



PATRON

Easter 2023

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

O God,
in Whom
we live and
move and have
our being,
grant us rain,
in due
abundance, that,
being sufficiently
helped with
temporal gifts,
we may seek
with more
confidence those
that are eternal.
Through Christ,
our Lord.
Amen.

*-Novena in Honor of
St. Isidore, National Catholic
Rural Life Conference*



CSS Lincoln Regional Site

A family project of giving

Weeks before Christmas, our oldest daughter reached out on our family group text. She asked our thoughts about doing something together as a family for someone less fortunate. We had done things like this with our kids as they grew up and now she is a mom and is hoping to teach their children about compassion for others.

We decided on making some care packages for homeless men and women served by Catholic Social Services in Lincoln. We found a list of items most needed by homeless people and each of us chose what we would bring at Christmas to compile our “homeless bags”. We worked as an assembly line at our dining room table and filled 17 gallon sized zip lock bags with wool socks, hand and feet warmers, travel toothbrush/toothpaste, deodorant, lotion, sunscreen, granola bars, etc.



CSS Client Relations Specialist Sandra Svajdenka with personal care packages for CSS clients

It made me smile to see our three year old grandson helping to fill the bags. This wasn't only good for the homeless men or women who would receive the bags but was good for our family to share an experience of working together to serve others.

The “homeless bags” were delivered to CSS staff member Sandra Svajdenka. A few weeks later when asked if any had been given out, only three were left. I asked if the recipients seemed to like the bags and Sandra said they are so happy, it's like getting a gift at Christmas for them!

*-Patty Lang
Development and
Event Support Specialist*

If you, your family or group are interested in undertaking a project for CSS, contact Rachel Tvrdy at rtvrdy@csshope.org.

Inside:

Renovation and expansion



Hope comes to Auburn, literally



Together, we can make a difference





Hope in the Good Life

Renovation and expansion

Katie Patrick
Executive Director

Before I get carried away sharing the excitement surrounding our project at 2241 O Street, I want to thank the small handful of private donors and foundations who made it all possible. After seeing the need to renovate our current facility so that it could be more welcoming for our clients and functional for our staff and volunteers, you answered the call. We are truly grateful for your hand in this endeavor. Your generosity will never be forgotten. Thank you!!

So much has changed at CSS over the past few years – and believe it or not, it’s not all due to COVID. We have seen growth in every single one of our programs at CSS. Our staff has done a tremendous job identifying areas where we can do more.

In Emergency Services, we average 80 unique requests for financial assistance weekly. Our team of two, at our current budget, is able to take on ten of those households. We work directly with those in need and their landlords or other vendors to gather documentation and process their request. In our new facility, we will be offering ‘Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin’ By World’ classes for those very households who come to us for financial assistance. We are happy to have helped them make ends meet but what we really want to do is provide them the knowledge and tools they need to become self-sufficient.

This classroom will hold English and US Citizenship classes, nutrition and food demonstration classes, community gatherings, job fairs, winter coat giveaways, and much more! We will also have a childcare room next to the classroom so that moms and dads can attend class without needing to secure alternative childcare.

Due to the incredible donations that our Food Market receives every week, in January we increased our daily households served from eight to twelve. We will also have an outdoor greenhouse and community garden this year. Right next to the food market, we will have our employee and volunteer breakroom as well as a secure outdoor courtyard area for staff and volunteers. And for clients who come for breakfast and/or lunch, the renovated lobby includes a place where they can sit down, eat, and visit with one another.

The open office design that we went with in our office re-construction reflects the needs of both Immigration Legal Services and Refugee Resettlement, where we have gone from two staff to twelve in less than two years. There is a very high need in the community for affordable, high-quality immigration legal services and, as you know, CSS is one of only two resettlement agencies in Lincoln. While we had to set up desks and tables and file cabinets all over what used to be Gianna’s Java and Gelato, with our new design we will soon have at least half a dozen medium to small focus rooms where this important work can take place.

The St. Gianna Program is also expanding beyond our 24-unit apartment complex in Lincoln. We have added two full-time staff members in addition to the three Marian Sisters, and together they are meeting the increasing needs of survivors of domestic violence and those experiencing unplanned pregnancies. We are ramping

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Hope comes to Auburn, literally

April Boellstorff

Director of Social Services/Operations

In February, Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska (CSS) celebrated 19 years of serving the people of Auburn and its surrounding counties. We humbly thank all of you who have helped us over the years!

Since February 2021, I have been running the programs side of CSS in Auburn with the support of countless volunteers and the thrift store staff. We have seen incredible growth since we began. Some days can get pretty wild! It became quickly apparent that we were growing beyond the duties of one person. So, God sent HOPE. (literally!)

