

Spring 2026  
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Catholic Charities  
of the Archdiocese of Chicago



# SPIRIT



Witnessing hope in  
Lake County  
The power of our  
volunteers

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You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: Only to act justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

— **Micah** (6:8)

*On the front cover:* Catholic Charities volunteers David and Margarita Held of St. Joseph Parish at the Schreiber Center in Round Lake. David and Margarita are among more than 115 volunteers who serve at Catholic Charities food pantries in Lake County every month.

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#### **Spirit Magazine — Spring 2026**

*Spirit* magazine is a triannual 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.

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## Loving mercy through compassionate welcome

**Kathy Brosmith and Paulette Van Erden** | Volunteers | Bernardin Center, Waukegan

Chances are, if you've had a reason to visit Catholic Charities' Bernardin Center over the last 15 years or so, you've already had the pleasure of meeting Kathy Brosmith and Paulette Van Erden and seen how they witness moments of human vulnerability with mercy and kindness.

Since 2006, Kathy has volunteered at the Bernardin Center's reception desk on Fridays, greeting every person who enters the building. Paulette started volunteering in 2011. She takes the Monday shift. After 15 years occupying the same chair on different days, they have become good friends.

Kathy and Paulette are smart, warm, funny, and very good at what they do — which matters, especially because both women have an innate understanding that the welcome they extend visitors at the reception desk is an important part of their service journey at Catholic Charities.

They also recognize the act of welcoming as a moment of encounter, which they have experienced in myriad ways. There is Ginny, who never made eye contact when she asked for help. But when she came in recently after an absence, she was fed, clean, and looked Kathy right in the eye.

And then there was the mother living in her car with her six children. "My daughter has experienced trauma," she said to Paulette, who, recognizing the urgency, connected her with a caseworker immediately.

There is often not much that many visitors to the Bernardin Center can count on. Thankfully, though, they can count on Paulette and Kathy to be there to open the doors of Catholic Charities to them.

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*Pictured: Volunteers Paulette Van Erden (left) and Kathy Brosmith (right) at the Bernardin Center's reception desk.*



Dear Friends,

This issue’s inspiration, Micah 6:8 (*see inside front cover*), is one of my favorite verses in the Old Testament. This is due in no small part to the poetic (and deceptive) simplicity of God’s message for us. The setting: a pilgrim visiting the temple in Jerusalem has asked how he can please Him: By offering thousands of rams? Rivers of olive oil? His firstborn child? But God’s answer is not about sacrificing things, it is about actions: Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your Lord.

Act, love, walk: each of these is a “doing” word. As you will see across these pages, our community is alive with the doing of justice, mercy, and humble walking with God. From recognizing the dignity of everyone who comes to our doors, to listening closely to the needs of our communities, Catholic Charities staff and volunteers are together living our commitment to serve others.

In this issue, we feature several stories about our work in Lake County and the power of our volunteers, like **David and Margarita Held**, featured on the cover, and **Kathy Brosmith and Paulette Van Erden**, featured on the opposite page.

**Don Rosanova** is another great example. After retiring as President of Mariano’s in 2018, Don joined the Ignatian Volunteer Corps, who matched him with Catholic Charities. Since then, he has become a passionate advocate for combating diaper need. This year, through his leadership, **Diaper Depot will distribute over 500,000 diapers to families in need** (*see story on page 12*).

In fact, the program has been so successful, that in FY27, we will be shifting the Diaper Depot from a volunteer-led initiative to a core program within Catholic Charities. We will be naming it “First Five” and hiring a full-time director to support Don and the entire volunteer team in growing the reach and impact of this amazing work — both in Lake County and continuing to expand it down into Cook County. The program will focus on supporting the unique needs of parents raising children from infancy to kindergarten.

This is a wonderful story about “doing” and faith in “action” at its best.

With gratitude,



Sally Blount  
Chief Executive Officer



Catholic Charities volunteers Don Rosanova (left) and Tom Powers at the Diaper Depot. In addition to overseeing the program’s operations, Don and Tom speak frequently with parishes and other community organizations about diaper need in our communities.

# Next steps for Catholic Charities in Lake County

## Designing our programs and outreach to meet local needs at the community level

When you ask Laura Kuever, Executive Director for Catholic Charities in Lake County, who she's been meeting with lately, she'll first ask what kind of partner. "Civic leaders? Service providers? Pastors?" As the face of Catholic Charities for the county, Laura wants to talk with *everyone*.

Her role is a new one for Catholic Charities. "Our teams are doing really good work in Lake County," says CEO Sally Blount, "but to have the greatest impact, our board and leadership recognized we needed a leader wholly dedicated to making sure this work is aligned with our priorities for serving people here."

**As Executive Director, Laura is responsible for balancing Catholic Charities' regional scale and expertise with a more targeted, community-based approach.**

"In our search, we wanted someone who could work with both internal and external partners, especially our parishes, funders, and other human services organizations," says Sally. "Lake County has an amazing community of people who are committed to serving our neighbors," she says. "With our new leadership in place, we're rolling up our sleeves to work alongside them."

### **Unwavering mission, nuanced approach**

Catholic Charities' service area includes the City of Chicago, suburban Cook County, and Lake County. **Together, this area is twice the size of Rhode Island with a population — nearly 6 million — six times as large.** Moreover, its communities are incredibly diverse, comprising both small towns and some of the densest city neighborhoods in the

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"Catholic Charities' mission is unwavering, but how that mission is achieved needs to be flexible to the neighbors we are called to serve."

— **Sally Blount**, CEO

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U.S. It also includes several of the country's most affluent ZIP codes and some where more than half the residents live below the poverty line.

As a longtime Lake County resident with more than 20 years' experience in the sector, Laura knows first-hand that even with the best teams, a program's impact depends on how well its approach is tailored to the populations it serves.

