



PATRON

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

“O Father,
in your Truth
-that is to say,
in your Son,
humbled, needy
and homeless- you
have humbled me.
He was humbled
in the womb of the
Virgin, needy in the
manger of the
sheep, and homeless
on the wood
of the Cross.
Nothing so humbles
the proud sinner
as the humility
of Jesus Christ’s
humanity.”
-St. Anthony of Padua

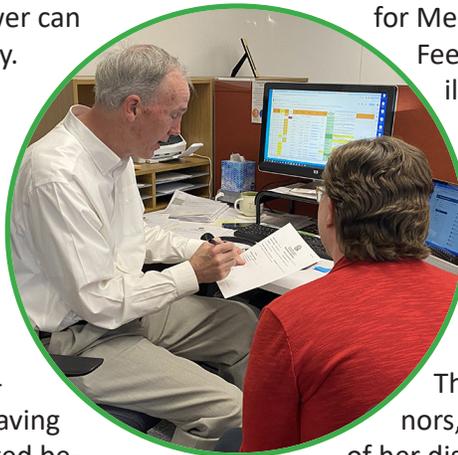


Answering a desperate plea *Thanks to our donors, we could offer hope*

For most of us, going without electricity for a bit is, at the most, an inconvenience. More often than not when the power goes out, it’s not out for long and the biggest challenge we face is trying to remember where we put the flashlight. But for some, going without power can bring fear and uncertainty.

Lori, a 44-year-old mother of two who is on disability, contacted our office requesting assistance with her LES bill. She and her husband were facing a disconnection notice. Lori was panicked at the thought of having the electricity disconnected because she suffers from Parkinson's disease and has a device in her brain that is controlled by her cell phone. The very thought of not being able to charge her phone was frightening. Besides having Parkinson's, Lori has other medical conditions that have lately needed medical attention. Unfortunately her husband lost his full-time job because he was away from work too much

taking her to doctors appointments. Her husband immediately took a job with a food delivery service so that they would not be without income. Unfortunately, Lori does not have medical insurance at the moment; however she will be eligible for Medicaid in January 2024.



Feeling the stress of her family’s mounting bills and disconnection notice, Lori desperately began contacting local agencies for assistance but was having difficulty getting in touch with anyone.

Thanks to the support of donors, we were able to take care of her disconnection bill. Lori and her husband are very thankful for what we could do. “Thank you so much for your help!” she told me. Please pray for Lori and her family, and for those we assist through our Family Support Services program at Catholic Social Services. Thank you for helping us bring Hope in the Good Life!

-Marilu Cazares
Family Support Services Program Manager

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A renewed sense of hope



Anticipation vs Impatience

Katie Patrick
Executive Director

I don't know about you but sometimes I have a hard time differentiating between the two, or rather I think that I am in a place of anticipation, but really I just want the time or event to be here already, which means that I'm more impatient than anything. Does this ever happen to you? If so, or if you think it might be you, the season of Advent is a perfect time to compare the two, and to do something about it.

For example, do we take the time to prepare our home for guests and buy or make presents that we know our loved ones will enjoy? Or, are we frustrated about having to clean the house and are we rushing around to buy and wrap gifts so that it's done and checked off the list?

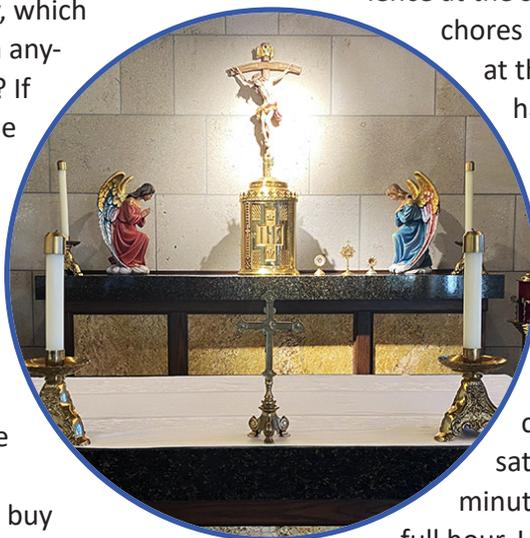
More importantly, are we preparing our hearts to welcome our Savior on Christmas Day? Have we committed more time to prayer and adoration or to helping the poor and vulnerable this season, or are we finding less time for these things because we're so busy trying to do

