

# Loving Christ through those we serve



THE **CLARION**  
NEWS FROM CATHOLIC CHARITIES

..... SPRING 2023 EDITION .....

# MEET OUR BOARD PRESIDENT



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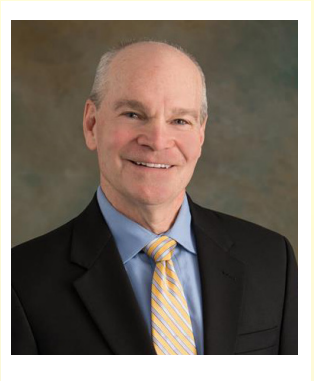
Dear Friends of Catholic Charities,

As we celebrate our Risen Christ, Catholic Charities joyfully thanks you for your support and engagement of our mission! Lent has reminded us of waiting and how to fill it with hope, just as our services bring hope to those in need.

Loneliness, despair, mental health issues, and even displacement into a new society a world away from birth are some of the struggles the marginalized of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese face daily. Because of your gifts of both time and treasure, Catholic Charities has brought hope into the lives of so many. Last year, the agency assisted nearly 20,000 people in the 14 counties we serve.

We help those here in our diocese just as our Church has taught us: without regard to status, history, mistakes, religion, or life circumstances. We concentrate on the service areas of Stability, Counseling, Migration, and Pro-Life. Annually we are blessed to provide over 47,000 services, however we continue to see significant growth in need. In the first two quarters of our fiscal year, we have seen a 40% increase in requests for services. This reflects both pandemic-related income loss for clients and marked inflation. With SNAP benefits ending in March, we expect another influx of need.

As we continue to grow, our Board always remains thankful for the generosity given to Catholic Charities and continuously endeavors to be a faithful steward of those gifts. This year, we retained StrategyWorx, a well-regarded consulting firm who frequently works with Catholic organizations, to do a comprehensive strategic review. Our goal is to streamline our organization, especially with respect to the distribution of our services, to most efficiently widen our impact at all levels. This review deeply involves each member of our entire Board, our CEO, and the full management team. It takes dozens of hours receiving input from all stakeholders and organizing and prioritizing ideas. This will result in clear strategic direction going forward.



In addition, we are revitalizing and expanding our West Region. We have added new board members from that area and hired Kellie Porter as Vice President to provide leadership over our services for the most vulnerable in St. Joseph, Elkhart, Marshall, and Kosciusko counties. Kellie comes to us with a history of success in both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations in the South Bend area, including the University of Notre Dame and the Beacon Health system.

Thank you all again as we continue to move Catholic Charities forward!

John Fallon, MD, MBA



# REGIONAL UPDATES

## EAST REGION

### **Meet Matt Smith, PhD.**

Matt came aboard in November as the first-ever Chief Development Officer. Matt is leading Mission Advancement, which includes Development and Marketing. Previously, Matt held positions at Our Sunday Visitor (OSV) Institute for Catholic Innovation, as Director of Institutional Advancement and Strategic Alliances, as well as the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at the University of St. Francis.



## WEST REGION

### **Meet Kellie Porter.**

Kellie joined us in January as the first-ever Vice President of the West Region. Kellie has had a long and respected career in fundraising at the University of Notre Dame, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and Beacon Health System. She will be overseeing programs, fundraising, and community engagement initiatives for St. Joseph, Elkhart, Marshall, and Kosciusko counties.



## NORTH REGION

### **Meet Heather Thiel.**

Heather is our newest case manager in our growing North Region office. Joining us at the beginning of February, she is working with the mentoring program, as well as providing case management to those in need through the Resource and Referral program and pregnancy support services.



# MEET DUKE

our new  
therapy dog

Have you ever noticed that conversations with our furry friends are much easier than with another human? With nonjudgmental ears, therapy dogs were introduced over a decade ago to the medical field. Clients have found success in sharing their emotions with their counselor through the therapy dog, especially those who have experienced trauma.

## Who is Duke?

When our Fort Wayne Counseling Supervisor, Karen, met Duke at an animal shelter, she could tell he knew something about trauma. A five-year-old standard poodle, Duke was surrendered to the shelter from a puppy mill. Blind in one eye, he showed signs of neglect and nervousness around humans. Little did Duke know, he would be the perfect dog to help other trauma survivors overcome their anxieties.