"One of the most important parts of my job is working with our internal

# Catholic Charities programs in Lake County

Programs and volunteer opportunities are open to all, regardless of faith, gender, race, or ethnicity.

To be connected to any program, call:

## Charities Resource Hub (312) 655-7700

8:30 am–4:30 pm (M–F)

Programs offered in locations throughout Lake County, including:

**The Bernardin Center**  
671 S. Lewis Ave., Waukegan

**The Schreiber Center**  
101 N. Cedar Lake Rd., Round Lake

**Christ Our Hope Parish (St. James Site)**  
140 North Ave., Highwood



### Community Meals

A warm, sit-down meal open to all.

- Schreiber Center (W)
- St. James (Th)

### Food Pantries

Food assistance for individuals and families in Lake County.

- Bernardin Center (M–F)
- Schreiber Center (T, W, Th)

### Diaper Depot

Distributing 50 diapers a month for every child who needs them. Available at:

- Schreiber Center (Th)
- Partner agencies serving babies

### Clothing and Basic Needs Closet

For individuals/families in need.

- Schreiber Center (Th)



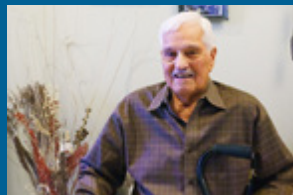
### Senior Nutrition

#### Home-Delivered Meals:

Fresh meals delivered to qualifying seniors and people with disabilities.

#### Congregate Meals for Adults:

Hot meals and in-person camaraderie for adults age 60+ at various sites.



### Senior Care

In-home assessments to connect adults age 60+ with support to continue living independently, including:

- Homemaker assistance
- Emergency home response
- Adult day services
- Home-delivered meals

### Housing Case Management

#### Critical Time Intervention:

Case management for people with disabilities experiencing chronic homelessness.

**Rapid Re-housing:** Quickly locating permanent housing for newly homeless families.

**Motel Voucher:** Short-term shelter for those without housing or immediate alternative options.

### Pregnancy and Parenting

Support for moms during pregnancy through their baby's first years. Other supports include post-placement and post-adoption support; post-adoption registry; and search and reunion services.



### Strong Families

Education, training, employment assistance, and case management for single parents and guardians for up to five years as they work toward achieving stability and financial independence.

### Domestic Violence

Safe housing and compassionate, culturally sensitive services for survivors of domestic violence and their children.

### Behavioral Health Services

Trauma-informed, professional counseling for children, youth, and adults. Individual and family counseling offered in person or virtually across multiple locations in Lake County.

### Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide

Support for survivors of suicide loss. Weekly and monthly groups, individual and family counseling, and parent consultations on grief support for children.

### Immigration and Naturalization Services

Department of Justice-recognized program offering affordable, high-quality legal assistance.

### Welcome Center

Classes and programs that address unemployment, health concerns, English language learning, literacy, and managing limited finances.



### Faith in Action

Catholic Charities volunteers make meaningful impact in our communities. Signature opportunities include:

**Diaper Depot:** Organize and fulfilling diaper orders for babies in our communities.

**The Shared Table:** Serve at community and senior congregate meals.

**Food Pantries:** Help visitors choose food for themselves and those they care for.

**Senior Home Meal Delivery:** Deliver a hot meal and warm smile to homebound seniors.



“Our vision for our community centers in Lake County can be summed up in two words: radical hospitality.”

— **Laura Kuever**, Catholic Charities  
Executive Director for Lake County

program leaders to say, “We’re really excited to bring this initiative to Lake County, but we need to adapt it to better serve the people who live here,” Laura says.

Meghan Powell-Filler, Senior Director of Community Operations for Catholic Charities in Lake County, explains that the county is itself diverse. “We have communities where the majority of residents are Hispanic. We have others where the senior population is really struggling. And then there are towns with serious service gaps...”

**How need is changing, and staying the same**

It may not come as a surprise that Lake County’s population is aging, but it may be a surprise just by how much. **While total population growth over the last decade has been relatively steady, the number of people in Lake County over age 65 increased by 42 percent.** The population of seniors living alone also grew at a similar rate.

For the Lake County team, this means **prioritizing programs for seniors that emphasize connection.** “About a third of Lake County seniors live alone,” says Laura. “Not only does this population experiencing financial hardship at higher rates, they are more likely to experience loneliness. This is something we can help address.”

In the Lake County ZIP codes with the greatest number of visitors to Catholic Charities programs, **more than one out of four people (26 percent) live in poverty or on the fragile line just above it.**

Again, this is where the team sees an opportunity to respond. “So many people in our target communities are a missed shift or car repair away from needing our help,” says Laura. While this isn’t a new problem, she explains that Catholic Charities is working to open its core assistance programs to more people without the limits that government funding often imposes.

**Opening doors**

Long-term, Laura and her team are excited to expand the services offered at the Bernardin Center in the northeast part of the county and at the Schreiber Center in the northwest.

Beyond shared meals and food pantries, the centers will offer diapers and other basic goods, host community outreach and partner events, and serve as the physical outposts of the Charities Resource Hub (*see inside back cover for more information on the Hub*). “We want everyone who passes through our doors to be connected quickly to the help they need.”



## Acting justly: One pastor, one parish, one mission

**Father Jerry Boland** | Pastor | Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Glenview

Seeing and serving need around us starts on the most personal and parochial levels. But it cannot be done by one person, or parish, alone. Whether walking humbly with neighbors in Glenview or on the opposite end of Cook County, Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) models this principle of subsidiarity in many ways.

Since 2014, it has done so under the pastorship of Father Jerry Boland, who retires this July after a career spanning from his earliest days at St. Michael's in Orland Park, through years in administrative leadership for the Archdiocese, to his final post at OLPH in Glenview.

