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KEENAGER *'Young At Heart'* NEWS

January
and February
2024

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A Publication of **Catholic Charities** of the Archdiocese of Chicago

New Year, New Opportunities to Help at Catholic Charities Food Pantries

As 2024 begins, hunger continues to plague thousands of our neighbors in Chicago and its suburbs. At Catholic Charities, our Nutrition Programs are designed to provide assistance to those facing food insecurity in the most effective, compassionate ways, and our Food Pantries play a vital role in this process.

Last year, 54,000 people received food from our nine pantries, over 215,000 visits. When guests come to a pantry, they are offered approximately three days' worth of food, with the quantities varying depending on the number of people in each household. As groceries are selected, guests also have the opportunity to learn about other Catholic Charities programs and services that might be helpful to them.



Latoya Cain, left, Program Manager, Food Pantry, discusses Clothing Room needs with Noreen Russo, Senior Director, Program Operations, 721 North LaSalle Street.

The Food Pantry at 721 North LaSalle Street, Catholic Charities' headquarters is especially busy, welcoming 150-180 clients a day, offering bagged lunches Monday-Friday and a larger

selection of groceries on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. According to Latoya Cain, Food Pantry Manager at this location, the guests she sees have often lost their jobs, they recently have been ill, or their SNAP benefits were reduced significantly in recent months. She says, "When the weather is bad, and they still come, we know things are especially difficult for them."

The Food Pantry at 721 North LaSalle Street is adjacent to the Clothing Room offering guests easy access to these items as well. As described by Noreen Russo, Senior Director, Program Operations, 721 North LaSalle Street, "Our Food Pantries and Clothing Rooms work in tandem with one another. Latoya does a great job treating every guest with kindness and respect when they come to us for help."

On a recent visit to pick up a lunch, a gentleman name Keith shared what he likes best about coming to Catholic Charities. He said, "Catholic Charities has a very patient staff. They are always able to help you. You meet nice acquaintances and associates when you are at Catholic Charities, too."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Greetings from the Editor

KATIE MCDONNELL BREDEMANN



Thank you to everyone who participated in Catholic Charities' Celebration of Giving and the End of Year Appeal. We are grateful for our partnership with you in spreading Christmas cheer throughout Cook and Lake counties! Happy New Year, from everyone on the Keenager News Team! If we can assist you in 2024, call (312) 655-7425 or email us keenager@catholiccharities.net.

For Catholic Charities, *Katie McDonnell Bredemann*

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Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Chicago
721 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60654

CONTRIBUTORS

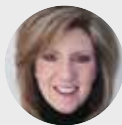
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SPECIAL DATES

January 2024

Poverty Awareness Month

Birthstone: **Garnet**

Flower: **Snowdrop**

- 1/1** New Year's Day
- 1/2** Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- 1/4** St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Feast Day
- 1/7** Baptism of the Lord
- 1/15** Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February 2024

Black History Month

Birthstone: **Amethyst**

Flower: **Violet**

- 2/2** Groundhog Day
- 2/4** D'Vine Affair
- 2/11** Our Lady of Lourdes Feast Day
- 2/14** Ash Wednesday
- 2/14** Valentine's Day
- 2/19** President's Day

For more news and information about events, visit catholiccharities.net.



St. James Parish, Chicago partnered with Catholic Charities and the Chicago Police District 1 station to distribute CTA Ventra cards to asylum seekers, so they can become acquainted with Chicago transportation. Featured here are Fr. John Edmunds, Pastor, fourth from right, with other parish leaders and Catholic Charities staff.

Email welcomethestranger@catholiccharities.net or contact your parish office to see how you can join Catholic Charities' efforts to extend charitable assistance to these new arrivals.



Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide (LOSS) hosted its Annual Evening of Remembrance at St. John of the Cross Parish in Western Springs.

To learn more about this nationally-recognized program, visit www.catholiccharities.net/behavioral-health-programs/loss-loving-outreach-to-survivors-of-suicide/ and/or email loss@catholiccharities.net.



All Catholic Charities Clothing Rooms continue to welcome donations of new or gently used winter clothing and outerwear. We are grateful for all volunteers, including the ladies featured above who help keep these rooms orderly. Donations can be dropped off in the lobby of each location during business hours.

Visit www.catholiccharities.net/what-we-do/our-locations/ for the regional office nearest you.

Learn More about Catholic Charities through our Monthly Eblast

Send an email to partners@catholiccharities.net to receive our monthly eblast that includes news and details about upcoming events.

How Catholic Charities is helping the city’s migrant housing crisis

The Voice of Charity

MARIE JOCHUM

Associate Vice President of Community Impact



While you may be seeing stories in the news about asylum seekers in Chicago needing shelter for the winter, you may not be aware that Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago has assumed a critical role in the response to this housing crisis.

Jesus calls us to serve anyone in need, regardless of their faith, gender, race, ethnicity, and—particularly now—citizenship. When the buses of migrants began arriving from Texas in Summer, 2022, our teams were there to greet them and connect them with on-the-ground resources. We also provided reunification support for arrivals who did not want to stay in Chicago, connecting them to friends and relatives in other parts of the country. To date, we have helped over 2,800

migrants reunite with their loved ones, using funds provided by the State of Illinois.

