Abuse victims no longer alone

Crime Victims Services Unit gives sustaining hope for victims

Stories like Maria’s (a compilation of immigrant victim testimonies from the Crime Victims Services Unit in Little Rock, at right below the photo) play out every day across Arkansas.

No one should live with the abuse, degrada-
dation and suffering that the immigrant vic-

tims served by the Crime Victims Services Unit encounter. We see victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and other vio-

lent crimes, most often committed by those who
claim to love them the most, including those whose the Scriptures place special emphasis on, the relationships between hus-

bands and wives — “Husbands, love your wive,
and do not be harsh with them.” (Col. 3:19). The Church leaves no room for excus-
ing a husband’s violent and abusive behavior
toward his wife, nor for the proposition that a wife is obligated to accept her husband’s abuse, her true responsibility is to ensure safety for herself and her children.

The Crime Victims Services Unit of Cath-
olic Immigration Services in Little Rock
works to end the cycle of abuse and violence
in our community because we understand that God loves each and every one of us the
same and because we are all his precious cre-
ations to be treated with respect and dignity.
Unfortunately, the victims that we see have
often been brainwashed into believing that
they deserve the abuse, that there is nothing they can do to change their situa-
tion and that there is no one who would help
them.

Immigration status or the lack thereof, is
often a powerful contributor to the sense of
alienation and hopelessness felt by many vic-
tims. Education on the legal remedies avail-
able to immigrant crime victims empowers
victims to reach out by showing them that
there are options available to them and that

See ABUSE page 10

We are all doing the work of the Lord

In baptism we are given “the ‘imperish-
able seed’ of the Word of God (which)
produces its life-giving effect.” (Cate-
chism #1228) and thus each of us is called to
bring the Word of God to growth in the soil
of our daily lives.

Each of you who are reading this issue of
Catholic Charities Connections is doing his or
her part in living the Gospel in your person-
al life, caring for your family and volunteer-
ing to help with needs that touch you. As we gather as a larger family in the community of
our parishes, we not only pray together, we
also reach out to assist each other in the
name of the Church. In such activity, we are
truly pulling together to move the world

See WORK page 10
Clinic attempts to address unmet needs

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops includes health care as one of the seven basic tenets of Catholic social teaching. It is under the framework of the rights and responsibilities theme that states: “The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. …The right to life is fundamental and includes a right to food, clothing, shelter, rest, medical care and essential social services.”

However, under the current health care system, if one does not have insurance it is difficult to obtain basic health care. Many people assume that if a person is without insurance the emergency room at the hospital will handle their care. Generally, emergency rooms only treat emergency situations that are life threatening. Patients are treated regardless of insurance coverage. Primary urgent care can also be provided but after an extensive wait and greater cost than necessary. If one has health care insurance and can afford treatment in a physician’s office. Hospitals do quite a lot of charitable emergency health care, but the emergency room is not the most effective system for urgent and primary care patients that is not life threatening.

Westside Free Medical Clinic and St. Vincent Community Clinic are two of the Catholic responses to central Arkansas. Designed to treat patients for those basic health care practice. Conditions to prevent the complications which require emergency room visits. For instance, if you have recently been to a health care provider and told your blood pressure was high that day or your glucose level was elevated and advised to follow up with your primary physician, what do you do? What if you have always had insurance with your employment but have recently been laid off, or are a non-traditional student without insurance? What if English is not your first language and you do not know where to go?

Without insurance, most private physician offices require payments before you are seen and often that cost is not in your budget. Alternatively, the walk-in clinics’ cost are often under your budget. The free and charitable clinics could be your answer, but we cannot do it alone. With an increased need for basic health care, our safety nets are weighted and taut because the need is so great.

We appreciate the funding we receive through our grants, but it is not enough to cover all the unmet health needs of Arkansas. As importantly, we could not function without our wonderful volunteers and specialists, but we need more professionals answering this call. This is a ministry with many challenges as we attempt to cover the broad spectrum of health care needs within the system we have at present. Our Catholic teaching calls us all to respond to those most vulnerable among us.

Karen DiPippa is the director of the Westside Free Medical Clinic in Little Rock.

