

Blessings

Catholic Charities of SouthWestern Ohio

An agency of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Winter 2012



Catholic Charities SW Ohio is a social service ministry of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. We are faith-based and committed to carrying out the teachings of Christ and Catholic social doctrine by supporting the poor, helping the vulnerable and welcoming the stranger, regardless of faith. For almost 100 years, we have worked tirelessly to advance the human dignity of every individual at every stage of their life.

Program Areas

NEW AMERICANS

*Su Casa Hispanic Center
Refugee Resettlement*

SENIORS

*Senior Companions
RSVP
Foster Grandparents
Coming of Age
Caregivers Assistance Network
Northern Brown Senior Center*

PARENTING & CHILDHOOD

*Pregnancy Counseling
Adoption Services
Parenting Education
Early Childhood Mental Health
Incredible Years
Postponing Sexual Involvement
Children Victims Treatment*

NEIGHBORS IN DISTRESS

*Second Harvest Food Bank
Mental Health Services
Emergency Assistance
Life Issues Workshops
Gifts of the Magi*

Friends & Fellowship in Brown County

A cloudy, brisk October Monday afternoon felt a little warmer inside a small brick building in Brown County. There were warm smiles, gentle humor and laughter as a group of senior citizens gathered for a rousing card game of Maneuver as they waited for lunch to be delivered.

“You can have as many players as you want and play as many cards as you want,” said Dora.

“But you can tell as many stories as you want as you play!” George chimed in as he was waiting for his cards to be dealt from Dora.

The jokes, bantering and chatter continued even as Nancy Stegbauer, director of the Northern Brown County Senior Center returned with pizza. She’s been the director for the last 23 years when the local community determined there was a need for the service.

“It keeps me motivated. It keeps me alive . . . “

In 1989, Catholic Charities partnered with the Ursulines of Brown County and Chatfield College to form the Center.

The Center is a program of Catholic Charities and helps area seniors and people with disabilities who have limited mobility. It is funded by a percentage of an Ohio Department of Aging levy and some assistance from United Way.

“Our days are filled with doctors’ appointments, errands, grocery trips, welfare checks and yes, an occasional veterinary trip,” Stegbauer said. “We gather here on Mondays and Thursdays for socializing, card games and just to be together. This is a very good group. They really do look out for one another.”

The Center helps 131 people in the panhan-



dle area of Brown County who are mostly referred from other agencies. On this day, about a dozen seniors were gathered around a table playing and enjoying conversation. Stegbauer said most of them have family to care for them but they may work or have limited resources to provide the care required.

“I love coming here on Mondays and Thursdays,” said Anna. “It keeps me motivated. It keeps me alive to know I’m going to see my friends. They take us on the most wonderful trips like to the Zoo, the Brown County Fair, Kings Island, Chillicothe and so many other places. It is truly a wonderful place to be.”

For Nancy, the purpose of the center is more than errands and social gatherings. It fulfills a need for the community and, for her, fulfills a desire to help others.

“I wanted to be a missionary when I grew up. Most people thought you had to go out of the country to do that kind of work,” she said, smiling. “However, when you pay attention to what God tells you and listen to what He wants you to do; sometimes you find people who need the most help are right in your own community.”

Laughter echoed through the other room as the card game and lunch continued. Sunlight streamed through the windows as the group started to plan for when they would get together next.

For more information, call Nancy at (513) 875-2317.

Seniors Serving Seniors

In business, the term “win-win” refers to successful collaboration between partners. In this corner of Ohio, “win-win” can apply to the Senior Companion Program that Catholic Charities offers the elderly.

Low-income adults age 55 and older can become senior companions to ease the loneliness and lift the spirits of the home-bound elderly. They also perform simple, but vital, household duties and chores.

Senior companions get something out of the program, too: new experiences, new friends – and knowing they have made a difference in someone’s life.

The Senior Companion Program has been around since 1968, initially through the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare and its Administration on Aging. Catholic Charities launched a pilot program the same year.

“It was so successful, the government extended the project until it became a fully funded program,” reports Celeste Walker, Director of the Senior Corps program for the agency. Today, the Senior Companion Program is administered by a federal agency called the Corporation for National and Community Service, and Catholic Charities receives funds to cover costs to help volunteers provide assistance to the elderly.

“She treats me with dignity and she’s keeping an eye on me.”

“Each year, we serve an average of 300 clients,” Walker says of Catholic Charities. “While other agencies provide companions, we are the only agency that offers the Senior Companion Program – with the distinction being our program consists of seniors serving seniors.”

Catholic Charities looks for compassionate volunteers to visit the elderly, and to help them remain as independent as they can in their own homes. These senior companions let family members know if they notice a



decline in the elderly person’s health or if extra help is needed. They can give caregivers a break or run errands.

Take it from Dorothy, who lives in Mt. Healthy. “I need help getting to the doctor’s office. I’m not easy on my feet,” she explains. She contacted Catholic Charities about a year ago and appreciates the weekly help volunteer Sarah provides.

“Sarah is a lovely lady. She’s very polite,” Dorothy says. “She treats me with dignity, and she’s keeping an eye on me.” Sarah often transports Dorothy to doctors’ appointments. “It’s just little things like that, but it’s big when you can’t do it yourself,” Dorothy says.

Another senior in Mt. Healthy, Rita, learned about Catholic Charities from a friend. Now Rita values support from volunteer, Shelley Bennett. “Shelley comes on Tuesdays,” she says, and together they compile a grocery list. “She goes to the grocery, and there have been times when there may be another errand,” Rita says. “She’s so nice, very nice. It’s great.”

Shelley retired in 2009 – and soon realized she needed to feel useful again. Then she learned about Senior Companions. By the end of 2010, she had joined a friend as a Senior Companions volunteer. “It sounded like something I would like to do,” Shelley says.

