



Hope in the Good Life

NEWSLETTER

The latest uplifting updates from Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska

He is calling **YOU** to hear, to help, and to holiness

“Moses saw a burning bush and he didn’t understand. Until he heard a loud voice say, ‘I am the great I Am.’”

This refrain is sung daily throughout my home by our daughters, Keira and Saoirse. They come home each week with stories and artwork of Moses and the burning bush, Joseph and his coat of many colors, and others from the Great Adventure Bible.

Since they are only three years old, my husband and I fill in the details, but the moral of the story—that **God is always present**—is soundly there and well understood by them.

God protected Joseph when he was sold into slavery. Later, God spoke to Moses on the side of the mountain when he was in need. In the Old Testament, God cared for His chosen people, the Israelites, when they were in exile. **God is with us always—especially in moments of fear, scarcity, and despair.**

Several policy changes in our country are impacting the people we serve at Catholic Social Services and **many are experiencing elevated times of fear, scarcity, and despair.**

Our immigration system, while creating a place for the vulnerable and protecting our borders, is broken and unjust in many ways. Families fear being separated and, in response, are not attending Mass, going to school, and are limiting trips to public places like grocery stores, parks, and community centers.

Effective October 20, 2025, upon a household’s recertification of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also formerly known as food stamps, those benefits will only be made available to previously exempt categories of people if they meet the mandatory work and/or volunteer requirements.

Policy changes don’t always have the desired effect of creating a more productive workforce or society. While the intent is honorable, SNAP-eligible households also will oftentimes face substance abuse, mental health concerns, medically dependent children, or other barriers such as language or transportation.



Additionally, refugees and other humanitarian populations are no longer SNAP-eligible until they have possessed their green card for a minimum of five years. CSS has welcomed and resettled hundreds of refugee households since 2020, who will lose access to SNAP.

While I could blame the government or other actors for being apathetic to the cries of the poor, I will instead shift to our call as Christians.

When Pope Leo XIV released his first Apostolic Exhortation, *Dilexi Te – On Love for the Poor* – he cited the starting point for hearing the cries of the poor with Moses at the burning bush.

He states, “The passage of Sacred Scripture in which God reveals himself to Moses in the burning bush can serve as a constant starting-point for this effort. There he says: “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them... So come, I will send you” (Ex 3:7-8,10).

God calls you just like he called Moses. **He calls you to hear the cries of the poor.** He calls you to encounter the poor – to see His face in the poor and to do something about it. But wait, it gets better.

Our path to holiness is through our humble and sacrificial love for the poor. As our Holy Father further explains in paragraph 79, “Serving the poor is not a gesture to be made ‘from above,’ but an encounter between equals, where Christ is revealed and adored. Therefore, when the Church bends down to care for the poor, she assumes her highest posture.”

At CSS, we need to serve more people through our food markets and meal programs. We need to increase the number of days each week that we provide a warm breakfast to the homeless. We need to be prepared to provide more financial assistance to households in need of rent and utilities. **But we can not do this without you. Please consider making a gift today that will go toward meeting these needs.** For just as God heard the cries of the Israelites, so too does He hear the cries of the poor today, and He has called you.

–Katie Patrick, CSS Executive Director

HEAR more about how we’re meeting the growing need, **HELP** us do so, and grow in **HOLINESS** at csshope.org





From the Sisters' Desk

Reflections from our St. Gianna Program Marian Sister Advocates

Looking out of the office window as I sit at my computer, I can see the mums blooming into beautiful purple buds which reminds me that fall is officially here and it has been just over two months since I have begun my apostolate at St. Gianna's. Sr. Bernadette and Sr. Karen served the women and children here for the first 15 years of the program's operation and now are adjusting to a different pace of life, back full time at the Marian Sisters Motherhouse. We are so grateful for their faithfulness and for the foundation that has been laid. On August 11th, Sr. Melissa Moxley and I officially joined Sr. Carol Hohmeier, Veronica Pino, Karla Wagner, and Veronica Barreto of the St. Gianna's Program team.

