counties of LaGrange, Noble, and Steuben round out the top four. Adams, Marshall, Kosciusko, and DeKalb counties are also very high on Indiana's unemployment-rate list.

During these dark economic days, however, has come a ray of light. A \$15,000 donation from benefactors who wish to remain anonymous has enabled Catholic Charities to provide direct assistance to 120 families at parishes in four of the counties hit hardest by the economy: St. John the Evangelist (Elkhart County), St. Anthony of Padua (Steuben), St. Dominic (Marshall), and St. Joseph (LaGrange).

"Although we provide programs and services in all of our 14 counties, we seldom

continued on page 4



Lisa Young (left) and Jo Fisher of Catholic Charities chat with a family at St. John the Evangelist in Goshen.



Catholic
Charities

Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese

Together, we will persevere

I don't have to tell any of you that we're living in uncertain economic times. We've all had to tighten our belts at least a notch or two. But for far too many people, these are *desperate* times. In our diocese, countless people have lost their jobs, seen their life savings vanish, and, in some cases, even lost their homes. Perhaps the most troubling repercussion of the current economic crisis is that children, right here in our diocese, face going hungry for the first time in their lives. We simply can't allow that to stand in our communities.

We recently received a very generous \$15,000 donation from benefactors who wish to remain anonymous. It's so heartening to know that there are people who, despite the economic downturn, are willing to give so magnanimously to enable our agency to continue in the pursuit of its mission. God bless these wonderful, selfless individuals.

With the full support of Bishop D'Arcy, we decided to use that money as direct assistance to families living outside Allen and St. Joseph counties, our two most populous areas. In the Fort Wayne and South Bend areas, we rely upon the generosity of parishioners, churches, the diocese, and the United Way. And although we're witnessing an unprecedented call for assistance in Fort Wayne and South Bend, the need in outlying counties, where our resources are not as substantial, is just as great and growing.

Four counties in our 14-county service area—Elkhart, LaGrange, Noble, and Steuben—currently have the highest unemployment rates in the entire state. Adams, Marshall, DeKalb, and Marshall counties also rank high on the list. At 18 percent, Elkhart County's unemployment rate is the fourth worst in the nation. And those unemployment figures don't include people who are underemployed or who have already exhausted their unemployment

benefits. In addition, there are others who are out of work, but aren't eligible for benefits.

We asked parish priests to identify and refer families with the most severe need. There was no shortage of families requesting assistance. Members of my staff and I went out to those counties and met with families. There, we witnessed the full extent of the need. In all, we were able to provide money for food and other necessities to 120 families.

The bottom line, however, is that we just don't have the resources necessary to provide regular direct assistance in many of these counties while still maintaining our other vital programs and services.

So I'm asking you to dig a little deeper into your pocket to help. We hope to raise enough money to continue this outreach, which has a very real, positive impact on families.

I know that when people give to a charity, they want their money used wisely to help others. We have a very lean administrative budget. In fact, more than 90 percent of our budget goes directly to support programs and services. In that vein, not one penny of the \$15,000 donation was used for administration. Members of my administrative staff went above and beyond to visit with those families in need.

I ask that you open your heart—and your wallet—a little more to help all these people in need. I pledge that your donation will be put to good use. And with your help, we can all persevere in these tough times.



Debbie Schmidt, M.Ed.

A message from Bishop D'Arcy

The present economic downturn offers to the believer an opportunity. The call to care for the poor, for the widow, the homeless, those without food, and the unemployed, represents to us the call of Christ. It is a call to love, and to find Christ our Savior in those in need.

We do not approach them in a way that is condescending. Pope Benedict XVI has reminded us that what the poor need is a profound humanity. A gracious love, and one filled with joy, and a concrete love, for this particular person is the call of Christ to each one.

I call Catholic Charities, and Saint Vincent de Paul Society, and the Christ Child Society, and Women's Care Center, and all those affiliated with the Church to a love that is unselfish, filled with humanity, and never condescending.



Let our celebration of the Holy Eucharist remind us always of our neighbor in need. It is a privilege to serve the needy, and the present situation calls for extra effort.

Let us especially turn our face towards Elkhart County, Indiana. I am grateful to Catholic Charities, which recently gave funds received from an anonymous donor to Goshen, Bremen, Lagrange, Angola, and Elkhart. It was only a beginning. Like the widow's mite, it is pleasing to the Lord. But we are called to do more, and I resolve to do everything possible to help.

A Blessed and Holy Easter to all.

With every best wish and prayer, I remain

Sincerely yours in our Lord,



Most Reverend John M. D'Arcy

Did you know?

In 2007, some 1,568,964 people received basic-need services from their local Catholic Charities agencies.

The Community Center of Caring food pantry in DeKalb County served more than 12,876 people in 2007–2008.

