

Mission trip can make a difference much closer to home 12
 Adoption reunions are often a blessing. 12

CATHOLIC CHARITIES Connections

SUPPLEMENT TO ARKANSAS CATHOLIC • CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF ARKANSAS • 2415 N. TYLER ST. • LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72207 • JUNE 17, 2017

AT A GLANCE Catholic Charities of Arkansas serves

- **Adoption Services:** Birth parent services, adoptive family services and search and reunion
- **Immigration in Northwest Arkansas:** Family-based legal assistance, domestic violence and crime victims services, refugee resettlement, employer trainings, education and advocacy, legal assistance with applications for DACA
- **Immigration in Little Rock:** Family-based legal assistance, domestic violence and crime victims services, supporting survivors, legal assistance with applications for DACA, education and advocacy
- **Parish social ministries:** Parish-based ministry development, disaster recovery parish-based teams, family assistance
- **Social Action:** Prison ministry, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, legislative advocacy, alcohol and drug, Catholic Charities Summer Institute
- **Westside Free Medical Clinic:** Medical and dermatology clinics for noninsured adults, outreach and community education
- **Development:** Grants management, Bishop McDonald-Catholic Charities Golf Classic, Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl and St. Nicholas Partners

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES' MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Catholic Charities of Arkansas of the Diocese of Little Rock is rooted in the challenge of the Gospel: To serve persons who are poor or marginalized; to advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable; and to actively promote charity, justice and the sanctity of life in the Church and the community.

The water has gone down, but ...

Northeast Arkansas still recovering from April flooding

In late April, a slow moving storm system brought significant rain to Oklahoma and the areas along the border of Arkansas and Missouri. Rains were a constant downpour, filling the hill creeks and upcountry rivers.

The tributaries emptied into the Black River bringing it to flood level. For this river, a major flood crest is 25 feet. The 2017 flooding was greater even than the flood of 2011. This year's historic crest was 28.95 feet.

An evacuation order was issued May 1 for areas on the east bank of the Black River in Pocahontas. Parishioners from St. Paul Church volunteered, assisting with the evacuation of families in the affected area.

By May 2, the river began to breach the levee in nine places as the surge from upriver arrived in Pocahontas. Communities surrounding St. Joseph the Worker Church in Corning, St. John the Baptist Church in Engelberg and St. Paul in Pocahontas were hit hard. Each parish was, for a time, an island, isolated from the outside



Ronnie Rose

Contents of a family's house ruined by May flood waters are dumped on the street to be hauled away.

world. On Tuesday, May 2, Catholic Charities of Arkansas began to make disaster response funds available for the parishes, coordinated through St. Paul Church.

The flood destroyed as many as 50 homes and more than 100 were damaged. Flood waters ruined an estimated 2 million square acres of crops planted this spring. The American Red Cross opened a shelter in an old nursing home

in Pocahontas, housing approximately 35 people. As of May 31, the Red Cross was attempting to close the shelter but was having difficulty finding housing for more than 20 elderly with medical challenges. The county simply did not have available rental properties or space in hospitals or nursing homes. Gov. Asa Hutchinson has applied to President Donald Trump for a Presidential Disaster

Proclamation in order to obtain federal disaster relief funds.

As the water recedes, the initial tasks are to dry out the land and the housing and begin the process to "muck out" structures. Once dried, structures can then be evaluated to determine whether or not they may be repaired.

On May 30, the Red Cross began referring all flood victims in need of immediate assistance to St. Paul Church. The parish's pastoral associate Ronnie Ross is the contact person for the project to provide assistance to the families in need. The challenge has filled his days since the waters began to rise in late April. Donations of money and supplies from parishioners, the parishes and continuing funding from Catholic Charities has sufficed so far, but the long-range recovery efforts will require much greater resources to return displaced families to something approaching normalcy.

Tracy Eichenberger, the disaster preparedness and response coordinator for Catholic Charities, has traveled to Pocahontas several days each week since the flood. Working as the chair of the Long-Term Case Management Committee of the Arkansas Volunteer

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Death penalty sentences are abused in Arkansas

The Catechism discourages the death penalty unless execution is society's only possible way of protecting human lives from the criminal. It was St. John Paul II who taught that a modern state can effectively prevent further crime through a carefully administered penal system, making the death penalty unnecessary.

