SAVING LIVES THROUGH ADOPTION

Renee, a single mom in St. Clair Shores, had a 20 year career in accounting work before being laid off last October, just six months after she took in three children of relatives. While caring for her ten year-old biological son, Jacob, Renee has been taking classes to start a new career as an elementary school teacher. She has adopted one child, hopes to adopt two more, and serves as guardian for two other children. All are the children of relatives who either surrendered their parental rights or lost custody because of drug or neglect issues. Renee has two other biological children, both now adults living away from home.

Renee is now working on adopting seven year-old Kaine and his sister, eight year-old Brittani, for whom she is now caring as a foster parent. She has also taken in 12 year-old twins James and Joyce, serving as guardians for both.

“The most fulfilling part is witnessing how much they’ve changed,” said Renee. “Brittani and Kaine were raised on a lot of cereal and canned food and they quickly ate everything they could because they weren’t sure when their next meal would be. Joyce was always dividing her food to save some for later. They’re eating regularly now, they have clean clothes, and they bathe every day. It’s amazing how they’ve adjusted.”

Renee adopted two year-old Jade in December 2013 with the help of Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan (CCSEM). In 2012, a family member who was taking foster parent classes at CCSEM recommended the organization to Renee, who quickly enrolled at CCSEM’s Southfield office, which enabled her to bring Jade home from the hospital when she was two days old.

Now with six children under the roof of her three-bedroom house, Renee believes it’s not that much harder caring for three as it is for six. “I’m not saying it’s easy, but I do the things other families do. The kids are just like regular siblings. They have good days and bad days. Sometimes they fight, and most of the time they are best friends. I try to take my classes when they are in school and Jade is in daycare. We do our homework together, the kids do their chores, and they each earn a little allowance. It’s awesome helping them to restart their lives.” To help parents like Renee make ends meet, the State of Michigan provides payments for foster care as well as post-adoption financial assistance.

Renee credits Chris Boyer, CCSEM’s foster care and adoption services supervisor, with making Jade’s adoption possible. “He did everything for Jade’s... continued on page 3
The Christmas Giving Tree Campaign is welcoming friends old and new to help Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan provide a meaningful Christmas to children and families. Five CCSEM programs and services are the focus of this year's campaign and the involvement of parishes, schools, businesses, and individuals:

Refugee Resettlement: In 2013, CCSEM resettled 831 people from Iraq, the majority Chaldeans. So far this year, CCSEM has assisted more than 670 refugees to relocate to metro Detroit. These families have been persecuted and forced from their native lands, losing virtually all of their possessions. This program assists refugees by providing kitchen, household, and personal hygiene items, access to educational programs, and other resources to support their successful integration, independence, and self-sufficiency in the United States.

Hispanic Outreach: This CCSEM service provides education and support to help Hispanic families become self-sufficient and successful in their country, with an emphasis on building individual and family strengths. CCSEM annually helps about 500 Hispanic families through these services. Approximately 100 of these families are in severe financial need and cannot consistently provide their children with basic needs, which becomes especially evident at Christmas.

Project Hope: CCSEM partners with women to carry their pregnancy to term, embracing them with the love of Christ through companionship, support, and encouragement. In 2013, Project Hope provided assistance to nearly 100 mothers. So far in 2014 more than 120 moms have turned to Project Hope, and in 2015 the plan is to help even more throughout the Archdiocese of Detroit.

Crisis Navigation: CCSEM helps those with emergency needs anywhere in the region, offering immediate assistance for housing, food, and utilities. CCSEM strives to help people transition from securing basic needs to sustainability and independence. In 2013, CCSEM provided emergency help to over 400 families, a number surpassed in 2014, and a trend expected to continue in 2015.

Adult Day Health Services: CCSEM provides daytime centers where adults with dementia, cognitive disabilities, and other conditions requiring supervision can enjoy social activities and stimulating projects while receiving professional, personalized care in a comfortable, friendly setting. Adult Day Health Services enables caregivers to work, take a well-deserved break, and keep their loved ones at home, in the environment in which they are most familiar and comfortable.

