Letter from the Director

Pope Francis said, “We all have the duty to do good.” During my five months at Catholic Charities, I have noticed that many of the good works performed daily seem to be some of the best kept secrets. One of my goals is to increase awareness of all the programs and life-changing services available through Catholic Charities.

I was excited to learn about all of the wonderful services offered and people involved with Catholic Charities. I discovered that Catholic Charities has funding for families of individuals waiting for transplants or dealing with catastrophic illnesses like cancer. It is such a blessing to be able to provide outstretched Hands of Hope to families on such a difficult journey.

In addition to learning about the good work performed, I have enjoyed meeting many of the wonderful volunteers and donors who make the mission of Catholic Charities possible. Without the generosity of our donors and the passion of our volunteers, none of these good works would be possible.

Thank you for supporting the mission of Catholic Charities. We hope this newsletter gives you some insight about the services Catholic Charities provides. The generosity of our donors and volunteers is what enables Catholic Charities to fulfill its duty to do good. We sincerely appreciate your continued commitment to our mission, and pray that peace be with you.

Many Blessings,

Michelle L. Martin
CEO/Executive Director
Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas
The Gift of Life

About half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned. Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas is focused on helping pregnant women carry their pregnancies to full term and keeping both mother and baby healthy. Through our Pregnancy Maintenance Initiative (PMI) Program, the counselors at Catholic Charities work with approximately 90 mothers each month in our 31-county service area.

“During our initial meeting with the mother, we want to assess her emotional needs, prenatal care, support systems, finances, and housing as well as speak to her about what resources are available,” said Jessica Palen, a counselor at the Catholic Charities office in Manhattan. “We offer counseling, adoption guidance, parenting advice, budgeting assistance and other support services while continuing to meet with the mother throughout her pregnancy and six months after delivery.”

Laura Dunn, a counselor in the Hays office added, “We assist families in the PMI program with diapers, wipes, formula, maternity clothes, car seats, cribs and other items if needed. Our focus is to have a safe and healthy environment for the baby.”

Both Jessica and Laura get a huge sense of fulfillment helping mothers and families. “I am overwhelmed by the gratitude we receive from the mothers in our program,” Jessica said. “So many of the mothers we work with don’t have any support systems. We listen and are a supportive partner throughout their pregnancies. Catholic Charities is the only place that offers these types of services, and I am so glad that we are able to help them.”

Each year around Mother’s Day, the Hays and Manhattan parishes take part in a Baby Bottle Campaign to support Catholic Charities programs for mothers and babies. The Annual Baby Bottle Campaign is a celebration of family, life, and love – between mothers, fathers, and children.

If you or your parish would like to take part in the Baby Bottle Campaign and raise money for Catholic Charities, please contact Jessica Palen in Manhattan at jpalen@ccnks.org or Laura Dunn in Hays at ldunn@ccnks.org. You may also choose to support these efforts by returning the enclosed envelope or by donating online at our secure website: www.ccnks.org.

If you would like information about Planned Giving opportunities, please contact Eric Frank at 785-825-0208 or efrank@ccnks.org.
Claudia and Johny Duran’s daughter, Persephone Consuela (Suela), is a beautiful, 16 year-old sophomore at Salina Central High School. This past fall, Suela started experiencing some unusual symptoms and after several doctors’ visits, her parents received news that no parent wants to hear … “Suela has a rare form of childhood cancer.”

In just one week, Suela’s family was one of four families who came to Catholic Charities dealing with a catastrophic illness of a family member and needing assistance. Although that week was not typical, the number of families seeking assistance for catastrophic illnesses continues to grow.

In addition to the stress of the illness, families face the harsh reality of all the costs associated with being sick or caring for a loved one … taking time off work (sometimes unpaid), covering travel expenses (food, lodging and gas) and mounting medical bills. These unexpected events can leave many families struggling to pay normal household expenses, especially during more challenging financial times.

Kelly Mead Fund

The Kelly Mead Fund was established by a courageous family who lost their teenage son while he was waiting for a heart transplant. They generously gave the funds they had collected for his transplant to Catholic Charities to help others dealing with catastrophic illnesses. Families may use the funds for expenses associated with traveling to medical treatments or other appointments, extra uncovered medical expenses and other associated expenses.

Cheryl Walters, the Emergency Assistance Coordinator at Catholic Charities, observed, “An illness can be financially devastating. Many of the families who come to us are in jeopardy of losing their homes, insurance, utilities, and their phones and cars which they need to reach their doctors.” Cheryl added, “This is a reality. People get sick or their child gets sick, and they struggle and need our help. They want to focus on their health and recovery, but the financial issues are staring them in the face.”

It Could Happen to Anyone

“No one plans to become sick or to have a sick child. These added expenses can add another layer of stress onto an already stressful situation,” said Michelle Martin, CEO/Executive Director of Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas. “Having a child with a rare congenital heart defect, I understand all too well what these families are going through. I am so thankful for the generous donors who enable Catholic Charities to help ease some of these families’ financial burdens.”

Fighting Spirit

This past week, Suela Duran and her parents returned to the Catholic Charities office in Salina to say thank you. Suela’s mother, Claudia, told us, “We cannot thank you enough for your help. Your assistance helped us keep our home during this difficult time.”

The Duran’s are celebrating because Suela just finished her last round of chemotherapy and had her 16th birthday. “She may have lost her hair, but not her fighting spirit,” added Cheryl Walters. “She and her family are strong. They are survivors.”

When you look at Suela Duran, you only see her beautiful smile, not everything she has been through these past five months. To us, her smile is priceless.
Upcoming Events

- **MAY 3**  Hays Baby Bottle Campaign Begins
- **MAY 6**  Match Madness with the Greater Salina Community Foundation
- **MAY 11**  Manhattan Baby Bottle Campaign Begins
- **JUNE 15**  Manhattan Baby Bottle Campaign Ends
- **JUNE 22**  Hays Baby Bottle Campaign Ends
- **JULY 20**  Catholic Charities Annual Fundraiser
  Salina Ramada Hotel & Conference Center
  1616 W. Crawford
  Doors open at 5:00 pm | Meal starts at 5:30 pm

  *RSVP only - no ticket purchase necessary. To make reservations, contact Eric Frank at 785-825-0208 or efrank@ccnks.org.*

- **AUGUST 9**  Catholic Charities Annual Appeal Begins

OUR MOST NEEDED ITEMS:

1. Diapers
2. Baby Bottles *(new or used)*
3. Plastic Totes *(large)*
4. Meat *(canned or frozen)*
5. Canned Soups *(with pull tops)*
6. Peanut Butter or Cheese Cracker Packages

*If you would like to donate items to Catholic Charities, call 888-468-6909*