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 Finding the right family for a challenging adoption 11

CATHOLIC CHARITIES Connections

SUPPLEMENT TO ARKANSAS CATHOLIC • CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF ARKANSAS • 2415 N. TYLER ST. • LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72207 • JUNE 16, 2018

AT A GLANCE

Catholic Charities of Arkansas serves

■ **Adoption Services:** Birth parent services, adoptive family services and search and reunion

■ **Immigration in Northwest Arkansas:** Family-based legal assistance, domestic violence and crime victims services, refugee resettlement, employer trainings, education and advocacy, legal assistance with applications for DACA

■ **Immigration in Little Rock:** Family-based legal assistance, legal assistance with applications for DACA, education and advocacy

■ **Parish social ministries:** Parish-based ministry development, disaster recovery parish-based teams, family assistance

■ **Social Action:** Prison ministry, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, legislative advocacy, alcohol and drug, Catholic Charities Summer Institute

■ **Westside Free Medical Clinic:** Medical and dermatology clinics for noninsured adults, outreach and community education

■ **Development:** Grants management, Bishop McDonald-Catholic Charities Golf Classic, Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl and St. Nicholas Partners

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Catholic Charities of Arkansas
 2415 N. Tyler St.
 Little Rock, AR 72207
 (501) 664-0340
 www.dolr.org

CATHOLIC CHARITIES' MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Catholic Charities of Arkansas of the Diocese of Little Rock is rooted in the challenge of the Gospel: To serve persons who are poor or marginalized; to advocate on behalf of the most vulnerable; and to actively promote charity, justice and the sanctity of life in the Church and the community.

Family assistance calls come year-round

FAP leverages support to meet constant needs with tight funds

During the past 11 months, nearly 600 people contacted Catholic Charities' Family Assistance Program.

People throughout the state, though mostly in the Little Rock area, are referred to us through other charitable organizations, social service organizations, medical facilities and utility companies. Google searches for financial assistance bring up Catholic Charities, as do searches for utility assistance and rental assistance.

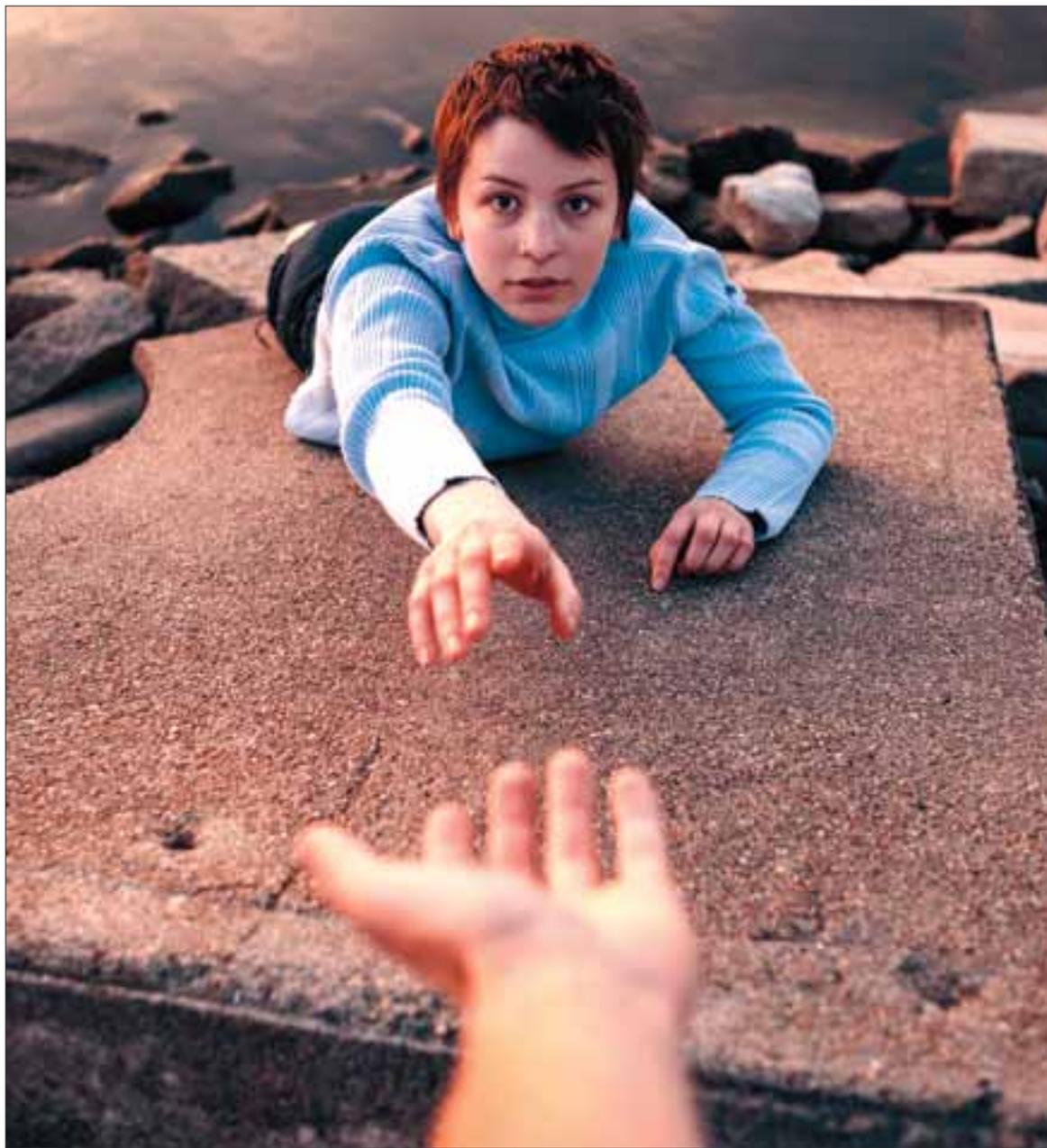
Utility companies provide customers with lists of organizations that sometimes help with bills and now, even apartment complexes are doing the same.