"Our Cardinal has asked us to partner more directly with parishes across the Archdiocese, and Father Boland and Our Lady of Perpetual Help understand the challenges, generously invest in the work, and stand with us in living the mission of charity," says CEO Sally Blount.

When Fr. Boland first arrived at OLPH, he took time to get to know the parish. He quickly came to understand that its deep commitment to the social mission of the Church was fueled by its parishioners.

Decades of partnership with Catholic Charities are part of that commitment, including during his brother Monsignor

Michael M. Boland's tenure as the organization's administrator and CEO. OLPH parishioners have supported families transitioning to self-sufficiency through the New Hope Apartments program and seeded the Giving Hope Fund, which provides emergency financial assistance to individuals living every day just one emergency away from financial crisis.

"To know that I don't have to be alone in this... there are resources that can help me — that's Church," Father Boland said in a May 2024 OLPH fireside chat with Sally. "That's what we're all about. Love one another as I have loved you is at the core of all of this."



**"I've learned to listen to myself about and be more confident in my decisions."**

"I can't imagine my life without Mateo. He changed my life. I have a lot of support from my mom and sister. I don't know what I would do without them."

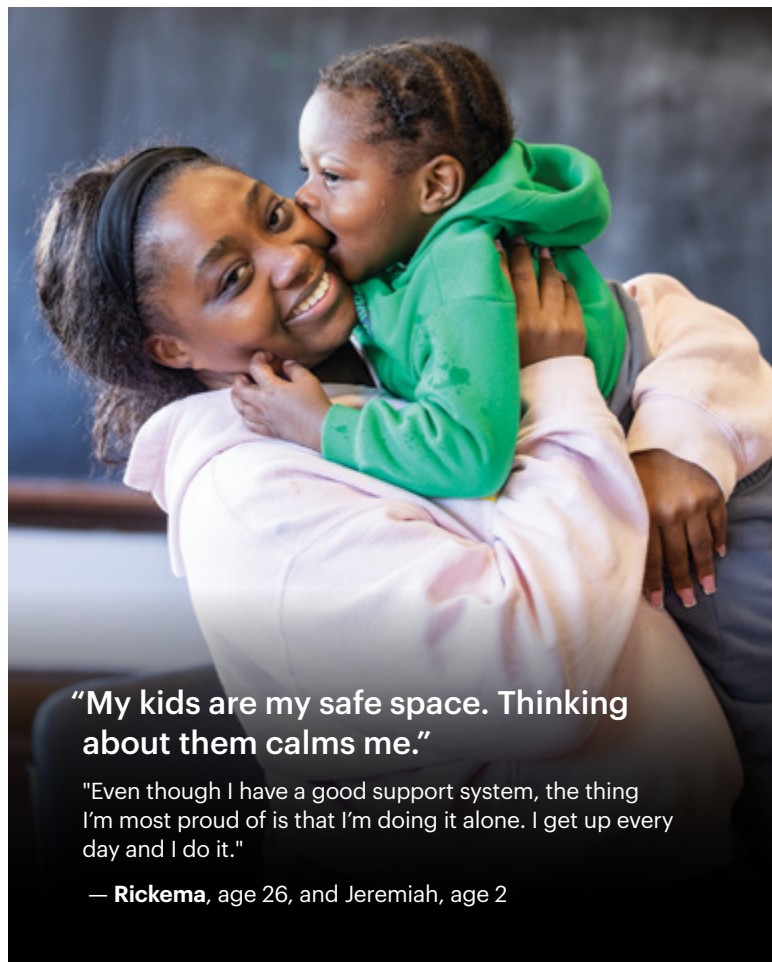
— **Elena**, age 30, and Carlos Mateo, age 11 months



**"My daughter is active and curious. She keeps me going."**

"My mom saw I had postpartum before I did. She helped me get through it. She was also a single mom for a time. She's my inspiration."

— **Destiny**, age 27, and Nairobi, age 1



**"My kids are my safe space. Thinking about them calms me."**

"Even though I have a good support system, the thing I'm most proud of is that I'm doing it alone. I get up every day and I do it."

— **Rickema**, age 26, and Jeremiah, age 2



**"I want to make sure my daughter is ready for whatever comes her way."**

"I am proud of how well my daughter is learning and growing. I know that reflects on how I am teaching her. I didn't know I would be able to do it."

— **Susana**, age 32, and Catalina, age 1

“We don’t judge. We encourage.”

## Catholic Charities’ home visiting programs helps moms be their children’s first and best teachers

**O**n a Wednesday evening earlier this spring at the Quinn Center in Maywood, a group of very excited toddlers were squealing with joy as they caught balloons, crawled under tables, and danced to nursery rhymes.

The energy level was high, the sound was reverberating, and the parents in the room were relaxed. Their children were doing exactly what they should: playing, exploring, and connecting with each other.

The occasion for the gathering was promoting literacy at home, but its higher purpose was to provide an opportunity for the parents — all of whom participate in Catholic Charities’ West Suburban Parenting Program (WSPP) — the opportunity to meet and learn from each other.

Leading the session were two staff members, Melina Jaime and Takeisha Freeman, who know the families

well. As home visitors for WSPP, Melina and Takeisha visit the families at their homes twice a month to provide personalized parenting support.

### Supporting moms through their children’s critical early years

“The moms we serve are magnificent,” says Karen Moore, Director of Parenting and Pregnancy programs at Catholic Charities. “When they come to us, they are already great parents. They are participating because they want to be even better.”

Karen leads Catholic Charities’ four pregnancy and parenting programs. In addition to WSPP, similar models operate out of Chicago’s Roseland and Gage Park neighborhoods and in Waukegan. **Her teams of doulas and home visitors work one-on-one with up to 300 moms a year.**

“We’re here for moms from the very beginning of their pregnancies up until their little ones enter school,”

she says. “The first five years are the most important time in a child’s development, and the families we serve want to give their babies the best foundation they can.”

