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# CATHOLIC CHARITIES Connections

SUPPLEMENT TO ARKANSAS CATHOLIC • CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF ARKANSAS • 2415 N. TYLER ST. • LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72207 • JUNE 18, 2016

## 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, domestic violence and crime victims services, supporting survivors, legal assistance with applications for DACA, education and advocacy
- **Parish social ministries:** Parish-based ministry development, disaster recovery parish-based teams, emergency 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**  
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**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.

## Foster parents key link in adoptions

### Babies live with families for only five to 10 days

By Antje Harris  
 Director, Catholic Adoption Services

May was National Foster Parent Month, but Catholic Adoption Services celebrates foster parents every month.

Catholic Adoption Services has three licensed foster families who have been with the program for many years — Sara and Dennis Kordsmeier, Linda and Craig Bowlby and Lisa and Cal Bohannon. One new family has started the comprehensive approval process. All of them reside in Little Rock to be able to work closely with staff. The agency would not be able to have a child placement agency without their dedicated service.

Birth parents who are considering a plan for adoption of their child have either five or 10 days to be sure of their important decision to place their child. They can change their mind for any reason during that waiting period. Many pre-adoptive parents are hesitant to have the baby in their home during the legal risk period. No one at Catholic Adoption Services will put any pressure on a birth mother to place her child for adoption. Life can exert pressures that affect choices, and the agency wants the birth family to look at their options



**Foster moms** Sara Kordsmeier (left) and Linda Bowlby hold a baby placed for adoption through Catholic Adoption Services in Little Rock. Three trained families help the agency by caring for babies during the legal waiting period.

for parenting or placing very carefully.

The newborn does not reside with the birth parents during the waiting period and needs to be in the temporary “cradle care” foster home if the adoptive parents are not an option. A child may also be in the hospital for an extended stay, and the foster parents can go there to provide extra love and attention. Some people have misunderstandings about foster care.

Catholic Adoption Services is a licensed child placement agency and must follow the Arkansas State Minimum Licensing Standards. It educates birth and adoptive families about how carefully the foster families are screened and trained. The agency is able to inform everyone about the care and love that the babies receive.

The foster parents participate in an in-depth home study process, in addition to annual CPR and in-

fant first aid training. The agency prepares them for the care of each newborn with the help of the medical staff at the hospital. Various speakers and discussions about relevant topics like drug-affected newborns, car seat safety, feeding issues and other medical concerns are held through the year. The foster families make a real commitment to working with the agency and to provide the best care. The agency has not seen a problem in the bonding process with babies going from one loving family to another loving family.

Catholic Adoption Services does not have a program for foster parents to adopt the child in their care. Families volunteering to work with our agency have all the children that they want to parent. It helps if they have parenting experience, but it is also necessary for their children not to be too young. A foster baby can require a lot of attention. People often ask if the foster family finds it difficult to let go of a child they have cared for in their home.

Linda Bowlby said, “We do love the children very much when they are with us. It is important for the baby that we bond with them. But we get to meet the new adoptive parents and see their joy when they receive their child.”

Sara Kordsmeier added, “We have raised our children and now even have grandchildren. We are really happy when a new family is able to have the child they have wanted so very much.”

## Mercy means visit the sick, comfort the afflicted

By Karen DiPippa  
 Director, Westside Free Medical Clinic

*“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.*

*To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.”*  
 (1 Corinthians 12:4-8)

In this Year of Mercy, visiting the sick is one of our corporal works of mercy while comforting the afflicted is a spiritual work of mercy. These two meld and really go together quite well, sometimes

inseparably.

Even without being a person in the medical field, we can all assist those who are sick or afflicted in some small measure.

Helping sick people in any way is an act of love and there are many ways to achieve this mercy in addition to visiting those in hospitals or nursing homes.

Some examples might be:

- Visit someone who is sick at home or seniors who are unable to get out themselves.

- Run an errand for an elderly or sick person.

- Pay it forward by paying for one month of medicines for a chronically ill person.

- Go on a medical mission trip. If one cannot go on a medical mission trip, assist with collection

drives for supplies and financial needs.

Prayer goes a long way for all needs and especially is fruitful for those who have limited mobility themselves.

Rather than list a long litany of actions though, the Year of Mercy is a personal call. It calls on us to reflect on how we internalize God’s mercy and impart this to those with whom we are in contact.

