



## Mercy Mats Volunteer Numbers Growing

If there is one staple item that we make sure that we take to each and every Volunteer Fair that we attend, it's a Mercy Mat. Started in late 2015 at Catholic Charities, the Mercy Mat Ministry took off from the moment Marlene Meyers brought the idea to us and hasn't stopped since! The expression on people's faces when we tell them that they are sleeping mats for the homeless and are made out of recycled grocery bags is one that never gets old. It starts as disbelief that "those are made out of garbage" and then turns to excitement as they inquire how they, or their group, can help.

No matter the age, or if you can crochet or not, anyone can help these mats come to fruition. There are so many steps! From gathering, sorting, cutting, looping into plyarn (plastic-yarn), or crocheting there is something for everyone. I received an email from Katie Boruske, a 7th grade teacher at St. Therese School in Southgate, KY asking how she could get their junior high students involved. They were learning about the effects of homelessness and thought this would be a good opportunity. Boy, were they right! After splitting the class into the students who would make plyarn and those who would crochet, about 6 or 7 kids caught on to the crocheting right away and within 2 months they had completed five mats! Some take them home and work on them at night, and some stay after school to work on them. They also did a personal hygiene drive of items that we can hand out to our guests at Parish Kitchen. Their participation and excitement is greatly appreciated!

We have also had youth from St. Henry High School and YouthBuild of Northern Kentucky come to our offices to spend time helping make the Mercy Mats. There is also a gathering every third Thursday of the month from 9:30 a.m.-12 noon at our office for anyone who is wanting to learn, or just fellowship with others while they work on their Mercy Mats. All ages are welcome! For more information about the Mercy Mat Ministry please contact Kristina Jolly at [kjolly@covingtoncharities.org](mailto:kjolly@covingtoncharities.org).



### Volunteer Opportunity

Volunteer needed to help maintain the yard at the Latonia Office. Duties would be grass cutting and trimming. Must be 18 years or older. For more info contact Kristina Jolly at [KJolly@CovingtonCharities.org](mailto:KJolly@CovingtonCharities.org) or 859-581-8974 ext 119.

# A Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends

"I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord, your God, obeying his voice, and holding fast to him." (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

I typically try to use this space in our Partners Newsletter to reflect on how God is speaking encouragement to us through the scriptures, Catholic Social Teaching and in our various programs. I am also mindful of the many volunteers and benefactors who enrich our ministry by the sharing of their gifts, so that our many parts lift up the one body of Christ. The messages we receive from God through each of these sources and from each other informs our awareness of the needs of others and motivates us in our commitment to serve.

This time, I would like to highlight the article "Adoptions Through Catholic Charities, Offering Hope and Comfort," featured in this issue of our Partners Newsletter about our pregnancy and adoption services. It includes a tribute to Monica Kuhlman who retired recently after spending her entire career of 43 years serving in this special ministry at Catholic Charities. It's on my heart to mention this here because of the unique gift adoption is to the baby being born, yet adoption often is not seriously considered or chosen.

I recently saw a documentary on YouTube called, "I Lived on Parker Avenue" that recounts how a young man, who had been adopted at birth, meets his birth parents. This film got me thinking about our pregnancy and adoption program, and particularly how we provide an option to abortion. As a Catholic ministry, we obviously are aligned with the various pro-life ministries that have successfully reduced the number of abortions and abortion providers in recent years. Yet we also are seeing the number of adoptions decreasing.

I believe our society has stigmatized adoption as selfish, when it is anything but that. Adoption is an option that puts the child first. My prayer is that Catholic Charities will continue to promote a culture of life and overcomes any biases that inhibit adoption. I think the way we overcome these biases is to educate the public about the various and complex aspects of adoption, and speak in a language that honors all parties to an adoption. For example, we are not in the business of getting babies for couples. WE ARE in the business of finding a family for a child whose birth parents are choosing adoption. I believe that we can help change the public's perception of adoption.

As always, I marvel at the good work we do with the dedication and sense of mission that is shared by so many: our staff, volunteers, and benefactors. I am humbled to be part of this work, and I am grateful for the support and help from each of you. Thank you for the generous and good works each of you do. Not only do I see the hands and feet of Christ by your work, but by your example you are the Light of the world. May God richly bless you in the Resurrection of the Lord in this Easter Season.

In God's mercy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Pickett". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan Pickett, Executive Director

## News and Events

### Save the Dates

#### **10th Annual Golf Classic: Saturday, July 14, 2018.**

8:00 a.m. shotgun start (4-person scramble) at Twin Oaks Golf and Plantation Club.