### The importance of parent relationships in early brain development

**From birth to age five, children’s brains develop more, and more rapidly, than at any other time in their lives.** The care and attention they receive during this period have deep impact on their health, learning, and future success.

Brain connections grow through everyday moments with loving, responsive adults — like talking, comforting, singing, and playing. Catholic Charities uses evidence-based curricula to help parents understand and make the most of these moments.



*Pictured, left:* One of the key messages West Suburban Parenting Program (WSPP) home visitor Melina Jaime tries to impart is that young children don't need expensive toys or electronics. Simple objects like scarves and bubbles are stimulating and promote discovery. *Right:* Melina introduces moms Susana and Elena to each other. Their children are the same age.

### Parent-centered and parent-led

Moms learn about WSPP in all sorts of ways: from a flyer at the library, a friend, their pediatrician, or another Catholic Charities program. Once they enroll, they are matched with a home visitor who conducts an intake interview and discusses what they would like to focus on during their time in the program. This can include goals for their children's development or goals for themselves.

Home visitors share research, strategies, and tactics that encourage brain development. **They also help parents track growth milestones; keep up with pediatric well visits and vaccines; and connect with other supports like WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) nutrition benefits.**

"The program is most successful when home visitors build a relationship of trust with the families they support," says Kathryn Herrera, Director of Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption. "We don't judge, we encourage," she says, noting that home visitors are often a bridge to systems and knowledge that can feel out of reach for many moms.

### Stressors and goals

At her intake meetings, home visitor Melina Jaime assesses the stressors a family is experiencing. These can include being a single parent, lacking stable employment, housing instability, social isolation, depression, and language barriers. "In the beginning, it isn't unusual for many of the moms I work with to have most, if not all of, the stressors," she says.

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"All new parents can feel unsure about their parenting decisions. We want them to know that simply by loving their children, they are already on the right track."

— **Kathryn Herrera**, Director, Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption

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In addition to the program's child development curriculum, Melina checks in on the moms' personal goals at each visit. For some, these may include pursuing a GED, looking for a new apartment, or taking an ESL class. Sometimes, she explains, a goal can be as simple as reading a book. **"For moms experiencing a lot of stress, even a simple act of**



*Pictured, left:* This was Trameil and his daughter Ezerai’s inaugural parent group meet-up. About his experience, he says, “This is [Ezerai’s] first time around other kids, so I like that they are engaging.” *Right:* Home Visitor Takeisha Freeman gives mom Destiny diapers from the Diaper Depot for her daughter Nairobi.

**self-care can have a big impact. They need to take care of themselves so they can be strong for their babies.”**

**Wraparound support**

As one of WSPP’s bilingual staff, Melina works with many moms who are Spanish-speaking immigrants. Particularly for this group, she serves as a critical resource for finding and getting help, like connecting them to food pantries or housing agencies.

**One resource Melina is happy to share is Catholic Charities’ Giving Hope Fund**, which is open to households receiving any service from Catholic Charities. Staff can refer families for up to \$2,500 in emergency financial assistance to help cover an unexpected expense.

Melina recently referred one of her moms, who is pregnant, to the Giving Hope Fund for a car repair. The mom is currently on bed rest and can’t make it to her doctor’s appointments. “When her car broke down, she called me right away. She was so upset she almost went into labor.”

**Incremental, yet transformational**

Melina says it takes a few visits for the moms she works with to open up. “Families are inviting me into their homes, to their private place.” But with time, she says she becomes a welcome guest. “Sometimes the babies and moms are waiting for me at the door because they’re so excited.”

She likes to get on the floor and model how play can spark language development. Cognizant that some

moms may not have been read to much as children, she models how to enhance their reading voices, point out colors, and use dramatic facial expressions to convey a character’s emotions. She often brings library books and shares information about story hours.

About her approach, she says, “It’s like I’m planting little seeds and working with families to help them grow. It takes time, but it is wonderful when they start to blossom.”

Diapers come from many sources, including diaper drives. At **St. Francis de Sales Parish in Lake Zurich**, parishioners leave diapers in the church's narthex throughout the year. About once a month, a volunteer brings them to the Diaper Depot.

When diapers arrive at the warehouse at the **Schreiber Center in Round Lake**, they are entered into a database that tracks donor, quantity, and size. Then they're repackaged into quantities of 25, labeled, and stored. About a four months' supply is kept on hand.

## The journey of a diaper

About half of all families struggle to afford clean diapers for their baby. When a free week's supply means more food on the table or a bill getting paid, every diaper counts.

Catholic Charities' Diaper Depot operates on a straight-forward premise: provide a monthly supply of 50 free diapers per child to families that need them. **The program has experienced explosive growth in recent years and is on track to deliver more than half a million diapers in the 2026 fiscal year.**

This achievement is all due to the vision of the program's founder, **Don Rosanova**, who started volunteering with Catholic Charities after he retired as President of Mariano's. Together with volunteer **Tom Powers** and many parish and community partners, Don has built a literal bucket brigade to gather, organize, and deliver diapers to 11,000 babies annually. Among them is Jorge, whose mom Marta shops at Catholic Charities' WIC Grocery in the Belmont-Cragin neighborhood on the city's northwest side.

On the last Friday of the month, about **45 partner agencies and Catholic Charities programs** submit orders with the number of babies and the sizes they wear (the greatest demand is for size 6).

The following Wednesday, volunteers assemble, pack, and take the orders to partners and Catholic Charities vans **waiting outside at the Schreiber Center.**

At the WIC Store, **Marta** learns about the free diapers while checking out. It's a welcome surprise, as she's been sick and hasn't been able to work as much this month to support herself and her three children.

