Officials, staff and clients celebrated the grand opening of Baptist Operation Outreach, a partnership of Baptist Memorial Health Care and Christ Community Health Services housed at Catholic Charities of West Tennessee (CCWTN), on March 1.

The event recognized the importance of a dedicated site to provide medical care to individuals or families without permanent housing. The health center is open to patients from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday at CCWTN, 1325 Jefferson Ave., in Memphis.

Established in 2004, Baptist Operation Outreach has long offered a mobile health clinic for the homeless, and that service will continue throughout the city.

CCWTN also has a history of partnering with Christ Community. In 1997, Christ Community initiated a mobile medical service in the gym of Catholic Charities for the immigrant and refugee community. Ten years later, Christ Community expanded the service to include homeless patients, and the clinic was open at CCWTN through 2017.

With the opening of Baptist Operation Outreach's primary location at CCWTN, opportunities to offer additional services to the homeless have expanded. The clinic specializes in providing primary and acute care for the homeless as well as dental, vision and social services. “We are excited to strengthen our partnership with Catholic Charities by establishing our primary clinic location inside CCWTN,” said Jan Taylor, program manager for Baptist Operation Outreach. “This new endeavor will make it convenient for our patients to access additional social services such as CCWTN’s food pantry, clothes closet and Driving the Dream program.”

The CCWTN Housing Ministry offers case management and rapid rehousing for the homeless, serving 373 households in FY2018. “The healthcare services are a wonderful complement to the Housing Ministry and emergency services we offer,” said Brenda O’Looney, Chief Financial Officer for CCWTN.

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee is staying true to its name by expanding its mobile food distribution in West Tennessee in the coming year.

These mobile food distributions will feed between 100 and 300 families, and will also include some locations in the City of Memphis. The food distributions will be done in collaboration with the Mid-South Food Bank and will allow Catholic Charities to reach the broader community to help meet this basic need. Nearly one in four people in Memphis live in poverty, and about 21 percent of people in Shelby County are food insecure, according to the Feeding America Network, the largest domestic hunger-relief organization.

“With the 2019 slate, we have doubled the outreach we did in 2018 and hope to have the opportunity to offer more mobile distributions as planning continues for the year,” said John Kovach, Director of Fig Tree Emergency Services at CCWTN. One location in the works is Brownsville, TN.

Confirmed dates and locations for the mobile food distributions include:
- April 11: Union City, TN
- April 30: Zip code 38126 in Memphis
- May 30: Jackson, TN
- July 18: Union City, TN
- Sept. 12: Union City, TN
- Oct. 30: Millington, TN
- Nov. 7: Union City, TN
- Nov. 21: Memphis location, TBA
CCWTN honors Person of the Year

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee (CCWTN) kicked off the New Year by celebrating the success of one of our customers who has gone on to contribute a great deal to the community.

In collaboration with the office of Mayor Jim Strickland, this award recognizes a CCWTN client who has moved beyond self-sufficiency to give back to the community through professional or volunteer efforts.

The first annual CCWTN Person of the Year award honored Marcellina James, who became homeless through a series of unfortunate circumstances but turned that situation around with the support of Catholic Charities.

“It’s so great to see success stories like Ms. James where she not only found employment, but is giving back one of her most precious assets—her time,” said Mayor Strickland.

When Ms. James moved to Memphis from Minnesota, she had housing arranged and was ready to embark on a career and new life in the city. But within one week of arriving in Memphis, she learned that the housing situation had changed, and she suddenly found herself without a roof over her head...

“I was convinced that I needed to just get in my car and drive the 13 hours back to Minnesota, yet I had no home there either anymore,” she said. A U.S. Navy veteran, James reached out to the Veterans’ Housing Program at Catholic Charities. Within days, she secured an apartment in Midtown, and Catholic Charities provided a move-in kit and a visit to our Food Pantry as part of the moving plan. Once settled into her apartment, James was able to secure a position as the Veterans and Military Services Coordinator at the University of Memphis, where she has worked since Sept. 11.

“I feel incredibly blessed and can’t believe I could have started my journey here in Memphis without the help of Catholic Charities,” she said.

Summer educational programming update

With the rise in free summer camps for children in Memphis and Shelby County, Catholic Charities of West Tennessee is taking a step back in 2019 to reassess the successful academic camp we have provided for six years to low-income families.

