



# PATRON

*Hope in the Good Life*

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA

**"If you want God to hear your prayers, hear the voice of the poor.**

**If you wish God to anticipate your wants, provide those of the needy without waiting for them to ask you.**

**Especially anticipate the needs of those who are ashamed to beg. To make them ask for alms is to make them buy it."**

**-St Thomas of Villanova**

## Keeping sight of who we are *Loving and serving others just as Christ loves us*

St. Thomas of Villanova was a Spanish friar of the Order of St. Augustine as well as a priest, bishop, and Archbishop of Villanova. Having been taught by his parents to serve the poor and needy, St. Thomas lived a life of service. However, he did not only meet the material and spiritual needs of the poor, he sought to improve the very systems that contributed to the cycle of poverty in his time.

Today, our own society confronts the evils of abortion, assisted suicide, domestic violence, drug use, street crime, et al. It is tempting for many of us to feel the weight of the world on our shoulders, however we should not allow these feelings of hopelessness to control our hearts, nor our minds, nor our actions. In fact, as Christians we are uniquely called to stand up, to pray, and to work fervently like St. Thomas of Villanova, and care for the most vulnerable among us.

Great. So, how do we accomplish this during a time when we have been asked to retreat and social distance ourselves for the safety of others?

Redesigning the many traditional Christmas programs we have here at Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska in Lincoln has not been easy but we have arrived to the place where we truly believe God has called us.

In remaining true to our theme of creating a culture of encounter rather than transaction, we have significantly expanded our Adopt-A-Family Program at several Lincoln parishes. Rather than hosting the St. Nicholas Toy Shoppe and collecting gifts purchased by parishioners for the event, we specifically asked those families we serve what they most need this holiday season. While most will be families too humble to ask, just as St. Thomas of Villanova said, we must provide for those in need

without making them ask. This particular program will request that donors directly deliver their gifts to the families in need. This encounter helps us all live out the true meaning of Christmas by celebrating the birth of Christ and the gift of Him being given to us, and rejoicing in the truth that we are called to be His sons and daughters, alongside those we

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### Advent/Christmas 2020

# Simply, thank you

Fr. Justin Fulton, Executive Director

## A Litany of Thanksgiving

For all You have given me

My God I thank You

For all you have withheld from me

My God I thank You

For all You have withdrawn from me

My God I thank You

For all You have permitted me

My God I thank You

For all You have prevented me

My God I thank You

For all the sincere friends You have given me

My God I thank You

For all You have forgiven me

My God I thank You

For all You have prepared for me

My God I thank You

For the death You have chosen for me

My God I thank You

For the place You are keeping for me in Heaven

My God I thank You

For having created me to love You for eternity

My God I thank You

My God I thank You for all things

And may I live and die thanking You.

Amen.

It has been a heckuva year. I'm sure we can all look back at 2020 and find something to complain about.....but what good would that do? We won't here.

**On behalf of Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska I wish to say 'thank-you'.** We have all been confronted with challenging times. Yet we have all partnered together to continue to bring Hope in the Good Life. Smile. Pray. Hope. Don't Worry. Follow my niece Cecilia's lead in the picture, shown with her dog KC!

## God loves you and God is in control.

During these months of reflection, thanksgiving, and preparations for our Savior's Birth, we invite you to reflect and be grateful for all of the blessings God has bestowed on us. **And we thank you for sharing those blessings with your fellow Nebraskans through your monetary and spiritual support of CSS.**

**Because of you.....**this year St. Gianna's Women's Homes has provided 17,280 nights of safe, quiet sleep to women and

children escaping from domestic violence.

**Because of you .....**CSS has distributed nearly 327 tons of food to needy families throughout southern Nebraska.

**Because of you.....**CSS has provided nearly \$650,000 worth of rent, utilities, and bill payments to your neighbors throughout southern Nebraska.

**Because of you....**CSS has found the homeless and the unemployed jobs which have earned self-sustainability and defeats homelessness.

**Because of you....**CSS has provided nearly 5,268 counseling sessions to those suffering from loneliness, trauma, struggling marriages, and depression.

