

# BREAKING

SPRING 2018

catholic  charities  
OF NORTHEAST KANSAS

# Bread

## Future is Bright for St. Rita's Inaugural Class of 2018

Lavaunte has always been passionate about auto technology. Without the proper training, that passion, unfortunately, couldn't translate into income. He needed more education, but as the youngest of five, no one in his family had ever had the option of attending college – until now.

Lavaunte was among a group of six students who participated in the Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas St. Rita's pilot program. Launched last fall, it's designed to remove barriers which keep people from the education needed to obtain livable wages. These barriers aren't just financial. They include child care and lack of transportation.

The program is housed in Wyandotte County, where the Economic Development Council has reported that there are more than 1,400 unfilled skilled labor jobs paying \$40,000+ per year. St. Rita's works with Kansas City Kansas Community College's Technical Education Center, assisting with enrollment. In addition, the participants must commit to attending mandatory sessions offered by St. Rita's including intensive financial education classes. "We want them to be equipped to make effective decisions with their new income, once it's achieved," explains Sasheen Cutchlow, St. Rita's Program Coordinator.

Professional skills training for job seeking, job retention and job success including full resume and application service, interview coaching and principles of successful work behavior are also required. "We focus on leadership training, creating a brand for yourself, work expectations, attitude and accountability," adds Cutchlow.



Throughout the year, ongoing case management services are provided to students to assist and support their goals. Also, they receive help with food, clothing, rent or utilities and other resources through Catholic Charities' Emergency Assistance programs.

For Kim Brabits, Vice President, Program Operations, who spearheaded St. Rita's, the first year has been exciting. Five of the six initial participants finished with certifications in Auto Tech, Machine Tech and Major Appliance Repair.

The future looks much brighter for Lavaunte, who graduated with academic honors in Auto Tech. Within one week of getting his certification, he's had two job interviews. His goal is to continue on to obtain his Diesel Technician certification.

Adds Brabits, "It's been so rewarding to watch Lavaunte 'come into his own' and share his thoughts and passions for the skill of auto technology, and to know he's off to a life-changing start." ❖

### WYANDOTTE COUNTY ECONOMIC STATS



Nearly 50% of Wyandotte county residents are below 150% of the poverty guidelines.



1,400 + trade jobs paying more than \$40,000/yr are available in Wyandotte County.



More than 3,000 people remain unemployed and an estimated 27,400 live on part-time jobs.



Of 244 households surveyed, 55% cited childcare as the reason they couldn't pursue better employment or education.

## School's Out. Food's Out.



**R**emember, as a kid, that excitement surrounding the last day of school? It meant summer had finally arrived. It was a care-free time filled with fun and friends.

As adults, we don't always look at summer in quite the same way. It's a time filled with stress and worry for many parents, especially if they rely on free or reduced price lunches to help out with feeding their children during the school year.

To help fill that meal gap, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas offers a Kids Summer Food Program. With the help of local volunteers, nutritious sack lunches are provided free of charge to all children 18 years and younger. Adult meals are also available, so parents can eat with their kids. This year, some of the sites will offer take-home snack bags on Fridays so kids have something to eat over the weekend.

Now in its fourth year, our Summer Food Program is at 30 sites throughout 12, mostly rural, counties. These sites are typically places where kids are already gathering such as libraries, parks and community pools. All are located in areas where at least half of the children come from families with incomes at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

Keeping in mind that summer is about the fun for kids, we offer a number of engaging activities at the sites, as well. The kids play games, paint, color and make things. It's a great way to encourage additional learning while providing a safe environment.

Last year, 15,264 meals were provided to children and adults through the Summer Food Program. We expect that number to grow. It's our hope that through programs like this, someday hunger won't be a part of any child's summer vacation. ❖

## Something to Smile About

**W**hen Jason arrived at Shalom House, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas' men's shelter, he was in very rough shape. Years of hard living, poor nutrition and drug abuse had wreaked havoc on his teeth, and within his first month at the shelter, he had the remainder removed. To make matters worse, he endured an emergency appendectomy. Due to his lack of insurance, he was discharged from the hospital mere hours after the life-saving procedure. If he had been living on the street, he would most likely have perished.

