

Mission in Motion



SUMMER 2019 NEWSLETTER



Danishka Valdes and Maritza Cedeño assisting migrants in Laredo, TX (Story on p. 3)

Family Transitional Housing Moving to Caroline Street

In October, Catholic Charities Family Transitional Housing (family shelter) is moving to Caroline St. in Worcester. The new building is much larger, offering increased bedrooms to accommodate more and larger families and increased living space for current families living there.

School Supply Drive

It's back to school! Each year, we provide backpacks and school supplies to students in need. With your support, the program has expanded this year to offer students back to school clothing.

Opening of Catholic Charities Women's Recovery Program

On October 4th, Catholic Charities will open a 16 bed Women's Recovery Program in Leominster, MA. The program will provide long term residential rehabilitation services to women who present with a substance use disorder and a co-occurring enhanced disorder(s).



ESOL GRADUATION 2019

This summer, 21 students graduated from English for Speakers of Other Languages classes (ESOL). Several students stepped out of their comfort zone to write and present speeches in English, a language that once seemed so distant to them. Many will be continuing their education and taking additional classes focused on citizenship and immigration.

A Message from Tim McMahon, Executive Director

The “slow days of summer” are certainly not the case here at Catholic Charities as we embark upon multiple projects that will have significant impact in our community. We are well under way with the renovation of our new transitional housing program located at Caroline Street in Worcester, beginning construction on our six-month women’s recovery program in Leominster and working with an architect on a “redesign” of the Mercy Centre in Worcester. These are exciting times at Catholic Charities!

We anticipate having fifteen to seventeen bedrooms at our transitional housing program with a grand opening in mid-October. The property, where Mother Teresa once stayed, is a former convent built around the turn of the last century. The property is being restored, taking full advantage of the fine craftsmanship that is so apparent under the carpeting and through the dust. The families that we serve will have their dignity while they pursue safe, affordable housing and learn the skills necessary to enjoy a life of self-sufficiency.

Through the generosity of Bishop McManus, we now own the property at 196 Mechanic Street in Leominster where we will open a sixteen-bed women’s recovery program, funded through the Department of Public Health (DPH). The building currently houses our home care and emergency services programs. The recovery program is designed to help an underserved population in an underserved part of the state. The six-month program will be opening in October.

Finally, we are working with an architect to modernize and design a flow more conducive to the population we serve at the Mercy Centre. While this undertaking is very much in the infancy stages, we are very excited to know the work has begun. No timetable has been set for the actual implementation of the design; we are looking forward to beginning the work.

I want to thank the Catholic Charities staff, donors, and volunteers for your hard work and dedication to the folks we serve at Catholic Charities. The new programs and shiny buildings are exciting, but it is each of you that makes Catholic Charities the incredible place that it is.

My best,

Tim

MEET *Angel Bodziak*

Administrator,
Women's Recovery
Program



Angel has joined the Catholic Charities team as our new Administrator of the women’s recovery program opening this fall in Leominster. Angel joins us from Washburn House, where she was involved with counseling, transition planning, clinical evaluations, and program development. She has many years of experience working with women in recovery and we are looking forward to the level of expertise she will bring to this vital program. Angel finds herself looking for the positivity in every situation.

“I have so many reasons why I enjoy working for Catholic Charities, however, I must say that one of my favorite things is that we have a wonderful, dedicated, and caring team of employees here at Catholic Charities. My motivation is internal. Once I help someone, I become inspired to continue to help, support, and provide services to people.”

Lending a Helping Hand to Migrants in Laredo, TX

DANISHKA VALDES SHARES HER LIFECHANGING EXPERIENCE

For Danishka Valdes, it wasn't even a thought, as soon as Catholic Charities USA notified her of the opportunity to help with the migrant influx in Laredo, TX, she knew she had to go. Working at Catholic Charities, she's always looking to help people. In 2017, when Hurricane Maria struck, Valdes wanted more than anything to help her friends and family who had been devastated by the tragedy, but at the time could not afford it. When the opportunity to help migrants arose, she knew she had to help, just as others had once helped her family after the hurricane.

Each day at 8am, Valdes arrived at the shelter and prepared for the border patrol vans that would bring 150-300 migrants from the border. Many had walked for 29 days with no food, no showers, and no idea what would happen next. Their faith allowed them to have trust in the kindness of strangers, and their continuous hope throughout the journey made Valdes realize how much we take for granted. Migrants, after having their clothes taken away and not eating for days, gave thanks and praised how well everyone treated them. Valdes found herself inspired by these individuals and families who always remained hopeful; with daily prayers, their faith was enough for them to know they were going to make it where they needed to be. Volunteers did anything they could to help: feeding migrants, providing showers, assisting with intakes, cleaning, setting up shelving, and creating food and personal hygiene pantries. Each day, hundreds of packages donated from Amazon.com would flood in, ensuring there were enough supplies to take care of people. Even something as simple as a toothbrush had an impact, allowing someone to brush their teeth for the first time in 29 days. At the end of the day, everyone was genuinely thankful for things we take for granted every day.

On the final day before returning to Massachusetts, a blessing ceremony mass was held for the migrants. At this moment, looking back on her eye-opening experience, Valdes found herself filled with emotion. The experience was exhausting mentally, physically, and emotionally, but working with migrants has inspired to help as many people as she can.

"Everyone was genuinely so thankful for things so small that we take for granted every day. We don't think about whether or not we have a toothbrush in the morning, and they weren't able to have one for months."

~ Danishka Valdes

