Be The Light
Don’t let the darkness of poverty overcome them
THE WAIT IS FINALLY OVER!

RETIREMENT LIVING REBORN IN BROOKSIDE
ST. ANTHONY’S RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
IS NOW OPEN

Residents are moving in, building friendships, and enjoying their new community. Amenities include a fitness center, chapel with daily Mass, sunrooms, underground parking, and so much more!

Join us on December 12th from 3:30-5:30pm for a wine & cheese open house!
Schedule your personalized tour today to see what makes St. Anthony’s the perfect place for you.
Call today to RSVP.
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Come Stay, Play and Pray with Us

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KC – St. Joseph Diocese
I’m excited to announce we just completed our new strategic plan! It contains a bold, new vision of exactly how we will serve and lift those in Western and Northern Missouri. To Serve and To Lift is not simply a catch phrase, but our strategy. It explains the process a client goes through when interacting with Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph.

Clients begin in our Welcome Center where emergency assistance is provided and where we take direct action to relieve their anxieties and remove their burdens. This can be providing food, hygiene products, diapers, or rent and utility assistance (To Serve). From there, we seek to unveil the reason for their suffering. We then direct them through to our other services based on these uncovered needs – adoption, parenting, employment, housing, etc. This can often take the form of assigning a case manager to walk alongside them or provide educational opportunities to help them overcome (To Lift).

I want to share a few highlights demonstrating our impact in the past fiscal year:

- We served 10,000 heads of households
- Nearly half of all those served had children in the home
- 74% of those coming to us were unemployed
- 85% of those served were widowed, single, divorced or separated
- 61% were female
- We provided over $1,000,000 in rent, utility and other emergency assistance
- 25% were seniors
- 26% were ex-offenders
- 20% were disabled
- 11% were veterans
- We served 236 households with 40% reporting their homes were either severely affected or destroyed in the Missouri spring floods

And, just a few proven results:

- The average income of those seeking services was approximately $774 per month. Of those who obtained our Employment Services, their incomes rose to $1,836 per month!
- 85% of veterans who participated in our rapid rehousing program were successfully housed at the completion of the program and 93% were still in their home six months later!
- We placed a record number of children into loving households through our adoption services exceeding the past eight years!

As we celebrate our 140th year in serving the needs of the poor and vulnerable (1879-2019), we look back with pride at these accomplishments, and thank God for the indelible mark we’ve made in people’s lives.

In 2020, we look to broaden our outreach through mobile services and renewing parish outreach. We will complete a new 38-unit, low-income, senior housing complex in St. Joseph (currently under construction), and we will continue to implement our new Stay the Course® program, partnering with Metropolitan Community College to help over 100 low-income students persist in their pursuit of an associate degree.

This is a brief look at where we’ve been and where we’re going. To continue being a vibrant Catholic Charities, I need your help. I know there are many charitable organizations vying for your attention, especially this time of year, but we are located right here in your own diocese. The funds you provide go to helping neighbors closest to you. I ask you to consider making a one-time gift this holiday season or accompanying us throughout the year by becoming a monthly donor. The impact we can make together will be life-altering.

God Bless.
We’ve all heard, “it’s better to give than to receive,” “it’s the thought that counts,” and “sharing is caring.” But what, in the grand scheme of things, is the significance of giving?

First, we need to break down the need. The United States makes up just 4.27% of the world’s population and controls 50% of the wealth, yet nearly 45 million Americans are still considered poor, with an overall poverty rate of 13.9%! To put it into perspective, that means 1 in 8 Americans are poor, and one-third are children. If we look at how we currently spend our money and the average American income is represented by a dollar, the Bureau of Labor Statistics says our money would be spent in this manner:

Where does your money go?

- **41¢** Housing
- **17¢** Recreation
- **17¢** Transportation
- **7¢** Healthcare
- **15¢** Food

*Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics*
That leaves just three cents, which most of the time is spent paying off other debts.

So, where does that leave charitable giving? And, if we do have money set aside for charitable giving, what is the real significance?

