Nobody ever says, “When I grow up, I want to be homeless.”

When Walter Moody was growing up in Coffeeville, Mississippi, he wanted to be a boxer in the U.S. Army. He achieved that goal after entering the military following high school graduation. One of seven children, he would send money to his mother monthly from the Army base to help her out.

Walter served three years in the U.S. Army at Ft. Dix, New Jersey, and in Ft. Sill, Okla., before returning home to Mississippi, where he worked as a machine operator for a time. But in his late thirties, Walter decided to try his luck in the big city and moved to Memphis to look for work. That was when he began living as an employed but essentially homeless person. He found different kinds of jobs – warehouse worker, assembly line worker or floor finisher at a local hospital. But those paychecks didn’t keep up with his rent, utilities and child support for four children. “I was on the verge of homelessness, in and out of homelessness,” he said. “I was determined not to go home and tell my Mama my issues. I fought my battle by myself.”

He would park his car at the Memphis Welcome Center to sleep at night. “Many cold nights I dozed in my car,” he said. “But on those cold nights I prayed and told God to show me the way, and He did.”

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In 2013, he connected with the Memphis Vet Center, where he learned about a variety of services available to him as a U.S. Army veteran, of which he had been completely unaware. The Vet Center also sent him to money management courses at Catholic Charities of West Tennessee. The courses are offered through St. Sebastian Veteran’s Services, a program of Catholic Charities that provides services for veterans and their families – especially those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. St. Sebastian also helped pay part of Walter’s rent and utilities for about one year.

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Catholic Charities offers help and hope at the crossroads of need and despair

Memphis is a paradox—once the most generous and the most impoverished city in the United States. At the center of this paradox stands Catholic Charities of West Tennessee, and we are so grateful that you stand with us. Because of donors like you, we are able to serve mothers like Susan,* who came to us this winter struggling with several issues. Her son, who is autistic, had been bullied and injured at school. She began homeschooling him, but was unable to pay their rent. The small family was evicted from their apartment. Although they found an apartment they could afford, the cost of housing and her son’s medical bills meant that Susan and her son would have no Christmas. Through Catholic Charities, however, a family adopted this small family for Christmas, giving Susan’s son a bicycle, providing clothing, gift cards to Wal-Mart and board games that were fun and mentally stimulating. For this mother in need during the holidays, “grateful was too small a word to describe her response,” said Lucie Johnson, volunteer coordinator for Catholic Charities.

Catholic Charities stands with members of our community at the crossroads of need and despair. We offer help and hope. When a local family of 10 lost everything in a recent house fire, the American Red Cross referred them to Catholic Charities, and we immediately provided food and clothing for the large family. In the Clothing Closet, “they were able to find enough to get them through, including school uniforms,” Lucie said. “That was one thing they were most appreciative of because it was just one less burden for them to worry about.”

Because of you, we can clothe the needy and feed the hungry, just as we have done this fall and winter. In addition to providing meals daily through our Fig Tree Food Pantry, Catholic Charities took our food mission to the neighborhood with cookouts in September and January. The cookouts were so well-received that they will become a monthly event, said Dick Hackett, Executive Director of Catholic Charities. “We gave away 900 hot dogs at the first cookout,” he said. “That was with no advertising because the only way to advertise to the homeless is to crank up the grill!” For Hackett, the greatest lesson from the cookout was that not one of the people served had any complaints. “I made a point to ask every single person how they were doing that day and the most common answer was, ‘I’m blessed,’” he said. The second cookout, on Martin Luther King Day Jan. 15 resulted in about 850 meals being given away in the Catholic Charities parking lot at Cleveland and Jefferson. But it is more than meals, Hackett said. “It is also about dignity, the dignity of these people and spending time talking with one another. . . . God teaches us that the people we serve should take a place of honor in a banquet or meal. They are our honored guests.” As he continues his first year as Executive Director, Hackett said, “My No. 1 prayer is that we serve our customers to the best of our ability and apply best business practices for our donors and, ultimately, that we find a medical clinic collaboration for our homeless clients because they are in dire need of medical help.

Bikes donated for Gifts for God’s Children.

Wish List

We have an extra special need this season for:

- Men’s clothing and shoes (all sizes)
- Men and Women’s undergarments (all sizes)
- Socks (all sizes)
- Boy’s clothing and shoes

Please call (901) 722 – 4750 or (901) 722 – 4797 For more information on donations

*Client’s name changed to protect her privacy.
The phone rang at Catholic Charities on Christmas Day, and the staff member who answered it heard the story of a 17-year-old girl who had just had a baby on Christmas Eve – an unplanned pregnancy in very difficult circumstances. She had no support and had been befriended by some older women who were calling, seeking help.

