

The Mission

Serving the Community since 1947

Catholic Charities Achieves Reaccreditation

Catholic Charities received word November 7 that it had once again been nationally accredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), which praised Catholic Charities as an “outstanding” provider of “quality services.”

The on-site visit by COA reviewers took place October 1-3 and involved detailed examination of Catholic Charities’ operations, including personnel, safety, and fiscal management, as well as services to clients.

At the October 3 exit interview, Martha Halterman, the COA peer review team leader, said that she found the staff “dedicated and hard-working” and the board “very active and involved.” She also reported, “I received positive feedback from the clientele I interviewed.”

COA is an international child- and family-service and behavioral



Photo by Jeanne Spaeth

COA review team leader Martha Halterman (left), seated next to team reviewers Deborah Pinkett (center) and Christopher Kelly (right), addresses Catholic Charities’ staff and board members at the October 3 exit interview.

healthcare accrediting organization that evaluates agencies against best-practice standards. Catholic Charities first applied for COA accreditation in 1987 and has successfully maintained its accreditation, undergoing in-depth reviews and self-studies every four years.

Catholic Charities’ Executive Director Stephen Luteran said, “This reaccreditation affirms that we are providing the very best care and professional services to our clients and that we are responsive to the needs of the community. It attests to the commitment of our caring staff and volunteers.”

St. Martin’s Helps



After moving in with her daughter, 87-year-old

Josephine hoped her life would be more secure and less stressful than living alone on a small pension.

Her daughter, who recently lost her husband, invited

Josephine to share her apartment and sincerely wanted to give her mother companionship and care. But the daughter soon fell into a state of depression, mourning her late husband, skipping work, and turning to alcohol.

An elderly neighbor in the apartment building saw what was happening and invited Josephine to come along with her to visit Catholic Charities’ St. Martin de Porres Senior Center.

At the center, Josephine got a hot lunch, participated in exercise classes, signed up for daily bus transportation to the center, and, probably most important, made new friends.

Josephine says, “St. Martin’s has become my family. We all look out for each other at the center, and the staff is helping me persuade my daughter to seek counseling for her grief and addictions. St. Martin’s has been my life-line.”

Photo by Lauren Cheliec, CCUSA

FROM THE DESK OF Stephen Luteran

Photo by Jeanne Spaeth



Stephen Luteran

Our successful reaccreditation by the national Council on Accreditation (COA) means that any individuals who walk through our doors can be assured they will be met by compassionate people who are competent in what they do and can offer appropriate help.

To be accredited by COA, an agency must demonstrate that it is meeting the highest professional standards of service. The accreditation process requires an

extensive self-study and a three-day site visit by a review team that examines and analyzes operations and documents and interviews staff, clients, and supporters of the agency. The entire process takes about one year from beginning to end.

It was very gratifying to receive word that we were reaccredited and that we earned high ratings, with no major deficiencies noted. Our clients and supporters can indeed be assured that we are staffed with highly qualified professionals and dedicated volunteers.

Accreditation reminds me

of the Gospel parable about using the talents we have to the fullest extent possible. Our reaccreditation confirms that our talented, caring employees and volunteers at Catholic Charities are using the gifts God gave them to bring the Gospel to life.

Through your faithful support of our programs, you, too, help bring the Gospel to life. Thank you!

Stephen Luteran, M.S.W., L.C.S.W.
Executive Director
Catholic Charities
of the Diocese of Arlington

Invited Speakers Share Insights and Information

Catholic Charities' board member Fr. Mark Mealey and program director John Odenwelder were recently invited to speak at the Chancery's brown bag lunch series.

Discussing "The Gift of the Incarnation" at the December 12 session, Fr. Mealey described the incarnation celebrated at Christmas as a "major event in our spiritual lives as well as history." He read from Isaiah passages of hope used in the Advent liturgy: "The desert and the parched land will exult. . . . Be strong, fear not! Here is Your God" (Isaiah 35).

Fr. Mealey, who also serves as Vicar General of Administration, said, "What could God send us to prove the intensity of his love? He sent his word, his son, his very self." He called the incarnation "a sign of unconditional love" and said that Christ "came to walk the walk that we walk." Quoting from St. Francis de Sales, he said that "even if man had not sinned, Christ would have come to show the intensity of God's love for us."

Odenwelder, who oversees Hogar Hispano, spoke about "Immigration Services: Welcoming the Stranger among Us" at the October 23 session. He said that his office works "to imple-

ment locally the Church's commitment to social justice" and to "welcome the stranger" regardless of religious or ethnic identity.

Odenwelder explained that Hogar offers legal representation, adult education, naturalization assistance, and social services and, with the help of many volunteers, keeps its fees as low as possible. He said that Hogar's office locations include Falls Church, Sterling, and Leesburg as well as fourteen ESL classroom sites.

John Odenwelder (right) and Fr. Mark Mealey, OSFS (below)



Photos by Jeanne Spaeth



Gift Drive Brings Smiles to Low-income Children

Catholic Charities' Christmas gift drive was organized by its Hogar Hispano program (Immigrant Services) in 2007. Hogar was able to distribute gifts to more than 500 children from low-income families on December 17 and 19 at its Falls Church and Leesburg offices. Hogar thanks the many organizations and individuals who donated items just in time for Christmas celebrations.

