

## FAMILY SUPPORT CENTERS

### ATCHISON

502 Kansas Ave.  
Atchison, KS 66002  
913.367.5070

### HOPE DISTRIBUTION CENTER

1708 Steele Rd.  
Kansas City, KS 66106  
913.432.3141

### LAWRENCE

1525 West 6th 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

### WYCO (KCK)

600 Minnesota Ave.  
Kansas City, KS 66101  
913.621.1504

### ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

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



Connect with us:

[f](#) [t](#) @CCNEK [i](#) @catholiccharitiesks



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

# Catholic Charities Helps Families Facing Homelessness

Sarah came to Catholic Charities as a last resort. She had lost her job due to COVID, and was evicted from her apartment. Experiencing homelessness meant she and her son sometimes stayed with friends and family. At other times, she made sleeping arrangements for her son, while she opted to stay in her car.

Sarah met with a Catholic Charities case manager regularly and was able to find employment. She was accepted into our Pine Street transitional housing program in Olathe, which allowed her to save money for a place of her own. She found a second job so she could pay off old debt.

However, soon after, her car broke down. Since the repairs would cost more than the car was worth, she decided to give it up. She had to rely on public transportation, which meant she was often

late for work at both jobs. Working so much also caused her to feel worn down and left her less time with her son.

After many months, she was able to find an apartment and Catholic Charities was able to help her pay the deposit and first month's rent. This assistance allowed her to use the money she had saved to buy a car. She would no longer need public transportation and was able to quit one of her two jobs.

Catholic Charities provided the support and resources that Sarah needed to get back on her feet. She was beaming when she returned the keys to the Pine Street apartment. Her struggle had lasted nearly a year, but now she was finally able to rest in her own home. ❖



Thanks to our generous supporters, we were able to provide over **\$2.38 million dollars in Direct Financial Assistance** to families facing homelessness, eviction or disconnection.

# BREAKING Bread

FALL 2021

catholic  charities  
OF NORTHEAST KANSAS

## Family Financial Transformations Celebrates \$1 Million Milestone



Members of our Family Financial Transformations team celebrate \$1 million debt reduction milestone.

Although Laurie had a full-time job and was earning a livable wage, she had a lot of debt. That debt put the single mother of two at risk of eviction. Needing some financial guidance, she enrolled in Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas' Family Financial Transformations (FFT) Program.

The FFT Program has been successfully helping families, like Laurie's, learn the skills they need to better manage their finances and decrease debt. Since its inception in 2015, the cumulative amount of debt reduced by the 316 families who completed the program is \$1 million!

"Many generations didn't get financial education in school. No one taught us about interest rates or how to create a budget," said Kimberly Burau, LMSW, Financial Empowerment Specialist. "The people who participate in our program are employed, but it's that periodic expense, such as an unexpected car repair, that has caused them to turn to a high interest credit card or payday loan."

The program's year-long curriculum offers one-on-one meetings with the Catholic Charities' team along with three sets of class sessions which include basic budgeting; how to save based on spending categories; understanding and improving the score of a credit report; and more. The classes are now held online, which has allowed the program to expand beyond Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

Mike Wirtz, who has a finance and accounting degree, is one of the volunteers who facilitates the classes. "Financial education can be an intimidating subject," said Wirtz. "but I feel with this model, it's so much more approachable. It really sets participants

up for success. For me, it's inspiring to be around people who are bettering their lives."

Each family who comes to FFT has a unique set of circumstances and goals. Goals could include increasing savings, decreasing debt, building credit or managing money. "Some families are able to take the skills learned and resources given to immediately make changes," explained Suzanne Evans, AFC, Director of Asset Development. "For others, their challenges are greater and we may be planting seeds for future growth."

Classes geared for kids and young adults are available to participants' children. "It is important for kids to learn the value of money and how to set goals for financial wants. It is also helpful for kids to be more aware that their family makes choices everyday about how and where to spend their money," said Evans.

Laurie shared that her main goal for participating in the FFT program was to improve her credit score and to one day buy a house for her and her family. Over the next two years, she tracked expenses, cut-out impulse spending, contributed to her savings and became debt free. She is working with a realtor to find a house.

"It was exciting to hear that the skills she learned in our program really had transformed her future and that of her children," added Burau. "I'd like to think that FFT is impacting generations to come, making them more budget savvy, and better preparing them financially."

For more information about enrolling in the FFT program, email: [fft@catholiccharitiesks.org](mailto:fft@catholiccharitiesks.org) or call: **913.906.8938** ❖

## FISCAL YEAR 2021 IMPACT (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021):

**67 high-interest predatory loans**

paid off through our Kansas Loan Pool Project (KLPP).



