



Diocese
of Joliet

the WINTER 2010 CONNECTION

A Publication of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet

Dear Friends,

On September 1, I began my new job as Executive Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Joliet. I am so grateful for the tremendous support I have received from our Catholic Charities and Joliet Diocesan staff, volunteers, donors, and board members. It is clear that they all believe in our mission and are united in the commitment to provide help and hope to those in need in the communities we serve.



While I have been busy learning more about the vast and incredible programs we provide, I have also been developing relationships with local community leaders and others in the national Catholic Charities movement – something I believe is of utmost importance. With their help, we will continue to advocate for the needs of the poor as Jesus taught us to, focus on their strengths, and empower them to achieve self-sufficiency and independence.

You and your families will be in our prayers during this holy season and throughout the New Year. Please continue to support our work and our mission. We can't do God's work without you.

Very truly yours in Christ,

Glenn Van Cura
Executive Director

Together for Life

Polly Anna Elllison White was 98-years-old when Midge Daucanski, a Senior Companion for Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Joliet, began visiting her. And Midge was there this past August when Polly Anna celebrated her 108th birthday.

Their deep friendship started when both, coincidentally, were in need of some "TLC". Midge had recently lost her husband. "I was walking around in a fog. I was just a robot," she said. Around the same time, Polly Anna had been hospitalized and was due to go home. But social workers knew she needed some extra help, especially because she lived alone and was surviving on a very limited income.

Hospital staff contacted Catholic Charities' Senior Companion program knowing the program paired up low-income seniors with homebound seniors who need some extra attention but not necessarily full-time care. The companions receive a small stipend for their work which consists of visiting homebound seniors up to four hours a day, taking them to appointments, stores and outings.

It didn't take Midge long before she became fascinated with Polly Anna's life. She listened to story after story of Polly Anna's youth in Hollywood, Alabama, growing up with 13 siblings, jobs in Detroit as a cook and as a nanny, her escape from an abusive husband, and her journey to her home in Kankakee, Illinois. Polly Anna, too, was delighted to hear Midge's stories, especially of her family and her late husband, the love of her life.

That first year, as the holidays approached, Midge cancelled her plans to travel to Florida to be with her family. She did not want Polly Anna to be alone. Today, holidays are spent together.

"I found out that I could offer a lot to someone who needed me," Midge said. "And Polly Anna has so much to offer." Polly Anna replied, "And she loves me. If she don't, she's really good at pretending!"



Midge and Polly Anna – friends forever.



What gift would you give to the person who has everything?

How about a Gift from the Heart? Make a donation through this program and it will be used to buy diapers, food and milk, toiletries and cleaning products for low-income families and seniors, and so much more. You can even make your gift in honor of that special someone who has everything and we'll send them an acknowledgment telling them of your thoughtful gift on their behalf. **Shop for your gifts today at www.cc-doj.**

Applause for Hope House

Hope House staff recently shared some great news! During July, August and

September of 2010, 92% of homeless adults that lived at the shelter obtained employment! Given the challenges with the economy and unemployment rates, this is awe-inspiring news!



Nick Triani, a former resident at Hope House, is pictured on the day he left Hope House to start a new job with a cruise line in Alaska.

Hope House is a unique 16-bed shelter program operated by Catholic Charities in DuPage County. The program provides support for persons and families who are situationally homeless due to job loss, depleted savings, etc. Residents of the shelter work hard to get a job and a permanent place to live in a short period of time.

If you would like additional information about Hope House or any of Catholic Charities' homeless shelters, please visit www.cc-doj.org

Spirit of Charity



Chuck and Regina Millington and Bishop J. Peter Sartain

Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "Do little bits of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world." Chuck and Regina Millington know all about those "little bits" and in September 2010 they were presented with the prestigious Catholic Charities' Spirit of Charity Award.

Since 2000 Chuck Millington has served on the Board of Directors at Catholic Charities and is currently the Treasurer. His expertise in finance has never been needed more than in the past three years when the agency and the country have struggled financially. Regina Millington's smile and laughter can brighten anyone's day, but it's her commitment to help those in need that is most admirable. Regina has spent countless hours caring for God's oldest children at St. Patrick's Residence in Naperville.

This amazing and humble couple has clearly shown us God's love and compassion for the poor and those in need, especially at Catholic Charities. Whether it's their attendance at one of Catholic Charities' events, their hands-on help with the Back to School Fair in DuPage, Chuck's dedication in balancing the agency's budget, or the prayers we know they offer for those we serve, they are the Spirit of Charity.

All Saints Kids to the Rescue!

"They just kept coming and coming," said Nancy Zakosek of the Foster Grandparent Program, when she talked about the incredibly successful book drive recently held by students at All Saints Academy in Naperville. Her goal was to collect new and gently used books for kids ages 3-5 that are enrolled in Catholic Charities' Head Start program. "Our volunteer grandmas and grandpas love to read to the children in the classrooms, but over the years the book supply and variety has dwindled, especially the bilingual books for children who are also Spanish speaking," she said.

