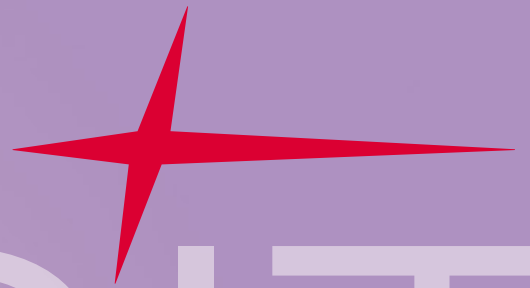


Spring 2024
Vol 24 | No 1


Catholic Charities
of the Archdiocese of Chicago



SPIRIT



Vision 2030
Lifting Up
Mothers



“Do not be discouraged.
The Holy Spirit is not asleep.”

– Thomas Merton, O.C.S.O.

On the front cover:

Catholic Charities’ Jadonal E. Ford Center in the Roseland neighborhood on Chicago’s the far south side provides a continuum of care for pregnant and parenting mothers from ages 13 to 30. For 16-year-old Tyreanna and her four-month-old son Tyrell, the center is a welcoming and comfortable place where she feels at home. “If I need anything, I just go there,” she says. Read more about the center and its programs on page 8.



Spirit Magazine—May 2024

Spirit magazine is a triennial publication of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago that is designed to inspire our readers and offer a message of mercy and hope to a world in need.

Copyright ©2024 Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago.
All rights reserved.

Editor

Rose Sweeney

Photography and Illustration

Randy Belice, Cindy Grosch,
Kathleen Hinkel, Catholic Charities
Communications

Get In Touch

Spirit Magazine
Communications Department
Catholic Charities of the
Archdiocese of Chicago

721 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60654
communications@catholiccharities.net
catholiccharities.net

In this issue

Vision 2030

5 **Lifting up mothers**

A window onto the focus, clarity, and hope of the new path Catholic Charities' Board and leaders have envisioned for our future

6 **Allowing Mary, Undoer of Knots, to guide us**

Undoing the complexities that humans create whenever we are in relationship

Sally Blount, President and CEO

Lifting Up and Empowering Mothers

8



How a mother thrives ultimately determines how her baby thrives

The Jadonal E. Ford Center provides a continuum of support for mothers and their babies on Chicago's far south side

11

The Catholic Charities maternal support ecosystem

Being a mother can be hard; with Catholic Charities, moms don't have to go it alone

13

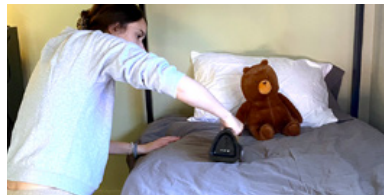


A nutritional lifeline

WIC supports families during a critical period of development

Partners in Mission

15



A pioneering partnership

Catholic Charities joins with Saint Clement parish to provide safe and stable housing for migrant mothers who are survivors of domestic violence

16



Connecting with our mission

Lenten outreach projects meet our neighbors where they are

17

Thoughts on accompaniment and encounter

John DeCostanza, Vice President, Faith and Mission and Executive Director, Saint Martin de Porres Society

18

Reflections on the Holy Spirit

Catholic leaders share how the Holy Spirit inspires us to seek new pathways for living our faith

Partners in Giving

19

Recent and upcoming events

20

Ways to give and serve

Help us improve lives and nourish spirits across Cook and Lake counties

Beautiful Ms. Verna Margaret McCathen-Preston

Ms. Verna is a force. At 100 years old, she's fiery in spirit, hearty in appetite, and walks five flights of stairs when she's in the mood. She is also the oldest of 13 siblings, mother to six, grandmother and great-grandmother to 49, and long-time parishioner of St. Martin de Porres (now part of St. Simon of Cyrene) on Chicago's west side.

Ms. Verna has lived independently at Catholic Charities' Matthew Manor for

more than 21 years, but this is only the latest of her life's chapters. She was born in Louisiana, studied in Florida during World War II, and settled with her husband in Virginia. When she migrated to Chicago with her children, the family found community in their local Catholic parish and school. For years, she took the train from the city to work at Fort Sheridan.

Even though it's nearly impossible to put one's arms around all the history Ms. Verna

has charted over the course of her life, it's easy to see all the love she has sown—it runs deep and rich in her gracious and warm family, vibrant in her faith, and joyous in the simple pleasure of something good to eat.

Verna Margaret McCathen-Preston, born December 9, 1923, and photographed at Catholic Charities' Matthew Manor on March 25, 2024.



Dear Friends,

The world feels so topsy-turvy—with inflation, war, climate change, political divisiveness, and the ever-increasing number of people who come to our doors amid the unrest. It is easy to become discouraged, to begin to doubt...

Yet, at Catholic Charities, we are called to witness and to hope—to witness today and to hope for tomorrow.

The Holy Spirit beckons us to fully enter into today's hunger and need, while simultaneously anticipating and preparing for the realities and needs of tomorrow.

This is not a calling for the faint of heart. Our Board and leaders have devoted significant time over the last four years to imagine new ways of being. We have had to make some very difficult decisions—decisions that require saying no to some things today in order to do more tomorrow.

For some who have not been in the room praying and studying the issues with us, these decisions may feel off somehow, because in the short term, they require us to close some sites and change certain aspects of how we serve. Yet, short-term sacrifice is often the requirement for tomorrow's flourishing.

