

A Tapestry of Grace: Where Giving and Serving Meet

By Jill Walch, Volunteer Services Manager

On a night filled with gratitude, laughter, and heartfelt stories, our annual Donor and Volunteer Appreciation Dinner became more than just a celebration—it became a testament to the transformative power of service. As volunteers stepped up to share their witness talks, the room was moved by stories of compassion, resilience, and human connection. Each reflection offered a glimpse into the quiet, often unseen moments where lives are touched, and hearts are changed—both for those receiving help and those offering it.

As the volunteers spoke from the heart, recounting moments of deep connection with the clients we walk alongside every day, their stories reminded us that service is more than an act—it's a calling. Through their experiences, we were invited to see God's hand at work in small, sacred moments, where love meets need and hope takes root. Their words reminded us that every act of compassion is an encounter with Christ Himself, and that in serving others, we are drawn ever closer to the heart of God.

Donors were reminded that their generosity isn't just financial, it's a spiritual gift that makes this mission possible. Together, as one community, we live out the Gospel call to love deeply, give freely, and see Jesus in every person we meet.

A standout moment of the evening was the presentation of the Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope Award. Named in memory of Marcella Strategier, a devoted volunteer whose unwavering commitment to her Catholic faith and community and who left a lasting legacy, the award reflects her spirit of service. Marcella generously volunteered with Catholic Charities from 1989 to 1995, and her passion for the mission led her to establish an endowment that continues to support our work today. In her honor, this award is given to individuals who exemplify her dedication by generously offering their time, talents, and treasure to advance the mission of Catholic Charities. This year, we were proud to recognize Michelle and Jack Loos, cherished members of the Catholic Charities family for over 25 years, for their enduring support and heartfelt service.

Another significant honor of the evening was the Community Partner Award, which highlights an individual, business, or organization that embodies the values of Catholic Charities and collaborates to create meaningful change. We were thrilled to present the 2025 Community Partner Award to Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield, in recognition of their outstanding partnership and shared commitment to making a positive impact throughout the community.

As the evening came to a close, it was clear: this mission is not sustained by hands alone, but by hearts united in Christ. Every story told, every dollar given, every moment of service offered, it all reflects a deeper truth. We are not just helpers or donors; we are disciples. In a world so often marked by division and despair, our volunteers and donors become signs of hope, reminders that Christ is still very much present in this world—alive in every act of love, every gesture of mercy. May we continue to be His hands, His feet, and most of all, His face—to those who need Him most.



A Letter from the Executive Director



Dear Friends,

Last month, we gathered at the Catholic Charities Annual Appreciation Dinner to celebrate the unwavering dedication and compassionate service of more than 650 volunteers across our many ministries. We were also proud to honor Michelle and Jack Loos as this year's Marcella Strategier Angel of Hope Award recipients—a tribute to their extraordinary commitment to our mission.

The heart of the evening came through the powerful reflections shared by four volunteers representing four of our ministries: JJ Wurtz (Jail Ministry), Greg George Sr. (Pickett's Corner), Sister Mary Pat Bruemmer, SND (Parish Kitchen), and Pat McDonough (Mobile Food Pantry, St. William Church in Williamstown, Grant County). Each shared how their lives have been transformed through encounters with those they serve, reminding us that service is something we offer and deeply shapes who we become.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis calls every Christian to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, reminding us that no one is excluded from the joy He brings. And where do we encounter Him? In loving others.

Pope Francis teaches that love-expressed through service and engagement with others—draws us closer to God, opens our hearts to His presence, and becomes the foundation of authentic evangelization. In giving of ourselves through mercy and compassion, we become most fully alive. JJ, Pat, Sister Mary Pat, and Greg are powerful witnesses to this truth. Their joy, rooted in love and lived through service, is the mark of true missionary discipleship.

This kind of love-in-action is not merely a theological idea—it is embodied daily by people in our communities, as witnessed through the lives of our volunteers. The following excerpts, shared at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, reflect the depth of their service and the heart of their witness.

Pat McDonough shared: "I can't help but think of John's Gospel when Jesus said, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me? ... Feed my sheep.' I wonder—are we the ones doing the feeding? Or are we the sheep? While we offer food to nourish others' bodies, we, in turn, are being fed a different kind of nourishment—one that feeds our souls. The opportunity to serve His will is, without question, the richer portion of the meal. Thanks to Catholic Charities and their mobile food pantry for making that possible."