Zakosek is now working on a plan to distribute over 1,000 books to the six head start sites in Will County. "I can't wait to see their happy faces when I deliver these books," she said, referring not only to the children, but the foster grandparents who requested the books!



Parent volunteers from All Saints Academy helped load books donated by the students and their families.

Challenges, Change and Charity

A Look Back at the Past Year



Last year (July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010) was filled with endless challenges and “firsts”. It was a year in which a record number 71,000 people were helped – an increase of over 33% from last year. It was also a year that cost an average of \$57,000 a day to do God’s work.

It was a year in which new federal funds were used to meet the needs of those who showed up at our doors. Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing funds allowed us to help “the new face at Catholic Charities” by paying rent and mortgage payments and providing case management to help families navigate the challenges of unemployment and depleted savings. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds were also used to expand Early Head Start in Bolingbrook adding classrooms at the center and additional home based service sites.

Providing the Basics

It was a year where we saw almost 12,000 low-income family members work their way through the Back to School Fairs – an increase of over 30% from the year before and a year where we helped over 2,000 households survive the challenges of daily life by providing basic needs such as medicine, food and clothing. We fed 64% more people at our Shepherd’s Table soup kitchen and donations of food thankfully arrived from caring individuals and groups every time we asked for it. We have never fed so many hungry people as we did last year.

It was a year that we were thankful for a 7% decrease in the number of seniors who had been abused, neglected or financially exploited.

The Angel Fund

The Angel Fund was created when the agency’s most generous donor stepped up and offered to provide a \$50,000 matching gift to increase revenue. This last-minute effort was pulled together in less than two weeks and raised nearly \$150,000 in less than a month.

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Preventing Homelessness

Permanent Supportive Housing expanded as Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing funds were used to relocate families living in Transitional Housing at Daybreak to scattered site housing in apartments and homes throughout the Will County community. Furthermore, HUD funds were then

used to move chronically homeless men living at New Beginnings to permanent residences in the living areas on the top two floors of Daybreak Center. This movement represented the first significant expansion of housing for chronically homeless men living in Will County.

Support & Intervention

The Counseling rooms used for family and child therapy got a face lift with new, appropriate furniture, wall art and play therapy toys. These changes were truly warranted as the program has witnessed a 126% increase in the number of persons served. Part of the increase can be attributed to the program’s highly successful support groups including the addition of the Unemployment Support group.

A Resource for Those in Need

Last year was undoubtedly one of the most challenging years ever faced by Catholic Charities. Requests for services piled up, the phones never stopped ringing, people lined up outside our doors as early as 6:00 a.m. looking for help and our staff have never worked so hard with such limited resources. But we survived. We survived because of the unbreakable will and dedication of our staff – and because of our amazing, generous donors.



Emergency Services Gets a Helping Hand... *from Heaven*

Catholic Charities has been blessed many times by those who remember the agency in their wills and estate plans. Because of them we are often able to meet needs that might not otherwise be met. For example, not too long ago, a faithful donor and special friend of Catholic Charities from the Kankakee area passed away, but before he did, he named Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Joliet as the beneficiary of his life insurance policy. As a result, the agency received over \$100,000 which has been earmarked for use in our Emergency Services programs. "I feel like these funds were 'heaven sent' because now more than ever we need additional money to help the increasing number of families who are coming to us for help," said Pam Kostecki, Community Services Division Director. The funds will be used to cover needs that cannot be met with any other available funds.

Examples of items that can be purchased using Emergency Services funding include special clothing or shoes needed for work such as uniforms or steel-toed boots, air conditioners for families with children who have severe asthma and emergency car repairs.

Have you ever considered choosing Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Joliet as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy? If you'd like more information on this option or other planned giving opportunities, call Lorri Nagle at 815-723-3405, ext. 1102.



Staff briefly took in the sights on Capitol Hill before they participated in the historic introduction of new legislation aimed at reducing poverty.

Staff Travel to Capitol Hill – Introduce the National Opportunity and Community Renewal Act

Staff traveled to our nation's capitol not only to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the formation of the national Catholic Charities movement, but also to introduce the National Opportunity and Community Renewal Act (S. 3845/H.R. 6222). While the "safety net" for the poor provided by current government programs has certainly helped, it has not moved people out of poverty. The newly introduced legislation offers a new way to address poverty that is tailored to individual needs and circumstances.

Staff met with Senator Dick Durbin and representatives from the districts represented in the Diocese of Joliet to ask for their support of the bill. "It was so exciting to be on the Hill, meeting with key legislators and asking them to support this ground breaking legislation," said Deb Darzinskis, Associate Executive Director.

For more information about the legislation, visit www.catholiccharitiesusa.org

An Angel in the Kitchen

Congratulations to Gail Flatness, kitchen coordinator at Shepherd's Table, who was named the 2010 Employee of the Year. Pam Kostecki, Division Director for Community Services once said, "The homeless must have been praying for a miracle because they got a whole lot more than a cook when Gail arrived at Daybreak four years ago."

