

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide for the needs of our community through selfless service under the sign of love. Catholic Charities is committed to empowering individuals and families in our community with the goal of fostering independence.

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc.

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Catholic Charities receives grant to provide services to veterans

By David Wagner

Catholic Charities was recently awarded \$997,131 from the Texas Veterans Commission for a two-year grant for the Military Family Relief Project.

Grant funds will be used to serve Texas veterans and their families living in the 210 and 830 area codes with a focus on especially vulnerable veteran population segments, including unemployed and underemployed veterans, veterans suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and other war-related injuries.

This program is made possible by a grant from the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance. The Fund for Veterans' Assistance provides grants to organizations serving veterans and their families. Funding for these grants comes from a portion of Veterans scratch-off lottery ticket sales.

Catholic Charities will provide veterans and their families with emergency assistance, case management, individual/group/family counseling services, transportation assistance and a connection to a wide range of social services, including employment and family and child services.

Emergency assistance includes: food/clothing assistance; financial assistance with rent/mortgage, utilities, and medical bills/prescriptions; urgent, minor home repairs; and urgent, minor vehicle repairs. Services will be free.

Through this grant, Catholic Charities will work toward the following goals: prevention of homelessness due to eviction or foreclosure; prevention of utility disconnection; increasing veterans' ability to cope with medical/mental health issues; increasing

enrollment in job training programs; increasing access to transportation; enabling veterans to maintain their health; feeding and clothing veterans and their families; and increasing the safety of veterans' homes and vehicles.

The Military Family Relief Project has been serving Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans and their families since late 2007. Now in its third year, the program had been previously funded by a Texas Resources for Iraq/Afghanistan Deployment (TRIAD) grant from the San Antonio Area Foundation. TRIAD funding for our area has come to a close, so Catholic Charities is thankful to have found other resources to keep the program going.

With the funding from Texas Veterans Commission, Catholic Charities will be able to expand the Military Family Relief Project in several ways.

First, eligibility can now include any veteran, individual or family, who served in any war, from any time period and in any geographical location.

Secondly, we will be able to reach more veterans who live in outlying rural areas. We will also be able to offer assistance not previously provided, like job training and job search assistance.

Since the inception of the Military Family Relief Project, we have learned that, for many of our veterans, the effects of war on individuals and families is long term, and it is an ever-increasing need in our communities. Now that soldiers are returning home from Iraq and with the increase in deployments to Afghanistan, a veteran's need for assistance, recovery and healing will only continue to grow in the coming years.

Catholic Charities evaluates and adjusts to emerging or changing veteran needs based upon what we learn



Photo by Department of Defense

U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Charles Armstead, left, a former platoon sergeant with Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry Regiment (D Co., 1-12 CAV), 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, greets Sgt. Christopher Stevens, assigned to D Co., 1-12 CAV, during a brigade visit to Brooke Army Medical Center. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Karl Williams/Released)

from our clients. One emerging need we have discovered is that many of our veterans are in need of employment.

We are currently able to assist veterans with one-time emergency financial assistance, food and clothing. We have learned through experience and through our interview process that many — if not most — of our veterans, would benefit from employment assistance. We seek to expand our existing program in order to assist veterans in obtaining and retaining adequate employment.

Catholic Charities is proud to be part of the ever-growing number of organizations and agencies who serve

those who have served us. We are grateful to the Texas Veterans Commission for their generosity and their devotion to serving Texas veterans.

We look forward to making a difference in the lives of soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines and their families in the coming years.

For more information on the Military Family Relief Project or on available assistance for veterans, contact David Wagner at (210) 226-6178.

David Wagner is the case manager for the Military Family Relief Project. Ester Geffre contributed to this article.

Donors make Christmas a dream come true for local children

Guadalupe Community Center (GCC) was extremely busy this past Christmas season with various holiday projects coordinated by dedicated community partners.

The first to take place was GCC's BMW shopping spree, which was a huge success. Every year, the Tejas Chapter of the BMW Car Club of America donates \$3,000 to GCC for this event. The chapter members personally accompany the children from the center's After-School & Summer Youth Program as they shop for their families at Target. Afterward, the children and their partners wrap all of their gifts with supplies generously donated by Target.

The Tejas Chapter of the BMW Car Club of America has been making this contribution every year to GCC for the past six years. The children look forward to this event because they are actually able to buy Christmas gifts for their family members — something they would not be able to do otherwise.