This edition of *Spirit* provides a window onto the beauty and hope of the new path our Board envisions for 2030—a path that opens the way for us to **invest more deeply in mothers, their strengthening, healing, and growth.** It will lead us to the resources and expanded programs we need to build up mothers and with that, the strength, self-sufficiency, and futures of their children.

With open arms and open hearts, we welcome the Holy Spirit as we witness to mercy and to hope—staying present to today and planning for tomorrow.



Sally Blount
President and CEO



Sally Blount together with Beatriz Ponce de León, Deputy Mayor of Immigrant, Migrant, and Refugee Rights for the City of Chicago (middle) and Ami Novoryta, Catholic Charities' Chief Program Officer (right) while serving guests at our Sister Joyce Dura, O.S.F., Supper Program.

OUR THREE STRATEGIC PILLARS



Strategic Pillar 1

Welcome with open arms

Serve with open hearts, embrace radical hospitality

- Reduce barriers, increase action
- Boldly collaborate and partner
- Equip our partners to grow in faith and service



Strategic Pillar 2

Heal, strengthen, and empower

Commit to the deep work of long-term growth and well-being

- Look beyond numbers to lasting impact
- Focus on mothers and seniors
- Harness the power of community



Strategic Pillar 3

Change systems and mindsets

Walk in solidarity with those we serve to build a more just future

- Deliver as most trusted partner, step up in crisis
- Create and share knowledge
- Give voice to those we serve in advocacy and change

From our March 7, 2024 news release

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago—the region’s largest private human services provider—announces **the launch of its Vision 2030 strategic plan** and, with that, several decisions designed to realign its services for greater impact over the years ahead.

We will continue to partner with government at the local and state levels to provide essential services, but at a reduced level. After careful evaluation and discussion, we have decided to reduce our footprint as a government contractor by an amount equal to 12 percent of our funding.

“Our Board and staff remain committed to serving as our region’s cornerstone partner, employer, and provider. **We will continue to operate at a significant scale, between \$175 million to \$200 million annually, to provide essential programs and services across our three impact areas.**”

–**Michael Monticello**, Board Chair

We remain steadfast in our founding mission to serve people in need across Chicago and Cook and Lake counties—regardless of their faith, ethnicity, nationality, gender, or race—while adapting to the changing needs of our times.

“Over the past four years, Catholic Charities’ Board and leadership have undertaken an important strategic exercise—one that all organizations of substance must regularly do. **I laud them for their courage, vision, and commitment to deepening the Church’s impact on behalf of the region’s most vulnerable.**”

–**Cardinal Blase J. Cupich**, Archbishop of Chicago

Lifting up mothers

This edition of *Spirit* is designed to **provide a window onto the focus, clarity, and hope that Catholic Charities’ Board and leaders have envisioned for our future.** With the launch of our Vision 2030 strategic plan, we are realigning our services for greater impact over the years ahead.

In developing Vision 2030, we have come to understand that to increase impact, we must sharpen our strategic focus and simplify our program structure and resources. We must reduce complexity.

Between now and 2030, we will organize our work around three strategic pillars. We will be present with love to the need that comes to our doors (*see Pillar 1: Welcome with open arms, left*). We will take on the bold, hard work of long-term growth and change, with a focus on mothers and seniors—two populations that are not only central to our faith, but also ones we are uniquely equipped to serve (*Pillar 2: Heal, strengthen, and empower*).

We will walk in solidarity with those we serve, advocating for needed change, stepping up to our role as

a human services leader and as the Church’s partner in charity and social justice (*Pillar 3: Change systems and mindsets*).

“If we want to increase our impact over the years ahead, we must sharpen our strategic focus while reducing the time our staff spends navigating an increasingly complex and uncertain government environment.”

—**Michael Monticello**, Board Chair

In this issue of *Spirit*, we are proud to share stories about how we serve local mothers in need. They provide a preview into how we will advance our programs to not only address immediate needs, but also invest more deeply in human strengthening, healing, and growth.

For the mothers we accompany, by focusing on their needs, we help them secure the foundation their families need to flourish. By strengthening them, we build the strength, self-sufficiency, and futures of their children.



In our new streamlined structure, we have shifted our focus from children, youth, and families, to mothers, their children, and how they build their families. Under the new strategic plan, Catholic Charities will pilot programs and expansions to increase services for mothers experiencing hardship across Cook and Lake counties.



The patron saint of relational complexity and organizational change

“I have come to see ‘knots’ not just in the challenges of marriage, but in the complexity that humans create whenever we are in relationship.”

Allowing Mary, Undoer of Knots, to guide us

Sally Blount
President and CEO

Leading the Midwest’s largest private human services provider through COVID, and now as we regain our footing amid high inflation and ever-growing need, is not for the faint of heart.

The urgency of our times

The levels of need in our country and region have never been higher. Fifty years of unprecedented economic growth have only exacerbated income inequality. Poverty has stayed flat, hovering at 12 percent, but with double the population. And it’s not just families under the poverty line who are struggling. It is estimated that 40 percent, as many as 137 million people, can’t make ends meet.

Catholic Charities, too, has seen change. Between 1995 and 2015, as governments at all levels privatized the provision of many human services, we dramatically increased our programs and services. At our peak, we were managing between 200 to 250 different government contracts and programs.

The challenge is that the political conditions that spurred that growth have shifted. Funding has not kept up with inflation since 2015. Many contracts no longer cover their full costs, and the complexity of the internal systems that evolved to service these diverse contracts created a cost structure that is difficult to sustain.

