



PATRON

Fall 2024

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES OF SOUTHERN NEBRASKA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Almighty Father, thank you for this harvest time and the earth's bounty. We give thanks for the hard work of those who have cultivated the land and brought in the harvest. They have worked hard to make this a prosperous year. We ask for divine guidance as we enter into this season of thanksgiving. Let us offer You what we gained thus far, and we shall keep on offering whatever is yet to come. Amen.

St. Gianna Program

“Why don't they just pick up and leave?”

Rene (not her name) sat in my office crying softly now and then during our conversation. It was her last day at our St. Gianna Program (SGP) home, and she was turning in her key. She wanted to go but she wanted to stay. For many months, SGP home had been her home where she and her child were safe. Now she was ready to move on. But like so many of our other former residents, she will probably be looking over her shoulder for the rest of her life wondering if her abuser will find her. As we visited, she said, “if it hadn't been for all of you at St. Gianna's taking me in, I would be dead.” She didn't say this lightly, it was unfortunately the truth and we have heard this comment many times over. What possesses a man to threaten a woman with death once they leave? What possesses a man to strangle a woman to unconsciousness, hitting their head with a baseball bat, punching out their front teeth, banging their heads against the wall (causing brain damage), stabbing her, beating her to unconsciousness, threatening to harm the children



or take them with him, sexually abusing her and her children? And the list goes on. We have had many such cases over the years.

There have been situations where I have heard people say, “Why don't they just pick up and leave?” This comment shows a complete ignorance of just what domestic violence is, and I cringe every time I hear it.

If you were a little mouse in my office while I was visiting with these ladies, you would hear why they have their teeth knocked out, why they are suffering from third degree burns on their face and arms, why they now have brain damage and can't work. He cut them off from their own families, wouldn't let them work, kept all their money if they did work, accused them of being a poor mother, being unfaithful, convinced them they were crazy, unfit in every way. How many times did some of them try to escape but went back because the guy said he would change, or they had no place to go, nor did they have money or a car to support

(Continued on back page)

Inside:

Exciting changes and challenges in Hastings



CSS Quarterly Impact Report



Season of Creation: Reflections on stewardship



Feeding the hungry with compassion and companionship: Exciting changes and new opportunities in Hastings

Katie Patrick

Executive Director

Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska (CSS) is thrilled to share some significant updates and exciting opportunities with our Hastings community. As we continue our mission of feeding the hungry and supporting those in need, we are making a meaningful shift in our approach, all while embracing new ways for you to get involved and make a difference.

A New Chapter: Transitioning Food Recovery Operations

Since 2005, CSS has been at the forefront of combating hunger in southern Nebraska through our Food Recovery Program. Initially, we began by distributing surplus bakery items from Russ's IGA in Hastings, and our efforts have grown significantly over the years. Our program expanded to include pickups from Walmart and Sam's Clubs, and by 2017, we were distributing food to 15 different pantries and shelters through a partnership with Food Bank for the Heartland.

However, as community needs have evolved, we've recognized the need for a change. In September, CSS transferred food recovery operations to Crossroads Homeless Shelter, an organization well-equipped to serve a broad area including its shelters in Hastings, Grand Island, Kearney, and Lexington as well as the rural food pantries. This shift will help streamline our efforts and allow us to focus more on relational client interactions and other vital services.

New Opportunities for Volunteers

With this transition, we are excited to offer new volunteer opportunities for those eager to continue their support for CSS and our mission. Here's how you can get involved:

- **St. Joseph Gift & Thrift:** Join our team to help with sorting, pricing, and staging items at our thrift store. This role also includes opportunities to sharpen carpentry skills and assist with furniture operations.

- **Family Support Services:** Volunteer to stock the St. Gianna Closet with diapers and baby clothes or assist with our Family Support Services Closet, which provides essential hygiene and personal care items.

- **Open Table / CSS Hastings Food Pantry:** Help distribute sack lunches and/or food boxes, organize our pantry, or provide administrative support for special projects.

- **Warehouse and Facilities Support:** Engage in various tasks such as baling clothes, assisting with building repairs, and picking up and delivering furniture.



These roles are crucial in helping us continue our mission of providing support and dignity to those in need. For more information or to sign up, please contact our Hastings office at (402) 463-2112.