Donations may be made securely online by going to <http://www.ccfwsb.org/> and clicking on "Give Now."

have the wherewithal to provide direct financial assistance outside our hubs, Fort Wayne and South Bend, where we have the most people and the greatest financial support," says Catholic Charities Executive Director Debbie Schmidt. "So this money was a real blessing because there are so many people in dire straits throughout our service area."

After parish priests referred families with the most need, Schmidt and members of her administrative staff traveled to meet with some of those families. Schmidt was accompanied by Lisa Young, assistant director; Jo Fisher, West Region administrator; Kela Guy, employment services supervisor, and Vicky Foltz, executive administrative assistant.

"We spoke with families about their situations and provided them with funds for basic necessities, such as food and outstanding utility bills," Young says. "They were very appreciative of the assistance. A lot of folks need money just to eat, and that's putting a real strain on food banks. It just breaks my heart that anyone is in need of food, the most basic necessity."

"People are wondering when this extreme situation is going to end," Young adds. "They don't know if a turnaround is coming soon. And some don't know if they'll lose their homes, and, in fact, be homeless—not just adults, but their children, too."

Nowhere is the recession having a greater impact than in the Hispanic community. "It's been absolutely terrible—70 to 80 percent of Hispanic families are without income due to the economy," says Claudia Ortiz, a longtime volunteer at St. John the Evangelist in Goshen. "And if they're undocumented, they can't apply for unemployment or other safety-net programs. Some families are moving in together to save money. They can't afford rent if they're not working."

Did you know?

Catholic Charities visited St. John the Evangelist Parish in Goshen. Pictured, from left, are the Rev. Constantino Rocha, associate pastor; Debbie Schmidt, Lisa Young, and Jo Fisher, all of Catholic Charities; and the Rev. Christopher Smith.

In 2007, more than 6.5 million people received food services, accounting for nearly half of the services provided by Catholic Charities nationwide.

Children's Cottage, Catholic Charities' all-day licensed child-care and preschool facility serving low-income families, uses the High Scope Curriculum.



Something extra

An increasing number of people are applying for food stamps. However, many necessities—toilet paper, sanitary napkins, diapers (for children and adults), personal-hygiene products (deodorant, shampoo, toothpaste, etc.), laundry detergent—can't be purchased with food stamps. So when you're shopping for your household, please remember to pick up a few extra items to help struggling families and individuals. You can drop off items at Catholic Charities in Fort Wayne and South Bend.

"At St. John, of course, we're trying to help everyone, not just Hispanics, although they're being hit the hardest by economy," Ortiz adds.

Father Mark Weaver is pastor at St. Joseph in LaGrange. He also serves Hispanic parishioners at St. Anthony of Padua in Angola. "People are in pretty bad shape right now," Weaver says. "Hispanics are the most vulnerable population in the community because of their fragile work situation."

A number of families have had to move away because there are no job prospects, and they're not eligible for aid. We were very pleased that Catholic Charities served so many people with this assistance."

Patti Sheppard, director of the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) headquartered in Auburn, says an unprecedented number of people are asking for help from the organization's Community Center of Caring Food Pantry. Since August, nearly 400 new families have come to the pantry; close to 100 new families have asked for food just since January.

"It's heart-wrenching," Sheppard says. "We're seeing people who have worked their entire lives and have never been in such need of assistance. It's a constant, growing need. We've even received referrals from the food stamp office because it's experiencing a backlog of requests."

As another way to help, RSVP hosted a Resource Fair at the WWII Victory Museum outside Auburn in February. Forty vendors provided information, much of it to help people as they seek employment.

And while the need continues to grow outside of Fort Wayne and South Bend, the call for assistance is increasing in those cities as well. "We're seeing more people than ever before—people who never expected to be here," says Phyllis Mizer, Brief Services case manager in Fort Wayne. "People are laid off and can't meet their bills. The need for food is much greater than I've ever seen in my 28 years with Catholic Charities."

Equal to the want is the growing need for sacrifice and altruism in these tough times. "We hope to be able provide more direct assistance throughout our service area," Schmidt says. "There will be no better time for our already generous donors to 'pay it forward' because none of us really knows when we'll need help just to put food on the table."



Anna Bautista, Claudia Ortiz, Lisa Young, and Jo Fisher at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Goshen.

Volunteer opportunities

South Bend food pantry

Assist with filing, or help find and copy recipes for clients. The hours—two or three a week—are arranged to fit volunteers' schedules. For more information, call Jo Fisher at (574) 234-3111.

Immigration Fort Wayne

Assist with citizenship classes. Call Tatiane Menzie at (260) 422-5625, ext. 282.

Immigration South Bend

Help conduct English-as-a-second-language and citizenship classes, or translate documents into languages other than Spanish. Call Courtney Presson, (574) 234-3111, ext. 32.

RSVP Auburn

Help with stocking and cleaning at the food pantry. Call Patti Sheppard, (260) 925-0917.

