



Dear Friends,

In this edition of our Partners Newsletter, I will reflect on our participation in Bishop John Iffert's Campaign of Mercy throughout 2024 and share how we are preparing for the 2025 Jubilee Year.

The Jubilee theme, Pilgrims of Hope, emphasizes encountering Christ through service and compassion. Pope Francis writes, "For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the "door" (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as "our hope" (1 Tim 1:1)."

Pope Francis has broadened indulgences to include corporal and spiritual works of mercy—feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, comforting the sorrowful—reminding us that true transformation happens when we serve those in need and lead others to Christ.

This Jubilee theme beautifully aligns with Bishop Iffert's diocesan pastoral plan, which ties two strategic initiatives—the Campaign of Mercy and Parish Missionary Disciples—to Catholic Charities' mission of offering hope and healing to the most vulnerable. We invite you to embrace this call by making works of mercy as part of your daily life as we help our neighbors and ourselves.

As Bishop John Iffert said, "By entering into this pilgrimage to encounter Jesus in our neighbor, we make ourselves available for Christ to heal us—and by healing us, heal our world."



Charitable Works In Action—2024

As we look back on 2024, and prepare to embark on a new year, I will highlight how our volunteers and staff have extended compassion and support to our needy neighbors and embodied mercy and hope in our community. Through the dedication of over 700 volunteers, we served more than 10,000 guests, clients, tenants, and neighbors across our principal ministries this year. Some of the highlights include the following:

- Prison Ministry: With the support of over 60 volunteers, this ministry facilitated more than 1,700 inmate visits across Boone, Campbell, Kenton, and Mason Counties, averaging two visits per month. Volunteers provided spiritual support and companionship to those in need.

Continued on next page

A Letter from the Executive Director

continued from front page

- Parish Kitchen: Over 400 volunteers served 50,686 meals, valued at \$157,000, providing nourishment and, significantly, building relationships with our guests.
- Pickett's Corner: In 2024, 425 bikes were donated to neighbors needing transportation to doctor's appointments, jobs, and grocery stores. The volunteer base has grown from seven to over twenty volunteers since 2023.
- Mobile Food Pantry: Utilizing approximately 100 dedicated volunteers, the pantry provided approximately 1,864 households and 5,397 individuals with a week's worth of meals, addressing food insecurity across six counties. The approximate cost of donated food is \$436,900.
- St. Joseph Apartments: Over 25 volunteers gathered to spruce up the property by painting the fence, trimming bushes, raking leaves, organizing storage, and constructing a 12'x16' gazebo. In December, five men volunteered their skills to build a 12'x40' multi-purpose building for use as an office and meeting community space.
- Administrative Support: Over 65 volunteers performed a number of varied and significant tasks within our Latonia office including front desk receptionist, supporting administrative staff, and the board.



Journeying to Christ: Expanding Works of Mercy in 2025

Preparing for the 2025 Jubilee Year, we will continue accompanying our neighbors on their life's pilgrimage through works of mercy. Whether providing emergency assistance like food or long-term support like housing, we will journey toward Christ, offering hope and compassion to those we serve.

To better understand our community's needs, we will conduct surveys across several ministries, including Parish Kitchen, Pickett's Corner, St. Joseph Apartments, and our mobile food pantries. These surveys deepen our interactions by identifying opportunities for spiritual transformation beyond physical needs.

We will also survey our 700 volunteers to learn how we can better support them in their mission of mercy. By asking how their service has impacted their lives and strengthened their relationship with Christ, we hope to highlight the transformative power of these acts. Volunteers who intentionally engage others embody the spirit of parish missionary discipleship. To further support this mission, we plan to offer training for those interested in expanding their outreach, equipping them to evangelize through personal interactions. This initiative aligns with the Diocesan Pastoral Plan by helping parishioners share their faith and foster deeper connections.

New initiatives for 2025 include exploring mental health services for Parish Kitchen guests and expanding counseling support within Catholic schools. Additionally, we will construct a 900-square-foot multi-purpose facility to house Pickett's Corner, provide secure storage for the mobile pantry truck, and offer additional space for Parish Kitchen supplies.