A contribution of \$200 was also made by an anonymous donor to be spent it on the children. This donation was used to provide lunch for the children after the event.

Another event enjoyed by the youth of GCC was the annual Weston Centre Christmas party, which is hosted every year by the Weston Centre downtown. The entire event was catered to children's tastes, including chicken nuggets and macaroni. The party also included holiday crafts, face painting, animal balloons and a photo-booth. Additionally, each child received a \$50 gift card to Target. A total of 100 children participated in the event.

Every December, Redeemer Presbyterian Church provides food boxes to GCC to distribute to needy families in the community. This past December, 4,000 food boxes were packed with the help of GCC staff and volunteers.

Guadalupe Community Center received 745 food boxes on the day of the event and distributed the boxes to hundreds of families in need. The entire distribution went well, and the relief and joy the families felt to receive the food was evident to all.

The following week, Redeemer Presbyterian Church dropped off more boxes and pallets of food to add to the food pantry. Thanks to their incredible generosity, GCC was able to give out larger amounts of foods during the holiday season.

At another event, the San Antonio Food Bank gave the children a special surprise. A nutritionist from the San Antonio Food Bank visited GCC for a Christmas presentation called "Santa's Mystery Wheel." The nutritionist played a game where each child was blindfolded and then asked to try a new healthy food item, such as snow peas. This was a fun way for the kids to learn about making healthy food choices.

On the day before Christmas break, the children participated in one last event. GCC held a Christmas party for the After-School & Summer Youth Program. Thanks to a few big-hearted sponsors, GCC was able to provide gifts to the children of the program. One sponsor gave about 40 different gifts, making it possible for each child to receive something.

The children enjoyed healthy sandwich wraps, received goody bags



Photo by Eric Chang

Members of the Tejas Chapter of the BMW Car Club help children from the Guadalupe Community Center After-School & Summer Youth Program wrap Christmas gifts after taking them on a shopping spree for their families.

and shared a cake that said, "Merry Christmas GCC!"

To GCC's surprise, a gentleman who participated in the after-school program as a child came to the center wanting to "give back." He dressed up as Santa and surprised all of the kids and donated even more gifts for the children.

Last but certainly not least, GCC has been very blessed this past year to have several families and individuals sponsor many of our needy families with food, toys and other Christmas

gifts. These donors gave our families more than just material items and tangible presents; they gave them hope.

Catholic Charities is truly grateful to each and every one of the persons and organizations that brought joy to the children of GCC this past holiday season. Coordinating so many events is a lot of hard work, but it is all worth it just to see how much it is appreciated by the children and their families.

Natalie Powell contributed to this article.

St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Church helps Catholic Charities fulfill mission

By Mary Nan Ollis

The truck bed was overflowing when it arrived at the Catholic Charities main office. Staff members from all departments were summoned to help unload and sort the packages for delivery to the apartments. And just when all thought the presents were sorted, the next vehicle pulled up.

A red passenger van was brimming from the front seat all the way to the back door with Christmas presents. All of the gifts were delicately wrapped with fine bows and intricately labeled so that each family would receive exactly the right number of presents.

These gifts were destined to be delivered to children and their families of Catholic Charities Refugee Services. Parishioners from St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Church strategically decided to provide for the warmth of 50 families by giving coats, blankets and socks and that they would bring joy to the hearts of the children by providing either a bicycle or toy for each child.

These gifts were primarily intended for refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo who have been resettled in San Antonio through Catholic Charities. In June 2004, the Banyamulenge Tutsi were forced to flee from their homes to the Gatumba refugee camp in Burundi due to extreme ethnic violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo. At that time, approximately 760 persons moved into this camp.

Two months later, a group of armed combatants infiltrated the camp and killed 152 of these residents and injured 107, mostly women and children. After this devastating massacre, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees decided it was necessary to resettle the remaining Banyamulenge Tutsi in a third coun-

try because there was nowhere else for them to go; they could not return to their own country, and they could not live in danger at the refugee camp. Therefore, many of these persons were resettled in the United States.

Most of these refugees have seen members of their own family brutally murdered. Their lives have been fundamentally altered to the core.

Having encountered this devastation, it is so very important that they are welcomed to the United States with open arms. It is vital that these refugees are given a place of solace, warmth and comfort. It is imperative that the children are given a chance to play, to be given a sense of normalcy so that they can heal from the trauma they have experienced.