Obviously, Arkansas' government does not follow Church teachings. So what guides a prosecutor? Prosecutors may introduce evidence and make arguments limited to four factors:

- the criminal's rehabilitative potential
- the specific and general deterrent value of the punishment sought

- just social retribution
- protection of society

These factors can be applied consistent with the Catechism, but we find too often that prosecutors and other public officials are affected by other concerns that have political considerations.

In the death penalty context, three of the four sentencing factors are easily disposed of. First, if death is imposed as punishment, there is no chance for rehabilitation. Further, our juries are not even required by law to make a finding that the person convicted of a capital crime is without any rehabilitative potential before imposing a death sentence.

Second, the deterrence factor is practically ineffective. While

imposing death certainly deters the person executed from committing further crimes, the value of the death penalty as a deterrent to others is so uncertain that it is not useful.

And third, on the issue of protecting society, the Arkansas Department of Correction has proven it can protect society from convicted killers. For example, each of the four men executed in April had been safely confined for more than two decades.

Prosecutors, officials and politicians have seized upon the concept of just social retribution as the principal argument to support the death penalty. It is used improperly.

St. Thomas Aquinas defines justice as habitually providing each person their due. For criminal justice, this means that punishment proportionate to an offense may be earned. But Aquinas goes further stating that justice without mercy

is cruelty. A criminal justice system based on a retributive framework demands an "eye for an eye." It is a cruel system. But our Judeo-Christian jurisprudence, while recognizing the role of the public authority to protect society, also recognizes that criminal justice is administered not as a process between two specific citizens, but as between society and the one accused of violating society's rules. A separate civil legal system is exists to litigate the interests of individuals.

Politicians in Arkansas have usurped the just social retribution factor, emphasizing the "retribution" and minimizing the "social." Because of political expediency, an Arkansas politician (governor, attorney general or representative) wishing to be reelected must express support for executions because they provide "justice and closure" for victim's fami-

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From the Director
 Patrick Gallaher

Reunions can answer many questions

Antje Harris, director of Catholic Adoption Services, recently got a wonderful surprise when she attended a workshop about spirituality in the workplace led by Don Streit.

One of the attendees was a young woman named Hannah whom Harris had helped place for adoption 26 years ago with Kathy and Ray Allen. There were warm hugs and big smiles — and the joy of knowing that Hannah was doing so well. The prayer with every adoption is that a child will be healthy, happy, able to meet their highest potential and, most of all, know how loved they are.

Antje and Hannah also connected eight years ago when Hannah and her birth mother were ready to meet. They had a reunion supported by Hannah's parents. Harris stayed in contact with both mothers over the years with ongoing updates. Hannah has a positive relationship with her birth family and with her parents. She earned her bachelor's degree at Harding University and then attended the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Graduate School of Social Work. She now works with troubled teens in a school-based program outside of Searcy. Hannah said the reason she decided to become a social worker was because of the meaningful adoption reunion she had with Harris' assistance.

Adoption Services Inc. has been a state-licensed agency for more than 33 years. By law in Arkansas, a person placed for adoption is able to request a search



Hannah Allen, who was adopted as an infant, and Antje Harris, director of Catholic Charities Adoption Services, meet by happy accident at a workshop on workplace spirituality.

and reunion with their birth family when they are 18 years old or older. The birth parents may also initiate the process at that time. Contact occurs through the agency only when both parties want to be reconnected.

Not everyone involved in the adoption wants to be found or to meet each other.

Years ago adoptions were more closed and there was little expectation of meeting again. There was often a deep hope for

this to occur, but a fear of rejection and many misunderstandings stood in the way. Birth mothers have said they are afraid their child will think they did not love them and that is why they were placed. In reality, a plan for adoption is made out of a deep love and concern for the child's well-being.

