



PATRON

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Lord God almighty, we give thanks to You in Your glory for this harvest of grain, and beg You again to bless the harvest which we have received from Your bounty, to preserve it and to shield it from harm. May we bask under Your protection, praise Your kindness and mercy without ceasing, and make use of temporal goods in such a way as not to lose everlasting goods; through Christ our Lord. Amen.



More than just bricks and mortar *Renovated Lincoln site is a "sign of hope"*

On October 14th, Bishop Conley blessed and dedicated the newly renovated Catholic Social Services site in Lincoln, completing the year-long project. The expansion and renovation was necessitated by the growing demand in services provided by CSS. The new features include:

- A waiting area redesigned to create a more welcoming and comfortable area for CSS clients.
- A larger and more accommodating area for those served by the breakfast and sack lunch programs, which has seen a large increase in participants.
- A new multipurpose room offering a flexible space for various community activities, workshops, and events.
- A community garden and greenhouse on

the property to provide fresh produce and opportunities for clients to learn gardening skills.

- The chapel was redesigned to welcome all visitors and offer a peaceful place for prayer and reflection.
- A major addition is the new child care center, allowing parents at CSS to know their children are always close and available to check in on. CSS Executive Director Katie Patrick said, "As Catholics we are very pro-life, pro-family, and now it's going to be visible within CSS."

The expansion of the site is much more than bricks and mortar. "It's a sign of hope, not just for the clients CSS serves," Patrick says, "but for the entire community that comes together to support the mission."

Inside:

Fall 2023

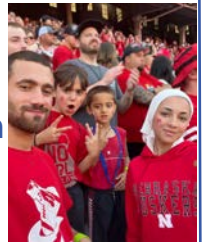
Our commitment to sustainability



'Tis the season!



More than a destination





Bales of clothing, shoes, purses and belts on our warehouse dock, prepped and ready to be recycled rather than going to the landfill

Hope in the Good Life

Our commitment to sustainability

Katie Patrick
Executive Director

Did you know that for the past several decades, Catholic Social Services has been directly involved in sustainability efforts? It's a journey that spans several decades and reflects our commitment to making a positive impact on the environment and the lives of the people we serve.

Deeply rooted in our core values of dignity, integrity, empathy, trust, and sustainability, we have been at the forefront of sustainability efforts since the opening of the St. Louise Gift & Thrift in Lincoln in 2000. We have expanded our footprint across southern Nebraska and now operate thrift stores in Lincoln, Hastings, Auburn, and Imperial.

One of the primary ways we contribute to sustainability is through efficient management of donated items. By carefully evaluating donated goods, our team ensures that wearable clothing and usable items directly benefit our clients or are sold in our thrift stores, with all proceeds supporting the vital programs that we offer, such as financial assistance, immigration services, and help for women experiencing unplanned pregnancies. Items that are damaged or unusable for clients and customers are responsibly recycled and used either as insulation, rags, etc., or sold in overseas markets, with proceeds going into our program budgets. This dedication to diverting items away from landfills makes a significant impact on waste reduction. From October 2022 to June 2023, CSS has recycled 88.5 tons of clothing, 8.5 tons of shoes, and 2 tons of purses and belts; items that otherwise would have ended up in our local landfills.

In April 2023, we took a significant step forward in our sustainability journey by introducing the Online Gift & Thrift Store on Facebook Marketplace. This online platform allows us to sell items like appliances, collectibles, and large furniture that may not be suitable for clients but can greatly benefit our programming when sold. This initiative continues to receive substantial support from donors and buyers alike, furthering our mission to provide "Hope in the Good Life."

In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "I believe, therefore, that true, and effective measures against the waste and destruction of Creation can only be realized and developed, understood and lived, when creation is considered as beginning with God; when life is considered on the basis of God and has its major dimensions in responsibility before God; life that one day will be given by God in its fullness and never taken away. In giving life, we receive it."

Another notable sustainability effort is our food recovery program in Hastings. In partnership with Food Bank for the Heartland, we receive fresh produce, meat, dairy, pastries and other goods from several local grocery stores and retail chains. Our team then distributes that food to communities across central and southwest Nebraska. So as you can see, sustainability has long been a focus of Catholic Social Services.

Moving forward, our commitment to sustainability no longer stops at responsible item management and food recovery. It will extend to a broader Sustainability Plan, which includes a focus on caring for the creation and the Southern Nebraska community. This plan, created in collaboration with CSS staff from the operations department, the marketing and development department, and the programs department, encompasses waste diversion, energy efficiency, food garden, compost, and more, all aligned with our core values and mission to preserve and improve lives for both current and future generations.

(Continued on back page)

'Tis the season!

Rachel Trvdy

Community Engagement Coordinator

Anniversaries tend to be a time to reflect. They celebrate spending an entire year dedicated to something, whether it be a relationship, or in my case, a job. As I come up on my one year anniversary as the Community Engagement Coordinator at Catholic Social Services, I've been reflecting on the highs and lows and the many hats I've worn. One of the highest points occurred during my first few months at CSS. Although I was still very green, I was placed in charge of coordinating our annual Adopt A Family program for Christmas. It was a massive undertaking, but as a lover of all things Christmas, I was thrilled and dove in head first.