Looking back, I have called Lincoln my home for the last 15 years, but was raised in Henderson, Nevada, a suburb of Las Vegas. After graduating from college at UNL, I began teaching high school math. Shortly thereafter, God called me to be His own. After wrestling with Him about my plans and dreams, I came to understand that maybe, just maybe, God might know better and in September 2018, I entered the Marian Sisters. Before coming to St. Gianna's, I taught middle school math and religion at St. Michael's in Lincoln.

Sr. Melissa, originally from Missouri, was raised right here in Lincoln. She attended Pius X High School where she met the Marian Sisters, and entered shortly after graduating. She has served in many ways during her religious life but 17 years of it has been in the role of Formation Director, guiding and teaching the newest sisters. Most recently, she did pastoral care and gave spiritual direction on one of our previous smaller missions in Springfield, Missouri. Two months at St. Gianna's has been enough time to begin establishing relationships with the women and children here, enough time to learn about some of the resources available, and enough time to see a glimpse of the great generosity of our benefactors and volunteers.



Two months has also been enough time to see that amid doing what is in their control, **much of the residents' time spent at St. Gianna's is waiting.** Waiting on applications, waiting on lawyers and judges, waiting on state and federal aid, all in order to begin rebuilding their lives. And much of the waiting is saturated with unknowns about the future. But rest assured; God is here in the waiting; God is here in the unknowns and St. Gianna's provides a safe place to be during all of that.

Looking ahead, the annual St. Gianna Carole Fest fundraiser is coming up on Sunday, December 14th at 3:00pm. We hope you can join us for this beautiful event. Your support is vital to our mission here at St. Gianna's. God bless you!

-Sr. Gabriel Perry, M. S., St. Gianna Program Advocate

CAROLE FEST

SUPPORTING & CELEBRATING THE CSS ST. GIANNA PROGRAM

Enjoy songs of the season performed by area choirs, meditations by our advocate team, and inspirational stories highlighting our wonderful St. Gianna Program families!

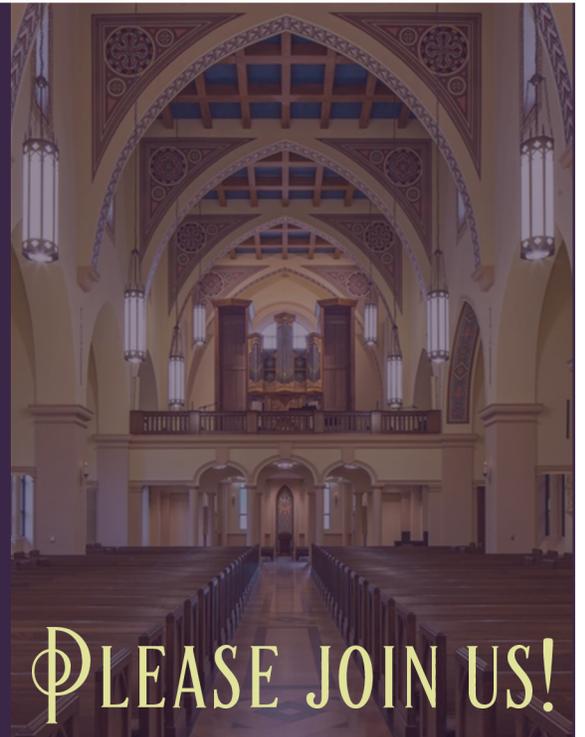


Sunday, Dec. 14th | 3 pm

St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Lincoln

Free will offerings gratefully accepted

More information at csshope.org



PLEASE JOIN US!

Refrigerator REFERENCE

Catholic Culture & CSS Calendar

How & why we're performing the Works of Mercy in response to the Call of God- join us in our mission!

