



**CATHOLIC
CHARITIES**
HOPE for all seasons

A Report to the Community



Welcome



Deacon Steve Schumer

Coming off our centennial year, we are so grateful for those who supported and celebrated with us as we marked this impressive milestone. And while it was wonderful to celebrate all that we have accomplished over the past 100 years, it also provided an opportunity to contemplate where we want to go as we start our next chapter.

With an eye toward the future, we continue to make improvements within our agency, seeking ways to be more efficient and identify ways to address some of the most pressing needs in our community.

You will read later on about our work with Permanent Supportive Housing, Nole's Court and Angela's House. Funded through Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI), Nole's Court and Angela's House are affordable permanent living situations for older adults with chronic health issues and who have been experiencing homelessness.

We are also excited to be an early participant in the New York Health Equity Reform 1115 Waiver Amendment, which offers Catholic Charities an opportunity to expand our impact on the community while lessening our reliance on Appeal funds to support these critical services.

We also plan to expand our school-based support services to provide integrated social-emotional, counseling and care coordination services. We are also exploring new ways to integrate mental health counseling with other community-based programs and services.

In addition to focusing on ways we can better serve the Western New York community, we are also identifying new ways to enhance the professional development of our staff. This year, we implemented the agency's first Leadership Development Program for our staff. The 10-month program uses a mix of learning methods – from lectures and training sessions to one-on-one mentoring – to both foster and grow our leaders' confidence, skill sets, and knowledge. The first cohort graduated in June 2024. We are pleased with its inaugural success and look forward to its positive impact on the agency.

While we are mindful of the significant challenges that lie before us and the community we serve, we continue to be steadfast in our mission of serving those most in need and focused on a vision shaped by HOPE. This is the purpose that drives us forward, inspires ingenuity, and compels success. As you read through this year's report to the community, we hope you are inspired by the good work being done and see clearly how your support truly makes a difference for so many.

Peace and Blessings,
Deacon Steve Schumer

Mission, Vision and Values

Our Mission

Catholic Charities of Buffalo is a Catholic sponsored human service agency serving anyone in need in the eight counties of Western New York. Believing all persons are created by God, we advocate for equity and justice for all people and empower individuals, children and families to achieve and maintain meaningful, healthy and productive lives.

Our Vision

Catholic Charities will be a community leader in providing quality, effective and efficient human services.

We will be the premier agency of choice for clients, donors, employees and volunteers.

We will be the beacon of hope for those in need.

Our Values



Compassion
Following the example of Jesus Christ, we seek to serve all those we encounter with dignity, respect, and the embrace of hope, in a trauma informed way.



Empowerment
Making a difference requires intentional strategies to engage, equip and support our employees and clients, meeting needs, guiding progress and effecting systemic change.



Diversity
Each is unique, all are worthy and in the spirit of inclusion we reach out, invite in and strive for excellence as we enhance the lives of clients, employees, volunteers and donors.



Teamwork
We recognize that collaboration and open communication build collegiality and sustain growth, which in turn expands our helpfulness to those in need.



Integrity
We commit to speak honestly, act ethically, and foster trust.

Program Highlights

Strengthening Communities, One Pantry at a Time

In 2024, Catholic Charities of Buffalo marked a year of transformative growth and renewal in its mission to combat food insecurity across Western New York. Two major milestones highlighted the organization's commitment to enhancing accessibility, dignity, and community support for individuals and families in need: the openings of the new Lovejoy Food Pantry and Perry-St. Brigid Food Pantry locations.

LOVEJOY FOOD PANTRY: A Tradition of Care, Renewed

September saw the relocation of the Lovejoy Food Pantry to a new, updated space at 118 Schiller Street in Buffalo. Situated just across the parking lot from its previous home on North Ogden Street, this move reflects a thoughtful commitment to better serve the more than 2,500 households that rely on the pantry each year. Julie Lulek, Senior Director, said the goal of the new location is to provide a welcoming and safe environment for staff and volunteers to serve community members with their dietary needs. The new one-level facility includes an accessible design, a dedicated client welcome area, and a covered service space for supplemental food distributions, allowing clients waiting outdoors for food distribution protection from inclement weather.