But for those families that had decided to stay in Chicago, the city was grappling with where they would live. So, in late 2022, our government partners approached us to help with case management of families to transition them out of an increasingly overstretched shelter system.

“Resettlement” refers to the process of helping displaced people from other countries find a safe place to live and obtain their basic needs. For many of the migrants who are coming to the U.S., they are fleeing extreme poverty and unsafe conditions.

We studied the situation and decided that, drawing on our deep experience in homelessness prevention and refugee resettlement, we were prepared to step up to address what was quickly turning into a crisis.

We deployed a small team to undertake this work, which we have expanded as our experience (and the need) has grown. With funding from the State of Illinois, we now have 60 people who have joined us just for this response. Most are bilingual and are themselves either immigrants to Chicago or have close family and friends who are. The team is persistent, focused, and committed.

We are proud to report that at the time of publication, we have connected approximately 8,600 migrants to long-term housing in

Greater Chicago. We are currently on pace to sign 500 leases a month.

The availability of apartments has been the biggest surprise for our team. Landlords, many of whom are increasingly reaching out to us, are some of the unsung heroes of this crisis. They are opening their units to migrants.

Our success continues to depend on a robust network of community partners who help with move-in support, furniture and household items, and the ongoing partnership and collaboration of our city and state leaders and agencies, who provide critical emergency funding.

It is important to note that this work has not impacted our longstanding homelessness prevention programs for neighbors in need who have encountered setbacks. We continue to serve thousands of residents in Cook and Lake counties daily – touching the lives of over 375,000 people each year. Some we serve only once, others we see weekly.

Our teams are (and will remain) focused on addressing the many critical needs of the communities, families, and individuals we are called to serve and accompany. That is our mission – to be there for people in need, the vulnerable, the hungry, the lonely.

Having Trouble Accessing parts of your home due to stairs?


Our Stair Lifts can HELP!

We have affordable options:
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Call us today! We can Help! 630-892-7267



Do you have a vehicle that’s seen its last days?

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Help families, children, seniors, and veterans. Give them hope, courage, and guidance to become self-sufficient.

catholiccharities.net/give
(877) 786 4483

5 Reasons Why You Should Donate Your Car Today

1. Free up space in your garage
2. We accept all types of vehicles nationwide, running or not (cars, trucks, RV’s, motorcycles, and boats)
3. You choose a pick-up time that’s convenient for you—free of charge
4. Avoid the hassle of selling your car
5. Receive a charitable donation receipt

Additional Thoughts on “The Holy Mystery of God”

Words for the Spirit

REVEREND CHARLES T. RUBEY

Associate Administrator,
Founder and Director, LOSS Program



We previously have discussed Karl Rahner, one of the most influential theologians of the 20th century. Rahner refers to God as the “absolute, Holy Mystery.” I would like to share more about Karl Rahner’s life and his theories which, I believe can help us think about life, and our faith in fresh ways this year.

Reverend Karl Rahner was a German, Jesuit priest whose work is rooted in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. He was born in 1904, the fourth of seven children in his family. His father was a college professor, and his mother was a devout Christian. After joining the Jesuits in 1922, Rahner studied and taught in Germany and later in Austria during World War II. In 1962, Rahner was appointed by Pope John XXIII as an “expert advisor” to the Vatican II ecumenical council. Throughout his life, Rahner wrote 4000 books and essays, often applying traditional

concepts about faith to contemporary thought. Other concepts attributed to Rahner include:

- “Theological anthropology” which suggests that what we say about God’s divinity should always include a statement about our humanity, since the human person is where divine revelation occurs;
- “Theology of liberation” which means that, since God allows us the ability to see Him in all things, we should be empowered to help address problems around the world;
- Grace can be sought in all human endeavors that help build God’s kingdom on earth – all actions that free God’s people from evil and corruption; and
- The Meaning of Life can be found in the experiences, history and sacramental life that are God’s world of grace.

As I have mentioned before, my own faith has changed over the years as I have worked with people who have lost a loved one to suicide. I worked with a man and his wife in the aftermath of their son’s suicide. About four or five years later, the father, John came down with acute leukemia. The doctors were unable to get it into remission. John asked me if I would do his funeral, and I said I would. He was Lutheran and his wife was Baptist. We met every two or three weeks and John had one recurring thought as we got together. He said, “When I see Jimmy (his son), the first thing I’m going to ask him is, ‘Why did you do this to your

mother and me?’ “ I was getting ready to say Mass on a Sunday morning when Mildred, John’s wife, called me to let me know that John died during the night. The first thought that came to me was that when John experienced Jimmy’s presence in the hereafter, the “why” didn’t matter anymore.

In another example, during one of our LOSS meetings a man came to me and asked me, “Where was God when my son needed Him the most?” I had worked with this couple in the aftermath of their son’s suicide. They were a very devout Catholic couple. They would say the Rosary after dinner with their children. My response to this man was, “This is all part of the mystery of God.”

That is who God is to me—mystery. We know that God is holy, but God is also mystery. As we try to make sense of the questions that plague us in our lives, be at peace knowing that many negative, harmful situations in this world are beyond our comprehension. We may not be able to understand everything in this life, but we do know that God allows us to know and relate to Him, through prayer and through our interactions with each other. The more we look for God in the world, the more we will find Him and, as Rahner says, we will see that “God becomes both giver and gift.”