To get involved, call Farrah Shammas at 586-416-1113, ext. 4021, or email: shammasf@ccsem.org.
adoption. He told me what to expect, what records I needed, the forms I had to complete, and when I needed to be in court. Chris made everything go smoothly and quickly.

Boyer oversees one full-time and three part-time adoption case workers at CCSEM, who facilitated 28 adoptions last year. They are currently working on about 35 other adoptions, which take from 150 days to a year or more. “Renee’s adoption of Jade was faster than many because they’re relatives, she was already caring for Jade as a foster parent, and she was engaged in the process,” said Boyer, who sees more single-parent adoptions when relatives are involved. “I never had to ask Renee twice for something.” Boyer has been involved in foster care and adoption work at CCSEM and its predecessor agencies for nearly three years. “It’s very fulfilling work to help children in need like this. It’s like giving children a second chance at life. They didn’t deserve to be in abusive or neglectful situations, and finding a loving home is what’s important to me.” Boyer and his wife are parishioners at St. Lawrence in Utica.

For Renee, court proceedings in Macomb County are expected to commence yet this year to adopt Kaine and Brittani. Boyer, as he did with Jade, is managing the casework for Renee.

CCSEM continually seeks adoptive parents and facilitates adoptions consistent with Catholic teachings and values. To learn more, call Chris Boyer at 248-552-0750, ext. 3936 or email: boyerc@ccsem.org.

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**CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE**

Please consider including one or more of these programs in your personal, business, or institutional Christmas giving.

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE 2014**

Multiple gifts of the following are needed to provide help and give hope through the year!
Since being licensed nearly three years ago by the State of Michigan to provide foster care in her house in Taylor, 58 year-old Catherine Debolt has provided refuge for eight children who suffered neglect or abuse. Widowed for 11 years and single, Debolt did hospital housekeeping before being disabled with chronic arthritis. “I had a choice – either sit around by myself and be in pain all day, or find a new purpose,” said Debolt. “I was helping care for family and others, and someone mentioned that I would be a good foster parent. Being single, I didn’t think that was possible, but I learned I could and signed up for classes.”

Debolt contacted Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan and attended weekend classes at the CCSEM office in Southfield. CCSEM caseworkers helped her prepare her three-bedroom house for licensure, which can take from three to six months. She is now a foster parent to eight year-old and 12 year-old boys. Debolt has fostered eight children and teens. “With the kids I don’t think about my arthritis too much – I don’t have time,” she said. “I get up to make them breakfast, get them ready for school, and take them on trips like camping or to hotels with pools when the weather turns so they stay active.”

The 12 year-old boy and his older sister were Debolt’s first foster children. She’s now working on adopting or becoming guardian for the boy depending on what the court decides. His sister is now in a semi-independent living program. “She’s very active in both of our lives,” said Debolt. She comes over all the time, and often spends the night. With him I feel safe doing guardianship or adoption, because if something were to happen to me, his sister would be strong enough to step in and care for him.” Debolt has kept in contact with almost all of the children she has fostered.

The shortest stay among Debolt’s foster children was about 30 days. The longest, her 12 year-old foster child, is approaching three years. She has cared for children between 6 and 18 years old. Three of her foster children have gone into semi-independent living and two have returned to their parents. One transferred to a different residential facility. “Considering the environments they’ve come from and the timing of their placements into foster care, I’ve been very blessed to have very well-behaved kids,” said Debolt. “I’m firm on household rules, and I reward good behavior. The kids are often so sad or angry they are in foster care that I try to make them understand it’s not
their fault and to appreciate the time we have together, so they develop a respect for what’s being done on their behalf, especially with their education. I do everything I can to make them feel this is a home and a safe place.” The State of Michigan provides twice-monthly reimbursements to foster parents for expenses related to the care of foster children.