### SHALOM HOUSE FISCAL YEAR 2017 STATS:



**123 men**  
received shelter and case  
management services.



**79 men**  
successfully exited services  
and achieved personal goals.



**38 men**  
sought and gained employment  
through community partner  
Bishop Sullivan Center.

Many would have collapsed under such an onslaught to their health, especially while endeavoring to maintain sobriety. Jason not only soberly endured his trial with an incredibly positive attitude, he enrolled in an 8-week intensive Hazardous Materials and Environmental Clean-Up certification class. He proudly graduated with perfect attendance and over a 90% average. For the first time in his life, Jason had a viable chance at a permanent job.

Despite his monumental perseverance and achievements, however, he couldn't help but feel self-conscious about his mouth. Wanting Jason to enter any interview or interaction with all the confidence that he deserves, Catholic Charities secured a new set of dentures thanks to the Newcomer Family Foundation and the collaboration with community partners.

"With all the interior work Jason has accomplished over these past months, it is indeed a blessing to be able to assist in some exterior work as well. Far from superficial notions of vanity, dentures allow a person

to be more human in their daily lives, opening up the possibility of sharing a smile," says Dustin Hardison, Director of Stabilization and Housing.

Thanks to the generous support of the Newcomer Family Foundation, as well as the Oppenstein Brothers Foundation and BlueScope Foundation, Shalom House continues to be equipped to serve and relieve the plight of homeless men, such as Jason. ❖



## Brigid's Hope Story: Understanding Spending Leaks

**A**fter struggling with her payday loan and other expenses, Brigid entered Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas' Kansas Loan Pool Project (KLPP). A single mother of three, her bank account was consistently overdrawn.

Month by month, with the help of her case worker, she started learning how to budget. "I had fallen behind on so many bills. I couldn't seem to catch up," she says.

She started to learn that if she was frugal and intentional with her money, she could slowly get back on track. "After five months of painstakingly changing my habits – paying extra attention to all my spending leaks – and watching every dime, I have not had a negative account balance for two months," says Brigid proudly.

Brigid continues to meet with her case manager regularly to make financial improvements. She adds, "Now, I even have a savings account."

To learn more about KLPP, a program designed to eliminate high-interest predatory loans, visit: [catholiccharitiesks.org/financial-education](http://catholiccharitiesks.org/financial-education) ❖



# TurnStyles Thrift *Opens New Store*

**T**urnStyles Thrift, a ministry of Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, celebrated the grand opening of its second Overland Park location. Fr. Jerry Volz, Pastor at Prince of Peace Catholic Church, blessed the store, which directs 100 percent of its proceeds to helping families in need. The Overland Park Chamber of Commerce conducted the ceremonial ribbon cutting.

The new store occupies a 16,600 square foot building in a strip center at 135th and Nieman. The founding store at 87th and Farley opened in 2004 and continues to operate.

The larger space offers greater on-site volunteer opportunities for groups and individuals 14 years of age or older. Children ages 10 and up are encouraged to join their parents for a Saturday family service activity. "Families are



often looking for meaningful ways to serve together," says Kristin Filardo, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator. "By processing donations out to

the sales floor, they're really helping other families who count on our thrift store to clothe their children and themselves."

For its vast inventory, TurnStyles relies on community donations. Its donation bay is located behind the building where customers can drive up and easily drop off items Monday – Saturday, 10 am – 5 pm. The store also offers scheduled delivery pick-up service for larger items or community garage sales.

To learn more about TurnStyles' volunteer opportunities, or for more information about acceptable items for donation, visit: [turnstylesthift.com](http://turnstylesthift.com) ❖

## Earthly Angels Provide Comfort at the End of Life's Journey

**A**lthough it can be hard to accept, death is a stage in all of our lives. Through the Angel Vigil program, Catholic Community Hospice provides around-the-clock bedside volunteers, so that patients and their family members don't have to go through these final hours alone.

Catholic Community Hospice Volunteer Director, Bonnie Krause, provides training to those interested in serving as a hospice volunteer. She recommends that new volunteers spend their first six months volunteering with patients, before sitting with the dying. Depending on the faith of the patient, Angel Vigil volunteers read a passage from the Bible or perhaps a spiritual book or favorite novel, say prayers, play comforting music or sometimes just sit silently holding the patient's hands.



Barb Trum had thought off and on about volunteering for hospice, but wasn't sure she could handle it. As her faith and devotion to the Blessed Mother and

Saint Teresa of Calcutta deepened, she knew this was the ministry God called her to do. After much discernment, she contacted Catholic Community Hospice.

