



Catholic Charities NEWSLETTER

Creating Hope, Transforming Lives

WINTER 2022-23

“*Love is the fruit in season
at all times and within
reach of every hand.*”

– MOTHER TERESA



Dear Friends,

Being raised by relatives who prided themselves on growing bountiful gardens, I learned early

on the meaning of “You reap what you sow.” For Catholic Charities, the stories and relationships that have blossomed from our collective seeds of commitment to support those in need are timeless. As we move into our Centennial celebration, we are entering a season that will not only reflect on where we have been, but also where we are going.

For four decades, men who have had no place to call home or loved ones to take them in have found solace at our Men’s Shelter on South Clinton Street. This winter will be the last time the offices, dormitory, and other common areas at that facility are filled with bustling activity. In the spring of 2023, we will embark on an ambitious journey as we relocate our Men’s Shelter to our newly-built Housing Services Center located at 1801 Erie Blvd. E.

While change can often times be bittersweet, it can also be invigorating. We’ve learned that the work we’re committed to doing requires creative and ever-changing solutions, especially throughout the pandemic. The fight against the formidable foe of poverty continues and we’re pressing onward to loosen its stronghold in our community.

For the past 100 years, we have helped to feed, settle, house, develop, and empower hundreds of thousands of individuals and families across generations. Historically, our agency’s impact has proven that there is no time like the present to help someone in need. As we celebrate this special anniversary, we hope you will support our mission and continue the legacy of creating hope and transforming lives.

Sincerely,

Michael F. Melara
Executive Director

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MISSION STATEMENT

Catholic Charities of Onondaga County is dedicated to caring for those in need while promoting human development, collaboration, and the elimination of poverty and injustice. We strive to empower those served to transform their lives in the spirit of God’s love and compassion.

2023

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HERE'S TO 100 YEARS: 1923 SOCIETY GIVING!



The origin of Catholic Charities of Onondaga County began in 1923 with one man's vision to provide support for people going through challenging circumstances. To reach the masses beyond the walls of each parish, Bishop Daniel J. Curley founded the agency for the purpose of showing God's love by being His hands and feet within the community.

Since its establishment in 2004 as a leadership-driven program, 1923 Society members have contributed over \$2 million. For the past decade, the unrestricted one-time or recurring donation(s), totaling at least \$1,000 each year, have been used to meet a range of needs for individuals and families. Food, clothing, footwear, hygiene products, and more have been provided to complement the services offered by various programs.

In memory of Bishop Curley and in honor of a strong one hundred year legacy, we are inviting new and existing donors to plan to give this year. You can help facilitate hope in 2023 and beyond. If you set aside \$20 weekly each year to donate to Catholic Charities of Onondaga County, you can become a member and help advance our efforts.

To become a 1923 member, you can scan the QR code to the right to sign up, contact Development Manager Lindsey James by phone at 315-362-7695 or by emailing ljames@ccoc.us. ■



A DREAM ONCE DEFERRED

In February 2002, Jose Alamo Jimenez and his wife arrived in Syracuse from Cuba. The couple, who at the time was in their 60s, knew no one and they only spoke Spanish. Soon after being the beneficiary of the resettlement services offered at the Northside CYO, Jose began to show his gratitude by doing whatever was needed.

Jose would show up to help at the warehouse where the same furniture items he once needed were stored. He would clean and stage apartments to get them ready for an expected family. That routine continued for 20 years straight, nearly every day for up to 40 hours per week, until the pandemic hit.

Aside from being able to serve others like himself, Jose had a special goal to achieve. He wanted to officially become a U.S. citizen. To do so, Jose would need to be able to read, write, and speak basic English. Despite being stateside for two decades, he had yet to learn the language.

Thankfully, an exception to the language rule was established by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Since Jose had been a permanent resident in the country for as long as he had, he was eligible to demonstrate his knowledge in his native tongue.

In September 2022, his wife, friends, and CYO staff watched Jose proudly fulfill a dream. He stood in a federal courtroom, with his right hand raised, and formally pledged his allegiance to the country he had called home for so long. What was once an unlikely day turned out to simply be a celebration delayed. ■



HOUSING SERVICES CENTER RECEIVES FINISHING TOUCHES

After a two-year process, Catholic Charities of Onondaga County secured the site of a new men's shelter. The Housing Services Center, located at 1801 Erie Blvd. E., will commence operations in March.

