Recent events have left many of us feeling like the world is upside down. It would be simple to just believe that the struggles and challenges we currently face as a community will be solved once a vaccine has been developed. However, that would be naïve and may lull us into a false sense of security. What IS certain in all of this is that while the long term effects of COVID-19 are unknown, we are already dealing with immediate effects as the country attempts to rebuild our economy and protect the educational opportunities of our children.

As we move forward, the term “new normal” has changed from something we have heard over the years, to a frequently used way to describe the changes we have experienced the past several months. It saddens me to think that this new normal will include fewer social interactions, more remote learning and a more distanced and disconnected community. Sure, some of this is bound to happen as a result of more technological advances and access to devices. All the same, I sometimes wish we could go back to more face-to-face interactions and less screen time. When I hear that there is some new product coming out that is going to make our lives “easier,” it causes me to pause and ask, “Does it really?” Whether we are forced to or choose to socially distance ourselves, I pray that we are still able to maintain a community that is welcoming, inclusive, healthy and in-line with our Hoosier tradition of good hospitality.

Throughout our response to the COVID-19 crisis, our staff, volunteers and the Indiana National Guard have demonstrated an energy and commitment to serve our community with food, shelter, personal hygiene items and hot meals in an effort to meet the need for consistency and a sense of security. These men and women, who show up daily, knowing the potential risks, do so because they believe their efforts can make a difference in the lives of our neighbors. There are so many people in our community who have stepped up without notice or accolades to help others. It is important that YOU know how much your support helps us serve families and individuals who are struggling to put their lives back together.

Dr. Robert H. Schuller, in his book Tough Times Never Last, But Tough People Do! states, “There is no substitute for deep abiding faith. If we hold on, we will win out! Unquestionably the profound faith and the beautiful providence of God produce a strong and unquenchable optimistic mental attitude.”

We have all been impacted by COVID-19 – isolation, working from home, virtual education or other normal activities are now disrupted and less convenient. I want to believe there is a light at the end of the tunnel that will help us realize the value of these experiences and the lessons learned and perhaps provide us with a better picture for the future. At the very least, let us be reminded of the value of slowing things down and being more appreciative of the simplicity this life has to offer.

Stay safe and healthy,

John C. Etling
Agency Director
Ryves Youth Center Changes Role to Meet New Needs

Despite having to close its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ryves Youth Center has continued to serve its community during this unique time. Along with the soup kitchen, Fishes & Loaves, hot meals are served, to-go, five days a week. Nutritious meals are served by staff and volunteers following updated safety protocols and it is requested that our guests wear masks when picking up meals. Since mid-March, we have seen the number of meals served per day increase by as much as 30% with the average number of meals being 300 each day.

Perhaps one of the biggest concerns resulting from the temporary closing of the Center is the ability to maintain relationships that staff have with the children of Ryves. It is a top priority that the youth know that they are valued, missed and not forgotten. When possible, Zoom calls have occurred between TIME for Mentors and mentees, many children visit to receive a hot meal daily and some have been safely gardening at the Eden of Ryves Community Garden.

A safety plan is in place that will allow for the reopening of Ryves Youth Center. This plan meets or exceeds recommendations from the Vigo County Health Department and the Center for Disease Control.

We are proud to announce that our Assistant Director of Bethany House, Julie Green, has earned a Master of Leadership Development degree with a concentration in Not-for-Profit Leadership from the prestigious Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

Since beginning as an intern in 2015, Julie has become an integral part of Bethany House. Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, Julie focused on her studies and conquered her last semester of college in the spring. Completing her graduate degree was no simple task and Julie faced many hurdles as she dealt with holding a full-time position, battling multiple health issues and being a parent. “I was only able to accomplish this degree through the help of God and the support system I had — Danielle (Danielle Elkins, Bethany House, Director) has been an amazing boss and mentor; and she tries to accommodate each one of her staff and supports our endeavors,” says Julie.

Julie’s hard work and dedication is an inspiration to the staff and residents at Bethany House and she is a priceless asset to those that she serves. She looks forward to utilizing her new skill set to serve as a role model to others and promote change in our community. Catholic Charities is lucky to have Julie as part of our team and wish her nothing but the best as she continues to grow and achieve her hopes and dreams.

New Degree Will Be Used to Serve

Stable housing is a key factor in ensuring a child’s well-being, as well as future educational and economic success. The recent federal moratorium on evictions from the CDC will prevent landlords from evicting tenants if they were unable to pay until the end of the year, however, payments for housing will continue to accrue. This means that once lifted, Hoosier families will face months of accrued rent charges they have been unable to pay due to COVID-19’s economic impact. It is inevitable that this combination of months of accrued or unpaid rent and the need to pay current rental payments will lead to unprecedented amount of evictions throughout 2021.

For Indiana’s youth, many living right here in west central Indiana, housing insecurity will only increase the social isolation and disruptions in education that children currently face during this unique time. Catholic Charities is committed to help these children and their families but we need your help to meet the rising need.

If you feel moved to do so, please visit our donation page at ccthin.org