all the rest? During this Advent season, I've been able to spend some time in reflection, as much as a working mom of toddlers with a baby on the way can, and what I've noticed is that more often than not, I'm impatient.

So what can we do about it? Well, here is what I've discovered. Slowing down is required and making a conscious choice to do so is also necessary. If not, we will miss seeing, serving and loving the people in front of us, including Jesus.

Whether it's an additional 15 minutes of prayer and silence at the start of your day, or putting down the chores or the cell phone 15 minutes earlier at the end of the day, start there. If you happen to be out shopping for your family, pick up some food, personal care items, hats, gloves, or scarves and drop them off at your nearest CSS office. Make at least one holy hour this Advent season - there is still time. If you're like me, it takes about 45 minutes to actually decompress enough to have a conversation with Jesus, but those final 15 minutes will be amazing, so stay for the full hour. I promise, it'll be worth it. Besides, even though you may feel like you weren't present for the full hour, Jesus was with you the whole time.

There's a holy hour on my calendar (December 22nd); know that I will use that time to pray for each and every one of you! Wishing you all a blessed Advent season and a very Merry Christmas!!



CSS Wish Lists offer many ways to help bring hope

During the holiday season, we are so blessed to have many individuals, families and groups who help us bring hope to our neighbors across southern Nebraska. From monetary gifts, to volunteering, to food donations, toys, clothing and more, we are so grateful for the generosity of our donors. The need we see is great and is present throughout the year. We have put together a CSS Wish List on our website

that offers many ways you can assist our sites in Auburn, Hastings, Imperial and Lincoln. Just visit csshope.org/csswish to see ways to help. Members of the CSS team have created separate wish lists administered through a site called MyRegistry.com. This allows us to help those we serve with the specific items they need. Thank you for your prayers and support!



Thankful for a chaotic, heart-felt moment

April Boellestorf

Auburn Regional Director

God likes to hit my heart extra on certain days, like Ash Wednesday. I was already home from work after a busy day, but noticed I had several messages from the same caller dinging my work voicemail. I had been too busy with scheduled appointments that afternoon to listen and return new calls. Feeling concerned, I decided it best to listen to the messages.

I heard the familiar voice of a client that I had previously assisted with food. Her voice sounded different, though.



Panicked. Since I knew the caller and we had nice encounters previously, I decided I would give her a quick call to set up her appointment and alleviate her concern. "Hi Sharon! I'm returning your call about needing some food and a fuel card. I'm already off work for the day, but let's get you scheduled first thing tomorrow morning."

Long pause. Quiet. My voice became less chipper and more thoughtful. "Will that work for you?" Another long, awkward pause. "Sharon? When are you needing that gas card and food by?" Then I heard a cracking voice and tears, "Now." Then sobbing.

I asked what was going on and if she was ok. She explained, "You know how Brian got a new job out of town and we told you we probably wouldn't need your help anymore? Well, we found out today that he won't get the paycheck for another two weeks. I don't get my SSDI until the 1st and he doesn't get paid until the 8th. We are almost out of food and don't even have enough money to fill the car to get him to work tomorrow and he NEEDS this job. I am so sorry!!! I am so SO sorry that I keep calling you, but I don't know what else to do!"

