

**Catholic Charities**  
Providing Help. Creating Hope. Serving All.

1400 N Meridian St  
Indianapolis, IN 46202  
HelpCreateHope.org



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The Church in Central and Southern Indiana



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**MISSION STATEMENT** The staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities Indianapolis are called by the Gospel to uphold the dignity of all people. Guided by Catholic social teaching, we consider it a privilege to deliver compassionate and caring service to help and empower those in need.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**May, 20, 2018**

*Walking for Dreams*  
Indianapolis Downtown Canal

**June 24, 2018**

*Coffman Memorial Golf Outing*  
Bluff Creek Golf Course

**June 20, 2018**

*World Refugee Day Breakfast Open House*  
Catholic Center

For more information on upcoming events, please contact Valerie Bendel at [vbendel@archindy.org](mailto:vbendel@archindy.org).



# Catholic Charities

Spring News 2018



## Director's Letter

Families in poverty suffer just as Jesus suffered while he was here on earth. Just like Jesus, poor families are looking for hope of a personal resurrection - deliverance out of poverty.

The path may be different, but consider these striking parallels:

Jesus was betrayed - our social welfare systems were initially designed to be a safety net, but after 50 years, we see they have become more like cobwebs that keep people where they are. The system unintentionally sets families up for failure, and they are betrayed by false promises.

Jesus was deserted - families in poverty live in the shadows of society and are marginalized on a daily basis. In talking about the poor, Pope Francis said, "Those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or it's disenfranchised - they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the 'exploited' but the outcast, the 'leftovers.'"

Jesus was falsely accused - families in poverty are often labeled as "lazy" and "freeloaders." The reality is that the majority are the working poor - hard workers with full-time, minimum wage jobs. It's just not enough to get their basic needs met.

Jesus was rejected - families in poverty are rejected on a daily basis, as though poverty is contagious through touch. Think about how many times we've heard "that's a great project, but I don't want it in my neighborhood."

Through the resurrection, despair is turned to hope. The promise of Christ's life, death and resurrection is that the story is not over. Through him, life and hope for the future are reborn. This is what families seek when they come to Catholic Charities.

Please take time to prayerfully read the activities and client stories shared in this newsletter. Consider your participation in helping Catholic Charities help the families we serve be delivered out of poverty by sharing your time or talents, or by a making a sacrificial gift.

Service to God through Charity,

*David J. Bethuram*

**David J. Bethuram**  
Executive Director  
Secretariat for Catholic Charities

## Legal Immigration Success Story

Biak Htoo came to Catholic Charities in Indianapolis Legal Immigration in May of 2017 at the referral of one of our staff members in the refugee program and is a part of the Burmese community. Biak Htoo needed to apply for Naturalization in order to become a U.S. Citizen. Coming to the United States in August of 2011, he now had the 5-year residency requirement to apply. Yet, upon meeting him, one obvious thing stood as a barrier between him and Citizenship. Biak Htoo is both deaf and mute. One of the requirements for obtaining Citizenship is to pass the Naturalization interview, which includes answering questions from the application, answering correctly U.S. history and civics questions, and an overall ability to read, write and understand English. The staff knew that this was going to be a difficult obstacle because Biak Htoo also did not know sign language. His family communicated with him only through basic gestures. Biak Htoo could not spell or write out words in his own language. So, the idea that he could learn to spell out words in English was not an option either. Our only option was to try for a medical waiver. Medical waivers are granted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in cases when applicants have some sort of disability or impairment which directly inhibits their ability to learn or retain information needed to pass the Naturalization interview. USCIS emphasizes that there must be a nexus between the impairment and the person's inability to pass the Naturalization Test. Yet, part of the problem with Biak Htoo was that it was difficult to assess this because it was difficult to communicate with him. Nevertheless, a doctor evaluated Biak Htoo and provided the reasons for his inability to pass the test.

A staff member accompanied Biak Htoo to his Naturalization interview, along with a family member who could act as the closest interpreter there would be. She is familiar with the various gestures used with Biak Htoo. The first several minutes of the interview were spent trying to clear up confusion. We had to explain that the applicant knew no sign language, could only communicate through gestures and that we had a medical waiver on file because of these circumstances. It was a first for the officer, who ultimately sought the guidance from a supervisor on how to proceed.

