

FEBRUARY 2010

## All in a Day

I am continually amazed at the breadth of Catholic Charities' activities, all geared at reducing poverty, such as housing assistance, case management, food distribution, shelter, employment counseling and more. We serve so many kinds of people – seniors, immigrants and families in crisis – sometimes all at once.

This really hit home in mid-December. In the course of one day, nearly 200 clients came to our headquarters in Santa Rosa. As I entered the lobby, prospective clients for one of our new programs filled every seat and standing space. People were queuing up to ask counselors to review their applications for temporary rent or utility assistance – help they needed to stay in their homes. (This expansion of our housing counseling programs is called the Homeless Prevention/Rapid-Rehousing Program or HPRP, and is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.) I saw disabled seniors, single mothers, young couples, white and blue collar workers. Meanwhile, 70 more people of all walks of life sat shoulder-to-shoulder in John W. Doolittle Board Room – our largest conference space – listening intently as senior staff member Brian O'Callaghan described the program and answered myriad questions from desperate people about what the program can – and cannot – do to help. (see photo)

As I sat in this tension-filled room with people facing homelessness, some with babies in their arms, I could hear the lovely strains of a hushed group of 80 seniors singing "Silent Night" from across the hall. (See Sonoma Activities, I'm Home Alone). It was a bittersweet moment I will not soon forget.

After I returned to my office, I checked in with staff from the Family Support Center and Sam Jones Hall, our two largest emergency shelters. They were preparing to shelter 250 children and adults on this cold night, an amazing number that reminded me what vital work we do.

It wasn't two hours later that the conference room was transformed for 30 other people with vastly different challenges. They began arriving in the late afternoon, at the end of their work day, seeking assistance with immigration and citizenship through one of our weekly Immigration Services information sessions.

When I put my key in the door to close the office before I headed home to my own family, I thought of how our staff and volunteers had pulled together so effective-



ly to help so many people in just one day in Santa Rosa. I knew that the same kind of extraordinary work had also taken place at our Napa and Lake offices, which were both coordinating holiday assistance programs for nearly 1,000 families and launching their own HPRP application sites on top of their regular program responsibilities of providing emergency food and transitional housing.

With so much work to be done to reduce poverty, Catholic Charities is an amazing organization that always needs your help – we are expanding programs every month to meet the growing needs in our communities, so please consider volunteering, donating, or just spreading the word about our work.

We hope you'll sign up for our monthly E-News and "stay connected" to our work on a more frequent basis... We look forward to sending you timely news and updates, along with special program needs. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Larry Lakes, Executive Director

SIGN UP for our  
**MONTHLY E-NEWS** today!

Go to [srcharities.org](http://srcharities.org)

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## Napa County News

### Rainbow House, Home Base

A wonderful Thanksgiving launched the holiday season at **Rainbow House**. All the clients participated in a collaborative celebration, cooking together and sharing different cultural traditions – turkey competed with ham, and collard greens and green beans vied for attention. New dining room furniture allowed everyone to sit together. Christmas Dinner was also prepared by clients, with help from the staff, and included turkey donated by a Napa mailman and prime rib roast donated by facilities manager Steve Edwards. All the clients and their children enjoyed surprise Christmas gift bags, generously donated by St. Helena Catholic Church. Afterwards, staff and residents celebrated with an Awards Night. Young parents and single young adults received recognition for progress in their life skills development, such as workplace



success, overcoming obstacles, positive parenting and maintaining a commitment to a clean and sober life style. (See Event section about the next Awards Night.)

### New Faces

We were proud to welcome two beautiful baby girls into the Rainbow

House “family.” One of our new mothers, Nicole, always wanted to go



to school and then work, perhaps have a business, and then a baby. With the help of Rainbow House, these dreams are coming true – just in a different order than she planned. She finds living with other young women with babies and young children to be a big help to her. “Seeing them persevere through difficult challenges helps me know I can make it, too. All of this will make me strong,” she said. “I want to be a good mom.” Staff and group sessions, she says, help her understand her choices and motivations, and how other people in her life affect her. (see Nicole and baby, next page)

### Groups for Youth

Community living has benefits and challenges. To keep communication clean and open, we require participation at House Meetings. Continuing education takes place in group discussions on adopting new life skills and the process of recovery. But we also host fun, optional groups – Arts and Crafts, Movie Night, Game Night and Chef’s Night. Clients recently participated in several craft groups to make holiday decorations. And thanks to several thoughtful donations, we have expanded our game library for clients.