Search your heart for those things that call you to act and keep in mind the most important thing about the Year of Mercy is that it is not just a one time “thing” you can do and check off your list.

Mercy is about being present in the moment, recognizing needs around you and then acting on it. It becomes a way of life and a part



Andy Reis / freemages.com

of who you are.

Be present, be aware, be merciful.

## BRIEFS

## INDUCTION

Tracy Eichenberger, disaster preparedness and response coordinator, was inducted as the president of Arkansas Business and Professional Women June 4 at a ceremony at the Wyndham Riverfront in North Little Rock. She has chosen as her theme for the year, "Becoming Prepared Women." The organization helps women achieve professional and personal goals through programs, workshops, networking and friendships.

## ACCREDITATION

On May 26, immigration specialists Georgina Peña and Monica Callahan received approval as partially accredited representatives of Catholic Immigration Services Little Rock from the Board of Immigration Appeals of the U.S. Department of Justice. The approval was based on applications submitted on behalf of both, demonstrating they had the required experience and knowledge of immigration law and procedure to practice before the Department of Homeland Security. This accreditation allows Peña and Callahan to represent individual clients on behalf of Catholic Immigration Services Little Rock.

## AID AFTER FLOODING

Since last December, Catholic



**Immigration specialists** Georgina Peña (left) and Monica Callahan are newly approved as partially accredited representatives of Catholic Immigration Services Little Rock from the U.S. Department of Justice.

Charities has responded to disasters throughout eastern Arkansas. After flooding in Desha and Chicot counties, Tracy Eichenberger, disaster preparedness and response coordinator, deployed on three occasions to assist more than 100 clients in McGehee, Lake Village and Hamburg. Additionally, she went to Brinkley to provide direct aid to 18 residents of an extended stay motel that burned to

the ground. As a result of flooding owing to persistent rains over the last six months, Catholic Charities has made disaster funds available to pastors to help parishes respond within their communities at Our Lady of the Lake Church in Lake Village, Blessed Sacrament Church in Jonesboro, St. Mary of the Mount Church in Horseshoe Bend and Holy Spirit Church in Hamburg.

## TRAINING

Nine immigration specialists from the Catholic Immigration Services offices in Little Rock and Springdale attended the annual CLINIC Convening May 24-26 in Kansas City, Mo. The general purpose of the event was to provide education on recent developments in the complex field of immigration law.

## GOLF TOURNAMENT

The Bishop McDonald-Catholic Charities 22nd Annual Golf Classic is set for Monday, Sept. 26 at the Maumelle Country Club. Tee times are available for 8 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. This is the largest fundraiser for Catholic Charities and benefits various offices and projects in most need of funding. For example, in the past year, proceeds helped provide direct services for victims of human trafficking.

Loyal supporters, including CHI St. Vincent, Dr. Brad and Amy Baltz, Bray Sheet Metal, Colliers International, Fidelity Investments, Rasco, Winter, Abston, Moore & Associates and Catholic Mutual Group, have already committed. More sponsors are still needed to make the event a larger success.

The mailing for registration will be sent out soon. Entry forms for

player registration and for sponsorship can be obtained from Bridget Lewis at (501) 664-0340 or blewis@dolr.org.

## ARKANSAS GIVES

Catholic Charities participated for the first time in the Arkansas Gives event April 7. Arkansas Gives is a 12-hour fundraising campaign, sponsored by the Arkansas Community Foundation, that allows Arkansans to donate online to their favorite charities. Catholic Charities director Patrick Gallaher said 68 people contributed \$7,065.

On top of that amount, Catholic Charities received an additional \$488.16 as a bonus from First Security Bank. Statistically, Catholic Charities was ranked 41 out of 108 large charities in the amount of donations and was 23 out of 108 in total number of donors. The figures provide a performance baseline as preparations are made for next year's campaign, Gallaher said.

Gallaher said donations came from communities across the state, including Arkadelphia, Pocahontas, Mountain Home, Cabot, DeValls Bluff, Maumelle, Scranton, Alexander, Bella Vista, North Little Rock, Hot Springs Village, Conway, Fayetteville, Hot Springs, Mabelvale, Haskell and Little Rock.

# Immigration clinics give info, legal services across Ark.

## Agencies set up temporary sites in Delta, South

By Maricella Garcia

Director, Catholic Immigration Services - Little Rock

Many immigrants in Arkansas have no access to immigration legal services in their community, especially in rural areas. Or, if there are immigration attorneys available, many times the clients cannot afford their services.