**162 families** reduced over **\$264,000 in combined debt** through our Family Financial Transformations (FFT) program.

**474 tax returns** filed and **\$640,000** refunded through our Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.



Our Individual Development Accounts (IDA) program assisted **refugees with the purchase of over \$2 million in assets.**



Lauren Solidum, President & CEO



Joy, Kindness, Patience, Self-Control, and Faithfulness – perhaps at no other time in the 65-year history of Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas have we ever so intentionally lived out our agency values, as we have this past year.

We experienced the joy expressed on the faces of our neighbors in need of food, clothing, housing, employment and financial assistance; the kindness demonstrated as we embraced the challenges and prioritized our work as a team; the patience endured throughout the ever-changing health guidelines and provision of services; the self-control required to reinvent the way we served with a limited volunteer workforce; and the faithfulness to one another and our supporters as we strived to serve our community in solidarity. And, perhaps above all, we witnessed the courageous faith, hope and love in action to serve our neighbors in need.

Looking back gives me nothing but hope for this fiscal year 2022. I am overjoyed by the impact our Family Financial Transformations Program has had on families. Participants are learning and practicing skills that will have a positive long-term effect.

Our St. Rita skills training program continues to grow. We started with six pilot participants in Wyandotte County. Today, we have 60 participants, with a plan to grow to 80. We have also increased our academic partnerships and now offer programming in Topeka, Lawrence and Leavenworth.

I am excited to share that our Shalom House Men's Transitional Living Program is about to begin a new chapter. Plans are underway to move the program to the site formerly occupied by the Sanctuary of Hope in Kansas City, Kansas. At the new site, we will be able to more fully serve and fulfill our vision for helping men experiencing homelessness.

The pandemic has shown what Catholic Charities is truly capable of, and our work is far from over. I humbly express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who served alongside us this past year, donating time, treasure, talents and most importantly, prayers. Without you, we could not have served at the capacity we did, nor would we look ahead with such hope. ❖

## When One Door Closes, Another Opens

Exciting changes are coming to our Shalom House Men's Transitional Living Program. It is being relocated to the Sanctuary of Hope in Kansas City, Kansas. The new site will allow Catholic Charities to provide additional resources and expand the capacity from 24 to 60 men served.



In the last year, we experienced an **89% increase in housing assistance.**

"We felt that the existing facility was insufficient to serve these men in a dignified way," said Lauren Solidum, President and CEO. "At the new Shalom, we will provide increased programming to elevate and meet the ultimate outcome of resident self-sufficiency."

While plans are underway to renovate the Sanctuary of Hope site, Catholic Charities has temporarily closed Shalom House. The current residents were placed into safe, stable housing. "During our temporary closure of Shalom House, Catholic Charities will continue fighting homelessness by working with a variety of community partners to successfully house new referrals and provide our continuum of services through other internal program referrals," added Solidum.

Shalom House was founded in 1973 by Angie O'Gorman and Bob Calvert, as a safe place for men who were experiencing homelessness. Catholic Charities took over the operational leadership 13 years ago. While Shalom House will remain a secure place where men will have an opportunity to sleep, shower and eat a hot meal, it will also serve as a place for those who are ready and willing to engage with other Catholic Charities' services including nutrition, personal hygiene, mental and physical health, financial education and employment.

"We ask for prayers and support, as this will be a heavy lift for our Catholic Charities team," said Solidum. "Through Shalom House, we hope to fulfill our vision of serving a more robust role in ending homelessness in Wyandotte County." ❖

## Kids Summer Food Program Serves 46,000+ Meals

Our Kids Summer Food Program was put to the test last year as schools, churches, community centers, libraries and other gathering areas were shut down due to the pandemic. Many lessons that were learned about food distribution were put into action again this past summer so that children would have access to healthy meals.



More than 46,000 meals were served at 32 Kids Summer Food sites across our 21 county service area. "We didn't know what this summer would look like as Covid-19 continued, but we were able to have another successful year!" said Chanel Griffin, Food and Nutrition Coordinator. "Our site coordinators, volunteers, and Summer Food interns were extraordinary. They truly love their communities and the kids they served."

Most of the food sites were set up outside as drive-thru or grab and go locations. This allowed sites which had re-opened but still had indoor safety precautions in place, to participate. In addition, Catholic Charities' staff and volunteers delivered meals to kids in underserved neighborhoods in Kansas City, Kansas.

