Education: A pathway out of poverty
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Spiritual Director: Bishop James V. Johnston Jr.
Group Leader: Chris Ice, CEO Catholic Charities of Kansas City - St. Joseph & Mary Ice

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In 1967, Pope Paul VI said, “education is the first and most basic tool for personal enrichment and a lack of education is as serious as a lack of food.” This is why education has always been a key component of our service offering at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

We provide pregnancy and parenting education through our Mom’s Empowerment and Parent Café’s, money management and budgeting through our Financial Literacy, soft skills training, resume development, and job retention techniques through our Employment Services, and this is just to name a few. Recently, we launched our newest Stay the Course® program (see center spread), in partnership with Catholic Charities of Fort Worth and Metropolitan Community College. This unique initiative is designed to help low-income community college students persist in their education by offering intensive case management and access to emergency financial assistance when unexpected financial hardships hit (car repairs, daycare expenses, etc.). Without this help, surprise expenses can easily derail the educational pursuits of low-income students.

Having worked in higher education, I can bear witness to it transforming lives. Studies show those with advanced educational backgrounds not only do better financially but are just better equipped for life in general. Unfortunately, education doesn’t always receive the accolades it deserves. When a person receives a physical gift, they can show it to others, it’s tangible. Education appears more subtle yet much more powerful in impacting the life of an individual or a community. According to the Missouri Poverty Report, over half of the 27 counties we serve exceed the state average for poverty. This means our educational component is critical in helping to serve and to lift.

As we transition into the fall season and many families head back to a new, regimented school year, I ask for your prayers and support. Our educational programs run year-round and thrive due to your generous help.

God Bless!

As Fundamental as Food

Chris Ice
CEO, Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Message from the CEO

“Education is more subtle yet more powerful in impacting the life of an individual or a community.”

www.catholiccharities-kesj.org

Please remember Catholic Charities in your will or estate plan.
Is Back-to-School a Burden?

By Kisha Thomas  
Director,  
Welcome Center

Back-to-school is an exciting time. New teachers, new friends, new classrooms, new schedules, new activities, new supplies, and new clothes all speak to the opportunities and experiences that lie ahead. Yet for some, back-to-school is a looming financial burden.

According to the National Retail Federation, households will spend a record $80 billion on elementary to college school necessities this year. Families with children in elementary school through high school plan to spend nearly $700, that’s up $12 from last year. While all parents want their children to be successful in school, some simply can’t afford the rising cost associated with school needs. Backpacks, pencils, paper, uniforms, electronic devices, activity fees, school lunches, field trips, etc., can rapidly drain a family’s finances. As I shared in our July email newsletter, in the month of June alone, our Welcome Center received requests for utility assistance in the amount of $160,000! It is inevitable families on a strict budget will have to choose between paying monthly bills or school supplies.

To offset this, I want to share some tips on how to keep these costs in check:

• If possible, use supplies and uniforms from the previous year before purchasing anew
• Attend community back-to-school fairs held by school districts, churches and social service agencies
• Shop during the tax-free weekend. Although this has already passed in Missouri (August 2-4), please make note for future reference
• Shop online for deals not available in the store
• Always stick to a list
• Shop consignment for school uniforms
• Seek discounted fees - ask the school if they have financial assistance or scholarships
• Volunteer services - instead of monetary payment, see if you can volunteer at your child’s school
• Apply for free/reduced lunch programs
• Be proactive! Back-to-school time comes once a year. Save your tax return to help during this time or start saving early in the year

At Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, we realize budgeting finances can be difficult, especially when you’re on a set income or simply don’t have enough income to meet your households’ needs. This is why we offer Behind on Bills, a workshop providing information and tools to help households gain control of their finances. Behind on Bills addresses debt management, budgeting, credit building and repair, and overall money management. The Behind on Bills workshops are held every Tuesday from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at our Kansas City office, 4001 Blue Parkway, Suite 250.

For more information on our Welcome Center, please contact Kisha Thomas at 816-659-8237 or kthomas@ccharities.com

Welcome Center

Kansas City Office: 4001 Blue Parkway, Suite 250, Kansas City, MO 64130, 816.221.4377  
St. Joseph Office: 1123 S. 10th Street, St. Joseph, MO 64503, 816.232.2885
Retirement Living Reborn in Brookside

St. Anthony’s is a Catholic sponsored retirement community that welcomes all faiths. The 9-story Independent Living tower will offer one and two bedroom apartments. Assisted Living and Memory Support opening in 2020.

Call to hear more about our brand new Community coming soon to Brookside!