The staff member made arrangements to meet the caller at Target and shopped for the young mother, purchasing a car seat, diapers, clothing and bathing supplies for the baby – paid for through Catholic Charities donations.

Because Catholic Charities took that call, the young mother was able to bring her newborn baby boy home from the hospital with all the basic necessities. The staff member also referred the young mother to Birthright of Memphis, Inc. for parenting classes.

“The Catholic Church and our faith teach us that life begins at conception,” said Dick Hackett, Executive Director of Catholic Charities. “This experience with the young mother on Christmas Day was just another message that we need to be in collaboration with Birthright.”

Birthright’s mission is to provide non-judgmental support to these expectant mothers, and Catholic Charities is happy to announce that we are partnering with Birthright to help them expand that support.

Through this new ministry, Catholic Charities will provide vital supplies for Birthright’s efforts to care for these mothers throughout their pregnancies.

- **Food** – Catholic Charities will provide a food box for each month of the pregnancy that is nutritionally planned for expectant mothers by a dietician.

- **Maternity Clothes** – Catholic Charities is seeking donations to purchase new maternity clothes at an 80 percent discount.

- **Parenting Classes** – Since 2008, Birthright has offered a series of classes on life skills, pregnancy and parenting. We hope to offer an additional location for this course at the Catholic Charities headquarters, 1325 Jefferson Ave.

- **“Happies”** – Just as every baby deserves to be born, every pregnant mother deserves encouragement. Catholic Charities will seek “happies” or small gifts for the mothers at periodic intervals throughout the pregnancy. These would include necessary infant items or supplies to take to the hospital.

“The collaboration with Catholic Charities allows Birthright to expand its services, by giving us the opportunity to serve more women who are dealing with a crisis pregnancy,” said Vicki Hardesty, Executive Director of Birthright of Memphis. “At Birthright we are dedicated to fostering the kind of change that has a positive impact on families in our community today and for generations to come. This resonates with the ideology of Catholic Charities and makes us a good match. We are both here to serve the poor, the needy and the person in crisis. We will remain separate agencies, but will collaborate to best serve Memphis.”

This collaboration with Birthright extends Catholic Charities’ continuum of caring for the dignity of life to the pre-born. His Excellency the Most Reverend Bishop Holley, who is a member of the committee of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Respect Life Program, has given his enthusiastic support to this project.

Please assist us in our outreach to these mothers in support of their decision to give life. To donate to this program, please check the Birthright box in the envelope provided. For more information, contact Therese Gustaitis at 901.722.4794 or therese.gustaitis@acc.cdom.org.
In Memphis – the poorest city in the United States – the challenge of moving from poverty to self-sufficiency can seem insurmountable.

For a family of four in Memphis, the gap between poverty and self-sufficiency is more than $30,000. To put that in context, a family of four living on $25,100 in Memphis is living in poverty. But to reach self-sufficiency, a family of four in Memphis needs at least $57,852, according to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator.

The United Way of the Mid-South (UWMS) is introducing a revolutionary way of helping the poor make that leap, and it has chosen Catholic Charities of West Tennessee as one of two agencies to launch this program, called Driving the Dream.

Catholic Charities has received a three-year grant to serve as a care coordination hub for Driving the Dream, which approaches poverty in much the same way a physician approaches any treatable condition. The coordination hub serves as a sort of primary care office where a care coordinator assesses issues contributing to a client’s poverty and connects them to the necessary services to move toward self-sufficiency. Porter Leath is the other care coordination hub in Memphis.

Driving the Dream uses a holistic approach that looks at the entire family and measures their level of self-sufficiency in 19 categories, including areas such as income, transportation, financial management and parenting skills. It also looks at early experiences that may have contributed to their poverty.

The coordination hubs use the same database and tools to store information and to track the clients' progress toward self-sufficiency. They will refer clients for services to agencies who pledge to accept these clients and respond to them in a timely manner. As a client moves through the program, the information captured in the database will show whether they are making progress toward self-sufficiency. Memphis is the first city in the nation to take this approach citywide.

Deloris Clayborne recently joined Catholic Charities to serve as care coordinator for Driving the Dream. She brings a wealth of experience to the position, with 20 years of experience in both government and non-profit sectors, and is energized by Driving the Dream’s innovative approach to reducing poverty.

“We need to make sure our customers understand that we are not going away. They can trust us and tell us where their challenges are so that we can help them address them.”

The data tracking and accountability built into the program ensures that issues will be addressed, she said. “We want to be sure that everyone has A+ service and make sure every opportunity to serve is taken,” she said. “We need to make sure our customers understand that we are not going away. They can trust us and tell us where their challenges are so that we can help them address them.”

