



Catholic Charities of  
Southeast Texas

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[www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org)

### IMPORTANT DATES

Every Friday—Walk-In Green Card Renewals, 9 a.m.—3 p.m., 2780 Eastex Freeway, Beaumont

Oct. 12—Catholic Education and Ministry Institute Class, *Sustainable Change...The Path to Self-Sufficiency*, 2780 Eastex Freeway, Beaumont @ 6 p.m.

Oct. 28—Immigration Services Outreach, 9 a.m.—3 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Church, Orange

Nov. 1—Legislative Advocacy Event, 11:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m., 2780 Eastex Freeway, Beaumont

Nov. 10—Harvest of Hope Gala Honoring Jill and Kevin J. Roy, MCM Elegante Hotel, Beaumont @ 6 p.m.

Nov. 17—National Children's Grief Awareness Day, Elijah's Place Memorial Service @ 6 p.m.

Nov. 18—Immigration Services Outreach, 9 a.m.—3 p.m., Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Port Arthur

### HOW TO VOLUNTEER

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



# Social Concerns Newsletter

Volume XXII, Number 1

Fall 2011

## No Respite for Disaster Response Staff

The lack of a Gulf Coast hurricane thus far this season does not mean the Disaster Response staff has had a quiet summer and fall. There's much more to disaster response under the Catholic Charities umbrella than the name might first imply.

Anybody paying attention in Southeast Texas this year knows it has been plenty hot and extremely dry. Because of the heat and drought related impacts on the area, Catholic Charities USA issued a \$10,000 emergency grant to us, giving the agency modest funding designated for distribution to residents of some of the more rural counties within our service territory.

Our Disaster Response staff is in the process of identifying and addressing priority needs for heat and drought relief in Jasper, Liberty, Newton, Polk and Tyler counties to put that emergency grant funding to good use.

Disaster Response staff is also busy gearing up for administration of food and shelter assistance in Newton and Tyler counties in response to the awarding of approximately \$16,000 to those counties from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's annual Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) grants intended to benefit local jurisdictions around the nation.

This summer, Catholic Charities was selected by the local EFSP board in Newton County to distribute its award of \$7,310 to county residents in need of emergency utility, housing or food assistance. Similarly, Tyler County's local EFSP board chose Catholic Charities to distribute its EFSP grant award of \$8,666 within the county.

Disaster Response staff has also been tasked with continued distribution of the Port Arthur Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) grant, in recognition of its fine administration of funds on behalf of Port Arthur residents. The HPRP grant is designed to keep people facing possible homelessness in housing by offering short-term rental or utility assistance.

The H. H. and Edna Houseman Charitable Trust administered by Capital One Trust has also recently given \$50,000 in grant funds exclusively for assistance of residents of Orange County.

The Houseman Charitable Trust funding can be used to help with emergency matters such as food, furnishings, clothing, medications and rental assistance.



Monica Vernier (left) and Landon Newsom (right) of Capital One Bank present a \$65,000 grant check to Dr. Henry Venta, Vice Chair, and Carol Fernandez, President/CEO, to partially fund some activities of the agency's Disaster Response and Immigration Services programs.

### Board of Directors

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Shelley Tortorice  
Regina Winegar  
Laura Williams—Ex Officio

### What's Inside?

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### Did you know?

- The Hospitality Center will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2012
- Elijah's Place offers grief support to children affected by loss due to death in their families or because of separation or divorce
- Our Counseling Services program uses a sliding fee scale to keep mental health support affordable
- Our Immigration Services program offers walk-in Green Card renewals every Friday from 9 a.m.—3 p.m.

## From the President

## *The Poor You Will Always Have With You*



**Carol Fernandez**  
President/CEO

This time last year, our long-term contract to serve as a community resource linking low-income parents to subsidized childcare opportunities came to an end. Since then, our Board of Directors and I have studied many opportunities for new programs that might serve as a replacement. We are rightfully proud of our seven existing programs because they deliver a wonderful variety of services, including a daily meal for the hungry, financial literacy classes and case management, immigration legal services, mental health counseling, hardship assistance and disaster recovery, as well as grief support for children and their families. Still, even with that wide reaching array of services, the Board and me are convinced there are unmet community needs that Catholic Charities should consider addressing.