The perseverance exhibited to break ground was preceded by collaboration with community partners. Government funding at the federal, state, and county levels is helping fund the \$13.9 million project.

Rich & Gardner Construction Co. began both rehabilitation of an existing building and new construction in February 2022. As the passing months have gone by, the three-acre lot (near the intersection of Erie Blvd. E. and Teall Ave.) has undergone a massive transformation. Beyond the facility's visible

exterior, an 80-bed dormitory with on-site medical and mental health services, two meals served daily, and a commercial kitchen for skill-building/workforce development await any man in need of shelter. The Housing Services Center also includes office space for 40 personnel, and eight one-bedroom apartments for permanent supportive housing.

You can help make a difference. Funding is needed for both construction efforts and upcoming operations. To join the fight against homelessness, donors can contribute to the Housing Services Center Campaign by going to www.ccoc.us/giving/give-now to make a gift. No contribution is too big, and certainly, no donation is too small. ■



THE HOUSING SERVICES CENTER



ASYLUM CLINICS LEND LEGAL MINDS TO SERVE AFGHAN REFUGEES

Staff at the Northside CYO worked around the clock to resettle close to 350 Afghans since the fall of 2021. The months leading into 2022 consisted of trips to the Syracuse Hancock International Airport, moving individuals and families into their new homes, and providing supportive resources to help with adaptation.

With the immediate items out of the way, the refugee resettlement team identified administrative hurdles standing in the way of many Afghan asylees progressing in their new lives. Access to benefits, employment, and financial aid all weighed in the balance due to a lack of documentation and representation. To solve this issue and serve local agencies supporting refugees and asylum seekers, a partnership formed with Volunteer Lawyers Project and Hiscock Legal Aid Society.

After six asylum screening clinics over a period of two months, more than 300 Afghans were served. Wegmans sponsored

refreshments and convenient host sites made room for 40-plus volunteer lawyers, over 100 law students, a range of practicing and retired attorneys, and other volunteers to offer their expertise. Professional interpreters for two of the main languages in Afghanistan were also available to ensure communication barriers were not an issue.

Due to the arduous task of applying for asylum, the documentation needed, and the heavily burdened asylum system, only 14 families have found representation to move forward with their cases so far. Syracuse has a great history of coming together to help refugees and the legal community in Syracuse is no different. The ultimate goal is to have many more families be paired with an attorney who will fight for their specific asylum case to the end.

Overall, the collaboration was a great success, lives were changed, and families are on the road to being reunited with one another. ■



BECOME A CHAMPION!

Please consider joining our recurring gift program and become a Catholic Charities Champion. Your monthly or quarterly recurring gift will provide reliable, consistent support to serve vulnerable communities in Onondaga County.

Donors who commit to becoming a Catholic Charities Champion receive a Catholic Charities branded pen and notebook and official certificate acknowledging their commitment to being a Champion as a welcome and thank you.

Become a Champion by visiting www.ccoc.us/giving/monthly or calling **315-362-7695** to make your gift.



SAVE THE DATE:

THE 38th ANNUAL HOUSE OF PROVIDENCE AWARDS

The 38th Annual House of Providence Awards will return to the Oncenter on

Wednesday, September 27, 2023.

Dedicated community servants will be celebrated for the tremendous work they are doing in Syracuse and throughout Onondaga County. As Catholic Charities of Onondaga County's largest fundraiser to help support its programs, this in-person event will feature a food, drinks, live music, and a ceremony to honor the award recipients.

Visit

www.ccoc.us/HOPAwards2023
for announcements related to the 2023 class of honorees, tickets, and sponsorship levels.



FROM VOLUNTEER TO STAFF MEMBER



Teresa Arnold wanted to find a place to volunteer after retiring from her job at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield to travel across the country with her husband. She had a desire to work with refugees. When her online search led her to Catholic Charities of Onondaga County's refugee resettlement program, she believed she had found exactly what she was looking for.

The volunteer opportunity that was available at the Northside CYO was no longer a match due to changing circumstances, but the introduction to the agency had been made. She still wanted to use her time and talents to serve wherever there was a need. While connecting with Pat Campany to inquire about different options to consider, Teresa walked right into her next chapter with AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program).

