thanksgiving
Dear Friends,

During the month of November, we are reminded often of how much we have to be thankful for. The blessings in our lives certainly come into perspective as we see how many of our neighbors struggle, sometimes working multiple jobs, to make ends meet.

When families are barely making it day by day, they have no ability to pull ahead. Investments for the future are halted. Savings accounts run dry.

This critical time, when families are making tough decisions on what sacrifices they must make, is when Catholic Charities is needed most. We walk alongside families to help them find stability today and determine positive steps for the future. Sometimes all a family needs is a bridge to help them get on the road to self-sustainability.

In order to create sustainable, successful and dynamic programs, Catholic Charities partners with individuals, community groups, other nonprofits and more. We believe in creating new and exciting opportunities that allow us to meet the needs of our community without duplicating services or recreating efficient programming.

This newsletter is full of examples of Catholic Charities’ partnerships that have lead to tremendous successes in eliminating poverty in Central Texas. Last year alone, we served more than 14,000 people in our 25-county service region.

This could not happen without support from the community and from you. Our success is the direct result of your financial support, volunteer time, expertise and prayer.

As I say a prayer this Thanksgiving for all the blessings my family has received, I will remember all those who have supported Catholic Charities and who have shared their own blessings with the families we serve.

With sincere gratitude,

Sara Ramirez
Executive Director
CC101

Get to know Catholic Charities of Central Texas at one of our free bimonthly CC101 lunch-and-learn events. Enjoy a delicious lunch and take a tour of Catholic Charities.

Contact Martha Jasse at Martha-Jasse@ccctx.org or (512) 651-6126 to learn more and to RSVP.

www.ccctx.org/get-to-know-catholic-charities

Two Events — One Cause

IT ONLY TAKES ONE

Save the date for two unforgettable events in which the mission of Catholic Charities will be shared by those whose lives it has touched. You’ll enjoy a complimentary lunch as you see that it only takes ONE to restore hope in Central Texas.

5th Annual Celebrate Life Luncheon

Noon - 1 p.m. Wednesday, February 17, 2016
St. Thomas Aquinas Parish // College Station

For more information contact Allison Seibert at (979) 822-9340 or allison-seibert@ccctx.org.

www.ccctx.org/CelebrateLife2016

10th Annual Creating Hope Luncheon

Noon - 1 p.m. Thursday, April 14, 2016
Hyatt Regency // Austin

For more information contact Kristen Erdem at (512) 651-6132 or kristen-erdem@ccctx.org.

www.ccctx.org/CreatingHope2016

Brazos Valley

2015
November 5, 19

2016
January 7, 21
February 4, 25
March 10, 24
April 7, 21
May 5, 19
June 2, 16

December 3, 17
July 7, 21
August 4, 18
September 8, 22
October 6, 20
November 3, 17
December 8, 22
After class at Catholic Charities Gabriel Project Life Center (GPLC), the instructors, all six of them, hang back to receive feedback. They learn from their own instructor a few ways they could improve their short lessons. These are not the full-time teachers at the life center, but students from the University of Texas (UT) at Austin School of Nursing.

Each year, Catholic Charities partners with the UT School of Nursing to provide enhanced instruction from students on topics such as the stages of labor, developmental milestones and childhood illness to GPLC clients. The nursing students are given the opportunity to develop their communication skills, interact with clients who will benefit from the information and give back to their community.

“We see it as a win-win,” says Director of Social Services Teresa Valenzuela Cox. “Our moms and dads learn valuable information from a trusted source and the nursing students get to enhance their education and skills with real life experience.”

The nursing students conduct pre- and post-testing to ensure comprehension and applicability. The result is families who feel better equipped to take on the challenge of caring for a new baby.

The Gabriel Project Life Center focuses on education as a key component of the program. Clients complete 10-week courses on parenting and pregnancy topics. The program is enhanced by an Earn While You Learn option that gives moms and dads who attend classes points toward baby items such as strollers, cribs, and diapers. This allows families to attain both the knowledge and material needs to give their children a safe and healthy start at life.
Disaster Response Helps Families After Memorial Day Floods

When unprecedented rains caused flooding throughout Central Texas, thousands watched as their homes and livelihoods were washed away. Catholic Charities immediately activated our Disaster Response team to assess the situation and serve those affected.