Work

Continued from page 9

You are invited to read the stories and identify what Gospel mandates, or Catholic social teachings come to your mind as you do so. We also ask you to pray for the staff of Catholic Charities as we serve along with you to produce the “life-giving effect” of living the Word of God day by day. (Catechism #1225)

“How blessed is he … who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry … The Lord loves the righteous.”

Psalm 146:5-8

Immigration Services

Volunteer attorneys to assist with complex immigration cases and attorneys for civil legal issues are needed. Volunteer also are needed to help to catalogue files for digital storage.

The office in Little Rock also needs lateral five-drawer file cabinets for storage of paper files. Contact Maricella Garcia or Frank Head.

Prison Ministry

Spiritual books are appreciated by many prisoners and volunteers are needed to serve the spiritual and religious needs of Catholic inmates. Contact Tom Navin.

Refugee Resettlement

Donated used cars are needed by families as they settle into their new homes in Arkansas and move toward citizenship. Contact Frank Head or Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, DC.

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Golf tournament raises more than ever

$48,784 will support the varied programs of Catholic Charities

T he first time ever Catholic Charities exceeded its goal of $60,000 for the Bishop McDonald-Catholic Charities Golf Classic. As of Nov. 2, $60,631.69 has been raised, with $48,784.49 going directly to Catholic Charities to support its programs.

The Cathedral of St. Andrew helped to start things off right by hosting the golf tournament and cocktail party on the eve of the Golf Classic Sept. 19. More than 75 items, including an autographed Pete Rose bat and Waterford crystal bowl, were on display for the silent auction. Volunteers from several other parishes also helped to make it a memorable evening.

“We are grateful to everyone who pitched in behind the scenes, making sure that every detail was just right and making sure that there was plenty of wonderful food, desserts, and drinks for everyone — not to mention staying afterwards to clean up,” chairwoman Alice Dennis said. “Because of the efforts of these volunteers, the party flowed seamlessly and was a huge success.”

On Monday, Sept. 20, 45 teams played in the tournament. Many golfers paid a small fee in order to participate in special contests at various holes, also to the benefit of Catholic Charities. There was stiff competition all around to get the best score.

The Golf Classic is Catholic Charities’ biggest fundraising event of the year.

“We are indebted to the many businesses and individuals who sponsor the Golf Classic and who donate items for the auction and cocktail party each year. Without them, these events could not exist. Catholic Charities is especially grateful for underwriters St. Vincent Health System and Dr. Brad Bultz,” director Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, DC, said.

‘Who is my neighbor?’

Parable’s lessons apply to us today

T he meaning of the parable is hard to miss: “Who is my neighbor?” the attorney asks. Your neighbor is any person in need who crosses your path.

I thought of the good Samaritan recently, when, as director of Catholic Charities Immigration Services Northwest, I represented Moises (not his real name), a 35-year-old man from Michoacan, Mexico, who is married to Jennifer, a Cherokee tribal member and U.S. citizen from our neighboring state of Oklahoma. Raised in rural poverty, Jennifer was also born deaf. Her rural public school had no accommodations for deaf students.

A loving teacher realized her intelligence and recommended her for a scholarship to the Oklahoma School for the Deaf from which she graduated high school with a 3.5 grade point in 1985. She was accepted to community college and went on to college, but the summer after high school she married and got pregnant. Her husband drank a lot and didn’t work much.

She went to work and put off her dreams of college. After 10 years of beatings and abuse, she divorced her husband and kept working two jobs to raise her daughter.

In 2003, Jennifer met Moises at her church. He was a handy guy always fixing things for people. He was shy and had never married, coming to the U.S. when his family lost their farmland to drug gangs. At first they could only smile at each other or share a meal at a church social. Then Moises started studying sign language so he could speak to her. He offered to help fix her roof and helped her parents with other repairs. By 2005, Moises was fluent at signing. In 2007, they married.

In March 2010, after four months waiting in Juarez and being robbed twice, Moises’ I-601 waiver was approved. He was allowed to rejoins his family in Oklahoma as a legal permanent resident. Half of the applicants for waivers in Juarez that month were refused. Unfortunately, none were my clients. But all were someone’s neighbors and someone’s beloved. When Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan, he was speaking to Jews who saw Samaritans as enemies and foreigners who had desecrated the Jewish Temple at Passover. But when asked by a lawyer, “Who are my neighbors?”, he chose a Samaritan. Who would he choose now?