While finding a dollar to give seems harder and harder to come by, Missourians have a heart for giving. According to philanthropy.com, Kansas City charitably gave 3.21% of the residents’ total income in 2018, putting them 7th among the cities in Missouri. Likewise, St. Joseph had a giving ratio of 3.41%, putting them 6th among the cities in Missouri.

Most interestingly, however, Missourians with lower income levels had a higher giving percentage. Residents making under $25,000 per year gave an impressive 8.94% of their income to charity. The positive correlation between those with lower income being more generous leads us to the significance of charitable giving.

As an agency, we believe in Christ’s Gospel mandate to give charitably to the community around us. If you look at the four Gospels, the topic of money makes up over two-thirds of Jesus’ parables. Likewise, over 2,00 scripture passages speak to the topic of money, which is twice as many on faith and prayer combined. (https://get.tithe.ly/blog/bible-verse-about-money)

Why is there such an emphasis on giving? Because Christ knows our hearts follow our money, and He desires to free us from an unhealthy attachment to our money.

Beyond Christ’s call to give, generosity allows us to ultimately flourish in a number of ways:

- It creates a feeling of gratitude
- Encourages a culture of giving
- Strengthens communities and nations

In the Welcome Center, we see the life-changing impact financial generosity has on the lives of our clients, providing food, hygiene and financial assistance to individuals and families just looking to survive. In gratitude for what they receive, many clients give back to the agency with the time, talent, and treasure they have, thereby creating a continuous cycle of generous giving.

In this season of giving, we boldly ask you to consider becoming a monthly donor to Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph. Just $10 provides food for a family who didn’t otherwise know where their next meal was coming from.

Your gift, no matter the amount, quite literally saves lives. Thank you for your generosity, and your efforts to impact the people closest to us here in Northern and Western Missouri.

“We are all generous. The question is whether we will be generous towards ourselves or towards God.”
– Todd Peterson

To learn more about our Welcome Center services, contact Kisha Thomas at kthomas@ccharities.com or call 816-659-8237.
Happiness: An Intentional Act

By Ashley Wohlgemuth
Director, Children and Family Services

While many people are excited about the upcoming holiday season, not everyone is happy around the holidays. Stress, hopelessness, loneliness, loss and anxiety are just a few reasons why the holidays may not be happy.

Earlier this year, the World Happiness Report revealed Americans are “as unhappy as they’ve been in years—and it seems to be a trend.” Most recently, various sources report anti-depressant medication usage has increased by 65% in the last 15 years.

So, how can we move beyond the struggle to a state of happiness this holiday season? To answer this question, we must first understand where happiness comes from.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, author of “The How of Happiness,” says only 10% of happiness comes from life circumstances—how rich you are, how attractive you are, what life events have happened to you, etc.

Conversely, half of one’s happiness comes from genetics—your natural disposition and personality—and the other 40% comes from what she calls intentional activities—the choices we make that either increase or decrease our happiness level.

This dissection explains why a homeless pregnant woman can be happy despite her situation and why the happiness of a lottery winner statistically decreases after winning. Jobs, money, and life circumstances do matter, but not nearly as much as we might think.

What matters is what we can control as it relates to our happiness.

Dr. Laurie Santos, a psychology professor at Yale University, teaches “Psychology and the Good Life,” the university’s most popular class in its 300+ year history. In her class, as well as in her podcast, “The Happiness Lab,” Santos shares science-based research on how to improve one’s well-being through positive behavior change. Based on her research, happy people consistently exhibit the following behaviors:

Express gratitude
• Happy people reflect daily on the things they are thankful for. Dr. Santos advises writing down a gratitude list and, taking it a step further, writing a letter of gratitude to and reading it out loud to people you are thankful for.

Create time for social connections
• Happy people spend time with the people most important to them, as well as with those outside their immediate circle, i.e., the person sitting next to you on the bus, the person in line at the grocery store, or the other parents at a Catholic Charities Parent Café.