Senior companions receive 40 hours of training, which prepares them to deal with a variety of situations, including handling seniors with dementia, mental illness, de-

velopmental disabilities, physical disabilities and other special needs. They can serve up to 40 hours per week. They receive mileage reimbursement and some qualify to earn a tax-free, hourly stipend. Volunteers usually spend time in private homes.

Shelley has had three clients. She shops and provides Rita transportation for errands and lunch with friends. She cooks for a Lincoln Heights woman and takes her to medical ap-

pointments. She used to read to a blind woman, who has since passed away.

Shelley sees herself volunteering for the foreseeable future because “there are a lot of seniors out there who just need companionship – and I enjoy it,” she says.

That sounds like a “win-win” for everyone.

For more information, call Ruthann at (513) 241-7745.

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Website:

CatholicCharitiesSWO.org

Works of Mercy Blog:

CatholicCharitiesSWO.wordpress.com

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CatholicCharitiesSWOhio

Caregivers Assistance Network:

CatholicCharitiesSWO.org/CAN

Second Harvest Food Bank:

SpringfieldSHFB.org

Adoption & Pregnancy Counseling:

Call Robyn or Emily at (513) 241-7745

Su Casa Hispanic Center:

Call Heidi at (513) 761-1588

Mental Health Services:

Call Michelle at (513) 385-9600

From War Refugee to American Hopeful

Twenty-two year old Nupcia Mbilampassia is a beautiful young mother with a shy smile. She's a university graduate who likes to go to the park and hang out with her 2-year old daughter and friends. She's got a job, goes to church, and, to an outsider, looks like your typical Cincinnati.

But looks are deceiving. Nupcia has had a life of upheaval. This spring, she came to Cincinnati from Gabon, a small West African nation that sits between Cameroon and Congo. She was a war refugee, originally from the Republic of Congo, where civil war broke out when she was just eight years old, forcing her family from their home. Even after the fighting stopped, the political situation in Congo did not improve.

After 14 years as a refugee, she was granted the status to leave Gabon. Nupcia came to the United States, with her daughter Serlya Makita, as a client of Catholic Charities' Refugee Settlement Services. She had to make the difficult decision to leave without her husband, who is waiting to join her in the U.S.

Nupcia lives in Price Hill in an apartment with her baby girl, joined by her sister and nephew, who've relocated to Cincinnati and live with her. Nupcia speaks fluent French and is learning English.

She came to Cincinnati in March 2012, and got a job soon after. Like many immigrants before her, she is starting at an en-

try-level job. "I am working at DHL. The type of job that I am doing is sorting letters based on zip code," she says. She has already been recognized for her hard work and has gone from part-time to full-time.

Catholic Charities has been very helpful in connecting her with the resources she needs to make a home in Cincinnati.

To help her get started, Catholic Charities helped her get an apartment, pay for her rent and other necessities; and she's re-



ceiving financial assistance from the government. She's quick to point out that, as her income increases, the assistance level will go down.

When a car became available for Catholic Charities to give to a refugee client, the decision was easy as to who it should go to—Nupcia (*see photo*). She'd never had one in her home country and it is important to her. "This helps me with my job, so I can get to work," she says.

Catholic Charities is the only provider of direct resettlement services for war, religious and political refugees in Hamilton County and Southwestern Ohio. Over the past thirty-one years, more than 11,000 refugees have been resettled in the Greater Cincinnati area under the auspices of Catholic Charities, which works with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the U.S. Department of State.

The program helps refugees before they travel from their refugee nation, once they arrive in the U.S., and after they're settled. Once they are in Cincinnati, the agency helps refugees find work, housing and English courses, in addition to getting proper documentation like a Social Security card.

Nupcia hasn't quite adjusted to the U.S. culture, especially the food. But she's made friends through church, and likes to learn about the city through their eyes. She's doing well, but some days are tough in a totally new environment.

"It's very difficult or hard, but it's OK," she says with a smile.

In Gabon, she studied marketing, but hopes to get an IT degree here. The challenge is that she has to start over academically. "I want to pursue my studies. I have to get my GED and then I can go to a university here," she says.

Nupcia has gone from a future of refugee uncertainty to one of American hope.

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Su Casa Hispanic Center Receiving National, State & Local Recognition for its Outstanding Work

For their outstanding contribution to the Latino/Hispanic community, the team at the Su Casa Hispanic Center, a program of Catholic Charities of SW Ohio, has been recognized with three key awards in September & October.

The **National Society of Hispanic MBAs** awarded its national Brillante Award for Community Service Excellence on October 6th in Orlando, Florida.

At the **LULAC Cincinnati** Community Awards Gala on September 29th, LULAC awarded its Hispanic Serving Institution Award to Su Casa.

On October 12th, the **Ohio Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs** recognized Giovanna Alvarez, Director of Su Casa, as a Distinguished Hispanic Ohioan.



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Getting Support for Grief & Loss During the Holidays

During the holidays, do you feel the loss of a loved one, or struggle with the loss of a dream, job or life opportunity?

Celebrating the holidays following a loss can present unique challenges for people who have experienced a loss. Learn how to honor this grief and get support during the holiday season.

This free program will be offered four times during the Christmas season. All programs start at 7:00pm.

November 15th—Centennial Barn

November 27th—St. Joseph Church (West End)

December 4th—Hyde Park Health Center

December 18th—Faith Community United Methodist Church (West Chester)

And if group settings are not for you but you would like to talk to a professional counselor about your loss, please consider using our **Mental Health Counseling Services**. We offer help to people of all income levels.

CALL (513) 385-9600 to set up a confidential appointment with our licensed counselors and social workers. There is a sliding scale fee. We accept Humana, Anthem and Medicaid.