As we embark on this pilgrimage of mercy & hope, we invite you to join us in living out Christ's call to serve our neighbors.

News and Events

Make an Even Bigger Difference

by Jennifer Abdrabbo, Institutional Advancement and Development Associate

Since its humble beginnings of a cup of soup and a sandwich served for the first meal, Parish Kitchen has continued that nourishment without missing a day for the past 50 years. 3.5 million meals have been served without any questions asked to whomever walks through the door. Parish Kitchen was founded on the principles of Dignity, Respect, Affection, Attention and Hospitality and can be seen daily in the actions of our volunteers.

On June 17, 2024, Catholic Charities of Covington celebrated Parish Kitchen's 50th Anniversary. As part of the celebration a special fund was created to carry us into the next 50 years. Our current project is a multi-purpose building which will shelter our Catholic Charities box truck, ensuring its longevity and safety. Additionally, the building will offer much-needed storage space and a dedicated area for volunteers to work on bikes during Pickett's Corner clinic days. Over the past two years, Pickett's Corner has given away over 700 bikes. We are also working to create space for a small community room that could be divided where Pickett's Corner guests and volunteers will have a more comfortable space to conduct the interviews required in order to receive a new bike. Our goal is to break ground by Spring of 2025.

To date we have raised \$130,000 towards our \$250,000 goal. We have been blessed with the generosity of the Butler Foundation with a matching gift grant of up to \$50,000 for the Parish Kitchen's 50th Anniversary multi-purpose building fund. All new and increased gifts to the 50th Anniversary Fund will be matched for all gifts received by the end of March. This is a wonderful opportunity to make your donation go even further. To donate please scan the QR Code or see the enclosed envelope.



School Counseling

Autumn Ruehl, an intern from NKU, who has been completing her internship at Catholic Charities, reached out to Officer John Murray, an NKU Police Officer, and Athena, his service dog, to visit St. Joseph School in Crescent Springs. The second-grade students, under Mrs. Ruehl's guidance, have been learning about mental health topics such as coping strategies, managing impulsivity, goal-setting, and how to strive to be the best versions of themselves. Mrs. Ruehl invited Officer Murray and Athena to talk to the students about how Athena can assist in managing stress, how Athena sets and works towards her own goals, and the importance of teamwork in achieving success.



Invite your friends and family to the Metropolitan Club to Support Catholic Charities.

Join us on Thursday, February 27th 4:30–7 p.m. for Philanthropic Pints at the Metropolitan Club, 50 E. Rivercenter Blvd, Covington, KY 41011. **50% of proceeds spent on food and drinks will come back to Catholic Charities.** Contact Jennifer Abdrabbo – jabdrabbo@covingtoncharities.org with any questions.

Providing a Home and Building Self-Sufficiency

By Karen Kuhlman

Brandy Medaugh is a Client Care Specialist and Case Manager for St. Joseph Supportive Housing, a ministry of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington. This ministry provides intensive case management services and assistance to homeless families and individuals. Each family includes at least one adult or child with a disability. Families reside in one of the sixteen units in the two-building permanent housing complex. A small community laundry facility is on premises for the convenience of the residents.

Rosalie Hentz and the late Sue Butler were best friends. Sue's husband, Bill, of the Butler Foundation, created a grant in honor of his wife, and made Rosalie the first recipient of the grant. Rosalie and Dick had been working on various projects for St. Joseph apartments for several years; Rosalie made what she called "care bags" for the residents for holidays and other occasions. Sometimes, she just dropped them off as a surprise. They contained small necessities, like soap, laundry detergent, or special little treats for the children. Dick built a wheelchair accessible playhouse for the youngest residents of the apartments.

