



Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas Social Concerns Newsletter

VOLUME XXI, NUMBER I

FALL 2010

CATHOLIC CHARITIES
OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS
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Dates to Note

09/24/10—Immigration Services Outreach at Immaculate Conception Church, Liberty from 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

09/25-26/10—National Catholic Charities Sunday observed in local churches to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Catholic Charities USA.

10/02-03/10—Annual second collection to assist the work of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas occurs in all Diocese of Beaumont churches.

10/22/10—Immigration Services Outreach at St. Francis of Assisi Church, Orange from 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

11/12/10—Immigration Services Outreach at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Port Arthur from 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

11/13/10—Harvest of Hope Gala. MCM Elegante Hotel, Beaumont at 6:00 p.m.

How To Volunteer

To offer assistance as a volunteer, please call (409) 924-4421 or email volunteer@catholiccharitiesbmt.org.

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Two Years Spent Conquering Hurricane Ike

Two years ago when Hurricane Ike roared ashore on Sept. 13, 2008, Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas was among the earliest organizations to respond with community aid, establishing five resource sites throughout the region that served nearly 10,000 vehicles arriving to request relief supplies and emergency aid.

Thanks to grants received and the generosity of donors, until June 30, 2010, the agency was still actively soliciting and

providing needed Hurricane Ike case management. At that time, the last of its temporary case managers concluded her employment period.



Catholic Charities volunteers move pallets of relief supplies shortly after Hurricane Ike's landfall in September 2008.

In the nearly two years of serving the area through distribution of financial assistance and long-term case management, Catholic Charities provided aid to 4,041 people in addition to the thousands helped during that initial burst of activity at community resource sites.

Financial aid took the form of gift cards and vouchers, helping 1,440 families gain access to food, personal items and furnishings that helped them

(see Power, page 3)

Valuable Volunteers Honored

About 100 guests attended Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas' Volunteer Appreciation Dinner at St. Charles Church in Nederland on June 22. The event honored all volunteers for their vital contributions to the agency's mission.

Bobby Abraham, a volunteer at Catholic Charities' Hospitality Center for much of its 22 years in operation, was honored with the Deacon Vernon Drummond Volunteer of the Year Award, named after the first Director of the Hospitality Center. The Center has provided a daily meal to the poor in Port Arthur since opening on Christmas Day in 1987.

Abraham contributed almost 900 hours of volunteer ser-

vice during the past fiscal year, assisting at the Center virtually every day.

When bestowing the Volunteer of the Year Award, President/CEO Carol Fernandez said current Hospitality Center Director Christina Vara jokes that other volunteers wonder what Abraham does, since he often tackles behind-the-scenes roles others don't accept.

Many other Hospitality Center volunteers, as well as those who facilitate support groups within Elijah's Place, a program for grieving children, and those who fulfill administrative tasks were also honored.

Volunteers provided 22,654 hours of service to the agency in Fiscal Year 2009—2010, estimated as a contribution worth \$472,336.



Hospitality Center volunteer Bobby Abraham (left) receives the Volunteer of the Year Award from President/CEO Carol Fernandez.

Board of Directors

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Shelley Tortorice
Enrique "Henry" Venta
Laura Williams—Ex Officio

From the President *Changed by Time, Charged by God*



Carol Fernandez
President/CEO

In a couple months we'll go through the process of changing our clocks, ending Daylight Savings Time and creating the false impression that we control time.

In reality, though, we can't escape the grasp time has on us. Like it or not, time changes us. Sometimes the passage of time adds a few pounds or a few wrinkles. Sometimes it matures us and makes us better people.

September 1 marked one year of service for me as President/CEO of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas. I have enjoyed my year in this role immensely, even though the role has at times presented significant challenges. I have enjoyed the past year because of the way all that has transpired has changed me. I'm grateful for those changes, because our patient God uses the passage of time to mold us as He wishes.

I like to think that at my core I am the same optimistic, energetic person who accepted the agency's leadership position a year ago. But, I also like to think this year has touched my heart with joys and sorrows that have enabled me to become even more dedicated to seeing Catholic Charities accomplish all it can in Southeast Texas.

In the past year, as can be expected, the agency has changed, too. Some of those changes bear my imprint, others have arisen from circumstances beyond my control, like the stagnant economy. As you'll see elsewhere on this page, regrettably, Catholic Charities will no longer be the administrator of childcare subsidies for low-income families in our community due to the loss of a contract awarded by the Workforce Solutions of Southeast Texas Board. That change is painful for the organization, but, as with all change, it becomes part of the evolution of our agency.