Save these upcoming
CSS
EVENT DATES

SUN 12/14 CAROLE FEST CONCERT FOR CSS ST. GIANNA PROGRAM
UNL NEWMAN CTR/ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

SUN 2/15 TRUMPET FEST FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES
ST. JOSEPH CHURCH, LINCOLN

SAT 3/14 CELEBRATION OF HOPE GALA & SILENT AUCTION
EMBASSY SUITES, LINCOLN

See more info & register online:
cssshope.org/calendar



Our Catholic Culture: Advent Prayers

Advent is a time of anticipation and joyful hope. It is a time for penance, and also for a renewed focus on prayer. As Pope Francis stated, "Advent is thus a favorable time to pray with greater intensity, to reserve to the spiritual life the important place it deserves. Another shortcoming could be a lack of charity for our neighbor, above all toward people most in need of help, not only material, but also spiritual. We are called to be more attentive, closer, to the needs of others." With this in mind, place the Advent calendar on your refrigerator or somewhere where it can be seen daily. During Advent, we ask that you and your family join us in praying for the intention listed each day. **May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas!**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 A Holy Advent  1st Sunday of Advent	1 Health and Intentions of the Holy Father	2 Bishop Conley	3 All Priests of the Diocese	4 All Religious Orders of the Diocese	5 The Seminarians studying for the Diocese	6 Our country
7 Increase in Faith  2nd Sunday of Advent	8 Feast of the Immaculate Conception Being open to God's will	9 Our families	10 Our communities	11 Our farmers and ranchers	12 Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe The women and children served in the St. Gianna Program	13 All parishes of the Diocese
14 Increase in Hope  3rd Sunday of Advent	15 All Catholic Schools of the Diocese	16 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Auburn regional site	17 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Hastings regional site	18 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Imperial regional site	19 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Lincoln regional site	20 The volunteers and benefactors of Catholic Social Services
21 Increase in Love  4th Sunday of Advent	22 The poor souls in Purgatory	23 Return to the Faith of family and friends	24 Peace	25 The Nativity of Our Lord 	"For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord." Luke 2:11	

CSS Lincoln Holiday Giving Programs refreshed



It's hard to believe, but Christmas is just around the corner, which means that our staff at Catholic Social Services in Lincoln is preparing our annual Holiday Giving Program. Having worked at CSS for a few years, it always amazes me how generous our donors are and how eager they are to help out in any ways that they can. **On behalf of all of our staff, I want to thank everyone who has donated and helped out with this program in previous years!**

With that being said, we're making some changes to the program. This year, we will not be taking requests from clients for any toys, as there are many other organizations in the Lincoln area hosting those kinds of programs. Instead, our office will be focusing on requesting food market items, clothing items, monetary donations to go towards paying client rent and utility bills, gift cards, and other household items for our programs to provide to our clients. **By focusing on gifting clients with these essential items and services, families will have funds freed up to buy gifts and toys for their children on their own.** After all, what parent doesn't get joy from being able to buy gifts for their children?

What **won't** be changing is how donors will be able to help buy items for clients. **Beginning in early December, we will have Christmas trees set up at all the parishes in Lincoln and St. Mary's in Denton.** Ornaments will have a QR codes directing you to a webpage with a list of requested items from CSS programs. You'll also be able to donate financially via this page, to help families pay their rent or utility bills. Purchased items can be dropped off in blue barrels at the churches. Once all the gifts have been collected, we will also need volunteers to help drop off these gifts to our clients. If you are interested in volunteering to do this, please contact me.

Thank you again for your continued support and helping provide Hope in the Good Life this Christmas season through your generous donations and time. **If you have any questions about the program this year or want to assist in dropping off the Christmas gifts, feel free to contact me at wstokebrand@cssshope.org.**

- William Stokebrand, CSS Lincoln Volunteer Coordinator

NEW CSS Donation Center now accepting, processing items in Lincoln



The CSS Donation Center opened to the public on Sept. 2 as the new, centralized location for item donation intake and sustainability efforts. The CSS team is welcoming around two dozen or more vehicles per day to drop off item donations and see the center. **Located at 1300 N. 14th Street in Lincoln - one mile north of the Husker's Memorial Stadium in central Lincoln - the CSS Donation Center is 20 minutes or less from most locations in the city.**

In addition to being just one location in Lincoln where items may be donated, the CSS Donation Center holds other important purposes. Our center:

- **Simplifies** the item intake process for donors by ensuring a timely and enjoyable experience. Upon entering and parking in one of the donation drop off spaces, a CSS Donation Center team member **can help to unload your vehicle, answer your questions, and provide you with a tax deductible receipt.**
- **Streamlines** sustainability efforts in the Regift, Resell, Recycle process to ensure that in-need community members receive critical support. The Donation Center is a central location for CSS to receive donations, sort and stock inventory for St. Louise Gift & Thrift and CSS eCommerce, distribute items to people in need, sell high-volume goods (e.g. baled clothing) and large items (e.g. furniture), and manage a robust recycling operation to ensure that CSS is stewarding donations down to the item and material (e.g. metals, broken electronics) level for recycling.
- **Centralizes** as it houses other CSS services including maintenance, item donation data collection, and pickup/delivery services for CSS programs like the Food Market, St. Gianna Program, and Family Support Services. The centralized services are all housed at the CSS Donation Center to ensure ease and efficiency of maintenance and logistics for these important program services.

CSS seeks to extend the lifecycle of donations through regifting, reselling, or recycling and therefore mitigating the potential of items ending up in the landfill. When you donate an item to one of our four thrift stores or e-commerce, we either:



Regift it to a family in need;

Resell it with all funds from resold items used to assist clients and families needing financial assistance for rent, utilities, medical bills, or gas; or

Recycle it, making every effort to divert waste from the landfill and extend the life of a material while also caring for creation.

The CSS Donation Center accepts item donations large and small. A list of the acceptable and not acceptable donations can be found at csshope.org/cssdonationcenter (see the QR code below).

By managing these donations on a larger scale (rather than at the individual level) in the community, **there is more opportunity to bring Hope in the Good Life through the Regift, Resell, Recycle process.** Thank you to our community members for your donations and please come visit us at the CSS Donation Center!

-Jamie Carson, CSS Director of Sustainability

Visit csshope.org/cssdonationcenter for a map to the center, items we accept and do not accept and our other clothing drop-off sites in Lincoln. **Please note: ST. LOUISE GIFT & THRIFT STORE IS NO LONGER A CSS DONATION DROP-OFF SITE.**



When in rains, it pours HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE

It's been a wonderful summer at CSS in McCook. As September arrived, the needs of our community began to increase. We've been busy not only helping those experiencing homelessness, but supporting families who are struggling to make ends meet.

One story in particular came to us after a big rain storm here in McCook. On September 16, McCook was bombarded with over six inches of rain, hail the size of lemons, and possible tornadoes. Sirens sounded as the hail pounded the city for 90 minutes. It was the heaviest rain the area had seen in a while. It left behind broken windows, roof damage, and widespread crop and garden losses.

The next day, I received a call from a family who needed help right away. The basement in their rental home caved in after the heavy rain and they needed to move as soon as possible due to safety concerns. They have a son in school and a baby on the way (due on Christmas). After connecting with local landlords in McCook and with some rental assistance from CSS, the family was able to find a new place to live. They were extremely grateful and appreciated how close their new home is to the grade school their son attends. Each time I see them at church, they continue to praise CSS for the care and support they received.

Even in the midst of a storm, CSS is there to provide support for those in need. An example of bringing Hope in the Good Life in Southwest Nebraska.

-Jennifer Hinze, CSS Family Support Services Specialist McCook



How may we pray for you at CSS?

Share your prayer intentions with us, and we'll offer them during our **Rosary** in the CSS Lincoln Chapel. You may also submit requests anonymously online at csshope.org/pray

HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE NEWSLETTER | NOV/DEC 2025

 I'll support *Hope in the Good Life!*

You may also use this form to correct any mailing info found on the front panel

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Support enclosed: \$ _____

Check to receive an annual statement ONLY
(individual thank you letters for each gift will NOT be sent to you)

Donate online!
csshope.org/donate



Thank you!



"CSS was there for us when we needed it most, helping to keep our lights on and easing the burden we carried. The support made possible through the generosity of past donors gave us not only stability, but also a deep sense of hope and dignity during a very difficult time. For that, we are truly grateful."