Because of the generosity of the parishioners of St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Church, this group of refugees has encountered a sense of the holy love of the Christmas season. Catholic Charities Refugee Services is grateful to these parishioners for their support this year and for the past three years. In the sharing of these gifts, the parishioners walk alongside Catholic Charities as we seek to fulfill our mission of providing for the needs of the community through selfless service under the sign of love.

Thanks to a grant funded by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Migration and Refugee Services, Catholic Charities is able to strengthen parish and community involvement in its resettlement work. Through a national program called Parishes Organized to Welcome Refugees (POWR), Catholic Charities is developing important resources devoted to refugees through local parishes and churches.

As we expand our parish partnerships, we invite you and your parish to get involved in the efforts of Refugee Services to live your faith and



Photo provided

Tom Hoog, volunteer and donations coordinator for Catholic Charities Refugee Services, unloads the bed of truck overflowing with Christmas gifts especially collected by parishioners of St. Peter Prince of the Apostles Church for Catholic Charities' refugee families.

welcome the stranger among us. We encourage parishes to make an ongoing and organized commitment to working with refugees in partnership with Catholic Charities. To find out how your parish can get involved with Refugee Services,

contact Tom Hoog at (210) 222-1294, ext. 204, or thoog@ccaosa.org.

Mary Nan Ollis is the development coordinator for Catholic Charities.

Save the Date!

Join us for
**Guadalupe Home's
Wine Tasting Gala**

April 14
5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Woman's Club of
San Antonio

Call 210.476.0707

Catholic Charities branches out to Del Rio with RSVP

By Lisa Streeter

Last summer, Catholic Charities cast its net over Val Verde County with the opening of a Del Rio office for its Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP).

The Del Rio office, located at 902 E. 11th St., was launched with an Open House on Dec. 8. RSVP partnered with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid for the event, which was attended by many local nonprofit leaders and community members.

Ana Rivero, RSVP's newest team member, is the community coordinator for the Del Rio office. She has been working hard to make the launch of the new office a success.

"I'm excited to finally be up and running,

ready to serve the Del Rio community," Rivero says. "There are many wonderful organizations and volunteers who can benefit from RSVP."

RSVP creates positive volunteer experiences for seniors 55 years and older who use their life experiences and job skills to strengthen their community.

For nearly 30 years, RSVP has been matching volunteers 55 years and older with volunteer opportunities in Bexar County. The program currently has 100 volunteer stations, more than

1,300 volunteers, and plenty of opportunities for seniors to give back to the community.

With a strong team of dedicated hard workers, RSVP is confident the program in Del Rio will be successful. If you are 55 years or older and interested in volunteering in Val Verde County, call (830) 488-6240. To volunteer in Bexar County, call (210) 222-0301.

Lisa Streeter is a community coordinator for RSVP San Antonio.

RSVP

Lead With Experience

Refugees highly motivated to find job training and employment in the U.S.

By Mary Nan Ollis

Catholic Charities of San Antonio has been resettling refugees from around the world for the past 25 years. The United Nations defines a refugee as a person who flees to a foreign country to escape danger due to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion. There are over 14 million refugees in the world that are displaced; many of which reside in refugee camps for decades.

Last year, Catholic Charities Refugee Services welcomed just over 850 refugees to San Antonio. Currently, refugees come to San Antonio from countries like Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar), Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Iran, Iraq and Somalia. Refugees arrive to the United States as taxpaying members of society.

Catholic Charities' principal mission is to help newly-arrived refugees to become self-sufficient through employment. The Targeted Assistance Discretionary (TAD) Program of Refugee Services provides job-readiness classes for refugee adults. Topics covered during this nine hour session, which is completed over a series of several weeks, include financial literacy, vocabulary for working at specific job sites, conversation skills practice (related to job duties) and community

education workshops on issues such as health.

The main goal of the TAD program is to promote refugee self-sufficiency by helping remove barriers to employment, increasing employability and facilitating better integration into the community both socially and culturally.

More than 50 newly-arrived refugees graduated from the TAD program last month. After graduation, the next step for each refugee is to begin their pursuit of a job. Refugees that arrive to the U.S. come from a variety of vocational and educational backgrounds. One refugee might have an advanced engineering degree while another has no work history because of the rules and regulations of the refugee camp from which he came.

There is one common and apparent thread among the refugee community, however, and that is a consistent desire within most refugees to find work so that they are able to support their families with their own money as soon as possible. Each refugee is assisted in their job search by the Catholic Charities employment team, and as refugees begin the journey of finding a job, there are a variety of obstacles that are encountered.