The gifts ranged from toys suitable for infants to games for children to gift-cards for young teens. A highlight of the gift drive was the delivery of seventy-seven shiny new children's bikes, donated by ExxonMobil employees.

Other generous donors included St. Charles Borromeo, St. Philip, St. Luke, and Queen of Apostles parishes. Students from Bishop O'Connell High School, Langley High School, and James Madison High School also kindly contributed, as did the P.A. Consulting Group and the Information Technology Office of the Diocese.



Top photo by Jeanne Spaeth, bottom photo by Ray Plarney

New children's bikes, donated by ExxonMobil employees, are unloaded by Mark Hitt, Dennis Atchison, and Robbie Atchison (left to right in right photo). A happy toddler (above) arrives with her family to receive gifts.



Calendar

Feb 1 – Catholic Charities Ball (703-841-3835)

Feb 12 – Following in the Footsteps of Jesus series (703-841-3831)

Feb 21 – Forum for the Family: "teen substance abuse" (703-841-2531)

April 27 – Walk for Life (703-425-0100)

Full details at www.cdda.net

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Feeding the Hungry during the Holidays



Photo by Ray Plarney

Bishop Loverde thanks Chef Sergio Mueller for his gourmet food preparations for the Christ House meal for the hungry on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

As always, Christ House opened its doors to the hungry this past Thanksgiving and Christmas, serving a festive dinner and providing holiday food baskets to needy families.

Bishop Paul S. Loverde led prayers before the meal, greeted guests, helped serve, and thanked volunteers and staff

who handled food preparations, serving, and clean-up.

Fifty-six guests were served dinner at Thanksgiving and eighty-seven at Christmas. In addition, 184 food baskets (providing a complete holiday dinner) were distributed to families for November 22, and 142 were given out for December 25.

Sixteen families also received holiday presents through the Emergency Assistance adopt-a-family program.

The bishop especially thanked Sergio Mueller, a local gourmet chef who faithfully arrives at the Christ House kitchen at 8:00 a.m. on holidays to prepare plump turkeys for roasting with special herbs and spices and to start work on delicious side dishes.

Students Hold Food Drives for Christ House

Christ House thanks the many groups who are helping stock its food pantry, a source of sustenance for needy individuals in the local area as well as those in the Diocese's outlying areas visited by the Christ House on Wheels van.

On November 15, a group of home-schooled girls donated a vanload of nonperishable food they collected by making food donations the "price of admission" to their Backyard Fair project. The 6th and 7th grade girls are members of a local chapter of Traditions of Roman Catholic Homes (TORCH), a national association established to promote home-schooling among Catholic families. The girls have formed a social-service group called St. Elizabeth's Club, based in Reston, where the Fair was held.

On November 27, Brady

Members of St. Elizabeth's Club gather to fill a van full of food for Christ House (right photo). Brady Murray (on the right in bottom photo) unloads his delivery of food and toiletry items with the help of Tom Bransfield (left) and Joe Cella at Christ House.



Top photo by Joe Cella; bottom photo by Connie Murray

Murray, a senior at Bishop O'Connell High School and a member of Boy Scout Troop 129, delivered four vanloads of food and personal hygiene items that he had collected as part of his Eagle Scout service project.

Murray said that he decided to organize the drive for Christ House because "I knew it was a shelter serving many families in need." He thanks all donors and the



members of his troop who assisted in the collection.

Food pantry donations get used up quickly. Any group wishing to organize a food drive for Christ House may call 703-841-3838.

Released Inmates Receive Support



Photo by Jeanne Spaeth

Nina Deboeck delivers filled backpacks to Sr. Connie Parcasio, SNDS.

When Sr. Connie Parcasio, program director for Catholic Charities' prison ministry, gave a presentation to students at the University of Mary Washington in October 2003, she did not foresee that one of the attendees would one day be a diocesan youth minister collecting supplies for newly released prisoners. But, sure enough, Nina Deboeck showed up December 12 at Sr. Connie's office to

deliver thirty-six backpacks filled with supplies.

At Christmas time, Sr. Connie puts out a call for gifts such as backpacks, Christmas cards, and stamps for inmates. Nina worked with her pastor, Fr. Martin McGuill of St. Luke Church in McLean, to use the parish's annual giving tree to make requests for backpacks and supplies such as soap, shampoo, socks, underwear, soup, and snack packs. "These items," explains Sr. Connie, "are needed by released inmates, who often lack financial resources, job prospects, and support from their families."

Other donors of backpacks and supplies include the Knights of Columbus at St. Mary of Sorrows in Fairfax and

the Friends of La Salette, who are supporters of Sr. Connie's order, Sisters of Notre Dame de La Salette. Contributors of Christmas cards include Marymount University, Christendom College, EPS (Education for Parish Services), and the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Nina said, "I vividly remember Sister's description of the inmate's plight, and before becoming a youth minister, I spent a year as a Vincentian Volunteer in Liverpool, England, working with individuals who had served time for drug and alcohol misuse. I saw first-hand how these individuals are often forgotten by family and society and lack any support to turn their lives around."

To help, call Sr. Connie at 703-841-3832.