NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2026

Hope in the Good Life NEWSLETTER

The latest uplifting updates from Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska

Prayer returns you to the FATHER'S LOVE

As we near the holiday season, on behalf of our staff and volunteers, I want to express our sincere gratitude for the many blessings that we have received throughout the year. Not only have our donors blessed us with generous and sacrificial contributions, but our clients' humility, perseverance, and gentleness remind us why it's all worth it.



At a recent Catholic Charities gathering, Bishop James Ruggieri of Portland, Maine, said to us, **"Prayer returns you to the Father's love and renews the charity within you."**

Refreshing, isn't it? God invites us into deeper communion with Him, so that first and foremost, we can be filled with His love, followed by the graces required for unconditional love and service to the poor and vulnerable. It isn't up to you, or me, or any one specific person to meet the needs of our neighbors—it's God who meets their needs through us. In other words, when you allow God to work through you, powerful encounters can happen.

We recently provided Luke, a 28-year-old with a 5-year-old daughter, with $300 in rent assistance, $150 for Super Saver and $60 in gas vouchers. Here is an excerpt of the thank you he sent us:

> Thank you so much for reaching out and for being able to help me during these hard times. I am truly truly grateful to your organization and to our Lord Jesus Christ as I had complete faith that I would get through these times as long as I did everything in my power to help myself and **I am just amazed at the grace of God and his ability to work through others.** … I have been praying and praying for days and I truly believe the Lord has protected me my entire life. … I was in a very dark place last Thursday when my electricity was cut off but I chose to have faith in God and to just work as much as I can until I ran out of time. … Thank you again and God bless you!!

Luke recognized God working through others, and that is exactly what each of you makes possible. Whether you are an employee, volunteer, donor—you share the knowledge, and the profound responsibility, that we are doing God's work. For it is only by His love for us, and our love for the Father, that we are equipped to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and bury the dead in a way that is totally life-giving.

As we conclude 2026, I encourage you to grow in your prayer life. Invite God to work through you. If time or distractions are a barrier, turn to St. Teresa of Avila and St. Ignatius of Loyola, well-known for bringing others into greater intimacy with the Lord, and asking them to pray for you. **"Prayer returns you to the Father's love and renews the charity within you."**

Wishing you a blessed and joyful Christmas season!

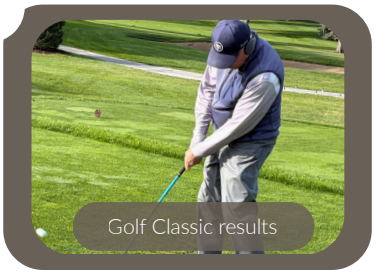
-Katie Patrick, CSS Executive Director

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From the Sisters' ~~Desk~~ Pew

Reflections from our St. Gianna Program Marian Sister Advocates



From my pew in the St. Gianna's Chapel, I can gaze upon the stained-glass window of Mother Teresa. She is holding a child and has such a serene and peaceful look on her face. I often see the mothers at St. Gianna's holding their children; yet some of them have anything but a serene look on their face.

Many of the mothers at St. Gianna's are so focused on self-preservation that they have little time left to enjoy and simply be with their children. This time of year can be stressful for our mothers as they navigate the upcoming cold weather, as they think of the inevitable germs their children are likely to catch, and as they wonder how far their money will go during the upcoming holidays.

While all of these are certainly legitimate concerns; one could imagine that the people that Mother Teresa ministered to throughout the years shared in some of these same struggles. **And yet, Mother Teresa went through life with a serene and peaceful countenance because she entrusted all of her cares to God.** She found joy in loving and that made all the difference between her and those who find it hard to discover joy in their daily lives.

As Mother Teresa once shared: "He gives most who gives with joy. If in your work you have difficulties accept them with joy, with a big smile. The best way to show your gratitude to God and people is to accept everything with joy." **We are hopeful that the mothers at St. Gianna's can step away from the busyness of their lives, take a deep breath, and refocus their priorities.** By doing so, I imagine that we will see many more smiles and hear more joyful laughter from both the children and their mothers! Thank you—Mother Teresa!