I wish you all a happy, healthy New Year.

Keep on Keepin’ On,

Charles T. Rubey

† ST. JUDE NOVENA

*May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved, and preserved throughout the world, now and forever.
Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on us; St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us; St. Jude, helper of the hopeless, pray for us.*

CL

MK

PSB

CAK

The Novena is a nine day devotion. Say the prayer nine times a day. If you would like to acknowledge your gratitude for its influence in your request, contact Keenager News at (312) 655-7425 and we will include your initials in the publication of this Novena. No payment required.

Relevant Radio Leads the Way to the National Eucharistic Congress

“The Bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.”
John 6:51

Catholics throughout the United States have been eagerly awaiting the start of 2024, as the National Eucharistic Congress coming this summer draws nearer by the day.

This extraordinary gathering of lay people, clergy, and religious will be held July 17-21, 2024 in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, IN. It is the culmination of a three-year Eucharistic Revival started by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in June, 2022 to increase a greater awareness among Catholics about the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

Since that time, Archdiocesan leaders across the United States have been inviting the faithful to increase their attendance at Mass, participate more frequently in Eucharistic Adoration and Eucharistic Processions, and learn more about Church doctrine regarding Christ’s divine gift of Himself to the world through the Eucharist. The 2024 National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis will be the first held in the United States in the past 48 years, with similar events having been held previously in Chicago (1926), New Orleans (1938), and Philadelphia (1976).

Relevant Radio, with its national headquarters in Lincolnshire, IL is the presenting sponsor for the National Eucharistic Congress. Fr. Francis Hoffman, Chairman and CEO of Relevant Radio and known to many as Fr. Rocky, has been leading the Relevant Radio promotional efforts for months, discussing



NATIONAL Eucharistic Congress

the importance of the Eucharist on the radio, recording videos about Eucharistic miracles that have occurred around the world, and praying daily for the success of the National Eucharistic Congress as he leads more than 100,000 people in the Family Rosary Across America each evening, at 7:00pm Central time on 214 Relevant Radio stations around the country and worldwide on their free mobile app.

Fr. Rocky says, “We are hoping that at least 80,000 Catholics come to Indianapolis to experience this once-in-a-lifetime event.”

Through the Winter and Spring, Relevant Radio will continue its efforts in support of the National Eucharistic Congress, sharing previews about the event in its programming airing throughout the United States. Relevant Radio owns and operates 129 of its 214 stations and distributes programming to the other 85 affiliates.

In mid-May, four Eucharistic pilgrimages will begin to travel to Indianapolis from different locations in the United States. For sixty days, Church leaders and local parishioners in cities and towns across America will have the opportunity to join these Eucharistic Processions that will allow 1,000 hosts to help carry a monstrance containing the true presence of Christ, Our Eucharistic Lord over a total of 6,500 miles. More than 100,000 participants are expected to join in these four pilgrimages that will each conclude as it arrives in Indianapolis on July 16, the day before the National Eucharistic Congress begins. While preparing for the National Eucharistic Congress, many Catholics are

also learning more about Blessed Carlo Acutis, known as the “First Millennial Saint” who had a deep devotion to studying Eucharistic miracles before he died at age 15 in 2006. To celebrate him, Relevant Radio produced an audio series to share Carlo Acutis’ story (visit thesaintspodcast.com).

As planning for the National Eucharistic Congress has continued in America, Pope Francis has been an enthusiastic supporter. Last Fall, he blessed the official monstrance that will be used at the four-day event in July. He also has been publicly quoted as saying, “The National Eucharistic Congress marks a significant moment in the life of the Church in the United States.”

The theme of the National Eucharistic Congress is, “Come in faith. Leave with hope.” Public registration begins on February 15th. For more information, visit:

<https://relevantradio.com/encounter>

<https://www.eucharisticcongress.org/>

<http://www.carloacutis.com/>

<http://www.miracolieucaaristici.org/>

← CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Keith continued, "I've been a cook for more than thirty years. I'm working on reestablishing my Food Sanitation license now. In the meantime, you can always come and get help with the basics. Catholic Charities helped me get housing last April, and they helped me furnish my apartment too. I hope Catholic Charities never goes away." Latoya says, "We always welcome the help of volunteers who want to join in our work. Anyone interested can go to ccofchicagovolunteer.com to see available opportunities and sign up." Also, anyone interested in holding a food drive in support of our food pantries can send an email to info@catholiccharities.net. Latoya adds, "It is so rewarding to help people in need and make someone smile when they are having a bad day. Some of them just need someone to talk to. In every way, we want guests to know we care about them."

