



# SOCIAL SERVICES QUARTERLY REPORT

July - September 2020

Report by:  
Katie Patrick  
Regional Director of Social Services

Social Services Staff:  
Marilu Cazares  
Mike Fitzgerald  
Sr. Carol Hohmeier  
Veronica Hotovy  
Megan Meagher  
Drew Miller  
Albert Maribaga  
Sr. Bernadette Radek  
Jeremy Sousek  
Erika Stewart-Finkenstaedt



## OUR PROGRAMS

Lincoln, NE

Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska in Lincoln is comprised of five key program areas with each program encompassing multiple projects and services. Our five program areas, include:

- **Emergency Services:** cash assistance, employment services, furniture delivery, and walk in services such as clothing, diapers, etc.
- **Food Pantry:** St. Francis food pantry, Catholic school food market, breakfast and lunch programs, and the Sunday evening food truck
- **Immigration:** assisting clients with immigration documents, and other forms of identification
- **Refugee Resettlement:** welcoming new arrivals and secondary migrants, refugee employment services, New American Encounter, and Career Ladder
- **St. Gianna's Home for Women:** housing for survivors of domestic violence, counseling referrals, and community-based learning opportunities for residents

Special Projects include: Random Works of Mercy, onsite English and Citizenship Classes, holiday programs, et al.

## CREATING A CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

*While people across the nation may still feel disconnected due to social distancing, Katie Patrick, regional director of social services for Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska (CSS), shared several updates on how CSS is performing the Works of Mercy in response to the call of God.*

*"The Works of Mercy give us a model for how we should treat all others as if they were Christ in disguise," the CSS website reads. "They are charitable actions by which we help our neighbors in their bodily needs. They respond to the basic needs of humanity as we journey together through this life."*

*Southern Nebraska Register  
August 7, 2020*



## FRONT DESK

Walk-in services for the homeless and working poor of Lincoln, Nebraska



### JULY

- 129 households received diapers
- 337 individuals received food pantries
- 66 households received vouchers to shop at the St. Louise Gift and Thrift store
- 17 households received gas vouchers

### SEPTEMBER

- 221 households received diapers
- 443 individuals received food pantries
- 79 households received vouchers to shop at the St. Louise Gift and Thrift store
- 17 households received gas vouchers

### AUGUST

- 161 households received diapers
- 332 individuals received food pantries
- 74 households received vouchers to shop at the St. Louise Gift and Thrift store
- 20 households received gas vouchers

## HIGHLIGHTS

Client Relations Specialist, Veronica Hotovy, created flyers that were distributed to low-income childcare providers across the city of Lincoln inviting them and the families they serve to come by our offices if they are in need of diapers or formula.

"The best part of my month was speaking with a client who called (crying) for Emergency Services, who had no food and no way to celebrate her son's birthday (same day) - [With us,] she was able to get a food pantry including a small cake to celebrate and personal care items. And was able to get through to [CSS] Emergency Services the following week." -Veronica Hotovy

# ST. FRANCIS FOOD PANTRY

**860 breakfast burritos**  
catered by **Chez SoDo**

**2,920 sack lunches**  
sandwiches prepared by  
**Knights of Columbus** volunteers

**370 dinners**  
catered by **The Pasta Place** food truck

The St. Francis Food Pantry received 210 pounds of fresh produce in the month of July.

The St. Francis Food Pantry received 4,510 pounds of nonperishable goods, pre-packed for our clients from the food pantry at **Eastridge Presbyterian Church** as their own pantry is going through a renovation.

The Knights of Columbus at Blessed Sacrament led a food drive and donated 881 pounds of food to CSS.

**18,110 pounds of food was donated to the St. Francis Food Pantry by parishes and individuals this quarter.**

**78 families were served by the Catholic School Food Market Program at Blessed Sacrament | St. Teresa | St. Patrick**



**\$46,217.76 was provided to households struggling because of COVID-19**

## TESTIMONY

## EMERGENCY SERVICES

Number of households provided cash assistance

**133**

Total amount of rental assistance

**\$55,860.83**

Total amount of utilities assistance

**\$3,487.65**

Total amount of vehicle assistance

**\$2,427.07**

Total amount of miscellaneous assistance (childcare, medication, etc.)