Frank Head is the director of Catholic Charities Immigration Services in Springdale.

AT A GLANCE

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.” (1 Cor. 12:4-5)

Adoption Services serves pregnant women who are considering adoption for their child and with families seeking to adopt. Ongoing support includes search and reunion services.

Catholic Campaign for Human Development is the U.S. bishops’ effort to help eliminate poverty and assist through public policy efforts to make things to do so. The collection is taken up in November each year on the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

Crime Victims Services address victimization within the immigrant community focusing on domestic violence, human trafficking and other violent crimes. In addition to legal assistance to victims as they apply for visas, they provide training for law enforcement on available legal resources and educate the immigrant community on the need to report criminal activity and their legal rights as victims of crimes.

Development helps Catholic Charities pursue and maintain funding needed for basic operations and program development.

Immigration Services offices in Little Rock and Springdale provide legal services to assist people through the process of application to the U.S. citizenship and immigration services for families seeking reunification and stabilization, victims of criminal violence, refugees, foreign-national priests, and other non-citizens.

Parish Social Ministries provide education, mentoring and support to parishes as they develop their local ministries. This program also coordinates Disaster Response and Parish Emergency Assistance

Prison Ministry is responsible for seeing that the sacraments and spiritual support are available to the incarcerated in the 14 state prisons and four federal prisons. Training is provided to volunteers who are interested in this ministry.

Refugee Resettlement assists families displaced from their homelands by war or other national tragedies and who meet the United Nations’ criteria of credible fear of danger if they return, to stabilize in their new country.

Social Action monitors public policy matters and conducts workshops based on Catholic social teachings. The office also coordinates community activities that reach out to the poor and underserved.

Westside Free Medical Clinic serves adults without medical insurance through clinics, using volunteer medical providers. Clinics are provided in both English and Spanish.
Learning about St. Nicholas Partners

What is St. Nicholas Partners?

St. Nicholas Partners is a special annual appeal to help raise money for the Catholic Charities programs that provide services directly to those who are in need.
- Adoption Services
- Immigration Services
- Prison Ministry
- Westside Free Medical Clinic
- Parish Emergency Assistance
- Services to victims of domestic violence

Donors also have the option of designating their gift for use where most needed within Catholic Charities.

How is it different from other Catholic Charities fundraisers?

It’s different in two ways. First, it makes it easier for donors ("partners") to designate which Catholic Charities program they want their contribution to support. Second, because the appeal occurs right before Christmas, a donation on behalf of a friend or family member makes a perfect gift.

What makes St. Nicholas Partners special?

Each year, an original design depicting St. Nicholas is specially created and generously donated to Catholic Charities by an area artist. This artwork then becomes a “Christmas card” distributed by Catholic Charities and inviting everyone to help support the ministry of their choice.

This rendering of St. Nicholas was created by Ken Oberste and uses transparent watercolor and ink. Oberste has been a commercial artist for 50 years, a freelance artist for 30 years and a studio artist for 20 years. Oberste can be reached at tinkandken@comcast.net.

I’ve never gotten one of these Christmas cards. How do I get one?

The cards will be sent to people on the Catholic Charities mailing list and were inserted in 20,000 copies of the November issue of Catholic. You can also contact Rebecca Spencer to become part of this year’s St. Nicholas Partners appeal.

Anything else?

Between July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010, the Catholic Charities programs named above served 24,120 clients. For many of those who receive assistance from Catholic Charities, the holiday season can be particularly painful. Please help us continue to help them by supporting St. Nicholas Partners this year.

God guides adoptions during joys and sorrows

Sister Mary Lou Stubbs, DC, asked us to share how we see God in our work in the various departments at Catholic Charities. Of course, we see the hand of God in the answered prayers of the birth parents who are looking for a special family for their child and in those of the adoptive parents who long to create a family. November is National Adoption Month and also a time of thanksgiving for Americans. There is a lot to be thankful for in adoption. The beauty of adoption is that there is much more to be aware of as well.

When people find out that I am the director of Catholic Adoption Services, they often say something like how wonderful that must be to get to work with the babies and what a blessing for the parents to be able to adopt. Yes — that is true that each new life is a miracle, little babies are amazing, and the adoptive parents are very grateful for the opportunity to become a family.