Catholic Charities of Arkansas is the only agency recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) to represent low-income immigrants in the state with two offices, one in Little Rock and the other in Springdale. It can often be burdensome for those immigrants in the remotest areas of the state such as DeQueen, El Dorado or the Arkansas Delta to even make it to one of the offices for legal advice.

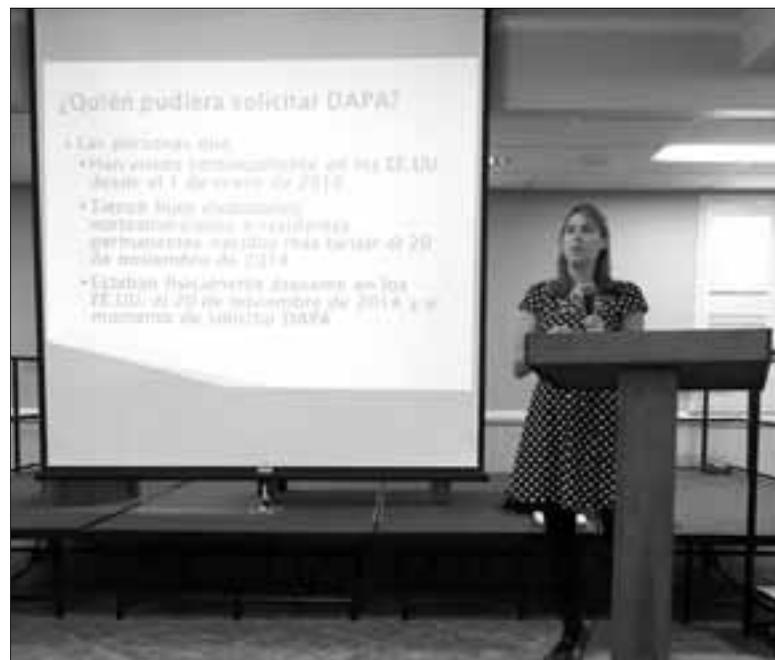
Immigration law is extremely complicated and immigrants need to understand not only their basic

civil rights but also what immigration options are or are not available to them.

When there are no services easily accessible, they are at high risk of being taken advantage of by unscrupulous *notarios* who promise much but in fact put many immigrants at risk of deportation. Catholic Immigration Services - Little Rock receives between 15 and 20 clients a month who have gone to a local *notario* and filed a document with the government, which now has raised significant problems for which they need assistance in correcting.

Given the lack of services in the state, CISLR has partnered with Interfaith Arkansas Immigration Ministries to provide clinics in various regions not only to conduct consultations with immigrants to see what services for which they may qualify, but also to provide information sessions to the immigrant community at large.

"Providing these community presentations helps us educate people on what options are out there and perhaps lets them apply for an immigration benefit which they didn't know that they qualified for," said Georgina Peña, im-



**Immigration specialist** Monica Callahan makes a presentation at the May 7 immigration workshop in Pine Bluff. Workshops around the state make it possible for immigrants in remote areas to learn their rights and options.

migration specialist. "It is necessary to provide them up-to-date information on immigration law because it is constantly changing and to make sure that they do not

receive misguided information from *notarios* that may defraud them."

The clinics were made possible by a grant from the Delivering on the Dream Fund II, a fund of the Arkansas Community Foundation, in partnership with the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation.

Through our partnership with IAIM the Little Rock office is work-

ing to increase outreach and legal services for immigrants throughout Arkansas. The partnership with IAIM has allowed CISLR to focus on providing immigration legal services and information on rights and possible immigration relief, while IAIM focuses on developing volunteers and identifying churches and other groups willing to host a clinic.

So far CISLR and IAIM have conducted two clinics in Pine Bluff that served 55 people through consultations and workshops. Additional clinics will be held through 2016.

It is the hope that these shared clinics will provide immigrants throughout the state with much needed services and information.

"Outreach is important because we are able to educate a greater number of people about their rights so that they can make informed decisions and are more likely to apply for immigration benefits for which they qualify" said immigration specialist Monica Callahan.

"Knowledge is power, especially for the most vulnerable in our community. It is my hope that our presentations inspire and encourage immigrants to seek the benefits they deserve," she said.

If you are interested in hosting a clinic or volunteering at a clinic, contact Callahan at (501) 664-0340 ext. 383.