Disaster Response works to stabilize families immediately after a disaster event and give long term help for the future. This includes a thorough intake process to determine the needs of the family. Throughout the process, staff and volunteers concentrate on holistic help, addressing safety, financial and mental health needs.

Numerous volunteers and partner organizations helped throughout the Catholic Charities disaster response. Here are a few highlights of what Catholic Charities was able to accomplish:

- Served more than 3,000 individuals impacted by the floods throughout nine counties of our 25-county service region.
- Provided 1,096 nights of emergency shelter stays at local hotels.
- Distributed more than $71,000 in gift cards to help flood victims.

In addition, we provided counseling services, document replacement for immigrants, and countless bags of clothing, food, hygiene and cleaning kits.

Catholic Charities continues to work with families to help them with the rebuilding process. While the long-term recovery after the floods could take years, Catholic Charities will be there each step of the way to ensure a full return to normalcy for families who lost everything.

Thank you to our Memorial Day Flood Disaster Response partners

- Canyon Middle School
- Gabriel Project at St. Anthony’s Catholic Church, Kyle
- Head to Heart
- Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church, Martindale
- Knights of Columbus #3458
- Lay Missionaries of Charity
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Dripping Springs
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Wimberley
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul, San Marcos
- St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, Austin
- St. Gabriel’s Catholic School
- St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Austin
- St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, San Marcos
- St. John Neumann Catholic Church, Austin
- Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc.
- Numerous other groups and individuals who worked silently in the background to ensure the success of our Disaster Response.
Imagine needing help in a place where you do not understand the customs or social systems. Navigating the options available can be a nearly impossible task. Catholic Charities reaches out into our community, welcoming the stranger in our midst and providing the greatest gifts we have to give – hope, love, and compassion. Since 2002, Catholic Charities has provided low cost family-based immigration legal services. Those who come to us for help want to be contributing members of society and no longer want to live in fear.

Central Texas has one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the U.S. Sadly, unqualified individuals who call themselves notaries (exploiting the meaning of notario, a word that indicates legal credentials in Latin America) prey on this vulnerable population and charge exorbitant amounts to file immigration paper work, often incorrectly or fraudulently. Across Texas, families are at risk of separation due to deportation, which is detrimental to the welfare of our entire community.

In order to serve the needs of the immigrant population in Central Texas, Catholic Charities was named a 2015 Impact Austin Community Partner and recipient of its Family Focus Area grant in the amount of $80,000. The grant will expand Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services (ILS) program by funding an additional Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) accredited representative who will coordinate outreach into rural areas where there are currently little to no low-cost legal representation services for immigrants. In addition, the grant will fund mobile immigration workshop equipment so that we can take our services on the road to efficiently serve outlying communities.

“On behalf of our members, we are proud to award Catholic Charities of Central Texas with a 2015 Focus Area Program grant,” says Donna Benson-Chan, executive director, Impact Austin. “As it expands its Immigration Legal Services program, they will help individuals and families to stay together and become productive and responsible residents and citizens.”

Often referred to as a collective giving organization, Impact Austin is comprised of several hundred women members who contribute $1,250 a year to create high-impact grants valued at up to $100,000 for area nonprofits. Through its membership, Impact Austin brings new charitable resources into Central Texas and empowers women philanthropists to invest in their community.

We have seen a marked increase in the number of individuals coming to our Austin office for consultations as a result of a new marketing strategy and new partnerships. The technology equipment purchased with Impact Austin funding has allowed us to give enhanced presentations on our immigration services to stakeholders throughout our service region. We are pleased to report that we have not had to turn away a single family from receiving our immigration legal services due to the increase in capacity made possible by additional staff.
Partnerships Strengthen Project

Collaborative partnerships are key to the success of this expansion project. Parishes and public libraries throughout our service region have been gracious hosts for Immigration 101 info sessions. At Immigration 101, families learn the basics of immigration benefits and the process for applying. The parishes will also host consultation workshops so that families do not have to travel to Austin to find out if they qualify for immigration benefits. Alliance Tech, a local event technology solutions provider, has been instrumental in helping us integrate technology into our formerly paper-based immigration workshops. These partnerships allow Catholic Charities to continue to keep families together and safe by helping them access the immigration benefits for which they are eligible by law.