-Sr. Carol Hohmeier, M. S., St. Gianna Program Advocate

eCOMMERCE: Recognized for Building Bridges



An inside look at CCUSA Filming of Catholic Social Services eCommerce program

Recently, our sustainability team at Catholic Social Services had the opportunity to attend the Catholic Charities USA annual conference in Richmond, Virginia. It was a gathering of more than 600 members of the Catholic Charities network from across the country. It was an incredible conference for us to network, learn, reflect, and pray.

The conference's theme this year was **The Bridges we Build**. There were many chances, from breakout sessions, to keynotes, to reflect on the ways that our agency can be a bridge to hope for our community as we strive to bring hope to the Good Life.

We also had one very unique opportunity to build a bridge at this year's conference, a bridge between our agency and supporting others across the country. We were highlighted this year for our eCommerce program. I was selected to be one of three presentations about top innovation initiatives across the Country. **I was invited to share how eCommerce has innovated our agency and how others can learn to do the same.**

I was invited to speak in order to inspire other agencies to learn how they could create a new and sustainable source of funding for their many incredible missions and clients. Agencies are constantly facing the loss of government, state, or local funding often leaving them uncertain how to financially support their programs and clients. **I was able to share how eCommerce has created an incredible opportunity to generate new unrestricted funding to use that best supports Nebraskans.**

In a press release about the conference, Charities USA President and CEO Kerry Alys Robinson, said:

"I see a network that, over the past year, has been defined not by struggling but by building — by building new programs, forging new solutions, establishing new partnerships, creating new pathways out of poverty for your clients," Robinson said. "This isn't to say that the challenges we've faced are gone. It's a realization and appreciation that so many of you have confronted them, have found your bearings and have moved forward with determination and joy to carry out your mission in new and enhanced ways."

This determination led to innovation and the creation of our ecommerce program in 2023. Since its creation we have seen tremendous growth and it has become a significant source of funding for our clients and the programs that serve them. I was reminded again and again how incredible our community of donors are in Southern Nebraska. None of this would be possible without your consistent generosity. YOU have helped us create a new program, bringing in important funding, that has truly helped us to do more good for our clients. YOUR charity has helped us love Jesus Christ present in the poor of our community. **Thank you for joining us in our mission and enabling us to not only continue to serve but also to innovate and to build up a program worthy of sharing with other agencies across the country. Together, we're sustaining Hope to the Good Life.** *-Mario Racicot, Director of eCommerce*

Watch the CCUSA video on our agency YouTube channel: youtube.com/@csshope

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

- **TUES 12/01** | NEMAHA COUNTY GIVING DAY FOR CSS AUBURN — ONLINE: VISIT CSSHOPE.ORG FOR DETAILS
- **SUN 12/06** | CAROLE FEST CONCERT FOR CSS ST. GIANNA PROGRAM — UNL NEWMAN CTR/ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
- **SUN 2/21** | TRUMPET FEST FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES — ST. JOSEPH CHURCH, LINCOLN
- **SAT 3/20** | CELEBRATION OF HOPE GALA & SILENT AUCTION — EMBASSY SUITES, LINCOLN

See more info & register online: **csshope.org/calendar**

Our Catholic Culture: Advent Prayers

Advent can be a difficult season to remain focused, for both children and adults alike. From gatherings to parties to programs and events, it's easy to get distracted from preparing our hearts and minds for the birth of our Lord. Fortunately, the Church offers us ways to focus on the spirit of Advent. St. John Paul II offered many homilies on how to have a fruitful Advent. One such way he suggests is daily prayer. "Preparing ourselves to receive him requires first and foremost an **attitude of intense and trusting prayer.** Making room for him in our hearts demands a serious commitment to convert to his love." With this in mind, place the Advent calendar on your fridge or 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. **This year, we're excited to share a new resource with you- visit csshope.org/Advent2026 for a daily Advent prayer reflection.** Wishing you a blessed Advent and Christmas! 🙏