The relocation also supports expanded offerings, including more client choice in meeting special dietary needs and providing culturally appropriate foods. The Lovejoy Food Pantry, which operates Wednesdays and Fridays, has been a cornerstone of the neighborhood since 1990, underscoring Catholic Charities' long-standing presence and impact in the community.

PERRY-ST. BRIGID FOOD PANTRY: Honoring the Past, Building for the Future

Earlier in the year, Catholic Charities celebrated the opening of the new Perry-St. Brigid Food Pantry at 305 Perry Street. This facility, which replaced the former Fulton-St. Brigid location, boasts a 2,500-square-foot space within the Commodore Perry Extension apartments, funded by a \$500,000 capital improvement initiative from the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority (BMHA).

Deacon Steve Schumer, President and CEO of Catholic Charities, blessed the new pantry during a dedication ceremony that drew praise from local leaders, including Buffalo Deputy Mayor Dr. Callie Johnson. "This brand-new facility will be able to serve more residents and will be more accessible. I want to thank Catholic Charities for once again stepping up and making a difference in our City," Dr. Johnson said.

The Perry-St. Brigid Food Pantry serves approximately 1,745 households annually and is open on Wednesdays. Its expanded layout includes a waiting room, offices, storage, and service areas, enhancing the overall client experience. "This new space allows us to provide more choice, better meet dietary needs, and reduce food waste—all while treating our clients with dignity," noted Lulek.

The Perry-St. Brigid Food Pantry carries a legacy dating back to the 1859 founding of St. Brigid Parish in Buffalo's Old First Ward. The name honors the parish's pivotal role in supporting Irish immigrants and later its work in addressing food insecurity.

Program Highlights (continued)

A NETWORK OF HOPE

The Lovejoy and Perry-St. Brigid Food Pantries are two of nine Catholic Charities pantry and outreach centers serving Western New York, with seven in Erie County and additional locations in Wellsville and Franklinville. Each pantry offers emergency food, referrals, and support from trained volunteers dedicated to helping individuals and families navigate challenging times.

These milestones reflect Catholic Charities' unwavering commitment to building stronger, healthier communities. By offering safe, welcoming spaces and innovative approaches to client care, Catholic Charities continues to fulfill its mission of serving those in need with compassion, dignity, and respect.

Together, we are feeding hope and strengthening our community.

Expanding Hope and Stability: Supportive Housing Programs

This past fiscal year, Catholic Charities of Buffalo proudly participated in transformative housing initiatives designed to bring stability, dignity, and a sense of community to vulnerable populations. Two exceptional developments, Noles Court and Angela's House, highlight our mission in action.

NOLES COURT

Opened in December 2023, Noles Court, located at 99 Best Street in Buffalo, is part of a \$93 million project spearheaded by New York State to provide affordable housing on the city's East Side. Located in the Fruit Belt neighborhood, Noles Court features 49 one-bedroom apartments for individuals 55 and older who are homeless, have a chronic condition, and are Medicaid-eligible. Residents, paying 30% of their income, benefit from fully funded support through the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI).



Catholic Charities provides case management for ESSHI tenants, connecting them to medical care, mental health resources, community services, and employment opportunities. Monthly events, such as karaoke and health awareness workshops, help foster connections among tenants. One tenant, initially isolated due to severe trauma, has grown into an active participant in the community thanks to consistent support from staff.

ANGELA'S HOUSE

Located at 590 Doat Street in Cheektowaga, Angela's House, a project spearheaded by the Felician Sisters of St. Francis and Delta Development of Western New York, saw the renovation of the former Villa Maria Academy into apartments for lower-income and homeless seniors. It offers fully furnished one-bedroom apartments with accessible amenities for individuals with mobility, hearing, or visual needs. Utilities, laundry, and case management are included, along with health and wellness programs designed to enhance residents' quality of life.

These supportive housing programs exemplify Catholic Charities' dedication to addressing homelessness and fostering community, offering not just housing but pathways to holistic stability and belonging.

