

Matthew 25



August 2023

A journal on ministry and service to the margins in western Oregon

Catholic Charities

‘Living what you believe’

Parish and Catholic Charities team up for refugee ministry

Daily encounters with fascinating families from around the world have transformed a grateful team of volunteers from St. Ignatius Parish in Southeast Portland.

Since 2018, the parish has used a spare building to house refugees being served by Catholic Charities of Oregon. Tibbetts House, with five bedrooms, is a temporary way-side used while refugees and their case managers locate permanent housing.

“In the house we feel safe and secure because we know we’re in good hands,” said Charité Beto-laum, adult daughter in a family of nine from the Central African Republic.

The family narrowly escaped a deadly civil war in their homeland. “There was nowhere to go,” explained Élodie Betoloun, the mother. “Whether you go left or right you are being chased.”

Now, the family laughs, plays sports and has a good time with American hosts.

“Our experience with Catholic Charities is that they are very good people who have taken very good care of us,” Charité said, citing financial help, clean water, food, healthcare guidance and classes on



Refugee children from the Central African Republic play outside Tibbetts House.

managing everyday life in Oregon.

Kerri Babin, volunteer and co-ordinator of Tibbetts House, said the ministry links world news to human beings. “You see the human impact of what happens in the world,” said Babin, a member of St. Ignatius since 2007.

“I’ve been so impressed and amazed by the resilience and strength of these families,” said Michael Shin, another Tibbetts House volunteer. “They don’t want to be in the position of receiving charity; they want to be independent and help us. It really allows for this relationship to flourish and be really rewarding.”

Shin’s fondly recalls helping a teen girl from a refugee family learn to ride a bicycle.

Jim Gradoville, another Tibbetts House volunteer, urges other churches to consider using spare space for refugee housing.

“It’s going to add a lot to your parish,” Gradoville said, explaining that new worshippers may want to join a church that so clearly is doing God’s work.

Babin knows it’s important to donate to good causes, but said it feels right to act as part of everyday life to do good, since that is “living what you believe.”

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOSTING REFUGEE FAMILIES CONTACT CLAIRE MCILWAIN, CMCILWAIN@CCORE-GON.ORG OR 971-256-2917.

SEE THE VIDEO



[youtube.com/
watch?v=WkrlFc3Twf8](https://youtube.com/watch?v=WkrlFc3Twf8)



Ermias Mehari, Catholic Charities resident services coordinator for Esperanza Court and adjacent Kateri Park, plants vegetables along with residents Janice Lytle and Sherri Blake.

New garden good for health, community

Deep down, everyone's a farmer. In a quiet yard at Esperanza Court, planter boxes wear a cap of sprouting lettuce, green beans, beets and carrots. Residents of the Catholic Charities affordable housing community in Southeast Portland are caring for the little garden, and the results include healthy food, daily exercise and community interaction.

"It's nice to have this at a housing complex, especially for us elderly," said Sherri Blake, a resident of Esperanza Court for three years. "I was thrilled when I heard about this."

Globs of Oregon soil dropped from Blake's fingers as she looked over her handiwork: neat rows of freshly planted lettuce.

Janice Lytle, who has lived at Esperanza since 2020, plunges her hands deep into soil to plant leaf lettuce. "It's a place where I can find calm and peace," she said.

The four garden boxes were donated by family of a Catholic Charities employee.

Ermias Mehari, resident services coordinator, said the garden is not so much to produce food as to offer therapeutic exercise and communal interaction. He thinks elders in the buildings might especially benefit.

Love shows in lunch

Catholic Sisters bring monthly meal to clients of Catholic Charities

BEAVERTON — Each month, the Sisters of St. Mary of Oregon here serve Jesus through the clacking of kitchen knives, the whir of a blender and the whoosh of a whisk.

For more than two years, the small but energetic community of Catholic religious sisters has been preparing a monthly lunch and delivering it for the women who drop in at Catholic Charities headquarters in Southeast Portland. The clients are homeless or working their way out of homelessness.

In the 1920s, one of the founders, Sister Johanna, encountered a hungry and homeless man who came to the door of an orphanage. She offered to give him her own meal from sparse resources.

"To reach out to Catholic Chari-



Sr. Marianne Giesel and Sr. Sara Goggin converse with Caitlin Gleeson, a Catholic Charities outreach specialist.

ties to volunteer to provide a lunch made that SSMO spirit alive today," said Sister Sara Goggin. "When all parts of the meal preparation are counted – from veggie peeling to washing dishes – half of our 44-member community have in some way participated," said Sister Sara. To help, contact Victoria Waldrep, vwaldrep@ccoregon.org or 503-688-2672.

Leadership expert to lead CCUSA

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Kerry Alys Robinson, an expert in Catholic leadership and philanthropy, will serve as the next president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA.

Robinson begins her tenure at the national umbrella organization on Aug. 23, guiding the domestic humanitarian work of the Catholic Church in the United States. "Kerry's entire professional life has been devoted to serving and bettering our church," said Neal Black, chairman of the CCUSA board of directors.

Robinson serves currently as an executive partner of Leadership Roundtable, an influential organization of laity, religious and

clergy working to promote best practices in the church.

"The gospels call Catholics and all people of good will to serve those most in need of our aid," Robinson said. "The staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities agencies around the country answer that call every day: feeding the hungry, comforting the afflicted and welcoming the stranger."



Have a story about Catholics reaching out to those on the margins? Contact Ed Langlois, Catholic Charities communications director, elanglois@ccoregon.org or 503.935.6187.



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