In West Tennessee, the United Way of the Mid-South also serves Tipton, Fayette and Lauderdale counties. Driving the Dream is supported by a small group of donors: Kathy and J.W. Gibson, The Assisi Foundation, The Kresge Foundation and The Urban Child institute.

For more information please contact Deloris Clayborne at 901.722.4722 or Deloris.clayborne@acc.cdom.org.
We so often hear praise for first responders – those who rush toward conflict in crisis situations to aid the injured, comfort the grieving and protect those in harm’s way. Whenever I see first responders on the news, I think, “How brave, how caring these people must be!” Yet, it seems to be their natural reaction. As I consider who we are, here at Catholic Charities of West Tennessee, I realize that we are first responders to those living in poverty. And when I say “we,” please understand that you are a vital part of our mission at Catholic Charities to be first responders to people living in poverty in our community.

At Catholic Charities, we spend our days responding to pressing needs:

- Feeding the hungry
- Sheltering the homeless
- Clothing the needy
- And something new: Providing supplies to expectant mothers referred to us by Birthright

I have been with Catholic Charities since September, and it is so hard to see the pain and suffering of crisis poverty every day. So, without hesitation I beg you to become a first responder to poverty in West Tennessee by becoming a monthly donor to Catholic Charities.

Your monthly donation will ensure that we have a consistent stream of funds to meet the needs of those who come to us seeking food for their children or clothing for a job interview. Seeking diapers for a newborn baby or assistance in finding housing.

During the holidays, Catholic Charities staff answered all phone calls daily, including Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day. We served food, and we received gifts of clothing and gave it away as fast as we received it. Our resources took a hit, but our customers were served. Hunger has no holiday. Please use the attached envelope to become a monthly donor and, together, we can rush to the front lines of poverty to begin to put an end to the pain and suffering it causes here in our community.

With sincere gratitude for all the first responders and on behalf those we serve,

Dick Hackett
Executive Director
Catholic Charities of West Tennessee
Cell phone: 901-265-0121

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee offers Hope for the Holidays

Everyone looks forward to the holidays, but not everyone goes home for the holidays. Because we understand that, Catholic Charities of West Tennessee is a 365-day-per-year operation. Our staff fed the homeless on Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, providing “walking bags” of food to more than 50 people on each of those holidays, as well as gifts of clothing that had been donated.

“We gave everything away as quickly as it came in,” said Dick Hackett, Executive Director of Catholic Charities. “Hunger doesn’t take time off.”

Christmas 2017 also marked our most successful year for the Gifts for God’s Children program. Thanks to our generous donors, we were able to serve more than 5,000 of our neighbors – an increase of 1,500 from 2016 – and to provide Christmas for more than 1,000 households in our community.

Also in December 2017, we established a new partnership with Home Depot and Feed the Children – expanding opportunities to feed more people in West Tennessee over Christmas.

Our mobile food outreach in West Tennessee has expanded recently to include Union City, as well as Dyersburg, Jackson and Brownsville. By reaching out to Union City, we were able to serve 215 adults and 143 children in need of food.

We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to all of the parishioners and organizations whose generosity allows us to serve those in need, and we extend a special thank you to the St. Vincent de Paul Societies throughout the city who helped us develop the new partnerships with Home Depot and Feed the Children. Thank you, thank you. We could not succeed in our mission without your support.
Did you know... Catholic Charities of West Tennessee receives 25 percent of the proceeds from Rice Bowl donations in our diocese? We use this to feed people served by the Fig Tree Food Pantry.

**Florida Donation**

On your behalf, Catholic Charities of West Tennessee has made a donation to the Archdiocese of Miami to be used to help those affected by the school shooting at Marjory Stoneman Davis High School in Parkland, High School. The donation will applied to the area of greatest need in the community.

**CRS Rice Bowl**

We would like to thank the following benefactors for their generous support:

- United Way of the Midsouth
- Holy Spirit Catholic Church
- St. Peter Catholic Church
- St. Mary Catholic Church
- Hilton Worldwide
- International Paper
- Benevity Community Impact Fund
- Stan and Kathryn Turk
- Paragon Bank
- Urban Child Institute
- Baptist Hospital Foundation

**Mission Statement**: Following the teachings of Jesus Christ, we provide help to those in need and bring them hope by supporting them on the path from poverty to self-sufficiency.

**Service Overview**: Catholic Charities of West Tennessee serves people regardless of religious beliefs, socioeconomic status or ethnic background. Catholic Charities is not just for the Catholic community, it is from the Catholic community.

Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & YouTube

Visit us at CCWTN.org

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Your donations are deductible as allowed by law.