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Catholic Charities

ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

SUMMER 2009 VOLUME 1 NUMBER 3

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DEALING WITH DISASTERS

The Catholic Charities Disaster Response Team provides assistance and gives hope to families in Lone Grove

Kirsten Lee and Allison Craig, members of the Catholic Charities Disaster Response Team, have been on the job at Lone Grove, Oklahoma since the tornado struck on February 10, 2009, providing emergency assistance and long-term recovery case management. More than 40 families have found a friend and advocate in working with Kirsten and Allison. While the images of the devastation are familiar to Oklahomans, the stories of hope are just as familiar.

Linda lost everything in the disaster. She lived in a rented mobile home with

her daughter and granddaughter. Uninsured, Linda received only \$6,000 to replace everything they lost. Linda used the money to purchase a used mobile home, but obviously the work of replacing the many lost personal and household items was just beginning. Kirsten and Allison helped to piece together other resources in the community so that Linda and her family could return to the home they once knew.

With a tremendous amount of support from the community, Linda and her family are finally self-sufficient.

The Church of Christ donated a stove and refrigerator. The First Baptist Church paid for the electricity to be set up. A local benefit concert gave the money to pay for a new water heater and water connections.

Catholic Charities has learned a lot in working in the Ardmore area and will continue to work with those directly affected by the tornado in the months to come. A temporary office has been established at Memorial Hospital in Ardmore. 

While the images of the devastation are familiar to Oklahomans, the stories of hope are just as familiar.

Dear Friends of Catholic Charities:

Daily, Catholic Charities is called on to assist the poor. As Director, I have learned one critical point about poverty.

Poverty does not mean having no money. Rather, poverty is a state of existence in which one experiences extreme isolation from family or community or society. We all experience some kind of poverty as a part of our human condition.

We see poverty in the faces of our refugees who have been rejected by their own people, because of their beliefs or political convictions. We find poverty in the life of the single pregnant mother who has been devalued and abused by her child's father. Poverty is hidden in the family, whose adolescent son has turned to alcohol to ease the pain of a broken family relationship.

You and I are God's children and are members of one family. We are sisters and brothers to every person in this universe. Indeed, God's plan for our salvation required the gift of His Son to unite us as one family. It is the work of Catholic Charities to help repair our broken relationships so that God's family is enriched with His grace and blessings.

Our stories in this issue help share the good news of Catholic Charities' efforts in strengthening families and building community in Oklahoma. These are the works that will help our society overtake poverty. We are very grateful for your continued prayers and support which make our work possible.

Sincerely,



Tim O'Connor, Executive Director
Catholic Charities of Oklahoma City

TEACHING REFUGEES NEW SKILLS

Kent Sannman spends his volunteer hours for Catholic Charities teaching refugees to drive using his very special skills. As a city planner, Kent used his skills to build street maps that show traffic signs as well as street placement. He uses Matchbox cars to teach our Burmese refugees the rules of the road.

After initial lessons with Kent, another volunteer works with the refugees to learn actual driving techniques. This very important skill provides more employment opportunities for the refugees. Without the

volunteers and the donated vehicles, employment and housing opportunities would be very limited. 



Volunteer August Rivera helps a refugee client learn to drive. To join our volunteer team call Cassie Neahring at (405) 526-2308.

GRANTS PROVIDE SERVICE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR CATHOLIC PARISHES

Catholic Charities continues to help parishes and other groups in our Archdiocese develop anti-poverty programs, which will give hope to persons who experience the greatest effects of material deprivation. The National Campaign for Human Development returns one fourth of its annual collection to the local diocese to engage parishes in the works of social justice.

Previous grant recipients have included Mount St. Mary's Summer Academy, sponsored by Sacred Heart Parish, which "is a project of transformative justice designed to address some of the root causes of poverty in the next generation," says Brian Boeckman, Coordinator. Sessions on leadership development, religion, industrial crafts, art, life skills and tutorials in Math and English have given neighborhood

children a safe environment to develop skills and talents.

Becky VanPool, Diocesan Director of the Catholic Campaign for Human Development says "Through partnerships with parishes, the CCHD grants give many talented parishioners the opportunity to make a difference in their community by creating programs which put faith in action."

"For example, St. Ann's Parish of Fairview has provided support for single parent families at the Little Jacket Learning Center through parent education classes and a literacy program, 'Hooked on Books.' This is an example of a long-term effect to transform the future of these families," Van Pool commented.

The Campaign for Human Development is the domestic anti-poverty, social justice program of the US Catholic Bishops that supports community-controlled, self-help organizations and provides education about the causes of poverty. Local grant information for parishes can be obtained by contacting Becky VanPool at (405) 523-3003 or bvanpool@catholiccharitiesok.org. Information regarding the CCHD programs is also available at www.usccb.org/cchd. 



Art projects enhance the summer experience of students at the Sacred Heart Church and sponsored Mount Saint Mary Summer Academy. Partial funding for this project is from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development Seed Grant program.

2009 ADOPTION REUNION

Catholic Charities recently sponsored the annual reunion for our adoptive families. Sabra Ruminer, Coordinator for Adoption Services, arranged this event using the beautiful facilities at the Oklahoma City Zoo. Each year Catholic Charities helps celebrate the families whose lives have been enriched by the adoption of a child. The reunion is an opportunity for the families to share their common experiences and to learn more about the resources which are available to couples who adopt.