Meet Hope Weninger, Auburn's Emergency Services Specialist. Hope is excited to begin assisting those in need in our five county region. Hope will be working part-time and expanding our local outreach. Hope resides in Nebraska City, which provides a stronger connection to Otoe County. Hope will be assisting with call intakes, referrals, financial assessments and assistance, and budgeting guidance. She is excited for future learning opportunities, increasing her knowledge about Federal Programs, and is already signed up to become a Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' By World Facilitator. When interviewing Hope, she said, "I want to take care of people and teach others. It's in my heart." She's eager to help us move mountains!

With Hope onboard, CSS will be able to increase the number of clients in our food market. When a representative from the Food Bank of Lincoln recently visited us, she stated, "CSS is truly feeding this corner of Nebraska!" She explained that we have the largest food pantry in the area and the number of neighbors we are feeding is incredible. "Keep it up! We want to work with you to serve even more!" Her encouraging words repeat in my mind. The Food Bank of Lincoln collaborates with

CSS and other agencies to alleviate hunger in Southeast Nebraska. We are able to purchase items at a reduced cost from them which they currently deliver to our Auburn location one time a month. Delivery day is always exciting! Their dedicated team helps us put food on the tables of neighbors in need. They are an amazing resource to CSS and those we serve. We are communicating the possibility of more frequent Food Bank deliveries and expansion of our food pantry offerings, including fresh produce and baked goods.



Hope and I, along with our SFGT staff and volunteers look to be a powerhouse for Southeast Nebraska! We are ambitious visionaries of growth to come! While Hope works with clients' financial needs, I will assist with food, diapers, personal care items, items from our thrift store, and other local resources. Often, one need leads to another, and we try to serve the entire needs of the family. We want to give proper time and care. We have families coming for food from Pawnee City, Tecumseh, Nebraska City, Humboldt, Nemaha, Brownville, Falls City, and beyond. I routinely see many of these folks once a month for food services, and know that CSS is vital to their monthly budget. Since we are able to house a lot of food at our location, we want them walking out the door with weight lifted off their shoulders. We help load their car with food and unload their food insecurity worries. We are their friends and support in tough times. People travel 20, 30, 45 minutes to receive this assistance. It's our privilege to bless them with a cart or two of food, diapers, personal care items, referrals, resources and love. Some families require additional support and our team works together to meet their needs. It's a relief knowing we have that quality time to give and can share service work with Hope.

Offering hope at a difficult time

Diana Amaya Bilingual Emergency Services Coordinator

At Catholic Social Services (CSS) in Hastings our Emergency Services team works together to meet the basic needs in our community from food and personal items to assisting with utilities and shelter, not just in Hastings but across south central and southwest Nebraska. Some families have nothing when they come in asking for food. CSS provides not just food but beds in which to sleep, blankets to stay warm, tables to eat family meals, and much more. Last year we gave away 418 food boxes, gave 62 households furniture, and assisted families with \$115,000 in monetary assistance.

I joined the team in August as the Bilingual Emergency Services Coordinator to reach the Spanish speaking population. Recently a young mom of three girls came to us. She was facing a crisis situation: she



had recently lost her job after a car accident that had left her with no means of transportation, and she lost her babysitter. Having never been in this situation, she didn't know where to turn. Feeling lost and alone, she came to our office to pick up some food and after visiting with her, we learned about her situation. Our Emergency Services team began walking with her, providing her food, diapers, winter coats and clothing for her family. We've helped her get connected to daycare so she can get back to work. CSS continues to provide hope and support to her as she takes steps to not only get on her feet but also to get out of poverty, working alongside other community organizations, to one day reach a life of prosperity for her and her daughters. She is only one of the many families that CSS is helping escape poverty!

Watch HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE in action

Celebration of Hope 2023 was a beautiful and uplifting evening! These three videos from the event bring to life our agency's vision of **inspiring hope and love in every encounter**.



Shirley Lang | Heart of Christ Award Acceptance Address

Shirley has humbly made a difference for many of her "almost ninety!" years. Years ago, she and her late husband, Jack, selflessly opened their home (and hearts) to two refugee children resettled by CSS. She's also worked tirelessly for Lincoln Right to Life from the organization's inception. Shirley's beautiful acceptance address shares how she has reflected the heart of Christ in these ways and so much more.



Panel Discussion | The Global Refugee Crisis: A Catholic Response

During our innovative and insightful panel conversation, we examine how CSS has helped refugees and immigrants find hope in the good life. Our panel featured a member from the Ukrainian community (Oleg Stepanyuk), a member of the Afghan community (Faheem Rashidi), Fr. Justin Fulton, and Katie Patrick. Our refugee friends shared many stories from their journey, and we learned why we are ALL called to "welcome the stranger."



Impact of Hope | 2022 Report from Catholic Social Services

Our CSS team members, volunteers, and donors made a HUGE **Hope in the Good Life** impact during 2022. Together, we brought hope, help, and healing to neighbors in need across 24,000 square miles of southern Nebraska. Enjoy this video glimpse of the many lives you helped change in the past twelve months.