Embracing a Vision of Compassionate Service

At CSS Hastings, our vision is evolving to better serve the poor and hungry in our community. Inspired by the Christ in the City model, we are reimagining our approach to food distribution. Our goal is to move beyond the traditional model of handing out food and create a welcoming, café-style space where clients can experience hospitality and build connections.

This shift reflects our commitment to not only meet immediate needs but also to foster genuine relationships by recognizing the dignity of the human person. By creating a space where individuals can come in, share a meal, and connect with our team, we aim to enhance the impact of our services and deepen our engagement with those we serve. To accomplish this vision, CSS Hastings will soon embark on a renovation project. Stay tuned for more details, and for now, please keep our clients, staff, volunteers, and benefactors in your prayers. Thank you and May God Bless you!!



“One of the best things that CSS can give to someone in need is our time.”

This quote from CSS Executive Director Katie Patrick comes from our video update that premiered at our Hastings Bountiful Harvest Celebration in September. We feature a Hastings CSS encounter and how it illustrates our vision of inspiring hope and love in every encounter. Scan the QR code at the left to see our CSS board members, team members, and volunteers explain how we are working together to share Hope in the Good Life and invite you to do the same.



CSS PUBLICATIONS SURVEY

We want to hear from you! Please take our quick survey.

We love sharing stories and updates about inspiring HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE and we want to continue doing so in the best possible way.

We truly appreciate your feedback regarding our agency's publication content and frequency. Currently, we publish the following:

- Hope in the Good Life newsletter (monthly, program-focused update)
- The Patron newsletter (quarterly general agency update)
- No Greater Love newsletter (quarterly St. Gianna Program update)

Send in your response by Nov 1 for a chance to win a \$100 CSS SWAG GIFT CARD!

Save time by quickly filling out the form online!



Name

Email

How do you prefer receiving our publications?

- Print Digital Both

How often do you want to hear from us?

- Monthly Bimonthly Quarterly Annually

Which region(s) do you want to hear about?

- Auburn Hastings Imperial Lincoln All

What programs do you want to hear about most often? *Check your top THREE choices.*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Support Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Refugee Resettlement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Market & Meal Services | <input type="checkbox"/> St. Gianna Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration Legal Services | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability Department: eCommerce |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Little Blessings Daycare | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability Department: Gift & Thrift Stores |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prison Ministry (Apostolate to the Incarcerated) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability Department: Warehouse |

What sorts of stories do you prefer reading? *Check your top THREE choices.*

- Faith/Catholic Culture (Lives of the Saints, Teachings of the Church, Traditions, Family Life—tied to a story, experience, or program at CSS)
- Client Stories (Testimonials, Experiences, and Hope-Filled Tidings from our clients)
- Program Updates, CSS Events, CSS Engagement (Volunteer Opportunities, Calls to Action, Donation and Planned Giving)
- CSS Impact (Data, Information, Transparency)
- CSS Team Stories/Updates

Please let us know if you have any other ideas, suggestions, or feedback to continue improving our publications:

Please mail to PO Box 30425 Lincoln, NE 68503 | Thank you for supporting HOPE IN THE GOOD LIFE!



SUSTAINABILITY

More than just a **CSS CORE VALUE**, it's now a CSS Department!

At Catholic Social Services of Southern Nebraska, we define sustainability as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." We formed the CSS Sustainability Department during the 2nd quarter of 2024, which includes these three key areas:



ECOMMERCE | RECYCLING / WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS | THRIFT STORE OPERATIONS

SUSTAINABILITY DEPARTMENT Qtr 2 2024 Impact Highlights:



Qtr 2 2024 Program Impact Highlights



"I love that I get to work in a position where my day to day tasks may seem insignificant, whether it's taking a client to the doctor or helping them find a job, but when you piece them together, you realize you have helped someone essentially **create a new life for themselves and their family.**"



Will Stokebrand,
Lincoln Team Member

"CSS is built upon trust and Christlike love. I am continually inspired by the depth of the relationships in the agency - among staff, volunteers, donors, and those we have the privilege of befriending and serving. The friendship, compassion, and love is deep. **CSS brings hope and light to a world that desperately needs it.** Oh, where a simple smile and a little love can take us!"



April Boellstorff, Auburn Team Member

"To feel the amazing sense of **kindness, hope and peace when working together with the remarkable volunteers and staff** at the CSS agency is like experiencing 'your best day ever' everyday! The compassion we share in supporting each other, as we strive to assist client's needs, demonstrates the rewarding impact we gain from our faith-driven values."