“I think that really helped them,” said Deacon Ruiz. “They were hearing real questions get real answers.”

Immigration law is complex, meaning it is easy for families to be overwhelmed by the information and process. Catholic Charities is here to break down the barriers to this vital information.

We believe in the dignity of every person. We believe that strengthening families strengthens our community. Thanks to all of the partners involved in this ILS expansion project, Catholic Charities will be able to serve more families, reach new communities, and increase our impact.

ILS Expansion Partners to Date

Alliance Tech
Cepeda Branch, Austin Public Library
Emmaus Catholic Church, Lakeway
Impact Austin
Little Walnut Creek Branch, Austin Public Library
Mission Waco
Pleasant Hill Branch, Austin Public Library
Raindrop Turkish House
Ruiz Branch, Austin Public Library
Santa Julia Catholic Church, Austin
Southeast Branch, Austin Public Library
St. Francis on the Brazos Catholic Church, Waco
St. Helen Catholic Church, Georgetown
St. Mary of the Visitation Catholic Church, Lockhart
Windsor Park Branch, Austin Public Library
Angels of Hope Golf Tournament Success

Catholic Charities of Central Texas thanks the generous sponsors of the 7th Annual Angels of Hope Golf Tournament. Together, we raised more than $38,000 in support of our services in the Brazos Valley.

GUARDIAN ANGELS

Cashion Dental  
Catholic Family  
Fraternal of Texas-KJ.Z.T.  
Dyson Energy Group, LLC  
Sam & Carol DeStefano Charitable Foundation  
Cullen and Patti Mancuso  
M.G. Cangelose & Associates, LP  
Robert Manning  
Mark B. Riley, M.D.  
Readfield Meats & Deli  
Michael Schaefer  
Patricio J. Santander and Clotilde Pichon  
St. Anthony Altar Society  
St. Joseph Health System  
St. Mary’s Catholic Center

GOLF CART ANGELS

David & Anna Damian  
Fruit Your Fancy  
FedStar Credit Union  
Randy Flasowski - Farmers Insurance  
Holy Rosary Altar Society - Frenstaf  
James L. & Laurie Henry Lindsay Communications  
Justin Munsey - Edward Jones

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First State Bank of Bedias  
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Galleria Day Spa  
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Kolache Rolf’s

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Capital Farm Credit  
Ana Maria Denena  
Leon & Cynthia Denena  
O’Brien Development  
The Rhodes Group  
R.E.C. Industries, Inc.
Volunteers Lifeblood of Catholic Charities

Volunteers are important to any nonprofit, but at Catholic Charities of Central Texas, we rely heavily on the help they provide. Last year alone, more than 350 volunteers gave more than 18,000 hours to the mission, for an added value to the agency of more than $450,000.

Volunteers completed a variety of tasks such as:
- sorting donations and clothing
- entering data
- completing client intake
- teaching classes
- scanning documents

If you are interested in giving back in a fun and meaningful way, we encourage you to consider volunteering with Catholic Charities.

Current Volunteer Opportunities

Receptionist
Welcome guests and answer phone calls during peak hours. Training provided.

Office Help
Help staff to organize supplies, create client folders, complete data entry and more.

Donation Center
Assist our staff by stocking shelves, filling orders and sorting donations.

Individual & Group Projects
Let Catholic Charities help you or your group find the right fit at our agency.

1. King’s College students spent an alternative winter break volunteering.
2. Volunteers from Challenge, based at St. John Neumann, spent Martin Luther King Jr. Day sorting clothing donations.
4. Tony Gomez, our 2014 Volunteer of the Year, shares about the value of service with St. Thomas Moore students during Just 5 Days summer service program.
Catholic Charities Launches Parish Relations Program

This past spring, Catholic Charities of Central Texas launched a new initiative to better engage and serve the parishes and communities of our 25-county service area. Although Catholic Charities served more than 14,000 individuals in the past year alone, many more need our help to create hope of a better life. We believe that by investing in our parishes and building upon the strengths of what we both have to offer, we can work together to better serve the poor and vulnerable entrusted to our care.