Although the Kids Summer Food Program ended in August, it is still making an impact. Catholic Charities is partnering with school districts to distribute any leftover shelf-stable food. "Due to the supply chain issues, schools have been struggling to get enough food to feed students, so we are donating the extra that we have from our Kids Summer Food Program," added Griffin. "I'm happy that we can help fill in the gaps and build healthier communities." ❖

## "...A Stranger and You Welcomed Me."

Matthew 25:35

As the Afghanistan humanitarian crisis began to unfold, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas was called upon to help. Four Refugee and Immigration Services staff members were deployed to military bases, which had been transitioned into "refugee camps." The rest of the team began preparing for the work of welcoming those who would now call Kansas home.



**181 refugees, including new arrivals and resettled families received ongoing support and education through 9,082 case management hours. (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)**

Initially, Catholic Charities agreed to provide resettlement assistance for 75 Afghanistan evacuees. That capacity number has since doubled to 150. All arriving must have a "U.S. tie" to Kansas. That "U.S. tie" may be family members or friends. For those with a Special Immigrant Visa, a tie may also be a member of the U.S. military.

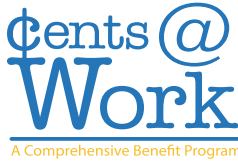
The greatest challenge for Catholic Charities has been quickly locating housing. "We are receiving two to three-day notice of arrivals. We have limited free temporary housing available," said Kasey Featherston, Director of Refugee and Immigration Services. "Some of the evacuees are staying in hotels at their own expense, which comes from their one-time stipend from the federal government. We are seeking additional financial support to help offset this expense for these families."

The outpouring of support from the community has been heartwarming. "I have so much hope for the families coming out of Afghanistan," said Featherston. "I have hope because I've had the honor of receiving seemingly endless emails and calls from those across our community who also feel called to the work of welcome."

While the challenges ahead for these families will be difficult, Featherston is optimistic about the future for those who reach the doorsteps of Catholic Charities, adding, "By the grace of God we will meet these families with help, with hospitality and above all with hope."

To donate items or volunteer, email: [refugees@catholiccharitiesks.org](mailto:refugees@catholiccharitiesks.org) ❖

## Improving Employees' Financial Health



Financial stress can be a major distraction in the workplace. In fact, a recent study showed that 58 percent of employees admit that financial worries cause them to have anxiety and be less productive.

In the last decade, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas has assisted thousands of families by providing the financial education and support they need to better manage their finances. "We have served as a trusted resource for families to gain skills that help them understand their finances, reduce debt, build savings and reduce their financial stress," explained Helen Friedman, Program Coordinator.

Our new Cents@Work program is now bringing this expertise to the workplace. The mission of the Cents@Work program is to utilize the workplace as a platform to provide low to moderate income employees with the on-site resources and support needed to achieve financial stability. By subscribing to Cents@Work, employers invest in the financial wellness of their employees. They also can connect their people to a network of resources that intervene in circumstances which can disrupt an employee's ability to concentrate at work and lead to employee turnover.

To learn more about Cents@Work, contact **Helen Friedman, hfriedman@catholiccharitiesks.org**, or **Amelia Reyes, areyes@catholiccharitiesks.org** ❖

## Plans Underway to Launch New Social Enterprise

For the last 65 years, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas has been in the business of creating life-changing programs and initiatives designed to solve the root causes of poverty. The wheels are spinning again as the agency is exploring new social enterprise ideas that support the mission.

Last spring, Catholic Charities internally launched a "Social Enterprise Incubator." Staff was encouraged to submit innovative, practical ideas that would employ vulnerable populations, inspire and mobilize volunteers to serve, and generate a new revenue stream to help sustain and grow existing ministries.

"There's such a great wealth of knowledge and commitment to those we serve within our teams," explained Kelly Kearney, Chief Development Officer. "This was an opportunity to engage with them, tap into their areas of expertise and invite them to share ideas that would align with our mission strategy of helping the most vulnerable populations realize their full potential, and promote the dignity of work."

The Catholic Charities staff responded, submitting 19 new ideas! Of those, four were chosen to develop into formal business plans with the help of staff, volunteers, board members and subject matter experts.

"We are just in the beginning stages, but it has already been extremely rewarding to witness the enthusiasm for creating a new business that will not only generate income – but more importantly, transform lives," added Kearney.

Stay tuned as launch plans are finalized! ❖

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

Go to [catholiccharitiesks.org](https://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.

We serve our neighbors, of all faiths, through *Help, Hope, and Hospitality.*