JJ Wurtz shared a moving encounter with a 40-year-old father of three who was incarcerated: "During one of our sessions, we began talking about St. Joseph and how everything he did was for Jesus and Mary. As we reflected on St. Joseph's selflessness, this man began to break down. It hit him hard—how many times he had failed to put his own family first. I often use the phrase taken from the book *Be A Man, Becoming the Man God Created You to Be* by Fr. Larry Richards: 'I am Third'—God first, family second, and myself third. That message resonated with him, and with many of the men we meet. It becomes a starting point for healing. Jail Ministry is not just about bringing faith into the prison; it's about seeing Christ in those we serve. And in that, I have learned that conversion and hope are possible anywhere, even in the most unexpected places."

Greg George reflected on the impact of Pickett's Corner: "Pickett's Corner is coming up on its second anniversary, and if I had to say who is being more transformed today, I would say it is those of us on the team, because of what our clients have meant to us and shown us as they struggle through daily life." ***Continued on next page***

News and Events

16th Annual Knights of Columbus Golf Classic Dennis Eliz Memorial to Benefit the Clients of Catholic Charities

Saturday, July 26, 2025, at Kenton Co. Golf Course, Independence
Shotgun Start at 8:30 am, 4-man Scramble format, Cost: \$125 per Golfer

If you aren't a golfer you can still support the outing by becoming a sponsor.

For Golf Classic Information contact:

Carl Biery 859-781-5054, cbiery@fuse.net or Bill Kopp 513-262-8102, bil1kopp6@gmail.com

Help Us Build Hope – Your Gift Can Go Twice As Far

We invite you to prayerfully consider making a monetary donation to support the Parish Kitchen's 50th Anniversary Multipurpose Building Fund. Time is running out, and your help is vital to meeting our goal and double the blessings!

Thanks to the generosity of Oakley Farris, in loving memory of his wife, Eva G. Farris, we've been blessed with a matching gift opportunity to keep the momentum going. Every new or increased gift received through June 30th, 2025, will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$50,000. As of May 7th, 2025, we have raised \$28,000 toward this goal.

You can view the exciting plans for the new Multipurpose Building online at www.covingtoncharities.org. Please scan the QR code to make your donation today! If you have questions about how to make a personal or corporate donation please contact Jennifer Abdrabbo at 859-669-3635 or jabdrabbo@covingtoncharities.org.



Dear Friends continued

Sister Mary Pat answered the call to a newly created volunteer opportunity - a ministry of prayer, listening to guests' intentions as they leave the Parish Kitchen after a hot, nutritious meal: "For me, this ministry is humbling in the fact that others would share their struggles and ask for the assistance of prayer, and I can be a part of that. I find I continue to hold their request in my heart. It's a heart-changing ministry."

In closing, may we continue to be inspired by the witness of our volunteers and reminded that in serving others with compassion, we not only bring hope but also discover Christ in our midst.

In Christ,

Chris Goddard

Our Brother's Keeper

By Karen Kuhlman

Since 1931, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington, has been its brother's keeper, making life a bit easier for those faced with problems beyond their ability to solve on their own. Some of our family, friends and neighbors may suffer problems of which we are blithely unaware. Perhaps personal or family problems color their lives. It could be that financial situations have rendered their housing less than adequate. Maybe the unavailability of nourishing food creates a worry-train they ride day after day.

Parish Kitchen, an enduring ministry of Catholic Charities, was founded in 1974 to provide sustenance to the hungry. Dining-in service began at Mother of God Church before moving to Pike and Russell, and, ultimately, to its current location on Madison Avenue in 2022. No matter the location, Catholic Charities' volunteers have lined up to prepare and serve a noonday meal to our hungry neighbors. Over the decades, guests of Catholic Charities have received the blessing of nourishment that will sustain them through the day.

Hunger doesn't end at the boundary lines of the inner cities; poverty and food deserts torment the hungry in many communities across the 3,359 square miles of the Diocese. Thankfully, Catholic Charities has developed and implemented a plan to help alleviate some of the day-to-day human suffering of our brothers and sisters in rural communities. To that end, Catholic Charities visits six Diocesan cities in six Kentucky counties in rotation, bringing comfort and hope to communities we may have never heard of or visited.