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# Refugee crisis cries for relief from religious genocide

Instability in Africa and the Middle East, caused by religion-fueled war, has produced a world refugee crisis of proportions not seen since the final days of World War II. Religious persecution displaces millions from their homes as they seek safety.

Syria continues to unravel in civil war. With a population of more than 22 million, 11.5 million Syrians are estimated to be displaced. Of that 11.5 million, 4.8 million have left Syria and registered as refugees in U.N. camps in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Twenty percent of the present population of Lebanon consists of Syrian refugees.

To compound this tragedy, there is Islamic persecution of Christians in Egypt, Iraq and Syria. The persecution of Christians by the terror group ISIS has

been documented in a report submitted to the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. This report, prepared by the Knights of Columbus and the group In Defense of Christians, was presented to Kerry in March.

On March 14, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, issued a statement supporting a petition to stop the persecution of Christians in the Middle East. His public statement was made to convince Kerry to include Christians in a declaration of genocide. His statement also supported a joint congressional resolution decrying the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities.

On the morning of March 17, Kerry designated the actions by ISIS to persecute and murder religious minorities as genocide.

Later in the day, Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas introduced a bill, the Religious Persecution Relief Act. Speaking from the Senate floor, Cotton spoke approvingly of Kerry's action, providing further explanation of the horrific facts surrounding the persecutions. His bill offers a solution: allow Syrians who are members of religious minorities persecuted by ISIS to apply directly to the United States for designation as refugees. These applications would be considered apart from the U.N.-sponsored refugee process now in place. In practice, the U.N. system has ignored persecuted religious minorities, tacitly facilitating the genocide. The bill would al-



CNS / Ali Mustafa, EPA

**An injured boy** stands amid rubble outside his home in 2014 after airstrikes in Aleppo, Syria. The Melkite Catholic archbishop of Aleppo has asked for support for his war-torn city and thanked organizations for speaking out about the genocide of Syrian Christians and other religious minorities.

low 10,000 Syrian Christians and members of other persecuted religions to be resettled in the U.S. each year. Cotton's bill has yet to come up for a vote.

The U.S. bishops have supported a series of steps to solve the refugee crisis, beyond simply authorizing the resettlement of refugees in the U.S. First and foremost, the conflict in Syria and

Iraq must end. There must be an inclusive and lasting peace that allows all those displaced by war and persecution to return to their homes to rebuild. The U.S. and international community must provide humanitarian assistance and development aid to help with the rebuilding. The burden of leadership is on the U.S.

Involved in refugee resettlement

since the late 1970s, Catholic Immigration Services in Springdale presently helps to resettle refugees sent to Arkansas by the federal government. Further, the director of the Springdale office, Frank Head, has been working with a newly formed group, Canopy NWA, to prepare to receive refugees from the Middle East, if any are ever sent to this state.

## You can help refugees

- Pray for the protection of all refugees displaced by violence and persecution.

- Communicate with the president and members of Congress to take all efforts needed to stop religious persecution, relieve the suffering, and assist in the redevelopment of areas affected.

- Support Catholic Immigration Services Refugee Resettlement Office.

- Support Bishop Taylor's Lebanon Relief Fund.

## Many ways you can help keep Catholic Charities running

Catholic Charities of Arkansas relies on income from a number of sources to continue operations. No one single source of income amounts to more than 10 percent of total operating costs.

Consequently, there are many ways to give to keep Catholic Charities in operation so it can meet its mission of serving the poor and those on the margins.

- **The summer "Blue Envelope" campaign:** The insert in this issue of *Arkansas Catholic* is an easy method to provide a direct donation.

- **The Bishop McDonald-Catholic Charities Golf Classic:** This year's event will be the 22nd annual and will take place Sept. 26 at the Maumelle Country Club. The golf outing is the largest fundraiser and offers an opportunity for enjoyable participation.

- **The annual collection for Catholic Campaign for Human Development:** A portion of the



**Have a vehicle** that's old and in the way, running or not? Donate it to Catholic Charities of Arkansas and receive a tax deduction.

collection is used by the Social Action Office to support the CCHD local grant program. Pregnancy resource centers, food pantries, prison ministries and homeless

outreach programs are just some of the activities that benefit from local grants.

- **The St. Nicholas Partners**

**campaign:** The annual Advent Season effort comes through both inserts in *Arkansas Catholic* and through direct mailing. This allows donors to target giving to specific Catholic Charities programs.