A year later, through training and positive reinforcement, Duke has overcome many of his trepidations and is a therapy dog in training. When he isn't working, he enjoys bones, potato chips, ear scratches, and afternoon naps.

**"What I love about dogs is they are just how they are. They can't make excuses for themselves; they do what they need to do. They love unconditionally, no matter who you are or what has happened in your life. They don't put expectations on clients and are role models for how living could be if we all just accept who we are."**

*Karen, Catholic Charities' Counselor and Duke's owner*

## How are therapy dogs used?

A lot of people don't know how to ask for their needs. Experience has shown having a therapy dog present can help clients say, "I need help." When they ask to sit with Duke, they are actually expressing their needs to the counselor. They acknowledge that something is upsetting them internally by conveying the need of touch and comfort by the dog. For the counselor, a therapy dog serves as an extension of human connection that counselors cannot give clients, like hugging, and teaches the client to find comfort in different ways.

## Where did the idea of having a therapy dog come from?

When Karen was in graduate school, she attended an animal-assisted training. There she learned how to use animals to aid clients' self-esteem, acceptance, trauma, and comfort levels.

Karen held onto that dream for over a decade. With her work in schools, Karen felt it would be a great way to connect with shy students. Oftentimes, talking to an animal is less intimidating than to a counselor, so Duke often helps Karen quietly assess a client's needs as they talk to him.





# INCREASING our impact

**12** diocesan schools have weekly counselors.

**205** counseling clients were helped last year.

**259** Clinical Liaison referrals were received last year.

**143** addiction clients attended group sessions last year.

## NEW COUNSELING OFFICES

With our counseling teams growing, so have our facilities!

Fort Wayne services have moved to the Woodland Plaza. This addition also includes a new play-therapy space for younger clients.

South Bend services will still conduct group therapy at the Miami Street office, but will also offer one-on-one appointments at the St. John Paul II Center (located next to Marion High School).

### Has Duke been trained?

After being welcomed into Karen's family, Duke was enrolled in beginner obedience training. He was a super star and graduated top of his class. He was also deemed having the perfect temperament for a therapy dog. This spring, Duke is enrolled in a fundamentals 6-week obedience training course; afterward, Duke will need to pass the Canine Good Citizenship (CGC) test. Once he's passed the CGC then he can be enrolled in therapy animal training, where he will learn how to remain calm in certain situations and be exposed to medical equipment. Karen will also receive specific handler training so that all involved have a positive experience.

### What can clients expect during a session with Duke?

Duke has started to join counseling sessions with Karen. With a comforting and patient temperament, he does very well in one-on-one situations, and thrives around children.

"Once Duke sees me pull out his therapy vest, he gets very excited to go to work," said Karen. "Duke becomes the happiest dog when we enter a school and the children come to say hello."

Clients can expect their session to be the same as not having a therapy dog present: using different therapy exercises to achieve their goals. Duke is another tool Karen can use with a client for comfort and emotional regulation. Duke's main purpose is to act as a touchstone or a calming presence when needed. Whether it is sitting on the floor with Duke or not wanting his assistance, clients can share their preference with Karen.

# finding hope for an **ASYLEE**

Leaving Afghanistan was one of the most chaotic and heart-wrenching experiences Ahad has had to endure. He had to make the decision to leave his pregnant wife and unborn child, knowing they could not make it to the entrance of the airport, where he was hoping and praying they would make it past the hordes of people so they could escape the Taliban. He was forced to get on a plane without them in hopes they could join him in the United States shortly after. Due to his connections and previous Air Force training in the United States, as well as his rank as a Captain in the Afghan military, he knew the Taliban would be looking for him and would not hesitate to kill him.

"I knew that coming to the United States would be the best chance I had to get back on my feet and provide a way for my wife and child to be safe and secure," said Ahad.

Due to his desire to serve his country and people, Ahad graduated as a Second Lieutenant Aviation Officer with a bachelor's degree in science. He pushed himself to excel further and was able to obtain a scholarship to come study in the United States. It was at the United States Air Force base where he received a diploma for studying English and then trained for another goal: become a pilot for the Afghan military to fight the Taliban.