Now two years old, Marta's youngest son, **Jorge**, is nearly ready to be out of diapers. Since his birth, Marta has spent about \$4,000 on them — a significant expense, especially given her limited income.

Shoppers at Catholic Charities' **WIC Grocery store on the city's northwest side** get one pack a month, as do moms in its parenting programs.

Catholic Charities drivers take the diapers to the **WIC warehouse** on Chicago's near west side. From there, they are delivered to different program locations.

### Support the Diaper Depot!

Contact Don Rosanova at [drosanova@CatholicCharities.net](mailto:drosanova@CatholicCharities.net) to learn more about diaper need and how to host a diaper drive.

# With Harvest of Hope, the Archdiocese unites to act justly, with and for each other

Last fall, food pantries across the Archdiocese of Chicago saw a sharp rise in visitors as two overlapping crises — federal immigration raids and a government shutdown that disrupted food benefits — pushed more families to seek emergency help.

When federal funding stalled, issuance of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as food stamps), was delayed. For households that rely on this assistance, even a brief interruption can lead to a financial crisis.

At the same time, immigration enforcement activity in the area created another wave of need. Some immigrant families lost income when family members missed work or stayed home out of fear. Many turned to church pantries for help.

## Surge part of long-term trend

The surge did not happen in isolation. It reflected a rise in food insecurity that has not abated with the end of the pandemic. Today, **the Greater Chicagoland Hunger Report**

**estimates one in four people experiences food insecurity in the region.**

Across Cook and Lake counties, food pantries have reported not just more visitors, but more people visiting a pantry for the first time. **At Catholic Charities pantries alone, visits have increased by 35 percent since last June.**

## Standing with neighbors through their struggles

Understanding the strain pantries were under, **early last October, the Archdiocese and Catholic Charities launched Harvest of Hope, a food drive to help Catholic pantries meet the increase in demand.**

“I don’t believe we had ever done an Archdiocesan-wide food drive before,” says Marie Jochum, Vice President of Community Programs at Catholic Charities. “So, first on the agenda was connecting with pantries in the network.”

To do this, Marie brought in Catholic Charities’ Rapid Response team to

work with the Archdiocese. Rapid Response staff are experienced in building grassroots coalitions to deliver wide-scale solutions. Previous projects include helping the City of Chicago secure housing for nearly 30,000 migrants and assisting with pandemic relief programs.

With a goal to collect and deliver the food by Christmas 2025, they set out to map the network’s scale. **What they found was impressive: the Archdiocese has 64 pantry affiliates that collectively serve approximately 30,000 households a month.**