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StAnthonysKC.com
For many Americans, concerns about nutrition deal with issues such as weight control, supplements, allergies, cholesterol, omega-3 fatty acids, intermediate fasting, and antioxidants. But for the clients we serve, their concerns deal with a whole different aspect of nutrition.

For most of us, our concerns about nutrition deal with issues like weight control, supplements, allergies, cholesterol, omega-3 fatty acids, intermediate fasting, and antioxidants. But for the clients we serve, their concerns deal with a whole different aspect of nutrition.

Our Children & Family case managers meet with dozens of mothers, fathers, and caregivers everyday grieving the inability to afford formula for their baby or fresh fruits or vegetables to create well-rounded meals.

Some individuals could get support through programs like WIC (Women, Infant and Children, a federal assistance program of the Food and Nutrition Service under the USDA) or SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the largest federal assistance program formerly known as Food Stamps) but do not, due to barriers such as believing they are ineligible or not having transportation to and from participating grocery stores.

Other barriers often include a lack of time to prepare a meal, fresh fruits and vegetables spoiling before usage, no simple recipes they know how to prepare, picky eaters, or limited funds without knowledge of how to budget well.

While this may not seem be a major problem to the everyday American, the statistics say otherwise.

Studies show that one in three children are overweight or obese, and vegetable consumption among children has decreased by 42% since 1997. Nationally, only two percent of children actually meet the USDA Food

The current visual being used by the USDA for nutrition recommendation.
Guide recommendations, and 16% do not meet any food group recommendations. The basic nutrition these children are missing is absolutely essential for proper brain growth, academic performance, and mood, and can cause many adverse effects.

Now, 13% of American children in poverty are more likely to experience a stunt in growth, compared to five percent of the rest of the population, and tooth decay and anemia are twice as likely to occur among these children. For parents walking in our doors, we know this is not the life they want to provide their children.

At Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, we want to help each client we encounter, and the best tool being information and education. Contrary to what many low-income families may believe, eating healthy on a budget is possible with some preparation and guidance. Here are some cost-cutting tips:

**Save with coupons**
- Coupons are no longer just in newspapers, but can be found online, on an app, or in a store. It is also important to consider store or discounted brands. As you start your grocery shopping, check for coupons in the store flyer or at the racks at the entrance of some stores.

**Buy in bulk**
- If a family cannot use a whole watermelon or a five-pound bag of green beans before they spoil, consider freezing the excess or swapping with a friend.

**Meal plan and grocery list**
- We know it takes time to plan out meals, but writing out a month’s worth of meals and snacks allows for grocery shopping with a strategy.
- Consider cooking once and eating twice with items such as chicken, where first it is baked chicken and the leftovers are used for a chicken casserole later.

**Visit a farmer’s market**
- People with SNAP benefits can double-up their food bucks (up to $25 each market day) of eligible fresh fruits and vegetables at 62 Kansas or Missouri farmers’ markets and some participating grocery stores. To find a farmer’s market near you, visit MissouriGrownUSA.com or DoubleUpHeartland.com/locations.

**Skip or decrease convenience foods and junk foods**
- Not only do these foods “eat up” the budget, but they contain excess fat, sodium and carbohydrates which contribute to the risk of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. Moreover, convenience and junk foods don’t keep you satisfied as long as whole foods, thereby wasting time, money and energy.

**Preparation with cooking skills and picky eaters**
- It does take time to cook and prepare any meal, so often simple changes are best. One could try an old favorite recipe and change a few ingredients whether to add tuna instead of chicken, or to include peppers, onions or tomatoes in something enjoyed in the past.
- Ask friends for a trusted recipe but start with only one new recipe each week so as to not get overwhelmed.
- All of us have likes and dislikes with foods and recipes, so when there are picky eaters in the house, find out everyone’s favorites and “meet in the middle.”

As a nutritionist, I want to challenge each family in Northwestern Missouri to a healthy lifestyle, even if you have limited resources, taste discrepancies, and everyday restrictions. If you are low-income or struggle with feeding your family, check the SNAP and WIC requirements at USDA.gov to see if you qualify, or come into our offices where we can help you apply!

For more information on nutrition and healthy eating, call Nancy at (816) 659-8285.
**Stay The Course® Q&A**

By Christie Dade
Program Manager, Stay the Course®

This is a pre-emptive program designed to keep people out of poverty or perhaps break the vicious cycle of generational poverty.

**Q:** I understand Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph was recently awarded a $1.2 million grant. Can you share more about this?

