During this time, let us act with compassion and empathy, remembering Jesus’ words: “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:5)

It is true that Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans is part of a nationwide network of agencies that act as the charitable arm of the Catholic Church. Impelled by the love and teachings of Jesus Christ, we strive to serve the most vulnerable in our communities, lift up voices less heard and empower the weak to foster a just society. In these summer months we observe and celebrate Memorial Day, Flag Day, Juneteenth and Independence Day, all holidays which celebrate the achievements and sacrifices made to move this great nation forward. In our recent call-to-action, we asked you to exercise your rights afforded to you under a representative democracy and contact your legislators in support of a state budget that funds care for individuals with disabilities, such as individuals served by our Padua and PACE programs. Thank you for your letters, phone calls and prayers.

As U.S. citizens, let us remember to not take our rights and privileges for granted! I was recently able to attend a naturalization ceremony. As 57 men and women representing 30 countries enthusiastically declared the Oath of Allegiance to the USA, I couldn’t help but reflect on the sacrifices made to move this great nation forward. In our recent call-to-action, we asked you to exercise your rights afforded to you under a representative democracy and contact your legislators in support of a state budget that funds care for individuals with disabilities, such as individuals served by our Padua and PACE programs. Thank you for your letters, phone calls and prayers.

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To learn more about Catholic Charities’ response efforts, visit www.ccano.org/disaster-response-services.

Recovery Still Underway on the North Shore

In March of 2016, historic flooding ravaged areas of the North Shore, destroying homes and leaving residents with a long road to recovery ahead of them. As soon as the flood waters receded, Catholic Charities case managers were on the ground assessing the damage, distributing food, offering counseling and helping those affected begin to pick up the pieces.

Since then, Catholic Charities Spirit of Hope Disaster Case Management Program (DCMP) has offered more than $2 million in services to those renovating, rebuilding and working towards recovery. Case managers continue to work with those who are still in need.

North Shore resident Debra Smith, who is elderly, disabled and lives alone, was one of those affected looking for assistance in the immediate aftermath. Wind-driven rain had left the roof of her home extensively damaged, which was in turn damaging the house’s ceilings and insulation.

With a limited income and no means of transportation, she was forced to continue living there while mold and further damage began to spread.

“I knew that it needed to be repaired, but I just didn’t have the money. I didn’t know what to do – only to pray,” Debra said.

About a month after the floods, FEMA representatives assessed the damage and added her information to a list of those looking for help. Luckily, she was then referred to Catholic Charities case manager Connie Bovington.

Connie worked with Debra to assess the damage and begin searching for both someone to fix it and a way to pay for it. Thanks to Connie’s persistence, Debra’s prayers and a construction crew’s hard work, Debra’s roof was soon repaired.

“The construction crew they sent to do the work did a fantastic job,” Debra said of the repairs to her home.

Soon after, it rained again. Debra anxiously sat in her newly renovated home and waited for the rain to come through her roof, when it didn’t, she was thankful and overjoyed and all the work that had been done for her.

Debra was so moved by the generosity shown to her that she wrote a letter to Catholic Charities thanking the organization, Connie, the construction crew and all those involved in her recovery process!

“Working with this client was a joy,” Connie shared. “She’s just a sweet lady that is grateful for the help she’s received.”

To learn more about Catholic Charities’ ongoing support and continued long-term recovery efforts on the North Shore, visit www.ccano.org/disaster-response-services.

Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to help us!

Head Start Students are Moving Up!

Last month, we celebrated our St. John the Baptist, Incarnate Word, St. Paul the Apostle and St. Mary of the Angels Head Start students who are going on to kindergarten! Schulte Hall, where each Center held their own promotion ceremony, was decorated with balloons, flowers and banners.

Friends and families of the graduates watched them process under a beautiful archway and take their seats on stage. Younger students from other Head Start and Early Head Start classes performed songs and dances for the crowd.

The graduating classes also performed poems and songs, demonstrating all the things they’ve learned during their time in the Head Start program.

Finally, it was time to hand out the diplomas! Each student was called by name to receive their diploma from Rhonda Taylor, Catholic Charities’ Director of Early Childhood Education Services, and Sr. Marjorie Hebert, M.S.C., President and CEO of Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New Orleans.

During their time in Catholic Charities’ Head Start program, these students received quality early childhood education as well as health, social, mental health and nutrition services. Their parents were able to volunteer and participate in activities at the center.

It was wonderful to see how far each of these students have come, and we can’t wait to see how far they’ll go thanks to the education and services they received through Head Start!

To learn more about our Head Start and Early Head Start programs, please visit www.ccano.org/head-start-program/

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Recovery Still Underway on the North Shore

Pace GNO Celebrates Nursing Assistants’ Week

O ffered since 1977, National Nursing Assistants Week celebrates the selflessness, hard work and dedication that nursing assistants provide to their patients. At PACE (Program of All Inclusive Care for the Elderly), nursing assistants provide special care and attention to each participant, helping make the most of their time at the center. We are so grateful for the service of our nursing assistants and help they provided to our National Nursing Assistants Week treat!

In the Spotlight: ESL Instructor Claire Brooks

A few years ago, Claire Brooks, a now-retired Presbyterian pastor, was the pastor at a Chinese church in Kenner and wanted to do more for the immigrant population there. Already aware of the presence of an English as a Second Language (ESL) program at Carrollton Church of Christ, Claire began shadowing Catholic Charities ESL Instructor Jenny Garrison after she retired from the church.

This experience provided Claire with a chance to hone her teaching skills and the encouragement she needed to dive in and start volunteering as an instructor herself.

For the past year, Claire and Jenny have been co-teaching a level one English as a Second Language class at Church of Christ. There are times that one will teach while the other walks around taking questions and offering help; there are other times only one is able to present and will teach alone.

Teaching the classes is exhausting, but exhilarating. “I come home from class and I’m drenched in sweat. You can’t stand still; there’s too much going on,” she shares. “I get so energized – it’s just the greatest experience.”

Like most teachers, she enjoys watching students who were puzzled by a topic suddenly make the connection and understand the material. But the best part, she says, is watching students who speak different languages and come from different cultures speak to each other in English. Last year, a new Arabic-speaking student and a Spanish-speaking student in Claire’s class were discussing recipes and ingredients in English – their new common language.

Many of Claire’s students work a full day at their job, sit through two and a half hours of ESL classes and then still have a long bus ride home.

“If people understood how hard our immigrants work at their job, at learning English and at learning more about the community and the culture, it might change some of their opinions,” the says of her students.

To learn more about our English as a Second Language program, including how you can volunteer, visit www.ccano.org/english-second-language-classes.

Notes from the Heart