



Hope in the Good Life NEWSLETTER

The latest uplifting updates from Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska



Commemorating 50 Years Since the Fall of Saigon

One of the best family reunions that I've been to recently was not my own - it was with the Tran family, at St. Andrew Dung-Lac Catholic Church in Cheney, Nebraska. Chuyen (Alex) Tran invited me and my family to attend their family's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the fall of Saigon.

In 1975, Catholic Social Services' executive director, Fr. Tucheck, was instrumental in welcoming the twenty-six members of the Tran family to Lincoln, Nebraska.

Refusing to be separated, the Tran family was temporarily housed at a U.S. Army base in Arkansas.

Agencies across the U.S. were declining to accept such a large family, but Catholic Social Services said yes. The Tran family traveled to Lincoln, Nebraska - a place they had never heard of before, and made it their forever home.

Learning about their journey from South Vietnam to Nebraska at the reunion that day continues to inspire me and reminds me that even in the darkest of times there is hope.

While photos and videos were shown with popular American songs playing in the background, I learned of the heroic moment when Nhu (Peter) Tran, made the decision to flee with his wife, Quang (Annie) Thi Le and their children including Chuyen. Before the final moment of departure, more joined for a total of 26 Tran family members.

The family fled on two boats, and when food was running low, the parents courageously went back to shore and gathered what they could. For three days, 26 members of the Tran family floated out into the South China Sea until being picked up by an American ship and brought to Guam.

This that you're reading is not the first article written by a CSS director about the Tran family, and likely it will not be the last.

In 1996, the Tran family received the Heart of Christ award at CSS's annual Celebration of Hope Banquet. **Then executive director, Fr. Walsh recognized the Tran family not only for their extraordinary efforts in building a new life in America, but for their extraordinary faith in God's plan.**

God never promised us that life was going to be easy, but He does promise to be with us every step of the way. It may not have been Thu Tran and Quang Thi Le's dream to move to a new country with their future generations immersed in a new culture, but they did so because they had faith in God's plan and that, whatever path He had planned for them, it would be plans to prosper them and not to harm them, plans to give them hope and a future. **Praise God for the Tran family and for all those who said yes to helping them on their journey.**

-Katie Patrick, CSS Executive Director

*The family only took what they could carry on their backs, which included a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (pictured on the right). **This is the same statue that Chuyen's grandfather escaped with when he fled the communists in the north many years before.***



Hear more of the story

In **HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE** PODCAST Episode 53. Alex Tran shares a glimpse into the experience of escaping from his home country, viewed through the eyes of a child.

csshope.org/podcast



*Welcome to our
new(ish) newsletter!*

We're excited to launch our revamped and expanded agency publication! Based on your valued feedback from last fall's publication survey, **Hope in the Good Life** is now our agency's sole newsletter and will come to you every two months in print. In between, we'll send a digital-only update (sign up at csshope.org/connect). Thank you for joining and supporting us as we grow **Hope in the Good Life** together!

-Paula Schlotterbeck, CSS Director of Marketing

A fall, and rise, weathered together at Auburn CSS

Tuesday started with the joyful donation of 40 dozen farm-fresh eggs from two sweet girls and their grandma. As they left, I peeked out the door, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the CSS Hastings staff for a planned day of collaboration, including facility and town tours.

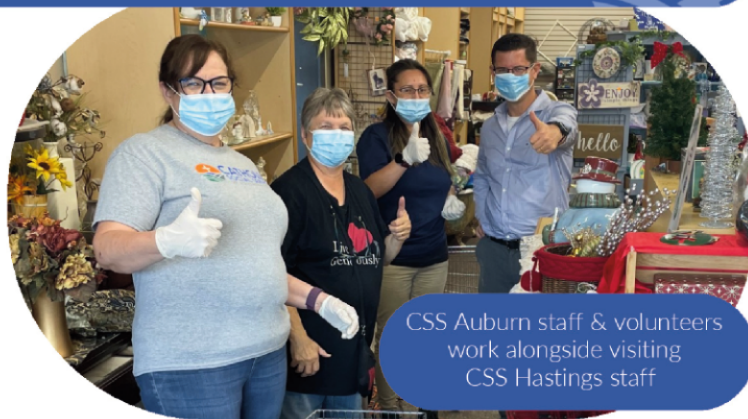
My thoughts were interrupted by Lynn's voice: "I need to tell you something I don't think you're going to want to hear." I glanced at my watch, raised an eyebrow, and replied, "You have one minute before I join the Leadership meeting." Without missing a beat, she stated, **"The ceiling fell in at the thrift store."**

The front room looked as if a giant vacuum canister dumped over it, and an elephant sneezed. Displays were covered in a filth, and a gaping hole marred the ceiling tiles. **As I took it all in, I received a message asking about my attendance at the meeting, the doorbell rang, and we welcomed Hastings staff to the circus.**

Fortunately, our contractor was only a block away and kindly agreed to interrupt his day. He confirmed there was no water damage or structural issues. The old, brittle, snap-together ceiling tiles, lacking a modern grid system, simply decided it was time to crumble. Since there was no asbestos, we could safely begin cleaning. The contractor assured us of his return that evening.