Help others
• Happy people give time and money to others, whether it’s someone you know who could use assistance, or people you do not know at a social service agency like Catholic Charities. Santos says the amount insignificant—it is the gesture of knowing we helped someone that helps improve our happiness.

Practice mindfulness
• Happy people live in the present moment. They savor moments instead of allowing “mind wandering” to creep in.
• Practicing meditation 10 minutes a day can improve one’s mindfulness so you can more easily notice the good things in life.

Emphasize healthy practices
• Happy people exercise regularly. Dr. Santos said 30 minutes of exercise is equivalent to taking one dose of Zoloft anti-depressant a day.
• Happy people get sufficient sleep. Most adults need seven hours of sleep each night and children need ten hours.

Become time affluent
• Happy people prioritize time over money. They are not always strapped for more time, but instead plan to do things they enjoy. To teach this in her class, Dr. Santos cancels class for one day and requires each student to something other than schoolwork, such as going on a walk or visiting a museum.

Dr. Santos advises, “You must put the practices into life in order to improve your happiness and increase your well-being.” You do not lose weight by eating one healthy meal. Losing weight takes intentional daily practice, as does choosing happiness.

The intentionality of living happy, selfless, Christ-centered lives is what motivates the everyday work at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, especially heading into the holiday season when we know anxiety, loneliness and fear can increase dramatically.

The ways we provide for our clients at this time of year is by focusing on two of the most important aspects of achieving and maintaining happiness, as mentioned by Lyubomirsky. First, we aim to better their life circumstances by providing financial support, adoption services, parental classes, and child development assessments.

Second, and most significantly, we encourage our clients to seek opportunities of great intentional activity—those empowering decisions we can make to better our own lives out of love and respect for ourselves. By emphasizing these intentional activities, (where 40% of our happiness comes from) we see many of our clients go from just surviving to thriving.

As a team, we pray you will all embrace this holiday season no matter what life may throw at you, and that you would consider supporting the health and happiness of the clients who entrust themselves to our care.

For more information on our Children and Family Services, contact Ashley at awohlgemuth@ccharities.com or (816) 659-8279.
Shine Your Light Today

By Susan Walker
Executive Director, Outreach and Engagement

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.
– John 1:5, Mass on Christmas Day.

We all know what it’s like when the lights go out and you’re in a seamless, black room. The darkness gets heavy, almost oppressive. Your heart beats a little faster. Your breath becomes shallow. Anxiety spikes. You can’t see what’s in front of you, even in a familiar room, so you move cautiously trying to feel your way out. The longer the darkness persists, the more frantic you become.

For many families who come to Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph in need, darkness has enveloped their lives. It seems no matter what they do, the light is nowhere to be found.

When you give to Catholic Charities, you become a light piercing the darkness, opening the door for the desperate single mother unable to feed her children, or a veteran at his wits’ end. For many clients, the darkness has been the only familiarity. When you say ‘yes’ to Catholic Charities, you transform lives.

By opening the door to “yes” in the lives of our clients, you simultaneously open the door to a bright, clearly lit future of self-reliance. This self-reliance is provided in a variety of ways:

• Imparting parenting knowledge and techniques to assure their children grow and thrive
• Teaching the skills necessary to secure and retain a living wage job
• Permanently housing someone so they can overcome mental and physical health challenges

This holiday season, please give to help our at-risk brothers and sisters. Your gift will be nothing short of life changing. Shine your light today by returning the envelope found in this newsletter, or go online to www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/donate.

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<th>Life in fear and darkness</th>
<th>Life in safety and light</th>
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<td>No, you can’t stay here</td>
<td>Yes, we can pay for your rent - sleep safely tonight</td>
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<tr>
<td>No, you don’t have any more time to pay</td>
<td>Yes, we can cover your heating bill - be warm</td>
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<tr>
<td>No, you don’t have enough money for food</td>
<td>Yes, here’s food for your children - calm their crying</td>
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Pull out your most festive holiday sweater and join the Junior Board of Catholic Charities for our Tacky Sweater Party

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20 AT 7:30PM
at The Brooksider!