**"I now have the possibility to not only be safe from persecution, but eventually to be reunited with my family here in the United States and provide them a safe and secure future."**

Ahad would not be where he is today if it were not for the efforts of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

During the fall of the Afghan government, Ahad came to the U.S. under the Afghan Placement and Assistance (APA) program. Under this program, he had to change his refugee parolee status to asylee within one year of entering the country.

He expressed, "Through Catholic Charities' Refugee Department, I was able to work towards starting a new life here. They helped me with all my initial needs such as housing, employment, and even the basic things, such as where to find groceries."

Though starting to settle in and now employed, one thing has not left Ahad's mind: reuniting with his wife and child.

"After my initial resettlement process, I was connected with Catholic Charities' Immigration Department. They met with me many times to ensure I stayed in the United States legally. They worked with me to finalize my asylum case and gave me hope that I would be able to not only seek asylum for myself, but for my wife and my baby. After waiting a few months, I received the news that my asylum application has been officially approved and I am so grateful."





Working with Catholic Charities' fully-accredited Department of Justice Immigration Director, Luz Ostrognai, was key in submitting his asylum application.

"Our agency is working to help Afghan clients rebuild their life in our community," said Ostrognai. "The process of obtaining asylum and other forms of immigration relief has been intense and stressful due to each case's individual complexities, language barriers, and the statutory deadlines imposed; but the positive impact we have on the lives of our clients cannot be overstated."

Since the arrival of 150 Afghans in our diocese over the last year and a half, Catholic Charities' Immigration Department has been working diligently on these unique asylum cases.

**"Our humanitarian work is making a difference in the lives of these individuals, and this is truly something we are proud of!"**

## TERMINOLOGY

### **Who is a Refugee?**

An individual with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country. They are granted refugee status from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees before being resettled. Upon entering the U.S. they receive Legal Permanent Residency.

### **Who is an Asylee?**

An individual with a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, has entered the U.S. on their own and then applies for asylum from within the country. U.S.C.I.S. judges each case before being approved or denied.

### **Who is an Immigrant?**

A foreign-born individual who voluntarily leaves his/her country of origin and has been admitted to reside permanently in the U.S. as a Legal Permanent Resident.

## VOLUNTEER WITH US

We are in need of volunteers to help our Fort Wayne and South Bend Refugee and Immigration Services teams. If you are interested, please visit

[www.cfwsb.org/volunteer](http://www.cfwsb.org/volunteer) for more info.

# Giving More Than Just Food

It is hard to find a more dedicated person than Juan. He is a neighbor, friend, and permanent volunteer at our food pantry in South Bend.

Juan moved to South Bend from Guadalajara, Mexico when he was 16 and a couple of months later learned about Catholic Charities' programs. Responsible for greeting food pantry clients with his warm smile, Juan embodies our vision of meeting people with hope at our doors.

"When we first moved to the neighborhood, I saw a food pantry sign across the street and I decided to check it out," said Juan. "Since then, this place has been a part of my family. It is a space where I am able to help and gather with this community. Everyone who steps in is my friend."

Over the years, Juan has formed a friendship with our staff and mission.

"I like Catholic Charities because they, like I do, enjoy helping others. Being able to help at the food pantry is a lot of fun because I get to meet people and lend a hand when they really need it," adds Juan.

Juan embodies Catholic Charities' vision and mission as he is always trying to help those in need in any possible way. You can volunteer with Juan and help hope begin for our neighbors every Wednesday in South Bend.

## PANTRIES IN NEED

In March, extended SNAP benefits ended, meaning many families will not be able to afford basic hygiene items like shampoo, conditioner, bar soap, tooth paste, and laundry soap. Drop off a hygiene or food donation at our Auburn or South Bend food pantries.



