



Social Concerns Newsletter

Volume XXII, Number 2

Holiday 2011

Catholic Charities of
Southeast Texas

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IMPORTANT DATES

Every Friday—Walk-In Green Card Renewals, 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m., 2780 Eastex Freeway, Beaumont

January 24—National Migration Week Prayer Vigil, St. Anthony Cathedral Center, 700 Jefferson, Beaumont, 5:30 p.m.

January 26—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Training for Civics and Citizenship Teachers of Adults, Diocese of Beaumont Pastoral Center, 710 Archie Street, Beaumont, Time TBA

February 24—Immigration Services Outreach Session, 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m., Immaculate Conception Church, 411 Milam St., Liberty

March 3, 17 and 31—Asset Building Case Management's Fundamentals of Good Credit Classes (Three-Part Series), 9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m., 2780 Eastex Freeway, Beaumont

March 16—Immigration Services Outreach Session, 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m., St. Joseph Church, 2590 U.S. Highway 190 West, Livingston

HOW TO VOLUNTEER

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



Hospitality Center Set to Mark 25th Year and Serve Millionth Meal in 2012

As of Christmas Day 2011, the Hospitality Center will begin its 25th year of service to Port Arthur and surrounding communities as a soup kitchen-style feeding center where the poor can come for a free, hearty midday meal every day of the year.

Since first opening its doors on Dec. 25, 1987 to the homeless, elderly, disabled and anyone else in need of a satisfying meal, the Center has regularly served over 40,000 meals annually. This means that in 2012, the Center will not only be in its 25th year of operation, but will exceed 1,000,000 meals served.

"It is regrettable that as we head into our 25th year of food service to the hungry, the lines that form on a daily basis are still long, but we are thankful that we have had sufficient volunteers and financial support to allow us to persevere with this mission," said President/CEO Carol Fernandez.

"To be in position to serve our millionth meal during the upcoming year is an extraordinary accomplishment. I hope that if this food service continues to be needed for another 25 years or more, the community will always help Catholic Charities meet the daily demand."

Catholic Charities will be conducting some 25th anniversary themed observances at the Center during 2012 and hopes to use the occasion as a springboard to solidify the Center's long-term future by receiving additional community support to help it increase its food inventory, upgrade kitchen equipment and modernize its facility. Gaining additional committed volunteers is another key to the continued daily operation of the Center.

Those interested in offering financial or volunteer support can contact the Center at (888) 982-4842 to assist.



A refurbished bread rack was one of the many projects completed by members of Triumph Church in Nederland during a day of volunteer service at the Hospitality Center this fall.



Gifts in the following amounts can symbolically make 2012 a special year for the Hospitality Center and its guests

- \$2.50—Could purchase two boxes of family-sized tea bags (8,000 bags are used each year!)
- \$25—Could purchase food for 30 meals
- \$250—Could purchase a commercial-sized heavy gauge aluminum pot
- \$2,500—Could purchase a commercial stove

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas!

Board of Directors

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Jim Wade—Chair | Jeffrey Oliverio |
| Henry Venta—Vice-Chair | Dade Phelan |
| Gail Krohn—Treasurer | Jon C. Reaud |
| Barbara Lange—Secretary | William F. Scott |
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| G. R. "Lupe" Flores | Shelley Tortorice |
| Kara Hawthorn | Regina Winegar |
| Dana P. Melancon | Laura Williams—Ex Officio |

More Highlights

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Did You Know?

Residents of Chambers, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Liberty, Newton, Orange, Polk and Tyler Counties can receive the services of Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas.

Your will is a powerful way to support Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas. To help the agency benefit from your will, contact (409) 924-4427.

From the President

The Many Hands of God



Carol Fernandez
President/CEO

For a number of people, the Christmas season is one of the more stressful times of the year. Much of the stress, of course, is self-imposed, like when we create long gift lists, which means many hours of shopping; when we host and attend holiday parties, which means more hours of shopping; and then when we plan for a fabulous Christmas dinner, which means yes, more hours of shopping. No wonder we have stress!

Fortunately, God in His infinite wisdom, places us in a space where, even if just for a short time, we reflect on the gospel messages of the Advent and Christmas seasons. For me, that time came as I was working to catch up on email after returning to the office from a few days of vacation. Trish, a Catholic Charities colleague, had shared her reflection on the gospel passage for the first Friday of Advent (Matthew 9: 27-31). The passage is one of several in that chapter that tell of Jesus' miraculous healings. These particular verses are about the healing of two blind men. In her reflection, Trish wrote "I especially noticed that these two blind men could not possibly have come to Jesus without help. They needed hands to guide them and lead them to where Jesus could hear their pleas, answer their cries for help, and heal them."

Trish compared the hands of those who helped the blind men, to the hands of Catholic Charities staff, and went on to say that the hands of staff are multiplied many times by those who support our work with their time, talent and treasure.

The final words of this chapter read, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few, so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest." Truly, there is abundant need for the services of Catholic Charities. However, our ability to fulfill our mission of service is only possible through the resources we receive from the laborers who give their time, talent and treasure.

As we prepare to celebrate the gift of Christmas, I pray that we all reflect on the gospel passage from Matthew and that we allow God to place us in a space where we see how He has blessed our lives and how we can share those blessings with others. And, I ask that you please join me in prayer to thank God for the laborers he has already sent, and to ask that He will send more laborers who will multiply our efforts by volunteering to serve or giving much needed financial support.

My prayer for you and your loved ones is that you are filled with the joy and peace that Christmas brings!