CATHOLIC CHARITIES FOOD PANTRY LOCATIONS

COOK COUNTY:

Casa Catalina:

(773) 376-9425
4537 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago

Catholic Charities North/ Northwest Regional Office:

(847) 376-2100
1717 Rand Rd., Des Plaines

Catholic Charities West Regional Office:

(708) 222-1491
1400 S. Austin Blvd., Cicero

St. Blase:

(708) 563-2407
7438 W. 61st Pl., Summit

St. Irenaeus:

(708) 748-6891
78 Cherry Street, Park Forest

St. Sabina:

(773) 846-3018
1120 W. 79th St., Chicago

St. Vincent Center - Food Pantry:

(312) 655-7700
721 N. LaSalle St., Chicago

LAKE COUNTY:

Catholic Charities Waukegan Regional Office:

(847) 782-4100
671 S. Lewis Ave., Waukegan

Catholic Charities Schreiber Center Round Lake:

(847) 546-5733
101 N. Cedar Lake Rd., Round Lake

2023 By The Numbers

In 2023, Catholic Charities accompanied and served more than **375,000** individuals throughout Cook and Lake counties, many of whom were supported multiple times and by several programs.

COMMUNITY FOOD & NUTRITION

54,000 people received food from our **9** pantries, on **215,000** occasions

31,879 people were served at sit-down and To-Go suppers; **104,000** meals were given out at these services

59,200 mothers and caregivers were served at the **15** WIC centers

4,100 seniors received home-delivered and congregate meals

HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION

4,500 people were served in our Homelessness Prevention programs (case management, rapid rehousing, housing stability, etc.) and **1,800** people lived in our affordable housing senior buildings

NEW HOPE APARTMENTS

900 engaged in rapid and permanent housing

100% of clients reported an increased level of self-sufficiency

100% of clients were able to obtain stable housing

SENIOR COORDINATION

10,000 seniors across the city received housing coordination services in 71 senior housing buildings

MIGRANT CARE/REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

12,600 asylum seekers were assisted in their resettlement, which is half of the **27,000** individuals who have arrived in Chicago since August, 2022.

We have assisted **2,800** migrants as they join loved ones in other cities

We have connected more than **8,600** migrants to long-term housing in Greater Chicago, with the assistance of other community-based organizations

We are partnering with **26** parishes across the Archdiocese who want to financially assist and/or personally accompany the asylum seekers as they adjust to life in Chicago

3,800 people, designated by the U.S. State Dept, as refugees, were provided with legal assistance, refugee resettlement, legal referrals, and citizenship classes;

Refugee Resettlement on its own served **134** people

100% of refugee resettlement clients improved their readiness for employment in the U.S. by attending job readiness classes, and **84%** of those who graduated were able to secure employment within one year of arriving to the country

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

2,200 new and expectant parents and their children received case management, doula support, and home visits

91% of children attending the early childhood education centers met the social and emotional milestones for their age

Youth Engagement helped **540** youth gain confidence and stronger social and emotional skills through mentoring, aftercare, case management, and summer employment programs

100% of teens participating in employment programs reported they gained confidence in their skills and abilities

97% of students in mentoring programs said they developed stronger relationships in their life as a result of the mentoring services

SENIOR CARE

Senior Care helped **82,200** seniors remain in their homes by providing Care Coordination, Adult Protective Services, and supportive assistance

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

2,400 adults and children were assisted on their path toward healing and wellness

92% of clients reached one or more of their treatment goals

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

102 people stayed in DV shelters and **380** received DV counseling/outreach services

90% of counseling clients achieved their treatment plan goals

95% of shelter clients obtained permanent housing and stable income

Chicago's Drake Hotel, the site of many New Year Celebrations

Chicago History

MARY ELLEN KASTENHOLZ

Volunteer Writer



Over 2000 of Chicago's most distinguished citizens attended the inaugural New Year's Eve Gala at the Drake Hotel in 1920, immediately earning it the distinction as a hotel of luxury and grandeur. The property had been acquired by John and Tracy Drake from the Potter Palmer estate in 1916 and financed by a syndicate of friends including the famous names of Armour, Swift, McCormick and Palmer, at a price of \$10 million for the land, construction and furnishings. The hotel was named for the Drake family patriarch, John Burroughs Drake, notable hotel proprietor of the Tremont Hotel along with the Blackstone Hotel on the south end of Michigan Avenue.

The Drake Hotel, situated on the cornerstone of the Magnificent Mile and Lake Shore Drive, became known as a city within a city. The country's first urban resort was conceptualized by self-taught architect Benjamin Howard Marshall of Fox and Marshall, from Italian palaces of the Renaissance in Rome and Florence. He waived architectural fees in exchange for an ownership share in the hotel, eventually becoming General Manager and Director of Entertainment.

During the Roaring 20's, The Drake was sought after as high society's first choice in opulence in Chicago. The Fountain Court hosted a daily tea for the city's social elite and guests. This tradition continues in the renamed Palm Court restaurant. The Drake was home to the original WGN radio station



The Drake Hotel on Michigan Avenue, Downtown Chicago

when it was renamed from WDAP in 1924. The Amos and Andy radio program originated here. The popularity of The Drake continued to increase, apparently unaffected by the crash of 1929. Celebrities such as Bing Crosby, Walt Disney, George Gershwin and Charles Lindbergh were seen enjoying cocktails in the Gold Coast Room while listening to the Herbie Key Orchestra.

In 1932 the Cape Cod Room opened in anticipation of the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair. It was the country's first "themed" restaurant and quickly became popular for fresh fish and seafood. The room became even more renowned 20 years later with the visit from newlyweds Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio who carved their initials in the restaurant's famed wooden bar.