Some of the limitations of the campus have been frustrating for Medaugh through the years, who explains, "There has always been a lack of available space. My designated office, located outside the bathroom door, is in an open area that sits at the back of the laundry facilities. This is where I would meet with my clients. As for storage, there is none for the 700 sq ft. apartments. For example, after Christmas, there was no place for holiday storage. You can't have your Christmas wreath up 12 months of the year! And where do you put your winter jackets in the spring or your summer necessities in the winter? The residents didn't have the luxury that we have of storing seasonal apparel or other items until they needed them again. Lacking a designated storage area, the folks often had to eliminate those possessions. Since our residents couldn't keep those things, year after year, they spent a lot of time looking for replacements for seasonal items. We are also fortunate to be offered supplies and donations from our supporters but lack space to store them."

When Bill Butler told Rosalie she could pick the first recipient for The Mary Sue (Lutz) Butler Faith and Family Award in honor of the late Sue Butler, she instantly thought of the St. Joseph apartments. Rosalie worked with Brandy who gave considerable thought to what was truly needed and felt the best use of the funds would be to provide storage space and an office. The office space will give Brandy a private space to talk with residents and provide a community space to work on life skills. It was decided that a 12 ft. by 40 ft.





prefabricated barn-like building would fit the need. Fifteen feet of the building were sectioned off to be devoted to a multi-purpose office space. This will include a meeting space and resource center for clients and a homework center for the tenants' children to come to when they need assistance. The second portion of the building will be used for storage and community space.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington is blessed with volunteers who generously give of their time, talent and treasure. When the building arrived, it was an empty shell. Medaugh said, "We needed to finish the interior in a way that would serve all the needs we wanted to address. The most recent addition to the campus at St. Joseph Apartments allowed many volunteers to put their faith into action."

Gregory George, an advisory board member who served on the board finance committee and was soon to be retiring from the board said, "This will be a good project for me to end on!" He found a group of five gentlemen from St. Pius to come and do all the renovations for free. By our tally, the group has spent over 162 hours on our building; they want nothing in return. The grant we received funded all the necessary materials. The volunteers came day after day and started off by creating the office. Medaugh stated, "The guys did a wonderful job! I have a meeting room now, something I never had in the other building and had only dreamed of." Some furnishings are still in pieces and await assembly, but we have been able to use the building for our Christmas shop and cookie decorating event and are excited to have other larger events within the space. We have a standard entry and one with a ramp that assists those in wheelchairs and mothers with strollers. The building provides a good space for our current needs.

Brandy Medaugh said "The goal of the St. Joseph Apartments ministry is simple. Whether you stay with us for a few years or twenty, we want to help you to become self-sufficient. We will wrap you and your family with whatever case management you need to become self-sufficient."

Bishop John Iffert's recent visit to bless the St. Joseph Apartments complex underscored the importance the Diocese of Covington attaches to the residents and this important mission. Bishop Iffert invoked God's blessing on the new building, on those who labored there, and on the families whom it will serve. Just as St. Joseph provided a safe and secure home for Jesus and Mary, Catholic Charities in the Diocese seeks to follow in St. Joseph's footsteps and provide a safe and secure home for the families of the St. Joseph Apartments.

Program Updates

Parents of Addicted Loved-Ones (PAL) Free Support Group

**2nd & 4th Wednesday
of each month**

6:30–8:00 p.m.

Catholic Charities,

3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015

PAL provides continuing education along with support, at no charge, for parents with a son or daughter suffering from alcohol or drug addiction.

Friends & Family of the Incarcerated Free Support Group

3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Catholic Charities,

3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015

A safe, welcoming community where you will be accepted without judgment. Questions? Contact Dave Pike at 859-669-3636.

Free Homebuyer Education Class

Saturday, March 1, 2025

Saturday, April 5, 2025

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Catholic Charities,

3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015

Learn about managing money, budgeting, insurance, inspections, mortgage lending, realtors, protecting your investment and predatory lending.

Class size is limited. Registration Required. Contact Client Care at 859-581-8974.

Mental Health is Just as Important as Physical Health!



Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) was designed to extend the concept of first aid training to mental health and substance use challenges. When you use the skills you learn in MHFA, you are the first line of support for a person in need. You are there to help them feel less distressed, and you can be a vital source in helping them seek further assistance. MHFA teaches participants to recognize the signs and symptoms that suggest a potential mental health or substance use challenge, how to listen nonjudgmentally and give reassurance to a person who may be experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge, and how to refer a person to appropriate support and services.