Four years of hard, but important, decisions

So, it’s been four years of hard decisions—balancing how we serve today with how we will ensure we are here to serve tomorrow. Internally, that’s meant gathering our Board and staff around a shared vision for our future. Externally, it’s meant facing criticism from people who are upset about some of the decisions that have been made.

For me, shepherding us all through this season has meant many nights of uneasy sleep and some early morning tears, as I’ve asked God for His guidance. And yet, it has also been a season of rich spiritual growth. My reliance on

Before

FAMILY & PARISH SUPPORT		CHILD, YOUTH & FAMILY	COMMUNITY DEV. & OUTREACH	HOUSING	SENIOR SERVICES	REGIONAL SERVICES
GENERAL	Pregnancy, Parenting, & Adoption Support	Youth Counseling	Women, Infants, & Children	Senior Housing (19 sites)	Care Coordination	Community Engagement
Family Stabilization Services	• Adoption	• Youth & Family Therapy	• WIC Grocery Centers	Family Housing (2 sites)	• Comprehensive in-home assessments	Parish Outreach
• Food Pantries (Cook, Lake)	• Pregnancy & Parenting Support	• Community-Based Violence Prevention & Intervention	• WIC Farmers Market	St. Leo	• Care plan development & linkages to services	Basic Needs
• SNAP Outreach	• Post-Adoption	• CC Heals	Seniors (60+)	Homeless Services	• Choices for Care assessments	• Food Pantry
• Mary's Closet		• CC Renewals	• Home delivered meals	• New Hope Chicago + Suburban	• Care Transition Program	• Community Suppers
• Clothing Closets		• Adoption Preservation	• Congregate	• Safe at Home		• Pop-up Food Distribution
Homeless Prevention Call Center	Central States Institute	• Adoption Respite	• Senior Food & Nutrition Program commodity boxes	• Rapid Rehousing	Community-Based Direct Services	• Diaper Ministries
• Catholic Charities Hotline	HIV/AIDS Ministry Liaison	• The Encompassing Center		• Transitional Housing	• Home Care	• Clothing Ministry
• HPC: City		• CDPH Trauma Informed Svcs	Youth Development & Training	• Permanent Supportive Housing	• Adult Day Care	
• HPC: Suburban	LAKE COUNTY	• Service Coord. & Navigation	• One Summer Chicago	• Job Development	• Senior Centers	ADDITIONAL
• Chicago Coordinated Entry System Matching & Diversion Program	Food Pantries	Special Projects	• Chicago Youth Corps	• Bridge Subsidy Program	• Service Coordination	Burial Assistance
• New Skilled Assessor Service for Cook Entry	• EAP Food Pantry	• SDL (Chicago)	• Peace Corner Youth Center	• St. Joseph Apartments	• Senior Employment Program	Catholic Charities Legal Assistance
	• HIV CC	• CCUSA Mentoring (Lake)	Community Outreach	• St. Leo's Social Services	• CHA Service Coordination	
	Emergency Assistance	• St. Mary of Celle Family Strengthening	• City Key	• Veteran's Employment	Nutrition Services	
	• Homeless prevention programs		• Summer Health Fairs	• Support Services for Veteran Families	• Home delivered & congregate meals (Lake, McHenry)	
	• Emergency + transitional			• Streets to Home		

After

Our programs are aligned around our three impact areas, each of which is addressed by our strategic plan.

Our foundation programs for deepened impact and innovation as we head toward 2030...

<p>Immediate Access and Basic Needs</p> <p>Charities Hub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlined call center, highly responsive, no wait times Micro-grants for people facing crisis <p>Community-based Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City: downtown HQ, 2 parish-based centers Suburbs: 3 community centers Supplemented by mobile food pantries and community meals <p>Homelessness Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Hope housing Bridge housing 	<p>Mothers and Families</p> <p>Empowering Mothers and Young Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 WIC grocery centers in key Chicago neighborhoods Pregnancy and parenting support, doula services, case management, home visits Post-adoption services <p>Empowering Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 domestic violence shelters Family self-sufficiency programs for single mothers Behavioral health counseling Immigrant and refugee services 	<p>Seniors and Housing</p> <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19 senior housing communities 4 residences for veterans and people with disabilities <p>Senior Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and care coordination for seniors aging-in-place through independent living 	<p>+</p> <p>Rapid Response Team</p>
---	---	---	---

the Holy Spirit and my understanding of our mission and calling have deepened in some marvelous ways, particularly as I have come to know Mary, Undoer of Knots.

On knots and their undoing

The setting for this showing of Mary is often tied to a 17th century German nobleman trying to save his troubled marriage. But I have come to see “knots” not just in the challenges of marriage, but in the complexity that humans create whenever we are in relationship. Be it in marriage, in families, in building and sustaining organizations, we always make things messier over time.

As a scholar of organizations, I know that the long-run challenge organizations in every sector face is managing the complexity that accumulates over time. Forms, systems, norms, routines, files—they always increase and can become an organization’s downfall. Their undoing requires shedding, simplification, refocusing... being open to new ways of being, doing, and interacting.

The best way I can show you how Mary has come through for us at Catholic Charities is to compare our current portfolio of services to that from before we began this work. Our calling remains clear: we are here

to witness a message of mercy and hope to a world in need. Yet, how to enact that mission must change over time. As the charts above show, our structure is simpler now as we equip ourselves for the future.