When Prohibition ended on December 5, 1933, the Coq d'Or cocktail bar within The Drake became the second establishment to obtain a liquor license, right behind the Berghoff. The Coq d'Or's doors opened December 6th with a welcoming invitation to patrons to purchase a 40-cent whiskey! By the 1940's it was a favorite rendezvous for politicians, reporters and even some infamous characters among the loyal Chicago crowd. It offered customers viewing privileges, having one of the first television sets in a Chicago bar.

The 1940's were a decade of change for The Drake (as well as the world). The iconic sign above The Drake illuminated one of the most recognizable skylines in the world. The Gold Coast and Silver Forest rooms were moved to smaller entertainment spaces. The Camilla Bar and Supper Club occupied those spaces for nearly 20 years featuring pianists such as Jimmy P. Blake. The Palm Court offered seasonal menus for the more sophisticated palates. In the winter months, to evoke a warm and inviting atmosphere, the fountain was replaced with a 2,000-pound fireplace. In the summer, the ceiling was opened to take in the lake breezes and the fountain was filled with fresh water.

From the 1950's on, Chicago saw tremendous change in the political and social climate as well as development of premier, upscale shopping in the Gold Coast streets near The Drake, ensuring continuous patronage. In 1980, Hilton International acquired The Drake Hotel, restoring it to its former glory and earning a listing in the National Registry of Historic Places.

Source: thedrakehotel.com



Tax Time!

2023 Taxes are due Monday, April 15, 2024

Keenager News is pleased once again to share this annual review of information to keep in mind as readers prepare to submit their federal and state tax returns for the previous year. Much of the information that follows was obtained from the Internal Revenue Service website (irs.gov). It is presented as a resource for readers of Keenager News. However, Keenager News is not an official source for tax information or filing. Please consult official government sources and/or certified tax preparation professionals for tax-related questions. Visit the websites and reach out to the phone numbers and email addresses provided for additional information, as well.

Tax Preparation Assistance from the Internal Revenue Service

Electronic Filing of Returns is Strongly Encouraged

For Federal Returns: Taxpayers can obtain forms and answers to questions from the IRS website (irs.gov), IRS offices, participating libraries, IRS Taxpayer Assistance Centers, and certified commercial tax preparer sources. For State Returns: Visit tax.illinois.gov for Illinois state income tax returns, forms and all information about filing.

The Internal Revenue Service: Your Main Source For Information

Log-on to irs.gov, type "seniors" into the search, then click ENTER and you will find a great deal of helpful tax preparation information. You can download "Publication 554, Tax Guide for Seniors" or "Publication 524, Credit for the Elderly or the Disabled." This online source also provides information about who needs to file a return. Call 1-800-829-1040 to ask questions about filing your taxes. For help with downloading or ordering hard-copies of tax forms (including large print forms) and publications call 1-800-829-3676.

In-Person Assistance From the IRS

The IRS operates Taxpayer Assistance Centers (TAC) in every state for taxpayers who prefer to receive face-to-face assistance with tax issues or questions. Visit irs.gov/help to locate the TAC nearest you. To make an appointment, call 844-545-5640. In downtown Chicago, the TAC is located at 230 S. Dearborn Street.

Protect Your Personal Finances

(Courtesy of irs.gov)

1. Use security software; make sure it updates automatically, has virus/malware protection and a firewall.
2. Safeguard your personal information like it is cash; don't leave it lying around.
3. Use strong, unique passwords online. Consider a password manager.
4. Back up your files.
5. Never download apps or software from pop-up advertising.
6. If you filed a federal tax return last year, you may be eligible to opt in to the IP PIN program. This is a 6-digit PIN that offers additional protections for your Social Security number on your tax returns.
7. Use Multi-factor Authentication, when possible, to protect your online accounts.
8. Stay educated on the latest scams and security measures. When in doubt, consult a tax professional or contact the IRS directly, at irs.gov.

If you believe you may have been targeted in any tax scam, or if you are ever unsure if any person contacting you is with the IRS, call the IRS directly at 1-800-829-1040 to verify the call, letter or email.

"Dirty Dozen" Tax Scams

The IRS provides this list annually to raise awareness about common scams that are used to try to steal money and personal information from taxpayers. The names of the 2023 Dirty Dozen Tax Scams are listed below. Visit irs.gov to learn more.

Employee Retention Credit claims

Phishing and smishing

Online account help from third-party scammers

False Fuel Tax Credit claims

Fake charities

Unscrupulous tax return preparers

Social media:

Fraudulent form filing and bad advice

Spearphishing and cybersecurity for tax professionals

Offer in Compromise mills

Schemes aimed at high-income filers: Charitable Remainder Annuity Trust (CRAT) and Monetized Installment Sales

Bogus tax avoidance strategies: Micro-captive insurance arrangements and Syndicated conservation easements

Schemes with international elements: Offshore accounts and digital assets; Maltese individual retirement arrangements misusing treaty; and Puerto Rican and foreign captive insurance

The IRS Criminal Investigation Division is always on the lookout for these types of schemes.

Taxpayers should think twice before including questionable arrangements like this on their tax returns. After all, taxpayers are legally responsible for what's on their return, not a promoter making promises and charging high fees. Taxpayers can help stop these arrangements by relying on reputable tax professionals they know and trust.