**A:** Sure! The grant we were awarded is for a program called *Stay the Course®,* developed and piloted by Catholic Charities of Fort Worth, Texas in 2013, to address the critically low graduation rates at community colleges nationwide. Research has identified four barriers to degree completion at community colleges:

1. Cost
2. Academic under-preparedness
3. Personal non-academic obstacles (daycare expenses, car repair, etc.)
4. Social and institutional obstacles (first generation college students, maneuvering a community college system, etc.)

While research and services exist to address the first two, much less attention has been given to the personal, non-academic obstacles, as well as social and institutional obstacles. These last two obstacles are the ones which *Stay the Course* addresses. *Stay the Course* achieves this by pairing each student with a “Navigator” who helps them identify their educational goals and the unique impediments faced in achieving them.

**Q:** What is a Navigator?

**A:** Navigators are trained case managers who help the students “navigate” the college experience. They serve as a resource and support to the student by providing weekly contact and bi-weekly face-to-face meetings. They tailor services based on the student’s strengths and unique circumstances, assist in goal setting, and address barriers that occur both inside and outside the classroom. By providing holistic case management, including emergency assistance at times, the navigator reduces hindrances which may have impacted the student’s ability to persevere in their education.

**Q:** How does this program fit within the Catholic Charities wheelhouse?

**A:** That’s a great question. Our mission is “to serve and to lift” members of our community - to serve their immediate needs while simultaneously lifting them to the dignity of self-reliance. The *Stay the Course* program fits perfectly by helping low-income students overcome barriers which hinder their ability to complete their education. Studies show that with each level of education achieved, income rises. So, while there are numerous programs designed to help people in poverty, this is a pre-emptive program designed to keep them out of poverty altogether or perhaps break the cycle of generational poverty.
Q: So, it’s not a stretch to say Stay the Course can be life-altering?

A: Not at all. Stay the Course has the potential to completely change a student’s life by identifying personal, social, academic and financial barriers that keep a student from completing their education and then helping them overcome those barriers through personalized, intensive case management. The data shows this program has resulted in increased graduation rates among its participants, which in turn translates into greater earning opportunities. Statistics reveal having an associate degree increases a person’s earning by around $9,300 a year, resulting in greater overall stability for students and their families. For students who persist and graduate or continue on to a four-year university, the reality of making a living wage and finding a pathway out of poverty becomes a life changing reality.

Q: Who is eligible for Stay the Course and how do they get involved?

A: A student must:

• Be enrolled at Metropolitan Community College
• Be taking a minimum of six credit hours
• Be Pell Grant eligible
• Be at least 18 years of age and not dual enrolled in high school and college
• Have completed less than 30 credit hours toward a degree or certificate
• Have a minimum 2.0 grade point average for any college credit completed

Eligible students will receive invitations to sign up to attend an information session where they’ll receive more details about the program and have the opportunity to apply. Navigators and staff will be available on campus, so interested students can speak with them face-to-face. Unfortunately, due to financial limitations, not everyone who is eligible will be able to receive Stay the Course services. Those who choose to apply will be entered into a lottery system and 120 students will be randomly chosen. They will immediately be paired with a Navigator and begin work for the fall 2019 semester.

Q: Who are the partners involved in bringing this program to Kansas City?

A: This is a collaboration between four different entities - Catholic Charities of Fort Worth in Texas created Stay the Course; Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame, who conducts the data analysis; Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St Joseph, who was chosen to replicate this program; and Metropolitan Community College, the oldest and largest institution of higher learning in the Kansas City, Missouri area.

Q: What are your expected outcomes?

A: Data shows graduation rates for Texas students paired with a Navigator were four times higher than those who did not receive Stay the Course services. This was especially profound among female students where 31.5% of females graduated after three years compared to less than 1% who did not receive services. We hope to see the same positive results on graduation rates here in Kansas City. By doing so, we’ll see higher earned wages and more sustainable employment.

For more information on Stay the Course, contact Christie Dade at 816-659-8216 or cdade@ccharities.com.
Most people think the solution to homelessness is to rapidly rehouse people and get them off the streets. But at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, we know the best solution is first lifting our clients to the dignity of self-reliance in our Life Skills training class.

In past Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph newsletter articles (visit https://www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/stories/), we’ve talked a lot about homelessness, what it is and where it comes from. As we’ve also discussed, homelessness is a complicated issue with many causes and consequences. So, what can and should we do about it?

Many times, people think the best solution is to rapidly rehouse those who are homeless and get them off the streets. However, the best way to solve homelessness consists of more than just the obvious.

Best practice demands a multi-faceted, coordinated approach which includes both locating safe and affordable housing for individuals and families and providing necessary education and support so individuals can stabilize and maintain their housing status for the long run.

These education and support components are essential to assist homeless individuals and their families in successfully maintaining their housing status. One of the ways Catholic Charities Community Housing staff provides these services is through our Life Skills education and training classes.