Adoptees often initiate the search asking for medical information about their family of origin. Some conditions have a ge-

netic link not known at the time of placement. They may or may not want to meet each other. Others are curious and want to know who they are like in their family. The adoptive parents want to thank the birth parents for the gift of their child.

In the past 18 years, many birth and adoptive parents have met each other on the front-end when a child was born so there has been more peace of mind and greater ease of staying in contact. They know more what the expectations are for openness and often can stay in contact with each other through the agency. Search and reunion later with these families is relatively easy.

More of the early adoptions are being opened, but this can be challenging, Harris said. For many reasons, it is frequently difficult to locate birth mothers. The search process is simplified when the birth parents contact the agency, as the adoptee is generally easier to find.

Many reunions are wonderful and happy occasions. There is an opportunity for healing when all can acknowledge their gratitude for life and know the love all around. Occasionally, birth parents may have too many challenges and are not ready to be more open. Other times the best that can be done is to provide medical information and updates, but not an actual meeting.

No matter what level of contact, the agency can reassure the adoptee that their birth mother wanted the very best for them and made their decision out of love.

Flood

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Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) she has worked with county leaders, urging them to organize long-term recovery groups.

Additionally, she has coordinated with the Red Cross and Salvation Army to provide assistance to flood survivors. In the coming months, the long-term recovery group in Lawrence County will work to help families return to permanent housing. Leaders in Randolph County have decided, at this time, to not form a long-term recovery group.

Donations to support the recovery efforts may be sent to St. Paul Church, Attn. Ronnie Rose, 1002 Convent Street, Pocahontas, AR 72455, or to the Catholic Charities of Arkansas Disaster Fund, Diocese of Little Rock, 2500 N. Tyler Street, Little Rock, AR 72207. Donations will be used to provide assistance to those impacted by the 2017 Flood and to help administer those recovery efforts.

Justice

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lies. A realistic definition of their "justice and closure" is "personal vengeance." Society's interest in just and proportionate retribution tempered by mercy is subordinated to the political concern. In the interest of personal vengeance, the interest of the victim's family is elevated above what should be the overriding interests of society.

As a Church valuing the dignity and sanctity of the human person, each of us must take a greater role in the public discussion about the death penalty. We must argue for mercy. We must downplay appeals for personal vengeance as a dominant factor in whether or

Because of political expediency, an Arkansas politician wishing to be reelected must express support for executions.

not the death penalty is imposed or whether or not clemency is granted.

Justice comes for the families of victims when the verdict of the court is announced, not when the sentence is completed. The imposition of the punitive sanction is a matter of social importance in which the personal feelings of vengeance should not play the leading role. To allow individuals to control the execution of punishments is a subversion of the criminal justice system designed to protect societal interests, not those of specific individuals.

Mission trips within state increase sharing

For the past few years, a team from St. Joseph Church in Conway has been making mission trips within Arkansas. On Saturday, June 3, the Missions Committee from St. Joseph, led by parishioner Joe Cordaro, traveled to Danville to work with the parishioners of St. Andrew Church on their parish center.

The volunteer event, which was initially coordinated with the aid of Catholic Charities supported initial efforts toward long-term renovation goals for its parish center. Eight men from St. Joseph Parish drove from Conway and spent one Saturday working.

The crew from St. Joseph also included Don Kremer, Ron Gatto, Mark Meaux, Don Greenland, Caleb Mallet, Skip Leigh and Raymond Gunther. Volunteers from St. Andrew Parish, who had recently begun renovation efforts on both the church and parish center buildings, were present throughout the day, primarily re-

furbishing the front entrance of the parish center.

Concurrently, the St. Joseph team moved furniture and removed outdated carpet from second-floor rooms used primarily for religious education classes. Carpet and fasteners were also removed from a wooden staircase. Fluorescent light fixtures throughout the second floor were repaired. A wall was removed to enlarge a space for classroom use. A new sink drain was installed in a bathroom, and other plumbing problems were investigated. Large furniture was moved by a crew from St. Andrews with a little help from the St. Joseph's men. On the outside, gutters were repaired and some tree limbs were trimmed.

The St. Andrew's parishioners and pastor Father Mauricio Carrasco were hospitable. Several ladies from St. Andrew prepared breakfast and a Mexican pork dish with fresh tortillas for lunch.