Now, one whole year later, I am again looking forward to the Christmas season and coordinating our annual Adopt A Family Program. For those who may not be familiar with Adopt A Family, it's a program where we invite clients in Lincoln to create a Christmas wish list for their family. For each family, a paper angel ornament is placed on an Advent giving tree at many parishes in Lincoln. Members at these parishes are invited to take an angel, shop for the items on the family's wish list, and then personally deliver the gifts to the family's home. We hope that this opportunity allows for greater human connection between the donating and receiving families, rather than purely transactional giving. Last year, I was so blessed to drop off gifts to a couple of families, and I can testify that there is no greater joy than seeing the

delight and gratitude in the eyes of our clients.

In addition to the standard angel ornaments, there are also other ways to give to CSS this Christmas. There will also be small envelopes on the Advent trees to give the gift of cash or gift cards. The envelopes can be returned to the parish via the collection baskets. The gift cards we collect during Advent and Christmas are truly the gift that keeps on giving, because we are able to give them out to clients in need through the rest of the year. In a little way, it keeps the Christmas joy alive throughout the entire year, instead of just one season.



Furthermore, we are adding extra ornaments with new opportunities for giving to the Advent trees. One type of ornament will have a list of suggested items such as socks, hats, coats, gloves, etc. which are always needed at the front desk. We give these items to the homeless and working poor of Lincoln who are in dire need of the ability to stay warm and safe during the winter. There will also be another type of ornament with information regarding volunteer opportunities at CSS during the Christmas season, such as organizing a coat drive, putting together care packages, and more! This is a great chance to get the whole family involved!

As the days get shorter and we get closer to the season of our Lord's birth, I invite all of you to join me in reflection. How is the Lord calling you to give to those in need? Is it through your time, talent, or treasure? All of the above? If you're looking for a simple way to begin answering that call, please consider participating in the CSS Adopt A Family program or contact me at rtrvdy@csshope.org. We look forward to partnering with you to bring Hope in the Good Life this Christmas.

3rd Annual Walk to End Hunger a big success



Thank you to Mike Hosek, BetterLife Lodge 426, many of the Lincoln Knights of Columbus Councils, and our wonderful volunteers who helped with this year's Walk to End Hunger. Our Lincoln Food Market benefited from the Knights friendly competition that culminated with the walk held at Pius X High School. This year's Walk to End Hunger raised a total of 30,583 combined pounds of food and dollars. Thank you to all who helped bring hope to those we serve at our Lincoln Food Market!

More than a destination

Paula Schlotterbeck

Digital Media Manager

“It was the happiest day. We were finally safe.”

When a mom says this about the day her family arrived in Nebraska, and her eyes contain a decade of shadows, you steel yourself for the rest of the story. Thankfully, the journey has led to “Hope in the Good Life” (AND Go Big Red!) for Mahfidha Othman and her family.

But to fully appreciate the path they’ve traveled, we must first look into those shadows. They’re cast by past encounters with a brutal adversary: war. Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, an estimated 13 million Syrians have been displaced and 6.7 million refugees forced to flee Syria (UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, 14 March 2023). In fact, it’s often described as one of the largest refugee crises in history. Mahfidha, her husband Qawas, and their children lived in Syria until fighting in their neighborhood made civilians frequent targets.



The Othman siblings taking in their first Husker football experience

Qawas describes it as a violent time with “no system, no rules.” Random attacks on the streets threatened them all daily. It quickly became an unsafe place for the family to remain, so the parents made the same decision that over 260,000 fellow Syrians have made since 2011: to cross the

border and enter Iraq. That crossing was unimaginably rough, and the decade spent in Iraq equally so. Safety and many basic necessities were in constant short supply. However, they did their best to settle down. Conditions forced everyone in the household to abandon their schooling and work, just to scrape by. Eldest son Mohammed describes the time as extremely frustrating: “We did not achieve anything, anything at all, due to being refugees in a foreign country.” Finally, after ten long years in limbo, the USCCB gave the Othmans their assignment and destination: Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska. The family of eight touched down in America on June 23rd, 2023. The CSS team met them at the airport, and a new journey began- to medical appointments, safe housing, legal documentation, a sturdy vehicle large enough for the entire family, and employment for both

Qawas and Mohammed. The CSS Food Market provided groceries for them when they arrived, and when they needed more food, they shopped at the Food Market and selected items themselves- items to prepare familiar, comforting, family meals. CSS Case Manager Abdul



CSS Case Manager Abdul (left) with Qawas and Mahfidha Othman

was a vital connection point, ensuring the family felt a warm welcome from Lincoln’s community of other new Nebraskans- many of whom had traveled a similar, exhausting journey.