**\$5,593.69**

Number of households provided furniture

**34**

A 44 year old, single woman, who is taking care of 3 kids, her 15 year old daughter and 2 grandnephews, one is 2 yrs and the other one is 8 months, was very excited and thankful for the assistance provided by our agency.

This woman has been unemployed since September 17th of 2019. She got laid off due to missing so much work for medical issues that are still in the process of being resolved. So, this made her ineligible for unemployment, which pushed her to cash out her retirement money.

She had never called any agency before for assistance, and after calling multiple places and not hearing back from them, put her in lots of stress and anxiety.

When she called our agency, she was shy about calling for help.

Thankfully, we were able to help her with her October rent and her electric bill. When she got the news, she couldn't stop crying and saying "Thank you, thank you, thank you...for all you do for people!!"

It was a very emotional phone call...

Marilu Cazares  
Emergency Services Coordinator

**"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."**

**Jeremiah 29:11**

During this quarter, our staff connected residents to Voices of Hope, Matt Talbot Kitchen, League of Human Dignity, Birth Right, Center for People in Need, Lancaster County Health Department, Lincoln Housing Authority, and the Immaculate Heart of Mary Counseling Center,

## ST. GIANNA'S HOME FOR WOMEN

### Notable Achievements & Highlights

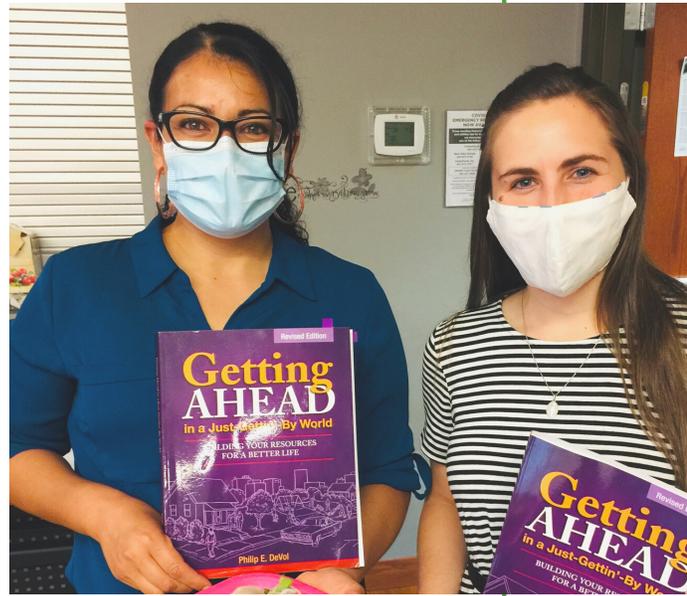
- One resident found a new job, which had been challenging because she is a single mom of four
- One resident made her final student loan payment and is now debt free
- Two residents obtained their drivers' licenses
- Three residents secured permanent housing
- Six residents enrolled in the financial literacy class offered by CSS: Getting Ahead in a Just Getting by World
- Seven self-care assessments were completed by new residents and the CSS Residential Care Manager
- 24 residents chose to no longer live in fear of their abuser and are survivors of domestic violence



## GETTING AHEAD IN A JUST GETTIN' BY WORLD

When daily life is unpredictable and unstable, people can get caught up in solving problems all day long. Breaking out of that trap can lead to a new future story.

-Philip DeVol



One of the most difficult topics for almost anyone to discuss is money.

