



CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA

Hope in the Good Life

January 2024

The Heart of Christ Award/The Villa Family

Looking for the little way to serve

Over 36 years ago, a group of lay people gathered to assist Catholic Social Services in planning a fundraising dinner to highlight the work of the agency. The result of their efforts was the first Celebration of Caring event which was held in February of 1988 (the event name was changed to Celebration of Hope in 2020). Beginning in 1989, CSS has presented the Heart of Christ award at the event to a person, family or group who exemplifies Christ-like service to our neighbors across southern Nebraska. On Sunday, February 25th, we will gather at Embassy Suites for the 37th Celebration of Hope event. As part of our celebration, we are pleased to present the 2024 Heart of Christ Award to Mike and Emily Villa and their family.

Emily's desire to welcome the stranger was instilled in her from a young age. Growing up in Lincoln, welcoming foreign exchange students, priests and religious from across the diocese or co-workers into their home was the norm. She and Mike began dating in college and served together as Sunday school teachers. This service to the church became an integral part of their identity as they began their married life. When their children were little, most of their service to their parish, the Cathedral of the Risen Christ, was done as "little things" they could do from

home. The Villas especially enjoyed welcoming new families to the parish, often with brownies and ice cream. As Emily states it, "We try to be intentional about greeting people we don't know at church so no one feels like a stranger."

The Villas have lived out their love of welcoming the stranger through volunteering at CSS. They enjoy cleaning and getting supplies for apartments for refugees being resettled by CSS. Through working with these families, they realized there was a shortage of decent furniture

needed to setup the homes. So, they organized a furniture drive with a quick post on Facebook, requesting nice, used furniture. "The response was so positive that my daughter suggested we rent a U-Haul and make a few trips around town to pick up all the furniture and take it to the (CSS) warehouse," Emily said. "We had a lot of fun learning to drive a U-Haul and the rest of the family met up with us to

load furniture into it at each stop. I guess if there is a little way to serve Jesus, we try to see it and say 'Yes!'"

Like so many across the diocese, Mike and Emily Villa and their family exemplify the Heart of Christ in humble service to others. From helping with projects in their parish to welcoming refugees settled by CSS, the Villa family is honored to accept the 2024 Heart of Christ award on behalf of all who give in little ways in Christ-like service to our southern Nebraska neighbors.

Listen to our latest Hope in the Good Life podcast featuring Emily Villa at csshope.org/podcast. For information on attending Celebration of Hope 2024, see the back page.





PO Box 30425
Lincoln NE 68503-0425



#HopeintheGoodLife



PLEASE JOIN US!
Sunday, February 25, 2024 Embassy Suites, Lincoln
Social Gathering- 4:30 pm Dinner- 6:00 pm
The Heart of Christ Award will be presented
to the Villa family

We'll gather for an evening of food, fellowship, live music from The Wildwoods, a panel conversation



focusing on the CSS sustainability plan and a program highlighting the work of CSS this past year. RSVP required for seating purposes- **deadline is 2/16/24**. To purchase seats with a credit card, visit csshope.org/celebration2024 or just scan this QR code. If you prefer, you may fill out the form below and send it in the enclosed envelope.

Yes! I'll attend 2024 Celebration of Hope on Sunday, February 25th.
Enclosed is \$ _____ to reserve _____ places (\$65 per person). Note: There is no charge for priests or religious to attend but a RESERVATION RESPONSE CARD IS REQUIRED for seating purposes.

No, I/We cannot attend, but enclosed is a gift to support the work of Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska.

Enclosed is \$ _____ to sponsor the cost of a Priest or Religious to attend.

Name(s) of attendees: _____

Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Parish: _____

Please make checks payable to Catholic Social Services. To register online with a credit card, go to csshope.org/celebration2024. Detach this card and mail with payment in the provided envelope no later than February 16th, 2024 as seating may be limited.

TRUMPET FEST

2004-2024
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18TH
2:00 - 4:00 PM
Saint Joseph Catholic Church
7900 Trendwood Dr., Lincoln, NE



In Memory of Mac McCune and Dennis Schneider

A free will offering with proceeds going to Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska

FREE
Trumpet Master Class
Dr. Darryl White
Trumpet Professor/UNL

Dr. Louie Eckhardt
Trumpet Professor/
Hastings College

1:00-2:00

For more information contact
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(402) 540-3130