



# Catholic Charities Connections

Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo

## 50th Anniversary Edition

Catholic Family Services was established on June 11, 1975, and later in 2012, became Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo.

We are thrilled and humbled to celebrate 50 years of service to the nine counties of Southwest Michigan.

With your continued support, we can continue to be a beacon of HOPE for the next 50 years.

In celebration of this landmark anniversary, we have filled the pages of this newsletter with stories and quotes written by individuals whose lives have been touched by our work. Some of the names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

### Bread of Life client

A household comprising of a senior, disabled mother and her adult daughter were in need of food delivery, due to not having transportation.

*From the mom: "this is a shot in the dark, but i wanted to see if we could get any help with food. I use a a walker to get around".* Bread of Life was able to deliver 2 times to this family. The mom thanked me for the delivery and asked if she could hold my hands and pray with me. She said that she knew the Lord would take care of her and help her and asked for blessings for our agency.

### Immigration Assistance

Thank you so much for the update—and even more so for all the hard work you've done on our behalf. What once felt like a daunting and overwhelming process has become something truly manageable, largely thanks to your guidance, clarity, and reassuring presence throughout.

You've been a real comfort in a stressful time, and I'm genuinely grateful for your help thus far. With your continued support, I'm confident we'll see this entire process through to the end—successfully and with sanity intact.



At Catholic Charities, we have been given the incredible privilege and responsibility to accompany those we serve on their life's journey. We are called to provide help for today, create hope for tomorrow, and cultivate caring communities that endure.

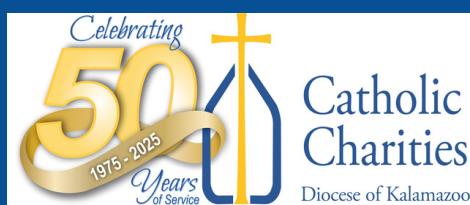
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## *Ark Shelter*

Sam, a 17-year-old boy, is a youth who has had many barriers and struggles throughout his life including Sam, his father, and his brother have been homeless for the last 4 years. The family recently went to Florida to stay with family friends but were eventually kicked out after 4 months and due to a struggle to find housing down there, came back to Michigan. The family has been living in a car since April 2024. The family had parked their car in his employer's parking lot and Sam and his brother would stay in the car while their father worked. The week before they sought out the shelter, the youth's father was told they could not stay there any longer. Although the youth's father was employed, he did consistently get denied from different apartment opportunities due to two eviction notices. Sam came to the Ark seeking shelter, clothes, and food. The youth was given access to clothes from the donation room at the shelter as well as new clothes that were ordered for him specifically. He also learned life skills such as doing dishes, cleaning, and having a schedule.

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While staying at the shelter, Sam wanted to work on school, which he did online through Wayland, and to improve his hygiene. Due to the families struggle with housing, Sam did not have the ability to keep up with basic daily tasks such as brushing his teeth or showering. The habits he formed because of his housing circumstances were ones he needed redirection for while at the Ark, but eventually progress was seen and he began taking better care of himself. During his stay at the shelter, staff worked on finding safe and stable housing for the family. Eventually, they got an apartment set up for them and also gave Sam and his family dishes and other basic necessities for their future apartment. Although they do have a place to live now, the family still struggles financially.



*We envision respect for human dignity and ever-increasing stability and independence for individuals, families, and communities we serve. (CCDOK Vision Statement)*

## *Catholic Community Center*

"I think people like you were sent by the Lord to help people in need like me. I thank you from the bottom of my heart." Ernest

"People like you are good for people like us. Thank you." Mary

"Thank God for you all. You really don't know just how much this helps." Rosa

## *Bridges Counseling*

"I'm the wife of a combat veteran, and mother to 3 sons. Our youngest boy has Autism. Over the years, we have struggled on our path to consistent wellness and stability. Financial crisis left us unable to pay rent, to afford Christmas, or to even purchase groceries.

I came to Caring Network in post-partum depression. Bridges Mental Health Counseling was there for me every step of the way.

Thank you for Everything. You keep Hope Alive."



## *Caring Network*

Thank you for caring for me and making me feel safe. The staff are all really nice and I'm really happy to be working with them. I come to them when I need anything and they help out.

"If it weren't for the donors at Caring Network, my son wouldn't be the person he is today. Because of the Caring Network my son is a better person, I'm a better person."

## *Ark Outreach*

I first met Abe in January of this year. At the time, Abe was a high school student in Van Buren county who had been kicked out of his home by his guardian. Abe's only other family in the United States lived in Texas, and so he found himself staying with a friend so that he wouldn't have to switch to a new school in a new state and leave his support system behind. I began working with Abe to get copies of his birth certificate and social security card as well as to find him medical care. With the help of his school district's McKinney-Vento Liaison, I was able to assist Abe in getting both dentist and doctor's appointments set up. I was also able to help him with some material needs, such as a winter coat, a bicycle, and a new cell phone when his old one broke. When the school year ended, Abe decided that it would be best for him to be with his aunt and grandmother in Texas, and the Ark was able to purchase a bus ticket for him to ensure that he got there safely.