Soon, after some time had passed, the Othman family began to do more than merely survive: they began to thrive. Education for their children has always been a priority for both Qawas and Mahfidha. Seeing them settle into Lincoln’s school system and excel in their studies is a point of pride and gratitude. And those kids have acclimated well in other ways, too. A generous donor gave CSS four tickets to this season’s first home Huskers football game. We, in turn, gave them to the four oldest Othman kids. As captured in the photo, they’re now Big Red fans! Other areas of our beautiful city have also become family favorites, including our park and trail system- peaceful places of family time recreation and a stark contrast to their former, chaotic surroundings. And then there’s the recent Lincoln Airshow. Qawas shares that being able to see the planes up close was very, VERY different from Iraq and normalized an object that before had been experienced as a weapon used against them. Both parents describe it as “a healing experience” for the entire family- another moment on their journey reminding them of how far they’ve come in more ways than one.

Of course, challenges remain for the Othman family. Learning the language (especially the alphabet- vital to understanding the street system) is a work in progress. And one significant and constant worry is the family they left behind. Luckily, they’ve been able to share photos of their new house and vehicle. Showing how well they’re doing lessens the pain of separation on both sides. Still, a specific goal remains for Mahfidha: her brother, now living in Iraq, dreams of joining the family in Lincoln someday. She, in turn, dreams of him following in the family’s footsteps and becoming a Nebraska neighbor. After all, “Hope in the Good Life” is more than a destination. For Mahfidha Othman, it’s “finally safe”- a way of life meant to be shared with loved ones and new neighbors.

A simple way to embrace the spirit of providing Hope in the Good Life

John Soukup

Development Officer

Providing Hope in the Good Life is a calling CSS takes seriously, and we know that it's not possible to help people unless we are first helped by generous donors like you.

The beauty of giving is that you don't have to be wealthy to make a significant impact. One of the most simple and meaningful ways to make a charitable gift that would enrich both your lives and the lives of others is to do an IRA charitable rollover.

Did you know that if you're over the age of 70 ½, you can make direct donations from your traditional IRA to qualified charitable organizations? This practice, known as a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), allows you to transfer up to \$100,000 per year directly from an IRA to an eligible charity like CSS without paying income tax on the transaction.

Other benefits to you include:

- Satisfying your required minimum distribution (RMD) for the year.
- Reducing your taxable income, even if you do not itemize deductions.
- Making a gift that is not subject to the deduction limits on charitable gifts.
- Helping to further the work and mission of Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska.

How an IRA charitable rollover gift works:

1. Contact your IRA plan administrator to make a gift from your IRA to CSS.
2. Your IRA funds will be directly transferred to our organization to help continue our important work.
3. Please note that IRA charitable rollover gifts do not qualify for a charitable deduction.
4. If you wish for our gift to be used for a specific purpose, please contact CSS Development Officer John Soukup at 402.560.5014.

27TH CSS MEMORIAL GOLF CLASSIC & AUCTION A SUCCESS



Held in memory of long time CSS friend Jose Quintero, the 27th annual CSS Memorial Golf Classic & Auction was again a fun-filled day. The tourney took place on August 5th at Hillcrest Country Club in Lincoln and thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, donors and golfers, we were blessed to raise over \$100,000.00 for our programs. Here are the results of the tournament:

Morning First Flight

56-Team Dornbos
59-Team Roberts

Morning Second Flight

64-Midwest Tile, Marble &
Granite
65-Team Ruhl

Morning Third Flight

72-Team Gonnerman
72-Team Asselin

Afternoon First Flight

55-Zach McDermott/
Red Door Realty
56-Walker Tire Point S

Afternoon Second Flight

66-Action Plumbing, Heating
& Air Conditioning
66-Team Krause

Afternoon Third Flight

70-American Agency
70-Team Oxbow

BIG NEWS: We're moving to a Monday next year!
Mark your calendars now, the 28th annual CSS Memorial Golf Classic & Auction will be on **MONDAY**, August 5, 2024 at Hillcrest C.C. in Lincoln





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#HopeintheGoodLife

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(S.A.G.)

The Patron

Fall 2023

Our commitment to sustainability

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This summer, we expanded our reach by launching an e-commerce store on eBay, pricing an avenue to sell collectibles and high-end items. Additionally, we initiated an operational audit with Upright Labs, a company specializing in helping second-hand stores nationwide become more efficient and sustainable. These initiatives have led to us being recognized and awarded a Keep Nebraska Beautiful Sustainability Award in the Civic/Non-Profit category, a testament to our dedication to making a positive environmental impact.

At the heart of our efforts lies a deep-rooted definition of sustainability: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition, grounded in Catholic teaching, guides our programs and activities, prioritizing responsible discernment of resources while inspiring hope and love for all those we serve. So the next time you gather items to donate to us, know that you too, are participating in our efforts to live our faith and keep our environment in good shape for future generations. Thank you and God bless!!

CAROLE & FESTO

A HYBRID BENEFIT FOR
ST. GIANNA PROGRAM

Sunday, December 10, 2023

3:00 PM

St. John the Apostle Church
Lincoln, NE

csshope.org



More information soon at csshope.org