Gail welcomes everyone to Daybreak and Shepherd's Table. From the volunteers who serve meals to the clients who lend a helping hand, she makes everyone feel a little better about themselves. With a smile always on her face, Gail goes that extra mile and has taught many to look beyond what our eyes see when a client comes into our soup kitchen. She has taught us to listen to their stories, see their desperation, their fears, and above all, their gratefulness.



Gail Flatness, 2010 Employee of the Year, makes everyone feel special including little Taliyah.

Remembering a Friend

One thing that Doug Spesia taught his family and friends was the importance of sharing one's blessings, which he did with grace and humbleness. Catholic Charities lost a dear friend with Doug's passing this summer, but his legacy and message will live on in the soon-to-be renovated St. Joseph's Family Center at Daybreak Center in Joliet. The room renovation was made possible by gifts that were made to Daybreak Center in memory of Doug after his passing.

Aside from his faith, Doug's greatest love was his family which is why they chose to name the room after St. Joseph, the patron saint of families. St. Joseph's Family Center will be used by families living at the homeless shelter and will feature couches and comfy chairs, a computer and work station for homework, games area and a large TV for "family movie night"! The Spesia family, especially Doug's wife, Lori, has been involved in choosing the décor for the room including the furniture and fabrics. Some artwork for the walls was also donated by the family. St. Joseph's Family Center is scheduled to be open in February 2011.

Gift of Christmas

Catholic Charities has again partnered with *Christ is Our Hope*, the magazine of the Diocese of Joliet, on helping Christmas wishes come true this season for many children and families in need this Christmas. Sixteen stories of struggling families and their wishes are currently featured in the magazine and a total of 50 stories are featured on Catholic Charities' website.

If you would like to help a struggling family, child or senior, please visit www.cc-doj.org

Benefit for Kids – Great Success!

Toes were tappin', people were singing and raising funds for kids was never as much fun as it was at Playing for Miracles, one of Catholic Charities' most exciting fundraisers. The event featured the talented antics of "Howl at the Moon" dueling pianists Andrew Blenderman and Tony Kidonakis, an exciting silent auction, a memorable live auction and, for the first time, the "Candy Bar" where guests paid \$20 to get a bag full of delectable sweets. All funds raised from the Candy Bar were used to buy diapers and formula for families in need. The dueling piano entertainment was sponsored by **Harris Bank Lincoln-way Region**, a strong supporter of the work of Catholic Charities. Gourmet food stations were sponsored by Mr. & Mrs. John Martin, Mr. & Mrs. John Carr, and Mr. & Mrs. Michael McCoy.

This year saw the presentation of the first annual Angels Among Us Award which was presented to St. Paul the Apostle Parish and School of Joliet for their unwavering support of Catholic Charities and its programs.

The event raised over \$70,000 for programs that serve children at Catholic Charities.

Special thanks to Rose Ann Deadessis, chair of the silent auction and creator of the Candy Bar, for her leadership and enthusiasm. Thanks also to the auction and ad book committee: Bonnie Clark, Sue Levy, Maureen Mitchell-Golden, Cindy Perryman, Pat Cargola, and Sue Kaiser.



Playing for Miracles



From top: Fr. Greg Rothfuchs, pastor at St. Paul the Apostle Parish in Joliet, and Kim Cunnea, parish council president (and a board member at Catholic Charities) proudly accepted the Angels Among Us Award from Catholic Charities Executive Director, Glenn Van Cura.

Guests Eileen Carrero (front) and Andrea Kaminski (back) had a blast bidding on auction items.

Bob Borgstrom from McGrath Office Products, and his daughter, Erin, proved the event was one that pleased a crowd of all ages!



Catholic Charities

PROVIDING HELP. CREATING HOPE.

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www.cc-doj.org.

Our Mission...

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Joliet, translates God's reconciling love into professional human services, advocates for a just and compassionate society and brings together members of the community, church, business, health care and government to develop effective responses to human needs.

We commit to define these needs, seek solutions, and call forth other resources so that those we serve are empowered to achieve for themselves satisfying and productive lives.

If you have any questions or concerns about this publication, please call Lorri Nagle at 815.724.1102.



Save the Date!

Exclusive Preview of the 2011 Chicago Auto Show



First Look for Charity

**Thursday, February 10, 2011
6:30 pm – 10:30 pm**

**This year the fun will never stop with big name
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Reserve your tickets today. Call 815-724-1140.

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First Look for Charity and the Chicago Auto Show are presented by the Chicago Automobile Trade Association, representing the new-car dealers of Chicagoland and north-west Indiana.



**Black-tie attire
mandatory**

By purchasing a ticket and attending the event, you are automatically entered to win one of two fabulous vehicles –Honda CR-Z Hybrid and Hyundai Sonata. Prize vehicle winners must be present.