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29 A Holy Advent — 1st Sunday of Advent	30 Health and Intentions of the Holy Father	1 Bishop Conley	2 All Priests of the Diocese	3 All Religious Orders of the Diocese	4 The Seminarians studying for the Diocese	5 Our country
6 Increase in Faith — 2nd Sunday of Advent	7 Our families	8 *Feast of the Immaculate Conception* Being open to God's will	9 Our communities	10 Our farmers and ranchers	11 All parishes of the Diocese	12 *Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe* The women and children served in the St. Gianna Program
13 Increase in Hope — 3rd Sunday of Advent	14 All Catholic Schools of the Diocese	15 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Auburn regional site	16 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Hastings regional site	17 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Imperial/ McCook regional site	18 Those served by Catholic Social Services at our Lincoln regional site	19 The volunteers and benefactors of Catholic Social Services
20 Increase in Love — 4th Sunday of Advent	21 The poor souls in Purgatory	22 For those struggling with physical and mental health challenges	23 Return to the Faith of family and friends	24 Peace	25 The Nativity of Our Lord	*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests. -Luke 2:14*

30th Annual CSS Memorial Golf Classic & Cookout a success

Held in memory of Tom and Margaret Tracy, our 30th annual CSS Memorial Golf Classic & Auction was a big success! For the first time in the history of the event, rain forced the rescheduling of the tourney. Originally slated for September 14th, this year's event took place on October 19th in beautiful autumn weather. We are grateful to the teams who were able to juggle their schedules resulting in 60 teams participating. **Thank you to all of our sponsors and golfers for your supporting Hope in the Good Life!**



MORNING FLIGHT WINNERS

1st Flight
- Lacey Construction/Unico Group: 59
- Lincoln Industries: 60

2nd Flight
- St. Peter: 67
- Team Wathen: 67

3rd Flight
- The Schiloungers: 71
- Team Watson: 72

AFTERNOON FLIGHT WINNERS

1st Flight
- On Eagle's Wings: 58
- Zach McDermott/Red Door Realty: 59

2nd Flight
- Slim Chickens: 67
- Steve Lang Insurance Agency: 67

3rd Flight
- Tracy's Collision Center #1: 72
- Team Reese: 72

CSS Regional Roundup: *Serving 24,000 square miles of southern Nebraska*

CSS HASTINGS: *Wellness for the winter- expanding the CSS Pantry*

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

– Galatians 6:2

During my family's first year in missions in General Cepeda, Coahuila, Mexico, we were part of a beautiful initiative at the local parish. Parishioners would bring in their unused medications and trade them for other medications they needed. We effectively created a grassroots medication pantry right in the back of the church, built entirely on neighbors caring for neighbors.

While liability and safety regulations in the U.S. prevent us from operating a direct exchange like that, the spirit of that mission has lately been stirring within me. I find myself asking "How can we at CSS Hastings recreate that community safety net here?

As the windy chill settles in and we prepare for the colder months ahead, we are officially expanding our pantry services to include **unexpired, over-the-counter (OTC) medications,** alongside our continued focus on personal care and cleaning supplies.

As we enter cold and flu season, the need for basic medical relief is obvious. We are seeing families who are already stretched incredibly thin by rising healthcare out-of-pocket expenses, increased grocery prices, higher fuel costs, and high utility bills. When a child wakes up in the middle of the night with a fever, a simple $10 bottle of medicine can really strain a family's weekly budget (especially if you have a big family like ours). Furthermore, essential items like OTC medications are prohibited from being purchased with SNAP benefits.



CSS is stepping directly into this gap. We are expanding our pantry to include much needed OTC medications—with a special focus on children's relief—and we are ensuring that our neighbors don't have to choose between putting dinner on the table and treating a sick child.

To make this a reality, we need the hands and hearts of our entire community. We are currently focusing our collection efforts on the following high-priority children's medications:

- Children's Ibuprofen (fever reducer and pain relief)
- Children's Acetaminophen (fever reducer and pain relief)
- Children's Cough and Cold syrups
- Pediatric allergy relief

I thought it might be a propos to ask St. Luke the Evangelist, patron of physicians and healing, to pray for us! Intercede for our community as the weather turns cold, and pray for the families who come to our doors seeking wellness, dignity, and relief.

To help, drop donations off at our office during normal business hours (found at csshope.org/locations). For larger donation, we can pick up- just call 402.463.2112.

Thank you for continuing this journey with us. Your prayers and generosity make this expanded care possible.

-Jonathan Kiehl, Hastings Regional Director



CSS SOUTHWEST: *Trivia Night a spooky success*

Halloween Eve Trivia Night was frightfully fun!

Best Dressed Team: "Let's Get Quizzical!!!"