**[DONATE @ www.ccdok.org](http://www.ccdok.org)**

We are provided a sense of belonging and purpose when we are surrounded by people who care about us. This community accompanies us on our life journey and provides us with support, and guidance. To often, those we serve don't have this community and don't have support and guidance in times of crisis. Catholic Charities staff, volunteers, and donors step into that role – becoming the community so desperately needed. In so doing, we are in the business of changing lives for the better.

## *Volunteer Quotes*

I know they are grateful for the services. I think it's extra special that we have items for Moms, too. Often they are so concerned about the children that they put themselves last. One of the last expectant Moms I helped was so grateful -- she said that she had no clothes that fit and was happy to get the maternity clothes.

Catholic Charities is working nicely I am proud to be a very small part of the organization. This year we had several families with small children as well as elderly clients who had shut off notices that day. Good people in our sounding communities who are too proud to call until the last day for help. By the grace of God and caring supporters we were able to give them warmth and love. Thank you for your generous dollars. May God continue to bless you.

Client stated "I came in looking for material items and was talking with the volunteer who you could tell cared about my story and everything going on. At the end of the visit, she handed me her coupon for a free coffee and said I deserved this and I needed to take care of me too. I will never forget that thoughtfulness and remember that volunteer daily"

**We are beyond grateful to all of our engaged, enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers for seeing an opportunity to serve, and for acting upon it.**

**Volunteers play an essential role in strengthening our mission and delivering services to our clients across the diocese.**

**If you are interested in joining this amazing team of volunteers, check out the opportunities at [www.ccdok.org/volunteer-opportunities](http://www.ccdok.org/volunteer-opportunities)**



# Ways to Give Back

Share the spirit of holiday giving with those in need



Contribute or sponsor an individual or family during **Thanksgiving** and **Christmas**. We provide clients and their families with a holiday-themed supplemental food basket at **Thanksgiving** through the Bread of Life Program.

We will match you with an individual client and their family to sponsor a **Christmas basket**, providing you with the information form that will include ages, gender and needs of the person(s) you're interested in helping!

Become a Sponsor or donate a prize to be auctioned or raffled off at our **4<sup>th</sup> Annual St. Nicholas Fundraiser** on **December 6th**.

Buy tickets to attend the event which will include food, drinks, dessert, music, raffle ticket, and live auction.



Donate to any one of our programs at  
[www.ccdok.org/donate-today](http://www.ccdok.org/donate-today)

Follow us on **FaceBook** and **Instagram** to find out the latest happenings and events!!



Please join us for the "Workers of Mercy Mass" honoring Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo, St. Vincent dePaul and Knights of Columbus.

*"We are God's hands providing housing, health and hope to His children."*

## Save the Date

Date: September 26, 2025

Time: 6:00 pm

Location: St. Augustine Cathedral

Reception to follow in the Rectory Meeting Room



**Catholic Family Services**  
- Serving People of All Faiths -

**ARK** - Call 616-343-8765 or 1-800-873-TEEN  
24-hour outreach and temporary shelter for teenagers in crisis

**BARAGA MANOR** - Call 616-694-9711  
Independent housing for seniors and mobility-impaired adults

**BRIDGES** - Call 616-381-9800  
Affordable counseling for families and individuals

**CARING NETWORK** - Call 616-381-1234  
Services for pregnant women and teenagers

**Catholic Family Services**  
1819 Gull Road  
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49048  
616-381-9800

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**Baraga Manor celebrates 20 years of service**

HOMETOWN SPOTLIGHT: OTSEGO

Baraga Manor, an independent-living facility for seniors in Otsego, celebrated its 20th anniversary on May 6. The celebration, featuring the crowning of Jim and Mary Rogers as king and queen, was attended by 48 residents, 48 former residents, 10 members of the community, and the former Bishop of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Paul Donovan.

Baraga Manor was founded 25 years ago by Paul Donovan of the Diocese of Kalamazoo. It was built upon Catholic values to develop affordable housing for seniors.

Retired Baraga Manor Manager Donna Holmes, standing, talks with Connie Loviska, left; Sister Jean Kennedy, and former Bishop Paul Donavan during the manor's 20th anniversary celebration. Jim and Mary Rogers, were crowned king and queen.

JERRY CAMPBELL/KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Baraga Manor features 48 apartments with built-in accordance with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development safe, affordable housing in an independent-living environment and for low-income seniors and mobility-impaired adults. Residents can live as independently as they choose, but most take advantage of the community room for group meals, coffee hours, bingo nights and monthly birthday parties.

Marge Hough, the only 20-year resident, says she enjoys the safety and privacy at Baraga Manor, as well as the many friendships she has developed over the years that she has been a resident.