Program Highlights (continued)

Celebrating the Dedication and Recognition of Our Volunteers

Catholic Charities of Buffalo relies heavily on community support, including the work of our volunteers. This year, their extraordinary dedication earned both state and national recognition, showcasing the profound impact they have every day on those across the eight counties of Western New York.

DEB MOTT: CURA Award for Outstanding Caregiver

In the fall, Deb Mott, a kinship caregiver volunteer from Hinsdale, was honored by the New York State KinCare Coalition with the CURA Award for Outstanding Caregiver. A founding member of the Cattaraugus County kinship group, Deb exemplifies resilience and compassion. As a single grandmother who raised her grandchildren, Deb faced significant challenges, including her diagnosis of multiple sclerosis. Despite this, she remained deeply involved, volunteering to teach painting classes to other kinship families.

“Deb has been a mentor to countless caregivers, offering empathy and guidance to those navigating their new roles,” said Danielle Kielar, kinship caregiver social worker. Deb’s work embodies the spirit of kinship care, ensuring children receive the love and stability they need while supporting caregivers.

KATHY ELIAS: Transforming Refugee Housing

Kathy Elias leads a team of over 100 volunteers, “Kathy’s Happy Helpers,” as part of the Immigration & Refugee Assistance Program. Starting with home setups for Afghan refugees, Kathy developed a system for collecting and organizing donated items to transform basic shelters into welcoming homes.

“Kathy and her team go above and beyond, creating spaces that bring comfort and hope to families who arrive with little more than their resilience,” said Lauren Mye, program supervisor for the Immigration and Refugee Assistance Program. Mye shared that thanks to the work of Kathy and her team, a family of eight, who had initially planned to leave Buffalo, chose to stay after seeing their beautifully prepared home.

Through their selflessness, Deb and Kathy exemplify the mission of Catholic Charities: to empower and uplift those in need, ensuring dignity, equity, and hope for all. Their recognition underscores the transformative power of volunteerism in creating lasting change.



Deb Mott



Kathy Elias

Program Highlights (continued)

1115 Waiver: Advancing Health Equity Through Social Care

The New York Health Equity Reform 1115 Waiver Amendment offers Catholic Charities of Buffalo a groundbreaking opportunity to expand its impact on community well-being. By redirecting Medicaid funds from direct clinical services to social care initiatives, the waiver supports essential services like transportation, transitional housing, food assistance, and health-related social needs (HRSN) screenings.

Through the waiver, all Medicaid recipients undergo a standardized screening to identify barriers such as housing instability, nutritional gaps, and educational or workforce challenges. Catholic Charities will focus on providing these screenings, along with service navigation and care coordination, ensuring clients are connected to the resources they need. Unlike traditional funding models, the waiver introduces Medicaid reimbursement for these critical social services, creating a sustainable model that reduces the reliance on Appeal funding.

“This new funding provides an opportunity to focus on one of the things we do best, such as case management and housing support, while collaborating with other providers for services like transportation or meal delivery,” said Megan Lostracco-Reed, Catholic Charities Senior Director.

The waiver also incentivizes improved outcomes by tying reimbursements to value-based metrics. Success in meeting or exceeding these goals could result in additional bonus payments, further strengthening Catholic Charities’ programs.

This initiative not only sustains current services but also positions Catholic Charities as a key partner in addressing social determinants of health. By aligning its expertise with community needs, the agency continues to advance its mission, providing hope and tangible solutions to those it serves.

Community Impact

147,470

People served through more than 50 programs offered across 50 locations



Basic Needs

14,205



Behavioral Health

7,320



Nutritional Services

113,907



School-Based Services

3,015



Stability & Connectedness

1,809



Workforce Development

3,098

Organizational Development

This year, Catholic Charities President and CEO, Deacon Steve Schumer, announced the creation of three workgroups within the agency, signifying our commitment to several crucial strategic areas of focus: Trauma-Informed Care (TIC); Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB); and Workplace Wellbeing.

The establishment of these workgroups signaled a reinvigoration and reimagination of what these areas of focus mean to Catholic Charities, and how they should intertwine with our commitment to support both our clients and our staff.

Workgroup leadership includes: TIC co-led by Emily Mehlretter, Senior Director of Family Enrichment, and Jim Lowe, Senior Director of Workforce Development; DEIB co-led by Megan Lostracco-Reed, Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives, and Cherie Sugg, Chief Human Resources Officer; and Workplace Wellness co-led by Anne Miles, District Director for Cattaraugus and Allegany counties, and Lyndsey Robichaud, Senior Manager HRBP and Agency Business Center.

In her role as Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives, Lostracco-Reed will be spearheading collaboration among the groups and leading the unified strategic direction.

“These workgroups underscore the importance of overall wellness in our agency. When we take care of our employees, and they feel supported, we know that carries over to our clients,” said Lostracco-Reed. “It’s essential to remember that as a human services provider, we recognize that in its simplest terms, we are people taking care of people. Every person in our agency, whether they be a client or a staff member, is a complex person with a set of ideals and experiences that have shaped their lives. It’s important to lead with that knowledge. These workgroups will help hone that skillset and mindset.”

In January 2025, these workgroups, in addition to the Safety Committee and Emergency Preparedness and Response Committee, will convene to establish a unified Strategic Direction and clear project plan to spur positive impacts for the agency as a whole.

Organizational Development (continued)

Homegrown Leadership

Beginning in September 2023, Catholic Charities launched its inaugural Leadership Development Program – a high-level training initiative for agency leaders to glean new skills and hone those already in pocket.

The 10-month program centered on monthly training where participants attended interactive seminars led by respected professionals and experts in the realms of leadership, creative thinking, conflict resolution, and others.

To tailor to the more personal development of each leader, the program also included one-on-one mentoring, to give a personalized approach to leadership development, and to encourage personal and professional growth.

The first cohort graduated in June. One program participant said, “Over the past year of the leadership development program, my journey as a professional leader has been marked by continuous growth and transformation. Through targeted mentorship and self-reflection, I have identified key areas for improvement and taken tangible steps toward addressing them.”

Catholic Charities is committed to developing strong, well-rounded leaders to continue our tradition of excellence in serving those in need.

Celebrating 100 Years

A Centennial Worth Celebrating

Our 100th anniversary in the Western New York Community gave us a golden opportunity to explore new ways to tell our story. In today's age, that looked like getting our story down on film.

Working alongside Buffalo-based ad agency Abbey Mecca, we produced a half-hour long documentary film, titled "A Century of HOPE: Catholic Charities of Buffalo 1923-2023." It was broadcast a total of four times on WBBZ, WGRZ and WUTV in January 2024. Our Catholic Charities team identified and brought on board 16 interviewees that represented our past and present, sharing their first-hand accounts of key moments in our history and their hopes for our future.

The documentary film was a highlight of our centennial year, offering us a moment to reflect on our rich history in the community and the impacts we have had and sustained over the years.

In addition to the documentary, our centennial year included a kickoff luncheon, a robust social media campaign, community outreach efforts, a coffee-table style book, and a culminating celebration Mass and luncheon.

We're so grateful to those who joined in our celebrations, but we are especially indebted to those who came before us and made Catholic Charities what it is today – truly an agency worth celebrating!



Appeal 2024 Results

Catholic Charities milestone 100th Appeal was officially launched on January 11, 2024, with an announced goal of \$9.5 million.

More than 20,500 generous donors provided gifts that totaled more than \$8 million. Although coming in 16% shy of the stated goal, the Appeal did see some encouraging trends, including an increase in corporate giving, which saw an increase of more than \$26,000 over the prior year.

The average per-donor gift for 2024 was up across almost all donor segments. Of note, the average corporate gift increased by \$850.

Development efforts experienced some growing pains in 2024 as the launch of a new database, and the inherent challenges such an endeavor brings, delayed the initial Appeal mailing by five weeks. There were some innovative efforts for Appeal 2024, including the inaugural “Hops for HOPE” event. Hops for HOPE was collaborative effort with Resurgence Brewing to increase visibility of HOPE Day, the single biggest fundraising day during the six-month Appeal.

In August 2023, Catholic Charities welcomed a new Chief Development Officer. Chuck Hayes joined the team and helped to reshape the department, including a merger in July 2024 of our Communications and Development functions into one department focused on elevating the Catholic Charities brand and strengthening relationships with our donors and supporters.

Key Constituency Giving: Appeal 2024

Parish Community	\$6,340,230.72
Corporate	\$678,308.73
WNY Non-Affiliated	\$640,135.86
Clergy	\$247,251.21
Catholic Communities	\$96,778.85
Appeal Totals	\$8,002,705.37

Financial Performance

Financial Stewardship July 2023–June 2024

TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT **\$34,818,782**

Grants & Contracts **\$15,739,032**

Annual Appeal **\$6,377,360**

Service Fees **\$5,005,561**

Philanthropy and In-Kind Contributions **\$7,696,828**

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$36,667,046**

Program Expenses **\$29,860,771**

Administration Expenses **\$4,864,807**

Fundraising Expenses **\$1,941,468**

Looking Ahead

If there is one thing the last 100 years tells us about the future, it's that we can expect two things with great certainty in 2025: A continued need for our services, and change.

We expect to see more individuals, children, and families in need of the programs and services we offer. The uncertainties associated with the economy and inflation are expected to increase the strain on safety-net services, including mental health services, emergency financial assistance, and food pantries. The capacity to deliver mental health services – from clinical treatment to in-school social work services – will be tested by the increasing crisis of isolation, loneliness, and challenges with family instability. We will be well prepared to meet these challenges, so long as we are able to raise the resources required to meet the increasing demand.

While we expect to enhance some programs and services, the economic realities ahead will require a careful evaluation of our capacity to deliver those services and a practical assessment of the physical infrastructure in which we operate. Managing the delivery of services across a practical footprint of locations is essential to the efficient use of our resources.

With such deep roots in our Catholic faith and legacy, our support is intertwined with the Catholic community and our diocese. We are in a period of unprecedented change within our diocese and the shifting landscape of parish life will require both our compassionate assistance and understanding as well as operational changes for our agency, particularly with how we run our annual Appeal.

The future, like the past is in God's hands. We know that as He reveals each new day to us, that we are on the right path so long as we remain committed to our mission. In this Jubilee Year of 2025, we will once again answer the call to be Pilgrims of HOPE.

Trustees & Senior Leadership

Board of Trustees

Most Rev. Michael W. Fisher | Chairperson | Bishop, Diocese of Buffalo

Alexis Agnello | Group Manager, M&T Bank Commercial Division – Buffalo

Thomas R. Beecher Jr., Esq. | Attorney, Phillips, Lytle LLP

**Patricia Clabeaux | Executive VP/ Chief Human Resources Officer,
Independent Health Association**

Rick Cronin | Community Volunteer

John Daly | Managing Principal, Trautman Associates

**Anthony Delmonte, Jr. | Vice Chairperson | Business and Professional Banking/Market Manager
for Western and Central New York, M&T Bank**

Joseph H. Emminger | Treasurer | Supervisor, Town of Tonawanda

Kevin Gannon | Chief of Sales, Azeros Health Plans

Rev. Peter J. Karalus | Vicar General, Diocese of Buffalo

Jill D. Manka | Career Readiness Specialist and adjunct professor, Villa Maria College

Donna P. Mitchell, MDiv, MAPM | Founder/CEO, Universal Ministry Network

**Nancy H. Nielsen, MD, PhD | Senior Associate Dean for Health Policy, Medicine,
University at Buffalo**

Melissa Potzler | Chancellor, Diocese of Buffalo

Anne Ryan | Executive Director, Read to Succeed Buffalo

Esmeralda Sierra | Community Volunteer

Adam Sumlin, PhD | Assistant Professor of Oncology, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

Steve Timmel | Community Volunteer

Kellie Ulrich | Secretary | Counsel, Magavern Magavern Grimm LLP

Trustees Emeritus | Robert M. Bennett

Executive | Deacon Steve Schumer | President and Chief Executive Officer