Debolt credits CCSEM with enabling her to become licensed and for ongoing support. “CCSEM is very helpful and caring,” she said. “When I’ve had challenges, CCSEM has been there for me, and they’ve done everything I could expect them to do. I’ve gotten frustrated with the system at times, like when I’ve taken a child for supervised visitation and the parent doesn’t show up for weeks on end. We don’t have a lot of control – the courts do. CCSEM’s caseworkers know what the courts expect, and they do what they can, including petitioning to amend court orders.”

Jennifer Vasilovski has been a CCSEM foster care supervisor for six years, a role she describes as sometimes disappointing but always fulfilling. “It’s hard to deal with the environments some of the kids come from,” she said. “Some have been neglected, some abused. The foster parents and the children are worth all the effort.” Vasilovski, who serves as Debolt’s caseworker, describes a successful foster care environment as one in which the foster parent creates a normal, healthy, stable environment for the child, toward reunifying them with family or adoption. “A good foster parent does what a parent should do - put three meals a day on the table, keep the kids focused on school, get them involved in extracurricular activities, and do things with them on the weekends.”

About half of the CCSEM foster homes involve single parents like Debolt. “Every foster parent needs a substantial support system of family and friends,” said Vasilovski. “Catherine has that, and she’s a foster parent for all the right reasons. She really cares about the kids in her home, and she treats them to experiences they’ve never had before.”

“I plan on continuing this as long as I am able,” said Debolt. “Being a foster parent has given me a good purpose in life instead of being a lonely arthritic widow.”

The goal of CCSEM is to have at least one foster family for every parish in the Archdiocese of Detroit – more than 220 across six counties and the city of Detroit. Learn more about foster care by calling Jennifer Vasilovski at 248-552-0750, ext. 3925 or email: vasilovskij@ccsem.org.
HEADING OFF THE HOLIDAY BLUES

As advertising and the redefining of Christmas push the holiday season further away from its true purpose – to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ – pressure and stress are increasingly eroding the joy of this time of year. The residual effects of holiday-induced stress lead to an increase in appointment calls to therapists at Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan in late February and early March. Individuals seeking post-holiday therapy often battle through negative thoughts and experiences from Thanksgiving through New Year’s, then feel overwhelming exhaustion and sadness weeks later.

“People often put high expectations on themselves of how the holidays ‘should’ be when it comes to entertaining, gift-giving, making meals, decorating, and the like,” explained Andrea Foley, CCSEM director of behavioral health. “They tend to forget holiday activities take planning and occur on top of their daily routines. Many have more to do and the list of holiday tasks and responsibilities becomes longer. Also, the holidays bring out these same expectations and stressors for everyone – including family members – so long standing issues or problems within the family can be exacerbated during the holiday season. This can all lead to a higher vulnerability towards depressive symptoms and using poor coping strategies such as drinking more alcohol than usual.” Foley has been with CCSEM and its predecessor agencies since 2003.

The move away from the sacraments and prayer, especially among families, has resulted in many Catholics suffering holiday-triggered anxiety and depression. “Advent can and should be a four-week period of slowing down and reflection,” said Rev. David Santoro, chaplain at the Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament in Farmington Hills. “Whether you are single or in a family, there’s a great peace to be enjoyed by having an Advent wreath on your table and lighting a candle accompanied by prayer for each week in preparing for Christ’s birth.”

The true theme of Christmas is reconciliation, exemplified in God reconciling himself with the human race by sending his divine Son to redeem the sins of mankind. Another theme for Christmas is peace to all people on earth, personified in Jesus accepting everyone as they are and where they are, with the purpose of helping all to become better people by accepting and practicing his love. “We can take steps in that direction by trying to reconcile with loved ones and others before having tension and arguments at holiday gatherings,” said Father Santoro. “Write and send Christmas cards to those with whom you might not normally be in contact, reflect and pray for forgiveness, and practice understanding – those are all good ways to prepare for Christmas.”

CCSEM has about 50 clinicians spread across nine locations, including offices in Auburn Hills, Clinton Township, Lake Orion, Lapeer, Monroe, Port Huron, Royal Oak, and Waterford. All CCSEM therapists have a master’s degree or higher and are licensed in the State of Michigan to provide mental health or substance abuse treatment services.