John Hehman, Catholic Charities Mobile Food Pantry Coordinator, Gary Frodge, Assistant Mobile Pantry Coordinator, and a host of volunteers accompany those folks on their journey towards food sufficiency. Laden with grocery items, the Pantry makes its way, six times a month, from Covington to one of the six counties of Mason, Grant, Gallatin, Bracken, Owen and Pendleton. The Pantry's arrival eases the stress of feeding the families of those who find themselves without options. Thanks to the generosity of Catholic Charities' donors and a helping hand from The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) via the Northern Kentucky Area Development District (NKADD) Food Bank, food insecurity is diminished.

The variety and amount of food delivered by Catholic Charities to residents in need is staggering. Recently, 7,000 pounds of canned and frozen foods were distributed to families in Mason County. But that astonishing figure is not a month's worth of food, rather a supplement to that which families have in their own pantries. Recipients usually receive enough food for 5 or 6 solid meals, plus leftovers. That is a double blessing: The gift of food allows the recipients to use the money they have earmarked for groceries to instead cover medical expenses or other essential obligations.

The logistics of food distribution is important when providing nourishment to large numbers of people. John Hehman shared some impressive information about the Catholic Charities' statistics for the number of people the Mobile Pantry has feed since the ministry began. "Records indicate that in 2024, Catholic Charities has provided food to an amazing 6,515 households. When we tally the number of individuals living in those homes, the number of people





fed by the Catholic Charities' Mobile Food Pantry adds up to a staggering 17,596 people!"

"On the day of each pantry", Hehman said, "I like to try to get there 2 hours prior to opening to set up the hall with tables before working on food and fruits that needs to be bagged for guests to take. I try to keep everyone up to date with the announcements for staff and volunteers to hear. After we pray together, we begin the registration process. I try to use local volunteers to help with registration and hand guests' food as they go around the tables. The pantries are visited by quite a few elderly people, and our volunteers will escort them through the pantry, bag their items and help them load them in the cars. Our volunteers help take food to our guests' cars, as there is no way they can carry all the food they are getting. Imagine shopping at your local grocery store, checking out and then having to carry all your groceries to your car!"

Hehman enjoys speaking with guests and learning their stories as they express their appreciation for the Mobile Pantry. Often in rural communities, extended families may not have the ability to buy a home of their own and opt, instead, for a mobile home on Mom and Dad's farm. "It is a good feeling to hear them speak of fighting to overcome poverty and difficulties on their own. And it is rewarding to speak with area residents who are now out of poverty and looking for ways to help people in their communities through volunteering themselves! They see the good being done by their friends and want to be a part of it."

Hehman wants people to know that Catholic Charities staff and volunteers are hard at work helping people in rural communities. The Mobile Pantry was the first to visit rural communities in outlying areas of the Diocese of Covington on a regular basis. More

importantly, Hehman said, "The Mobile Pantry Ministry would not work without the dedicated volunteers who assist with the ministry. We would absolutely love to have more volunteers who want to lend a helping hand. And we are getting a good response from people from other social assistance organizations and health professionals who have shown an interest in setting up a table at the pantries to speak with people they are trying to help."

And when a project is successful, the next logical step is - expansion! Such is the case with the Mobile Food Pantry. The Pantry owns a large multi-use box truck that is used for picking up and delivering food and transporting and storing equipment essential to the Pantry. This includes equipment like the folding wagons that are used by the guests to transport their groceries from the Pantry to their transportation home. The carts are similar in function to the grocery carts used by shoppers at local grocery stores! To prolong the useful life of the truck and other equipment, Catholic Charities hopes to build a garage on the property with the Parish Kitchen. The garage will also be used for extra storage for Parish Kitchen and storing bicycle equipment for the Pickett's Corner bike ministry.

The ministries of Catholic Charities are many, and so are the volunteers who lend a hand. And though the tasks they are given require donations of the volunteers' time and talent, they are, indeed, happy givers. The smiles on the faces of those they serve are all they need in return.

For more information on how to volunteer or donate visit www.covingtoncharities.org.

Program Updates

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

**2nd & 4th Wednesday
of each month
6:30–8:00 p.m.**

**Catholic Charities,
3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015**

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

Friends & Family of the Incarcerated *Free Support Group*

3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

**Catholic Charities,
3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015**

A safe, welcoming community where you will be accepted without judgment. Questions? Contact Dave Pike at 513-502-8287 (cell).

