



# Hope in the Good Life

## NEWSLETTER

*The latest uplifting updates from Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska*



The first Friday of Lent marked a retreat day for the staff at Catholic Social Services. Our St. Teresa of Calcutta Committee, composed of CSS staff from across our different offices and programs, organized the day for us. Fr. Danek, newly appointed clergy for the incarcerated, celebrated Holy Mass and gave one of three talks. Staff signed up to bring homemade soups and bread and we had Eucharistic Adoration continuously that day. There was time for quiet meditation and opportunities to visit with each other outside the context of meetings. **We also were blessed to welcome two special guests— Sr. Dominga and Sr. Jesula of the Missionaries of Charity, the Order founded by St. Teresa of Calcutta.**

Sr. Dominga told us stories of the experiences she shared with Mother Teresa—what she observed, learned, and admired. Sr. Dominga also shared stories of the men, women and children that she herself cared for. Names and stories that I will never forget, not because of the trauma they had been through or the labels they carried but because of the way Sr. Dominga loved them. **She talked about them and loved them the way Christ teaches us to love the poor—with total tenderness.**

When asked by one of our staff what the core mission of the Missionaries of Charity is, she responded **“to love Jesus and to prepare people for death.”** Even now as I write this, I feel how heavy those words are— preparing people for death.

The Missionaries of Charity are known throughout the world for serving the poorest of the poor, accompanying people dying of hunger and AIDS, wounds and infection, and all manners of deformities. **Yet, what sets them apart more than who they serve is how they serve.** They enter dark corners of the world where even governments look away and they find among the rubble and under the soiled sheets and garbage and beyond the graffitied, needle-ridden warehouses, the forgotten. And they stay with them and they look them in the eyes and whisper to them how much they are loved, and **they hold the dying in their arms, as if Christ were holding them himself.**

When I brought my daughter the next morning to drive the Sisters back to the airport, I explained to her that the Sisters help people before they die— and Saoirse, like many four-year-olds, I would imagine, responds to me and says: **You mean to help them meet Jesus.** Yes, Saoirse, I say, to help people be ready to meet Jesus. And just like that a toddler’s understanding of death that follows life in this world is one where Jesus is the first person you meet.

May we all answer the call in our own ways to accompany those around us— family, friends and neighbors as they too, prepare for death and to remember that we are accompanying them into eternity with Our Father.

*-Katie Patrick, CSS Executive Director*



# From the Sisters' Desk

Reflections from our St. Gianna Program Marian Sister Advocates

## I'm ROOTING for YOU!

The last encounter I had with Robin, not her real name, was in the garden. She was showing me how to plant cucumbers by making a mound around the plant so that the water would drain directly down to the roots. Robin is a tall, confident, friendly woman but she wasn't always that way. She came to St. Gianna's in the summer and, at the time, Robin was quiet and reserved and was seeking a better life for herself and her daughter whom she loved dearly.

The women we encounter at St. Gianna's have come to the realization that someone they have loved has failed to treat them with the human dignity they deserve. **We know from Scripture that every person is made in the image and likeness of God and that the dignity of the human person is the cornerstone of all Catholic social teaching.** When we fail to respect this God given truth, the door is open to all manner of injustice and violence. The women we work with know this all too well.

I got to know Robin better that day when she came into the garden. **I could see that she physically stood up straighter, made eye contact with me and exuded a confidence that she did not possess in the beginning.** She liked to garden and she shared stories of her childhood and memories of her planting experiences back on her farm. We laughed and enjoyed the sunshine beaming down on our faces. It was a peaceful exchange between two persons that was both positive and life-giving.



Our small garden at St. Gianna's

Gardening can encourage mindfulness and ease stress as it acts as a creative outlet from one's regular duties. **Our small garden at St. Gianna's is a place where our residents can encounter the beauty of nature and take time to relax and pull up some weeds along with their roots!** I continue to root for Robin and pray that she fully discovers who God created her to be and will realize that "Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone." – Catechism of the Catholic Church, #357. And she is definitely someone special!

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



## CELEBRATING our VOLUNTEERS

Plans underway for National Volunteer Week: April 19-25

One of the distinctive ways God makes His presence known is through the use of fire and light. In the Old Testament, God spoke to Moses through the burning bush and walked with the Israelites through the desert as a pillar of fire. The Gospel of John refers to Jesus as "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." I like the shortened Latin phrase, "Lux in Tenebris", meaning "Light in the Darkness." Similarly, Jesus tells His disciples that they are the light of the world and that our light is not meant to be hidden under a bushel basket, but to be put on a stand to light the way for others to Christ.