“What differentiates our therapists is they work in a faith-based agency,” said Foley. “Spirituality and its role in good mental health is a primary focus of our services. Many of our clients desire a spiritual element in their therapy, and some don’t. We’re able to accommodate everyone.

**Signs of Seasonal or Generalized Depression**

- A sad or depressed mood for more days than not
- Tearfulness
- A foggy feeling making it difficult to focus and accomplish tasks
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Poor appetite or overeating
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Feelings of worthlessness and negative thoughts about oneself, others or the future
- Suicidal thoughts

Those experiencing these feelings, especially suicidal thoughts, should call 855-882-2736 to meet with a CCSEM therapist.
PARISH NURSES HELP HEAL MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

As a registered nurse, Maureen Duncan cares for hospice patients in metro Detroit. As one of about 70 parish nurses in southeast Michigan, she also serves the faithful at St. Mary Parish in St. Clair as well as the children at St. Mary’s School. Duncan has been a parish nurse since 1997, visiting the home bound and organizing programs to help with the emotional, physical, and spiritual health of her extended parish and school family.

“Parish nursing enables me to express my spirituality as well as my professional training as a registered nurse,” Duncan explained. “When I visit the home bound or volunteer in one of our parish or school clinics, I talk with people and learn if they have other health or spiritual needs.” Duncan serves as a Eucharistic minister at St. Mary and assists with a yearly anointing Mass for the sick.

Approximately 90 parishes in the Archdiocese of Detroit have parish nurses, who, like Maureen, usually serve as part of the parish Christian service ministry. Most parish nurses are affiliated with the community health program of one of the regional health care systems including Henry Ford Health System, Oakwood Healthcare, St. John Providence, and St. Joseph Mercy. The health systems typically provide training, equipment, and other resources for programs organized by the parish nurses.

Duncan recently organized a flu shot clinic at St. Mary with the Visiting Nurses Association, conducted during a parish health fair at which St. John Providence offered bone density testing, blood pressure screenings, and a grief education program for people enduring the loss of a loved one. “We try to offer these resources after Sunday Masses,” Duncan said. “Parish volunteers help out, including active and retired nurses, as well as other healthcare professionals.” She advises ushers on emergency procedures if someone experiences medical problems during Mass, and facilitated placing automated external defibrillators in the church and school.

Since 2011, Joyce Hyttinen has provided support for Christian service coordinators and parish nurses throughout southeast Michigan. Her position and responsibilities were transferred from the Archdiocese of Detroit to Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan earlier this year. “Parish nurses have a special ability to make the faithful feel comfortable,” she said. “They have lots of resources, make referrals, and most importantly, they engage in conversation, listen, and pray with people.”

Other parish nurse activities include organizing blood drives, parenting and babysitting programs, first aid training, and putting together talks and support groups for cancer patients and the caregivers of those with cognitive diseases like Alzheimer’s and dementia. “Parish nurses have the medical background and training to offer guidance and a deep faith,” Hyttinen said. “They know that prayer helps with our health and by sharing the love of Christ in such a tangible way with the faithful of all ages, there’s a strong element of evangelization in their work.”

Mary Kraus is in her in seventh year as Christian Service Coordinator at St. Lawrence in Utica, a parish with about 3,400 registered households. Kraus recently started a parish nurse ministry in partnership with St. John Providence. She consulted with Hyttinen, enlisted four parishioners, three of whom are nurses, and formed the parish Faith and Wellness Ministry. Their first event at St. Lawrence was an after-Mass flu shot clinic. As was done at St. Mary in St. Clair, the Visiting Nurses Association was involved and the clinic was extended to the St. Lawrence School.

