

This story was originally printed in the March 2011 issue of New Earth, the newspaper for the Diocese of Fargo.

Your God's Gift Appeal donations at work:

Catholic Charities North Dakota serves the poor and vulnerable

Mary Jo Andersen

Catholic Charities North Dakota is one of many programs and ministries that are funded in part by the God's Gift Appeal. Catholic Charities North Dakota has been making a difference in the lives of people across the state since 1923.

The agency focuses on four main programs in which we serve the poor and vulnerable. They include Pregnancy, Parenting and Adoption Services, AASK (Adults Adopting Special Kids), Guardianship Services and Counseling Services. Our mission: In faithfulness to the Gospel and the mission of Jesus, Catholic Charities North Dakota serves people in need with compassion, dignity and respect, empowers them toward self sufficiency and works with others in advocating for justice.

The programs of the agency make this mission come alive each and every day, by helping to make a difference in people's lives, whether that is going to an important medical appointment with our Guardianship clients; lending an unbiased ear to a woman facing an unintended pregnancy; giving a child in foster care a permanent family; or helping a family in a time of crisis.

Our Counseling Services program, which was highlighted in the God's Gift Appeal video, was started in 2003 and has services available in Fargo, Grand Forks and Langdon, with plans to expand to more rural areas in the state. In that time, we have served 691 clients in 4,582 sessions. This would not have been possible without generous donations and support from the God's Gift Appeal and from individuals who donate directly to CCND. This support allows us to offer our clients a sliding fee scale, which enables all families and individuals to afford counseling.

Roughly half of the clients we see use our sliding fee scale because they are either uninsured or their insurance doesn't cover counseling services such as ours. Others have insurance but would have to pay the full rate until their deductible has been met and simply can't afford it. In these cases, Catholic Charities offers a sliding fee scale to ensure people receive the help they seek.

Counseling Services are available to individuals, couples, families, children and adolescents. Some common counseling areas include marital conflict, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, grief/loss, caregiver support, and family conflict.

The following stories are examples of how Catholic Charities North Dakota is making a difference in the lives of people each and every day through Counseling Services. (The names and specifics of the situations have been changed.)

Maria and John sought marriage counseling because they found themselves arguing constantly and, when they weren't arguing, they only talked about the children or work. They had lost their sense of connection with each other and felt like strangers sharing a house. Through their work with one of our counselors, they learned how to reconnect with each other and to communicate their needs more effectively. The biggest benefit of counseling was learning how to listen to each other so both felt heard. Although it seemed

like such a simple thing, they were unwilling to hear each other because of the unresolved hurt and anger which had built up over the years.

Since the couple's therapy wasn't included in their health insurance coverage and they were already stretched thin financially, Catholic Charities used its sliding fee schedule to find a fee that was right for them, which allowed them to see a counselor until they found themselves in a good place.

The Carter family came to Catholic Charities North Dakota because their three adolescent children were constantly at odds with each other. Instead of seeing each child individually, the counselor decided to see the family as a whole unit and discovered there were a lot of misunderstandings and hurt feelings because of failure to communicate effectively with each other.

In only six sessions, this family learned how to talk so others could listen and to listen so others felt heard. Conflict between the children was reduced from a number of arguments in a single day to one or two every two weeks. There were more positive interactions within the family unit and they started spending family nights together, enjoying each other instead of hiding out in their bedrooms and avoiding interacting.

Insurance would not pay for this service; this family was a typical middle class family who lives paycheck to paycheck without a lot of extras. Catholic Charities provided their sliding fee schedule so this family could determine a fee that was affordable for them.

The Counseling Services at Catholic Charities North Dakota would not be possible without the support of individual donors and the Diocese of Fargo through the God's Gift Appeal. In 2010, God's Gift Appeal support equated to 6 percent of the budget at Catholic Charities.

Thank you for your ongoing support of all of the programs of Catholic Charities North Dakota. With God's grace and your support, we will change lives.

If you would like to make a donation to help CCND continue making a difference in people's lives, you can donate to CCND online at www.catholiccharitiesnd.org or by mailing your contribution to: Catholic Charities North Dakota, 5201 Bishops Blvd., Suite B, Fargo, ND 58104. God's Gift Appeal donations can be made through your parish, by mailing your contribution to God's Gift Appeal, 5201 Bishops Blvd., Ste. A., Fargo, ND 58104, or online at www.fargodiocese.org and click the "donate here" link.

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