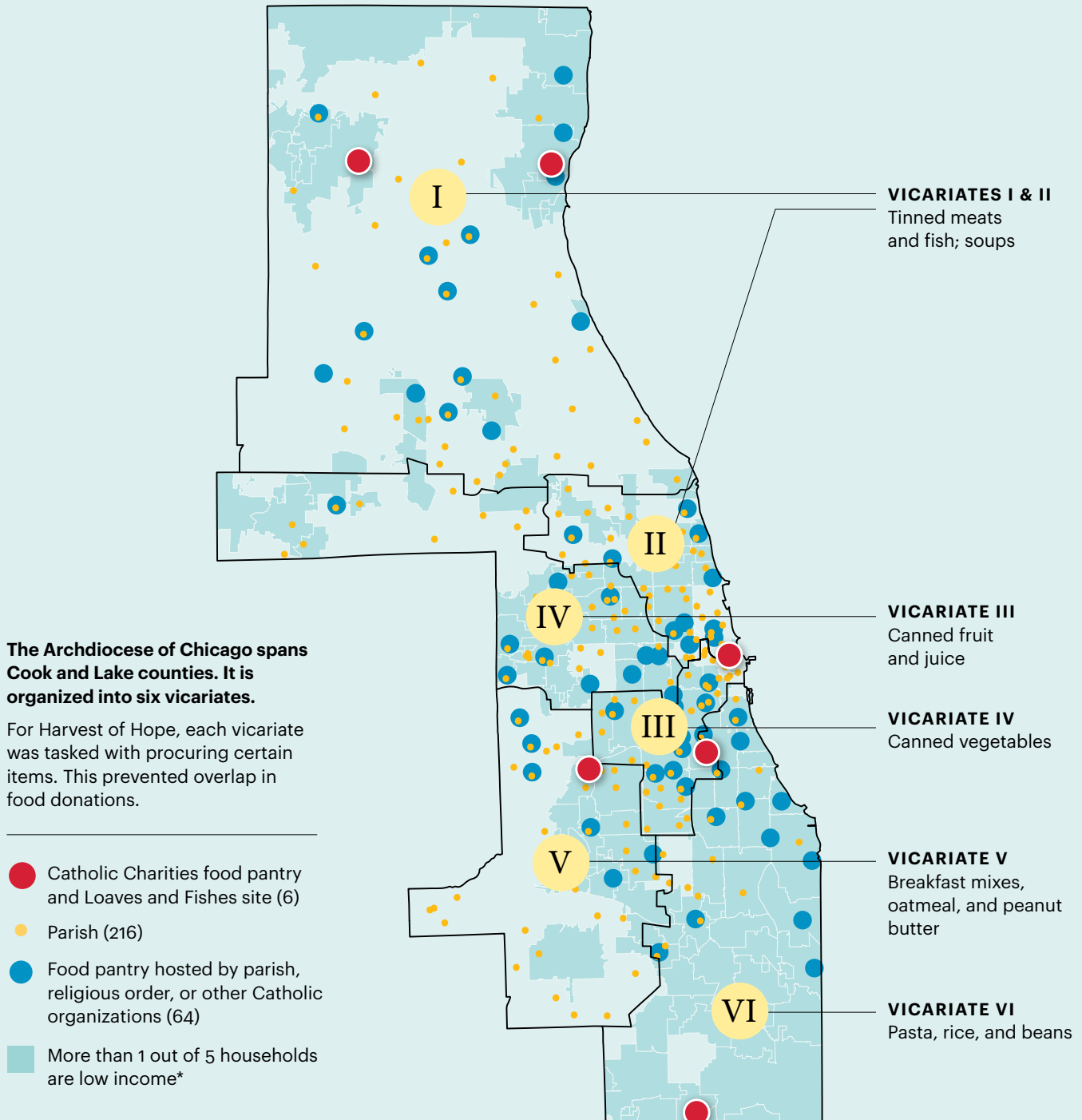
## Truly participatory

Even though Catholic Charities, the Archdiocese, and parishes like St. Anne in Barrington pledged financial support to purchase food, **Archdiocesan leadership wanted everyone to be able to participate, regardless of their financial means.**

Recognizing this, Harvest of Hope invited Catholic schools and parishes to hold drives for specific foods based on the vicariate in which they are located (*see map, opposite*).

## Archdiocese of Chicago Food Pantry Network

This Catholic network of 69 food pantries is the region’s largest — serving more than 30,000 households every month.



\*Low-income households are defined as at or below 200% of the poverty line (\$31,920 for a single person per year or \$66,000 for a family of four). Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2024 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates.

## Harvest of Hope



Participating parishes collected food items (above, left) and dropped them off at hubs to be picked up by Catholic Charities and brought to its warehouse on Chicago's west side (right) before being delivered to pantries.

### Immediate impacts

**In all, Harvest of Hope delivered 300,000 pounds of food to families across every vicariate, which translates to about 25,000 meals.**

As a follow-up, this February, 5,880 dozen eggs were delivered to participating pantries.

The donations were very welcome, says Darlene Montes de Oca, manager of the Holy Family Food Pantry at Most Blessed Trinity Parish in Waukegan.

Every week, the Holy Family Pantry provides food to about 240 families. The parish also serves 400 people a week at its soup kitchen. Darlene says there have been times in recent months that she's had to turn people away because they had run out of food.

### Anticipating long-term need

Even though the government shutdown ended and immigration enforcement has eased, Catholic Charities does not anticipate the demand for food pantries to decline any time soon.

This spring, the grace period for SNAP work requirements will expire and immigrants with humanitarian protection will also lose benefit eligibility. As a result, **the Greater Chicago Food Depository estimates that at least 450,000 SNAP recipients could lose their benefits on May 1.**

The Archdiocese and Catholic Charities intend to hold more Harvest of Hope drives. "Now that the network is activated, we are looking forward to gathering information about

specific needs and whether there are certain times of the year when extra food is needed," says Marie.

Back at Holy Family Pantry, Darlene was especially thankful for Harvest of Hope's delivery of eggs this past February. They can be hard to come by in the winter months, she explains, "It's not always something we can count on having."

For pantry visitors, Darlene and her team cut the cartons of donated eggs in half. "We wanted to make sure we could share them among everyone."



“I asked myself, ‘Would I be able to look at myself as honestly and vulnerably as he was?’”

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**Nicolle Gaudette** | Clinically Licensed Therapist

## Walking with our neighbors through counseling

As a therapist, Nicolle has worked with many adults and children facing emotional, behavioral, and mental health challenges. But one client she worked with stands out from the others.

The man she refers to presented for therapy with severe depression, suicidal ideation, and the feeling that his life didn't matter. As they began to build trust, he shared the weight of his past: a serious criminal history that had resulted in several years in prison.

As someone who specializes in working with survivors of harm rather than those who have perpetrated it, Nicolle admits that she had to face her own unconscious biases. “I struggled with how easy

it would have been to judge him had I only seen his file, not his face,” she says.

Nicolle says their work together in that counseling room was some of the most profound she's experienced. Week after week, she witnessed not just his pain, but also his strength. “With each session, I sat with this paradox: a man who had committed harm, and yet whose honesty and tenderness revealed such profound humanity,” she says.

Over the next several months, she says she witnessed “a sacred transformation” as his pain eventually made way for strength and self-forgiveness. And, in the process, she experienced her own transformation.

“As he learned to offer compassion to his younger self, I found myself reflecting on my own capacity for grace, forgiveness, and humility,” she says. “His journey toward self-forgiveness taught me that redemption isn't a dramatic moment — it's a series of small, courageous choices to believe in one's own worth and future, even when the past feels unforgivable.”

By the time their work together ended, Nicolle's client was empowered by the life he was choosing to build. She, too, had changed. “He reminded me why I became a therapist in the first place... Healing is always possible.”

God calls us to worship not just through prayer, but also through action. We asked lay Catholic leaders to share how their ministries help unite their communities, bring them closer to God, and provide opportunities for members to live their faith.

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**Mary Bottie**

Hope Ministries  
St. Anne Parish, Barrington

We are called to “act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God,” and we are reminded that faith is not passive — it is lived through action, compassion, and humility. At Saint Anne Hope Ministries, this call is answered daily through service to our neighbors in need.

Project Hope, the outreach arm of our ministry, embodies both justice and mercy by providing food and essential support services. This grassroots ministry provides more than 2,000 direct services monthly. Serving without regard to denomination, we strive to meet people where they are, offering not only nourishment but also dignity and care in times of hardship. Justice is lived out in ensuring access to basic needs, while mercy is reflected in the compassion extended to every person who walks through our doors.

The mission is sustained through the House of Hope, our resale shop, powered largely by more than 200 dedicated volunteers. Their humble service — sorting, pricing, and selling donated goods — transforms generosity into tangible support. Through their efforts, shelves are stocked and lives are touched.