- **The Catholic Adoption Services Christmas Card campaign:** The direct mailing benefits the work done by the adoption office and comes in an artist-designed card.

- **The Diocese of Little Rock's annual CASA collection:** Catholic Charities of Arkansas receives an allocation of CASA proceeds each year. CASA donations may be made by check or credit card and can be spread throughout the year.

- **The Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl campaign:** The CRS Rice Bowl has become a traditional part of Lenten giving. Seventy-five percent of the proceeds go to CRS to fund international relief. Twenty-five percent of the

proceeds stays in the diocese and are used for the Parish Social Ministry's Family Assistance Program, which helps families in financial need.

- **Arkansas Gives:** Each year, for 12 hours on one day in April, donors can participate in an event that raises funds for charities across the state. Catholic Charities is one of those.

- **Catholic Charities of Arkansas Vehicle Donation Program:** Owners of used cars, trucks, boats and planes can phone a toll-free number (844-534-4483) to arrange for free pick-up. The donor of the vehicle receives a tax deduction.

Catholic Charities also benefits from direct, recurring contributions from individuals, organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus, and parishes, including Little Rock's Christ the King and Our Lady of the Holy Souls, North Little Rock's Immaculate Conception and Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Hot Springs Village.

# Love in the concrete: Building homes in Little Rock

**H**ousing the poor in Arkansas presents great challenge. Matthew 25 commands us to house the homeless. In 2015, Little Rock area Catholics acted on this command, building houses for the homeless in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity of Central Arkansas.

Father Erik Pohlmeier, pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church, joined along with his parishioners.

"We must exercise a preferential option for the poor," he said. "If you take it seriously, it places a greater obligation on me. We cannot just give them what's left over. Habitat offers that opportunity. Workdays are often on Saturdays, which many of us see as 'my time.' But when working on Saturdays it is a preferential option for the poor because I'm giving them my time. It is a sacrifice and it's what we are called upon to do."

Longtime Habitat board member and Holy Souls parishioner Lee Bass was an early backer, but had reservations about whether the Catholic community would respond. An anonymous donation in honor of Pope Francis plus a generous donation from CHI St.



Aprille Hanson, Arkansas Catholic file

**Catholic youth volunteers** watch through an opening at the Pope Francis house as other volunteers raise another wall in Little Rock July 2, 2015, in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity of Central Arkansas.

Vincent gave the needed financial support to allow for construction of two homes. His questions were answered as parishes energetically responded.

"Petitions at Sunday Mass in-

cluded our project. The local Catholic schools provided willing labor. Many men of our parishes were all over the house during construction, as well as our Knights of Columbus men and women," Bass

said. "We worked hard and were well fed. We began each day with prayers of thanks and appreciation and even used Catholic blessings at each meal. I truly believe this provided the nexus for support from the Catholic parishes in the area to continue with more Pope Francis Builds for Habitat for Humanity in the years to come."

One of the new owners, Regina Goynes, mother of two and grandmother of two, purchased the Little Rock Pope Francis House in December 2015. Her dream of home ownership had always been far out of reach, a remote dream for a woman who, though college-educated, found herself living in a shelter with 80 others. The Our House shelter gave her a new start: a safe place to rest after a long day's work and a foundation for financial planning. She yearned to carry on the traditions of her grandmother and mother — of gardening, community, sharing and love.

"I want to get back to growing things for my family and the community," Goynes said. "I grew up gardening ... I am thankful I get to have this and nobody can take it away from me. Gardening is like

being next to God. You have solitude and conversation with him and you aren't bothered by the world's problems."

Father Pohlmeier noted one impactful part of a Habitat build is the community that is built along with the house.

"The construction team could have done it faster themselves, but they were conscious that this is about serving the need of the people that have the house, but also the need of people who are volunteering. If you don't give people the chance to become less selfish then they won't."

Patrick Gallaher of Catholic Charities of Arkansas said the participation was miraculous.

"We saw it from youth groups, Knights of Columbus and seminarians coming out to help build the house ... It was an outpouring that reaffirmed to me that the Catholic community in this area has a great giving heart."

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor was on the scene, providing inspiration and guidance through his example. "You can't love in the abstract, and you must love in the concrete," he said.

## 'For I was hungry and you fed me' responding to need

**M**any Catholics in the Diocese of Little Rock participated in Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl program during Lent. Rice Bowl annually puts a spotlight on the issue of global hunger. Hundreds of millions of people around the world confront hunger every day.