RSVP Elkhart

RSVP of Elkhart County is seeking members for its advisory council, which meets monthly to discuss project development and ongoing events. Members also assist with the planning and implementation of projects and fundraisers and facilitate community networking. Call Sarah Hendrix, (574) 534-0148.

RSVP St. Joseph

For an up-to-date listing of volunteer opportunities in St. Joseph County, go to www.makeadifferencemichiana.org/Agency_View.asp?AgencyID=458.

Catholic Charities has a wide variety of volunteer opportunities to fit any schedule.

Did you know?

Wish list

Catholic Charities has an ongoing need for new and gently used items. If you have something to contribute, please contact Barb Burlingham in South Bend at (574) 234-3111, ext. 31, or Judy Schmidt in Fort Wayne at (260) 422-5625, ext. 229. Donations can also be left at Catholic Charities, 315 E. Washington Boulevard in Fort Wayne, or 1817 Miami Street in South Bend.

Adoption/Pregnancy/ECHO

- Diapers (all sizes)
- Baby clothing and other items
- Car seats for infants
- Pack 'n Plays
- Gently used maternity clothes
- Books for children

Brief Services

- Sanitary napkins
- Shampoo
- Deodorant
- Laundry detergent
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes
- Toilet paper
- Dish soap
- Bar soap

South Bend pantry

- Nonperishable foods
- Plastic bags

Refugee job development

- Small and medium men's blazers and dress pants

RSVP

- Donations for rummage sale
- A sewing machine
- Thread, Yarn
- Dish and laundry detergents
- Mittens and gloves
- Canned food
- Paper products
- Personal-hygiene products

Upcoming events

RSVP DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben: RSVP will offer a rummage sale in conjunction with Auburn's annual Sidewalk Sale. The rummage sale is set for Thursday, July 23, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and Friday, July 24, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at RSVP, 107 West 5th Street.

RSVP Elkhart: Plans are still in the works for a fundraising rummage sale later this spring. Call Sarah Hendrix at (574) 534-0148 for more information.

RSVP St. Joseph: From Old2Gold, Notre Dame's annual fundraising yard sale of items donated by students, is set for Saturday, May 23, from 7 to 11 a.m. in Notre Dame Stadium. Early-bird entry (7 to 9 a.m.) is \$5; admittance is free from 9 to 11. One hundred percent of the proceeds go to local charities that assist with the sale, so RSVP needs extra volunteers to help with the effort from April 20 to May 26. Of course, shoppers also help support the sale. For more information, call Jennifer Tindell at (574) 287-0500.

Villa of the Woods: Older Americans Month will be celebrated with an open house from 2 to 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 19. Villa of the Woods is located at 5610 Noll Avenue in Fort Wayne.

Children's Cottage:

Diversity Week: May 4–8. For further information, contact Vanessa Hayden at (260) 745-4929.

Headstart graduation: June 13. For more information, contact Rhonda Lewis or Lucretia Lindsey at (260) 745-4929.

Pot of Gold: The annual Pot of Gold raffle in the South Bend area will run from July 1 through September 30. For more information, call Jo Fisher at (574) 234-3111.

Citizenship classes: Catholic Charities' Immigration Department in Fort Wayne offers citizenship classes. For more information, call Tatiane Menzie at (260) 422-5625, ext. 282.

Adoption information meetings:

Catholic Charities conducts monthly adoption information meetings at the agency's Fort Wayne offices, 315 East Washington Boulevard. Different types of adoptions and the application process are discussed, and questions are answered. Meetings are on the first Thursday of each month (except for this July, when the meeting will be held on the second Thursday). Meetings start promptly at 10 a.m. and end by 11. No preregistration is required. Please arrive on time and check in with the receptionist at the front desk. Child-care services are not available. Parking is available in the lot on the corner of Washington Boulevard and Lafayette Street, and also in the metered lot on the corner of East Wayne and Barr streets.

April is the Month of the Young Child.

Did you know?

The World Refugee Day celebration will be Friday, June 26, from 10:30 a.m. to noon, at Villa of the Woods, 5610 Noll Avenue, in Fort Wayne.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Permit No. 899



Catholic Charities
315 East Washington Boulevard
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802

*Catholic Charities would
like to wish all mothers,
grandmothers, and godmothers
a Happy Mother's Day,
May 10.*

Catholic Charities celebrates the spirit of Jesus and fosters personal dignity by serving the needs of our neighbors. Catholic Charities serves those in need with special emphasis on the most vulnerable populations—the poor, disabled, migrants, elderly, and children. The agency is committed to improving the quality of life for individuals, the family, and the community.

Copyright © 2009 Catholic Charities. Published quarterly for friends, supporters, and staff of Catholic Charities, a nonprofit organization, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana. Articles may be reproduced with proper attribution. Phone: (260) 422-5625 • Fax: (260) 422-5657 Catholic Charities is supported by contributions from United Ways in Allen, DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, and St. Joseph counties.