Mu Nan, a refugee from Burma, is a graduate from the most recent TAD class. Prior to her arrival in the United States last year, she lived and worked in Thailand as a tour guide. Because this was her profession, she has been exposed to many

languages — English, French and Japanese — and at one time was quite proficient in each.

Now that she is here in San Antonio, she is struggling to find employment. This is because Mu Nan is from a tribe of Karenni called Kayan whose women practice the special ornamentation of brass coils around their neck (making the neck appear elongated). Mu Nan has embraced this custom for many years out of respect for her family's heritage.

As Mu Nan tries to enter into the workforce, she is discovering that the way she looks is keeping her from getting a job. Even though in-depth research has proven that women who wear such ornamentation are able to complete tasks at the same rate as women who do not, people seem taken aback by Mu Nan's appearance.

The deep hope is that with Mu Nan's determination, she will overcome this barrier and that she will soon find a job where she can utilize her skills and unique perspective on life.

If you own a company or business and would like to find out how to partner with Catholic Charities to help someone like Mu Nan get back to work, contact the Refugee Services employment team at (210) 242-3196.

Mary Nan Ollis is the development coordinator for Catholic Charities.



Photo provided

Mu Nan, a Karenni refugee from Burma, is eager to find employment now that she has successfully completed a job-readiness class.

Award-winning broadcast journalist visits residents of Guadalupe Home

By Suzanne de Leon

This past December, several of the Guadalupe Home residents sat around the living room not quite sure why two ladies they didn't know wanted to visit with them and tell them their stories. During the introductions, however, and as the conversations continued, it became quite evident that all the women in the room had something in common. Not unlike the residents, our guests, Jodie Sinclair and Minerva Perez, had similar challenges when they were young and were eager to share their stories and encourage our Guadalupe Home residents to never give up.

In the 1980s, Minerva Perez was a teen mom living in the Texas Valley with no clear vision of how to succeed. One of the first Hispanic women on the air in the United States, Perez is an award-winning broadcast journalist and longtime television news anchor with a history in San Antonio.

The road Perez charted herself was against tough odds, but the story she shared showed our residents that faith, courage and belief in self can work miracles.

Minerva is now the executive producer, co-host and partner of the new cable television show, *Latina Voices*. She is also owner/president of Minerva Perez Media, LLC, a public relations/communications firm in Houston.

Perez' visit was underwritten by Jim S. Adler & Associates. Jim Adler is a mayoral appointee to the Harris County Joint City/County Commission on Children, which recommends child-friendly policies and programs to local officials for both Harris and Houston counties.

Jodie Sinclair, director of public relations for Jim S. Adler & Associates, represented the firm for the Guadalupe Home visit. Sinclair had her own stories to tell, offering words of wisdom and encouragement to our residents. She also gave advice on appropriate business attire and developing the confidence needed to present oneself in a job interview.

It is not easy facing the many challenges that the mothers of Guadalupe Home have to face every day. For most of the mothers, their challenges started when they were much, much younger, perhaps even as infants. I often tell residents that there is a reason why they become homeless and pregnant, and if they really want to make a change and make a better life for themselves and their children, many things have to change — old habits, old friends, old boyfriends, old ways of thinking. Probably the most difficult step for them to take is making the decision to limit contact with their family.

You would never see bad parenting in an old "Ozzie & Harriet" or "I Love Lucy" television

program, but as times have changed with our society, so have parenting styles, so much so that many parents have daughters who need to live at a shelter like the Guadalupe Home.

Too often, we hear stories of young children having to raise themselves, fix their own breakfast and get themselves off to school, often returning from school to an empty house. Too often, there was no adult supervision or direction to help them make good life choices and no one there to assure they would make good decisions.

It is not always a parent's fault, though, that our children make bad decisions in their lives. We should all be responsible for the decisions we make, and we cannot blame it all on how we were raised. That is what Jodie and Minerva were trying to impart on our residents; life is not always fair and we, as adults, need to stand up and say, "I'm going to make a change in how I live my life. I'm going to be a better parent to my child than my parents were to me."

Now, after that statement comes the hard part: doing it. Thankfully, Guadalupe Home is here to help women who have found themselves in very desperate situations and give them the hope they need to make the changes they need to succeed.