I told her not to worry. I would come meet her at the CSS office on the way to Ash Wednesday services that evening. I pushed a new panic button. Brian was still at work and she was unable to drive due to her physical limitations. Could I drop it by? I scribbled down her address and confirmed that she was comfortable with a delivery crew. It was already 5:30, church was at 6:00, and we live in the country. I shouted at my family of six, "Let's go! Someone needs our help and if we're late for church, I'm pretty sure God's going to give us a pass this time." We quickly loaded up boxes filled with food, toiletries, a fuel gift card, and an application for further financial assistance to buy a little more time until that first paycheck. Sharon was like a broken record thanking us. She was crying, but this time joyfully and thankfully. It was raining, muddy, rushed, real -- and the best thing my family has done together in a long time.

We still received ashes and possibly some looks from the pews as our shoes squeaked along the polished church floors as we rolled in late and soaked. We knew the "rest of the story" and thanked Jesus for the chaotic and heart-felt memory and all those behind the scenes who provided us the resources to help in this moment.

CSS Gift & Thrift Stores

Our donor-supplied, diocesan-wide chain of four

Our sorted, clean, and organized Gift & Thrift stores in Auburn, Hastings, Imperial and Lincoln are another way CSS brings Hope in the Good Life while elevating the dignity of the person. Individuals who cannot afford items in our stores can apply to receive items for free through our Family Support Services programs in each of our outreach offices. All funds from resold items are then used to assist clients and families needing financial assistance for rent, utilities, medical bills, or gas. If we cannot resell or regift an item, we recycle it so it can be repurposed and help the environment. All of the merchandise in our stores has been donated by our generous supporters across Southern Nebraska. Visit csshope.org/ThriftStores for locations and hours.



A hello and, sadly, some goodbyes

John McDonald
Hastings Regional Director

The holiday season gives one the chance to reflect on the year. My reflection on 2023 has resulted in an immense feeling of gratitude towards all who are involved in Catholic Social Services, our staff, donors, and our volunteers. None of our operations would be possible without any of these vital pieces! In this season, we have welcomed a new staff member and will be saying goodbye to a few members.

Angelica Bauer, a native Kentuckian, recently joined our staff and has assumed volunteer responsibilities among others. Angelica's arrival to the CSS staff was very providential; while visiting Nebraska she ran into Susan, our client relations specialist, and before we knew it we had another energetic, motivated, and faithful woman on our staff! In her few months on staff, she has learned all the various daily food and volunteer operations of our office, aided us in executing our holiday giveaway events, and has really inspired us to even more fully integrate our personal relationship with Jesus into work!



Susan McKedy (left), Mike Ley and Angelica Bauer

Susan McKedy, a seven year veteran assistant manager of the St. Joseph Thrift Store, is planning to retire next spring. Susan will be missed; she brings a gracious and fun demeanor to CSS. Her capacity for hard work is combined with a keen eye for aesthetic taste and is capitalized by her intense piety. Susan has been vital in creating and maintaining the boutique feel of the thrift store. In addition, she has a warm and fun personality, which is necessary for creating a fun and productive volunteer environment, without which the thrift store could not operate.

Mike Ley, another mission-driven veteran of almost 8 years, is the assistant manager in charge of furniture and plans to retire at the end of the year. Mike has been the backbone of furniture operations and brings a laser-focus to his work. Without all the sweat he has put into hauling furniture to its various destinations, we would not have such a dynamic thrift store and furniture giveaway program. It is safe to say that without Susan and Mike we would not have the record breaking sales we are having this year!

If you want to learn more about Catholic Social Services in Hastings and see how you can follow Angelica, Susan, and Mike's lead and help us help those in need in south-central Nebraska, visit csshope.org/hastings. Thank you for your prayers and support. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Adopt-A-Tire will keep us rolling for our southwest Nebraska neighbors in need

Our CSS Imperial site uses a van that is vital in collecting donations and transporting recycled clothing across the area. Unfortunately, all four tires are as bald as Dwayne Johnson. To keep our folks safe while bringing hope in the good life to our neighbors in southwest Nebraska, we're offering the Adopt-A-Tire program! You can "adopt" one tire (or four) by making a donation online at csshope.org/donate or drop a check in the enclosed envelope. Please note "Adopt a Tire" under additional details if donating online, or in the check memo if donating by check. All funds designated will go towards new tires; funds raised over the amount needed will go to support our CSS Imperial site. Thank you for keeping us rolling!