NEED VS. RESOURCES

The Family Assistance Program's funding comes from the annual CRS Rice Bowl collection, donations from St. Nicholas Partners, individual donors and the Catholic Charities Poor Fund. A small amount of \$18,000 was budgeted for the year, allowing for a \$1,500 per month guideline.

The callers and their needs are tracked, which helps estimate the number of unduplicated callers. Approximately 54 people have contacted the FAP each month with requests that far outstripped available resources. If even half

See FAP page 10



Noah Buscher / Unsplash

Church cooperation can have big impact for the poor

Every parish is a Catholic charity. Every parish does what it can to assist those in its community who find they are in need. In Arkansas, most parishes lack the size and resources to be the sole source of assistance in their neighborhood. Parishes that cooperate with other churches and local groups increase the efficiency of their efforts to support the surrounding locality.

An example of this community cooperation

strategy is the way St. Jude the Apostle Church in Jacksonville works to support its local food pantry, Fishnet Missions.

Fishnet Missions is a food pantry and thrift store located in Jacksonville at 1700 Swift Drive. It is probably the largest food pantry in the state. In 2017, it distributed more than 6 million pounds of food to those seeking help. More than 500,000 individual client services were provided by Fishnet Missions during the year.

Yet, it operates with a minimal budget, relying on donations from groups and individuals and on income generated by its thrift store. It has no paid employees, operating solely with volunteers from local churches and organizations.

Offering numerous services, Fishnet Missions provides grocery boxes for families at its front door, delivers food to approximately 800 seniors and has a program to help veterans and active duty families. The mission also has emergency food boxes on hand, so that no one ever is turned away. Further, the group prepares hot meals to serve the hungry in its kitchen as well as a traveling operation to feed the

homeless breakfast in downtown Little Rock on weekends. Lastly, Fishnet Missions offers assistance to smaller organizations to meet the needs of their particular communities.