At St. Gianna's we have been blessed with an opportunity to address this challenging topic in a way that not only educates, but that also builds community. The first three sessions of Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin'-By World have exceeded our expectations. The ladies are creating a space where they are able to share and grow together, learning from each other just as much as from the class itself. Over the past year, we have been working to strengthen the community at St. Gianna's. COVID made that incredibly difficult, putting a halt to most of the activities. After such a prolonged period of isolation, this class offers a space in which the women can connect again, sharing in their common experiences and forming friendships. Having a community of support is important for all of us, especially if we are trying to make changes - which is the focus of this class.

Together, we are diving into the circumstances we have encountered and the choices we have made that brought us where we are now, and what we can do to make the changes that we desire.

It has also provided an amazing opportunity to involve mentors from the Lincoln community and to create strong, positive relationships that can support the women both in and out of the sessions. We are so thankful for each of the amazing ladies who have stepped into that role of mentorship. Having the mentors present to offer guidance and to share their various experiences is an invaluable asset to this new program, and it creates bonds that we hope will outlast each woman's stay at St. Gianna's. The mentors are creating bridges that will assist the women not only in building up their knowledge in the financial realm during this class, but will also serve as a support that is greatly needed any time we try to make lasting changes in our lives.

Veronica Hotovy  
Client Relations Specialist  
&  
Marilu Cazares  
Emergency Services Coordinator

## REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

### "New American Encounter": Adopt-a-Family Takes a New Name

While the Spring of 2020 will remain widely known as the period of lockdown, for the Refugee Resettlement Department at CSS however, it was a season marked by widening horizons and extended outreach.

CSS is excited to have launched a new set of initiatives that seek to foster meaningful and life-giving encounters between Nebraskans and their new American neighbors. Among these initiatives has been "Adopt-a-Family" which, as we are excited to announce, has continued its mission under a new heading: "New American Encounter."

This volunteer opportunity pairs Lincoln locals with refugee individuals, couples, and families, with the aim of facilitating an exchange of conversations, ideas, and new friendships.

"New American Encounter" came as a response to a deepened interest among Lincoln parishioners to become more involved with the refugee community, as had become clear from CSS's encounter with FIAT (Faith In Action Team), an outreach-focused volunteer group from St. Joseph's parish.

The "New American Encounter" initiative, now in full swing, was kicked off by two informational sessions this summer, one held in-person and the other over Zoom, and engaged over 50 households -- from individuals, to couples, to families large and small.

We have been so humbled by the outpouring of interest, compassion, and commitment throughout the Lincoln community, and wish to extend our most sincere gratitude to all who have opened their hearts and homes to our new neighbors from among the refugee community!

Megan Meagher  
Refugee Resettlement Director



## REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT

Work is a good thing for man—a good thing for his humanity—because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes “more a human being.”

—St. John Paul II  
Laborem Exercens



**We secured  
permanent  
employment for  
34 clients this  
quarter.**

### **New Americans Task Force (NATF) CareerLadder was named a winner in the Google.org Impact Challenge!**

In November 2019, we partnered with several other participating NATF agencies to write a grant that would establish CareerLadder.

CareerLadder connects skilled immigrants and refugees to career pathways, digital resources, and a professional network while fostering economic opportunity and restoring dignity through work.

CareerLadder is near and dear to our hearts. The Refugee Resettlement team at CSS has worked hard over the years to build and cultivate strong relationships with the many refugee and immigrant communities and with other community partners in our city.

We are honored to be a recipient of this grant alongside the **Asian Community and Cultural Center, Lutheran Family Services, Center for People in Need, City of Lincoln,** and others

"A family that was unable to return to El Salvador due to their airport closure related to COVID was extremely worried about remaining in the US without a visa extension. When USCIS sent us the receipt showing all requested evidence was submitted and the case accepted prior to visa expiration, the family brought me pupusas and they were extremely grateful. It made my month because I learned something in the process."  
-Drew Miller, Immigration Specialist

## IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

### IMMIGRATION BY THE NUMBERS

Total number of clients

**95**

Total number of forms submitted to USCIS

**195**

Total number of clients receiving free or discounted legal immigration services

**47**

Total revenue generated by the department

**\$5,745**

Total number of consultations or forms filed as a result of community or employer-based partnerships

**11**

Total number of trainings attended

**6 - Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC), Migration & Policy Institute**

In September, Drew Miller, CSS Immigration Specialist, launched monthly round table discussions with two local, nonprofit agencies, including **Center for Legal Immigration Assistance (CLIA)** and **Lutheran Family Services (LFS)**. The monthly roundtables are intended to share best practices and discuss concerns facing the immigrant community in respect to the policies and procedures of USCIS.