## STOP BY OUR PANTRIES

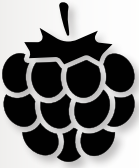
Volunteer in South Bend on Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Volunteer in Auburn on Monday 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., Tuesday 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., or Wednesday 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

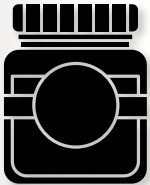


# SERVED LAST YEAR

by our food pantries



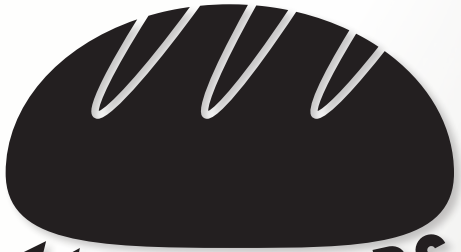
**FOOD  
PANTRY**  
SOUTH BEND  
**2,023**



**FOOD  
PANTRY**  
AUBURN  
**1,958**



**COATS**  
AUBURN  
**3,574**



**113,000+ LBS**  
OF FOOD GIVEN AWAY





# A REASSURING VOICE *and a healthy baby*

Through the Hispanic Health Advocacy program, many low-income Spanish speaking individuals in Allen County have found support, quality medical interpretation, and transportation services. In Sofia's case, it was a lifesaving program.

At five months pregnant, Sofia moved to the United States with her two daughters and her husband for a better life. After services ended at another nonprofit, Sofia was referred to Catholic Charities' Hispanic Health Advocacy program for ongoing pregnancy care.

By the time the Hispanic Health Advocate (HHA) started seeing Sofia, she was seven months pregnant and, from an ultrasound, learned that she had a high-risk pregnancy. Sofia's baby had gastroschisis; meaning the baby had a hole in its abdominal wall and could result in the intestines growing outside of the body. It was crucial Sofia attended all her appointments for additional monitoring. She had missed many appointments before the HHA's involvement due to lack of transportation. The HHA stayed in contact with the hospital's social worker and nurses, letting them know the HHA would be helping with interpretation and transportation services. The HHA sat down with the nurse and together scheduled out transportation for Sofia's remaining prenatal appointments.



Once she started getting help from the program, the HHA saw Sofia twice per week and attended all Sofia's appointments leading up to her due date. The HHA not only supported Sofia, but also provided the expert medical interpretation needed for this complex case.

Because of the severity of the baby's health, the physician wanted Sofia to relocate to Indianapolis before the delivery. Unfortunately, the HHA couldn't help with transportation to Indianapolis, but Catholic Charities was able to help with gas cards so that other family members could drive Sofia. The HHA was able to get connected with the hospital in Indianapolis and spoke with a social worker to get Sofia set up with transportation services available through the hospital.

**“When I began working with Sofia, I was so scared for her high-risk pregnancy. I was grateful to provide transportation and medically-trained interpretation services so the baby had the best chance possible at being healthy.”**

*Arantza, Catholic Charities' HHA*

The HHA kept in contact with Sofia by phone while she was in Indianapolis and after she gave birth to a baby girl. Immediately following birth, Sofia's daughter had to have surgery.

Now thriving, the HHA is helping Sofia and her baby get to post-surgery medical appointments so she grows up happy and healthy.

## *Funded by*

Funded in part by a grant from the **St. Joseph Community Health Foundation**, the Hispanic Health Advocate program was created to serve those in our diocese who need Spanish interpretation services in all vital areas of healthcare.

The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, sponsored by the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, exists to steward resources that strengthen, improve, and sustain long-term community health in Allen County, Indiana. They invest in and collaborate with other community agencies to improve the physical, mental, and spiritual health of the poor and underserved.

**Thank you to the foundation for making this story possible.**

thanks to your  
*generous gifts*

we were able to serve

**19,385 INDIVIDUALS**  
in 2022

PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT OF:

- \$1,500** ..... PROVIDES COUNSELING FOR THREE MONTHS
- \$1,000** ..... PROVIDES 600 FOOD PANTRY MEALS
- \$500** ..... GIVES SCHOOL SUPPLIES TO A REFUGEE CHILD
- \$250** ..... PROVIDES JOB TRAINING FOR LOW INCOME PARENTS
- \$100** ..... GIVES A BABY DIAPERS AND WIPES FOR A MONTH
- \$50** ..... HELPS A LOW INCOME FAMILY KEEP THE HEAT ON
- \$25** ..... GIVES A CHILD A WARM COAT

Any gift, big or small, helps hope begin  
for families across the diocese

where **hope** begins.

To learn more about our Pro-Life, Migration, Counseling, and Stability services, please visit our website at [www.ccfwsb.org](http://www.ccfwsb.org).



**CATHOLIC CHARITIES**  
FORT WAYNE + SOUTH BEND

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