Given its age, current condi-



Don Kremer, a member of St. Joseph Church in Conway, repairs a bathroom sink at St. Andrew Church in Danville June 3. Eight men from the Conway parish partnered with the Danville parish for a one-day mission experience.

tions in certain areas and the desire for additional improvements of the parish center building, future collaborative work days are

being planned.

Father Carrasco said, "The project was a blessing in so many ways."

The challenge is to welcome the stranger

By Frank Head

In 2017, immigrant families in Arkansas face a sudden decrease in opportunities to reunite their families and integrate into American society.

In Arkansas, Catholic Charities Immigration Service is the agency

where thousands of immigrants turn for legal advice and representation. Demand for immigration services has skyrocketed with the new expanded threats of arrest and deportation of immigrants who have committed no crime.



Frank Head

Catholic Charities Immigration Services in Springdale significantly expanded service capacity in the last two years, adding a volunteer immigration attorney and four accredited representatives, while the Little Rock office added two accredited representatives. Last fiscal year, counselling was provided to nearly 13,000 individuals concerning their legal status.

Catholic Immigration Services encourages immigrants to obey federal immigration laws and search for legal options to obtain documentation for living and working in the United States.

The Springdale office has created a Rapid Response Program to provide counselling, referral and, when possible, direct legal representation to immigrants arrested by Immigrations and Customs Enforcement authorities and put in proceedings for deportation.

The Springdale office also expanded its compassionate response by participating in a program called Special Immigrant Juveniles. The SIJ program helps foreign children who have been abused, abandoned or neglected. Certain children who are unable to be reunited with a parent can get a "green card" and can live and work permanently in the United States. So far this fiscal year, the Springdale office has filed 22 SIJ applications.

A recent study by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network found that more than 15 percent of undocumented immigrants in seven southern states could qualify for legal status if they had proper legal advice. In Arkansas alone, that represents approximately 8,000 neighbors and loved ones.

Frank Head is the director of Catholic Immigration Services in Springdale.

Disaster preparation class

On May 25, Catholic Charities presented a class at the request of Father Benoit Mukamba, CSSp, to parishioners at St. Mary Parish in Helena. It was a timely presentation, in light of the fact that Helena has been bracketed by flooding in both southeast and northeast Arkansas these past two years. Issues discussed included types of likely events, contingency planning for response, contents of a family disaster response kit and insurance.

Catholic Charities will provide similar presentations for any parish group wanting information on how to prepare for a disaster in order to be more resilient in its aftermath. Contact Tracy Eichenberger at teichenberger@dolr.org for more information and to schedule an event.

CCCD local grants

Each year a portion of the annual Catholic Campaign for Human Development collection, taken up during the last weekend before Thanksgiving, is used to fund a local grant program administered by Catholic Charities



The Cedar Ridge Food Pantry helps people in Independence County with support from a Catholic Campaign for Human Development local grant.

By Karen DiPippa

The recent House vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act without a proper replacement is shortsighted. The ACA has been a success for the majority of our Westside Free Medical Clinic patients. Arkansans who never had insurance obtained the potential to have quality lives with the Medicaid expansion, which is now placed in jeopardy if the currently proposed repeal and replacement bill becomes law.

The ACA was never meant to be the final word, but the first word on coverage for the uninsured. Critics repeat that ACA is an abysmal failure, but they fail to consider people who previously were denied treatment, diagnosis or



Pastor Father Benoit Mukamba, Mark Chan of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and parishioner Kevin Smith talk about disaster preparation during the May 25 presentation in Helena.

of Arkansas. These local grants are awarded to applicants for the diocesan fiscal year, July 1 to June 30. They are designed to aid local organizations to help within their own communities. The amounts of the grants are modest, ranging from \$200 to \$2,000.

Last year's group of grantees included pregnancy resource centers and other programs serving women, immigrant resource centers, facilities aiding the homeless, a program that supports Catholic parish programs teaching English as a second language and food pantries. Communities served included Little Rock, Hot Springs, Conway, Jonesboro, Rogers, Fort Smith, Hope and Texarkana.