Life Skills are the skills we all need to ultimately thrive in life. They allow us to adapt to, deal with, and overcome everyday challenges. Most of us learn these skills early on through loving, supportive families, teachers and educators. However, for clients growing up in poverty and unstable environments, many never learn these skills. This proves to be an extremely difficult barrier in life, and can perpetuate the problem of homelessness and poverty.
Our Life Skills classes are taught by Community Housing staff through individual case management sessions and in group workshops. The training covers a large number of topics and includes (but is not limited to):

- How to get along with landlords
- How to get along with other tenants
- Goal Setting
- Money Management
- Time Management
- Organizational Skill Building

Among the most essential of these topics are Goal Setting and Money Management. Through education and training in Goal Setting, clients learn to set smart and relevant goals, as well as how to prioritize and work toward meeting goals, one by one. Other themes include self-knowledge and self-awareness, where clients learn to advocate for themselves.

Through Money Management training, clients learn how to budget, the difference between “want” and “need,” and how to spend, save, and otherwise manage finances.

What happens during these skill-building exercises is what psychologists call “Cognitive Re-structuring.” Cognitive re-structuring is the process of changing the way that a person thinks. Through this process, clients gain more creative, critical thinking skills and become more practiced at thinking about life’s problems in new ways, thereby helping them find more innovative solutions.

When clients are able to re-structure the way they think, the possibilities are endless, and that is the most rewarding part of all. Life no longer is a battlefield, but a launching pad to happiness and potential. Life Skills training is one of the most important ways Catholic Charities Community Housing staff can assist individuals in becoming successful members of our community, thereby ending the cycle of homelessness.

Wanting to come to a class? Call (816) 232-2885 to reserve a spot, as seating is limited. We will be hosting Life Skills classes at our 1123 S. 10th Street location in St. Joseph on the following dates:

- August 20-21
- September 3-4
- September 17-18
- October 1-2
- October 15-16
- November 5-6
- November 19-20
- December 3-4
- December 17-18

To learn more about our Life Skills classes, contact Jan Motl at (816) 659-8284 or jmotl@ccharities.com.
When living in poverty, the desire to meet basic needs becomes the highest priority.

More than 77% of persons that come to Catholic Charities’ Employment Services are ex-offenders, most of whom come straight from prison. As we’ve seen in recent articles, a staggering number of ex-offenders have experienced trauma in their life, and are at a high risk of re-offending, thereby continuing the cycle of criminality, poverty and unemployment. For us to understand our clients even better, we need to take a look at how poverty affects criminality.

Using United States census data and the Kansas City Missouri Police Department (KCPD), we’ve looked closely at three of KCPD’s six patrol divisions. Of the six, the Central, East and Metro Patrol Divisions in particular house an astounding 68% of Kansas City poverty and 75% of violent crime. All of this is encompassed in just 30% of the total land area (Figure 1)!

This means the other 70% of Kansas City contains 32% of the families below poverty level and 25% of the violent crime. These statistics validate the correlation between poverty and criminality.

So, the question remains: why does poverty positively correlate with crime? To answer this question, we need to look at both the internal and external barriers among those in poverty.

External barriers include everything from not being able to pay bills, find employment, childcare, transportation, and the like. Moreover, having fewer educational opportunities can dramatically increase the chances of criminality and remaining in poverty. Of those who do graduate high school with the hope of further education, many are forced drop out due to the cost of
books, internet, technology, etc (our Stay the Course® program can help alleviate these obstacles).

To prove the correlation is true for our own community, let’s compare a high-poverty area to a more affluent neighborhood just a few miles away in Kansas City. Looking at the diagram below, we see that 42% of the individuals west of Troost Avenue obtained a bachelor’s degree by age 24. However, only 1% of those individuals east of Prospect Avenue had a bachelor’s degree by age 24 (Figure 2).

Now let’s explore internal barriers. First and foremost, poverty often causes mental health problems to go untreated. As services dwindle for those without insurance, it is no wonder that they are forced to go untreated. Feeding into the problem of mental health, people living in poverty also live with extremely high levels of stress. When living in poverty, the desire to meet basic needs becomes the highest priority. If those needs cannot be met over time, some individuals commit robberies, burglaries, and other crimes. These crimes can lead to violent acts, though in the mind of the perpetrator, the actions are seen as a method of self-preservation.

Remember Timothy from last month’s email newsletter article (https://www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/stories/trauma-and-its-impact-on-criminality/)? He also grew up in an impoverished area. After his mother’s death, he lived in a single parent home and quickly began to show signs of serious mental illness, which went untreated. He quit school as a young child, so furthering his education was never a consideration. Viewing the disparity of his life compared to others, he decided that “there must be something wrong with me.”