Teresa started out filling in at the office for a staff member who was out on leave in January 2022. She became the go-to person for managing the program's databases. Months later, Pat, the program's director at the time, invited Teresa to join staff at local events to help promote the program. The work involved with recruiting and dispersing seniors into the community was a natural fit.

Born and raised on Syracuse's South Side, Teresa is a registered nurse by trade. Her journey on both sides of the healthcare system gave her a unique perspective, especially after having to combat an illness of her own. Liver failure had created a situation where without a transplant, her very life was at stake.

Fortunately, in 2006, Teresa was blessed to be the recipient of a donor's liver. With the understanding that tomorrow is never promised, she uses her second chance to give back.

"There are so many things that you can do to fill up your time," said Teresa. "Why not fill up your time with something helpful to someone else?"

In September 2022, Teresa took on a new role as a paid staff person for AmeriCorps Seniors RSVP. Her contributions to the program have been recognized by her colleagues and she is a valued member of the team.

"It gives you a purpose. It gives you sense of belonging..." said Teresa. What started out as a few hours of community service has evolved into more time spent being there for those who are aging. ■

REKINDLING HOPE AT THE INTAKE CENTER

The Intake Center grew out of a partnership with Onondaga County Department of Social Services in April 2022 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals who tested positive and needed to quarantine were transported to a local hotel as a service to prevent the spread of the wildly spreading virus.

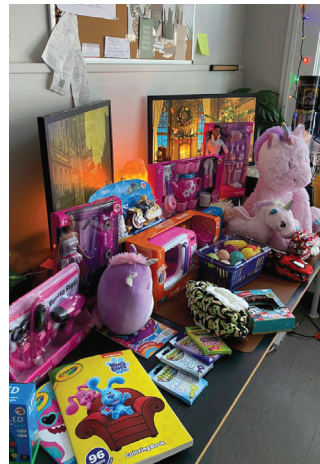
As available space at local shelters diminished, displaced families and men still needed access to shelter. Present day, the 24/7 program out of the Emergency Assistance Services office in downtown Syracuse has continued to offer essentials and rides to temporary lodging quarters. To this day, assistance remains open for clients required to isolate themselves, in addition to those who simply have nowhere else to go, mainly after County business hours.

Case workers Tami Rodriguez and Anthony Dotterer saw firsthand how hard it was for families who were

secluded during the past holiday season. Tami reminded Anthony that many of the families they worked with would be spending Christmas in a hotel, away from their loved ones. The pair came up with a plan to reach out to community businesses for donations in hopes to provide gifts where there would be none.

With help from Onondaga Physical Therapy, Proz.com, and Catholic Charities of Onondaga County's Food Pantry, Tami and Anthony had more than gifts to give away. Families also received clothing, gifts cards, and Christmas trees! Two staff members who thought of others brought hope to residents facing difficult circumstances, and for that, over a dozen adults and close to 30 children were grateful.

In Luke 18:16, Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." ■





EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

The annual employee recognition event resumed in person in the fall of 2022 after a virtual stint initiated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hosted at Traditions at the Links, the large gathering to appreciate the staff of two neighboring organizations shifted to a smaller function this time around. Catholic Charities of Onondaga County presented Shades of Spring, a time for its dedicated workforce to celebrate hope, harmony, and healing.

Employees were recognized for reaching the five-year and ten-year work anniversary milestone, and three honorees were selected to receive the featured awards.

Congratulations to **Sarah Layhee**, the 2022 C. Walter Driscoll Award recipient. As a senior care manager for Adult Health Homes, Sarah has made an impact in the lives of the individuals she works with while also being a great team member to her colleagues.

Two program directors were chosen to receive the 2022 Richard A. Kline Leadership Legacy Award. Congratulations to **Danchell Hicks** from Supportive Housing and **Ellen Ketchum** from Clinical Services for their "uncompromising desire to improve the lives of the people the agency serves."

The special event consisted of a cocktail hour, dinner, an award ceremony, and a full on dance party featuring a DJ to close out the evening. ■



5-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Kristen Armstrong
 Christine Clarkson
 Karena Harvey
 Tekla Henderson
 Marilyn Hobelman
 Anita Hopper
 Shanique Hordge

Rozie Kirkland
 Robert Missouri
 Pamela Quigley
 William Raines
 Lindsay Staub
 Kirsten Whitecloud



10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Patricia Curtis
 Esperanza Davis
 Linda Dombrow

Martin Mauro
 Beatrice Neema
 Tia Sales