As Catholics and Christians, we are called to be imitators of Christ, and the best way we can imitate Him is in how we use our resources, particularly our time and talents, giving of ourselves to serve those around us. **Our volunteers become that light in the darkness for our clients when they volunteer their time with us, walking as a pillar of fire with them, whether that's been by helping clients get food from our Food Markets, assisting shoppers at our thrift stores, meeting with our homeless clients, visiting the imprisoned, helping out at St. Gianna's, or volunteering another way.** These seemingly small acts can be life changing for our clients just like a single flame can illuminate an entire room. We at CSS are truly grateful for all that you do to help us further our mission.

To celebrate the hard work and dedication of our volunteers, the week of April 19-25 has been declared as National Volunteer Appreciation Week, the theme of which is "Your Year to Volunteer." During that week, we will be highlighting our volunteers on our social media, and we will host several events at our offices across southern Nebraska to show our appreciation for our volunteers. **Please watch [csshope.org](http://csshope.org) and your email for more information about the events closer to National Volunteer Appreciation Week, and each CSS region will celebrate in ways best suited to their volunteer teams.**

President George H.W. Bush, in his inaugural address, called charitable organizations like Catholic Social Services, "a thousand points of light...spread like stars throughout the nation, doing good." He also prayed that God would write on our hearts "Use power to help people." While he said this nearly forty years ago, we can continue to pray the same thing. **We could not help out clients without the power of our many volunteers. To all our volunteers at all of our sites across the Diocese, thank you for sharing your light with us and our clients. We hope to see you at one of our volunteer appreciation events!**

*- Will Stokebrand CSS Lincoln Volunteer Coordinator*

# 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: The DIVINE MERCY NOVENA

In *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, Jesus reveals to Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska a nine-day novena to be prayed in preparation for Divine Mercy Sunday. The novena is to begin on Good Friday and continue through the Triduum and Easter Week, culminating in the Feast of Mercy on the Eighth Day of Easter—the Sunday after Easter. In this novena, Jesus asks that each day be offered for a different group of people:

*I desire that during these nine days you bring souls to the fount of My mercy, that they may draw there from strength and refreshment and whatever graces they need in the hardships of life and, especially, at the hour of death. On each day you will bring to My Heart a different group of souls, and you will immerse them in this ocean of My mercy, and I will bring all these souls into the house of My Father. You will do this in this life and in the next. I will deny nothing to any soul whom you will bring to the fount of My mercy. On each day you will beg My Father, on the strength of My bitter Passion, for graces for these souls.*

To pray the Divine Mercy Novena, begin with the intention for the day, followed by reciting the Divine Mercy Chaplet. Below is an explanation of how to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, and the intentions our Lord revealed to St. Faustina.



### How to pray the Divine Mercy CHAPLET

- The Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, Apostles' Creed.
- On each of the 5 large Rosary beads say: Eternal Father, I offer You to Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your Dearly Beloved Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.
- On each of the 10 small Rosary beads say: For the sake of His sorrowful Passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.
- Conclude by saying three times: Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world.

### Intentions for each day of the Divine Mercy NOVENA

"On each day of the novena you will bring to My heart a different group of souls and you will immerse them in this ocean of My mercy. . ."