Free Homebuyer Education Class

**Saturday, June 6, 2025
Saturday, July 12, 2025
Saturday, August 2, 2025
9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Catholic Charities,
3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015**

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

Class size is limited. Registration Required.
Contact Client Care at 859-581-8974.

NKY HOME Consortium Offers Downpayment Assistance.

Eight cities in Northern Kentucky offer forgivable loans of up to \$10,000 for closing cost and down payment assistance. As long as the homeowner keeps the property as their primary residence for 10 years, they never have to pay it back.

- First, the home you plan to purchase has to be in one of the cities that participates in the program. That includes Covington, Ludlow, Erlanger, Independence, Florence, Newport, Bellevue and Dayton.
- Then certain financial requirements created by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), must be met. The borrower's gross annual income must be at or below 80% of the Area Median Income. To qualify, for example, the maximum income for a single person is \$58,700 annually at the time of the application. For a family of four, it's \$83,850.
- All properties must be one to two units, owner occupied or vacant and meet minimum local housing standards. There are other property and financial requirements.
- The money is a 10-year, no-interest loan. The loan will be forgiven if the borrower occupies the property for 10 years after purchase. A tenth of it is forgiven for every year the homeowner remains a primary resident in the home.

Covington was the first city to offer the homebuyer assistance program over a decade ago. Since then, more than 426 families have benefited from the program in the city.

For more information about the Northern Kentucky HOME Consortium, please sign up for a free Homebuyer Education Class at Catholic Charities. Please call 859-581-8974 and ask for Client Care.



Program Updates continued

Thank You Volunteers!

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers who created Easter bags for Campbell Co. Detention Center. Our jail ministry program is a special group of volunteers who visit those who are incarcerated. The bags included a variety of snacks and a personally picked orange. If you would like more information about our jail ministry program visit www.covingtoncharities.org.

Thank you to St. Pius X Church volunteers. The volunteers spruced up at our St. Joseph Apartments by mulching, power washing, weeding and built and installed two bicycle huts for the residents' bikes. At Parish Kitchen volunteers mulched and spruced up the courtyard getting the garden beds ready for planting. They also installed a new shed to store garden supplies and equipment. Thanks again St. Pius X.



Pickett's Corner Update

Pickett's Corner reopened in March. They have been busy giving away or repairing about 50 bikes a month. We are thankful for the wonderful bicycle donations from individuals and bike drives from Holy Cross High School and Notre Dame Academy. Heritage Bank, Ft. Mitchell Branch, hosted a very successful drive in May. If you would like to donate a bike, email your name, phone number and address to pickettscorner23@gmail.com and a volunteer will call to make arrangements to pick up your bike.



Welcome Emily

Hi! My name is Emily Hudepohl, and I'm honored to join the team as the Communications and Marketing Specialist. My husband and I are parishioners at Blessed Sacrament, and we are thrilled to be raising our three children in our wonderful community. Professionally, I spent several years at Macy's Inc., where I gained valuable experience in training and corporate communications. Over the years, I've enjoyed volunteering at my children's school in various capacities, particularly in development and event support. I'm excited to join the team and look forward to contributing in new ways as we work together toward our shared goals.

Save the Date Cassba 2025

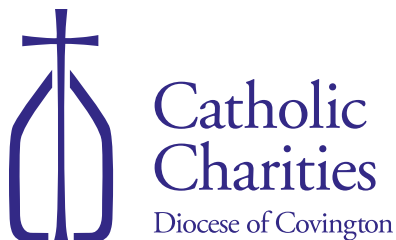
Sunday, August 24 at Drees Pavilion, 3:00–7:00 pm

Corporate and Family Sponsorships still available.

Check out all things Cassba at www.cassba.com

See enclosed flyer or purchase your Cassba Cash Tickets by scanning the QR code





Extend a Hand. Change a Life.

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www.CovingtonCharities.org
www.facebook.com/CovingtonCharities

Serving the community for over 94 years

Our Mission: We serve all people in our Diocese who lack basic human needs, including physical, spiritual, or emotional, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Using a unique holistic approach, we support and empower our clients to achieve self-sufficiency by providing guidance, tools, and life-skills.

We also serve our volunteers, supporters, and partner agencies/ministries by providing the means for them to serve and assist their neighbors in need through our programs or referrals.

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Diocese of Covington

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.