“Your donation has given us... a renewed sense of hope.”



CSS Refugee Resettlement staff member Sebit Deng (right) presents a van to the Assef Al Shaban family

Offering hope comes in many forms. It happens when we assist those who come to us for help with what they need to help them get back on their feet or to build a new life. Such is the case with Assef Al Shaban and his family.

Earlier this year, our Refugee Resettle Services staff resettled Assef and his family. One of the challenges families and individuals face in building their new lives is reliable transportation to get to their new jobs, school and appointments. Assef faced that challenge as well. His father has health issues and Assef was especially concerned about finding a way to get his father to his doctor appointments. Thanks to the generosity of a donor, we had a van that had been donated to our vehicle donation program. Shortly after receiving the van, we received this letter from Assef:

We, the family Assef Al Shaban, would like to express our deepest gratitude for your generous donation of the Honda Odyssey 2007 to our family. As Palestinian refugees living in Iraq, we have faced numerous challenges and have been struggling to manage our family affairs, especially with my father’s many doctor appointments.

Your donation has made a significant impact on our lives and has given us a renewed sense of hope. We are truly grateful for your kindness and generosity, and we cannot thank you enough for your help during these difficult times.

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the staff and volunteers at Catholic Social Services of southern Nebraska Lincoln for their dedication, hard work, and commitment to helping families like ours. Your selflessness and willingness to help make a real difference in people’s lives.

Once again, thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support and generosity. May God bless you and your organization (CSS) for all the good work you do.

Sincerely,
Assef Al Shaban and family



If you are thinking about upgrading to a newer vehicle and your current car is still in roadworthy condition, reliable, and safe to drive, please consider: Instead of trading it in, donate your vehicle to our Vehicle Donation Program. All donated vehicles (drivable or non-drivable) will help those in need. For more information or to donate your vehicle, contact our site nearest to you:

- Lincoln offices: Call 402.327.6222 or email mcazares@csshope.org
- Hastings offices: Call 888.826.9629 or email hello@csshope.org
- Auburn & Imperial offices: Email hello@csshope.org



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(S.A.G.)

The Patron

Winter 2023

With using FreeWill, creating your will is free

To ensure peace of mind for both you and your loved ones, having a will is crucial. The knowledge that your wishes are documented can alleviate stress during an already difficult time and guarantee that your assets are managed according to your preferences. Despite the importance, many find the process of establishing or updating a will intimidating, complex, and costly.

To address these concerns, Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska (CSS) has partnered with FreeWill.com to introduce a user-friendly tool in 2024 that enables you to create these vital documents at no expense. This initiative also offers you the chance to leave a Legacy of Faith for future generations by contributing to a charity like CSS in your will.

CSS development officer John Soukup, reflecting on his past experience as a life insurance agent, expressed amazement at the number of people without a will. "This



partnership simplifies the process, making it easy to create a legally sound will," said Soukup. "It provides peace of mind to you and your family, and the opportunity to give back after you're gone."

Starting in January, you can visit the CSS website at cssshope.org and access the link to create your will using this complimentary estate planning tool. The availability of this service is made possible by the support of numerous nonprofit organizations dedicated to meaningful causes. It has also empowered individuals to commit over \$9 billion in charitable gifts to the organizations and causes they care about since FreeWill.com was established in 2017.

The invitation is extended for you to consider a similar gesture. The legacy you wish to leave behind is not just about money and belongings but also about how you want to be remembered. In as little as 20 minutes, you can create your will, providing the opportunity to leave a Legacy Gift to CSS and perpetuate Hope in the Good Life for generations to come. For more information, contact John Soukup, CSS development officer at jsoukup@cssshope.org or (402) 560-5014.