

Winning team of Catholic Charities golf tournament announcedpage 10
Rogers student win St. Nicholas art contest.....page 10

CATHOLIC CHARITIES Connections

SUPPLEMENT TO ARKANSAS CATHOLIC • CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF ARKANSAS • 2415 N. TYLER ST. • LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72207 • NOVEMBER 22, 2025

AT A GLANCE Catholic Charities of Arkansas

- **Adoption Services:** Offers post-adoption support for those who have worked with the agency with an emphasis on search and reunions.
- **Immigration Services in Springdale and Little Rock:** Provides low-cost immigration assistance.
- **Refugee resettlement:** Ongoing case management services provided to refugees resettled in Arkansas by the agency
- **Parish outreach:** Assists with developing parish-based ministries, such as food pantries, that respond to local needs.
- **Prison ministry:** Responds to the spiritual needs of people who are incarcerated and their families.
- **Family assistance:** Short-term rent and utility assistance to families and individuals at risk of becoming homeless.
- **Catholic Charities Medical Clinic:** Provides free health care services and prescriptions for people 18 years old and older and referrals to other charitable health service providers.

FOR INFORMATION

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

One Church supporting Texarkana outreach center

For the past seven years, One Church: Unite Arkansas in Faith and Mission has been bringing together the Catholic community in the diocese to support a local mission or parish project.

One Church began in 2018 with the goal of helping a mission church or parish with a project they have begun and need help completing or sustaining with a one-time boost from Catholics across our diocese.

Catholic Charities of Arkansas and *Arkansas Catholic* work with each year's designated One Church partner to create the promotional material, help tell their story to explain their need and seek support for their project.

In September, the new One Church year kicked off with an appeal to support the St. Edward Outreach Center in Texarkana. For the past 40 years, they have operated out of an older, small house, providing a sack lunch to 250 hungry and homeless people every weekday.

The people they serve are not strangers to them. The volunteers at the St. Edward Outreach Center know their names and their backgrounds, and in many cases, warm friendships have formed over time.

On a recent visit to the St. Edward Outreach Center, Catholic Charities staff had the opportunity to meet some of the people receiving food assistance. It was obvious that the way the volun-



Courtesy Catholic Charities of Arkansas
Catholic Charities employee Claire Hollenbeck (right) talks with St. Edward Outreach Center clients William and David during a recent visit to Texarkana.

teers relate to the people they are serving has created a special community with a family-like feel. You can see this in conversations and in people's expressions.

The day of the visit from Catholic Charities staff, two men in line to be served, William and David, shared how they came to the St. Edward Outreach Center. They were both veterans — “brothers in arms” — and their military service was very important to them. While poking fun at each other, they talked about “having each other's backs.”

David explained how he helped William get a room in the same building where he lived, so not only were they friends, but also neighbors. And while they are both blessed to have housing, they talked about their struggle

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

Donors of One Church can support St. Edward Outreach Center in Texarkana by donating food and hygiene items. Donations can be dropped off or mailed to Catholic Charities, 2415 N. Tyler St., Little Rock, AR 72207 or St. Edward Outreach Center, 410 Beech St., Texarkana, AR 71854.

- Toothbrushes (travel or regular size)
- Washcloths (regular size)
- Bar soap (travel size)
- Razors (regular size)
- Soft granola bar, cereal bar or chewy protein bars
- Small bag of peanuts, mixed nuts or trail mix

- Peanut butter crackers or cheese sandwich crackers
- Small containers of applesauce or pudding cups

To learn how to create hygiene kits or blessing bags for the outreach center or shop its Amazon gift registry, visit dolr.org/one-church.

The Gospel mandate to address food insecurity in Arkansas

As Thanksgiving approaches, our mailboxes increasingly fill up with appeals from organizations asking for donations to help them serve people in need. We are presented with moving stories and photos of children, adults and the elderly seeking a meal, warm shelter, safety and some human kindness.

On top of this, our government was shut down from Oct. 1 to Nov. 13, leaving thousands of government workers without paychecks and no funding for critical social programs like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program). SNAP is part of



From the Director
Dennis Lee

our nation's safety net that helps feed around 42 million people who are food insecure.

Arkansas is reported to have the highest rate of food insecurity among the 50 states. More than 500,000 of our fellow Arkansans are estimated to lack regular access to adequate food. This is close to one in four adults, and worse, around one in five children live in a household without enough to eat.

Nonprofit and church-based food banks, food pantries and feeding programs are doing their best to keep people from going hungry. They are straining under the pressure to feed the people

who find themselves without enough food — either from poverty or as a consequence of the Oct. 1 government shutdown.

As Catholics, what does our faith ask of us if we are fortunate not to be in a line at a food pantry or waiting our turn for a meal at a soup kitchen or shelter?

