There is always something new at Catholic Charities! Here’s an update on recent news in each of our three areas of impact.

**Challenging Poverty**
Catholic Charities has just begun three new programs in Sonoma County dealing with issues of poverty. Through the Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) program we will search out the most vulnerable homeless people and collaborate with other service providers to place individuals in housing. We have teamed with Buckelew and Social Advocates for Youth for this program. The Coordinated Intake program is to be a single service intake point of contact for the County. We will be collaborating with other shelter and housing providers in the County to place families and those identified through HOST.

We have also launched a SonomaWorks program to provide rapid re-housing for families that are homeless and receiving government support. The program includes financial assistance, case management, and financial training through the Rent Right program, developed by COTS, a sub-contractor on the program. By collaborating with the County and other non-profits we are able to extend our services to those in great need. More to follow.

**Caring for Seniors**
Over the past six months we have extended our Alzheimer’s Respite Program from 3 days per week to 5 days per week. As we all know the need has been growing. Through this program seniors with Alzheimer’s disease are treated to a day of social activity, music, dancing, a hot lunch, story telling and arts and crafts while their caregivers are afforded a much needed day off. We frequently hear that this program is critical to keeping a loved one living at home. It is exciting that we are able to extend this service. Openings are available.

**Counseling Immigrants**
The new executive order described in this issue greatly expands the number of eligible individuals affected. Our Diocese is particularly impacted due to the demographics of our population. The program does not fully go in effect until May 20. There are many questions, and, unfortunately, many so-called “immigration specialists” improperly exploiting the situation for profit. Through our free counseling sessions with an Accredited staff and via outreach forums, we are educating, answering questions, and providing guidance as we expand our immigration services. Again, more to follow.

Sincerely,

Len Marabella
Executive Director

---

**Board of Directors**
Bishop Robert Vasa, Chairman
Joan Maxwell, President
Hon. Mike Hanlon (ret.), Vice President
Paul Vassallo, Treasurer
Msgr. Daniel Whelton, Secretary

Stella Agudelo
Frank Connelly
Honora Connolly
Nancy Moran
Maridel Perlas
Beth Ryan
Jacqueline Scott
Greg Steele
Patricia Wiele

Len Marabella, Executive Director

---

**COA**
Council on Accreditation

---

COVER PHOTO:
One of our dedicated volunteers serving breakfast at Homeless Outreach Friday mornings. If you’re interested in helping, please contact Volunteer Coordinator Kim Young at kyoung@srcharities.org or 707.528.8712 x160.
In 2002 Heidi Besonis’s life nosedived into a nightmare. The high school cheerleader, college graduate, and teacher found herself in a toxic relationship. She began using drugs – and shoplifting to support her and her boyfriend’s habit. She was arrested – 13 times – and eventually incarcerated for six months.

While in jail, she got the help she so desperately needed. She got clean, she got counseling, and she found Catholic Charities when she got out.

Here, in her own words, is how her life turned around:

“When you’re sitting on the street, homeless, you see things differently. When people turn away from you, treat you like you are less than human, it does something to you. You just don’t have the self-esteem to think that you could even get a job. I had no hope. I didn’t see any way out. And the truth is, without Catholic Charities, there wasn’t a way out. You cannot get out of homelessness alone.

But thank God Catholic Charities was there. I had no idea how much they could do for me. I knew they would meet my basic needs – food, shelter, clothes. But they did so much more – they gave me myself back.

After just a few weeks of living at Sam Jones adult shelter, I started to notice something really surprising – I started to feel like I mattered. Like I really did have something to offer the world.

And I learned that sometimes the worst thing that could ever happen to you turns out to be the best thing that could ever happen to you. Thank you, Catholic Charities, for being the best thing that ever happened to me.”

Today, Heidi has a full time job helping families who are homeless and living in their cars as a site coordinator for our Safe Parking program. She even got to host her family at her new home during the holidays.

If you’d like to see more of Heidi’s story and that of others we serve, visit our website at srcharities.org and click on any of the video links on the home page.
THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED RAISE A
IMMIGRATION SERVICES ADDS NEW PROGRAM

The Executive Order that President Obama signed on November 20, 2014 added a new program to Catholic Charities Immigration Services.

Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) is a program that allows parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to request deferred action and a work permit for three years, provided they have lived in the United States continuously since January 1, 2010 and pass required background checks.

In addition, the order authorized the extension of the DACA program for a three-year deferment as well for children of any current age who entered the United States before the age of 16 and have lived in the United States continuously since January 1, 2010. Both deferments can be renewed.

Catholic Charities is one of the few organizations in northern California to have five Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) accredited staff available to help immigrants through the paperwork and processes.

For more information, please contact Immigration Services at 707.528.8712 x134.

RENT RIGHT

Helping families find affordable housing

Anyone who lives in our Diocese service area knows that finding and affording rental property is extremely difficult. With a 1% vacancy rate and rents that average over $1,500 per month in Sonoma County, homelessness is a real threat for many families.

Our Community & Parish Services and Housing Departments have teamed up to provide a financial education program called Rent Right that will help mitigate some of the challenges faced by low income families.

At no cost to them, qualified individuals and families can receive help with credit repair, determining housing budget, housing applications, and more. In addition they will have access to a housing portfolio to search for low-cost housing options.

To access services, please email housing@srcharities.org or call 707.542.5426 x219.