For staff and clients, the hard work

PHOTOS: LOWER LEFT, RAINBOW HOUSE;  
UPPER RIGHT, HOME BASE

is paying off. **Rainbow House and Home Base** have exceeded their program goals in the following areas: residents completing and receiving certification in Independent Life Skills training, peer mentoring, stabilization regarding chemical dependency, enrollment in community college and employment, and client financial resources.

### Project Homeless Connect

Catholic Charities participated in the first Napa Project Homeless Connect on November 20th. We talked with many potential clients who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and we handed out 750 rain ponchos, 300 sets of gloves and 50 warm caps.

### Homeless Prevention/Rapid Rehousing (HPRP)

Napa's **HPRP** program provides short- to medium-term financial assistance to individuals facing homelessness in Napa County. The program, which is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is coordinated through four community partners, one of which is Catholic Charities. Information is available online at [www.srcharities.org](http://www.srcharities.org). Click on the Napa County residents link.

Go to [www.srcharities.org](http://www.srcharities.org) for links to Napa County HPRP program information



**Catholic Charities Napa Programs office** has relocated to 1248 Hayes Street, Napa. Come by and see us!



PHOTO BY DAN BURKHART

### UPCOMING EVENT

Napa Programs will host a client Awards Night in March. If you'd like to hear inspiring success stories and meet the clients behind them, contact Regional Director Mitchell Geis at 224-4403 x24.

good news napa

## Lake County News

### Holiday Assistance Success

Marvelous and heartwarming things happened this Christmas in our **Lake County Programs**. In early December, a single mother with inoperable cancer asked us to help with some expenses, and thanks to a special donor, we were able to pay her rent. We also helped make the Christmas dreams of her three young children come true by connecting them to the Bible Study group of St. Joseph Church, which adopted them for the holiday. While most kids ask for Christmas toys, they asked for clothing and shoes. They received everything they wished for, with lots of toys as well. When we presented the mother with all the gifts, she burst into tears of gratitude.



We provided gifts for many other families, as well as complete holiday meals, through the community's **Spirit of the Season** project. The project relies on dedicated volunteers to help identify needy families, collect and package food baskets, set up the Wish Trees with the Wish Bells, collect and wrap gifts, and distribute the wonderful packages just in time for Christmas. We had over 40 volunteers help this year! We also received significant help from the

community: when funding for the Spirit of the Season was running very low and Wish Tree bells were languishing



on trees, we put out a call for help and within a week we received more than \$4,000 and almost all the Wish Tree bells were returned with gifts for the children. Overall, donations to Spirit of the Season were up about 30 percent, enough to serve 978 people in Middletown and Kelseyville in December alone.

### Special Thanks

Special thanks to all the groups that participated in Spirit of the Season: Rotary Club of Middletown, Middletown Florists, Chic Le Chef, Wiloth Equestrian and Wiloth



Equine, Boys Scouts, Interact Club of Middletown, Clover Stornetta Dairy, Foods Etc., and Walmart in Clearlake, Cobb Mountain Lions, Twin Pines Casino, the Minnie Cannon and Coyote Valley schools, Middletown

High school, Loconoma High School, Langtry Estate, HVL Realty, Century 21 Realty, WestAmerica Bank, Tri-Counties Bank, Hardester's Markets, Middletown Community United Methodist Church, and St. Joseph Catholic Church.

## Best Christmas Yet

One volunteer commented that this Christmas was truly special for her and her husband because they both were involved in helping with the Christmas food and gift program. They could now see how much work it takes to care for the poor in our community. It made her grateful to give to others, and she requested to be contacted to help again next year. In fact, she said helping out this year made her Christmas the best Christmas yet.

Catholic Charities thanks all the volunteers, churches, business and organizations who stepped up to help our community realize the true meaning of Christmas. Your generosity will live on in the hearts of people who needed it most.