Taxpayer Advocate Service

The Taxpayer Advocate Service (TAS) is an independent organization within the IRS, offering free, in-person tax help for those who believe their tax issue cannot be handled online or by phone. Its mission is to protect your rights as a taxpayer. For more information, call the Internal Revenue Service at (877) 777-4778, or visit taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov.

Additional Help With Filing Taxes

LADDER UP

Ladder Up enlists the help of trained volunteers to offer free, confidential tax preparation and e-filing of federal and Illinois tax returns through its Tax Assistance Program (TAP). Sites are located throughout the greater Chicago area and in Springfield. Certain restrictions apply. To learn more, call the Ladder Up Chicago office at (312) 409-1555, or visit their website, goladderup.org.

AARP Tax Aide

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) provides a free tax counseling program, with trained and certified volunteers who will prepare basic tax returns. Many Tax Aide sites have bilingual counselors. To locate a site near you, call the toll-free number, 1-888-OUR-AARP (888-687-2277) or visit aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide

Tax Related Benefits for Seniors in Illinois, Cook County, and Chicago

ILLINOIS SENIOR REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTIONS

All senior citizen homeowners can apply for possible reductions in their real estate taxes. See below for two possible exemptions. If you live in Cook County, call (312) 443-7550 or visit: cookcountyassessor.com. If you reside outside of Cook County, contact your county assessor's office.

SENIOR CITIZEN EXEMPTION

This exemption provides tax relief by reducing the equalized assessed value (EAV) of an eligible residence. The savings is in the form of a deduction on the second installment of the real estate tax bill. Senior citizens must reapply annually for this exemption.

SENIOR FREEZE EXEMPTION

The Senior Freeze Exemption allows qualified senior citizens to apply for a freeze of the equalized assessed value (EAV) of their properties for the preceding year. This exemption does not automatically freeze the amount of their tax bill. Only the EAV remains at the fixed amount. Senior citizens also must reapply annually for the Senior Freeze Exemption.

STATE OF ILLINOIS SENIOR CITIZEN REAL ESTATE TAX DEFERRAL PROGRAM

This tax-relief program works like a loan and allows persons aged 65 and older by June 1 of the year in which the application is made who have a total household income of \$55,000 or less and meet certain other qualifications to defer all or part of the real estate taxes and special assessments on their principal residences, up to \$5,000. The state pays the property taxes and then recovers the money upon the death of the owner or when the property is sold or transferred. Homeowners must reapply every year. The deadline is March 1, so contact your county treasurer's office ASAP if you are interested. In Cook County, contact the Treasurer's Office at (312) 443-5100 or visit www.cookcountytreasurer.com/seniors. If you reside outside Cook County, contact your county treasurer's office.

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Eddie Tamez, and his "Over The Top" Generosity

Reader's Corner

BASIL DAMUKAITIS

Guest Writer

Catholic Charities' longstanding Chicago tradition of providing hot, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day meals to its guests continued this holiday season, but someone was missing. Chicago lost a great friend of the poor when Eddie Tamez died October 31, 2023. An accomplished caterer, Eddie coordinated and donated these special occasion meals to 400+ guests for the past ten years. Eddie also was a regular fixture each week at 721 North LaSalle Street, contributing generously to the preparation and coordination of the Tuesday Night Suppers.

With its community partners, Catholic Charities serves a hot meal to 300-400 guests each weeknight in Vincent Hall at 721 North LaSalle Street. No one is ever turned away. Eddie is sorely missed as part of the dedicated team that keeps these meals going, but his impact on the work of Catholic Charities continues, profoundly, today.

Eddie's connection to Catholic Charities started when he would listen to Fr. Wayne Watts, his then-pastor at St. John Berchmans Parish in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood. Fr. Wayne Watts, a longtime advocate of the poor and Associate Administrator of Catholic Charities since 2002, would talk about the work of the agency in his sermons and at parish meetings. Eddie asked Fr. Wayne, "What can I do?" and the rest, as they say, is history.

Eddie became a regular Tuesday Night Supper volunteer. The other volunteers welcomed Eddie's expertise to the process of creating and serving delicious, hot meals for the guests each week. When the benefactor of the annual Thanksgiving dinner informed Catholic Charities officials that they were unable to provide the meal that year, Eddie stepped up and offered to fill this critical role, and he selflessly offered to do the same for Christmas.

For Eddie, these holiday meals were more than just providing nourishment to the needy of the Chicago area. He also saw them as opportunities to treat guests with the dignity and respect they deserve as human persons. Eddie and his team of family, friends, and other Catholic Charities volunteers would outfit the entire room in festive holiday fashion including streamers, wall hangings, and tablecloths for each table. Eddie wanted everyone to feel special and loved... and let them know that they mattered.

When it came to the food, there was no skimping. Eddie put as much care and thoughtfulness into each meal as he would for the corporate clients of his catering company. For him it was a way of "paying it forward" for all the blessings God had given to him.

Preparations would begin a month in advance when Eddie started shopping for turkeys and all the fixings which he personally funded out of his own pocket. Even after weeks of planning and preparation each year, Eddie didn't want recognition or the spotlight. Fr. Wayne remembers, "Eddie was always joyful and humble. He never came out of the kitchen for acknowledgement unless I put him on the spot and called him out to the front." Fr. Wayne adds, "Eddie was a true friend of the poor and the homeless. He not only donated his own resources, but he put his gifts and talents at the service of others. He was Over-The-Top generous."