"We have some work to do!" I said with a smile. Maxine, our volunteer of over 20 years with a vacuum in hand, chimed in, "I'm ready! I've cleaned up worse things than this before!" Jon from Hastings asked, "Where can I find a broom?" Julie posted "Closed" notifications and we got to work! Tile pieces were disposed of, debris was vacuumed, displays were cleared, and items were toted to lend space for repairs.

The construction crew worked into the night, ensuring the facilities were temporarily safe enough for us to reopen. We explored options and obtained estimates for future repairs, recognizing the unstable state of the remaining ceiling tiles, many already sagging. While a new drop ceiling would be the ideal solution, cost proved prohibitive. Prioritizing safety and financial prudence, we opted to soon reinforce the existing ceiling with additional bracing, hoping to secure donations to offset associated costs. With so many donated treasures filling the space below, there's little reason to look upwards, so a patchwork ceiling suits our thrifty vibe and budget. As one of the high-up workers descended his ladder, I playfully remarked, "I bet you really wanted to come work here all night, right?"



He good-naturedly replied, "At least we're working in the air conditioning!" We'll be sure to keep it cranking when they return.

The volunteerism on Wednesday was incredible! Lynn's SOS texts worked, and the store was put back together in no time. Volunteers then floated to the Food Market to unload a large delivery that was a week late due to the Food Bank's truck breakdown. **It was amazing to see everything come together!** Previously canceled clients were called in and delighted to receive the freshly delivered food. We were back in business... until I noticed the growling noise coming from the freezer.

Don't they say things come in threes? 1. Food truck breakdown. 2. Ceiling. 3. Freezer?

The temperature rose as the freezer continued to moan. The staff was finally sitting down for the first time all day when I interrupted their moment with, "Ummm... Would you please help me shift some food? I think the freezer is going out."

My jack-of-all-trades husband spent the weekend coaxing the freezer along. On Sunday, the replacement fan arrived, and he had it back in working order by the afternoon.

On Sunday, a new prayer formed in my heart: *Dear God, thank you for guiding us through this challenging week and for all the selfless individuals who extended their help. We are grateful for the gift of "normal days". Thank you for those who grumble like the freezer when we must close for a day, and an even greater thank you for those who understand and graciously support our valuable work. Now, Lord, it is Sunday, and we are truly ready for a day of rest. Heck, maybe even a chill week if you feel so gracious as to give!*

-April Boellstorff, CSS Auburn Regional Director

Gifts of Real Estate: Transforming Property into Purpose

Real estate is more than just land or buildings—it can also be a powerful tool for creating lasting change. By donating real estate to a charitable cause, you can transform your property into a legacy of hope, while also receiving meaningful tax advantages. In some cases, a gift of real estate can even generate a guaranteed income stream for you during your lifetime. **Whether it's agricultural land, a family home, rental property, vacation getaway, or commercial building, real estate gifts can be a strategic and rewarding part of your financial and philanthropic planning.**

One of the most significant benefits is the ability to avoid capital gains tax on appreciated property. For example, by donating a residence, vacation home, or farmland, you can bypass the taxes that would come with selling, while also receiving a charitable tax deduction for the property's full appraised value. This deduction can be taken in the year of the gift or carried forward for up to six years. In certain arrangements, you can even continue to rent, live, or work on the property after making your gift. *(Continued on back page)*



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!

Our Catholic Culture: Saint Anthony Guide



One of the many wonderful things about our Catholic faith is the wealth of rich traditions that have been passed on for centuries. Catholic culture and traditions do more than preserve rituals of worship—they weave together faith, community, and identity. From art, music, and social teachings to less formal everyday practices, the richness of the faith is expressed and passed on. **Even simple traditions can connect generations rooted in history and faith.** For years, our Marketing & Development department at CSS has quietly been practicing one of these little-known traditions.