Sponsored by Northern Kentucky Knights of Columbus; benefits Catholic Charities LifeLine Fund.

\$90 per golfer includes 18 holes of golf with cart, coffee and donuts, lunch and dinner, beer, soft drinks and a gift bag. For more information about being a hole sponsor or to register call Carle Biery at 781-5054.

#### **CaSSba: Sunday, August 26, 2018**

3:00–7:00 p.m. at the Drees Pavilion, Devou Overlook.

\$60 per person presale/\$65 day of event. See enclosed flyer to purchase your CaSSba Cash raffle tickets now! For more info or to purchase tickets, contact Vicky Bauerle at 859-581-8974 or vbauerle@covingtoncharities.org.

### Sacred Heart Radio—Son Rise Morning Show

Listen to Son Rise Morning Show at 8:20 a.m. the **4th Thursday of the month** to hear Catholic Charities staff members talking about our programs and how we are serving in the Diocese of Covington. The podcasts are also available on the website at [www.covingtoncharities.org](http://www.covingtoncharities.org).



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# Adoptions Through Catholic Charities, Offering Ho

By Karen Horgan Kuhlman

When we reflect on our lives, we are amazed by how quickly the years have flown. Decades' worth of living and loving are recalled by Monica Kuhlman, Adoption and Pregnancy Services Supervisor, who retired in December 2017. She can look back on 43 years of wonderful memories experienced during her career with Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington. Monica has seen many changes in the professional adoption and pregnancy practices at Catholic Charities in particular and in the United States in general. Many of those changes are a result of a greater understanding of the long-term effects on the birth mother when placing her child in the arms of adoptive parents.

When Monica began, there was a great deal of secrecy and shame involved in being pregnant if you were not married. Many birth mothers neither saw their babies nor received any information about the adoptive parents. Mothers were told that as they got on with their lives, they would eventually forget about their babies.

Over the years, however, counselors were finding birth mothers coming forward and asking for help with the ongoing grief they suffered over the loss of their child. Also, adoptive parents often lived in fear that the birth mother would want her child back. As adults, children who were adopted came to Catholic Charities looking for information about themselves and asking "What were my birth parents like?" Many children, even as adults, felt they had no right to ask those questions, often waiting for the death of the adoptive parents or secretly requesting information.

The counselors at Catholic Charities decided that if they were to do work that was good, professional and compassionate, a mental health component had to become a part of the adoption process. They began by working to remove the shame of having a child out of wedlock by affirming the beauty of each birth mother's decision to choose life for her child. Around the same time, there was an awakening in the adoption profession that more needed to be done for women faced with an untimely pregnancy. Counseling provided birth mothers with an opportunity to decide upon a life plan for herself and her child, assuring her that the decision she ultimately made was based on her thoughtful consideration of all of her options. Counselors presented all of the options and did not try to sway her decision.





If a birth parent decides to parent, Catholic Charities will guide them to resources that will help them do so. When a mother/father decides to make an adoption plan for their baby, counselors will guide them through the process. They explain how making an adoption plan for their child will feel. More importantly, they will get to choose the adoptive parents for their child, and will be able to see and hold the baby at birth. Separation will be very painful as we are all hardwired by God to love our children, so the counselor will help prepare her for that.

All couples who come to Catholic Charities in the hope of adopting a child are experiencing the pain of infertility. They are counseled on how the process will affect them and are offered ongoing counseling and support. They will attend classes that require reading and written homework, and participate in a home study process.

Today, open adoptions are an option in the adoption program at Catholic Charities, and all parties to an adoption are educated around how it can be helpful to everyone involved. Just one face to face meeting between the birth parents and adoptive parents frees all parties from anxiety. Each may worry that the other will not like them, understand how much birth parents love their child or how much the couple wants and will love their child. Adoptive parents will receive vital information that may help them anticipate and understand health issues or personality traits that will make them better equipped to raise their child.

Monica has seen the hand of God moving in the adoption process at Catholic Charities when a birth mother comes seeking assistance with a difficult decision, couples come for assistance to form a family and counselors play a facilitating role.

When Monica Kuhlman retired, she left the Adoption and Pregnancy Counseling Program in good hands. Angel Stumler is a licensed certified social worker in Kentucky. Her background is in clinical mental health. She has been with Catholic Charities working with the Pregnancy and Adoption program since April of 2014. Our newest staff member is Megan Bowling. Megan is a licensed counselor in Kentucky and Ohio. Her background not only covers clinical mental health, but also chemical dependency. She came to Catholic Charities after working with women experiencing substance use disorders in a program specifically geared for women who were pregnant and in recovery, in addition to behavioral health work.