#### Day 1: Good Friday

*We pray for all of mankind, especially all sinners*

#### Day 2: Holy Saturday

*We pray for the souls of priests and religious*

#### Day 3: Easter Sunday

*We pray for all devout and faithful souls*

#### Day 4: Easter Monday

*We pray for those who do not believe in God and those who do not yet know Me*

#### Day 5: Easter Tuesday

*We pray for souls of those who have separated themselves from the Church*

#### Day 6: Easter Wednesday

*We pray for the meek and humble souls and the souls of little children*

#### Day 7: Easter Thursday

*We pray for souls who especially venerate and glorify My mercy*

#### Day 8: Easter Friday

*We pray for souls who are detained in purgatory*

#### Day 9: Easter Saturday

*We pray for souls who have become lukewarm*

### Save these upcoming CSS EVENT DATES

\* **FRI 4/10** MONTHLY CSS HOLY HOUR FOR CLIENT INTENTIONS CSS LINCOLN OFFICE CHAPEL

\* **SAT 4/11** MONTHLY CLOTHING & FURNITURE SALE CSS DONATION CENTER

**WED 5/06** NEBRASKA CATHOLIC DAY OF GIVING ONLINE GIVING EVENT

**THUR 5/07** GIVE HASTINGS DAY ONLINE GIVING EVENT *see back of this newsletter for info*

**SAT 8/08** WALK TO END HUNGER-FOR CSS FOOD MARKET PIUS X HS LINCOLN

**MON 9/14** CSS MEMORIAL GOLF CLASSIC & COOKOUT HILLCREST COUNTRY CLUB

**SUN 10/4** BOUNTIFUL HARVEST GALA & SILENT AUCTION HASTINGS CITY AUDITORIUM

\* Monthly event- visit our website for full list of dates

See more info & register online: [csshope.org/calendar](http://csshope.org/calendar)



## Love each other with a WARM LOVE that comes from the HEART (1 Pet. 1:22)

The cold, empty bathtub was a daily reminder of their struggle. For weeks, ever since the old water heater had finally given up, boiling water on the stove had become their family's nightly ritual. Juggling a full college course load, a demanding job, and caring for three toddlers—one disabled—made this effort utterly exhausting, especially in the intensifying cold of winter. The nearly \$2,000 replacement bid loomed between them and a basic comfort, and they certainly didn't have any extra money lying around.

When their request for \$2000 of assistance landed at the Auburn CSS office, we shared in their discomfort. It was a bigger ask than we usually receive. "Samantha" was invited to stop by for food and personal care items, and to discuss possible options. She embarrassedly apologized for the "unreasonable" request, assuring us, "We'll be fine! We'll just keep boiling and we may run over to Rock Port to shower at the truck stop." **The truck stop was twenty minutes away.** The thought of her carrying boiling water across the house with three little ones running around kept my wheels spinning for a solution to prevent another catastrophe.

A glimmer of hope appeared during a review of donated gift cards. \$545 in donated Menards gift cards was available at the Lincoln CSS office. A quick Menards search showed \$549 for a suitable water heater. God always has these things worked out ahead of time! Auburn and Lincoln connected—and Samantha confirmed the solution. **These gift cards, each denomination thoughtfully donated, added together, would mend this situation. It was a case of true donor and organizational teamwork.**

Samantha arrived after a long day at work, her husband home with their little ones. She stood there, tired but hopeful, as an envelope stuffed with various Menards gift cards was placed in her hands. "You might hold up the line, but it's worth it for a hot shower, right!?" Her relieved giggle was followed by a quick hug of gratitude.

However, a new challenge emerged: logistics. How would she transport the large water heater? She remained resilient, declining our offers for a volunteer to pick it up and assuring us, "You all have done more than enough! We'll get something figured out."

A couple of weeks passed, and a small, nagging doubt settled in my heart. **Did we really solve this, or did we just leave her with a handful of gift cards and an impossible task?** A friend was headed to Lincoln in a truck, and I had to make sure we didn't miss a chance to help. I quickly texted Samantha to check in. Samantha's reply confirmed the true success of the effort:

"Yes! Thank you guys so much!! We only had to spend like \$100 after all the gift cards. A friend of ours was able to transport it for us. My dad put it in last week. **You guys are an absolute lifesaver.** We truly appreciate everything you guys have done for our family!!"

The message was a powerful testament: the \$545 in gift cards, combined with collective efforts and love, was a true display of teamwork. **Many hearts combined to bring warmth back into a home and to bridge the impossible.**

*-April Boellstorff, CSS Auburn Regional Director*



## We have an **OBLIGATION TO HELP**: Standing with families as they strive to reach self-sufficiency

*Taken from Poe Dee's personal testimony supporting the proposed bill, LB843, regarding SNAP eligibility for immigrants.*

As a former refugee who has worked with this population since 2009, I understand their needs deeply. Refugees come here because they have no protection at home due to war and violence. Like all of us, they seek a better life and the opportunity to raise their children in safety. The "One Big Bill" has restricted SNAP eligibility for lawfully present families, causing immense hardship. **These families are particularly vulnerable during their first few years in the U.S. as they adjust to a new culture and work to become self-sufficient.**



I see the impact of these restrictions daily. For example, a family of eight from Sudan, whom we welcomed in 2024, recently lost their SNAP benefits. The father works in Omaha to support them, but with rent at \$1,795 and no vehicle, the loss of food assistance is devastating. When I visited them recently, the mother shared that **her children often only eat at school because there is not enough food at home.** Another refugee family from Iraq faced a similar crisis after a layoff coincided with the loss of SNAP benefits, **leaving them unable to afford rent or groceries until CSS intervened with emergency assistance.**

While CSS and local parishes do everything possible, **the need is greater than what non-profits and the private sector can manage alone.** Federal and state support through SNAP is essential.