A core aspect of MHFA is being fully present and listening. As human beings, we have a fundamental need to be understood. Not necessarily agreed with, but understood. Being fully present and truly listening can help minimize feelings of distress and may be the most effective step as you help someone seek support or treatment that fosters their well-being. The vision is for MHFA to become as common as CPR and for MHFA training to be available to everyone in the United States.

The in-person section of the class is 6.5 hours. There are 2 hours of pre-classroom work to be completed before the in-person meeting. For more information contact Autumn at ruehla2@nku.edu

Mental Health First Aid Class

February 18, 2025

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

3629 Church Street, Covington, KY 41015

Registration required

Scan the QR Code or visit

<https://form.jotform.com/243105347336149>



Program Updates continued

Pickett's Corner Update

As we wrap up another year at Pickett's Corner, a ministry of Catholic Charities, we want to share the impact we've made together with your support. Since launching in July 2023, we've distributed 747 bikes and locks to individuals across three counties in Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati, OH. Our motto, "Donate a bike and change a life," is backed by a 2015 Harvard University study that found access to affordable transportation is crucial for escaping poverty and preventing homelessness.



Here are two of the many inspiring stories we've heard from bike recipients:

- A gentleman returned from a clinic visit, excited to share he'd been taken off some medications. When asked what changed, he proudly said, "They gave me this bike, and I take it everywhere I go!"
- Another recipient brought his bike in for repairs after wearing out the wheel bearings delivering for UberEats. We gave him a new bike and luggage rack, and he shared that the bike is vital for his livelihood.

Thanks to the generous donations of bicycles from people throughout the diocese and funding from grants, we've been able to keep this initiative going. We look forward to resuming our efforts in March 2025!

Jim Volz, advisory board member and team lead, expressed, "As we take a break for the winter, we want to extend our heartfelt thanks for your support of our bike ministry. Please spread the word about our ongoing need for bike donations." For more information, please visit www.covingtoncharities.org.

Mobile Food Pantry Update

It was another busy year for Food for Friends Mobile Food Pantry. In 2024, among all six pantries we served 17,596 people in 6,516 households. It could not have been done without the work of our amazing group of volunteers.

In addition to food distributed, we have been able to give out hygiene products, blankets and pocket crosses at some of our pantries. Here are just a few quotes from guests of the Mobile Food Pantries:



- "A family of four gets only \$23.00 for food stamps. Without the Mobile Pantry we would not be able to pay all our bills. It helps feed our family."
- "With a family of five anything I can get is a big help. This is the biggest help I have had in a while."
- "You always make me smile every time I come here!"

2025 is off to a frustrating start. The first three scheduled pantries had to be canceled due to a snowstorm, so we plan to come on the scheduled day the following month. We are all anxious for mother nature to loosen her grips on the snow so that we can get back to conducting the pantries and serve our guests.

If you have any questions about the Food For Friends Mobile Pantry or if you are interested in volunteering, you can contact John Hehman at 859-581-8974 ext. 124 or jhehman@covingtoncharities.org.



Catholic Charities

Diocese of Covington

Extend a Hand. Change a Life.

3629 Church Street
Covington, KY 41015
859.581.8974
www.CovingtonCharities.org
www.facebook.com/CovingtonCharities

Serving the community for over 95 years

Our Mission: We serve all people in our Diocese who lack basic human needs, including physical, spiritual, or emotional, regardless of their religious beliefs.

Using a unique holistic approach, we support and empower our clients to achieve self-sufficiency by providing guidance, tools, and life-skills.

We also serve our volunteers, supporters, and partner agencies/ministries by providing the means for them to serve and assist their neighbors in need through our programs or referrals.

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Diocese of Covington

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Partners newsletter is published three times a year in spring, summer and winter for friends of Catholic Charities. Catholic Charities provides Child and Family Services; Counseling Services; Housing Services; and Community Outreach Services.