This month also marks the 100th anniversary of Catholic Charities USA, the national point of unity for all the local Catholic Charities agencies. It's unlikely that any of the 400 delegates who assembled at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. in September 1910 could have imagined they were laying the framework for uniting 163 local agencies with 65,000 employees and 250,000 volunteers in service to 9 million people in 2010. Yet, that's what their vision, the passage of time and the blessing of God has produced.

The American bishops have decided to pay tribute to Catholic Charities' extraordinary impact on the Church and nation through a National Catholic Charities Sunday on the weekend of Sept. 25-26. Please join me in prayer that weekend, asking God to stir up in our hearts a spirit devoted to advancing the Catholic Charities' mission begun by those visionaries 100 years ago.

Close of Childcare Subsidy Contract Comes Sept. 30

A lengthy chapter in the history of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas will come to an end on Sept. 30. The Workforce Solutions Southeast Texas Board (WSSETB) has awarded a contract previously administered by Catholic Charities to ChildCare-Group of Dallas, making them the party responsible for the management and operations of the Child Care Contractor Services program in this region, effective Oct. 1.

Catholic Charities was first

awarded the contract in 1991 and tasked with administering the federal subsidy funds that are passed through the state's Workforce Solutions Boards to childcare providers to help qualifying low-income families pay for childcare services.

Catholic Charities has administered the program on behalf of the WSSETB in Jefferson, Orange and Hardin Counties. During this current contract year, Catholic Charities has helped place a daily average of more than 1,500 children with

childcare providers selected by parents who qualify for the subsidy program.

"I am confident the families currently served by the childcare subsidy will not experience any interruption in services as the transition is made," said Carol Fernandez, President/CEO. "We regret losing from our staff dedicated employees who have served us well, but trust the new contractor will benefit from their dedication and knowledge."

Largest Ever Fundamentals of Good Credit Classes

The Asset Building Case Management (ABC) program's first offering of Fundamentals of Good Credit classes in Port Arthur has been a tremendous success. Record attendance figures have been reached in the classes designed to help low-to-moderate income families stabilize credit and establish manageable budgets.

Since its inception in 2008, the ABC program has conducted twice annual series of Fundamentals of Good Credit classes, usually attracting an average of 60-65 attendees. The three-part series currently under way has drawn an average of 75-80 students to its first two sessions.

Participants who complete the full series of free classes receive certification satisfying the financial and homebuyer educational requirements for the SmartSaver Individual Development Account (IDA) Program, which can provide a 2-to-1 match for up to \$2,000 saved, yielding an account value of up to \$6,000, as well as down payment assistance and other special mortgage programs.

Fundamentals of Good Credit students can further advance their financial literacy through monthly ABC Team meetings and receive additional help towards self-sufficiency through long-term case management. In 2½ years of operations, ABC has served close to 1,500 families, including 26 who obtained housing.

For more information about ABC, contact Stephanie Lundgreen at (409) 924-4425.

Major Events

Breakfast with the Bishop

Approximately 230 guests gathered at St. Anne Church in Beaumont on April 24 to participate in the 19th annual Breakfast with the Bishop fundraising event. This year's breakfast netted \$17,000 towards the agency's programs.

In keeping with tradition, Bishop Curtis Guillory welcomed guests, while priests, deacons and religious sisters helped volunteers serve breakfast.

The annual Humanitarian of the Year Award was given to former Catholic Charities President/CEO Dean Terrence. He said he first felt reluctance to be so honored, "because I saw myself as just doing my job."



Sesame Street character Elmo puts in an appearance at Breakfast with the Bishop to help tell the story of the Elijah's Place program for grieving children.

Third Age Day

Senior citizens had their day in the Mexican sun thanks to the coordination of the annual Third Age Day event on April 20 by Catholic Charities' Ginny Smith McClanahan, Coordinator of Parish Social Ministry.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Port Arthur hosted this diocesan-wide celebration of senior citizen gifts.

Bishop Curtis Guillory celebrated Mass, and then attendees feasted on a Mexican menu and enjoyed Mexican-themed entertainment.

Counseling to Serve Agency on Aging

The Area Agency on Aging of Southeast Texas has selected our Counseling Services program as one of its vendors to provide mental health services to those who are 60 years or older. Effective Oct. 1, 2010, residents of Jefferson, Hardin and Orange Counties who are deemed eligible for subsidized mental health services by the Area Agency on Aging may opt to receive those services at either Catholic Charities' Central Services Facility or its counseling location at St. Elizabeth Church in Port Neches.

These services could benefit caregivers or mobile senior citizens who desire help coping with individual or family issues or grief-related matters.

To learn more, contact Director of Counseling Christie Byrne at (409) 924-4418.