**Because of you.....**CSS has done a whole lot more this year.

The Church is pretty good at telling you how to live your life. The Church is pretty good at asking for your money. When we aren't the best at asking for your money we do a good job of pretty much taking your money.



**We at Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska wish to simply say thank you for your faith in Jesus Christ and thank you for partnering with us to bring Hope in the Good Life. We could not exist and we could not help others without your support.**

## Thank you.

You are important in this world. You are needed. You are the apostles in this world at your homes, cubicles, work stations, schools, and in your communities. **We thank you for being apostles of Jesus Christ.**

Let us be grateful during this season and may we always share the bounties our Lord has bestowed upon us with those of lesser and no fortune.

Smile. Pray. Hope. Don't worry! **God loves you and God is in control.**

**God bless and keep you always!!!**

Fr. Justin Fulton  
Executive Director

# A Year of Vision

**Dr. Courtney Miller,**  
**Director of Clinical Services**

The year 2020 has certainly been an eye opener, and it is often said that hindsight is 20/20. For some, this year was one full of hardships - financially, socially, physically, mentally, spiritually; for others, blessings were found amidst the pandemic. For most, it has been a year of unforeseen happenings that will not be soon forgotten, no matter how much desired, a year whose end is hastened with hope of a better New Year.

For us at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center (IHMCC), our mission has remained focused on supporting the mental health needs of Southern Nebraska. In May of 2019, we introduced the availability of telehealth counseling services in an effort to reach beyond our in person coverage area to more rural, and often underserved, communities of our Lincoln Diocese. We took great effort in planning, selecting, learning and piloting our telehealth platform to ensure the best quality of services through such means. At that time of preparation, we could have never envisioned the implications of this service. When

our office closed to the public in March 2020 due to the pandemic, we had a seamless transition of care from in person to telehealth and were able to continue to support the mental health needs of our clients and our Diocese. While our counseling center has re-opened for in person services, we continue to offer telehealth and have provided over 2,800 telehealth sessions since the outset of COVID-19.

In addition to direct counseling services, we have also made efforts to increase community outreach through online resources. On our website, we have posted blogs and produced video recordings of Mental Health Minutes on a wide-variety of topics. We also launched two new online programs, *Partners on the Journey*, a marriage enrichment program, and *Loving Hearts Little Feet*, a postpartum support group for mothers.

In a survey conducted by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in June 2020, 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues. We know mental health needs continue to grow and the means of supporting these needs continue to change. The one thing 2020 has truly illustrated for us at IHMCC is that we can continue to fulfill our mission. We have been truly blessed through prayer and financial support and have seen the fruits of our labor. We will keep our vision firmly grounded in faith as we look toward 2021 and have #hopeinthegoodlife.



## Hastings Catholic Social Services plays major role in Food Recovery Program



For years, our Catholic Social Services Hastings location has been a proud partner in the Feeding America Food Recovery Program sponsored by Walmart. Our staff and volunteers pick up excess food and produce from area Walmart and Sam's Club locations and redistribute to communities around the area. Local food pantries now exist in Harvard, Sutton, Glenvil, Fairfield, Clay Center, Edgar, Superior and Red Cloud. Last year, we distributed:

- Hastings FP- 1,671 lbs
- Superior- 2,992 lbs
- Fairfield- 5,580 lbs
- Sutton- 6,078 lbs
- Glenvil- 6,136 lbs
- Webster Co.- 6,278 lbs
- Harvard - 6,682 lbs
- Open Table- 9,544 lbs
- Other Counties- 35,845 lbs
- Crossroads- 117,687 lbs
- CSS Hastings- 258,991 lbs

**Total amount of food recovered last year: 457,484 pounds**

## Volunteer Program

# Bringing Christ into our relationship with those we serve

Jeremy Sousek, Lincoln Volunteer Coordinator

Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska has been striving to develop programs centered on serving clients with the most dignity, care, and mercy as possible. The goal has been to create encounters between our clients, staff, and volunteers that will ultimately share the love of Jesus. In order to learn how to have these encounters I recently took a trip to Christ in the City (CIC) in Denver, CO. Christ in the City serves the homeless in Denver with the mission of creating a culture of encounter by seeing, knowing, and loving their homeless friends.

