



The Quarterly

Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida, Tallahassee Regional Office
Accredited by the Council of Accreditation

Issue 7 Volume 3
Quarter 3

Number of People Served July-September 2009

Total Emergency Assistance	2241
Prevented Homelessness	211
Immediate Hunger Alleviated	2030
Avoided Utility Disconnect	38
Counseling	75
Improved Skills Workshop	3

30th Anniversary!!!!!!

Christmas Connection

Christmas Connection tries to fulfill the wishes and some of the basic needs of hundreds of needy families in NW Florida each holiday season. We want to deliver toys for their children, food for their table and a little joy to their homes. From 25 families in Tallahassee to 800 families in eight Big Bend counties: That is the amazing history and growth of this Catholic Charities Initiative.

In 1979, Christmas Connection began as an effort to help 25 needy families have a happier holiday. The response was overwhelming. Over the years, the Christmas Connection has exploded to a massive volunteer effort that now helps 600 to 800 families in an eight-county region every year.



NEW FACES AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES TALLHASSEE

We are blessed to have three wonderful women who match individuals, families, government agencies, university departments, and businesses with our Christmas Connection families to be adopted through the program this year: Betty C. Bays, Maggie Short, and long-time volunteer, Maureen Hemmerly.

Betty has lived in Tallahassee for 12 years and has recently retired as Volunteer Coordinator for a non-profit organization. She writes, "When I was six years old, my father was unemployed and the Christmas holiday season looked very bleak. The church supplied our family of six with Christmas dinner and gifts. I have never forgotten that difficult time. It's a pleasure to be a volunteer at Christmas Connection



and help in any way that I can."

Maggie volunteered at Christmas Connection helping in the warehouse wherever she was needed last year. "I like to help people, especially those with special needs. Working with all the great volunteers last year made me want to do it again this year."

Maureen earned her Bachelor's degree in Accounting and has lived in Tallahassee since 1971. She worked 31 years primarily as a Policy Administrator

responsible for planning and developing social and medical services for the poor and disadvantaged. This is her seventh year volunteering for Christmas Connection. She is particularly grateful to be able to spend time helping Catholic Charities. "I've spent most of my professional life trying to help those who are less fortunate, and Christmas Connection allows me to continue that work in retirement."

Maureen and her husband, Ken, enjoy contributing their time at local non-profit agencies that benefit the community. Ken has also volunteered for several years at Christmas Connection and helps the elderly by running a Meals on Wheels route each week.

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: OVERCOMING INCREDIBLE CHALLENGES

When Jack, case manager extraordinaire, asked me to write an article for the charity's newsletter, I was flattered and confused. He went on to explain that in working with me, he had witnessed a survival story that may help others in similar situations. I was happy to oblige if any of my words could help someone else in need. Telling my story is also part of my recovery. I am a recovering alcoholic and drug addict. There is a saying that if a person could put at least half of the energy spent on using to something productive, success will follow.

I will spare the readers the details of my past. After all, it is called "Alcoholics and/or Narcotics Anonymous". Instead, I will attempt to outline some of the tools used in my continuing success/survival. I truly believe that I am surrounded by Grace. There is no earthly reason that I have been able to make it without God's help. The events of my life humbled me as well — something I needed desperately. God gives you the tools; you have to use them.

Professionals are trained to hear your troubles, so don't be embarrassed or ashamed by your

past. There is no need to tell your life story either - explain your situation, answer any questions and wait for a response. Contact them again (and again) if your haven't heard back in a reasonable amount of time.

Most importantly, when you are seeking assistance from anyone, anywhere, tell the truth! There is no room for conning, or game playing. You won't get any additional assistance, and you'll probably get turned down. Most workers are well versed in this, and can spot it

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Catholic Charities carries out social mission of the Catholic Church in Northwest Florida by serving, advocating, and empowering vulnerable individuals of any race, religion, or national origin. (89% of clients are not Catholic.)

Client Spotlight from page 1

Immediately. Someone once said to me that most clients want to blame the government, law enforcement, their families, etc. It was my fault. I admitted it and was ready for change. Seek out any and every assistance available. The 211 telephone referral service is a good place to start. If one agency cannot help you, and ask if they are aware of another agency that might. Always be polite. Demanding services is not the way to go. Call every agency around and ask what their criteria for services are. You never know who may be able to help, and you just might qualify for their programs. Keep a list of contact names and services available. Don't take it personally if you have trouble getting assistance. There are certain parameters and laws that government agencies and non-profits have to follow. Just move on and keep going. Always remember, there is no shame in trying to provide for yourself and your family. Don't let pride get in the way.

Don't resent it if a program wants you to report or follow their rules. The rules are there for a reason and are part of the criteria for services. This is also a part of the guidelines by which these agencies are funded. Look at the bigger picture. If clients are not complying, there is a risk of that agency losing its funding. Again, don't take it personally.

Stay in touch with God. Develop a strong support system. God in his way will return to you just what you need. Be patient, don't give up. If you need to, start all over again. I keep a list of goals and accomplishments. Whether it is grocery shopping or getting assistance, I write it down. I thank you for the opportunity to share this and pray it can help others. God Bless.

"Snowflake" by Christopher Radko designed especially for Catholic Charities

\$50 donation

Please call 222-2180 x102



Christmas Connection

2818 Mahan Dr.

Tallahassee, FL

Come out and support our community in need. Volunteers are always needed!! Call 222-2180 x112.

A Year In Review

Catholic Charities Board of Directors has been hard at work planning the 10th Annual Christmas Connection Golf Tournament to be held November 16th at Golden Eagle, helping Catholic Charities organize the 30th Anniversary of Christmas Connection (www.thechristmasconnection.org), and raising funds through the distribution of Christopher Radko Christmas Ornaments. The work never seems to be done and in the midst of all this work, we are about to transition to new Board leadership.

The good news is that Catholic Charities is in better financial shape than they have been in for years and a public relations campaign including a professional solicitation mail-out and regular bulletin announcements at the local parishes has resulted in more donations for the agency. This year's Board has proven the old adage that hard work pays off. The Catholic Charities staff, volunteers and community supporters continue to provide resources for the most needy in our community.

As Board members decide whether to re-commit to serve the agency for another year they are reminded that transitions are never easy, the work is never done and succession plans do not always go as planned. They can also be re-energized by the knowledge that there will be new ways of doing things, new opportunities for growth and the continued satisfaction of doing good work for a great agency. Thank you for the opportunity to serve as President of the Board this year, and I look forward to our continued success.

—Maureen O'Neil, Board President Tallahassee Catholic Charities NW Florida

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 WE COULD NOT DO IT WITHOUT
 YOU!!!**