Mary Schutte,
Hastings Team Member

JOIN OUR TEAM.

Help increase our impact! | visit csshope.org/careers



Season of Creation: reflections on stewardship and sustainability

Jamie Carson, Director of Sustainability

Over the past month, CSS has reflected on creation care as we entered into the Catholic Church's 2024 Season of Creation – "Hope and Act with Creation." Pope Francis reminds us in his message for this Season of Creation (September 1, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, through October 4, the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi) that the first fruit of the Holy Spirit is love and that as children of God, we must turn to Him, "this is our great hope," he says.

CSS upholds our Catholic identity as a guide for how we care for creation and our Southern Nebraska community

through prayer, learning, assessment, action, and advocacy. CSS celebrated the Season of Creation by following this 5-part framework from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. For example, the CSS Sustainability Team* prayed

and learned together about the history and meaning behind the Season of Creation. The Sustainability Team also met (a monthly routine) to provide updates and assess efforts including waste diversion and recycling, garden management, organizational resilience, and more. The Team took action in collaboration with Project Impact,

a day of volunteering in the community led by Union College, in conjunction with College View Academy, and completed 60 volunteer hours in one morning on CSS sustainability projects. Finally, we advocated for the importance of stewardship and sustainability in our words and actions. We shared about the Season of Creation in an article in the Southern Nebraska Register that reflects

on creation as a reminder of God's great love for us because he designed it for us. We shared this message with our team and others throughout the month-long season.

CSS core values include dignity of the human person, integrity, empathy, trust, and sustainability. In 2023, the Sustainability Team defined what sustainability means at CSS including that CSS strives to preserve and improve the lives of those we encounter daily and for future generations. We'll continue to learn and grow on our stewardship and sustainability journey, and invite you to

join us.

God has a plan in all that we do. At CSS, the team efforts daily to listen to God's plan and implement it in our work. CSS will reach its 100-year anniversary in 2032 and has a goal to be able to provide "Hope in the Good Life" for



CSS Volunteer Coordinator Levi Baus (left) and Jamie Carson, Director of Sustainability (right) pose with students from College View Academy volunteers

another 100+ years by sustaining operations that align with the region's needs and growth.

In Spring 2025, CSS will welcome the community for an open house to share about CSS sustainability efforts and invite the community's feedback. Until then, thank you for all your efforts to care for humanity and creation.

**The Sustainability Team is an interagency team of 15 people from various programs and locations working together to lead care for creation and organizational resilience strategies. Sustainability is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."*



PO Box 30425
Lincoln NE 68503-0425

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

#HopeintheGoodLife



(S.A.G.)

The Patron

Fall 2024

“Why don’t they just pick up and leave?”

(Continued from page 1)

their children. Many go back for the children’s sake. As a side note, we have had several women we took in as residents who were living in a car with their children. We are talking about Lincoln, not New York City. We haven’t seen it all but we at SGP have seen enough to realize that our city is not immune from the increase in numbers and horrors of cases of domestic violence.

At SGP we try to help each family in their unique and individual needs. After years of being brainwashed into believing that they are the problem, it takes some time for our ladies to rediscover their dignity and move on. So, when Rene made that comment, I reassured her that if it hadn’t been for her hard work and effort to get her life back, she wouldn’t be handing me the key to her SGP home and leaving for a new key to her new home. She worked hard and we are proud of her. She knows that she can return to visit any time and that we back her with our daily prayers. So, if there is ever a time you are tempted to say, “Why don’t they just pick up and leave?” don’t. Put yourself in the situation of these women and ask yourself, if this was my life situation, what would I do? There is no easy answer. God bless you all.

*-Sr. Bernadette Radek, MS
St. Gianna Program*

Bringing Hope in the Good Life

Putting a plan in place

John Soukup, Development Officer

Plan ahead for your Future and the Future of Catholic Social Services.

October 21st - 27th is National Estate Planning Awareness Week, and we invite you to consider these important questions while making your will:

- Who do you want to care for your children or pets?
- Have you made decisions around finances?
- Do you want to support Catholic Social Services through our legacy?

No matter your age or how wealthy you are, you should have a plan in place. With our partner, FreeWill, you can create your plans in just 20 minutes online, and protect the people and causes you love. For more information, contact me at (402) 327-6235 or email jsoukup@csshope.org or scan this QR code.