Even as his health began to fail, Eddie would sit on a stool keeping a watchful eye on every part of the process on Tuesday nights last Fall. Like others who have made extraordinary contributions to the history of Catholic Charities, Eddie Tamez will be remembered as someone whose generosity engulfed him. It was that pure and genuine. In recent weeks, volunteers that he worked with have said that they looked up to Eddie, and that his example made them want to give more of themselves, too. Knowing that would make Eddie smile, with his kind and humble smile.

To learn more about helping Catholic Charities supper programs, visit catholiccharities.net or email info@catholiccharities.net.



Eddie Tamez, left and his friend, Basil Damukaitis

What Do I Love Best About Catholic Charities?



Editor's Note:

In recognition of Valentine's Day, some of the seniors we serve shared their thoughts and feelings about what they "Love Best" about Catholic Charities' Respite Program, which is part of our Senior Services Impact Area. Its goal is to assist family members who are caring for seniors who have chronic illnesses or disabilities. The program contracts with various providers who send staff in seniors' homes to provide services. Or, seniors can stay at a nursing facility while their caregivers are away. The Respite Program also provides a support group for the participants and many educational opportunities. The program serves over 12,000 clients per year.

"Catholic Charities is a wonderful resource, and a blessing to my mom and to me. Catholic Charities have provided me with Respite Care, Love and Care services that have transformed my way of caregiving for my mother. I do not take anything for granted. It's not only the funding that is provided for respite but also the moral support of Mary and Cynthia who have shown impeccable love, respect, and understanding of our needs as caregivers. I am very thankful and grateful for the support and encouragement that is given by Catholic Charities. I know that I could not be the caregiver that I am to my mother without Catholic Charities. You are truly making a wonderful difference in the lives of caregivers. Thank you again, for all your services." **JW** ♥

"The weekly Stress-Buster's Program with you on ZOOM is what I love the most. I didn't know it then, but it was just what I needed. It has also been an eye-opening experience for me to reflect on, so I can create self-care time when I get stressed caring for my husband. The program is very informative, with eight great techniques for us to use (and we even get to keep our manuals to refer to). Plus the Zoom offers some needed socialization and shared experiences. I wish it was longer! My advice to caregivers? SIGN UP for the program!" **BB** ♥

"The respite care services you set up, and the support Catholic Charities provided to me while I was very tired from continuing to care for my elderly mother at home, also while helping my wife raise our 3 children/teens has been invaluable! Many thanks for that. Your involvement in and support of me as a caregiver is a real blessing to me and my family. It is such a blessing to know that we are not fighting alone. May God bless your heart and all the staff for all your good works to many people like me who need it. You guys are angels! Thanks also for your regular check-in calls, texts, emails and listening when I needed it." **AA** ♥

"I wanted to thank you guys for the respite services especially. It helps give me some peace of mind having the respite worker with my parents while I'm not there. My parents and I are so grateful and for all your kindness. Thank you for all you do for us and other seniors and their families in need!" **JK** ♥

"You are so wonderful, thanks for going out of your way to support me all the time and for everything in your caregiver program! You are an angel sent to me from God above. Your help with providing me with different resources, like respite, elder law attorneys lists, gap-filler items for our home, especially when I had to have knee surgery, and your on-going support. The help is much needed and extremely appreciated. Your kindness, care and all your hard work to me as a caregiver and to all the many clients your agency serves was so helpful this past year. Love and God's blessings to you and Catholic Charities!" **TS** ♥

"Thank you so much for helping me during a very difficult time with my mother. I am also very grateful for the respite care that I get on your watch – so helpful and a great program! It's especially helpful in the cold winter months when she can't go outside, and for someone else to talk to, from the respite provider, since she is a widow. I wish you wellness and rest as I know it takes a lot of work on you and your co-workers at Catholic Charities. Just know that it all makes a difference as I am in a better place today because of your help." **AB** ♥



February 2024: Black History Month



The origins of Black History Month began in 1926 when historian Carter G. Woodson, with the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History proclaimed the second week in February

to be observed as Negro History Week. Schools across America were encouraged to instill a greater appreciation of Black American history in their curriculum. In February 1969, Black History Month was promoted by Black students and teachers at Kent State University. By the mid 1970's, Black History Month was celebrated throughout the United States, with students of all ages and in cities, towns, and community centers. President Gerald Ford,

in 1976, urged all Americans to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

For Black History Month, 2024 The Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. has chosen the theme of, "African Americans and the Arts," with exhibits planned to show the impact Black Americans have had on visual arts, music, cultural movements, and more. The Smithsonian is the world's largest museum, education, and research complex, with 21 museums and the National Zoo. To learn more, visit: <https://www.si.edu/events/black-history-month>

In the City of Chicago, a number of civic and community events are being held to acknowledge Black History Month. Visit www.chicago.gov/city/en.html and www.chicagohistory.org/event/black-history-month-2024/ to learn more about the events planned for February 2024.