St. Anthony of Padua is one of two patron saints of CSS' Marketing & Development department (St. Maximilian Kolbe being the other). Under the title of "Generator of Charity," St. Anthony's intercession in the department's fundraising efforts has long been enlisted. **One example is for over 20 years, an image of St. Anthony holding the infant Jesus above the letters "S.A.G." which stands for "St. Anthony Guide", has been printed on the mailing panel of our newsletters.** The origins of this tradition dates back to the early 1700's. A Spanish merchant sailed to Peru, leaving his wife behind. She wrote him many letters but received no reply and eventually found herself destitute. In her desperation, she turned to St. Anthony, placing a letter into the hand of his statue in the Franciscan church at Oviedo and begging for his help. When she later returned and saw the letter still in the statue's hand, she cried out in disappointment. A priest tried to remove it but could not, while she was able to take it easily—along with several gold coins that fell to the floor. To her amazement, the letter she pulled free was not her own but a reply from her husband, sent from Lima in 1729, explaining that a Franciscan had delivered her message and he was anxious at not hearing from her sooner. The letter may still be seen at Oviedo and is dated Lima, July 23, 1729. **This miracle became the origin of the custom of writing "S.A.G." ("Saint Anthony Guide") on letters, entrusting them to the saint's care.**

As a result, other Catholics turned to St. Anthony by writing S.A.G. on their letters or envelopes, and from there the tradition grew. Later, some groups and individuals even used St. Anthony stamps such as the one shown above. **St. Anthony, Generator of Charity, pray for us!**

-John McDermott, CSS Vice President, Marketing & Development



Save these upcoming

CSS EVENT DATES

| | |
|--------------|--|
| SUN 10/12 | BOUNTIFUL HARVEST GALA & SILENT AUCTION HASTINGS CITY AUDITORIUM |
| FRI 11/14 | TRIVIA NIGHT FOR CSS IMPERIAL/ST. ISIDORE G&T CHASE COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS |
| SUN 12/7 | 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:
csshope.org/calendar



Our Community Partner: CEDARS— Hope in the Good Life for Kids in Crisis

At Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska, we believe every child deserves a safe, loving place to call home. Sadly, many children in our state face the uncertainty of not knowing where they will sleep tonight—or who will be there to care for them tomorrow.

Our friends at CEDARS, a fellow nonprofit in Lincoln, are a lifeline for kids in crisis, offering safety, support, and hope when it's needed most. For some children, the turning point in their story begins when they enter a foster home—a place where they can feel secure, valued, and encouraged, and where they can begin to heal and imagine a brighter future. But right now, there simply aren't enough foster families to meet the need. Since the start of 2025, CEDARS has received an average of 248 foster care referrals each month. Because of the shortage of foster families, nearly 200 children are turned away every month. Without the stability of a home, children are moved from place to place, making it even harder for them to feel safe, build trust, or simply be a kid.

This is not just CEDARS' challenge—it's a crisis affecting our entire community.

The lack of foster families means thousands of kids across Nebraska are left waiting for someone to step forward and say, "I believe in you. I want to see you succeed." The need is urgent. If you feel called to make a difference in the life of a child, we encourage you to learn more about becoming a foster parent. To take the first step, visit CEDARSKids.org/foster for more details.

At CSS, we are honored to walk alongside families—whether through food assistance, housing support, counseling, or our St. Gianna Program. We know that strong families are the foundation of strong communities. **By supporting foster parents and those who care for children in crisis, we can work together to ensure every child knows the safety of a loving home—and find Hope in the Good Life.**

-John Soukup, CSS Development Officer



Unity Through Soccer: Lincoln's Youth World Cup



"Respect each other." It's the rule repeated three times—and lived out every day—at the summer soccer camp organized by Hasan Khalil and Luis Genis of Lincoln International Football Club (FC).

This summer, Catholic Social Services (CSS) had the opportunity to sponsor Lincoln International FC's Youth World Cup Tournament. It was the culminating event for a summer soccer program that Hasan and Luis offered to local youth at Clinton Elementary, located near 29th and Holdrege in Lincoln.

The idea for a Youth World Cup Tournament came about when I met Hasan at another event hosted by CSS last October. Hasan was the musician that evening, playing traditional Kurdish music for a small gathering of refugee families. It was then that I learned of his talent and passion for youth soccer. I shared with him a story I had seen about Croatian soccer player Luka Modrić during the 2018 World Cup. Modrić was a refugee during the Bosnian war (1992-1995) and grew up playing soccer in the parking lots of hotels that served as temporary refugee camps.



Having worked closely with Lincoln's refugee community, I've always thought our city was the perfect place to host something like a Youth World Cup. And so, Hasan and I ran with the idea. **He and Luis worked tirelessly in the final weeks of their summer camp to prepare the kids not just for the tournament itself but also for the national anthem and presentation of flags.**

While players were divided into teams representing Mexico and Central/South American countries, African nations, Afghanistan, Iraq/Syria, and other Arabic-speaking countries, the teams were flexible. Kids jumped in as subs and cheered each other on, no matter the "nation" they played for.

Flags from around the world—including Europe—waved proudly at the event as dozens of children descended from ancestors who emigrated generations ago also participated in the soccer camp.