People who have more experience with adoption know that there really cannot be the joy without pain nor can there be fulfillment of God’s plan without sacrifice. The birth parents experience more sorrow at releasing their child than can be understood by someone who has not gone through this incredible act of love and selflessness. They are told by some people that they are being selfish for not parenting their child and they know that really the opposite is true. Others may say that they do not see how anyone could possibly choose adoption — that they could never do it themselves. What a knife in the heart that is to the courageous individual who has enough strength to know that their decision to place a child for adoption is what is best for their child.

Adoptive parents are praised for opening their homes and told the child is lucky to have them for parents. These parents know that they are the fortunate ones to be parents and that this is not some sort of a good deed. The baby is the child of their heart whom they have wanted for a long time. They can understand some of the pain that a birth mother is going through when they have had their own sorrow of infertility and of not being able to have a biological child. They are happy for themselves but this is always connected to knowing another family’s great loss in placing. Even when there is deep peace all around, there is still the knowledge of what is happening.

So where is God in our pain? What about when an adoption does not go through and we worry about how this vulnerable baby will do in a birth family where there are a lot of problems? Why were our prayers not answered for this child to join a waiting and wonderful family? Why do great parents who long for a child have multiple miscarriages? What about the fear some birth mothers experience when an abusive birth father threatens to hurt her and her unborn child if she considers adoption? Why is life sometimes so incredibly hard?

I tell the clients that I am privileged to work with that I do not know the answers to the hard questions of faith. Above all, what I do know is that God loves us. Very simply — over and over — God loves us. I believe we are supposed to pray and that prayer helps, but we do not know how those prayers will be answered. But if we pray for the highest good to prevail, we will be more aligned with the divine than if we pray for a specific outcome.

As workers here for Catholic Charities, we are not the source, but we can be the channel through whom God can work in the lives of our clients. I can only do my best every day and then let go. We see God’s presence all around us in the generosity of our donors and volunteers, in the love of parents for their children, in the dedicated work of the Catholic Charities and diocesan staff, and in the changed lives of those who have experienced compassion in the name of Christ.

Anjie Harris is the director of Catholic Adoption Services.

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? And when did we see you a stranger, and invite you in, or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you?’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.’”

Matthew 25:31-46

“The true subject of the various Catholic organizations that carry out a ministry of charity is the Church herself — at all levels.”

“Deus Caritas Est” #32. Pope Benedict XVI, 2005

Refugees’ situations now more difficult

BY REBECCA BRYANT

INDIANAPOLIS — The overseas situation is becoming more tenuous for refugees. Anthony Brown, director of the U.S. bishop’s Migration and Refugee Service Office of Refugee Programs, said at the Aug. 17-18 regional convention in Indianapolis, Ind.

“The Iraqis who have fled to neighboring countries and the Burmese refugees in Malaysia are trying to survive on the edges of society, akin to illegal aliens in the U.S.,” he said.

Brown often travels overseas. Her update of the worldwide situation for refugees included these facts:
- The U.N. High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) asks for $1 a day per refugee living in a camp. They receive about 40 cents.
- Less than 1 percent of all refugees are ever resettled.
- Of the millions of refugees in need of resettlement, about 100,000 are accepted around the world each year. The U.S. is presently admitting 80,000 to 85,000, the largest number in absolute terms but not per capita.
- Burmese refugees who flee to India are especially vulnerable. There have been many reports of robbery, beating and rape to Chin people in New Delhi. Few are ever resettled. Many of the Burmese Rohingyas people make their way to refugee camps in Bangladesh. The U.S. will soon be admitting this group for the first time.
- Somalians continue to pour out of their country. The camps are full. Due to perceptions that they are not a favorable population for resettlement, they are rarely resettled anywhere but the U.S.
- At present, the top three countries of origin for refugees entering the U.S. are Iraq, Burma and Bhutan. The Bhutanese numbers are dwindling.
- The general consensus is that the number of Iraqi refugees will decrease as the U.S. withdraws. However, the absence of a plan to protect persecuted populations could cause another large outflow.

“Woe to those who enact evil statutes and to those who constantly record unjust decisions, so as to deprive the needy of justice and rob the poor of my people of their rights, that widows may be their spoil and that they may plunder the orphans.”

Isaiah 10:1-2