New community partners this quarter include an established referral process with the staff at **St. Monica's** and a partnership with the **Asian Community and Cultural Center** and **El Centro de las Americas**, who are recipients of the Woods Foundation Impact Grant. Together, we are providing eligible permanent residents with citizenship education and naturalization services.

#### Challenges

Due to the current administration, USCIS has become extremely difficult to work with. In September, we faced three improper rejections, numerous requests of evidence and seemingly easy cases now have unforeseen hiccups, such as having to call USCIS 2-3 times to schedule a client for an appointment in Omaha or to request an extension on a green card after properly filing to renew it, but it not being processed in time by USCIS.

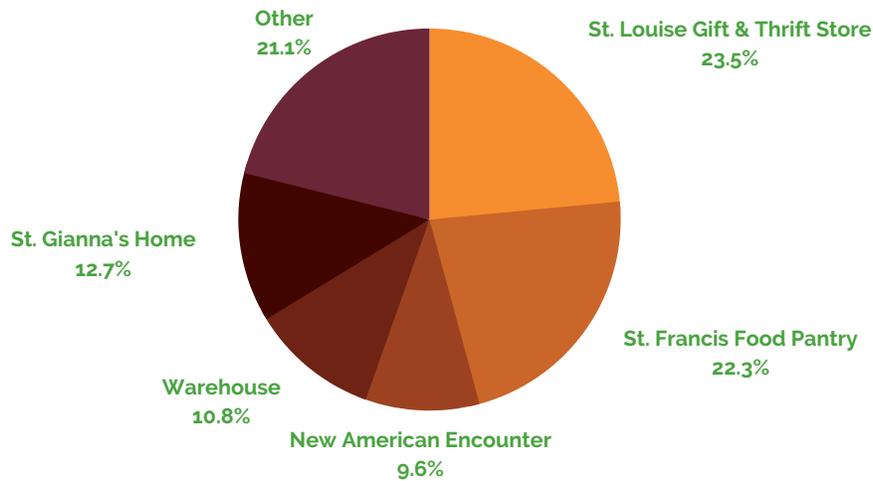
**VOLUNTEERS:  
WE COULD NEVER  
FULFILL OUR MISSION  
WITHOUT YOU!**

**We had 128 active  
volunteers who  
contributed a total  
of 1,235 hours of  
service!**

Random Works of Mercy connects volunteer groups with individual needs in the community. A participant will fill out a form describing needs for a service group and submit it. This is not a request for cash assistance but a physical need, such as repairs around the home.

"In September, Christi needed help cleaning her lawn. Her husband was ill for several months and then passed away. During that time, there had been quite a lot of overgrowth in her yard and she herself was not in good enough health to care for it. Hopefully, she feels welcomed back to the Church from the encounter." Jeremy Sousek, Volunteer Coordinator

**Where do CSS volunteers give their time?**



<b>St. Louise Gift and Thrift Store</b>	<b>595 hours</b>
<b>St. Francis Food Pantry Programs</b>	<b>356 hours</b>
<b>Warehouse</b>	<b>130 hours</b>
<b>St. Gianna's Home</b>	<b>115 hours</b>
<b>Other (Random Works of Mercy, Cristo Rey, etc.)</b>	<b>35 hours</b>
<b>New American Encounter</b>	<b>4 hours</b>
<b>TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS</b>	<b>1,235 hours</b>

## MEET THE SOCIAL SERVICES TEAM

Dignity  
Integrity  
Empathy  
Trust  
Sustainability