That is the challenge of all human relationships and organizations—they must keep adapting to stay vital and relevant. And that’s why we need Mary, Undoer of Knots, the patron saint of relational complexity and, I would offer, organizational change.

How a mother thrives ultimately determines how her baby thrives

The most important thing to know about Catholic Charities' Jadonal E. Ford (JEF) Center is that everyone who passes through its doors is a mother or someone who cares very deeply about them.

Located in the Roseland neighborhood on Chicago's far south side, the JEF Center is co-located with a Catholic Charities WIC Grocery Center. For moms traveling from as far away as south suburban Dolton, it's a vital destination to get nutritious food, see friends, receive support, and celebrate their babies.

Serving mothers who face extraordinary challenges

Motherhood—it's beautiful, profound, exciting ... and *hard*. But many of the women who visit the JEF Center face extraordinary circumstances that make it even more challenging, including poverty, homelessness, and domestic violence.

Mother-centered and grounded in the community, the supports and programs the center offers work in tandem to help moms overcome these challenges to have successful pregnancies and continue to grow as parents through their children's crucial early years.

"If we can support mothers in their pregnancies through their babies' formative years, the relationship with their child will be positively impacted because of parent engagement."

—**Velma Walker** Senior Director, Family Supports



Helping moms have safe, healthy, and positive birth experiences

"We don't advocate, we empower," says Nicole Harper-Spencer. As

Catholic Charities' Doula Services Program Manager and a doula herself, Nicole explains that empowering a mom's agency during pregnancy pays dividends long after her baby is born. Starting in the last trimester of pregnancy and continuing for up to two months postpartum, Nicole and her team accompany new moms between the ages of 13 and 30 as they prepare for the arrival of their baby, attend prenatal appointments, develop a birth plan, communicate with their medical team during delivery, and find their footing in the first months of their child's life.

Nationally, Black women are three times more likely to die because of pregnancy-related complications than White women, and this is even higher in communities with high economic hardship. Roseland and its surrounding neighborhoods have some of the poorest maternal health outcomes in



“It’s helpful to have someone just to talk to when you need help. It’s like they’re your close friend.”

-Tyreanna

Doula Services Program Manager Nicole Harper-Spencer greets 16-year-old Tyreanna and her son Tyrell, four months. “Being a doula is my purpose,” says Nicole. “Moms I worked with years ago still send me updates.”



“There’s always someone who’s in your corner. Anything you need support with, they will support you.”

-Brianna

17-year-old Brianna holds her baby Essence, seven months. Brianna learned about the JEF Center when she visited a Catholic Charities’ WIC Grocery Center during her pregnancy.



“We have been part of Roseland for over 48 years. Our roots in this community are deep.”

-Marianne Powell

Roseland/Altgeld Parenting Program Director Marianne Powell helps 20-year-old Mercedes select age-appropriate food items for her one-year-old son Rayshawn. Co-locating parenting programs and WIC within the JEF Center helps the team meet mothers where they are.



“I just love babies and pregnancies. I wanted to have a deeper connection to the mom.”

-Keiona Johnson

Doula Keiona Johnson checks in on a new mom and her daughter. “As a doula, you can provide much more emotional support than a doctor. We can make a big impact on a mom’s life,” she says.



One of the JEF Center's benefits is the community it provides and how it encourages moms to share with and learn from each other. For many, the friends they make serve as their support system long after their participation in the programs concludes.

the city. Community-based doula services like those Nicole's team provides are recognized as powerful interventions to reverse this trend.

Compassionate support through the infant and toddler years

Research shows that experiences during a child's first years have a profound effect on brain development, which can impact their health and success in school and life. Catholic Charities' home visiting and parent education programs help mothers

establish loving and responsive relationships with their children, advocate for their child's health and well-being, and serve as their child's first and best teacher.

Mom-centered

Ensuring meaningful outcomes starts by establishing safe and trusting relationships with the moms themselves. This is what makes the JEF Center so special. Welcoming and comfortable, it is a place where moms feel at home. High chairs are pulled up

to desks, babies are passed to open arms, and the team gives compassionately and patiently. "To be a social worker," says Marianne Powell, Director of Catholic Charities' Roseland/Altgeld Parenting Program, "it's something you do from your heart. We love these moms and believe in them. That's why we are here."

Catholic Charities' maternal support ecosystem

No mother should parent alone. Catholic Charities' teams accompany women with courageous compassion across every stage of motherhood, providing a system of support that encourages empowerment, financial stability, and self-determination.





A mother shops with Nutrition Associate Guadalupe Prieto at Catholic Charities' WIC Grocery Center in the Belmont-Cragin neighborhood on Chicago's northwest side. As one of the fastest-growing Latino neighborhoods in Illinois, the Belmont-Cragin center has experienced a surge in shoppers who have recently arrived in Chicago. Catholic Charities provides bilingual shopping assistance and nutrition education to help these mothers make the most of their benefits.

A nutritional lifeline for families during a critical period of development

On any given morning, when Tanya Cruz and her team open the doors to Catholic Charities' WIC Grocery Center in Chicago's Belmont-Cragin neighborhood, they are greeted by moms waiting outside, ready to stock up on nutritious food for their families.

This isn't a surprise for Tanya, the center's Site Director. She's been with the program for over three decades, starting with Catholic Charities' very first center near the former Cabrini-Green public housing development, and knows the community-based grocery centers are a critical resource.