Revisiting Rita

The visitation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to the Texas Gulf Coast in 2005 gave birth to our Disaster Response program.

Then, the agency quickly rallied to meet emerging community needs, ultimately serving 874 people after Hurricane Katrina and 2,968 families after Hurricane Rita. Financial assistance distributed in the form of gift cards and vouchers to those affected by Rita has totaled \$1,337,500 since.

Now, the Diocese of Beaumont has given the agency an additional \$96,000 to help resolve lingering issues related to Hurricane Rita. Those who may continue to be affected by impacts of Hurricane Rita and who would like to inquire about their eligibility for assistance may contact Randi Fertitta at (409) 924-4426.

Power of Ike No Match for the Power of Charity

(continued from page 1)

regain their self-sufficiency. In total, \$549,352 of such aid was distributed through gift cards and vouchers.

In addition, 103 families received long-term case management from Catholic Charities, helping link them to resources to address more significant home repair or furnishing issues.

Nearly \$550,000 of Hurricane Ike aid delivered to 1,440 families since 2008.

Though, thankfully, the requests for assistance related to the effects of Hurricane Ike have slowed, Disaster, Trauma and Loss Director Randi Fertitta remains busy with a set of duties that has expanded since Ike struck.

Catholic Charities' Disaster Response program is now a key community resource with ongoing responsibilities. While dealing with lingering hurricane-related matters, the agency also provides disaster preparedness training, hardship relief to those affected by personal tragedies and distributes funds from Port Arthur's Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing grant.



Community resource sites established by Catholic Charities in 2008 served close to 10,000 vehicles.

Building a Better Board

The Board of Directors demonstrated its commitment to improving its quality of governance by gathering on Aug. 28 for a daylong Board Retreat devoted to reflecting on the duties of the Board and the engagement needed from the Board to fulfill those duties.

Troy Zeigler, Director of Training and Consulting for Catholic Charities USA, came to Beaumont to lead the Board through the workshop entitled *Vocation of the Trustee*. The day's sessions highlighted the stewardship the Board exercises to assure agency supporters that the organization remains faithful to its mission and vision, and the role the Board plays in shaping

the agency's strategic thinking.

Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas' Board consists of 17 members, chaired by local business leader Jim Wade. The remainder of the Board represents diverse professional experiences, including law, medicine, social work, ministry, philanthropy, fundraising, finance, media, insurance and homemaking.

The whole Board meets quarterly and expands its work through periodic committee meetings. Standing committees are devoted to oversight of quality of services, advocacy, finance and fund development.

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creating hope.*

Harvest of Hope Gala to Honor Golden Anniversaries

The Catholic Church throughout the world just recently completed an observance of the Year of the Priest. That celebration set the stage for Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas' 2010 Harvest of Hope Gala honoring the priests of years. Years of service, that is.

This year's Harvest of Hope will pay tribute to 10 priests in the Diocese of Beaumont who have served the Church in ministry for 50 years or more. Three of those priests, Monsignor Michael Jamail, Father Telesfloro Blanco and Father George Kalappura commemorate their Golden Anniversary of 50 years in the priesthood this year. The longest serving-honoree is Father Luis Urriza, pastor of Cristo Rey Church in Beaumont, who marks his 66th

year in the priesthood in 2010.

The Harvest of Hope is the agency's largest annual fundraiser. This year's event will be held on Saturday, Nov. 13 in the Ballroom of the MCM Elegante Hotel. The event begins with cocktails at 6 p.m. followed by dinner and a tribute ceremony. Tickets can be purchased or event sponsorships secured by calling (409) 924-4421. Come join us!

List of Harvest of Hope Honorees

Rev. Telesforo Blanco, O.S.A.
Rev. Msgr. Salvador Culotta
Rev. Msgr. James Dempsey
Rev. Msgr. John DiStefano
Rev. Clement Iglesias
Rev. Msgr. Michael Jamail
Rev. George Kalappura, C.M.I.
Rev. Msgr. Col. Walter Montondon
Rev. Luis Urriza
Rev. Msgr. James Vanderholt

*Please Come to the
Harvest of Hope Gala*

Saturday, November 13, 2010
at the MCM Elegante Ballroom
at 6:00 p.m.

Honoring Golden Jubilarians

Priests in the
Diocese of Beaumont
with 50 years or more of
ministerial service

To reserve tickets or
become an event sponsor,
contact Catholic Charities of
Southeast Texas at
(409) 924-4421
or visit our website
www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org

**It's never too early to plan.
Have you remembered us in
your will or through planned
giving?**

To start a discussion about a bequest or planned gift, contact Dan Maher, Vice President of Development & Communications today at (409) 924-4427.

Check out our website.....
www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org



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OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS