

## Catholic Charities Lends a Helping Hand

By Ashley Mount  
Special to the Coloradoan

Catholic Charities, a faith-based nonprofit organization in Larimer County, has been working to reduce poverty for the past 40 years. Twenty staff members and 300 volunteers distribute money and services totaling \$1.1 million each year. "We just hope that through Christian charity, people follow their path by example," said Glenn Good, the regional director of the Larimer County office.

Through an El Pomar grant from the Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund, Catholic Charities offers emergency financial assistance as well as help with utility bills and prescriptions. Catholic Charities finds that many of the poorest people need to establish residency; they help by getting birth certificates, Colorado IDs and driver's licenses. Poverty also often comes with transportation issues, so Catholic Charities gets local bus passes as well as provides a bus ticket for people who may have had a family member die so they may attend services. However, it is utilities where Catholic Charities has seen the most need since 2009. "We work with several donors and have a close working relationship with the city of Fort Collins," Good said.

Good explained that Catholic Charities also is able to help pay the utilities when people get behind. For the last couple of years, they have used Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund dollars to supplement their emergency system utility budget, which permits them to help more families get their heat turned back on during the winter.

The Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund offers money to several area nonprofits who serve those in need. "People cry when they hear that their \$600 utility bill can be covered," Good said. Some other aids Catholic Charities provides is a homeless shelter and a hospitality kitchen that serves 90,000 meals a year. People who stay there get breakfast and dinner.

At the hospitality kitchen, the staff is committed to helping others. "We do try and treat everyone that we work with, with dignity and respect and create a safe environment," Good said. "People work here because they like to." Good shared the story of a mother and daughter who were in the kitchen volunteering and helping out with the dinner when the daughter stated that it was great to have her mother here. She's been volunteering here for a long time and will turn 99 in December.

"It is most rewarding to see the gratitude in people's eyes when they've been helped, and the compassion that is displayed from the people that volunteer their services to us," Good said. He also talks about a letter he got in the mail that came with \$5 in it. The sender, an elderly man, made minimal income but he wanted to give this money to help. "For that person, five dollars. For anyone else, a hundred-thousand dollars could've been a sacrifice," Good said. "For this person, it really was five dollars."

The Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund helps Catholic Charities meet the needs that come to them. "There are few restrictions. Most of the funds we receive from donors and grants have restrictions; people have to fit into a certain category to get the help.

"With the Empty Stocking Fund, we're getting the flexibility to meet needs that might be excluded by other donors," Good said.

*Ashley Mount is a Colorado State University student who wrote this story on behalf of the Northern Colorado Empty Stocking Fund.*