A transitional living program for homeless, pregnant women and homeless women with infants, Guadalupe Home provides case



Photo provided

Guadalupe Home Director Suzanne de Leon greets Minerva Perez, executive producer and co-host of *Latina Voices*, as she prepares to share her life story with the residents of the home.

management and referrals to many local and state resources, as well as social service support to teach residents essential life-coping skills, all while providing a safe and stable environment for their children.

Suzanne de Leon is the director of Guadalupe Home.

Teen mom's desire for a better life for her family pushes her to achieve her goals

By Natasha Bridges

"There are three ingredients in the good life: learning, earning and yearning." That is how novelist Christopher Morley describes success.

I have been a part of the Catholic Charities Precious Minds, New Connections (PMNC) team of parent educators for the past five years and have had the pleasure to work with teenage parents. For some teenagers, it is difficult to follow a recipe for success, although with a little stirring of the pot, the results are tremendously pleasing.

I first met 18-year-old Kimberly Vasquez when she was pregnant. This is her story.

Upon finding out she was pregnant, Kimberly's relationship with her mother became strained. Kimberly soon moved out of her parent's home and into a modest efficiency with her boyfriend, John Daniel.

Kimberly was one of those parents every educator hopes to have on their case load. She was receptive to all the prenatal and parenting information. Her goal was not only to have a healthy pregnancy but to also strive to give her child the best, from breastfeeding to being a good mom.

After a long and complicated labor, baby Natalie Rose was born on March 25, 2006 with shoulder dysplasia. Natalie had little to no mobility of her arm. At this time, both parents reluc-

tantly chose to withdraw from high school. John Daniel found work here and there, and Kimberly was a stay-at-home mom.

Kimberly continued with our parenting home visits and wanted to learn about child development. As an educator, hearing our parents state, "Wow, I didn't know that!" or "This is so helpful!" affirms that we are doing our job.

A physical therapist was working with Natalie Rose, but Kimberly had to commute across town on the bus to get to the sessions, which, with an infant, was hard at times.

I discussed early childhood intervention services, and soon she was able to have physical therapists come to her home. At no time did Kimberly complain about her role as a parent, but she soon expressed stress over the family's financial difficulties.

Both parents realized that with limited education, earning a "good life" would be hard. Kimberly tried to return to high school, but she soon became discouraged after failed attempts at standardized testing and trouble adjusting to her new role as "mom" amongst other teenagers who had no real responsibilities.

Being able to work one-on-one with Kimberly through our home visits for so long allowed her to open up and be honest about when parenting was challenging and express her desire to earn her GED but that she doubted herself. She also expressed anxiety about expecting her second child.

I remember the day Kimberly informed me she enrolled in GED classes. She opened the door with the biggest smile on her face and let me in. When she gave me the good news, I told her how proud of her I was and how she was being a good role model for her kids. She gave me the biggest hug.

While Kimberly was enrolled in Catholic Charities' PMNC program she displayed good parenting techniques. Parent and child interactions were a great combination of play and discipline. She would make comments about being happy to have found new ways to parent as opposed to what she was used to growing up. Earning her GED seemed to add fuel to her rising self-esteem because she expressed wanting more for her family.

Kimberly's yearning for a better life led her to her next goal. After finishing up a visit one day, I

pulled out my calendar to schedule for the following month. Kimberly dropped her head and said she would not be able to. I asked enthusiastically if she had found a job, but she shook her head "no."

I started to become concerned after a long pause. Kimberly then looked up and said, "I love our visits, but I've enrolled at a technical school, so I'm sorry; I won't have the time." Then she looked down again.

I reached over and grabbed her hand and told her that I didn't need an apology, that she just needed to let me know when she graduates. I got another big hug that day and some pictures of the kids to take with me when I left. The next time I heard from Kimberly was about a year later. She informed me excitedly she would soon be a certified nursing assistant.

I still get calls from Kimberly from time to time informing me about how well the kids are doing and how she would like more responsibilities at work and that maybe she should just become a nurse. We never know which of our parents will make it beyond being a statistic, but Kimberly proved that with learning, earning and yearning, you can become a success!

Natasha Bridges is an educator for Precious Minds, New Connections Parenting Program.



Diaper drive benefits Catholic Charities

Conducted in 2010, the Huggies® Every Little Bottom Study revealed that one in three American mothers struggle to provide diapers for their babies. Costing up to \$75 per month, these mothers have to cut back on basics such as food, utilities or even child care in order to provide enough diapers for their children.