We are called to practice the Corporal Works of Mercy, which include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless. In a more deeply Catholic spiritual way, we have the opportunity to reach out with love and compassion to our neighbors, those who are food insecure, as if we were serving Jesus himself.

There are all kinds of ways we can put our faith into action and respond to what Jesus asks of us

in Matthew 25, “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink ... Whatever you did for one of these least of mine, you did for me.” It can be as simple as preparing a take-home meal for someone you know who is struggling. Or picking up a few extra items from the grocery store to donate. Food pantries and feeding programs always need volunteers and money. And, there are all those donation envelopes that come in the mail this time of year. Consider if there are a few groups you can support.

Regardless of our circumstances, each of us can do something, and our actions as Catholics in Arkansas can have a big impact on ensuring that those at the greatest risk of hunger are fed.

BRIEFS

ADVENT PRAYER

This Advent, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) invites Catholics to prepare their hearts for the Nativity of the Lord at Christmas with a free Advent Wreath Prayer Guide. This is an online resource on the CRS website with weekly prayers and reflections that only requires a name and e-mail address to sign up at crs.org/advent-wreath.

Dennis Lee, diocesan director for CRS, said, "The CRS Advent Wreath Prayer Guide will help Catholics on their spiritual journey through the days of Advent to deepen their faith while joining in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Christ around the world who receive hope and life-affirming aid from Catholic Relief Services."

SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

The Diocese of Little Rock Task Force Against Human Trafficking and Pornography has trained speakers available to accept speaking engagements from parish groups. With the local pastor's approval, a parish group can schedule a presentation that will raise awareness about the problem of human

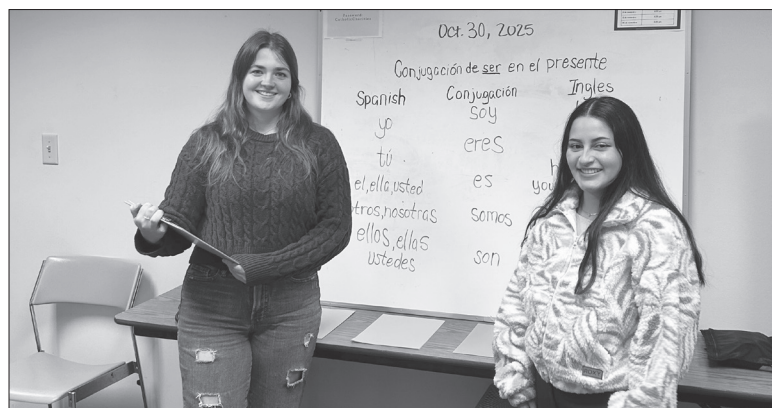


Courtesy Catholic Charities of Arkansas

The team of Father Bill Elser, Mark Hittner, Bob Baker and Jay Lester finished second overall in this year's Catholic Charities of Arkansas Golf Tournament with a score of 52.

transporting people when its eight-passenger van is not needed.

Prizes were awarded for various contests. The longest drive was won by Father Joseph Friend. The closest-to-the-pin prizes were awarded to Alan Hallman and Jim Hartman, both players on the team sponsored by the Arkansas Knights of Columbus State Council.



Courtesy Catholic Charities of Arkansas

Intern Andi Dunn (left) and instructor Valentina Martinez-Moya prepare for an ESL class at Catholic Charities of Arkansas.

trafficking and its link to pornography. Topics covered include the signs that indicate a person might be a victim of human trafficking and how to help a suspected victim. There is no charge for a task force speaker or the informational materials given out at a presentation. To request a speaker, contact Mark Ives by e-mail at markives2014@gmail.com. More information about the task force can be found at dolrtaskforce.org.

GOLF TOURNAMENT

Catholic Charities of Arkansas hosted its 30th annual Golf Tournament at Rebsamen Golf Course in Little Rock Oct. 13. The 15 teams that participated enjoyed a beautiful day for a fun round of golf that included complimentary on-course refreshments and a meal before and after play.

Proceeds from the tournament will help Catholic Charities buy a pickup truck to pick up and drop off large donated items, such as furniture and appliances. It will also give the agency a smaller vehicle for

The members of the four-person team shooting a 51, the lowest overall score, to win the first flight were Richard Burmester, Michael Burmester, Jackson Marseilles and Austin Gean. Taking first place in the second flight with a score of 61 was the team of Father John Marconi, Joe Justus, Deacon Mike Rector and Gavin Cunningham.

Tournament sponsors included Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Hot Springs Village, Father Bill Elser, First Security Bank, Mainstream Technologies, Bray Sheet Metal, which offered a \$10,000 hole-in-one prize, and Christian Brothers Services.