What is WIC?

The federal Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) serves low-income pregnant and postpartum mothers who, along with their infants and children under age five, are at nutritional risk. **The USDA estimates about half of all infants born in the U.S. are served by the program.**

When it launched in 1993, Catholic Charities' WIC Grocery Center model

was the first of its kind in the nation, providing both WIC-approved food and other supports. **Today, Catholic Charities operates 14 centers in Chicago neighborhoods with the greatest need.** Tanya's is among the busiest, serving approximately 1,000 customers every week.

While most shoppers come from surrounding neighborhoods, parents across the region travel to Catholic Charities centers for the convenient and welcoming experience. This was especially true during the baby formula shortage in spring 2022. The organization's WIC centers were among the rare locations across the state with plenty in stock.

100% WIC-approved

Many grocery and big-box stores feature WIC items, but they do not accommodate shopper needs the way Catholic Charities' centers do. The items WIC covers are very specific. They must meet nutritional standards, and the benefit can only be used to purchase certain brands and sizes of a product.

"At our centers, every item—fresh fruits and vegetables, baby food and formula, cereal, rice and beans, you name it—is 100% WIC-approved."

—**Tanya Cruz**, Site Director,
Catholic Charities WIC
Grocery Center



"At other stores, shoppers waste time scouring shelves for WIC-approved items. Sometimes they find what they need, other times the trip is for nothing," explains Tanya. "Moms with babies and toddlers in tow are busy and don't have time for guesswork. If it's here, it applies toward their benefit. Period."

A mom-focused experience

Tanya and her team work hard to provide excellent service. "Retailers often view WIC as an inconvenience, and that is reflected in how they treat customers," she explains. "We love our WIC moms and families! They are our sole reason for being here."



Pictured, left: Nutrition Associate Guadalupe Prieto prepares samples of the day's recipe, vegetarian sweet potato and black bean chili; right: a mother is accompanied by her partner and two-year-old daughter as she shops for produce.

“People see the Catholic Charities sign on our front door. They know it is a safe and welcoming place to ask questions and find lots of resources.”

—Tanya Cruz

Healthy nutrition is at the heart of the WIC program

In addition to providing nutrition education and breastfeeding support, Catholic Charities’ WIC centers also help bring healthy cooking to life. Twice a week at our center in Belmont-Cragin, parents are greeted

with the aroma of delicious cooking and a warm hello from Guadalupe Prieto, one of the program’s nutrition associates. “We feature a different recipe every month based on the season and what is in stock. All the ingredients can be found right here,” she says.

Innovating to reach moms where they are

For over 30 years, Catholic Charities’ WIC centers have supported families in Chicago during a critical period of child development. And it’s a critical period for mothers, too. In light of this, Catholic Charities is exploring ways to better meet the needs of local moms at its busiest centers.

At the Belmont-Cragin location, for example, the team is considering how it will integrate other Catholic Charities’ programs to serve moms, as well as provide flexible community space and complementary services from external partners.

Other efforts include launching a fully accessible mobile WIC store to reach more moms on Chicago’s west side. Due to hit the road this summer, the mobile WIC store will offer a wide range of WIC-approved food items, as well as introduce shoppers to other Catholic Charities supports. It will be the first of its kind in Illinois.

Partnering to serve migrant mothers experiencing domestic violence

On a warm afternoon this past February, something special was taking place at Catholic Charities' Madonna House, a residence for survivors of domestic violence. Inside, volunteers were making beds, distributing laundry baskets filled with toiletries and fresh towels, and placing a new stuffed animal on every pillow. After months of preparation, this was their last opportunity to ready the home for its new residents, migrant mothers living in city shelters who have experienced domestic violence or trafficking.

Hosting these families at Madonna House was made possible by a pioneering partnership between Catholic Charities and Saint Clement Parish in Chicago with the support of nearby parishes Immaculate Conception and

St. Joseph, St. Josaphat, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Anne in Barrington.

"As a parish, we decided we wanted to engage more deeply with the migrants coming to the city," says Saint Clement Pastor, Father Peter Wojcik. "We approached Catholic Charities because we knew they were on the front lines of this work." At the same time, Catholic Charities was seeking new avenues to broaden its care for migrants using existing infrastructure and resources.

Madonna House has capacity to house up to 10 mothers and their children. "The challenges these women face are unique," says Deborah Hammond, Catholic Charities Program Director for Domestic Violence Supports. "Considering their journeys to the U.S., their reception, the chaos of the shelters, plus layers of trauma... we will be

learning a lot about how best to serve them along the way."

"Our goal for every woman we serve, migrant or not, is self-sufficiency," says Deborah. Over the course of nine months, residents will receive intensive case management, including immigration support, ESL classes, connections to WIC and other benefits, and medical care. A pediatrician will also visit twice a month. After this period, the team will help the moms transition to subsidized housing.

For Saint Clement and the supporting parishes, the partnership is an opportunity to be part of a coordinated response to the migrant crisis. In addition to material goods, they are providing meals and operating capital for the shelter. "The response has been truly inspiring," says Father Wojcik.



Pictured: Saint Clement's Father Brett Williams, Associate Pastor and Director of Worship and Prayer Ministry, and Katherine Sexton, Chair of the Pastoral Council, preparing one of the rooms. Saint Clement collected toiletries, clothes, toys, books, and other materials to make the moms and their children feel at home.