But most prominent of all was the American flag. When it came time for the national anthem, sung by Ellen Soukup, not a sound could be heard among a crowd of nearly 300. **The children and their families all fell silent as we gazed upon the American flag.**

Being surrounded by so many cultures, languages, and backgrounds, I was reminded of what this country can represent—a **place of safety, opportunity, and hope**. And for all the differences among the kids, one thing was constant: they listened, they played fair, and they lived out the summer soccer program's most important rule. Respect each other.

-Katie Patrick, CSS Executive Director



HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE PODCAST Episode 57: Soccer, Refugees, and the American Dream

"At the end of the day, we feel the USA is our country, and the American flag will fly prominently." Those are the words of **Hasan Khalil**, organizer of the first Youth World Cup Celebration sponsored by Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska. Hear Hasan talk about how he brought 200 youth, most from refugee families, together for the event and its lasting impact!



◀◀ Listen to all our episodes at csshope.org/podcast



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 | SEPT/OCT 2025

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

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Thank you!



"Thank you to everyone at Catholic Social Services. **You have been a light in a time of complete darkness.** Thank you for the assistance and for the work you do in assisting our community. I sincerely appreciate your consideration of me... **you are a lifesaver.**"

-CSS Family Support Services client

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: "There is no greater joy than living for the Lord!"

"You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound." -Psalm 4: 7



Hear Jonathan & Teresa's mission story at our **CSS Hastings Bountiful Harvest** event on October 12th- see page 6 for registration information!

We have been so blessed to become a part of the CSS community this year. God is so good! Our fellow staff and volunteers have been more than gracious and have made us feel like honored members of the CSS team. Our family had been serving as Catholic lay missionaries since 2012, after a short-term mission trip to Mexico profoundly impacted our lives. Since then, we have lived and served in Mexico, Peru, and most recently, Ecuador.

Last year, we discerned that it was time to return to the United States for a season so that our younger children could attend school and we could be closer to our older children already living in the United States. We have been blessed with nine children, Moses 22, Elijah 20, Micah 18, Isaac 15, Gemma 13, John 10, Aaron 7, Silas 6 —eight boys and one girl! Our sixth son, Ezekiel, went to be with the Lord in 2014 after a tragic drowning accident. After returning to the U.S., we prayerfully sought opportunities to continue working with the marginalized. **We were incredibly grateful when Fr. Clinch told us about an opening at Catholic Social Services (CSS).** God is so faithful! We had long hoped for a chance to serve within a Hispanic community and to collaborate with others who share this mission.

Since arriving in Hastings, we've met so many kind and generous people—both within CSS and throughout the wider community. Our third son, Micah, will begin his freshman year at Hastings College, and our younger children will attend Hastings Catholic Schools. **We have been so encouraged by the love and commitment of the CSS staff and volunteers.** We're excited to see all that God has in store for this year.

-Jonathan & Teresa Kiehl, CSS Hastings team members



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(S.A.G.)

Hope in the Good Life Newsletter

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER 2025



Transforming Property

into Purpose *(continued from page 2)*

For some, gifting real estate can also help simplify their estate plans and ease the burden on loved ones. CSS donor and volunteer Sally, for instance, is single with two adult children who live far away. She decided that instead of leaving her home for her children to sell or manage after her passing, she would give it to Catholic Social Services (CSS) through her estate plans. **This choice ensures her property will directly support causes she cares about, while sparing her children from complex real estate decisions.**

"Gifting my home was more than a financial transaction—it was a way to transform something I've worked hard for into a source of lasting impact," said Sally. **"From feeding families to housing the vulnerable, my property will help ensure CSS can continue to serve others for generations to come."**

If you'd like to learn more about how a gift of real estate could work for you, CSS can help you explore your options and connect you with trusted professionals to ensure the process is smooth, secure, and aligned with your wishes. **To get started, just drop us a note in the enclosed envelope or email hello@csshope.org.**

By transforming your property into purpose, you can leave a legacy that reflects your values while bringing greater Hope in the Good Life to those in need for generations to come.

-John Soukup, CSS Development Officer



Bountiful HARVEST

There is no greater joy than living for the Lord

AN EVENING CELEBRATING AND SUPPORTING THE WORK OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES HASTINGS

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12TH, 2025
HASTINGS CITY AUDITORIUM
400 North Hastings Ave.
Social Time: 5:00 p.m. | Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Featuring a wonderful meal, CSS Hastings impact updates, Jonathan & Teresa Kiehl's inspirational mission story, and the presentation of the 2025 Love of Christ Award to Lanetta Kellogg
Silent Auction throughout the evening

Secure your seat before October 6th!
Register and pay online by visiting csshope.org/BH2025