



# notes

catholic  charities  
OF NORTHEAST KANSAS

## Program Delivers Care to Pregnant Women

The statistics are unsettling. Babies of mothers who do not get proper prenatal care are three times more likely to be born with low birth weights, and five times more likely to die. Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas is trying to change that outcome through its Pregnancy Maintenance Initiative (PMI) program.

"Our goal is to help pregnant women overcome health care barriers so that they will deliver healthy, full-term babies," explains Marion Blough, LMSW, Community Health Coordinator.

The program is available free of charge to any pregnant woman living in Catholic Charities' 21-county service area. Participants are assigned to a case manager who provides counseling, education and support that continues for six months post-delivery. Throughout the pregnancy, volunteer nurses assist with monthly blood pressure and blood sugar checks. Once the baby is born, a pediatric nurse gives guidance regarding infant care, weighing the baby during each visit.

Thanks to the generosity of parishes and community groups who donate new baby items to Catholic Charities, PMI participants are provided some essentials for the baby including diapers, wipes, onesies, infant seats and strollers. If needed, the case manager also connects the pregnant woman to safety net services offered at one of Catholic Charities' Emergency Assistance Centers including food or financial help with rent or utility bills. In addition, the PMI program works in partnership with Catholic Charities' Adoption program for those pregnant women who chooses not to parent the baby.

The PMI program serves approximately 50 women each year. Currently, there are 27 pregnant women or mothers of babies under six months participating. "Our biggest reward is when the mom comes back in after delivery and both she and the baby are healthy," adds Blough. "That's success you just can't top."

To learn more about this and other programs we offer, visit us online at: <https://catholiccharitiesks.org/>



## Passion for Healthy Food Turns into Volunteer Opportunity

### *Hope Hero Shout Out!*

Sarah Borisky is a dietetic student. While shadowing a Catholic Charities' social worker for one of her classes, she had the opportunity to experience the Overland Park food pantry. Over the years, Sarah had been a supporter of Catholic Charities. Now, she saw a whole new way to give to the organization and those it serves.

Once a week, Sarah began volunteering at the food pantry. She had been inspired by an NPR story that discussed how "nutritional nudging" - putting healthier foods at eye level, was a tactic some pantries were trying so people might make better choices.

She went to work rearranging the shelves. Foods such as whole grain cereals were placed in front of some of the more sugary choices. Whole wheat pastas were moved, becoming a little easier to grab than regular pastas. She contacted organizations including the Dairy Council and asked for educational materials to display in the pantry. She also began coming up with recipe ideas using the foods readily available at the pantry.

Every Thursday afternoon, the Overland Park pantry receives a generous donation of healthy food items from Sprouts. That means on Fridays, there is Greek yogurt, milk, fresh vegetables and fruit. As shoppers come through the pantry, Sarah shares with them the importance of these food options, especially if they have a health concern. "I want people to understand how much their food choices impact their health, especially if they have a chronic disease such as diabetes," she explains.

The experience for Sarah has been personally and professionally rewarding. "As a dietetic student, I've gained a lot of knowledge about people's actual needs and struggles when it comes to food," adds Sarah. "I feel good that I'm using my education to help make a difference in the lives of those who are on a limited budget and must rely on the pantry as a way to feed themselves and their families."

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



## Mobile Medical Care Impacts Shalom House Residents



One evening a week, a truck outfitted with an array of medical supplies pulls up to Shalom House, Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas' homeless men's shelter. On board are a group of volunteer medical professionals from Care Beyond the Boulevard (CBB), an organization committed to providing health care to the community's most vulnerable.

"Preventative care is not something practiced by the men who come to Shalom House," says Joe Domko, Shelter Manager. "They come to us and they have a full spectrum of ailments, which makes it challenging for them to find long-term employment."

The CBB team provides everything from blood pressure checks to prescriptions to treat infections and chronic illnesses. They also give referrals for specialty services to other medical professionals including dentists, eye doctors and podiatrists. The regular on-site

health care visits help keep the men from using hospital emergency rooms as a primary physician. "They're no longer waiting for a medical situation to get to a crisis state. There's a relationship now with a doctor or nurse who knows them by name. Our men have never had this consistent and comprehensive level of medical care," adds Domko.

The partnership between CBB and Shalom House began a few months ago after the health care team treated a homeless man who required multiple surgeries and needed somewhere to stay during recovery. They contacted Shalom House for help. For the man, Shalom House provided more than shelter. It was a place for healing - physically and spiritually.

"Our ministry is built around providing a sense of community for these men, which is something many of them have never really experienced," says Domko.

"Healthcare is an important part of that. When people start to feel better physically, it lifts their spirit. It empowers them as they take those necessary next steps towards employment and permanent housing."

To learn more about Shalom House, visit: <https://catholiccharitiesks.org/where-we-work/shalom-house/>

Or go to <https://carebeyondtheboulevard.org/> for information about Care Beyond the Boulevard.

## WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### Give Up \$40 for Lent and Help a Family in Need

**40** days  
of Lent

"I'm giving up French fries." "I'm giving up dessert." "I'm giving up pop."

Fasting from favorite foods and drinks is common during Lent. But what if you had to do without all year long?

At Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, we encounter people every day who are going without food - but not by choice.

This Lenten season, consider helping feed a family of four for 40 days with a tax deductible donation of \$40. Go to: <https://catholiccharitiesks.org/lent/>

Want to get the entire family involved? Collect 40 canned goods and drop them off at one of our eight Emergency Assistance Centers. For locations go to: <https://catholiccharitiesks.org/emergency-assistance/>

As Pope Francis reminds us, "No matter how much time you spend fasting, no matter how much you sleep on a hard floor and eat ashes and sigh continually, if you do no good to others, you do nothing great."

*Looking to volunteer?*

Contact Michelle Carlstedt at **913.433.2080**  
or [mcarlstedt@catholiccharitiesks.org](mailto:mcarlstedt@catholiccharitiesks.org).

**Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas**

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