Fishnet Missions is led by Dewey Sims, assisted by his wife Barbara. Intensely dedicated to running this project, Mr. Sims has been immersed in this work of charity since he founded Fishnet Missions in the last century. While not directly associated with any specific church, it is a Christian ministry that relies on the kindness of surrounding local churches

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From the Director
 Patrick Gallaher

BRIEFS

NEW PARTNERSHIP

Catholic Immigration Services - Little Rock recently began partnering with the Mexican Consulate located in Little Rock. The two organizations have met twice so far this year. They first met at the consulate, followed by CISLR hosting them. Employees of CISLR as well as others within Catholic Charities have met with both the consul and deputy consul.

Through their meetings, it became evident that much of their work overlapped, which led to the realization that the two organizations could work together, along with teaching and learning from one another. The hope is that the collaboration will better serve the community, especially the Mexican immigrant community.

Some of the collaborative works involve a monthly presentation by CISLR at the Mexican Consulate. The presentation consists of teaching Mexican immigrants about their rights and an overview of immigration laws, to assist individuals in knowing if they may or may not qualify for an immigration benefit. CISLR will also travel with Mexican Consulate staff at times when they have their "mobile consulates" in different areas around Arkansas, to give presentations and provide individual consults if needed. Recently, the Mexican Consulate hosted the first-ever Hispanic Job Fair in Little Rock, where they invited CISLR to answer questions about immigration law.

NEW EMPLOYEE

Karla Campalans began working April 3 as administrative assistant for Catholic Immigration Services - Little Rock. Campalans lived for several years in Austin, Texas, before returning recently to Little Rock. Her mother was diagnosed with terminal cancer and has since died.

Before her move to Little Rock, she took a community interpreting course at the Multicultural Refugee Coalition Center, where she learned how to not only properly interpret for refugee clients, but to also make them feel welcome and comfortable.

Campalans grew up in Venezuela, but moved to Arkansas when she was a teenager.

Campalans briefly volunteered at the Multicultural Refugee Coalition Center before they recommended her for a part-time job as administrative assistant at Justice for Our Neighbors, a legal immigration service.

"I love my job and it all feels right," she said. "I'm where I'm supposed to be. This job is everything I could have wished for ... where everyone is working together for the good of others."

IMMIGRATION VOLUNTEER

Sister Mary Ann Azar, a Daughter of Charity, joined Catholic Immigration Services - Little Rock as a volunteer immigration specialist in November. She brings years of experience as a Department of Justice-accredited immigration representative in multiple legal service settings, where she has helped immigrants to obtain legal status within the United States. Sister Mary Ann began her career in the health care field as a nurse/midwife. One of her assignments, as a nurse/midwife in Washington D.C., allowed her to learn Spanish to better serve her patients.

While working in the Diocese of St. Augustine, Fla., she administered a study to understand how to best serve a growing farm-



Karla Campalans

pitch in as well, performing tasks from bookkeeping to warehousing. St. Anne Church in North Little Rock has recently started a relationship with Fishnet Missions. Through these efforts, Fishnet Missions makes great contributions to the community, which includes surrounding counties, to meet the food needs of those who might otherwise be food insecure.

No single church or group in Jacksonville could provide all the services that are accomplished by



Sister Mary Ann Azar

worker population in northeast Florida. Sister Mary Ann joined the St. Augustine's immigration program for six years. She later worked within the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, W.V., aiding immigrants for another six years. She then served as a volunteer immigration specialist at Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center in El Paso, Texas, for three years.

"I'm enjoying Arkansas and being here," she said. "And I enjoy doing whatever I can do to help immigration services continue to serve the needs of the immigrant population."

LITTLE ROCK ID CARD

The City of Little Rock will launch its municipal identification card program July 7. The ID will be available to all Little Rock residents and is specifically targeted at those who might otherwise have difficulty obtaining a government issued ID.

The ID does not create or provide access to any government benefits. Its uses will include providing identification needed for such things as to have a prescription filled at a pharmacy, open a bank account, obtain a library card, gain access to a homeless shelter and provide proof of identity to a Little Rock police officer.

The city believes the card will be especially helpful to the homeless, undocumented immigrants, those recently released from prison, homeschooled students and the elderly.

The ID card will be available

Fishnet Missions. But by banding together, they meet the needs of the community through the concentrated effort of this wonderful organization.