Sometimes it's on the cloudiest days that the Holy Spirit shines brightest

Mission Engagement | St. Mary Magdalene Parish, St. Benedict Campus, Blue Island

This past Lent, members of Catholic Charities' South/Southwest Regional Advisory Board partnered with local parishes to hold a series of pop-up outreach events. Whether hosting a healthy meal for seniors at Catholic Charities' Lawrence Manor in Matteson, distributing "blessing bags" for moms at Catholic Charities' WIC Grocery Center in Little Village, or offering

personal care supplies to residents of mobile home communities in Blue Island, each event was an opportunity to bring neighbors together. As Christopher Torres, South/Southwest Regional Director for Mission Engagement, says, "Our relationships with parishes connect us to those we serve at a very local level. They are vital to our mission."

Pictured: Mission Engagement volunteers gather in Blue Island in late March to distribute personal care items to residents of a nearby mobile home community. Catholic Charities caseworkers were also present to connect individuals and families to services and programs.

“Just be fully present. That’s all you have to do.”



John DeCostanza
Vice President, Faith and Mission
Executive Director, Saint Martin de Porres Society

Every morning when I wake up, the first thing I lay my eyes on is a small cross sitting on my dresser. It was gifted to me in 2006 by my supervisor Pat during my Master’s of social work internship with Catholic Charities’ former Addiction Counseling and Education program. The Serenity Prayer is etched into its ceramic face.

At the time, I would not have called my experience leading group therapy among men in recovery as accompaniment or encounter, even though I knew what was taking place was mutual and that we were shaping each other’s spirituality and resilience.

This cross is not just an artifact from an early moment of professional formation, but also a reminder of what those men going through the 12-step process taught me about life. It stands as a daily reminder to “accept the

things I cannot change” and, with discerning wisdom, to summon “the courage to change the things I can.” Doing both of these in community is accompaniment and encounter.

At their essence, accompaniment and encounter depend on a willingness to be closer to our sisters and brothers, being in solidarity with them. And this is exactly what I have observed in the last few months in speaking with my new colleagues at Catholic Charities about their work and calling. No matter their field of expertise, our conversations inevitably center on those we serve, revealing an interiority, a spirituality, among my colleagues that is not possible without a commitment to solidarity.

My new role and calling at Catholic Charities is to create pathways for solidarity that are open to all, particularly our Partners in Mission. First, I invite you to accompany the Saint Martin de Porres Society as we seek deeper and more transformative means of being in solidarity through spirituality and thought, faith

and reason. Together, we will work to face the manifold challenges of systemic poverty through the wisdom of Catholic social thought, faith, and spirituality.

Second, we invite you to roll up your sleeves with us as a volunteer. Through opportunities to put your faith into action, we believe you will experience service as an avocation of the heart, the mind, and the body.

When I am paying attention and don’t get in my own way, I am able to see that accompaniment and encounter reveal what is true about our solidarity efforts. The great Dominican theologian St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, “Every truth, by whomsoever spoken, is from the Holy Spirit.” In my life (and I would wager to guess in yours), the clearest form of truth dwells in relationship. There, in community, we can dare to accept the things we cannot change and summon the courage to change the things we can. As Pat said to me all those years ago, “Just be fully present. That’s all you have to do.” Amen.

Always eternal, yet always renewing, the Holy Spirit inspires us to seek new pathways for living our faith. We reached out to local Catholic leaders to learn how this inspires their work.



Father Matt O'Donnell

St. Moses the Black Parish
Greater Grand Crossing, Chicago

Love is more than a feeling; it is a gift first shared by God. At St. Moses the Black, our mission is to be a community “Forming Missionary Disciples to Share God’s Love.” Jesus called ordinary people to follow him and to live as His disciples, which He continues to do to this day. Jesus continually prepared His disciples for their mission of sharing love in our world. He breathed upon them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22).

This ancient mission to share love continues to guide us. At our food pantry, we share more than food—we share love so our neighbors feel they are not alone. In our classrooms at Tolton Academy, we offer more than knowledge—we share love so our scholars can become saints! In The Athletic Center, we provide more than employment opportunities for high schoolers—we share love to invest in the next generation of leaders. In our sanctuary, we do more than worship—we share love so that we grow as a family.

Love has the power to change things. The Holy Spirit allows us to experience God’s abiding and eternal love. Our parishes are communities of disciples who seek to respond to an ever-changing world by sharing God’s love! The Holy Spirit animates us for this mission! Love is the greatest gift we have to offer!



Father Sergio Rivas Tamayo

Cristo Rey Parish
Little Village, Chicago

Experience has taught me that to be guided by the Spirit, we need prayer, active listening, and time. In prayer we become friends with God. It is the source of energy that compels us to serve and speak of Him to others. We need listening to know God’s will. God speaks in prayer, but He also speaks through the mouth of those we work with and serve. And finally, if we want to let the Spirit guide our actions, we cannot rush to do what we want, we need time to let the Spirit inspire others, humanize our projects, and see God in those we serve.

Moved by the Spirit, our parish is embracing three priorities. First, we are working to make our parish youth- and young-adult centered; we want to be a young community for young people. Second, we are trying to reclaim the public spaces of our neighborhood, La Villita, from the violent reality in which we live. Third, we are sponsoring families seeking asylum and building a shrine to St. Toribio Romo, the patron saint of immigrants. We hope to create a spiritual home for those who want to thank God for a safe border crossing, are worried about family trying to cross or who have died doing so, and for those who are praying to acquire legal status in our country.