Barb has become passionate about her volunteer service and knows she's where she should be. "I'm an earthly angel," she says, "sent by God to walk with these patients on their final journey."

To participate in this beautiful ministry and become an end-of-life care volunteer, complete a hospice volunteer interest form available online at: [catholiccommunityhospice.com/volunteer](http://catholiccommunityhospice.com/volunteer) ❖

## New Roots for Refugees Celebrates 10 Years of Growth

**I**t's been a decade since ground was broken on a nine-acre training farm in Juniper Gardens in Kansas City, Kansas. It is home to the New Roots for Refugees program, a partnership between Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas and Cultivate KC.

The urban incubator farm model is an ideal fit for refugees, who often come to the United States with significant farming experience and a desire to continue growing in their new homeland. While capitalizing on their strengths, experiences and culture of mutual assistance, the program breaks down the barriers of land acquisition, access to markets and language.

New Roots celebrated its first round of graduates in 2012, and continues to graduate farmers each year. It is one of the few programs in the United States that helps recently resettled refugee farmers purchase their own land.

Today, 20 graduates are selling their vegetables, grown on land (1/4 acre to 2 ½ acre farm) that they purchased or leased with the help of program staff. In the 10 years that New Roots has trained farmers, over \$1 million in income from selling vegetables has gone back into the local refugee community. ❖

**Get the latest news about Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas delivered straight to your inbox!**

Go to [catholiccharitiesks.org](http://catholiccharitiesks.org) and sign up for our monthly e-Newsletter which highlights our programs, upcoming events and ways you can help make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

## EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE CENTERS

### ATCHISON

502 Kansas Ave.  
Atchison, KS 66002  
913.367.5070

### KANSAS CITY

2220 Central Ave.  
Kansas City, KS 66102  
913.621.3445

### LAWRENCE

1247 Kentucky St.  
Lawrence, KS 66044  
785.856.2694

### LEAVENWORTH

716 North 5th St.  
Leavenworth, KS 66048  
913.651.8060

### OLATHE

333 East Poplar  
Olathe, KS 66061  
913.782.4077

### OVERLAND PARK

9806 West 87th St.  
Overland Park, KS 66212  
913.384.6608

### TOPEKA

234 South Kansas Ave.  
Topeka, KS 66603  
785.233.6300

### HOPE DISTRIBUTION CENTER

1708 Steele Rd.  
(Food Pantry Only)  
Kansas City, KS 66106  
913.432.3141

### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

9720 West 87th St.  
Overland Park, KS 66212  
913.433.2100



9720 West 87th St. • Overland Park, KS 66212



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and follow us on



Mark and Patty Couch

## Volunteers Serve with Hands and Heart

It's not surprising to find Mark and Patty Couch in an upstairs area at Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas' Hope Distribution Center. They are busy inventorying, packaging and moving furniture and household items as the resettlement program prepares for the arrival of a new refugee family.

"Setting up and moving furniture in for refugees has made us appreciate how difficult it would be for them to move to a new country and start a new life with so little. We feel fortunate to be able to help out," says Patty, who began volunteering along with her husband following retirement.

The duo were among a select group of volunteers from 22 non-profit organizations recently recognized by the United Way of Wyandotte County Executive Council. "They go above and beyond in their service," says Cari Olberding, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator for Catholic Charities. "They beam love and kindness to all our neighbors in need, serving in a multitude of our programs."

Mark and Patty also lend a hand at the Olathe Emergency Assistance Center, helping with the food pantry, clothing closet and monthly mobile food distribution. Plus, Patty serves as the Catholic Charities parish liaison for St. Paul's, and completed financial mentor training.

The Couch's aren't just volunteers – they're some of Catholic Charities' best advocates for volunteer growth. They encourage others to give back by donating their time to serve. "There are so many different volunteer opportunities with Catholic Charities. If you don't know someone who volunteers there, find a friend and sign up for something!" adds Patty.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, visit: [catholiccharitiesks.org/volunteer](http://catholiccharitiesks.org/volunteer) ❖



Over **1,600**  
volunteers each  
month provide  
support to more than **20 programs**  
and services.



Volunteers served  
over **216,000 hours**  
last year, helping carry  
out the mission of Catholic Charities.