-CSS Family Support Services client

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: A patchwork of HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE

Quilting. It is an art that fewer and fewer people are skilled in. A year ago, when I looked upon a quilt, I appreciated the artistry, and pondered the time it took to piece it together. Now when I pull a quilt off a shelf, I recognize it for what it is, **Hope in the Good Life**. A quilt is a home, a place of shelter. A quilt brings solace, a comfort to the afflicted. **A quilt is an action of love.**

Having worked in both the Lincoln and Hastings offices, I am aware of the breadth of services available to each region. It is the yards of fabric between Lincoln and Hastings that continues to bring me joy. It is somewhat unknown how the little pieces of sewn patch work make their way into CSS. **This is where the story begins.**

I live in Geneva, and attend St. Joseph Catholic Church. Within the church hall there is a small very organized room designated for quilting. There are five women who produce 30-40 quilts a year. Depending on the intricacy of the quilt, the average time from start to finish for an extra-large twin quilt is 10-14 hours. The group began quilting in 1997. If we look at some quick math: 30 quilts x 10 hours x 28 years = 8400 hours. **That is 8400 hours of unconditionally loving the stranger.**

When last year's winter wind terrorized Nebraska, not all of Lincoln's homeless made it into shelters. One gentleman reported that the underpass he had been sleeping under had been "cleaned up" right before the winter storm. Most of his personal belongings were missing, including his bedding. He was haggard from the three days and nights in the howling arctic wind. What did he ask us for? **A quilt.**



-Jolene Frook,
St. Joseph Gift & Thrift Assistant Manager



PO Box 30425
Lincoln NE 68503-0425

#HopeintheGoodLife

NON PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE
PAID
LINCOLN, NE
PERMIT No 976



(S.A.G.)

Hope in the Good Life Newsletter

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2025



“Charlie’s Project” provides sweet celebrations for CSS Auburn Food Market clients

Imagine the delight of your favorite birthday cake—its appearance, its flavor, the happiness it brought. For many, a birthday is a joyous occasion filled with gifts, friends, and, of course, cake. However, for countless individuals facing challenging circumstances, birthdays can pass by unnoticed, lacking the joy and recognition most of us take for granted.

This is where Charlie’s “Happy Birthday to You” project steps in, committed to ensuring every person who visits CSS Auburn’s Food Market, can experience the simple delight of a birthday cake. Donors are providing essential baking supplies—cake mixes, frosting, cake pans, and candles—to the shelves of the Food Market. **The project believes that a birthday cake is more than just a treat; it’s a powerful symbol of recognition, a tangible sign that someone remembers them, and a spark of happiness that can brighten an otherwise challenging day.**

Additionally, Guy and Karen Hutton, owners of “Our Li’l Hen House,” have generously donated 20 dozen farm-fresh eggs every couple of weeks to complement the cake mixes, among other egg uses. Karen and her grandkids gather the eggs, while Guy, who is wheelchair-bound, thoughtfully cleans and packages them. Their heartwarming kindness is truly appreciated, and we extend our biggest thanks!

As soon as the ingredients hit the shelves, they are quickly picked up! Clients have been having so much fun with this project, and we’re seeing more smiles than ever before. We’ve shared flyers locally, but are eager to expand Charlie’s vision by reaching out to all of you, our amazing readers. **Please join the fun!** You can help bring birthday joy by reminding recipients that they are thought of and loved, especially on their birthday. It’s a sweet mission, and in addition to our client’s smiles, you should see dear Charlie’s delighted face every time a donation is made! To keep this wonderful project thriving, we encourage donors to drop off donations at St. Francis Gift & Thrift during open hours. **Learn more about how you can help with the project by visiting the CSS Auburn webpage: csshope.org/auburn**



-April Boellstorff, CSS Auburn Regional Director



COMING IN HGL EXTRA DECEMBER EDITION digital only:

We have MUCH more to share with you (too much to fit in a single newsletter!) including more stories and reflections on our encounters with neighbors across southern Nebraska. Join our digital communication list: csshope.org/connect