That search for community service gaps that we could meet has taken interesting twists and turns and exposed me to fascinating programs existing in other communities. I feel like the search has given me enough knowledge of affordable housing programs to earn academic credits in a Housing 101 course! And, the search has probably even added a few pounds, since I sampled the menus at New Orleans cafés operated by at-risk youth using the cafés as job training centers!

There is still much work to be done with the Board and the community at-large to determine what the greatest unmet needs are in Southeast Texas and to assess which of those needs the community will support us in addressing. As we continue our study, we will follow the philosophy of Catholic Charities and make sure we apply due diligence so we do not simply duplicate services provided by others, but truly find a community void to fill.

While exploring the mission-based options before us is exciting work in one sense, looking for service voids in the community also leaves me with an empty feeling. This exploration of many potential service options reminds me of the words of Jesus in Matthew 26:11, "The poor you will always have with you."

How true it is that there always seem to be so many more needs than there are resources to solve them. But, while Jesus acknowledges that poverty may always exist within the human condition, He certainly does not want us to resign ourselves to its existence and stop helping the less fortunate improve their condition. Looking around me and realizing how many of our brothers and sisters have needs that go unaddressed on a daily basis has caused me to redouble my efforts to remedy at least some of those effects of poverty.

Please support the Board and me with your prayers and sacrifices, so we may have the wisdom and the resources we need to make a difference!

## Six-Part Series to Focus on Legislative Advocacy

The Advocacy Committee and the Parish Social Ministry program of Catholic Charities are collaborating to present a multi-part series devoted to consideration of key legislative issues facing Texas and the nation in 2012. The series will inform participants of varying perspectives on the issues, but will also reflect on the issues in light of Catholic Social Teaching. The six-part series will be conducted in parallel with significant milestones leading up to the 2012 presidential and Congressional elections.

The inaugural session in what are being called Brown Bag Lectures will be held in the Conference Room at Catholic Charities at 2780 Eastex Freeway in Beaumont on Tues., Nov. 1, 2011 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The guest speakers scheduled for the opening presentations are Bishop Curtis Guillory of the Diocese of Beaumont and state representatives Joe Deshotel (D) and Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton (R). The general public is welcome to attend, but space is limited. For more information about the series or to sign up to attend the opening session, contact Parish Social Ministry Coordinator Coquese Williams at [cwilliams@catholiccharitiesbmt.org](mailto:cwilliams@catholiccharitiesbmt.org) or (409) 924-4415.

"One of the best things that people can do to effect societal change, especially at the parish level, is to stay informed about the key political and legislative issues and then be a voice for the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable," said Williams. "We hope this series will stir up within people a passion for defending the rights of the needy."

The series is motivated by the anti-poverty challenge of Catholic Charities USA which aims to reduce poverty in America by 50 percent by 2020. The challenge issued calls on the public to Think & Act Anew in order to help the country make progress towards poverty reduction.

Future dates and speakers within the series will be periodically announced as details are confirmed. Visit the agency's calendar page at [www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org) for updates about the series.



State representative Mike "Tuffy" Hamilton (R-top) and state representative Joe Deshotel (D-middle) are scheduled to join Bishop Curtis Guillory for a kickoff discussion about legislative advocacy at Catholic Charities on Tues., Nov. 1.

## VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR VICTOR VASQUEZ—R.I.P.

In late June, we celebrated the extraordinary contributions of our hundreds of volunteers, coming together for Volunteer Appreciation at St. Elizabeth Parish in Port Neches.

Those in attendance enjoyed good food served by Knights of Columbus Council #2461 and mingled with their fellow volunteers.

Several volunteers went home with door prizes contributed by local vendors to honor the volunteers for their dedicated service.



A small memorial to honor Volunteer of the Year Victor Vasquez at the Volunteer Appreciation event.

Victor Vasquez was honored posthumously as Volunteer of the Year for the period of July 1, 2010—June 30, 2011. Vasquez volunteered in a variety of roles in support of the Hospitality Center in Port Arthur and contributed the most volunteer hours of anyone in the organization during that span.

Vasquez died unexpectedly just a few weeks before the event.

"Victor was like a brother to my family and 'Uncle Vic' to my child," said Hospitality Center Director Christina Vara Green. "He was loved by all who knew him. He will be missed."

