



Parish, agency services offer P hope for poor, hungry

Parents without jobs. Children with nothing to eat. Homeless families.

Each day, thousands of people throughout the Diocese of Grand Rapids must make hard choices between hunger, housing and health care for their families. For them, and the thousands more throughout the world who live in poverty, everyday is a struggle to survive.

Most West Michigan Catholics don't have to look beyond their own parishes to find those less fortunate. However, hope exists in the growing number of programs offered by parish communities throughout the diocese.

Catholic Charities West Michigan (CCWM), through its

program, God's Kitchen, has recently collaborated with two parishes in the diocese to open outreach projects serving hot meals to those in need from the parish locations.

Every Thursday evening, God's Kitchen North, located in Our Lady of Consolation (OLC) Parish's family center is

Local food pantries and other programs

Many parishes maintain their own food pantries or work ecumenically with other churches to feed those in their local communities. To find out more about the food pantry in your area, please contact your parish.

Catholic Charities West Michigan (CCWM) also works to help individuals facing the challenges of everyday life, offering numerous programs in our communities, including (but not limited to), the following:

- Casa de la Paz Emergency Shelter
- Foster Grandparents/Senior Companions
- God's Kitchen food programs
 - God's Kitchen in Grand Rapids
 - Christian Community Center in Muskegon Heights
 - Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry in Muskegon
- Suburban Outreach Program

open from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., serving a no-cost dinner to anyone who visits. The first outreach opened in April 2009 at St. John Vianney Parish in Wyoming serves meals every Tuesday from 6 p.m.-7 p.m.

“Our ongoing goal is to better serve the communities in the 11-county area of the Grand Rapids Diocese by partnering with area churches,” said Deborah Nykamp, president of CCWM. “Our agency’s outreach is constantly growing and we’re thankful for this opportunity to expand our food programs by going into communities to help feed those who may be struggling.”

The dinners, including a salad, main course and vegetables, are prepared at God’s Kitchen in downtown Grand Rapids and transported to the church ready-to-serve. An array of homemade desserts await guests at the end of their meals, compliments of OLC parish members. Other parish volunteers welcome guests, invite them to be seated, serve beverages and food, and make everyone feel comfortable.

“Northern Kent County, including Rockford, has been hard hit by the struggling economy,” said Todd Oatley, one of the OLC coordinators. “Perhaps, for the first time in their lives, people right in our own neighborhoods have to choose between obtaining prescriptions or paying utilities and buying groceries. This is why God’s Kitchen North is such a blessing. By offering dinner every week to those individuals and families who are facing tough financial times, we can at least help ease some of the stress they feel. I hope anyone who can make it, does come to enjoy a great dinner and good company. Everyone is welcomed.”



Save the date

Annual Soup’s On events benefit CCWM programs

Upcoming dates for Soup’s On, the annual fundraising events that benefit the food and pantry programs of Catholic Charities West Michigan (CCWM), include:

Soup’s On For All!

Monday, Jan. 25, 2010
The B.O.B. in downtown Grand Rapids

Soup’s On Along the Lakeshore!

Thursday, Feb. 25, 2010
Above and Beyond at Oakridge Golf Course in Norton Shores

These programs help benefit the Christian Community Center in Muskegon Heights, God’s Kitchen in Grand Rapids and Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry of Muskegon.

Soup’s On guests sample a selection of soups, breads, and amazing desserts, and enjoy a variety of entertainment by local performers and bands. Virtually all items for the events are donated by local restaurants, bakeries and businesses. In 2009, these events raised close to \$140,000, helping to nourish families and individuals throughout West Michigan. If you would like more information, email soup-bowl@sbcglobal.net or go to soupsonforall.org.



- Immigration Assistance
- Low Income Pharmacy Care
- Project Rachel (Post Abortion Reconciliation & Counseling)
- Family, Individual, and Child Counseling
- Substance Abuse Treatment
- Domestic Violence Group Counseling
- Psychiatric Services

- Premarital Preparation
- Pregnancy Support & Counseling
- Family Support Programs
- Foster Parenting

For further details and to learn about additional services provided by CCWM, call **616.551.4747** or visit ccwestmi.org.