Together these ministries form one body, united in purpose. We act justly by serving fairly, love mercy by caring deeply, and walk humbly by recognizing that all we do is guided by God’s grace. In serving others, we live out the Gospel call in a real and meaningful way.



**Jennifer C. Reid**

Pastoral Associate/Operations Director  
St. Moses the Black Parish, Chicago

In the Old Testament, the prophet Micah was known for directing the people of Israel and Judah to live justly and to love mercifully. In Micah 6:8, he reminds them of what the Lord requires: “to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.” At St. Moses the Black Parish, our food pantry lives out those words daily. Our guests come from all walks of life, and they are all in need of being treated with compassion and love. Our volunteers do exactly that; they walk humbly with our guests as they move through our shelves to receive whatever food or clothing they may need.

Chicago, and the entire country, is currently faced with all kinds of challenges, including the need for food to feed individuals and families of all ages and ethnicities. Our food pantry is consistently faced with the challenge of ensuring that we have enough food to feed the increasing number of guests who wait in line each week. Our collaboration with dozens of generous donors from various parishes and communities from around the Chicagoland area assists us with keeping food on our shelves. Without this assistance, we would struggle to keep our doors open.

It is a matter of justice, a basic human right, to ensure all people have access to food. Micah’s call to stand up for the marginalized by acting with kindness is a much needed one for all people of good will today. When we walk together, we really do have the power to share God’s love in our world!

# Recent and upcoming events

## D’Vine Affair

**February 1, 2026**  
Venue West, Chicago



Cheers to our incredible d’Vine Affair guests, sponsors, and supporters! Together, they helped raise more than \$100,000 for Catholic Charities programs. With special thanks to **Abby Brindis, Kristin and Joe Glunz, Jr., Michelle Glunz, Lisa McNamara, Suzzie Holtgreive, Renata Gryzik, Jayne Ingles, Bill McGowan, Sarah and Terry Stadler, and Kerry Cleary.**

## First Look for Charity at the Chicago Auto Show

**Friday, February 6, 2026**  
McCormick Place, Chicago



Catholic Charities was grateful to again be featured as one of the 18 charities at the Chicago Auto Show’s exclusive black-tie preview. Thank you to all who joined us!

## Virtual Investor Call

**Thursday, March 5, 2026**  
Online

More than 100 members of our community joined us to learn about how their philanthropic investment supports Catholic Charities’ mission.

## Blossoms of Hope Brunch

**Sunday, April 26, 2026**  
Westin Chicago, Lombard



Survivors, champions, and friends gathered to connect and support the Loving Outreach to Survivors of Suicide (LOSS) program and to honor LOSS Founder **Father Charles Rubey.**

## Mass and Mission

**Sunday, May 3, 2026**  
St. Christina Parish, Chicago



Celebrate Mass, then stay for coffee and refreshments with Catholic Charities to learn how partners like you make our mission possible.

## Charities Golf Classic

**Monday, July 13, 2026**  
Knollwood Club, Lake Forest  
Shoreacres, Lake Bluff



Help advance a legacy built over decades, one where generosity on the course translates into hope, stability, and opportunity for hundreds of thousands each year.

## Glow of Hope

**Sunday, November 1, 2026**  
Four Seasons, Chicago



Mark your calendars to join the House of the Good Shepherd Women’s Board to support Catholic Charities programs for survivors of domestic violence.

## Spirit of Saint Nicholas Ball

**NEW DATE!**  
**Friday, December 11, 2026**  
Hilton, Chicago

*Spirit of Saint  
Nicholas Ball*

Even though Christmas may feel far away, planning for the Spirit of Saint Nicholas Ball is in full swing. Save the date to kick off the holiday season with us!

## Next Steps

Purchase tickets, learn about sponsorship opportunities, and view photos from past events at [CatholicCharities.net/Attend-an-Event](https://CatholicCharities.net/Attend-an-Event) or scan QR code below.



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

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### Ways to give

**Donate online, or by phone or mail.** Secure donations can be made by visiting [CatholicCharities.net/Give](https://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 to help ensure our programs flourish for years to come. Contact Andrea Wynne, Planned Giving, for more information at [anwynne@CatholicCharities.net](mailto:anwynne@CatholicCharities.net).

**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. Visit [CatholicCharities.net/Attend-an-Event](https://CatholicCharities.net/Attend-an-Event) for more information.

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*Questions? Contact our Donor Relations team at (312) 948-6864, [donor.relations@CatholicCharities.net](mailto:donor.relations@CatholicCharities.net), or visit [CatholicCharities.net/Give](https://CatholicCharities.net/Give).*

### Ways to serve

**Faith in Action Team.** Catholic Charities welcomes all to help provide vital supports to individuals and families across Cook and Lake counties. The Faith in Action team offers opportunities to live your faith in the world, engage with your neighbors, and deliver meaningful impact to your community.

**Visit [CCofChicagoVolunteer.com](https://CCofChicagoVolunteer.com).** At Catholic Charities' volunteer hub, create a profile, learn more about different roles, and view current openings.

Opportunities are available for individuals or groups at varying levels of commitment and duration. These include serving at the Shared Table, delivering meals to seniors' homes, assembling care packs, and providing essential undergarments and diapers.

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*To inquire about how you or your group can get involved, contact Kelsey Rodriguez, Director of Volunteer Engagement, at [krodriguez@CatholicCharities.net](mailto:krodriguez@CatholicCharities.net).*

# “We’re Catholic Charities. We lead with love and empathy.”

**Ashley Styx** | Senior Director, Charities Resource Hub

Ashley Styx knows exactly when she first learned about the vision for Catholic Charities’ Resource Hub. “While I was on maternity leave with my daughter, who is now four,” she laughs. “Even though I knew what the vision was, it always felt far away. Now we’re actually here and we’re building it.”