Read the *(not so)* scary story online: **csshope.org/blog**



CSS AUBURN: *Nemaha County inaugural Giving Day 12/1*

Catholic Social Services of Auburn is honored to be chosen as a participating nonprofit for the first-ever Nemaha County Giving Day! Organized by Nemaha County Leadership (NCL) Class #12, this exciting community initiative connects local donors with non-profit organizations working to strengthen families and enhance quality of life across the county. The inaugural Nemaha County Giving Day begins on December 1st, 2026, leading into the main event in June 2027. Giving Day offers individuals, local businesses, and organizations a dedicated opportunity to unite in support of essential local services.

The NCL Website shares: *Nobody in Nemaha County has to explain what a nonprofit does. You have seen it. It is the food pantry shelf that was full the week somebody lost a job. The ballfield lights that stayed on so the game could finish. The child who lit up with JOY when the Nemaha County Sheriff's car pulled up to take them Christmas shopping. None of that runs on its own. It runs on people here deciding it matters.* **We're excited for this community-building event!**

To learn more about Nemaha County Giving Days, visit givebutter.com/nemaha-county-leadership

-April Boellstorff, Auburn Regional Director



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***

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HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE NEWSLETTER | NOV/DEC 2026

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

You may also use this form to correct any mailing info found on the front panel or to provide your email address (see below)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email address: _____

Providing your email allows us to communicate with you digitally, saving us valuable resources (including postage) for CSS programs/services & supports SUSTAINABILITY, a CSS Core Value.

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!



Thank you so much for the assistance provided toward our LES account. We truly appreciate the Family Support Services Request Review Committee's consideration and support. Thank you also for providing the information about the financial literacy training requirement. I've already signed up and am scheduled to participate tomorrow. Thank you again for your assistance. It is greatly appreciated. ***God bless you".*** 🙏

- A CSS Lincoln Family Support Services client. Thanks to your support, this family is journeying towards HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE.

2026 CSS HOLIDAY PROGRAMS: *the simple things*

I'm a firm believer that Halloween and Thanksgiving deserve to not be ignored, but it's also my responsibility to coordinate our Christmas Giving Program at the Lincoln area parishes. With that being said, I will put my love of Fall and Halloween aside to talk about the importance of giving to CSS this year.

Last year, we changed our Christmas Giving program to request items for each of our programs to use to help their clients. **This change has helped us focus more on helping our clients meet their basic needs, allowing them to buy gifts for their families. This makes your contributions even more important.**

Advent begins around the feast day of the apostle St. Andrew and there is even a Novena that can be prayed starting his feast day and ending on Christmas. I once heard St. Andrew referred to as the "Patron Saint of Chair Folders," in that he is not recorded as doing mighty deeds, but simply bringing people, like his brother St. Peter, or items, like the five loaves and two fish that would feed the five thousand, to Jesus.

When Jesus saw the crowd of five thousand and recognized their physical and spiritual hunger, he asked the apostles for what they had. **We have been truly blessed by how volunteers and donors have given to us, particularly during the holidays, simple items that we can use to help our clients.** Five loaves and two fish are not a lot, especially when it comes to feeding thousands of people. **Similarly, while we are asking you to provide simple items, they are still items that will allow us to serve our clients in incredible ways.** For example, the bug spray you donate will provide relief to our clients on hot days, and the towels you buy will provide comfort to our clients and their families. Additionally, the gift cards and other financial donations you provide will be able to provide food and other necessities for our clients.

Like last year, we will have ornaments and posters with QR codes to the list of requested items. However, we will not have the big blue barrels to drop items off in, but you will still be able to leave the items at the church or drop them off at our office. The program will run from November 29 to December 20. **Thank you for providing our clients with "the simple things' and Hope in the Good Life!**

-Will Stokebrand, Prison Program Coordinator, Volunteer Coordinator

See all of the ways you can help our clients this holiday season across the 4 CSS regions (Lincoln, Hastings, Auburn, and Southwest) at csshope.org/holidaygiving

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OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA

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#HopeintheGoodLife



(S.A.G.)

Hope in the Good Life Newsletter
NOVEMBER | DECEMBER 2026

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. 6th | 3 pm

St. Thomas Aquinas Church, Lincoln
Free will offerings gratefully accepted
More information at csshope.org



PLEASE JOIN US!

Hope in the Good Life EXTRA! DECEMBER 2026

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**