In response to these startling statistics, National Latina Health Network (NLHN) conducted a nationwide effort to confront diaper deprivation and alleviate some of the struggle mothers face to provide adequate diapers for their children.

Catholic Charities was a recipient of a large diaper donation collected through two diaper drives conducted in San Antonio at the end of last year by NLHN member Elisa Morales. Catholic Charities received more than 1,500 diapers to be distributed through its emergency food pantry and clothes closet.

Catholic Charities is extremely grateful to Elisa Morales and NLHN for their hard work and generosity. Their time and effort enabled us to impact the lives of many mothers and children in need.

To join this cause by donating diapers to Catholic Charities, contact the Crisis Intervention Program at (210) 226-6178.



Photo provided

National Latina Health Network member Elisa Morales, left, delivers more than 1,500 diapers to Ester Geffre, director of Catholic Charities Crisis Intervention Program, to be distributed through the emergency food pantry and clothes closet.

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES EIGHTH ANNUAL
LIFETIME OF FAITH & SERVICE AWARD DINNER**

Honoring

Clifton Bolner
*Owner,
Bolner Fiesta Spices*

The Hon. Phillip D. Hardberger
*Mayor Emeritus,
City of San Antonio*

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11
UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD
ROSENBERG SKY ROOM
6:30 P.M. RECEPTION
7:30 P.M. DINNER & PROGRAM

FOR INFORMATION, CONTACT PAMELA RAINES AT (210) 242-3111 OR PRAINES@CCAOSA.ORG.

Local medical group helps families in need enjoy Christmas

This Christmas season, Pathology Reference Lab/Pathology Associates of San Antonio brightened the homes of several families served by Catholic Charities.

A select number of families had the opportunity to celebrate Christmas in their own special way as they were given the opportunity to meet their basic needs as well as purchase holiday fixings with monetary gifts. The children of the families were also given specially chosen toys, clothing and other gifts.

The employees of Pathology Reference Lab/Pathology Associ-

ates of San Antonio worked hard for almost six months to raise what was needed to generously sponsor several families in need.

J.D. Perez, human resources executive for Pathology Reference Lab, explains, "Beginning in July, our organization felt the need to give to those in need, and, thus, the end result was a tremendous success."

Perez goes on to say, "Throughout the years, we go on with our daily lives, enjoying God's blessing. Oftentimes, we forget that there are others out there that are not as fortunate and blessed as we are. Christmas is a time

for all of us to enjoy the many gifts that we have and to share with those who are less fortunate."

Catholic Charities is truly grateful for the support it receives for its families from individuals, companies and other organizations. It is heartwarming to see members of the community come together to provide so generously to those in need.

On behalf of its families, Catholic Charities thanks Pathology Reference Lab/Pathology Associates of San Antonio as they contributed more than \$3,000 to help make these families have a joy-filled holiday season.



Photo provided

A Catholic Charities family receives extremely generous Christmas gifts from Pathology Reference Lab/Pathology Associates of San Antonio.

Grant Announcements

(as of Nov. 1, 2010)

CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

\$154,300

Guadalupe Home Capital Campaign

FROST BANK

\$10,000

Guadalupe Home Capital Campaign

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

\$150,000

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

KENEDY FOUNDATION

\$5,000

Guadalupe Community Center

\$10,000

Guadalupe Home Capital Campaign

KRONKOSKY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

\$40,000

San Antonio Birth Doulas

\$75,000

Money Management Program

MYRA STAFFORD PRYOR CHARITABLE TRUST

\$40,000

Guadalupe Home Capital Campaign

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

\$997,131

Military Family Relief Project

Planning for incapacity: frequently asked questions

By Monica Bonilla, Attorney-at-Law

As we begin 2011, people are making their New Year resolutions. As a guardianship attorney, my suggestion is planning for incapacity be on your list.

Many older persons are concerned about the onset of a physical or mental disability that would incapacitate them to the point that they would no longer be able to manage their personal or financial affairs. They fear that decisions about their financial assets and health care will be taken out of their hands.

With advanced planning, however, you can consider the options available to you and your family and even arrange for the legal action necessary to carry out a loved one's wishes. Keep in mind that advanced planning is recommended for people of any age because, in many cases, the onset of a physical or mental disability cannot be foreseen.

In light of this, I offer the following questions and answers in regard to preparing the necessary documents that address legal problems of incapacity.