See these three videos and more at csshope.org/watch



Together, we can make a difference

Poe Dee Refugee Resettlement Director

On April 21, 2022, the United States announced the creation of the Uniting for Ukraine program, an important step in fulfilling President Biden’s promise to welcome Ukrainians fleeing Russia’s invasion. The program allows Ukrainian citizens and their family members who are outside of the United States to come to the U.S. and remain here temporarily as “humanitarian parolees” for up to two years. Ukrainians who participate in Uniting for Ukraine must have a sponsor in the United States who agrees to support them financially for the duration of their stay.

In anticipation of these Ukrainian arrivals, Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department hosted a meeting to discuss preparations and available assistance for this vulnerable population. There I met with Ukrainian community leaders Oleg Stepanyuk and Sergii Checkushkin, who are also religious leaders from the House of Prayer Church in Lincoln. At the meeting, we discussed the needs of Ukrainians fleeing from the war and what Catholic Social Services, as a refugee resettlement agency, could do to help.

After collaborating with my team and identifying appropriate services, I contacted the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), our national resettlement agency partner, to inform them that we would be accepting Ukrainian clients at our agency. I assigned all Ukrainian clients at the time to Sebit Deng, a senior case

manager. I later hired Nadia Peterchuk, a Ukrainian case manager who speaks Ukrainian and Russian. Both case managers are trained to help Ukrainian parolees access public assistance, provide clothing items, schedule and transport clients to medical appointments, provide furniture and household goods, enroll children in school, provide employment services, and more. I initially requested to serve 60 individuals in FY2023, but by December 2022 we had already served more than 80 Ukrainian clients! I have since requested an additional 80 slots from USCCB, which were approved, and now CSS is serving over 100 Ukrainians.



Oleg Stepanyuk, CSS Refugee Resettlement Director Poe Dee, CSS Refugee Case Manager Nadia Peterchuk, Bishop James Conley, Sergii Checkushkin and CSS Executive Director Katie Patrick

Ukrainian clients are thankful for the services we provide to them. In gratitude, I and other community leaders in Lincoln were invited to the Ukrainian Appreciation Dinner, where we were warmly welcomed and treated to traditional Ukrainian food and music.

More recently, I attended another meeting with Oleg and Sergii, as well as Bishop James Conley. The bishop wanted to meet with the Ukrainian community leaders to pray for them, to express solidarity with them, and to find out what the Catholic community can do to help. Oleg thanked CSS for stepping up to provide services for Ukrainian families. After the meeting, Oleg gave me a big, firm hug and told me, “You are a good human being. Thank you for your support.” His words make me proud of the work I do. I am so proud to be part of CSS for what I can do to help people in need, like the Ukrainians. I believe if my staff and I can make this much of a difference, others can do the same!

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES | FISCAL 2022 IMPACT

\$2.31 MILLION DOLLARS In hand-ups: rent, utilities, gas vouchers, and more	306 TONS OF FOOD Distributed across 24,000 square miles of Nebraska	47,852 MEALS SERVED Nutritious breakfast burritos & sack lunches	180 REFUGEES RESETTLED Welcoming our newest Nebraskans	390k POUNDS RECYCLED Generating \$76,000 to fund our programs
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#HopeintheGoodLife

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(S.A.G.)

Hope in the Good Life

Renovation and expansion (Continued from page 1)

up our services in response to the Dobbs case. More on that to come later!!

The new construction includes increased security for staff and clients as well as a technology upgrade making it easy for board and staff to meet across the diocese or across the country. We also have planned a soundproof room for recording podcasts with clients, donors, and volunteers. Our overall move from a closed office design to an open office design allows for tremendous expansion and occasional contraction of programs. For example, the Marketing and Development Department has also seen an increase in activities and staff. The 3,500 sq foot addition to the south will accommodate their team as well as Operations.

We look forward to welcoming all of you, hopefully early this summer, to our renovated facility. To conclude, and most importantly, you will notice when you first walk into our lobby, amid the energy efficient natural lighting, on the right, there will be two beautifully designed doors waiting to welcome you into our Chapel. Having Jesus present is the ultimate gift and we are eager to share Him with all who come!

Easter 2023



YOUR CLEAN CAR CAN HELP BRING HOPE!

Now through April 30th, Rocket Carwash in Lincoln is offering their \$23.99 carwash for only \$10.00. Best of all, for every \$10.00 carwash sold, they will donate \$6.00 to Catholic Social Services! If 500 car washes are sold by April 30th, a bonus plus a matching gift from the Knights of Columbus brings the total for CSS to \$8.20 for every carwash sold! For more information visit csshope.org or scan the QR code down below to buy your car wash today!



Knights of Columbus
Council 10510