These individuals have already given up everything—their homes, families, and culture. **They should not have to face starvation here.** They are our neighbors; they work, pay taxes, and their children attend school with ours. **When they have a need, we have an obligation to help.**

*-Poe Dee, CSS Director of Refugee & Immigrant Services*

# 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](http://csshope.org/pray)

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

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Donate online!  
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# Thank you!



"Thank you for caring for my daughter."

*-A grateful dad, after our CSS Imperial team helped/prayed for his daughter during her final illness*

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: An abundant life, witnessing "special firsts"

**Every day is new with children.** As a childcare teacher, I often think of the verse, "[The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases,] his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). This verse is helpful to remember in childcare after a busy day. Every day is new! God's mercies are new every morning. This verse is also appropriate because there is constant growth and change in children, especially in the infant room where I primarily work. It is a joy to watch children develop skills, increase their mobility, and learn to communicate. Sometimes these abilities show up in a matter of days; they are learning all the time. **To witness those special "firsts" is marvelous, and it brings you back to the present, away from any distractions buzzing around or lingering stress.**

Children live with honesty and wonder and witness this authenticity in the adults around them. In my role at Little Blessings, I have reflected on the early years of Jesus' life and his vulnerability as an infant, especially around Christmas-time. **I continue to be moved by the radical mercy of the incarnation as I care for these innocent, wholly dependent infants who bring such joy to my day.** And I also appreciate God's daily mercies afforded to us all to start each day anew.



Hope in the Good Life reminds me of the promise of Jesus in the gospel of John "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly," John 10:10. **In the last year, "abundance" has come to mean the full human experience to me.** A life lived with God accompanying you will include different days and seasons, times of joy and of sorrow. But an abundant life includes ups and downs with the hope of God's steadfast goodness through it all.

*-Elizabeth Morehead, Childcare Teacher,  
Little Blessings Child Care of Catholic Social Services*



Learn more about Little Blessings Child Care of Catholic Social Services, including our childcare openings and career opportunities, at [csshope.org/littleblessings](http://csshope.org/littleblessings) >>>





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MARCH | APRIL 2026



## Join CSS Hastings in nourishing HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE!

One of my favorite days of the year is just around the corner - Give Hastings Day. It's a day that beautifully showcases the generosity of our community, as neighbors come together to support local nonprofits and strengthen the place we all call home. Each year, I'm amazed at what Hastings can accomplish in just 24 hours. **Catholic Social Services is excited to participate again this year on May 7th, with all proceeds benefiting our Open Table Sack Lunch Program.** Open Table provides free sack lunches to an average of 100 people every day through our front doors. With a "no questions asked" approach, we serve everyone with dignity, compassion, and care.

Tim is a familiar face that comes to CSS often for a sandwich from our Open Table Sack Lunch program. He carries his cane and his smile with him everywhere he goes. Wanting to get to know him more, I asked him why he comes for a sack lunch everyday. His response was simple, yet so profound: *"I come here because it makes me feel good to be seen, not just viewed. I know I can come here and get something to eat, but for me, it's the human contact I get here. It helps my physical need, but also gives me human connection."* **Tim's words really struck me. They remind us that our work is about more than food - it's about connection, belonging, and hope.**

To be able to better perform the Works of Mercy, such as feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty, we are in the midst of moving to a new office space. This new building creates room for even deeper connection - a place where guests can sit, share coffee, and enjoy a meal together. We're also expanding to offer hot, nutritious lunches at least once a week, thanks to dedicated volunteers who help cook and serve. These hot meals and sack lunches will be a beautiful place of encounter and an excellent way to serve the Lord.

This Give Hastings Day, you too, can perform the Works of Mercy alongside us. Your gift, no matter how big or small, helps nourish both body and spirit for neighbors like Tim. Together, we can continue feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, and building a stronger, more compassionate community.

*-Miranda Schumacher, CSS Hastings Development Officer*

Learn more about Give Hastings Day & help CSS Hastings nourish Hope in the Good Life at [csshope.org/GHD](https://csshope.org/GHD)

**Give  
Hastings  
Day**  
**5.7.26**  
live here. give here.

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mat 25:35).



### COMING IN HGL EXTRA APRIL 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](https://csshope.org/connect)