Allow God to place us in a space where we see how He has blessed our lives and how we can share those blessings with others.

HARVEST OF HOPE GALA YIELDS IMPORTANT SUPPORT



The ninth annual Harvest of Hope Gala proved to be one of the most successful fundraisers in agency history, netting close to \$185,000 to support the seven programs.

The Gala was held Nov. 10 at the MCM Elegante Hotel and honored long-time Board chair Kevin Roy

and his wife Jill for their extraordinary support of Catholic Charities and several other community services. More than 300 people attended to show their support for the Roys and the agency.

We thank Pat and Tommy Frank, Donna and Denny Harris, and Regina Rogers for co-chairing the event, and Dade Phelan for leading logistical planning.

Special Thanks

Platinum Harvest Stars

Pat & Tommy Frank
The Reaud Charitable Foundation

Gold Harvest Stars

Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word
The Modern Group, Ltd.
Jill & Kevin Roy

Platinum Harvest Sponsors

Joe Broussard II
Loretta B. Casey Mineral Trust
Betty & Dr. Mark Kubala

Gold Harvest Sponsors

Dr. & Mrs. J. Denton Harris, IV
Mrs. Raye G. White



(Above left) Honorees Jill and Kevin Roy offer remarks at the Harvest of Hope Gala. (Above) The Roys pose with Catholic Charities President/CEO Carol Fernandez.

Volunteer News

Decking the Halls

In each of the five years that Robbi Green has been the Youth Minister at St. Henry Church in Bridge City, she has led a contingent of high school students to the Hospitality Center in Port Arthur to decorate it for Christmas. Their art work on the windows of the Center gives it a seasonal feel adding to the warmth experienced by the hungry guests who come in for a free, hearty daily meal.

After visiting the Center to volunteer as servers of the guests in November, the seasonal decorating held special meaning to those

who returned in early December.

“They feel so good once they’ve decorated” said Green. “They love to draw and paint and they’re all bubbly and excited when they work. Now that they’ve served and know the people they have decorated for, it makes it even more meaningful.”

“You don’t know how they’re going to react the first time they go,” she said, “but they see the people they meet are interesting people and they always want to go back.”



A team of employees from the Cray Valley plant in Beaumont spent a brisk November morning volunteering inside and out to make repairs and landscaping improvements at the agency’s Central Office. The volunteers were engaged in a combination team building exercise and community service project related to an upcoming plant expansion.



Board Business

New Officers for 2012

Henry Venta, Dean of Lamar University’s School of Business, has been chosen as Board of Directors Chair for 2012. He will be joined on next year’s Executive Committee by Vice Chair Craig Sherlock, Treasurer Gail Krohn and Secretary Dade Phelan.

Congratulations to all! Thank you for your special service to the agency and community!

Stronger Advocacy

The Board acted to strengthen its Advocacy Committee, adding 11 new members for 2012.

New members represent fields such as child and senior protection, media, corporate public affairs and the legal profession.

The Advocacy Committee’s mission is to heighten community awareness of matters affecting the vulnerable.



Joanne Brown and Deacon Larry David display plaques received as tokens of gratitude for Board service. The pair and Shelley Tortorice conclude their terms at the end of 2011.

Some Words of Thanks From Those You Help

My husband has not worked since November 2010 and we struggled raising our grandchildren. After selling his truck and all we had of value, our home went to foreclosure and was to be sold November 1st. If it weren't for Catholic Charities, we would have been homeless. Their generosity helped us keep our home of 23 years. ... As I drove away, I didn't feel as if I just received charity, but rather the love of a multitude of people who support Catholic Charities. And to you, I say thank you.

—A Disaster Response client

Catholic Charities, thank you all for the nice new furniture. May God bless each and every one of you.

—A Disaster Response client

An End of the Year Gift Can Be a Blessing to Someone in Need

Thanks for Your Generosity!

**SUPPORT US
BY SHOPPING!**



Link to a broad array
of retailers through
the home page or
Fundraisers tab at

www.catholiccharitiesbmt.org
and we receive a portion
of the proceeds
at no additional cost!

*providing help
creating hope*

Help us build our
social media
following!

 Find us on
Facebook

 Like us on
Facebook

Non-Profit Org.
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Beaumont, TX
Permit No. 203

Teaching Basic Financial Skills

Throughout 2011, our Asset Building Case Management (ABC) program has been responding to a plea from some Port Arthur-based social service agencies to bring its financial education classes to that city on a regular basis to help those struggling financially to grasp the basics of financial management.

Thanks to some financial support from the United Way of Mid & South Jefferson County, Stephanie Lundgreen, Director of ABC, has established a weekly presence in Port Arthur to conduct financial case management with clients. Stephanie has also coordinated 14 financial education classes. In December, ABC concluded a six-part series known as the Gateway to Financial Fitness at the YMCA of Port Arthur.

The Gateway to Financial Fitness series is expected to be offered again in early 2012 with dates and locations soon to be determined. For more information about the services of ABC, call (409) 924-4425.

A Night to Remember

On Nov. 17, Elijah's Place celebrated its annual Memorial Service for deceased parents and siblings of children enrolled in its grief support program. The service coincided with the fourth annual National Children's Grief Awareness Day.

The 47 attendees exceeded the capacity of Catholic Charities, so the service was held at St. Anne Parish.

Children, adults and Elijah's Place volunteers sang, prayed and recalled fond memories of loved ones.



Children look at scrapbooks and pictures honoring loved ones remembered during the Elijah's Place Memorial Service.