Fourteen families with their 19 children participated in a day of education and fun. Stephanie Storozyszyn, staff assistant for Adoption Services, volunteers as a docent at the Zoo. Stephanie kept the children and adults entertained with an informative presentation and demonstration about animals that are native to Oklahoma.



The Catholic Charities adoption team of Sabra Ruminer and Stephanie Storozyszyn hosted the 12th Annual Adoption Reunion at the Oklahoma City Zoo.

A tour of the Oklahoma Trails Exhibit concluded the celebration and the families were invited to spend the rest of the day at the Zoo.

The true blessing of the day was getting to see the families Catholic Charities helped create continue to flourish and blossom. 🍂

ARCHDIOCESE NEWS

Eileen McGee, Coordinator of Catholic Charities Clinton office, has completed her training and is now a Certified Gambling Addiction Counselor.

Immigration Legal Services are now available in the Enid office of Catholic Charities. To set up an appointment, please call (800) 375-8514 or (405) 523-3001.

The City of Lawton awarded a Community Block Development Grant to Catholic Charities for a program called *Creating Lasting Family Connections*. Creating Lasting Family Connections (CLFC) was a proven program that had been shown to significantly increase youth drug refusal skills and to enhance communication and bonding between youth and their parents. This program has been highly acclaimed by participants, as well as professionals in journals across the country. Training will be held in July for facilitators. For more information, please call Andrea Farmer at (580) 353-1811. 🍂

WILDFIRE DEVASTATES HOMES IN OKLAHOMA

Work is underway to assist families in Eastern Oklahoma County, Ratliff City, Blanchard, Little Axe and Wellston who lost their homes in the May wildfires. Case managers will be assisting families and distributing resources at four locations. Assistance with rent and other immediate needs is already being provided. 🍂



This half burnt home stands as a testament to the danger of wildfires. Earlier this year many Eastern Oklahoma families were devastated by some of the worst wildfires in state history.

ST. PATRICK'S BALL UPDATE

The St. Patrick's Grand Marshal Ball on March 7 raised \$117,000 for Catholic Charities' Sanctuary Women's Development Center in Oklahoma City. These contributions provided the means to move six women out of homeless shelters to permanent housing in the first month of operation. Over 165 women were served in that month with counseling, job search skills training, and case management.

The Center, which opened in April in the former Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, assists women and children who live in shelters or are at risk of becoming homeless.

More than 350 guests attended the Ball at the Skirvin Hilton Hotel. The event, chaired by Toby Boothe, honored St. Patrick's Parade Grand Marshal Stanley Hupfeld and included a dinner, dance and auction.

"We would like to thank the hundreds of people from all faiths who supported the Ball through ticket sales, cash gifts, volunteer hours and auction donations," said Executive Director Tim O'Connor. "Your gifts are directly improving the lives of homeless women and children who seek help through the Sanctuary program." 🍂

Catholic Charities is pleased to recognize the following event sponsors:

Emerald Isle Chesapeake Energy, Corp. INTEGRIS Health Teleflora and The Meinders Foundation	MidFirst Bank Michael and Patricia Milligan OGE Energy Corp. The Oklahoman RoseRock Bank and Union Bank
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NEW NAME, SAME GREAT CAUSE: The name of the St. Patrick's Grand Marshal Ball is changing. Mark your calendar now to attend the 2010 St. Patrick's Grand Marshal Green Tie Gala set for the evening of Saturday, March 6, at the Skirvin Hilton Hotel, Oklahoma City. For more details, contact Jane Moon at (405) 526-2319.



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Catholic Charities offers services in Adoption (including adoption searches), maternity counseling, Family HOPE, Refugee Resettlement, Immigration Assistance, Counseling, Advocacy, Disaster Relief, Holy Family Maternity Home, educational services and outreach to parishes. Catholic Charities also has established the statewide office for Faith Community Nursing (also known as Parish Nursing).

INASMUCH GRANT PROVIDES ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUNDING

Russell came to Catholic Charities for help with his rent. He was the victim of a hit and run accident and had been unable to work due to his injuries. His employer was working with him to help him keep his job, but Russell needed \$200.00 to pay the last of his rent. He came to Catholic Charities at 4:00 a.m. on Monday to be first in line for help and to be sure he wasn't late for work. Russell had not eaten since 4:30 on Sunday and before he could be seen, fainted from hunger. The financial help provided to Russell was appreciated, but Russell was more grateful for the special attention and help which our staff provided during this episode.

As a result of the grant provided by the Inasmuch Foundation, Catholic Charities has increased its emergency assistance program to meet the growing needs for rent and utility assistance. Funds are used not only in the metropolitan area, but also in the Catholic Charities offices in Lawton, Clinton and Enid. All individuals and families seeking assistance from Catholic Charities are assessed by a case manager and provided with financial assistance or resource referrals to address their financial and other basic needs.

The special support provided by the Inasmuch

Foundation of Oklahoma has made a difference in the lives of many families who are fighting to maintain their homes and keep their families together.

For many, this kind of support may be their only chance to get past the hard times in a troubled economy. 

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Underwriting of this publication contributed by:
First National Bank of Oklahoma