When I went on street walks with the missionaries I noticed how I was inclined to just say “hello” and offer snacks, but that it was difficult for me to actually stop and simply be with the person in front of me. I had to entrust my safety, my comfort, and my time to the Holy Spirit before I could really begin to have encounters. Throughout the week I witnessed the Holy Spirit work through myself and other missionaries to give people the courage they needed to keep living. I am hopeful to bring the mission of Christ in the City back to Lincoln and Catholic Social Services to further develop our volunteers and staff to have encounters. The CIC missionaries recognize that they cannot give Jesus if they do not have Him in their own hearts. We are all called to bring Christ into our relationships with others.

If you feel particularly called to have these encounters through serving at Catholic Social Services, please fill out a volunteer application at (click on the "volunteer" button) or contact me at [jsousek@cssisus.org](mailto:jsousek@cssisus.org) or 402.327.6245.



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## Hope in the Good Life

# Grateful to help serve others while practicing my faith

Anne Cassidy, Student Volunteer

This summer I was looking for a place to fulfill my field practicum requirement in order to complete my social work degree. During my search, I came across Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska. After considering my options, I eventually decided that CSS would be the most suitable choice. I came to this conclusion because I was looking for an opportunity to serve others while practicing my Catholic faith. I also determined that working in the different branches of CSS would help me gain a greater understanding of social work by allowing me to interact with a variety of populations.

My experience at Catholic Social Services these past three months has been incredibly fulfilling. In September I learned about an initiative to provide healthy food to families across Nebraska by arranging food pantries according to the MyPlate nutritional guidelines. When I presented this information to Jeremy Sousek, we worked together to reorganize the food pantry according to the program's suggestions. Many of the volunteers mentioned that they found the new format more organized and thus much easier to navigate. I hope that clients will be able to

easily find healthy food once the market program opens again.

I have more projects I plan to complete in the near future that will allow CSS to distribute more resources to individuals and families who need them.



In the span of my practicum, I have observed just how much of an impact CSS has left on the community. Many people have been struggling to find employment and food due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Thankfully, the kind and supportive staff members have been able to distribute resources to those affected. The staff and volunteers have dedicated themselves to taking calls for food pantry orders and delivering boxes of food to people in the parking lot. They have also delivered orders to individuals who are unable to leave

their homes. The pandemic has affected the community in so many ways. Still, everyone at CSS has made it their goal to respond to the needs of others even in the midst of this challenging time. I consider myself blessed to be part of an organization that has played such an important role in serving the community.

# A lasting impact

Joan Stepan loves to tell stories about her aunt and uncle Elizabeth and Joseph Barton-Dobenin. Baron Joseph Barton-Dobenin is the oldest of three sons who were raised in a thirteenth century castle located a few miles outside of Prague in what is now the Czech Republic. Joe later fled to the United States when the communists seized his family's land (including Zbraslov, the castle he grew up in). Joseph, along with his brothers Cyrill and George, successfully reclaimed the title to their family's property in 1993. He knew the gift of freedom. Joseph loved hunting, fishing, his beloved dogs, and education.

Elizabeth was born on April, 21, 1921 in Liberty, NE to Hugh and Agnes Murphy York. She married Dr. Joseph Barton-Dobenin in 1952 and together they celebrated nearly 60 years of marriage. Joe and Elizabeth lived in Lincoln before settling in Manhattan KS with Joseph teaching at K-State in the College of Business Administration. They later moved to Weslaco, Texas in 2001 where they were active in St. Pius X Parish as well as their retirement community. They relished their life in Texas with no snow or cold and picking grapefruit in abundance! Joe passed away on December 19, 2012. With the deep loss of Joe, Elizabeth focused on her church as well as creating a lasting legacy to her family through an educational trust. Elizabeth passed away on Sunday, May 27, 2018, at the tender age of 97 years.



Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska is blessed to be one of eight beneficiaries of a trust set up by Joe and Elizabeth. Joan Stepan, their niece and a co-trustee, states, "It is my greatest honor to have the opportunity to distribute the donations that Joseph and Elizabeth requested in their will. These donations were centered on the needs of others in the local community, with considerations of hunger, immigration, education, and basic human needs of love and acceptance. To my gratitude Catholic Social Services met those needs for me and my family for this donation."