Cases like these are especially important because more is riding on approval than most other cases. Those of our refugee clients who have disabilities receive disability income so that their basic needs are met. These clients depend on this income and are especially vulnerable. A requirement of disability income for our refugee clients is that they become U.S. Citizens within 7 years of being in the U.S. Since they are eligible after being here for 5 years, this gives them a 2-year window for obtaining Citizenship. Often, the disability makes it harder for them to do so. The very people who need the supplemental income most are also those who may have the most difficult time meeting the requirements. The officer and supervisor came back into the room and stated that they would grant the waiver. While Biak Htoo and his family member did not necessarily know the weight that this decision held, our staff members' eyes lit up. The officer proceeded with the interview, albeit slowly and with much patience. At the end of the interview, the officer stated that he was recommending Biak Htoo for approval. And on January 25, 2018, Biak Htoo became a U.S. Citizen.



## Simple Soup & Bread Luncheon



Every year on Holy Thursday Catholic Charities Indianapolis hosts a Simple Soup & Bread Luncheon. Each year as Lent draws to a close, we invite guests to join us for a meal of soup, salad and bread. This simple meal calls to mind the many in our community who have little to eat or go without food. Through this simple meal, we symbolically join in solidarity with our brothers and sisters.

This year, Cardinal Ritter High School art students created bowls for each guest to take home with them as a reminder of this gathering and to remember those who go without sufficient meals and nutrition through prayer, volunteering and financial support.

We want to thank Cardinal Ritter for partnering with us on this event. We would also like to thank IndyAnna's Catering and Roselyn Recipe for donating the food. Monetary donations from this event support the work of Catholic Charities Crisis Office.

Mark your calendar for Holy Thursday of 2019 to join us next year.

## True Encounter with the Poor

"We may think of the poor simply as the beneficiaries of our occasional volunteer work or of impromptu acts of generosity that appease our conscience. However good and useful such acts may be for making us sensitive to people's needs and the injustices that are often their cause, they ought to lead to a true encounter with the poor and a sharing that becomes a way of life." (Pope Francis - Message for the First World Day of the Poor, n. 3)

"That true encounter with the poor" is the mission behind Catholic Charities newest ministry - Parish Social Ministry (PSM).

In August of 2015, Archbishop Tobin asked Catholic Charities USA to provide an organizational review

of the Catholic Charities network within the Archdiocese. After being assessed, it was concluded that one area for growth would be to expand upon the relationships between Catholic Charities and our parish and school communities. With that in mind, the Secretariat of Catholic Charities has launched a new initiative called Parish Social Ministry (PSM).

By definition, PSM is the action that the faith community takes to live out the Gospel we proclaim and to grow in love with God and our Neighbor. Our Archdiocesan parishes and schools often become one of the first places that people turn to when they find themselves in need - whether that need is food, shelter or clothing or perhaps just a listening ear in their time of crisis. PSM aims to work with parishes

and schools in fostering greater outreach and advocacy efforts, to educate on ways they can serve the poor and vulnerable and to provide opportunities for spiritual growth through charitable acts.

If you would like to learn more about Parish Social Ministry visit [www.archindy.org/psm](http://www.archindy.org/psm) or contact:

Theresa Chamblee  
Director of Social Concerns  
Catholic Charities  
[tchamblee@archindy.org](mailto:tchamblee@archindy.org)  
317-236-1404



## Holy Family Transitional Housing

Claire and her 2-year-old daughter Lainey did not know where to go next. They had been to two other shelters. Claire had been homeless with a small child *five times*. She faced an uncertain future and did not know how to put her trials with stable housing to rest. With the help of Connect2Help 2-1-1, Claire was connected to Holy Family Shelter and entered the emergency program. Through her initial assessment with case management services, we learned that Claire suffered from ADHD, Anxiety and Depression, all of which had prevented her from maintaining employment and housing in the past. Claire had recently lost her job, fell behind on rent and was ultimately evicted from her apartment. Claire also was fleeing domestic violence from her ex-husband and found a safe haven at Holy Family Shelter as well as a platform to rebuild her life.