## Housing Help Lake County (HHLC)

Catholic Charities was awarded \$1,195,000 to provide short- or medium-term housing assistance to those who would otherwise become homeless. The majority of the funds are for rental or utility assistance (no mortgage assistance is available), which is paid to third parties only. The program, similar to Homeless Prevention/ Rapid Rehousing in Napa and Sonoma counties, is now processing applications. The first step is to visit Catholic Charities' web site for a pre-qualifying checklist and application - **[www.srcharities.org](http://www.srcharities.org)**. Just click on the Lake County residents link.

Our community partners in this program are Lake Family Resource Center, Community Care, and the Lake County Community Action Agency.

Find HHLC forms at [www.srcharities.org](http://www.srcharities.org)



CATHOLIC CHARITIES NEW MIDDLETOWN  
OFFICE AT 21257 CALISTOGA STREET

good news  
lake

# sonoma activities

## Open Hearts Sonoma County Holiday Stories

Our community's generous hearts touch a lot of lives at Catholic Charities all year round, but especially during the holidays ... here are just a few wonderful examples:

The Christian Motorcycle Association roared into **Sam Jones Hall** on Christmas Eve to cook and serve, restaurant style, a delicious tri-tip dinner for 117 residents, a dignified treat after daily cafeteria-style meals.

Piner Café invited all sheltered families to breakfast Christmas morning. Residents woke up excited and single dads from **Russell Avenue Shelter** shined their shoes and pressed their shirts for the occasion. The café served residents at two seatings, and gave all children gifts and gift cards.

**Family Support Center (FSC)** staff was the epicenter of holiday activity for most of our homeless families. All FSC family members enjoyed a Santa visit, perfectly chosen gifts for the children, and an impeccable hors d'oeuvres and dessert table, all organized and produced by Hanna Boys Center residents and staff.

Samantha, an Ursuline High student, helped us a lot over the holidays, bagging and organizing gifts, aiding overworked staff who were diligently working so all residents were adopted for Christmas, as well as those living in our transitional houses, in addition to 31 "Catholic Charities families" who live outside of the shelter.

The Redwood Chevy Car Club and many other concerned, generous neighbors came by FSC with donations recently – three truck-loads of food, kitchen items, office and school supplies, and funding to open an **FSC Learning Center** with three computer stations for children to do homework, and their parents to job-search online.

**I'm Home Alone** volunteers pulled through this holiday. Program clients, all of whom receive a reassuring call each day, look forward to the friendly voices that check on their well-being. Like last year, a party was planned so clients and volunteers could meet in person. Volunteers Bill and Carol Dickinson hosted the Christmas Luncheon – they sent invitations,



cooked all the food, booked the entertainment, and helped set-up the festive room. Over 75 clients and volunteers joyfully sang, broke bread together, and enjoyed meeting the faces behind the voices.

On Christmas day, Sally Orth called everyone to wish "A Merry Christmas," while Pat Wilson stayed at the ready in case of an emergency.

## A Safe Home for Christmas

One of our dedicated **Immigration Services** staff, Molly Goss, runs a special program that helps immigrant victims of domestic violence and other violent crime get special visas which permit them to work and drive legally (U-Visa). Last year, Molly helped 61 survivors of violent crimes through the complicated,

emotionally wrenching U Visa process: 36 were approved, 25 pending are pending. Many of these cases take years to resolve, and require working with various social, state and federal agencies. Just before Christmas this year, a young mother who survived a vicious crime was given the best Christmas present imaginable: her U-Visa and her children.