“We are blessed with four very capable and dedicated women who have embraced the opportunity to lead this ministry and help parishioners with their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs,” said Kraus. “We are really looking forward to bringing a faith component to activities we plan to offer. As our Faith and Wellness team members get to know parishioners and their needs, they will direct them to the many resources available within the parish as well as in the community. For instance, a parishioner may need a visit from one of our priests, or could benefit from the Christian caregiving our Stephen ministry program offers, or may need the care of a CCSEM behavioral health therapist. Starting in January, we hope to offer monthly events or clinics at weekend Masses, during evenings, and at the school.”

CCSEM is actively recruiting additional nurses to provide the ministry in every parish. To learn more, call Joyce Hyttinen at 248-548-4044 ext. 3126, or email: hyttinenj@ccsem.org.

Parish Nurse Qualifications

- Current nursing license to practice
- Three to five years’ experience as a registered nurse
- Parish or faith community membership
- Completion of a preparation course through the International Parish Nurse Resource Center
Shawn, a Troy resident, was facing a hard challenge in October. Trying to make ends meet, she and her husband had fallen behind on their utility bills. Shutoffs were imminent. A local human service agency referred her to Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, which worked directly with the utilities to maintain service for the family of six. “It was a great help,” said Shawn. “I had to humble myself, understand things had gotten out of control, and made the call to CCSEM.”

Belinda Hughes has been with CCSEM and its predecessor agencies since 2009. She now leads CCSEM’s Crisis Navigation unit, personally managing requests for help on a daily basis and collaborating with dozens of other human service agencies in the region to alleviate emergency situations requiring food, shelter, clothing, and other basic needs. “Helping others like this is dear to me because I was once on the other side,” said Hughes. “I was unemployed and caring for a sick child for a year, so I understand how people get overwhelmed. I love to do what God wants me to do, which is helping my brothers and sisters.”

Hughes says many of her clients are happy to receive a prompt return phone call, a calm listening ear, and assistance to get through the challenge of the moment. “Belinda was prompt and persistent,” said Shawn. “She handled my utility problems in a day or two and then followed up because I didn’t have the clothes I needed for school.” Shawn is attending a training institute in Madison Heights to become a medical assistant, where hospital scrubs are required.

Pontiac resident Alicia awoke the morning of March 24 with her house in flames, escaping uninjured with her four-year-old son and some photos. Everything else was gone. She was able to move into a new place within a week-and-a-half of the fire, using assistance from CCSEM to help with her security deposit. “The fire was a real shock,” said Alicia. “I’ve been on my own since I was 16, I had never asked for help like this before, and I didn’t know where to turn.” An acquaintance recommended CCSEM and Belinda handled Alicia’s request. “Belinda was wonderful,” recalled Alicia. “She was very prompt and considerate. She let me know CCSEM would be there for my son and me for Thanksgiving and Christmas food packages, as well as for some toys, which we lost in the fire. She’s called to check on us, too. We both appreciate everything she’s done for us.”

To learn more about CCSEM’s Crisis Navigation program, call Belinda Hughes at 248-537-3300; ext. 3317 or email: hughesb@ccsem.org.
Two parishes, a Catholic school, and a dedicated parishioner were honored at an annual Mass for those with special needs and their loved ones celebrated by Detroit Archbishop Allen Vigneron at the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Detroit.

The awards for Outstanding Service to People with Disabilities are presented yearly by Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan and the Archdiocese of Detroit to recognize excellence among parishes and schools in embracing those with special needs and upholding the value, dignity, and sacredness of every person. The award is also presented to an individual demonstrating dedication to serving those with special needs.

The 2014 awardees include St. William Catholic School in Walled Lake for implementing a special education program serving children with special needs in grades kindergarten through eight. The program began in 2003 for children struggling in math and reading and was expanded in 2009 to include students with special needs such as Down syndrome and those with cognitive challenges.

The Special Needs Ministry team at SS. John and Paul Parish in Washington Township was recognized for forming a special needs prayer group that gathers on first Saturdays for several months of the year. Up to 90 group home residents and others have been welcomed for the last five years by a team of ten parish volunteers. The team organizes scripture dramas with costumes and props, singing and dancing to Bible songs, and prayer activities.