While in the shelter, after reconnecting with mental health supports and proper medications, Claire obtained a full-time position in May with a local restaurant starting at minimum wage. While Claire was able to obtain employment, she still had multiple evictions that prevented her from finding housing. Claire worked diligently to budget with her case manager to find housing that fit with her monthly income.

Months after exiting the shelter, the Holy Family Transitional Housing Coordinator contacted Claire to see how her family was doing. Claire had successfully maintained housing and employment but admitted that she still feared becoming homeless again on a daily basis. The longer the conversation went on, it was apparent

that this was a substantiated fear and Claire was vulnerable to returning to homelessness. Eager to assist, the Transitional Housing Coordinator encouraged Claire to fill out an application for the Transitional Housing Program, and she was immediately enrolled.

Since exiting the shelter, Claire has remained on her mental health treatment plan that she developed with shelter case management staff. Since her entrance into transitional housing services, new physical health diagnoses appeared that caused her to miss work and receive reduced paychecks. However, due to her prior demonstration of commitment to her job and dependability, she was able to maintain her employment and housing by successfully budgeting and maintaining her bills. Holy Family Transitional Housing Services was able to assist with rental assistance during these difficult times while she received the medical attention that she needed, free of fear that she would become homeless as a result.

Additionally, Claire expressed concerns for her now 3-year-old daughter's physical and cognitive development. With assistance from her case manager and her family doctor, Claire was connected with Riley's Children's Hospital and a speech therapist who confirmed Claire's suspicion that Lainey was not meeting childhood targets. With her speech therapist, Claire was assisted in developing a plan to help Lainey in learning and growing. As a single mom working 40 hours per week and relying on bus transportation, Claire diligently spent time at home reviewing lessons with her daughter

each night to encourage her growth and give her every chance to succeed. While Claire demonstrated extreme growth by her ability to maintain employment and housing while in the program, her eagerness to be the best parent she could be was what shined through the most.

In fact, the achievement Claire was most proud of was reconnecting with family and improving her family dynamic throughout the program. In addition to Lainey, Claire had 2 other children whom she hadn't seen in several years. As a result of a legal assistance referral, Claire was able to begin weekly visits with her 7-year-old son, Stan, and teenage daughter, Jordan. Much like her diligence in working with Lainey in improving her development, Claire sought out parenting support to assist her with her rekindled relationship with Stan and Jordan. The Transitional Housing Coordinator was able to connect her with a parenting support group to assist her in this transition and support Claire's goal of being a better mom.

Because of the supportive services Claire was receiving through Holy Family Transitional Housing Services, she was able to take better care of herself and be the mother she wanted to without the constant threat of falling behind with no support. The family began to move from a "survive" mindset to thriving in their new life. Claire exited the program having increased income at the same job multiple times and maintained permanent housing for nearly three years. Claire graduated the program confident that her fifth time of homelessness would indeed be her last.

## Caregiver Support

A ramp referral from an Eskenazi Health social worker connected the Pages to the Catholic Charities Caregiver Support Program. Robert and Maude are a couple living near poverty in Indianapolis. Robert, 55 years old, has been on disability for 36 years. A non-service related accident while he was in the Navy resulted in a traumatic brain injury. Permanent nerve damage was life-altering. Maude, 56 years old, has been on disability for 27 years and struggles with caregiver responsibilities as she lives with her own health conditions. Despite their limiting medical issues, they celebrate their 26 years of marriage and surround themselves with hope and humor.

The small deck and several steep steps at their home's entrance were deteriorating rapidly and were no longer safe. Whether she was bearing Robert's weight as he came down the steps, maneuvering her wheeled grocery cart out to the bus stop or simply going to the mailbox, Maude was anxious.

The Caregiver Support Program, collaborating with Holy Spirit Parish at Geist Ramps Ministry, removed the steps and built a ramp that allows the Pages to enter and exit safely. Maude says that a huge weight has been lifted from her shoulders. She's less concerned about falls for both of them, feels that the home is safer and

knows that having a ramp gives them a future in their home. (Plus, now she has an outlet for her decorating flair.)