Enjoy drinks, appetizers, music and more while supporting a great cause. We’ll also be collecting donations at the door of hats, gloves, scarves and socks to help keep KC warm this winter.

Tickets are $25, and all money raised goes directly to Catholic Charities of Kansas City and St. Joseph. We hope to see you there!

tackysweater2019.splashthat.com
According to the Population Reference Bureau, the number of Americans 65 years of age and older will nearly double from 2018 to 2060, going from 52 million to 95 million, comprising 23% of our total population. In Employment Services, we are witnessing this shift, experiencing more seniors participating in our classes in search of ways to supplement their income and continue contributing to society. But, for this to occur, society and seniors themselves must adjust their view of aging.

In his Tedx Talk, Dr. William Thomas, a geriatrician and author of *What Are Old People For? How Elders Will Save the World*, says, “We are beginning to question the mainstream models for aging, believing there are far more possibilities for our senior years than what is generally recognized and supported by modern culture.” Thomas goes on to position himself as an ambassador for “elderhood,” the phase he explains is beyond adulthood. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ijbgcX3vIWs

Corroborating Dr. Thomas’ efforts are a growing number of organizations devoted to overcoming ageism, embracing life, and advancing an ageless attitude. Here are a few: https://www.smartliving365.com/2016-best-websites-positive-aging-retirement/

However, for these efforts to be effective, seniors too must participate by renewing their self-concept. Our Employment Specialists often hear pessimistic views of seniors propounded by seniors themselves.

Overall, we see seniors:

- Lack confidence
- Convinced no one wants to hire them
- Persist in the belief they don’t have the skills necessary to compete in today’s job market
- Buy into the paradigm their age diminishes their value

Twenty seven percent of the people we served last fiscal year were over 55 years of age.
Further highlighting this point, in 2014, the Bureau of Labor Statistics identified 218,000 seniors as Discouraged Mature Workers – those not looking for work because they believe none is available, employers will find them too old, they lack the necessary schooling/training, or they face other types of discrimination.

While we may be a long way from eradicating negative stereotypes surrounding aging, we must recognize the problem isn’t solely in society but often inside of us.

At Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph Employment Services, we passionately advocate for seniors by first building up their confidence. Seniors want to work, and they want to share their valuable experiences with younger generations.

Here’s why hiring seniors is a smart move:

- **Seniors tend to be happier employees, bringing warmth, friendliness and a sense of humor to the workplace**

- **Seniors tend to have better coping skills, flexibility and resilience when dealing with hardships and problems**

- **Seniors demonstrate a unique set of skills based on their life experience. Wisdom, creativity, innovation, knowledge, and patience come from their diverse perspective**

- **Seniors have a great work ethic, displaying values for attendance and hard work**

- **Seniors tend to be more satisfied with their employment compared to their younger counterparts**

For more information on our Employment Services for seniors, contact Kathy Ficcadenti at 816-659-8269 or kficcadenti@ccharities.com.
In the September edition of our email newsletter, https://www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org/stories/q-a-with-a-veteran-outreach-specialist/ we interviewed Toya Jenkins, a Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Housing Locator and Outreach Specialist. Toya shared how the Veteran Services team at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph conducts continual outreach to uncover homeless veterans who might be suffering from mental illness, substance abuse, or simply low socioeconomic status.

Although Catholic Charities’ main offices are in Kansas City and St. Joseph, outreach efforts are not limited to urban or more populated areas. In fact, our three SSVF Housing Case Managers cover more rural counties than urban.

Rebecca Mosely has been operating out of our satellite office in Warrensburg, Missouri for eight years and believes her location is crucial.

“In rural counties there are fewer transportation options available to veterans than in the city,” said Mosley. “It’s been my experience that veterans won’t travel far to get the help they desperately need. Also, they are more reluctant to ask for help having been trained to survive,” she added.

Mosley attributes her location and continual outreach efforts with helping many veterans who might have gone unaided. “There are many veterans in need, however, they’re not always visible to the community.”