Sources: si.edu; nationaltoday.com



How Times Have Changed

A Look Back

... to 1924

1924 Car Ad: Chevrolet Roadster (\$480.00)

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Average income | \$2,196 |
| Unemployment | 5% |
| New House | \$7,720 |
| Gallon of Gas | 11¢ |
| Loaf of Bread | 9¢ |
| Gallon of Milk | 54¢ |
| First Class Stamp | 2¢ |
| Life Expectancy | 54.1 years |
| Metal Bed with Mattress | \$26.95 |
| Tweed Knickers | \$1.55 |
| Victrola Turntable | \$150.00 |
| 16 Inch Oven & Broiler | \$59.00 |

Source: alookthrutime.com



Above: A Typical Grocery Store in 1924; To the right: 1924 Nickel
Source: alookthrutime.com



from The Recipe Box

Stuffed Shells – Serves 6-8

INGREDIENTS

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 8 oz. Manicotti shells | 1 T. chopped parsley |
| 2 lb. ricotta cheese | 1 t. salt |
| 3 c. mozzarella cheese, shredded | 2 cloves garlic, minced |
| ½ c. plus 2 T. parmesan cheese | ½ t. pepper |
| 2 eggs, beaten | 3 c. spaghetti sauce |

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Bring 5 quarts salted water to boil. Cook noodles for 5 minutes. Drain pasta, cover with cold water and drain again. In large bowl, mix ricotta, 2 cups mozzarella, ½ cup parmesan, eggs, parsley, garlic, salt, and pepper. Pour 1 cup spaghetti sauce on bottom of lightly greased 13x9x2 inch pan. Fill each shell generously with cheese mixture and place filled shells on layer of sauce in pan. Pour 2 cups spaghetti sauce over it all. Top with 1 cup mozzarella and 2 tablespoons parmesan. Bake 40-45 minutes until lightly golden. Let set 10 minutes before serving.

Parmesan Oven Fries – Serves 4-6

INGREDIENTS

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 4 large baking potatoes, peeled (about 2 and ½ lbs) | 1 T. extra virgin olive oil |
| ½ t. dried thyme | ½ c. finely grated parmesan cheese |
| ¼ t. freshly ground pepper | ½ t. salt |

PREPARATION

Cut each potato lengthwise into 6 wedges. Pat wedges dry with paper towel, and place in a bowl. Add thyme and pepper and toss well. Drizzle oil over wedges and toss well to coat. Spray a baking sheet with cooking spray, then make a single layer of the potatoes in the sheet. Bake at 450 degrees for 30 minutes. Sprinkle parmesan and salt evenly over wedges. Bake an additional 10 minutes or until tender and browned. Serve warm.

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 I X S V Q T T A S C I R Y L D T X I C R

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- ARPEGGIO
- BALLAD
- BEAT
- CADENCE
- CHORD
- CHORUS
- CLEF
- CRESCENDO
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Humor & Nostalgia

Back by Popular Demand: Erma Bombeck



Of all of the comedians that we have featured in recent years, the humor of Erma Bombeck always elicits the most responses from Keenager readers. They write to us and say, "Add more Erma...she's hilarious!" Enjoy these witticisms from one of the most successful American humorists of the 20th century:

"I was one of those not-quite-ready-for-TV prime-time-mothers...My kids were the ones the prime-time mothers forbid their kids to play with or else they would get in trouble."

"Some say when a child can reach the clothes hamper without falling in, he is ready to assume responsibility for what he wears."

"I have discovered that one of the rich rewards of motherhood is casting maledictions on your children in the event they become parents. It's a unique way of saying, 'Just wait, kid...you're gonna get yours.'"

"I feel sorry for whoever is a youngest sibling. To be on the tail end of a family means anything you come up with has either been told or isn't worth telling."

"I come from a family where gravy is considered a beverage."

"My theory on housework is, if the item doesn't multiply, smell, catch fire, or block the refrigerator door, let it be. No one else cares. Why should you?"

"Did you ever notice that the first piece of luggage on the carousel never belongs to anyone?"

"Worry is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but never gets you anywhere."

"When a child is locked in the bathroom with running water and he says he's doing nothing, but the dog is barking, call 911."

"When your mother asks, 'Do you want a piece of advice?' it is a mere formality. It does not matter if you answer yes or no. You're going to get it anyway."

"A friend never defends a husband who gets his wife an electric skillet for her birthday."

"When humor goes, there goes civilization."

Source: Earlybirdbooks.com; everydaypower.com; libquotes.com; azquotes.com

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Katie McDonnell Bredemann

Editorial Advisors

Gina Cleggs
and Angela Bailey

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Birthdays and Anniversaries

To protect the personal information of our readers, we list the first names and last initials of all who have submitted birthdays and anniversaries to us. Thank you for your understanding.

Birthdays

HAPPY HUNDREDS

Harriet K. **103** on **1/11**
Lottie M. **102** on **2/13**

BELATED BIRTHDAYS

Josefina H. **104** on **9/18**
Vanice (Van) B. **80** on **11/24**
Victoria L. **90** on **12/3**

Anniversaries

ANNIVERSARIES

Jerry & Gerry A. **69** on **1/15**

BELATED ANNIVERSARIES

Michael & Virginia M. **60** on **10/12**