Q&A

What is Catholic Charities’ parish relations initiative all about?

The goals of the Parish Relations program are to:

• Increase awareness of the services provided by Catholic Charities.

• Build partnerships with parishes to expand existing services into currently underserved parts of the diocese.

• Provide opportunities for all people to live out the social teachings of the church.

• Help end poverty in Central Texas.

What can Catholic Charities offer to my parish community?

• Education - We can provide speakers on topics such as Catholic Charities, Poverty, Catholic Social Teaching, and other areas of expertise.

• Direct Service - Beginning with Immigration Legal Services, we are “taking our show on the road” in order to bring client services to the communities where they are needed most and to eliminate barriers to receiving much-needed support. Let us help to meet the needs of your community!

• Stewardship and volunteer opportunities - We can provide service-learning opportunities for individuals and groups of all ages!

How can my parish or parish group support the work of Catholic Charities to end poverty in Central Texas?

• Invite Catholic Charities to present to your parishioners. This includes ministry groups, committees, youth, prayer groups, Knights of Columbus, etc.

• Sponsor a donation drive.

• Recruit parishioners to volunteer in one of our programs.

• Become a Catholic Charities Ambassador! In this role you will assist in engaging parishioners in the mission of Catholic Charities in order to meet the needs of the community throughout the Catholic Diocese of Austin.

How do we get started?

Contact Allison Cavazos, Parish Relations Coordinator, at 512-651-6105 or allison-cavazos@ccctx.org.
Catholic Charities Welcomes New Board Members

On Tuesday, August 25, donors, volunteers, board members, staff, community leaders and friends gathered at the Catholic Charities Annual Meeting to celebrate the successes of the 2015 fiscal year.

We honored exiting board members—Barbara Budde, Parker Peiri and Steve Wohleb—whose leadership and passion have furthered the mission of Catholic Charities.

Catholic Charities’ new board members were welcomed, including DeKarlos Blackmon, Chris Cantu, Michael Scarpato, Judith Seguy, Ted Smith and Terri Von Dohlen. Each member of the board makes a three-year commitment to the mission of Catholic Charities. They oversee governance of the agency, ensuring fiscal responsibility, adherence to best practices and mission alignment.

Steve Wohleb turned his leadership over to Tom Howard, the newly appointed president of the board of directors.

Though Tom will hold a new position, he is not new to the mission and calling of Catholic Charities, having served on the Board of Directors for the past three years. Tom was first inspired to serve by dear friends who identify as Secular Franciscans, a community of Catholic lay people striving to follow Christ with St. Francis of Assisi as their prime example. Tom stands by the importance of pairing justice and charity to help others in need and emphasized how Catholic Charities can bring relief to those who face greater injustices.

“A young, pregnant, unmarried woman doesn’t have time to consider why she didn’t graduate from high school,” said Tom. “She needs help right now. A family about to be separated through deportation doesn’t have the luxury of musing about the injustice of the immigration system. They need help right now. A family devastated by a flood doesn’t have time to consider why they can’t afford to live on higher ground. They need help right now.”

Tom is honored to be part of our family at Catholic Charities of Central Texas where justice and charity intertwine to care for children, strengthen families and welcome the stranger. Together we will increase the help given to those individuals of our community in need of a helping hand.

Board of Directors

Tom Howard – President
Dr. Manuel Torres – Vice President
Chris Cantu – Treasurer
Joanne Sanders – Secretary
DeKarlos Blackmon
John Donna
Mary Beth Koenig, CPA
Terry McDaniel
Mike Millard
Michael Scarpato
Judith Seguy
Ted Smith
Terri Von Dohlen

by Emily Ott
People of faith serving anyone in need by strengthening families and promoting respect for human dignity and life.

our mission

“It only takes one person to restore hope.”
- Pope Francis

Think about a time in your life when someone—a friend, family member, mentor—helped restore your hope for the future.

You can give that same gift of hope to someone in need at Catholic Charities. Donate today in tribute of someone who gave you hope.

All gifts made in tribute will be listed in the next Catholic Charities newsletter.