Dewey Sims (at right) leads Fishnet Ministries, a food pantry and thrift store in Jacksonville that distributed more than 6 million pounds of food and other aid to people seeking help in 2017. Fishnet depends on support from many local churches of multiple denominations to do its work helping the poor.

for a modest fee. For more information, contact Maricella Garcia at (501) 565-7233 or mgarcia@littlerock.gov.

CLINIC CONVENING

During the week of May 28, five employees from the Diocese of Little Rock attended the Catholic Legal Immigration Network annual convening in Tucson, Ariz.. CLINIC is a network originally founded in 1988 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in response to a rapid growth of community-based immigration service programs. This year, the conference set a record for number of attendees at 500 individuals while celebrating its 30-year anniversary since its founding. The conference provides attendees with updates in the ever changing area of immigration law.

The diocesan offices represented were Catholic Immigration Services - Little Rock, Catholic Immigration Services - Springdale and the Chancery.

DIACONATE FORMATION

Two Catholic Charities Immigration Service employees recently gave presentations to the Spanish-speaking diaconate candidates during a formation weekend at Coury House at Subiaco Abbey. Jennifer Verkamp, director of Catholic Immigration Services - Little Rock, gave a presentation May 25 while Frank Head, director of Catholic Immigration Services - Springdale, gave a presentation May 26.

The primary topic of Verkamp's presentation was about the need for parishioners to serve their local communities. It was also discussed where Catholic Charities does provide direct support in specific areas that local parishes may be unable to provide. Specific programs include the Westside Free Medical Clinic, Adoption Services, Catholic Immigration Services, Social Action and Disaster Relief. Following the presentation, Deacon Marcelino Luna led a group discussion about various local charities, parish programs and involved community members.

Head's presentation specifically addressed immigration services Catholic Charities provides at each of its offices.



Rebecca Cargile (left), director of Parish Social Ministry, and social work intern **Sophia Dulanto** assist client **Rodney Robinson**.

FAP

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that number were given just \$100 financial assistance each month, an additional \$1,200 per month would be needed.

Catholic Charities benefits greatly from the generosity of the people in the diocese. Shortfalls are not because people are stingy, but because the need is so great, said coordinator Rebecca Cargile.

WORKING TOGETHER

Monthly FAP funds are rapidly depleted. Most of the time, a person who needs long-term help belongs to a parish that is already helping. However, a parish alone can't always financially see the parishioner through a crisis and will contact Catholic Charities.

There are times when FAP alone cannot adequately support the parish's efforts. In these cases, Catholic Charities works to find supplemental resources. FAP coordinates with other Catholic Charities departments and works with parishes. It also reaches out to lay organizations, such as Ladies of Charity and St. Vincent de Paul conferences. It works closely with the family assistance program at Sacred Heart of Jesus in Hot Springs Village.

Catholic Charities FAP had a budget of \$18,000. But, because others were willing to collaborate, \$25,305.28 was distributed through FAP.

WHO WE HELPED

■ A total of 50 individuals or households received financial help through FAP from July 2017 to May 2018. Fifteen of the 50 were helped more than once because of the nature of the need.

■ Fifty-two percent were callers who found us directly while 48 percent were members of parishes, were referred by parishes, were clients of other Catholic Charities programs or connected to us in similar ways

■ Inexpensive needs met include motel stays, gasoline, groceries and small utility bills

■ Mid-to-high range needs include most utility, rent/mortgage and funeral assistance

■ People who received help with extraordinary or long-term needs include a liver transplant patient, two cancer patients and a brain surgery patient.

Churches

Continued from page 9

for donations of food, money and the time of volunteers. Catholic Charities of Arkansas supported the group's efforts last year with a CCHD Local Grant.

Deacon Ernie Gallegos and his wife Ann generously donate their time to support Fishnet Missions, in addition to the full plate of duties they perform at St. Jude Church. Many other parishioners

Chances are, someone in your parish has a mental illness

Mental health outreach is a parish social ministry

BY REBECCA CARGILE
CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF ARKANSAS

Catholic Charities' Mental Health Ministry is focusing this year on increasing the visibility of mental illness as a reality.