Holy Name Parish in Birmingham earned an award for its development of The Matthew Project, a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process created by parish staff and volunteers for individuals with developmental disabilities. This project maintains the catechetical and ritual integrity of the traditional RCIA process while meeting the individual needs of each catechumen and candidate.

Denise King, a parishioner at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Plymouth Township, was recognized for her service as executive director of Community Opportunity Center and as an administrator of Livonia Opportunity House. She has been involved in the development of 23 residential homes, all of which are in Wayne County housing men and women with developmental disabilities.

“I am grateful that so many persons with disabilities and so many caregivers have taken the time to be a part of this joyful occasion,” said Archbishop Vigneron. “This Mass helps us remember that each of us brings unique gifts and talents essential to the work of building up God’s kingdom in his Church.”

Hundreds of loved ones, caregivers, friends and colleagues of those with special needs attended the September liturgy. Parish-based ministries to embrace those with cognitive and physical challenges are growing in the region.

### 2014 Outstanding Service to Those with Disabilities Awardees

| Parish Program: | SS. John and Paul, Washington Township |
| Religious Education Program: | Holy Name Parish, Birmingham |
| School: | St. William, Walled Lake |
| Individual: | Ms. Denise King |

Outstanding Service to People with Disabilities awardees (left to right) include Linda Jackson, principal at St. William School in Walled Lake; Denise King; Deb Shiner, representing Holy Name Parish in Birmingham; and Annette Wright, representing SS. John and Paul Parish in Washington Township. At right is Jason Shanks, CEO of Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan.
The Mission of Project Hope

Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan protects and defends the inviolable dignity of the human person by supporting women to choose life for their unborn child. CCSEM accomplishes this mission by offering:

1. Pregnancy testing
2. Counseling and support
3. Referrals to community resources
4. Parent education
5. Fetal development and childbirth education
6. Housing
7. Nutrition
8. Employment
9. Financial guidance
10. Prenatal care referrals
Individual, family, and group counseling clients have a warmer, more peaceful office environment since CCSEM opened the doors on October 1 at its new location in Waterford.

“Our lease at the previous location on M-59 was up, so we looked around and landed here,” said Kirsti Reeve, site supervisor and clinical therapist. “This new location is in a quieter, more private setting and is more cost-effective for our needs. Our clients and staff really like the change.”

Nine CCSEM therapists, two interns, and two support staff are located at the Waterford facility, which offers extended evening hours on weekdays as well as Saturday appointments.

**Waterford Office at a Glance**

1370 North Oakland Boulevard  
Suite 105  
Waterford, MI 48237  
248-666-8870

Services:
- Mental health and substance abuse counseling  
- Individual and family clients  
- Couples’ therapy  
- Group therapy  
- Saturday and evening appointments

“We know that human life is sacred and inviolable. Every civil right rests on the recognition of the first and fundamental right, that of life, which is not subordinate to any condition, be it quantitative, economic or, least of all, ideological. “Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.... Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a ‘throw away’ culture which is now spreading” (Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, n. 53). And in this way life, too, ends up being thrown away.”

– Pope Francis, April 11, 2014
CCSEM
By the Numbers:

15,000+ Individuals served and supported by CCSEM last year in the Archdiocese of Detroit

200 Increase in appointments for behavioral health services with CCSEM therapists in Monroe and Royal Oak

18 Grants and contracts awarded to CCSEM or renewed in 2014 totaling nearly $3.3 million

11 CCSEM program and service locations

7 New family preservation programs started by CCSEM since 2013 – Crisis Navigation, Pathways to Housing in western Wayne County, Family Connections in Lapeer, two parenting programs in Monroe, Life Skills in St. Clair County, and Project Hope

Calendar

Saturday, February 28, 2015

3rd Annual Celebrity Spelling Bee
St. Mary Catholic Central High School
108 West Elm Avenue, Monroe, MI 48162

Saturday, April 18, 2015

Spring Gala
Villa Penna
43985 Hayes Road, Sterling Heights, MI 48313