Citing Feed America's Map the Meal Gap 2015 report, the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance reports that Arkansas ranks among the highest nationally in food insecurity. It stated 19.7 percent of households in Arkansas struggle with food insecurity and 28.4 percent of children in Arkansas don't know where their next meal will come from.

There are countless churches and organizations doing what they can to help feed the hungry in Arkansas. Here is how some parishes are responding to the call.

### RUSSELLVILLE ST. JOHN CHURCH

St. John Church operates the Harvest House food pantry, which is open to the community. It is open Thursdays and Fridays, from noon to 2 p.m. The increase in the number of visitors to the pantry is troubling. In 2015, they served 1,442 visitors with food boxes. Just one year before, that number was 780. Since January, they've already seen 112 more people than for the same period last year.

Harvest House recently became a beneficiary of a food recovery program called Campus Kitchen.

The student group Because We Can at Arkansas Tech University launched the program in February. Surplus cafeteria food from one day is packed and given to pantries in the community the next day. Harvest House receives food from Arkansas Tech on Thursdays.

### HOPE OUR LADY OF GOOD HOPE

Map the Meal Gap statistics show that as of 2013, the food insecurity rate for children in Hempstead County was 31.8 percent compared to 21.2 percent for the entire population. On the third Wednesday of each month, Our Lady of Good Hope opens its pantry doors and helps meet the food needs of residents of Hempstead County. Boxes and sacks of food are given to 160-170 families each month. The pantry adopted a pre-registration method for food distribution through which people sign up for three months at a time. The pantry is supported by parishioners who donate food and money, and 21 parishioners volunteer their time.

The pantry buys food at a reduced rate from Harvest Texarkana Regional Food Bank about 30 miles away, and many of the volunteers from the parish pantry also volunteer at the food bank.

### PINE BLUFF ST. PETER CHURCH

St. Peter's Saturday Soup Kitchen opened in 2013. Then-pastor Father Anil Thomas, SVD,



Dwain Hebda, Arkansas Catholic file

**Katie Montroy serves** lunch to a guest at St. Peter Church's then-new soup kitchen in Pine Bluff as Thelma Jones looks on in November 2013.

explained the history of the Saturday Soup Kitchen in the July 3, 2015, issue of the *Pine Bluff Commercial*: "We never had a Saturday soup kitchen before in Pine Bluff. I had someone come up to me one Saturday and ask me for food. I then felt a calling to open up a Saturday Soup Kitchen. The first three months, we just had it the first and last Saturday of the month, but there was such a big turnout that we made it every Saturday."

Sandra Martin, who has been involved with the Saturday Soup Kitchen since its planning stage, is currently the coordinator. The parish provides for the soup kitchen with a special collection every sec-

ond Sunday and food donations. The soup kitchen is also supported by the police department, anonymous donations and Neighbor to Neighbor, a local community assistance organization. This year, the soup kitchen participated in Arkansas Gives for the first time, receiving \$868.

Grants also sustain the soup kitchen and help make upgrades possible. Last year a grant was received from Southeast Arkansas Economic Development Council. Synergy Foundation gave \$5,000 recently. Funds from this grant will be used to get an ice maker, wall cabinets to store utensils and to finish the 2015 kitchen remodel.

### FAYETTEVILLE ST. JOSEPH CHURCH

St. Joseph Church in Fayetteville is a member of a regional organization called the Cooperative Emergency Outreach. Started in 1990, the goal of the CEO was to centralize assistance that individual churches were providing. Initially, there were 12 member churches. Today, there are 22 (including St. Thomas Aquinas). There are no paid staff, so all monetary contributions provide assistance to those in need. More than 100 people are seen each week.

While clearly a cooperative effort, St. Joseph, particularly its Social Justice Commission, plays a significant role in the operation of the CEO. One of the functions of the Social Justice Commission is recommending budgetary allocations for charitable organizations. St. Joseph provides substantial monthly contributions to the CEO.

Members of St. Joseph's Social Justice Commission are well represented in the operation of the CEO: Michele del Sol is the pantry coordinator, and Maxine Le Blanc coordinates the daily managers. Joe Dushan is president of the board at large.

The CEO is open Monday through Friday from 1-3 p.m., and clients are seen on a first-come, first-served basis. The CEO offers help with rent, utilities, prescriptions, clothing and food. In 2015, CEO provided food to 10,800 clients.