

Matthew 25



April 2024

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

Catholic Charities

Pantries help with inflation

With inflation taking a bite out of everyone's resources, Catholic Charities of Oregon has organized a vibrant food pantry program for residents of its affordable housing sites.

There are weekly and monthly pantries now at five locations.

The food gets donated from multiple sources, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Oregon Food Bank, Dave's Killer Bread and Pacific Coast Fruit.

Hundreds of families are receiving food assistance, one way to make it more likely that they can afford housing, job training, education, transportation, youth activities and other items vital to thriving and advancing.

At one Southeast Portland housing site, about 80 households obtain food each week. One regular customer is Nancy, who has lived in the building for 12 years. Living with a disability, Nancy delivers newspapers to supplement her income, but was having trouble affording groceries.

"I'm so happy the food pantry opened," said Nancy, smiling as she waits her turn.

In the pantry, staff and volunteers help residents like Nancy pick fresh produce, bread, milk, cheese, pasta and beans. It's all healthy food, which can be expensive at the grocery store.

"Good food makes me feel better," Nancy explained as she held her bag open for volunteer Hannah Gustafson of St. Patrick Parish in



Nancy, a resident of Catholic Charities affordable housing, gets a sack of brussels sprouts from volunteer Hannah Gustafson of St. Patrick Parish in Portland.

Portland. Gustafson loaded the sack with onions, brussels sprouts and other produce.

"It's a joy being able to provide healthy food options for our residents and clients," said Sally Erickson, Community Services Director for Catholic Charities. "Customers can 'shop' the fresh selections to choose items their families would like, including gluten free, vegan, Halal and culturally specific foods. We've been blessed with generous donations, which makes the pantries possible, and we're able to help families make ends meet and tummies full."

Beatrice Endler, Health Outreach Supervisor, explained that beyond reducing monetary and geographic barriers to food access, the on-site food pantries also have become fun social events for residents and clients.

"It gives everyone the opportunity to convene with friends and neighbors and build a stronger community," Endler said.



Kler, who lives in Catholic Charities affordable housing, joyfully picks out groceries.



A resident of Catholic Charities housing enters a community room to obtain a supply of food to beat inflation.



OCP publisher Wade Wisler poses with the Traveling Crib.

OCP fills the crib

Oregon Catholic Press, the major Catholic liturgical publisher based in Lake Oswego, hosted the Catholic Charities Traveling Crib in February. Employees put diapers, baby clothes and other gear for youngsters in the crib. At month's end, Catholic Charities picked up the items and distributed them to families in need. Oregon Catholic Press is the first non-parish to host the crib.



Building blessed

Father Hans Mueller (above), a member of the Catholic Charities board of directors, visited Feb. 13 to give the nonprofit's offices a pre-Lenten blessing. Staff read from Psalm 90: "Lord, give success to the work of our hands." Father Mueller, pastor of St. Juan Diego Parish in Portland, walked throughout the offices sprinkling them with holy water.

A last chance for your car to make amends

DONATE IT



CCUSA leader to speak at UP

The University of Portland class of 2024 will hear from the leader of Catholic Charities USA May 5 during commencement.

In August 2023, Kerry Alys Robinson began her service as president and CEO of the network of 168 agencies that serve people, families and communities in need while advocating for justice in social structures. Catholic Charities of Oregon, founded in 1933, is a proud part of the network.

Prior to joining CCUSA, Robinson was the founding executive director of Leadership Roundtable, which is dedicated to promoting excellence in management, finances and human resource development of the Catholic Church. She previously served as executive director of the Opus Prize Foundation and as director of development for the Catholic center at Yale University.

Robinson authored the prize-winning book, "Imagining Abundance:

Fundraising, Philanthropy, and A Spiritual Call to Service."

UP's highest honor, the Christus Magister Medal, will be given

to Dominican Sister Donna Markham, who preceded Robinson as President and CEO of Catholic Charities USA.

"We have embraced anew our calling to be the university of, for and with Portland and the wider world," said Robert D. Kelly, president of University of Portland. Commencement is set for Sunday, May 5, 10 a.m. at the university's sports dome, the Chiles Center. A Baccalaureate Mass is set for Saturday, May 4, 4:30 p.m. at the Chiles Center.



Kerry Alys Robinson

Volunteers gave more than 13,000 hours

Almost 600 volunteers served more than 13,000 hours with Catholic Charities in 2023.

Volunteers help in the food pantries at Catholic Charities housing sites. They prepare lunches for women experiencing homelessness. A team of volunteers from Holy Redeemer Church brings meals and does crafts for residents of Kenton Women's Village. Others bring Sunday dinner to Kenton Women's Village.

Some stuff envelopes with thanks to donors while others help refugees learn to navigate culture.

They are interns who work on legal matters with immigrants or serve refugee families. A Jesuit Volunteer is on a year-long placement doing outreach to homeless camps.

The busiest month was March, when more than 100 volunteers put in about 1,600 hours.

A smaller number were very

busy in July, when 18 volunteers logged 1,171 hours of service for an average of 65 hours for the month.

This year already started out strong, with 33 volunteers serving more than 600 hours in January.

"We are so grateful to our dedicated volunteers," said Natalie Wood, executive director of Catholic Charities of Oregon. "Not only do they dramatically extend our work, but they give their hearts and souls everywhere they serve."

Have a story about Catholics reaching out to those on the margins? Contact Ed Langlois, Catholic Charities communications director, elanglois@ccoregon.org or 503.539-6333.



To read the extended versions of these stories, visit: catholiccharitiesoregon.org