If you would like information about the Pregnancy and Adoption Program at Catholic Charities, please contact Angel Stumler at [astumler@covingtoncharities.org](mailto:astumler@covingtoncharities.org) or Megan Bowling at [mbowling@covingtoncharities.org](mailto:mbowling@covingtoncharities.org) or contact them at 859-581-8974.

*Karen Horgan Kuhlman is a freelance writer and also the granddaughter of Mary Moser, a founding staff member of Catholic Charities.*



*“Open adoptions are an option ... Just one face to face meeting between the birth parents and adoptive parents frees all parties from anxiety.”*

## News and Events continued

### **Friends & Family of the Incarcerated Free Support Group**

**3rd Tuesday of the month**

**6:30–8:00 p.m.**

**Catholic Charities**

**3629 Church Street, Latonia**

A safe, welcoming community where you will be accepted without judgement.

### **Parents of Addicted Loved-Ones (PAL) Free Support Group**

**Wednesdays | 6:30–8:00 p.m.**

**Catholic Charities**

**3629 Church Street, Latonia**

PAL meets every week and provides continuing education along with support, at no charge, for parents with a son or daughter suffering from alcohol or drug addiction.

### **Free Homebuyer Education Class**

**Saturday, June 2**

**Saturday, July 7**

**Saturday, August 4**

**9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.**

**Catholic Charities**

**3629 Church Street, Latonia**

Learn about managing money, budgeting, insurance, inspections, mortgage lending, realtors, protecting your investment and predatory lending.

REGISTRATION REQUIRED: (859) 581-8974.

*You're Invited!*

*Love Blooms Where  
Kindness is Planted*

**Volunteer Appreciation  
Dinner**

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

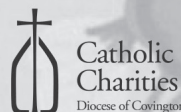
6:00 to 8:00 PM

Diocese of Covington, Curia Building  
Bishop Howard Memorial Hall (lower level)  
1125 Madison Avenue  
Covington, KY 41011

RSVP by June 1st to Kristina Jolly

[kjolly@covingtoncharities.org](mailto:kjolly@covingtoncharities.org)

(859) 581-8974 ext. 119



*Partners newsletter is published three times a year  
in spring, summer and winter for friends of Catholic Charities.  
Catholic Charities provides Child and Family Services; Counseling Services;  
Housing Services; and Community Outreach Services.*

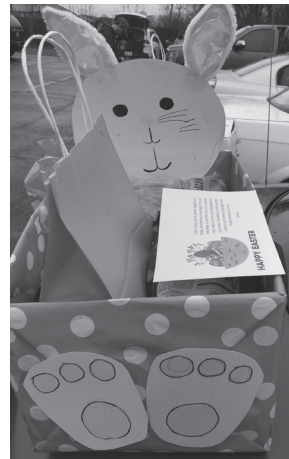
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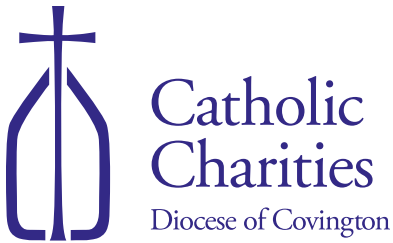
## St. Joseph Supportive Housing Spring Update

At our St. Joseph Apartments things have been hopping. St. Henry Parish provided residents with a “Brown Bag” containing food and toiletries, and on Easter, CHI (Catholic Health Initiatives) generously donated Easter meals to all the tenants as well as an Easter basket to each child. Holiday celebrations are always a challenge for our tenants, and those with children are especially grateful for the Easter baskets. CHI also gave each family a first aid kit, which any parent knows is good to have when the weather improves and children start to play outside. This year we have two high school seniors who are very excited about their upcoming graduation. They have both been accepted to NKU with generous financial aid. They are the first in their families to go to college. They will both be able to attend their prom, which they are also very excited about, thanks to the support of Schrader’s Formalwear.

This year to date we have accepted three families into St. Joseph Apartments. All of them are adjusting well and learning to use the case management services we provide in order to achieve their goals. By using our stable housing to resume or continue their education they are able to find and maintain employment, and ensure that their children succeed in school.

Catholic Charities has many angels like St. Vincent DePaul, Blessed Sacrament Parish and Dick and Rosalie Hentz who provided help and support to the St. Joseph Apartments. None of our success would be possible without their help and support. It is impossible to state how much we at Catholic Charities value their commitment and generosity. We really cannot do this work without the support of the community!





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**Serving the community for over 85 years**

**Our Mission:**

“*To promote healing,  
restore hope and affirm  
human potential through  
services that empower,  
voices that speak for justice;  
and, partnerships that  
strengthen communities.*”

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