Joyana Dvorak

DePaul University
Division of Mission and Ministry

The Holy Spirit is my dancing partner. Some moments I feel the Spirit clearly leading the way; more often, I clumsily try to take control, obstructing the Spirit’s work.

Every August, I partner with Catholic Charities to connect DePaul University’s first-year students as they embark on their college journey. In 2022, our plan was to meet Marilu Gonzalez, Catholic Charities Regional Director for Mission Engagement for southwest Chicago. Last minute, Marilu invited us to join her to welcome our new neighbors—migrants arriving on the first buses. The Holy Spirit moved us to throw out the plan and listen deeply to our community’s needs.

Back in 17th-century France, the Holy Spirit similarly nudged St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac to relinquish their life plans. The Spirit planted in their hearts a vision that another world was possible. This led them to organize new systems of charity rooted in dignity. Four hundred years later, at DePaul University, this legacy continues to be “caught, not taught.” I’ve witnessed the students’ joy after our encounters with Catholic Charities, and for me, this is a clear sign that the Holy Spirit guides this partnership! I’ll continue striving to step aside and let the Spirit lead.

Recent and upcoming events

The Spirit of Saint Nicholas Ball

December 1, 2023
The Hilton Chicago, Chicago



2023 was another record-breaking year for The Spirit of Saint Nicholas Ball. Together, we raised more than \$3 million to support our neighbors. We are especially thankful to 2023 Ball Chairs **Tom and Cece Ricketts**, Vice Chairs **Tim and Sue Sullivan**, and all those who supported Catholic Charities programs. Save the date for the 2024 Ball on Friday, December 6.

D’Vine Affair

February 4, 2024
Union League Club, Chicago



More than 220 people gathered to sample fine and imported wines and beers at this beloved annual event. Special thanks to **Kristin and Joe Glunz, Jr.** and **Jessica Parsons and Simon Yohanan**, Event Co-Chairs.

Art of Caring

April 20, 2024
Onwentsia Club, Lake Forest



Thank you to the **Lake County Women’s Board** for hosting this signature event to support Catholic Charities programs and honor **Ginny Primack**, longtime volunteer and member of the Lake County Women’s Board, with the Irene Leahy McMahon award.

Blossoms of Hope Brunch

April 28, 2024
Westin Chicago, Lombard



More than 500 survivors, champions, and friends gathered to connect and support Catholic Charities’ **Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide (LOSS)** program. This year’s keynote speaker was award-winning author and journalist **Meg Kissinger**, author of *While You Were Out: An Intimate Family Portrait of Mental Illness in an Era of Silence*.

Saint Martin de Porres Society

Imagining Abundance: Faith, Hope, and Charity in Today’s World
Thursday, May 16, 2024
Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish, Wilmette



Saint Martin de Porres Society

Please join **Cardinal Blase J. Cupich**, Archbishop of Chicago, **Kerry Alyson Robinson**, CEO of Catholic Charities USA, and **Sally Blount**, Catholic Charities President and CEO, for a rich and provocative conversation about the intersection of social justice and the mission of Charity. [Reserve your tickets.](#)

2024 Charities Golf Classic

Monday, July 15
Knollwood Club, Lake Forest
Shoreacres, Lake Bluff



2024 Charities Golf Classic

Join Catholic Charities supporters for golf, skill contents, and lunch and dinner at two premier courses. [Learn more about sponsorship and purchase tickets.](#)



Scan to learn more about and register for events and view photos from past gatherings, or visit catholiccharities.net/attend-an-event.

Join us to improve lives and nourish spirits
across Cook and Lake counties

Ways to give

Donate online, or by phone or mail. Secure donations can be made by visiting catholiccharities.net/give or calling (312) 655-7525. Checks made out to Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago can be sent to P.O. Box 7154; Carol Stream, IL 60197-7154.

Make a planned gift. The Legacy of Hope Society honors people who include Catholic Charities in a will or trust or make another type of planned gift to help ensure our programs flourish for years to come.

Saint Katharine Drexel Society. The Drexel Society recognizes individuals and families who have contributed \$10,000 or more during the past fiscal

year. The society convenes our most generous and loyal donors through exclusive events and communications.

Make a corporate gift or sponsor an event. Catholic Charities offers sponsorship opportunities for fundraising events throughout the year.

To learn more contact our Donor Relations team at (312) 948-6864 or donor.relations@catholiccharities.net, or visit catholiccharities.net/give.

Ways to serve

Local Regional Mission Boards. Our Regional Mission Boards are local networks of individuals passionate about charitable works and meeting the needs of their communities. They work in partnership with our staff across the Archdiocese of Chicago, connecting and vitalizing Catholics within and across parishes.

Email volunteer@catholiccharities.net to be connected with your local Regional Board leader.

Faith in Action team. Catholic Charities offers volunteer opportunities for individuals or groups at varying levels of commitment and duration. These include serving at

a community supper, stocking shelves at a food pantry, teaching English to refugees, mentoring young adults, or delivering meals to homebound seniors.

Visit ccofchicagovolunteer.com to see all opportunities, which are updated weekly.

Junior Board. Join other young professionals in service within a faith-based setting, connect to the broader secular community, and renew interest in personal and spiritual growth.

Email juniorboard@catholiccharities.net to learn more.



Answering the Call to Serve

“This is what God called me to do. I’m so grateful.”