## Volunteer Spotlight

### Patsy Jorgensen Hospitality Center



For more than 20 years, it has been easy for Patsy Jorgensen's friends and family to know where to find her on Tuesdays. She has been a faithful part of the "Tuesday crew" at the Hospitality Center in Port Arthur, arriving early in the morning with fellow volunteers, many of whom have volunteered there almost as long.

"The Hospitality Center has helped me far more than I have ever helped the Center," said Jorgensen. "Everybody there is filled with so much love. It has become my second home."

All 365 days a year, Hospitality Center volunteers provide a hearty meal for people who might otherwise not have access to adequate food because of their economic condition. Volunteers prepare the meal, serve it and clean up the Center afterwards, all while trying to help those they serve renew their sense of self-worth.

"The people we serve do not feel beneath us," added Jorgensen. "They're good people. They just need love and they need food. They all get a balanced meal that's really good. You can't get a better, more filling meal."

## Joyce Tatum and Sharon Woodle Longest Serving Volunteers for Elijah's Place

It takes a special person to support the children and families entering the Elijah's Place program to deal with the pain of loss caused by a death in the family or marital breakdown. The two longest serving volunteers in the program are indeed special people, well suited to their volunteer roles.



Sharon Woodle

The Elijah's Place program for grieving children has been blessed to have contributions of time and talent from Joyce Tatum and Sharon Woodle since June 2004. Both brought with them experiences that readily translated into the skills needed to provide the support system for children and their families that Elijah's Place provides.

Tatum had been a case manager in a hospice environment, giving her the chance to support hospice families through their own bereavement process. She also had personal experience with illness in her own family that made her realize the importance of supporting those passing through a period of loss.

Woodle is a school counselor, currently working at the kindergarten through third grade campus of Woodcrest Elementary in Port Neches. Supporting children through stress, including grief, is part of her professional duties, but she, too, grew in her desire to help grief stricken families through illness in her own family.

"My son had gone through two bouts of cancer, and being at Texas Children's Hospital, and seeing all the parents, you're right there in the midst of it," said Woodle. "There was a positive outcome for my son, but I witnessed the grief of others."

Motivated by what she witnessed, Woodle followed a growing instinct to begin volunteering and came to Elijah's Place looking for a way to help.

"When I got there and heard all the specifics, I knew I was in the right place," she said. Upon her arrival, she was invited to assist with facilitation of the parent/guardian group that meets simultaneously with the children's groups. Her partner in facilitation since 2004 has been Tatum, who also stepped in with the parents because a void existed there at the time.

"I think this service provided to the community helps so many people," said Tatum. "It boils down to serving kids and parents who feel so alone and may not have spoken to anyone about their loss. The children feel so alone when they first come here, but the bottom line is they ultimately realize they're not alone."



Joyce Tatum

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creating hope.*

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## Coming Soon!

Our principal annual fundraiser, the Harvest of Hope Gala, is set for Thurs., Nov. 10 at 6 p.m. at the MCM Elegante Hotel in Beaumont.

This year's event will again generate needed funds to support the seven programs of Catholic Charities while honoring community members for their exemplary service. This year's honorees will be Jill and Kevin J. Roy. The Roys are

well known for their business and civic service. Kevin is a former chair of our Board of Directors.

The Gala features cocktails, dinner, musical entertainment and a tribute to the honorees. Tickets start at \$125 and can be purchased by visiting the Catholic Charities website or by calling (409) 924-4421. Sponsorship opportunities are also available to help defray expenses and maximize the event's income.

9TH ANNUAL  
**harvest** of hope



*Jill and Kevin J. Roy are the honorees for the ninth annual Harvest of Hope Gala to be held Thurs., Nov. 10 at the MCM Elegante Hotel in Beaumont.*

### How Your Shopping Can Advance Our Mission

We are now enrolled as a charity Kroger customers can choose to support with a portion of the revenue they generate by shopping at Kroger.

To obtain the bar code needed to link a Kroger loyalty card to Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas, contact Dan Maher, Vice President for Development & Communications at [dmaher@catholiccharitiesbmt.org](mailto:dmaher@catholiccharitiesbmt.org) or at (409) 924-4427.

Then, your shopping dollars can help generate some extra help for those we serve. Thank you for your help!

### Please Think About the Benefits of a Bequest

Remembering Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas in your will can leave a lasting legacy of help and hope. To arrange for Catholic Charities to benefit from your will, please contact us at (409) 924-4427.



Visit us on the web at  
[www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org)