Our goal is to target an area of the city for our summer camp that is under-served by the free camps. Once that is determined, we will work with schools in that area to develop partnerships so they will see us as a resource for their students who may most benefit from an academically-enriched summer camp. We do plan to offer Camp Love & Learn in 2020.

For summer 2019, we are developing a smaller, more focused educational offering for children of our clients at Fig Tree Emergency Services because many parents bring their children when they come to use our food pantry and clothing closet. We are creating a children’s reading room staffed by volunteers. The room will be stocked with age-appropriate books, and children will be able to take home one free book each week. Stay tuned for more information about this new venture and updates on Camp Love & Learn 2020!

Did you know?

Giving through your workplace may greatly increase the impact of your donation to Catholic Charities of West Tennessee. These local companies match charitable gifts at a certain percentage when you donate using the workplace giving option.

International Paper
UnitedHealth Group Inc.
Raymond James
First Tennessee
Costco Wholesale Corp.
Medtronic
AutoZone
State Farm Insurance
Cargill, Inc.
Total Quality Logistics
Avanade
Nike
It has been such a blessing in this New Year to truly welcome the stranger, as we have opened the doors of Catholic Charities to more people experiencing homelessness who are making use of the new Baptist Operation Outreach clinic housed at our offices here at 1325 Jefferson Ave.

A partnership of Baptist Memorial Health Care Corp. and Christ Community Health Services, Baptist Operation Outreach has provided healthcare services to the homeless in Memphis since 2004. It is a privilege to provide the space for a freestanding clinic to this wonderful outreach, which can now expand its service to the community via the mobile clinic already in use.

We are grateful to both Baptist and Christ Community for their beautiful renovation of the offices that now house the clinic, providing healthcare with compassion and dignity to their clients. We are especially glad that the programs offered by Catholic Charities – such as our Housing Ministry, food pantry and clothing closet – may also benefit these clients, and that they are all accessible under one roof. We look forward to building this partnership in welcoming the stranger, which is an excellent reflection of the four pillars of Catholic Social Teaching.

The fundamental principle of Catholic Social Teaching is the dignity of the human person. This principle is the basis of our commitment to defend and support human life. The second principle, the common good, is defined as “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily,” according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

The third principle reflects Christ’s command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” It is the obligation to seek the good of others. This principle reminds us that the basic moral test of any society is how it treats those who are most vulnerable. Finally, the fourth principle, subsidiarity, speaks to the ordering of institutions in our society and encourages addressing issues at the most local level.

Certainly, this collaborative effort seeks to help our homeless neighbors meet their needs with dignity, for the common good and at the most local level. We are honored to play a small role in this most ecumenical effort. We ask you to join us in serving the most vulnerable and thank you for your support of our mission.

Peace,

Therese Gustaitis
Deputy Executive Director
Catholic Charities of West Tennessee

Reaching Out...

Apostolic Administrator
Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville visits CCWTN staff, clients and board members.

CBU students donate hundreds of hygiene kits and walking food bags.

Ida B. Wells Academy receives book donation for Read Across America Week.

St. Ann Catholic School donated 300 pairs of pajamas to CCWTN clients during Catholic Schools Week.
Becoming a First Responder during Lent

Catholic Charities serves on the front lines of poverty – supplying food, clothing and shelter to people when and where they need it. Nearly one year ago, we invited donors to join us by becoming First Responders to Poverty – monthly donors whose commitment helps ensure a steady stream of funds to meet the needs of clients that may not fit into grant criteria. No gift is too great or too small to help the poor in Memphis, which has the second-highest poverty rate of any city in the U.S. A $25 commitment could cover the cost of 10 walking bags of food for a homeless person each month. Our goal during Lent is to gain 40 new monthly donors during the 40 days of Lent – nearly doubling our number of First Responders. Please consider making an impact on poverty one of your Lenten vows. Become a First Responder to Poverty by signing up using the enclosed envelope. Learn more at ccwtn.org.

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.

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

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Hilton Worldwide
Chris and Michelle Clothier
Rocky and Patree Ruggieri
Jonathan and Tracy Frase
Tim and Maurine O’Connor
Amy Batson
Vincent and Connie Smith
Wes and Becky Kraker
Michael and Norma Montesi
William and Linda Payne

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