Ashley, who is a licensed clinical social worker, joined Catholic Charities in 2013, working as a case manager with single parents. From there, she accepted a supervisory role with Lake County’s Emergency Assistance Program, which eventually merged with the Charities Resource Hub.

When Ashley was named Senior Director of the Hub, Catholic Charities managed four call lines for emergency assistance (which provided, among other things, help with rent and utilities), and three separate case management teams.

At that time, most funding for these programs came from government contracts. “Callers had to meet specific conditions to qualify for assistance, which meant we were saying ‘no’ a lot,” she says. “It’s challenging to explain to families in crisis that they don’t meet the requirements to receive assistance they very much need.”

Since then, Ashley and her team have overseen a transformation of Catholic Charities’ “front door.” They consolidated call lines to one number, brought the case management teams together, and used data insights to identify pain points. Under her leadership, call wait times plummeted (they’re now under one minute) and, with emergency assistance starting to be more privately funded and flexible, saying “yes” has increased.

Ashley is excited about the Hub’s next evolution, which will usher in a new phase for service excellence and collaboration. “We’re building a system that will track a client’s journey from start to finish. People will be able to connect with us however they prefer, whether that’s by phone, text, web chat, or in person.”

Today, every call to the Hub is answered by a specialist trained to discern the caller’s need in seven minutes or less. But, Ashley says, she always adds an asterisk. “We lead with love and empathy. If someone needs to talk a little longer, we’re also here to listen.”

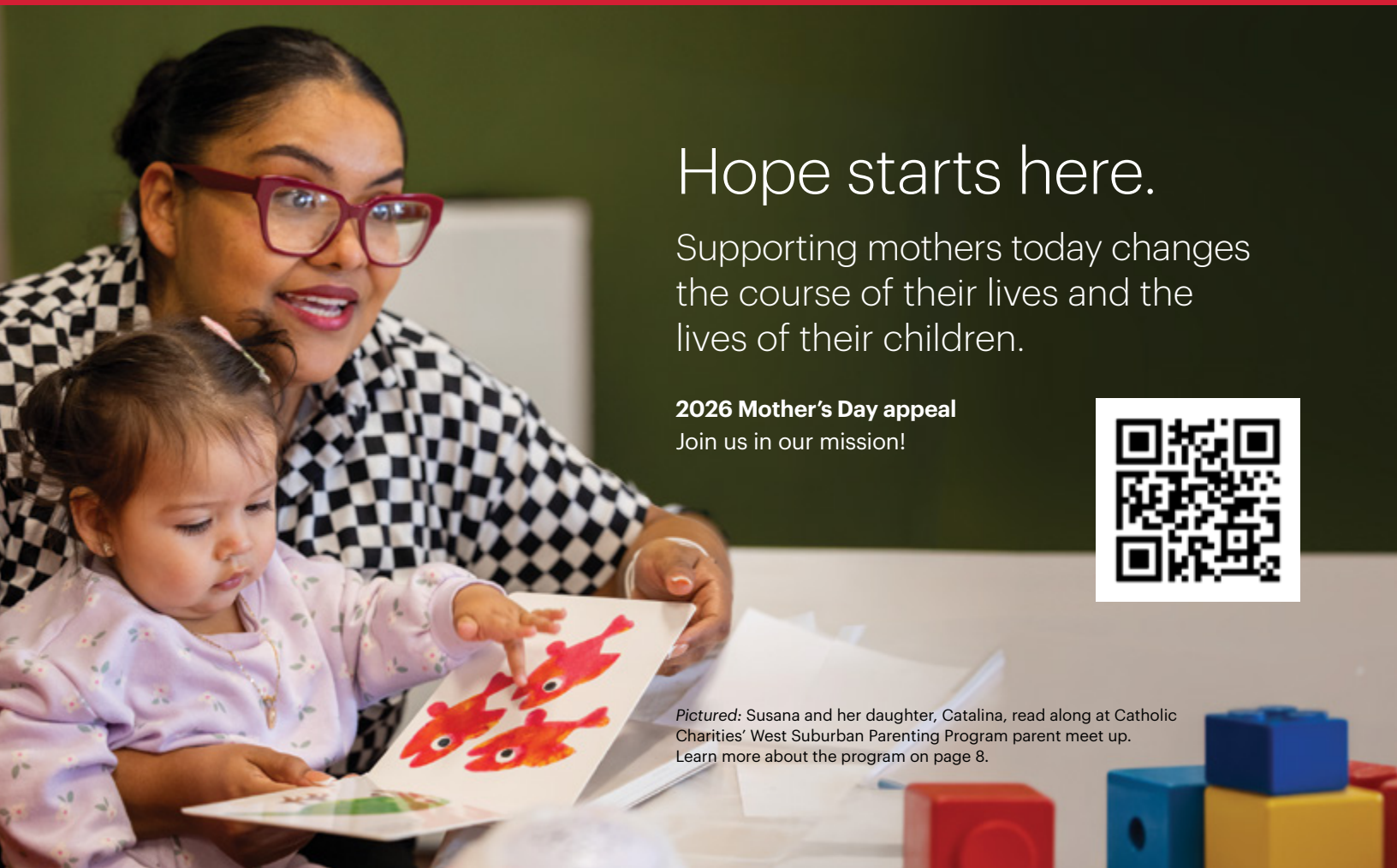




Archdiocese of Chicago

721 North LaSalle Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60654

Donate online securely today! Scan the QR code or visit [CatholicCharities.net/Mothers](https://CatholicCharities.net/Mothers)



## Hope starts here.

Supporting mothers today changes the course of their lives and the lives of their children.

**2026 Mother's Day appeal**

Join us in our mission!



*Pictured: Susana and her daughter, Catalina, read along at Catholic Charities' West Suburban Parenting Program parent meet up. Learn more about the program on page 8.*