Catholic Charities strengthens St. Patrick partnership

Catholic Charities of West Tennessee strengthened its ongoing collaboration with the St. Patrick Community Outreach Center this month by sharing all items collected in a citywide school supply drive with the St. Patrick community.

“We are blessed to be able to serve those in greatest need in the poorest zip code of the poorest city in the United States,” said Dick Hackett, Executive Director of Catholic Charities.

Memphis has a poverty rate of 26.9 percent – the highest of any metropolitan statistical area with a population of one million or more, according to the 2017 update of the Memphis Poverty Fact Sheet produced by the University of Memphis. The neighborhood around St. Patrick, in the 38126 zip code, has the highest poverty rate in Memphis, 60.9 percent, according to smartcitymemphis.com.

St. Patrick Catholic Church has been doing outreach in the neighborhood for 40 years. Current efforts include a non-profit ministry that feeds the hungry on Sunday and a food pantry open Tuesday through Friday.

The school supply collaboration extends the partnership between Catholic Charities and the center at St. Patrick, which will likely include more food and clothing distributions, Hackett said. “We will continue to work with the outreach center as opportunities present themselves to make the greatest impact possible in 38126,” he said.

Eugene Champion, a deacon at St. Patrick, said the school supplies would be distributed to families who visit the outreach center’s food pantry and utilize the center’s meal programs. “The Outreach Center is truly blessed to be a vehicle whereby these families can experience the generosity of those with giving hearts and spirits.”

A team led by Catholic Charities of West Tennessee (CCWTN) made a significant impact during their week-long mission in July to the Humanitarian Respite Center of Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley (CCRGV), which is a first stop for people who have crossed the Texas border into the United States and have been processed and released by U.S. officials.

The center provides a place for countless men, women, children and infants to rest, have a warm meal, a shower, and change into clean clothing, as well as receive medicine and other supplies, before continuing on their journey.

CCWTN made the trip at the request of Catholic Charities USA and with the approval of our Bishop, His Excellency, the most Rev. Martin D. Holley, D.D. The mission was a diocesan project in cooperation with CCWTN. The Memphis team included Catholic Charities staff, Catholic community leaders, and students from Christian Brothers High School, St. Agnes Academy, St. Benedict at Auburndale High School and Immaculate Conception High School. Our newsletter this month includes a first-person account of the trip by one of the students on page 2.

More stories from students can be found at ccwtn.org.
Dear Friends,

Tic-Tac-Toe — a game loved by children everywhere — will now forever hold a special place in my heart. I know that it may seem a little peculiar that such a simple game could hold such importance; however, once you hear why this game changed my life, it may hold a new meaning for you, too.

On June 30, I was asked by the Religious Education Director at my school, St. Agnes Academy, if I would be interested in joining the Catholic Charities of West Tennessee team on a mission trip to Texas. She told me that we would be working at a respite center that welcomed refugees who are entering the United States for better living conditions — and that we would leave in four days.

All I could say was, “Wow. Why me?” My heart was saying, “Yes! Yes! Yes!” But my mind was hesitant. It all felt too sudden. I then remembered a quote that has been my motto for a while now: “Let your faith be bigger than your fear.” I like to believe God was the one telling me, “yes,” and after this experience I know full well that He was the one calling me and tapping on my heart. He was calling me to help His people, to do His work, and to spread love.

“The next day, some of the other Memphis group members were talking with a young man when I walked into the room and they introduced me. He asked me to play Tic-Tac-Toe with him.

We all got to know him really well that day. He told us that he would never forget us, and that we were his best and first friends here in the USA. He even drew a heart on a piece of paper and began to write something inside it. Once he finished, we saw that he had written “amigos” on the paper inside the heart. He told us that we have created a friendship that meant so much to him.

The third day of our mission trip, I met a little girl with the sweetest smile and most beautiful heart. Again, we got to know each other through a game of Tic-Tac-Toe! She taught me so many things in the few hours I had with her. She taught me what it means to be a friend, and how important it is to make others feel beautiful and loved.

This little girl has a huge piece of my heart, as do all of the other refugees that I had the privilege of meeting. Before I left she said: “Please don’t forget about me. I love you with all my heart.”

Building friendships on the Texas border

Child at Texas Mission

Gracie Fogerty, St. Agnes Class of 2019 Holy Rosary parishioner
It has been a long, hot summer. That is especially true at Catholic Charities of West Tennessee, where we have been working without air-conditioning on the first floor of our offices since summer began. With heat advisories over 105 degrees Fahrenheit, we moved our staff up to the second floor, where the air-conditioning still works. As uncomfortable as it has been, this situation reminds us of the plight of our customers and makes us that much more committed to put our funds where they can help those most in need.

We began serving free snow cones daily this summer to help people on the streets stay hydrated after we had to call the ambulance for customers suffering heat exhaustion. At this writing, we have served well over 2,000 free snow cones. We have also distributed three tons of fresh tomatoes to our customers and to partner agencies serving those in need throughout the city. And we are looking ahead to winter, when frigid temperatures will make socks the most valued item on the streets. We are currently working to fund the purchase of thousands of socks so that we can distribute them freely and include them in the “walking bags” of food and water that we give to people who come to us seeking help.

In everything we do, we keep in mind these words from Matthew 25: “Whatever you do to the least of these, you do to me.” We serve on the front lines of poverty. Please join us here by becoming a First Responder to Poverty.

On behalf of those we serve,

Richard C. Hackett
Executive Director
Catholic Charities of West Tennessee
Cell phone: 901-265-0121
BECOME A FIRST RESPONDER

This ID tag worn by one of our customers makes the plea more effectively than we ever could. He said he wears it now in place of the military dog tags he once wore. Please become a First Responder to Poverty using the enclosed envelope so that we can help this man on his journey from poverty to self-sufficiency.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING BENEFactors FOR THEIR GENERous SUPPORT:

United Way of the Mid-South
Urban Child Institute
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Carlson
Christian Community Foundation
Ms. Amy Batson
Mr. and Mrs. C. Thomas Whitman
Mr. Charles D. White
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Platten
Mr. and Mrs. Mark D. Compton
Mr. Christopher R. Ross
Ladies of Charity of Memphis

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.