What does the term "incapacitated" mean? A person is incapacitated if, because of a physical or mental condition, the person is substantially unable to provide food, clothing or shelter for himself/herself, to care for his or her physical health or to manage his or her financial affairs. Merely advanced age or hospitalization does not automatically mean that a person is incapacitated.

How can I provide in advance for the management of my financial affairs should I become incapacitated? As we grow older and the possibility of becoming incapacitated increases, it is wise to consider choosing a trusted friend or family member who will have the legal authority to manage our financial affairs without incurring the expense of a guardianship. This is done by executing a Statutory Durable

Power of Attorney (POA), a legal document in which one person (called a principal) appoints another person (called the Attorney-in-fact) to manage the principal's financial affairs. A POA will automatically terminate upon the principal's incapacity under Texas law unless it is durable, that is, unless it contains language to the effect that "This power of attorney is not affected by subsequent disability or incapacity of the principal."

Who will make medical decisions for me should I become incapacitated? By executing a Medical POA, you can appoint one or more persons whose judgment you trust to make your medical and health care decisions should you be unable to do so yourself.

You can give your agent complete authority to make medical decisions or you can limit his or her authority.

Without a Medical POA, an adult surrogate can consent to medical treatment on your behalf if you become incapacitated or comatose. The adult surrogate, in the following order of priority, is: your spouse, your adult child, your parents, an individual identified to act on your behalf before incapacity, your nearest living relative, or clergy.

Can any person receive my protected medical records and information? You may authorize any person to receive your medical information by executing a HIPAA authorization form. This form authorizes your health care provider to disclose your medical information to anyone you designate.

What is a Directive to Physician (commonly known as a living will)? A directive allows you to direct that life-sustaining procedures such as use of a respirator be withheld or withdrawn if, in the judgment of your physician, you are suffering with a terminal condition from which you are expected to die within six months, or

you are suffering from an irreversible condition such that you cannot care for or make decisions for yourself and you are expected to die without life-sustaining treatment.

What is the difference between a Medical Power of Attorney and a Directive to Physicians and Family or Surrogates? A Directive to Physicians and Family or Surrogates has very limited application. It only applies to one medical treatment decision, the decision to withhold or withdraw life support when death is imminent. A Medical Power of Attorney covers all medical treatment decisions.

Can I designate in advance who I wish to serve as my guardian if a guardianship of my person or my estate should become necessary?

Yes. As long as you are not incapacitated, you can execute a Declaration of Guardian in the event of later incapacity or need of a guardian. You can designate a guardian of your person and of your estate in this form. Additionally, you can disqualify a particular person or persons from serving as your guardian. The designation can be revoked or changed anytime before you become incapacitated.

When should I plan for incapacity? The sooner the better. If you become incapacitated without advance planning, it may become necessary for surrogates to make medical decisions for you, as discussed above, or for a guardianship of your person and or estate to be established as discussed in the next section.

Where can I get these legal documents? Call Catholic Charities Guardianship Services at (210) 293-1009 and make an appointment. Catholic Charities provides this legal service free of charge.

Monica Bonilla is the deputy director of senior services for Catholic Charities.

Words to live by

By Howard Kravitz, OPA, MA, NCC, LPC-S

As we begin the new year we need to keep in mind that we are not the only people who have faced adversity (think the plague in Europe), nor will we be the last. We do, however, tend to focus on our troubles and all of the issues swirling around us.

In an effort to find information that we can use at the Catholic Counseling & Consultation Center and pass on to clients, I offer these paraphrased tips for emotional resiliency that I found in a book I have been reading.

- Focus on what you can control, not what is out of control; be flexible and open-minded.
- Alter your perceptions. As Epictetus the Greek philosopher said in 1 A.D., "It is not events which disturb us but our view of those events."
- Limit the hostility factor. The negativity and anger we harbor for others is destructive to us and not very Christian.
- Strive for goodness, not perfection. Get rid of ideas focused on "shoulds" which make you bitter.
- Develop compassion. Choosing kindness and resisting being critical is good for all relationships.
- Develop good self-care habits. Take care of your mental, spiritual and body needs.
- Develop mindfulness. Learn to live in the present.
- Stop thinking about events that cannot be changed — it will keep you up at night.
- Accept the good as well as the bad; neither lasts forever.

Howard Kravitz is the managing director of Catholic Counseling & Consultation Center.

Yes! I want to help Catholic Charities in its mission to serve those who are less fortunate.

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