Letter from the Director

As my second year at Catholic Charities nears completion, I feel so blessed to be with an organization focused on helping others. Your steadfast support enables us to expand our collaborative efforts in response to community needs. Working with other area agencies, we helped start an initiative to keep Saline County children in Salina after they are taken into Police Protective Custody (PPC). With a shortage of licensed foster homes, most of these children were being transported to the Wichita area for the initial 72-hour period. Sometimes they spent hours at the police station waiting to be transported. When the local Juvenile Judge requested assistance, Catholic Charities became part of the solution to help lessen the trauma for these vulnerable children. Our staff worked with other agencies to develop a system for recruiting, training and certifying homes for special PPC placements and held the inaugural training for the volunteer home in October.

Also in October, Catholic Charities joined forces with the Salina Adult Education Center to assist students completing Partners 4 Success - an intense employment skills enhancement program created for individuals working towards attaining self-sustaining wages. Volunteers at Catholic Charities matched participants with appropriate work attire from donated clothing in the Salina office. It was uplifting to provide encouragement to these individuals who persevered through several challenging weeks to make transformative life changes.

These collaborations were possible because of supporters like you who donated clothes, volunteered, and contributed to Catholic Charities. Your efforts made all of the stories in this newsletter possible. May God continue to bless and guide our work together as we extend hands of hope to those around us who are suffering from poverty and other afflictions.

Gratefully Yours,

Michelle L. Martin, Director
Catholic Charities of Northern Kansas

www.ccnks.org
Your Donations in Action

Cancer Diagnosis Leaves Family in Crisis

Learning that your 19-year-old son has brain cancer is news no parent wants to hear, but it was a reality for Billy Clinesmith of Beloit.

Billy’s son, Tyler, spent weeks in a Wichita hospital before being referred to St. Jude Children’s Hospital. After the St. Jude’s doctors successfully removed his brain tumor, Tyler was scheduled to have 34 radiation treatments at the cancer center in Salina. Billy had to miss work while Tyler was in the hospital. Without her paycheck and the growing medical bills, things were very stressful. “Our bills were mounting, and we didn’t know what we were going to do,” Billy said. “We couldn’t pay our utility bills, and we needed to find gas money so that we could make the 130-mile, round-trip drive to Salina for his treatments.” Billy tried to remain strong but felt hopeless.

When Billy learned that Catholic Charities was going to help, she was overcome with emotion, “I dropped my head and sobbed. We were so grateful that there were people out there still willing to help others.”

At a recent doctor’s visit, they learned that Tyler has a new tumor below the one that was removed. Through tears Billy said, “No mother wants to see her child go through this, but we are glad that Tyler has been given a second chance.” She admitted to having down days but said that they remain grateful to the people who support Catholic Charities. “We tried to get help from many places, but Catholic Charities was the only one that would help. If I didn’t believe in God before this, I do now.”

Everything is Possible Through God

Aaron Carter fondly remembers meeting the woman of his dreams at work 15 years ago. Sing, who was from Malaysia, was in the United States attending college in Salina. She was working on campus when she met Aaron. They began dating and soon fell in love. Before Sing left on a trip to Malaysia in 2001, Aaron proposed ... and Sing said, “Yes!”

The events of September 11, 2001, almost ended all their plans.

Sing’s family was worried and did not want her to return to the U.S. and Aaron was scared he would never see her again. “I thought I had lost her forever.”

When Sing arrived back in the United States, she decided that she did not want to finish college. Without a student visa, they now had to figure out how to navigate the immigration system to allow them to stay together. Aaron admitted, “We tried to figure things out on our own, but it was very complicated. We knew that one mistake could set things back, maybe for years.”

Aaron added, “There was no way we could have afforded a lawyer on top of the fees we had to pay the government. The staff at Catholic Charities was really helpful, and it was reassuring to know that our paperwork was filled out correctly.”

Sing was glad they received help from Catholic Charities, “I trust them because they are a Christian-based organization. When they tell you they will get things done for you, they do.”

Sing is now a permanent resident of the United States. She and Aaron have been married for 13 years and have two boys. Sing commented with a smile, “Everything was possible through God. He was with me on my flight back to the United States, and He wanted us to be together.”

“I thought I had lost her forever.”

“Everything is Possible Through God”

“If I didn’t believe in God before this, I do now.”
Changing Lives ... One at a Time

Finding Ways to Cope with Their New Normal

Just a year ago, Tony was a strong and hard-working 30-year-old man. Everything changed when he fell while carrying a heavy household appliance down the stairs. In addition to hitting his head, doctor’s determined that Tony’s back was broken in two places and would require surgery.

As Tony waited to see if his insurance would cover the needed surgery, he began to experience symptoms that doctors could not explain. He suffered dizzy spells and experienced a weakening of the muscles in his limbs. With each day that passed, his condition worsened. It soon became difficult for him to stand or walk. In July, Tony began having seizures. He spent weeks in a Wichita hospital as doctors tried to stabilize him.