"Our beautiful Aunt Elizabeth lived her life loving her God and family," Joan continued. "Her humble Midwest farm roots directed her throughout her lifetime. As I am only one of 24 nieces and nephews, we all shared many memories as well as unique personal stories of growing up with our wonderful aunt. She was an awesome baker, she would cut our hair when our bangs would drive her crazy, she would teach us the proper way to set a table, and most of all she loved us equally yet individually."

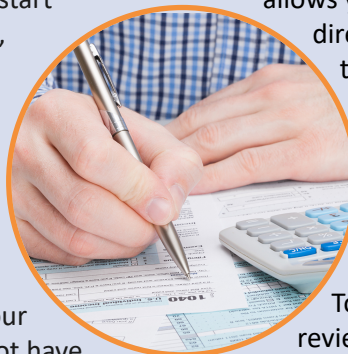


Jesus commands us in Matthew 25:31-46 to serve the poor because Jesus Himself is found in the poor. CSS would like to thank the Barton-Dobenin family for honoring Joe and Elizabeth's legacy of helping the poor and vulnerable in our community.

Please call the CSS Advancement Office at 402-327-6235 to learn more about our initiatives and priorities and how you can leave a lasting impact like the Barton-Dobenin family.

## Year-end giving reminder: Now is your opportunity to save on taxes

You cannot keep retirement funds in your account indefinitely and an individual generally has to start taking withdrawals from your IRA, SIMPLE IRA, SEP IRA, or retirement plan account when you reach age 70½. However, changes were made by the **Setting Every Community Up for Retirement Enhancement (SECURE) Act** which was part of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, P.L. 116-94, signed by President Trump on December 20, 2019. Due to changes made by the SECURE Act, if your 70th birthday is July 1, 2019 or later, you do not have to take withdrawals until you reach age 72.



The IRA charitable rollover provides several benefits. First, it allows you to transfer up to \$100,000 from your IRA directly to a nonprofit this year. You pay no taxes on the transfer and your gift counts dollar-for-dollar to support the important work of a nonprofit organization such as CSS. You can also count the gift against your required minimum distribution, which lowers your income and taxes this year.

To take advantage of this opportunity, please review the following helpful tips:

- Contact your IRA custodian or representative **before**

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#HopeintheGoodLife

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(S.A.G.)

**Keeping sight of who we are** *(continued from page 1)*

encounter here in this life we will be united with once again in the presence of God, our Almighty Father.

Alongside the Adopt-A-Family angels that will be hung on the Advent trees at Cathedral, North American Martyrs, St. Michael's, St. Peter's, St. John's, and St. Joseph's churches are decorated gift card sleeves where you can make a cash donation or purchase a gift card to put inside them. All can be placed in the collection baskets at your parishes throughout December.

We have also expanded our Christmas Day food baskets and hope to reach more than 300 families in the Lincoln area, providing them all the holiday fixings as well as gift cards to local grocery stores so that they can purchase what we may have missed that is sentimental to their holiday meal.

And so, Christmas at 2241 O Street may look a little different this year but we pray that having been challenged by the circumstances of our time, we have kept sight of who we are as Christians and that no matter what difficulties confront us we will always love and serve others just as Christ loves us.

Katie Patrick  
Regional Director of Social Services, Lincoln

**Year-end giving reminder** *(continued from page 1)*

making a gift to arrange for the proper transfer of funds from your IRA directly to CSS. The check issued from the IRA must be made payable directly to Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska.

- If you have elected to have income tax withheld from your normal IRA distributions, advise your IRA administrator not to withhold taxes from distributions to charity.
- Ask your attorney and financial advisor how to make CSS a beneficiary of your IRA. Naming CSS as a beneficiary is a smart way to make a charitable gift because leaving the IRA to family will result in an income tax liability before your family gets any benefit.

Please contact the CSS Advancement office at 402-327-6235 or email Michelle Birkel at [mbirkel@csssus.org](mailto:mbirkel@csssus.org) for a sample letter that you can provide to your IRA plan administrator to help facilitate your gift.

**Donate now at [www.csshope.org](http://www.csshope.org) to help bring Hope in the Good Life to those we serve!**