ESL CLASSES

Volunteer Valentina Martinez-Moya is teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to refugee families supported by the Refugee Resettlement Program. These classes are hosted at Catholic Charities of Arkansas. The weekly classes are taught by Martinez-Moya, a local high school Spanish teacher, and they are structured to

help non-native English speakers become proficient in the language. Intern Andi Dunn assists with the classes. Learning English is one focus of the agency's Refugee Support Services, which assist refugee clients in obtaining the resources and skills to become self-sufficient and achieve social and financial well-being.

ST. NICHOLAS ART CONTEST

The St. Nicholas Partners Fund Drive gives supporters of Catholic Charities of Arkansas the opportunity to designate their gift to special programs within the organization. A Christmas greeting card and donation envelope were distributed to past donors and in this issue of *Arkansas Catholic*. The annual card design is chosen through an art contest conducted through Catholic schools in the state. Cash prizes are awarded for the three best designs and are given to the artist and to the school the young artist attends.

This year's winner is Kadence Munkel, a seventh grader at St. Vincent de Paul School in Rogers. Second place went to Sawyer Dawson, a 10th grader at Catholic High School in Little Rock, and third place was awarded to Joseph Zoretic, a seventh grader at St. Vincent de Paul School in Rogers. The artwork was judged by Catholic Charities staff.

Last year's St. Nicholas Partners raised more than \$6,545 for Catholic Charities of Arkansas programs. For more information, visit dolr.org/catholiccharities/st-nicholas.



Courtesy Catholic Charities of Arkansas

Artwork of St. Nicholas for the St. Nicholas Partners Christmas cards was created by Kadence Munkel of Rogers.

partners or contact Megan Moore, office administrator of Catholic Charities of Arkansas, at (501) 664-0340.

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

The Diocesan Healthcare Evangelization Commission held its annual meeting with Bishop Anthony B. Taylor Nov. 5 at St. John Center in Little Rock. Administrators and mission and pastoral care staff for the Catholic health systems, hospitals and clinics in the diocese met to discuss a range of issues related to their ministry as Catholic health care providers. Participants included representatives from CHI St. Vincent Little Rock and Hot Springs, Mercy in western and northwest Arkansas, St. Bernards Healthcare in Jonesboro, the DePaul Community Health Centers in Gould and Dumas sponsored by Ascension DePaul Services of New Orleans, and Christus St. Michael Health System in Texarkana, Texas.

Father Jason Tyler, STL, diocesan bioethicist and pastor of St. Joseph Church in Fayetteville and Our Lady of the Ozarks Shrine in Winslow, chaired the meeting. Topics discussed included consent for organ donation under Arkansas law, restorative reproductive medicine (RRM) as covered by a new state law, the "Reproductive Empowerment and Support Through Optimal Restoration Act" or RESTORE Act and RRM practitioners in Arkansas, and revisions to the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services that were approved at the fall plenary assembly of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Nov. 10-13.



Malea Hargett

Crystal Bohannon (second from left), president of CHI St. Vincent Hot Springs, shares recent updates at the hospital during the Healthcare Evangelization Commission meeting Nov. 5.

One Church

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to afford their living expenses, and with the rising cost of food, being able to pick up a sack lunch at the St. Edward Outreach Center helped them make ends meet. William said the sack lunch was more than a meal; it was an opportunity to see his friends, and this helped him keep going "because that is what friends do, they take care of each other."

In a letter to parishioners in September, Bishop Anthony B. Taylor noted, "For some, the experience of being food insecure and unhoused can lead to feelings of hopelessness and despair."

In October, the St. Edward Outreach Center in Texarkana broke ground on a new building with Bishop Anthony B. Taylor, pastor Father William Burmester and many volunteers and clients present for the ceremony.

The parish has raised almost all the money it needs from pledges and donations for the new center, which will include a full kitchen, serving line, donation closet and bathrooms. A pavilion will be built next to the center, shielding clients from the rain and sun while they eat their lunch.

Once completed, the new building will allow the parish staff and volunteers to better serve their clients and more people in the community experiencing food insecurity and homelessness.

Donations received from September 2025 to August 2026 will help the outreach center hire a part-time cook to prepare hot meals instead of the cold sandwiches, crackers and fruit that clients are accustomed to. They will also set up a food pantry, allowing them to provide their clients with shelf-stable foods to eat on weekends when they are closed.

All donations to the St. Edward Outreach Center made through One Church will support their ministry of feeding people and expanding their services. To learn more about ways to help the St. Edward Outreach Center, including instructions for making hygiene kits and blessing bags or to make a financial gift online, visit dolr.org/one-church.

Donations can be mailed to Catholic Charities of Arkansas, 2500 North Tyler Street, Little Rock, AR 72207, with a check made payable to "Diocese of Little Rock - One Church" and a notation for the "St. Edward Outreach Center."