People like Timothy come to us every day. While we do provide them with opportunities for employment, we need to be truly concerned for the stress and desperation embedded in the minds of these individuals, brought on by poverty. It is essential we look at our ex-offenders with an understanding of their upbringing and lifestyle prior to prison, and the lifestyle into which they are being released.

It is for this reason that we at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph try to absorb ex-offenders into our classes as soon as they are released.

Currently, our curriculum focuses heavily on the internal barriers and emphasizes the uniqueness of each individual. In turn, this lifts them from hopelessness and instills optimism for the future, while allowing for support on the road out of poverty.

If you or someone you know is an ex-offender looking for help, contact Kathy Ficcadenti at (816) 659-8269 or kficcadenti@ccharities.com
I thoroughly enjoy watching my colleagues as they assist the men and women who come to us for help. Our staff is varied in their training - licensed social workers, skilled case managers, employment specialists, supportive service coordinators and housing managers. But, most of all, they are educators.

There’s almost always a tangible need that brings people to our door – rent, food, clothing, daily needs for themselves and their children. But, underlying it all, is a need for knowledge. Maybe poverty, incarceration, or substance abuse, has twisted and tossed them to the point they simply don’t have the ability to think through solutions. Every waking moment is spent just trying to survive. Or, maybe they never learned how to navigate life. Growing up in generational poverty can cause anyone to despair, convincing themselves there’s no way out. Perhaps they’ve given up on being able to know how to find a way forward, to lift themselves to self-sufficiency.

That’s where our staff comes in. In employment workshops, we teach participants how to overcome their past, build and evaluate their skills, and then connect those skills to certain job requirements to make themselves marketable. In financial literacy classes, we teach simple, effective money management techniques applicable to any income level. These skills resonate as clients progress to a better job, higher income, and a real career path. Educating is the foundation of what we do, and the human connection between our staff and our clients is crucial to successfully building a pathway out of poverty. Help with rent and utility bills fills an important gap, but we can’t stop there. As Socrates noted, the education clients receive from our staff kindles a flame, a desire for more, a confidence that grows and burns brightly, offering encouragement in life’s dark moments.

When you support Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, you are assisting with rent and utility payments, with food and personal care products, and you are keeping families from becoming homeless. But, most importantly, you are igniting a flame that will light the path for men, women and children, as they seek self-sufficiency and dignity. You are enabling our staff to give that gift, and what an amazing gift!

Thank you.
Practicums are Invaluable

By Melissa Watson
Human Resources Generalist

The Human Resources team at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph has built and continues to build strong working relationships with local colleges and universities to serve as a host agency for students seeking to complete their practicum.

Practicums, by definition, allow a student to put into practice, under supervision, previously studied theory. Practicums are less time intensive than internships, usually only requiring a few hours a week, observing and documenting professionals as they perform the job duties the student will one day perform when they enter the workforce.

Many of our social work employment opportunities at Catholic Charities began not when the applicant applied for an open position, but while they were completing their education through the practicum role. By providing these opportunities to students, Catholic Charities is helping to support the education of future social workers in our community and imparting the invaluable wisdom and experience of our directors, program managers and direct line staff.

In addition, the relationship forged through practicums not only provide the student an inside track to potential jobs at Catholic Charities, but equips them with real-world experience, distinguishing them from a host of other job candidates.

If you already have a degree in social work, we currently have two opportunities available:

1. Community Housing Case Manager
   Our Community Housing Case Manager is responsible for program development and strengths-based case management for permanent housing participants in Clay, Platte, Ray and Lafayette counties in Missouri and overall agency and community networking. Functions as a liaison between landlords/owners and participants and coordinate housing services.

   To apply and learn more about this opportunity, visit our Hireology page: https://careers.hireology.com/catholiccharities-kansascityandstjoseph/321515/description

2. Family Development Specialist
   Our Family Development Specialist seeks to assist families through comprehensive case management and parenting education. Services focus on aiding parents in the healthy development of their children through education, developmental assessments of children, goal setting and attainment, as well as assistance meeting their immediate needs.

   To apply and learn more about this opportunity, visit our Hireology page: https://careers.hireology.com/catholiccharities-kansascityandstjoseph/321521/description

If you want more information on setting up a practicum at Catholic Charities, contact Melissa Watson at 816-659-8224 or mwatson@ccharities.com.
SAVE THE DATE!  Saturday, November 9th, 2019

Catholic Charities
To Serve & To Lift

4001 Blue Parkway
Suite 250
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