MISSION STATEMENT
Catholic Charities in Terre Haute exists to serve the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the elderly, the neglected children, and the needy. Our goal is to relieve suffering and hardship for people in the community regardless of nationality, race, creed, or religion.

Director’s Letter

2019 The Year of the Unsung Hero

Dear Friends,

On any given day you can look around your neighborhoods and see the men and women who give their time, talents and treasure to contribute to their community. You recognize these people. They serve in the various branches of the military, are local and state police officers, firefighters, emergency crews, street department employees or code enforcement staff. These men and women put their lives on the line every day to enforce laws, keep order and protect us from those who might otherwise wish to do us harm. These are heroes that we should pray for, express our thanks to and never forget the sacrifice they are making for us.

There is another type of hero – those who can be found behind the scenes providing a crucial role in making our communities a better place. We all have a similar need in this world – to treat each other as we would like to be treated. Whether you open someone’s mind to new possibilities or you open their hearts, you are bettering your community. You are making the world a happier, more full place.

These unsung heroes can be found sorting clothes and other gifts for Christmas distribution, preparing meals in a local soup kitchen, playing the piano at their house of worship or singing in their church choir. They can be a mentor in a local youth center or a high school student who reads to younger children. It could be the den mother for the neighborhood scout troop or the retired farmer or business owner who now finds great meaning as a volunteer sorting food at the local foodbank.

No matter where you live, you will find them all around you, providing a service that makes a difference for others in our community. Because they are giving of their time and talents, they provide something of value. I believe it is their calling to step into these roles and serve as an example of inspiration to others in their community so they too can make a difference in this world.

This newsletter, the first one of 2019, will feature stories of what we want to call Unsung Heroes in our community. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things to change lives and ultimately change the world as we know it!

Yours in Christ,

John C. Etling
Agency Director

TIME for ME Attends Conference

Staff from TIME for ME at Ryves Youth Center recently attended the Catholic Charities-USA Mentoring Conference held in Washington, DC. Program coordinators learned valuable tools to strengthen relationships between mentors and mentees, attended talks on trauma-informed care and attachment, regulation and competency. As a result of the conference, TIME for ME will now incorporate an opioid component into the program with the goal of establishing an understanding of opioid dependence in youth.

TIME for ME at Ryves Youth Center provides help, creates hope and serves children through one-on-one interaction for two hours a week throughout the year. The program is open to boys and girls ages 9 to 17. Our program is in need of mentors; please consider offering your time to make a lasting difference in the life of a local child.

For more information and/or to register for an orientation, please contact Jubi Ben at 812-235-1265 or jben@ccthin.org
Financial Vulnerability

A study by Prosperity Now, published in January of this year, reveals just how vulnerable the working-class is to income interruptions. Their nationwide data is reflected right here in the communities that we serve with our programs.

The recent government shutdown was eye-opening for many Americans, including those here in the Wabash Valley. Employed full-time and with benefits, families found themselves struggling to make ends meet after several missed paychecks. Many families are just one paycheck away from financial disaster.

- Over 22% of jobs in the US are in a low-wage occupation, meaning these jobs pay BELOW the poverty threshold for a family of four.
- 1 in 5 families experiences income volatility on a monthly basis.

The numbers in this study represent millions of workers and families that rely on low or unreliable wages to get by. These families represent many of our friends and neighbors. Less than ideal credit scores, student loan debt, unfair rent costs and more are just some of the roadblocks preventing many families from getting ahead. While progress is slowly being made, many Americans remain financially vulnerable and are just one messed paycheck or medical emergency away from financial crisis.

Your continued support allows Catholic Charities to provide assistance and peace of mind when disaster strikes.

Judy Hogan
St. Benedict Soup Kitchen

When Judy Hogan was told that she had been nominated as an Unsung Hero, she was completely taken aback. She shared that, like many volunteers, “I don’t do this for the recognition; I do it for the help that it provides to the people in my community.” Judy proceeded to express how honored she was and hoped that this acknowledgment will bring awareness and inspire others to get involved.

Judy’s involvement with each aspect of the soup kitchen – from food and monetary donations to volunteers and patrons – keeps her from taking anything for granted. Her gracious attitude is just one thing that contributes to the successful operation of the kitchen.

Throughout the week, Judy plans nutritious and filling meals, organizes and coordinates volunteers and above all, always makes the soup kitchen a place where people find community, warmth and acceptance. Her goal is to make each of the 140-150 people she serves each day feel welcome and wanted.

Judy works tirelessly to maintain the dignity and respect of each visitor to the kitchen, while still making an effort to learn the names and stories of her patrons. Understanding the lack of fundamental resources that many members of our community face daily and combating that with compassion and understanding is just one example of how Judy makes a difference in so many lives. A volunteer who works closely with Judy shared, “Judy exemplifies true discipleship, for she not only feeds those who are hungry, she recognizes the face of Jesus in each person who comes to St. Ben’s in need of a meal.”

If you visit the soup kitchen, you will see a sign hanging that reads:

Our job is not to judge. Our job is not to figure out if someone deserves something. Our job is to lift the fallen, to restore the broken, to heal the hurting, and most of all, to feed the hungry. – Joel Osteen

With grace, dedication, humility, compassion and so much love, Judy follows these words each day and continues to touch the hearts, and bellies, of many in our community.

The Soup Kitchen at St. Benedict’s Church operates Monday through Friday from 11:30 to 12:30 at 111 South 9th Street, Terre Haute. Please call 812-232-8421 for more information or to volunteer.

Linda and Skip Lenne – Catholic Charities Christmas Store

Santa Claus may be enjoying time off from the holiday season, but his elves at the Christmas Store are hard at work! Keeping busy, you will find these volunteers here every Tuesday throughout the year. Two of those special volunteers, Linda and Skip Lenne, have been with the Christmas Store for 4 years and share a passion and commitment that have not gone unnoticed.

On this particular Tuesday, the Christmas Store is quiet, but as the sun peaks through the old stain-glass windows, you see shelves that are beginning to fill. Skip can be found in the Toy Room sorting through donations and making sure each toy is in working order. As he works, he mindfully considers each toy, “A glime kit, a boy would love that! Is that Wonder Woman? A little girl will have fun with this one!” Skip, and his fellow volunteers carefully sort each donated toy and place them on the shelves in anticipation.

Down the hall, Linda is in a small room helping sort women’s clothing items. Similar to her husband, Linda is quick to mention that they are just two of the many volunteers who work around the year to make the Christmas Store possible. As the clothes are sorted, she points out how many of the clothes are brand new, with tags, and how grateful that makes the guests of the Store.

Both Skip and Linda share that the Christmas Store would not be possible without donations coming in throughout the year. Many groups supply large donations in December, and while no donation is ever discarded, it is often too late for these items to be used that year. Families are scheduled to shop the Christmas Store during the last week of November thru the early weeks of December. To make the guests feel welcome, the Store must be organized and stocked by the time they arrive. Receiving early donations helps the process of sorting and displaying go much more smoothly.

During the weeks that families are shopping, Skip, Linda and the other volunteers will be extra busy restocking shelves each evening. “I enjoy coming in on those days to find the shelves cleared out. You know items go to a family in need – especially the toys!” shares Skip. Linda explains that, “Working with the other volunteers, building relationships and seeing the difference the Christmas Store makes, that’s what keeps us coming back.”

Donations for the Christmas Store are welcome throughout the year. Please call 812-332-4447 to schedule your donation or inquire about volunteering.