Need help with filling out your income tax return and getting back the money you’ve earned? Now there’s FREE help from Catholic Charities!

Our Community and Parish Services Department is participating in the EarnIt! KeepIt! SaveIt! program of the United Way. Trained volunteers will help individuals and families complete their Federal income tax returns for free. They will also provide low to moderate income households with access to asset building and income support resources such as public benefits, low or no cost bank accounts, and financial education. We also ensure eligible taxpayers claim income boosts such as the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

More information is available by calling 707.528.8712 x170.

Remembering Catholic Charities in your Will or Estate Plan

Providing for those in need through a bequest gives you and your family a way to ensure your commitment to Catholic Charities extends beyond your earthly life and continues to serve future generations.

For more information or questions about specific wording, please call 707.528.8712 or visit our website at srcharities.org/donate.
We reach out to those most in need, offer hope through service, and build better communities.

Moving from one shelter to another for 3 1/2 years, Desiree Barnas never thought the day would come when she could show a visitor around her 3 bedroom, 2 bath apartment. Still not fully moved in, she proudly said, “This is my son's room. This is my daughter's room. This is MY room! And it's all thanks to Catholic Charities!”

But it really was Desiree who made it happen, with a little help from her friends at the Family Support Center. She knew what the vacancy rate is in Sonoma County (1% or less), and she knew she had a few strikes against her as a potential tenant. And she knew she only had 90 days to find a place that would take her and her two children, 15-year-old Alessia and 3-year-old George.

So she got to work. With the help of the FSC staff, she worked to clean up her credit report, firing off letters and making payment arrangements. Then she put together a portfolio to give to prospective landlords, complete with a family photo, intro letter, credit report, bank statement, and copies of paid bills. She got a secured credit card to improve her credit rating and added three pages of proof that she is in Sonoma County to stay.

She made 14 portfolios and a bet with her daughter that she’d get an apartment before they were used up. She still has 7 of them left.

Daughter Alessia is on the honor roll and in the ArtQuest program at Santa Rosa High School. She plays five different musical instruments and is headed to the Judo nationals, thanks to a Sensei (coach) who took her under his wing while the family was living at COTS in Petaluma. Three-year-old George is happy to play with his toys in his room while mom continues to ready the apartment.

It’s been a hard, long road for Desiree. She still faces challenges, including heart surgery in the near future. But while she was putting Contact paper in her kitchen drawers, she once again said that it all would not have been possible without the support of the staff at FSC. “They recognized all my hard work,” she said, choking up. “I will still go back to them as I need to, if I need to. They are there for me – I know that. Oh, now I really am going to cry!”

Families for Families
Multiple generations sharing in sponsoring a room for homeless families

One of our donors came in with a great idea that we thought we'd pass along to others. As you know, our Family Support Center provides emergency shelter for homeless families, however they define themselves – single parents with kids, grandparents caring for their grandchildren, etc. Each of the 31 rooms is sponsored by a donor who provides financial support, paint, linens, furnishings, welcome packages, and more.

This donor’s idea is to encourage other families to do what his family is doing: be a room sponsor together with their own grown children and their grandchildren. Involving multiple generations of one family in providing for another family in need is a wonderful way to instill the values of philanthropy and caring for others. And it provides a great opportunity to share in a giving activity as a family, even if some have moved away from home.

If you and your extended family would like to explore sponsoring a room together at Family Support Center, please call Margie at 707.528.8712 x161 for more information.
Catholic Charities
of the Diocese of Santa Rosa
PO Box 4900
Santa Rosa, CA 95402

FIND HELP
VOLUNTEER NOW
DONATE TODAY
TAKE A TOUR
LEARN MORE

707.528.8712

To receive our E-News with regular updates, please visit our website to sign up.
www.srcharities.org

FIND HELP
VOLUNTEER NOW
DONATE TODAY
TAKE A TOUR
LEARN MORE

707.528.8712

To receive our E-News with regular updates, please visit our website to sign up.
www.srcharities.org

WE THANK OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS

MARY AGATHA FURTH

ReSTYLE MARKETPLACE

1001 W. College Ave, SR in the G&G Shopping Center
707.284.1700

Store Hours and donation dropoff for all programs:
10-6 MONDAY to SATURDAY
CLOSED SUNDAY

LOTS OF NEW BARGAINS AND UNUSUAL FINDS EVERY DAY!
RESTYLEMARKETPLACE.COM
A social enterprise of Catholic Charities

TOURS ARE HELD AT FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER
465 A Street, Santa Rosa
(behind Macy’s parking garage)
FROM 12-1 PM

If these are not convenient times for you, please call and we will work with your schedule:

Friday January 9
Thursday January 23
Friday February 6
Friday March 6
Thursday March 19
from 6:00-7:00PM
Wednesday April 1
Thursday April 16
Friday May 1
Thursday May 14
from 5:30-6:30PM
Friday June 1
Thursday June 18

SONOMA COUNTY:  987 Airway Court, Mail to: P.O. Box 4900, Santa Rosa CA 95402  707.528.8712
ReStyle Marketplace, 1001 W. College Ave, Santa Rosa 707.284.1700

NAPA COUNTY:  1219 Jefferson Street, Napa CA 94558  707.244.4403

HUMBOLDT COUNTY:  133 7th Street, Eureka CA 95501  707.407.3833