Applications this year have been submitted and are presently being reviewed. Submissions have come from all parts of the state. In an unexpected development, a large percentage of the applications have been submitted on behalf of feeding programs, such as food pantries, food banks and school backpack programs. Decisions will be made

on the applications by the end of June, and grants will be awarded to successful applicants in early July.

Graduation

Reagan Stanford, the crime victim services coordinator with Catholic Immigration Services in Little Rock, recently graduated from the William H. Bowen School of Law at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Temporary employee

Erica Kaylor of Rose Bud has joined Catholic Immigration Services Little Rock as a temporary employee during the summer. She will be assisting with services provided to immigrant victims of crime, helping them to obtain visas. Kaylor just finished her first year at UALR's William H. Bowen School of Law. She is a graduate of the University of Arkansas, with a



Erica Kaylor

degree in political science.

Envelope

The Envelope Fundraising Drive is a summertime campaign at Catholic Charities of Arkansas, which focuses on the help the organization can do around the state in the spirit of Matthew 25:35.

Through programs such as family assistance, disaster response, the Westside free medical clinic, adoption services, prison ministry and immigration services, Catholic Charities can provide a range of services throughout the state. The envelope is inserted in this issue of *Arkansas Catholic*.

Jericho Way Sleep Out

Catholic Charities of Arkansas supports the Jericho Way's Sleep Out in the Rock, which will take place Sept. 16.

A function of Depaul USA, Jericho Way is the homeless day resource center serving Little Rock and North Little Rock. Each weekday, Jericho Way provides transportation to and from the center, job and housing search support, showers, laundry facilities, case management, meals, respite from the weather and secure storage for personal items to the area's homeless. The mission of Jericho Way is to help homeless individuals on their journey to independence.

Sleep Out in the Rock is an annual fundraiser in which donors sponsor local residents to sleep out in Murray Park. The event raises awareness of the plight of those without housing while raising funds for the continuing operation of Jericho Way. Parishes or other groups interested in learning more about this event, or who would like to receive a presentation about the event from a Jericho Way representative, should contact Patrick Gallaher at pgalaher@dolr.org.

ACA was never meant to be final word

By Karen DiPippa

The recent House vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act without a proper replacement is shortsighted. The ACA has been a success for the majority of our Westside Free Medical Clinic patients. Arkansans who never had insurance obtained the potential to have quality lives with the Medicaid expansion, which is now placed in jeopardy if the currently proposed repeal and replacement bill becomes law.

The ACA was never meant to be the final word, but the first word on coverage for the uninsured. Critics repeat that ACA is an abysmal failure, but they fail to consider people who previously were denied treatment, diagnosis or

care for common diseases and now have coverage.

The free market idea or tax credit vouchers, described in the replacement bill, the American Health Care Act, will not help those families who live day to day to eke out their living. If people had the funding available to purchase insurance, they would already have been covered before the first insurance plan, the Affordable Care Act.

A better option is needed that does not unduly burden the uninsured, create dire consequences or jeopardize lives. The AHCA and its current revisions do all of the above and, arguably, will escalate costs for hospitals and insur-



Karen DiPippa

ers with the reasonably anticipated increased uncompensated care. In fact, the current AHCA ends the Medicaid expansion for nearly 300,000 Arkansans in 2020 and will make health care totally unaffordable for as many as one million Arkansans, according to Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families.

Health care remains a major element of Catholic social teaching. Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice, Fla., chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, called on the Senate to eliminate the harmful provisions of the AHCA: "Even with efforts to improve the bill before passage, The Ameri-

can Health Care Act still contains major defects, particularly regarding changes to Medicaid that risk coverage and affordability for millions; it is deeply disappointing that the voices of those who will be most severely impacted were not heeded."

The first priority should be lowering spiraling health care costs while reworking the revised AHCA, to ensure genuinely affordable coverage remains available for all. For more information on enrollment while it is available, check the HealthCare Marketplace at healthcare.gov or call (800) 318-2596.

Karen DiPippa is the director of the Westside Free Medical Clinic in Little Rock.