Tony’s wife said, “They couldn’t figure out what was wrong. He just kept having seizures. One lasted 26 minutes. He would shake so violently he would fall off the bed. It was very scary … he would stop breathing.” During it all, Crystal remained by his side.

Through genetic and DNA testing, they discovered Tony suffered from spastic dysplasia - a type of cerebral palsy. Since his discharge, Tony has had to re-learn basic skills like walking, dressing and writing. He still needs physical therapy. Crystal explained, “There is no cure. We are hoping that we can control it, but it could get worse with time.” She went on to add, “He was the sole provider for our family, and he has been unable to work for months.”

After receiving notice that their electricity was about to be disconnected, Crystal’s pastor referred the family to Catholic Charities.

“When Crystal and Tony came to Catholic Charities, they were desperate for help,” said Emelina Medellin, Salina Office Manager. “They came in seeking assistance with their electric bill. After speaking with Crystal, I realized that this was not a short-term issue. They were going to need more help.” Emelina went to work securing additional resources to help stabilize the family.

Catholic Charities connected them with the resources they needed to survive like food, hygiene items, and counseling services. Through the Kelly Mead Fund, which helps families impacted by catastrophic illnesses, Catholic Charities also helped them pay for some of their outstanding medical expenses not covered by insurance.

Crystal said, “Tony feels useless and constantly tells me how sorry he is. It breaks my heart. He didn’t ask for this, and we know he will never be the same again.” Though teary, she went on to share her gratitude, “We are lucky to have become connected with our counselor at Catholic Charities who has helped us work to find ways to cope. I am so grateful for all the help we have received from Catholic Charities. I don’t know what we would have done otherwise.”

“I am so grateful for all the help we have received from Catholic Charities.”

Consider Leaving a Legacy. Remember Catholic Charities in Your Estate Plan.
For more information, contact Eric Frank at efrank@ccncks.org.
Hope Helps to Rebuild a Family

“My life was forever changed when I was eight and discovered the body of my murdered brother,” Elizabeth shared. “That is something that you never quite get over. After his death, my mother was never the same.” Elizabeth’s life has taken many turns, and her struggle with anxiety and depression still haunt her. Last fall, Elizabeth finally gathered the courage to leave an abusive relationship and moved to her sister’s home so that she could start over. When she and her four children moved to Salina, they had nothing. She knew if she was going to end her abusive relationship, she had to leave quickly which meant leaving all of their possessions. Elizabeth was able to find resources in Salina to help them restore their lives and was thrilled to finally find a house to start rebuilding their lives.

“It has been a long process, but we finally moved into our own place last November. With four kids, especially having one with special needs, it is nice to have a house where we can all have space.”

Elizabeth came to Catholic Charities in need of food and diapers for her two-year-old twins. “While I was there, I learned about your Christmas program. I knew that I was not going to be able to provide anything for my kids at Christmas. That was painful for me. They had been through so much, and they deserved some joy in their lives.”

When Elizabeth arrived at Catholic Charities to pick up her family’s gifts, she was overjoyed. There were several large boxes of wrapped presents and other gift bags. Her twins smiled from ear to ear and giggled with excitement when volunteers helped them load the gifts into their car.

Elizabeth joyfully recounted the memory of that Christmas morning, “I just cried as I watched my kids open their presents. There was so much joy and happiness. I know that I didn’t buy their presents, but I was proud that my kids were happy.”

The family all received new warm clothes along with some toys. “The girls loved trying on their new clothes, and my son was so excited to get so many Thomas the Train toys. He plays with them every day.” Elizabeth said, “I am so grateful to everyone at Catholic Charities for their help through this rough time in our lives.”

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Christmas is a time of great joy. Unfortunately for the many families who struggle to pay rent, keep on their heat and lights, and put food on their tables, Christmas toys and gifts are just not an option.

Because of generous people like you, Catholic Charities is able to offer help each Christmas through our annual Adopt-a-Family program, which for the first time, shall be available in all three office locations - Hays, Manhattan and Salina.

For information on how you can become involved, visit our website www.ccnks.org.
Upcoming Dates

NOVEMBER 26-27  Offices Closed - Thanksgiving Holiday
DECEMBER 8  Offices Closed - Holy Day of Obligation
DECEMBER 24-25  Offices Closed - Christmas Holiday
DEC. 31 – JAN. 1  Offices Closed - New Year’s Holiday
JULY 24  11th Annual Catholic Charities Fundraiser in Salina

Welcome, Kyle!

We are pleased to announce that Kyle Weiser has been hired as the new Stabilization Services Coordinator at Catholic Charities. He grew up in Stockton, Kansas, and has remained in Salina since graduating from Kansas Wesleyan University.

Kyle, who attends St. Elizabeth Ann Seaton parish in Salina stated, “I am excited for this opportunity and look forward to serving the communities throughout the Salina Diocese.”