PHOTOS ABOVE: HANNA BOYS MUG IT UP WITH SANTA; CATERING-STYLE FOOD BY HANNA BOYS. PHOTOS BY LYNN NEARY

PHOTO TOP RIGHT: VOLUNTEER CAROL DICKINSON (STANDING) WITH CLIENT PEGGY  
PHOTO BY BETSY TIMM

PHOTO TO RIGHT: STAFF MEMBER MOLLY GOSS  
PHOTO BY BETSY TIMM

## Good News - Sonoma County

### Turning over a New Leaf

Amber, a 21 year-old single mother of three entered our **Transitional Housing** last spring. She buckled down and participated in all program components such as Coach 2 Career, weekly support sessions and caseworker meetings, and followed all the rules. Her goal is to gain custody of her two oldest children. She also participated in the DAAC Perinatal substance abuse treatment program and worked with Child Protective Services in the child reunification process. She recently celebrated one year clean and sober. As her progress continues, she will reunify with her children and all will stay in our program until spring of 2011. She has a new part-time job now, and we are proud to be part of her journey to independence.

### Helping Others Hard Hit by the Economy

Through a grant from Catholic Charities USA, our **Rural Food Project** has hired Kenny Moeller, a dynamic young man, to help with our new **Food Stamp Outreach**. (see column to right) The U.S. government has made food stamps available for an increased number of low-income families hard hit by the poor economy. Kenny's goal is to help more people determine whether they qualify, and then overcome fear or reluctance to apply. For example, Merrill is a college-educated, 60 year-old woman who was a self-sufficient artist for many years. Her income has plummeted over the past year, however, due to people's bare-bone approach to spending. Kenny encouraged her to apply for food stamps, and after overcoming her initial reluctance, she finally did. "Everyone has been incredible," she said, also extending her appreciation to the help she received from Catholic Charities' **Foreclosure Prevention** department.

Gary, a volunteer for the **Homeless Services Center**, understands the comfort and joy that pets can bring, especially when everything in life seems to be going wrong. Our shelters cannot accommodate pets, so Gary has offered to care for people's dogs – in his own home – while their owners work toward finding stable housing and moving out of the shelter.

A married couple with three children under age eight had been working hard – two jobs – but was unable to make ends meet, and thus put out a plea for help. The mother felt so beaten down and tired that she felt like giving up.

Within hours, staff members organized assistance to feed the family and develop a plan to prevent the loss of their home – making "a huge difference for my family," said the grateful mother.

Shortly after meeting CEO Bob Hall of Straight Edge Staffing at our Hope Works Wonders fundraising breakfast, **Coach 2 Career** counselor Jennielynn met in his office to discuss a referral process for clients who complete our program. Mr. Hall agreed, offering his intent to be a second chance staffing agency, just what many of our clients need. He knows that after gaining a job and income, everything else falls into place – taking care of debt, housing, and finally savings. The agency has extended employment offers to all five clients we have referred.



### NEED FOOD STAMPS?

Eligibility guidelines/benefits for food stamps have changed. If your income is suddenly/permanently reduced and you have limited cash reserves, you may be eligible. One person can earn up to \$903, a family of 4 can earn \$1838 and be eligible. Call Ken at Catholic Charities at 575-0215.

good news

## Join a TOUR at the Family Support Center

Please join us for an inspiring, one-hour tour of Catholic Charities' programs at our shelter for children and their parents, the **Family Support Center**, 465 A Street, downtown Santa Rosa (behind Macy's parking lot).

No cost, no donations requested. Hear clients and volunteers tell how our programs change lives.

Tours are every Friday 12 Noon - 1 PM except for holidays. Tour schedule at [srcharities.org](http://srcharities.org)

Contact Rebecca at 528-8712 x 158, [rsvp@srcharities.org](mailto:rsvp@srcharities.org). Call to arrange group tours.

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Santa Rosa  
PO Box 4900  
Santa Rosa, CA 95402  
707-528-8712  
[www.srcharities.org](http://www.srcharities.org)

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## Can You Help by Volunteering?

We have a new volunteer department in Santa Rosa, and a new volunteer coordinator as well. Georgette Parry works hard to help families, groups and single volunteers find meaningful ways to become involved with the work we do.

Catholic Charities is blessed with the gift of over 1,000 volunteer hours per month, infused with enthusiasm, skill and caring. Volunteers help stretch valuable contributions, so we can serve more clients.

Call Georgette and see how your passions and interests can help others. Call 528-8712 x105.



VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR  
GEORGETTE PARRY

You can read about current volunteer openings at [www.srcharities.org](http://www.srcharities.org)



Together, we can make a difference.