Statistics are clear. Mental illness is likely in the lives of either ourselves or our loved ones. Maybe in the life of a friend who hasn't figured out a way yet to talk about it, or who fears opening up will end the friendship. It is definitely affecting one of our fellow parishioners.

If the word "stigma" attached to a condition or a person sounds outdated, it is true because it belongs in the past. A person is not inferior for having a mental illness. Visibility gets the topic out in the open and creates familiarity with the issue.

In an environment of safety and acceptance, a door is opened, and

people with mental illness know that they are welcome to be who they are. The Spirit may even move them to educate others as someone with first-hand experience.

Another goal of the Mental Health Ministry is to do its part to educate. Trustworthy information about mental illness is not too hard to come by.

National Catholic Partnership on Disability has an entire webpage segment devoted to the subject, including a theological framework on mental illness, and links to groups such as Pathways to Promise, a cooperative of many faith and mental health organizations whose purpose is to facilitate the faith community's work in reaching out to those with mental illnesses and their families.

National Alliance on Mental Illness is one of the most well-known sources for mental health education and includes overviews of specific conditions, mental health in relation to specific populations and support for family members and caregivers. Information on local support groups is also available. NAMI FaithNet, similar to Pathways to Promise, is "an inter-

faith resource network of NAMI members, friends, clergy and congregations of all faith traditions who wish to encourage faith communities who are welcoming and supportive of persons and families living with mental illness."

Catholic Charities recently ordered pamphlets and booklets to distribute to priests throughout the diocese. Generally, the information provides overviews of topics priests may be most likely to encounter among parishioners, such as depression, PTSD, bipolar disorders and anxiety disorders.

National Catholic Partnership on Disability's booklet "Welcomed and Valued" can be enormously beneficial to priests and their parishes. The website alone has a one-page printout called "16 Ac-

See MENTAL page 12

Mental illness is likely in the lives of either ourselves or our loved ones. In an environment of safety and acceptance, people with mental illness know that they are welcome to be who they are.

Alan Cleaver / Flickr



Challenging adoptions take extra love, care in right family

BY REBECCA JONES
CATHOLIC ADOPTION SERVICES

One often idealizes adoption in terms of healthy newborns being placed with their new parents, but not all adoptions follow this description.

As an adoption agency, Catholic Adoption Services never knows what situations will be encountered, or what challenges birthmothers will face during their pregnancies. Too often there are instances of heavy drug and alcohol use during pregnancy, medical issues like hepatitis or sometimes mental health challenges. At times, children are born with genetic syndromes or are very premature or both. The difficult situation requires a careful search to find the right family for a special needs baby.

When it becomes evident a child has significant prenatal risk factors or complicated medical concerns, many potential adoptive families may be reluctant or unable to address the challenges. Nonetheless, there are wonderful resources for reaching out to families open to special needs adoptions.

Catholic Adoption Services works with sister Catholic Charities in nearby states to find willing families with the suitable resources to care for special babies. There is also the Little Bit of Heaven Adoption Agency, which connects to a number of adoption



Benjamin Earwicker / Freeimages.com

Babies who get off to a difficult start in life need the right family to address their special needs. A well-executed adoption finds a match between a birthparent and adoptive family as a special bond and promise to the child.

communication networks and specializes in helping to create matches for more difficult cases. The adoption community is mutually supporting in the search to find perfect matches.

There are a number of factors when considering a family for a special needs placement, including

their support system, medical expertise and community resources. These elements are important considerations to ensure the family is capable of providing the care and structure for a child with more complicated needs. A key tool used in each case is the family's home study, the report prepared

by a licensed social worker to evaluate the family. Further, references are checked to make certain the potential adoptive family has the qualities needed to match the challenges of the child.

A family must have a good support system. It is imperative they have family and friends that can

assist with child care, transportation and emotional support. An adoptive family should be part of an active community, preferably with relatives that live nearby and can help quickly if needed. It is important with a child who has numerous medical and therapy appointments that there are people available to help the family make a busy schedule work. This also allows parents to have respite time to alleviate stress and to simply rest. A family with a stay-at-home parent who can focus on the child and coordinate care is a great advantage.