Angela Bailey | Associate Vice President, Seniors

Thirty-three years ago, when Angela Bailey needed field experience to complete her social work degree, she answered an ad for a senior services case manager intern at Catholic Charities. “There was no hand-holding,” she laughs. “I was out in the field immediately.”

“I was traveling across the south suburbs visiting seniors in their homes... from very poor communities to wealthy ones,” she recalls. “But no matter their situation, I saw all seniors wanted the same thing: to be valued. And that’s why I stayed. They needed a voice, an advocate.”

Today, Angela is as committed as ever to valuing the seniors she serves. In her current role overseeing care coordination at Catholic Charities’ 19 senior living communities, her teams connect residents to resources to help them live independently for as long as possible.

A current focus is helping residents become more comfortable with technology. “The pandemic taught us that seniors and technology are like oil and water,” she says. Everything from telehealth appointments, to ordering prescriptions online, to speaking with

loved ones on Zoom proved overwhelming. First up in helping residents get more comfortable with technology: encouraging everyone to have an email address.

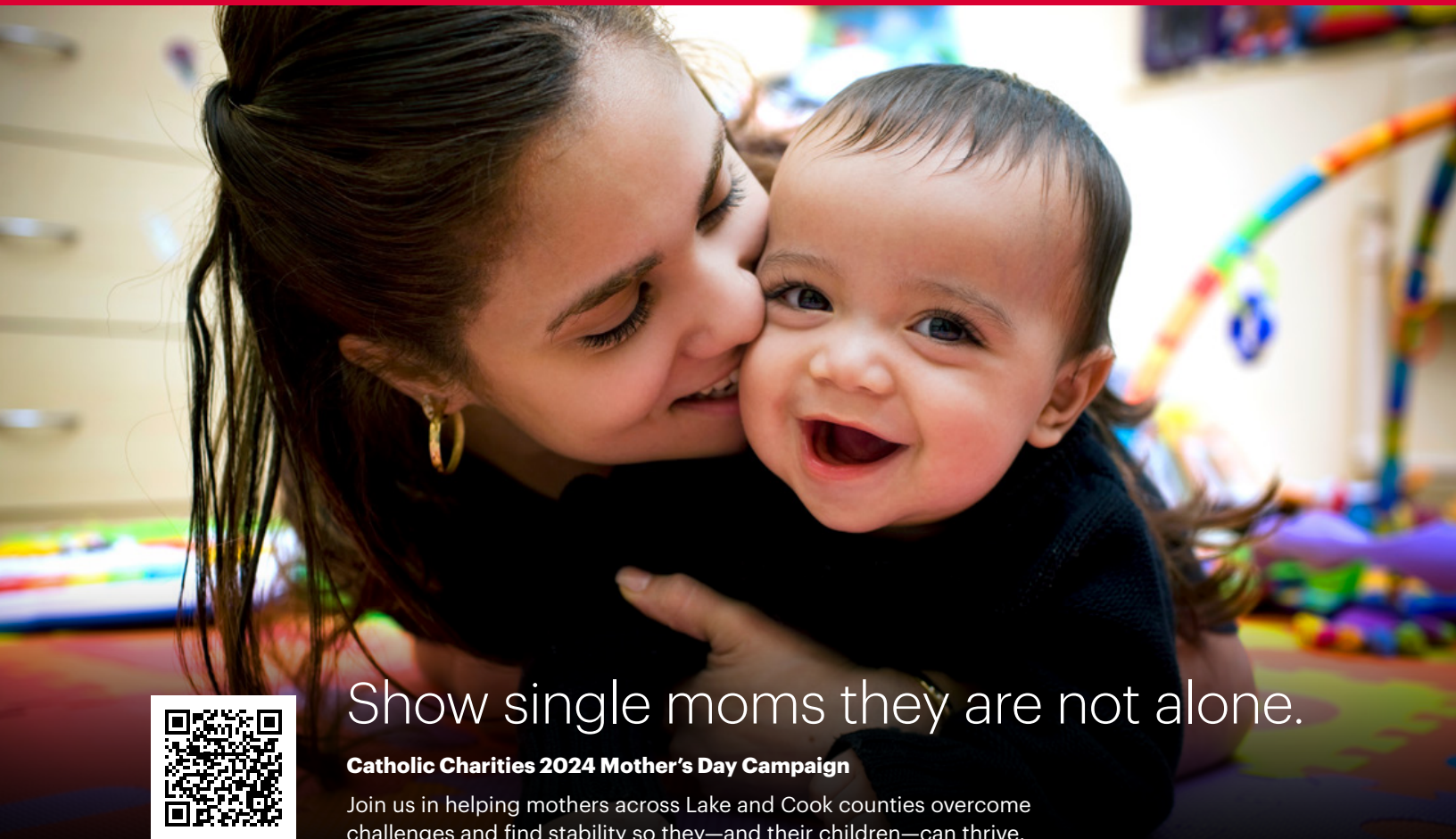
Angela especially enjoys celebrating and honoring the centenarians that reside in Catholic Charities’ residences. “Once you turn 100, you get wellness checks every day,” she says. “They get annoyed and say, ‘Stop treating me like a child!’”



Archdiocese of Chicago

721 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Donate securely online today! **Scan the QR code or visit catholiccharities.net**



Show single moms they are not alone.

Catholic Charities 2024 Mother's Day Campaign

Join us in helping mothers across Lake and Cook counties overcome challenges and find stability so they—and their children—can thrive.