Our Veteran Services team provided over $210,000 in rent and utility assistance.
While veteran homelessness might be considered more visible in the city, poverty and housing instability are major issues in rural settings as well. In fact, according to the VA National Center on Homelessness, almost one quarter of veterans live in rural areas. They often suffer from:

- Lower education
- Lower income
- Poorer health
- Transportation deficiencies
- A service-connected disability

This is why the Veteran Services team at Catholic Charities is aggressive in their outreach, desiring to leave no one behind.

However, outreach is just the first step in lifting a veteran back to self-sufficiency. Once a veteran is located, he is assigned a case manager who becomes the veteran’s advocate and liaison, bridging relationships, and ensuring the veteran is equipped with information regarding all the resources at his disposal.

The case manager’s priority is to house the veteran immediately and permanently. Catholic Charities operates under a “Housing First” model – the belief that permanent housing is foundational, and once achieved, can help the person overcome life’s other obstacles such as unemployment, monetary or budgeting issues, substance abuse, or mental and physical health challenges.

The Housing First model often translates into rent and utility assistance, either short or long-term.

85% of veterans were successfully housed with 93% still in their home six months later.

Last year, our Veteran Services team provided over $210,000 in rent and utility assistance. This enables veterans struggling financially to remain housed. If a veteran does end up on the streets, the Veteran Services team works to rapidly re-house them. Last year, 85% of veterans who participated in the Catholic Charities rapid rehousing program were successfully housed at the completion of the program and 93% were still in their home six months later!

Getting veterans housed can take on many forms, but permanently housing veterans and their families provides a suitable place for the flourishing of life. Don’t we owe them that?

For more information on Veteran Services, contact Rebecca Mosley at rmosley@ccharities.com or call 816-344-3699.
As we approach the end of year, holiday celebrations begin. One of the most exciting aspects of the holiday season is the sense of connectedness – toward family, friends, and even strangers we meet along the way. The joy of the season and the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ heightens our sense of connectedness, and we become true examples of a faith that respects the dignity and life of all human persons.

As the Human Resources Generalist for Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, I want our associates to feel that kind of connectedness to our mission, workplace, services we provide, and to their co-workers. One of the ways I gauge this is by listening to the choice of words employees use when describing their work. Rather than explain what “the agency” or “Catholic Charities” does, I take a certain sense of pride when I hear employees explain the work “we” do. This slight difference in word choice shows me the associate feels a sense of ownership and teamwork about serving and lifting the poor and vulnerable in our 27-county diocesan area.

I hope and pray every Catholic Charities associate feels that sense of connectedness, so that “we” can reach more people with the life-altering services we provide. As a new year approaches, we have a few positions to fill. If you would like to be a part of this connectedness, please send us your resume.

Family Development Specialist
(Full Time) Kansas City, MO
Assist families through comprehensive case management and parenting education. Services focus on aiding parents in the healthy development of their children.

Accounting Supervisor
(Full Time) Kansas City, MO
Assist the CFO in creating a compliant, efficient, and effective accounting/finance department. Takes a lead role in grant budget, billing, and reporting processes for the Agency. Proactively communicates accounting information as appropriate throughout the Agency. Continuously searches for, and implements, process improvements.

Grant Accountant
(Full Time) Kansas City, MO
Becomes the Agency expert on all grants. Creates and produces grant and contract budget, billing and reporting documents and processes for the Agency and other related entities as necessary. Collaboratively manages the grant accounting relationship with other individuals responsible for aspects of grants and contracts within the Agency, such as Program Directors.

To view the full descriptions of these jobs or to apply, go to www.catholiccharities-kcsj.org. For more information, contact Melissa Watson at 816-659-8224 or mwatson@ccharities.com.
Extending the Welcome

Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph had a deep impact on thousands of lives last year. We know, however, that for every person we assist there are an additional 20 who live in poverty within our 27-county region. Due to their distance from our physical offices, many are left unaided. Help “Extend the Welcome” in 2020 by supporting Catholic Charities’ outreach efforts, which take our services to the neighborhoods and communities where families most in need are living.