Given the treatment challenges of a special needs child, access to quality health care and information is essential. In some circumstances, it may be necessary that parents have medical training to be able to address complicated, ongoing medical treatment.

A well-executed adoption finds a match between a birthparent and adoptive family as a special bond and promise to the child. It is important that a child who may have more needs is offered the very best opportunity to reach the highest level of development and achievement in life — and to have all the love possible. At the same time, there is a secondary goal: to give the birthparents a sense of peace about the family.

Rebecca Jones is an adoption specialist for Catholic Adoption Services.

Mind, body, spirit all depend on each other

While most times we think of health as a physical condition, it is really a component of mental, physical and spiritual health, which comprises the full spectrum.

Usually, we focus on the physical because that is the area — a twinge, injury or illness — that prompts our immediate or eventual attention. However the hidden symptoms of mental illness are often not recognized or acknowledged and still retain a stigma much as the word “cancer” did in previous generations.

However, our mental state affects our physical state particularly with conditions like hypertension or high blood pressure, asthma, gastronomic issues among others. Stress and anxiety can elevate blood pressure to an unacceptable level. Unidentified causes of physical symptoms can also be connected to one’s mental state. Our fast-paced, challenging world makes it difficult to be in perfect health all the time but there are things we can do to identify issues needing attention.

If one feels depressed, often depicted by a lack of energy or interest in usual activities, sleeping more, sleeping less, eating more, eating less or turning to substances to either deaden one’s feelings or to try to energize them,



Ben White / Unsplash

Reaching out for help can be an important step to healing your mind and body.

then it helps to take a look at our health balance to prevent serious or dire consequences.

As in physical health, our mental state can benefit from exercise in any form and eating a healthy diet. Any activity which involves movement, whether cardio-vascular like running, walking or cycling or gentle stretches like yoga or Tai Chi helps increase the endorphins or good brain chemicals which can

lower anxiety and stress. Sometimes, a prescription medicine from trained professionals may be needed if the natural endorphins are not enough to jump start our balance. Just remember an imbalance is not the fault of anyone. Help and support are available to get back on track.

Most neglected in this triad may be one’s spiritual health. It is often when we need something from God, like comfort or a mira-

WHO TO TURN TO

■ **The St. Dymphna Society**, a peer support group for those with mental illness and their families, meets at St. John Center in Little Rock on the last Tuesday of each month. Mass is celebrated at 6 p.m. and a meeting follows. Contact Rebecca Cargile at (501) 664-0340, ext. 355 for more information.

■ **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** can be reached at (800) 272-8255.

cle, we remember prayer.

Taking time to sit with God in prayer can ease anxiety and stress. Whether it is a rosary, meditation or conversation, a peaceful calm can arise as one sits with God. In fact, mindful meditation has been shown to reduce blood pressure. Even without a physical boost, prayer can carry one through difficult times.

Additionally, our Catholic faith calls us to serve the least of our brethren. Our own mental state can improve when we put others first. As such, volunteering for a social justice issue close to our hearts can serve both our call to minister and our own health.

Mental

Continued from page 11

tions a Parish Can Take to Support Catholics with Mental Illness.”

On all the websites mentioned, one can find homily notes, short educational paragraphs for bulletins and prayers. NAMI has easy to understand infographics that can be printed free of charge and placed around the parish and in schools.

Lastly, we want to encourage the formation of peer support groups. If you can’t find tips or suggestions in any of the previ-



Father Warren Harvey

ously mentioned material or elsewhere that reflects the spirit of your parish, contact me at (501) 664-0340 ext. 355. More than three years ago a peer support group, the St. Dymphna Society, was formed in Little Rock. Each meeting begins with Mass. Parishes starting a group are encouraged to begin meetings with Mass. Father Warren Harvey has graciously celebrated Mass nearly 30 times for this group.

Rebecca Cargile is the parish social ministry director.

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**For more information,
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(501) 664-0340, ext. 379 or
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