Called to be Good Samaritans

Let me first begin by thanking you for all that you do to support the work of Catholic Charities. As long as there is a need to be filled in the community, Catholic Charities will be present to provide help and hope to individuals and families. In this newsletter, we’ve highlighted stories from our ministries that you have played a role in making possible. As I’ve quoted before, Pope Francis, while addressing the 2014 annual Catholic Charities USA gathering, referred to Catholic Charities as, “the engine of the Church that organizes love.” You are a part of this love, and our work would not be possible without your time, prayers, and donations.

In a recent gathering, we were asked to reflect on the Parable of the Good Samaritan. As we know, the Parable of the Good Samaritan was told in response to the questioning of the commandment to love thy neighbor as thyself. Jesus is asked, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). In his response, He tells of a man who fell victim to robbers and lay beaten in the street. In his need, this man was ignored by two passersby and finally cared for by the Samaritan. The Samaritan did not stop there, but continued to care for him, showing compassion and concern for the man’s needs.

In the same 2014 address to Catholic Charities USA, Pope Francis said that like the Good Samaritan and Innkeeper, “we are called to be in the streets, inviting people to be in the streets, inviting people to come to the Inn.” He continued, “We need to be the Good Samaritan in all walks of life coming together to comfort support, and assist their neighbors in need. As long as there is need, we need to be filled in the community, Catholic Charities will be present to provide help and hope to individuals and families. In this newsletter, we’ve highlighted stories from our ministries that you have played a role in making possible. As I’ve quoted before, Pope Francis, while addressing the 2014 annual Catholic Charities USA gathering, referred to Catholic Charities as, “the engine of the Church that organizes love.” You are a part of this love, and our work would not be possible without your time, prayers, and donations. In the same 2014 address to Catholic Charities USA, Pope Francis said that like the Good Samaritan and Innkeeper, “we are called to be in the streets, inviting people to be in the streets, inviting people to come to the Inn.” In the same 2014 address to Catholic Charities USA, Pope Francis said that like the Good Samaritan and Innkeeper, “we are called to be in the streets, inviting people to be in the streets, inviting people to come to the Inn.”

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In 2009, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded grants to 23 communities to implement the Rapid Re-housing for Homeless Families Demonstration Program (RRHD). New Orleans, whose homeless population had risen by as much as 85 percent in the years since Hurricane Katrina, was chosen as a grantee. Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans was one of two agencies in the area chosen to implement the program’s three-year pilot project. The program, which uses the housing first model, officially began on August 1, 2010.

The Rapid Rehousing program assists families with the identification of available housing in Orleans and Jefferson parishes. Assistance is also offered with move-in, short-term rental assistance, case management and linkages to community-based services. To be eligible, families must be living in an emergency shelter, on the streets or in a place not meant for human habitation.

Shawanda Holmes knows all too well what it’s like to live somewhere not meant for human habitation. She and her three children lived across the street from the shotgun double they now call home. At the house across the street, walls moved if they were bumped into, mold grew from numerous places, water dripped from the ceiling and tarp covered missing portions of the house’s exterior, leaving the home’s interior exposed to the elements in many places. One day, one of her daughters took a wrong stop, and her leg fell through the floor. Two of the children suffer from lead poisoning due to the house’s paint.

Fearful for her family’s safety and well being, Shawanda decided her family couldn’t live like this any longer. She went to the Social Security office to fill out paperwork, and after showing the social worker photos of her home, they agreed with her. Social Security referred her to Catholic Charities’ Rapid Rehousing program where she was connected with case manager Edla Roy.

“Ms. Roy has been a blessing” Shawanda comments, smiling. Thinking about where she’d be without Ms. Roy and the Rapid Rehousing program, Shawanda shakes her head, saying, “Weird definitely be at a shelter somewhere. That house was horrible and we had to get out fast. We wouldn’t have been able to find a new place on our own.”

Ms. Roy helped Shawanda find available, appropriate housing for her and her children. Finding a house near her children’s current school and an already in-place support system was critical as Shawanda didn’t want to disrupt their young lives any further. The program helped the Holmes family pay the initial deposit and offered them short-term rental assistance. Ms. Roy also helped her acquire food vouchers and fill out paperwork with the Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANDO) to receive more long-term rental assistance.

Now, Shawanda and her children, who just went back to school, are all settled in their new home. Since the program also contains a management element, Ms. Roy dropped by to check on them regularly, and she and Shawanda speak on the phone often. She commented, “This mom’s faith, hope and determination are admirable. It’s my pleasure to be of service to this family who was not looking for a hand out, but a hand up.”

Rapid Rehousing Brings Hope & Stability to Families in Need

CCANO is proud to announce our Spirit of Hope North Shore Floods Response Disaster Case Management Program serving Washington and St. Tammany Parishes. Spirit of Hope provides disaster case management services by assigning a single point of contact to those individuals or families who were impacted by the March 2016 floods. Our case managers help these households return to a state of self-sufficiency by working with them to identify their unmet needs, presenting these needs to groups providing assistance to flood victims and coordinating with volunteer groups for home repairs. Spirit of Hope case managers also help clients get connected to services, help with applications and appeals, and assist with finding housing, home repairs, transportation and other essential services.

If you were affected by the March 2016 floods and need help, please call 985-605-9843, or visit http://www.ccano.org/disaster-response-services/.