Together, we can

You helped this mom get back on her feet.

INSIDE
How a new home helped heal a broken relationship
One mother’s struggle to save her daughter’s health
A family is reunited through resilience and strength
“Unity happens when we walk together.” Pope Francis

Together, we can is much more than the theme for our 2021-2022 Catholic Charities Annual Appeal. Because of you, it’s something that happens everyday here at Catholic Charities. Individuals and families facing unimaginable circumstances walk through our doors feeling isolated, anxious, and desperate for help. They feel truly alone.

Thanks to you, these individuals and families experience the love and mercy of Jesus through the ministries of Catholic Charities. When they feel compassion and acceptance, some of their burdens are lifted, and they can begin to see hope for a brighter future. Because of you, they have someone to walk with them on their journey, every step of the way. You become part of their story of hope and healing through your faithful generosity.

Your continued support remains crucial to the growing mission of Catholic Charities throughout Northern Kansas, and we still need your help to keep moving forward. The Schmidt Foundation, along with anonymous donors, have provided a Together, We Can Donation Match, which means your gift will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to $100,000! No gift is ever too small to make a big impact on the life of someone in need.

To make a tax-deductible donation, complete and return the form on the back of this newsletter or give securely online at www.ccnks.org/annualappeal.

As you will read in the following stories, your help truly does make a real and lasting difference. Together, we can keep providing help and restoring hope to our neighbors in need.

God bless you!

Guided by God’s love, our mission is to provide compassionate service to all people in need throughout Northern Kansas.

We do this in a variety of ways:

- Financial & Housing Assistance
- Basic Needs - Food, Hygiene, Diapers, Clothing
- Counseling Services
- Immigration Legal Services
- Pregnancy Support & Adoption Services

Serving 31 counties from offices in Hays, Salina, and Manhattan
When Shelly Sisneroz came to Catholic Charities, she was anxious, afraid, and unsure. Like many, Shelly struggles with addiction and had relapsed after nine years of sobriety. The aftershocks of her relapse had catastrophic effects on her personal relationships and finances, leaving her isolated. That’s when Shelly turned to Catholic Charities, where she received housing assistance and regained control of her life.

“When I relapsed, it was really bad. I decided I was going to live alone, but I could not save up the money,” Shelly said. “When I came to Catholic Charities and applied for housing assistance, I was approved that same day. I left in tears. I had never had that kind of support from people who did not know me.”

Because of your generous support, Shelly was able to move into an apartment in a safe, clean area. “It only took me three weeks to find a place to live,” she said. “To not have to worry about the deposit, being in a safe place, or having to live with somebody that I do not know or trust was huge.”

For Shelly, the most important gift her sobriety has given her was a chance to reconnect with her son. “For me, to be able to say I turned my life around, and to not just say it, but show it, was a stepping stone for fixing that relationship,” Shelly said.

She is immensely grateful for the support and second chance at a stable life. “It is just really important that I show gratitude for the help I was given,” she said. “The only thing that Catholic Charities wants is for you to be in a better place and to do the right thing.”
All Angela Guerra wanted was for her 13-year-old daughter Elizabeth to be able to live a normal, healthy life. However, this wish seemed increasingly impossible, as Elizabeth’s health was quickly declining. Elizabeth had been diagnosed with Tarlov Cysts, a rare disease in which fluid-filled nerve root cysts are found along the base of the spine, causing extreme pain, muscle weakness, and even loss of reflexes. Angela and Elizabeth visited countless doctors before receiving this diagnosis.

“It was stressful, very stressful,” Angela said. “When you know something is wrong with your daughter and all you want is for your kid to live a normal child life. All you want is to find one doctor that believes in you to say this is what’s wrong, we are going to fix it and she will be ok. It was hard.”

The only way Elizabeth could be cured was by undergoing major back surgery in Dallas. While this operation would pose a fair amount of risk, it was the only way for Elizabeth to regain a normal life. Due to the countless medical expenses that accompanied Elizabeth’s disease, Angela did not know how she could afford the trip for the life-saving procedure. “We had the stress of trying to figure out how to get down to Dallas,” Angela said. “And figuring out where we were going to stay because we had to be there for eight days.”

Desperate to find a way, Angela came to Catholic Charities, where she was able to receive assistance through the Catastrophic Illness Fund. “Catholic Charities helped us with our hotel and food,” Angela said. “It was a lot of reassurance to know that money was there to help.”

Because of the generosity of donors like you, Elizabeth was able to travel to Dallas with her mother and receive back surgery, a procedure that ultimately gave her a new chance at life. “Before her surgery, her outcome was just being at home,” Angela said. “Now she can go back to school. Shes in driver’s ed. She gets to go do things and be a kid again where before she couldn’t. Before, she was stuck at home in bed.”

Angela says that the assistance she received from Catholic Charities not only changed her daughter’s present life, but her future. “Catholic Charities’ help brought hope to us,” Angela said. “Hope for Elizabeth to be able to live again.”
For any parent, the thought of not being able to live in the same country as their young child is an unimaginable scenario. For Sandra Gonzalez, this was a daily, nightmarish reality.

Sandra, who was born in the United States, moved back to her family’s native city of Fresnillo, Mexico, when she was just four years old. Sandra spent most of her childhood and young adult life in Mexico, where she eventually married and welcomed two daughters, Jazmin and Eileen. However, Sandra’s life in Mexico was not easy. She was entangled in an abusive marriage, which eventually ended. “I was in a very toxic marriage with my ex-husband,” Sandra said. “I felt alone and hopeless for the future.”

In 2018, Sandra moved back to the United States to give herself and her children a better life, one full of opportunity and possibilities. There was one major setback, however. While Sandra was a natural-born American citizen, her two daughters were not. This meant that for Sandra’s daughters to live in the United States with her, they would need to be granted permanent legal status by the United States government, which can be a lengthy and expensive process.

“When I came to the States, I had to leave my two children in Mexico,” Sandra said. “I was also pregnant with my third child, so I was able to stay with my ex-husband’s family, but I still had very little support.”

With limited financial means, Sandra said hiring a private immigration lawyer was not possible for her at that time. “A lot of lawyers want to charge you so much money and there was no way I could afford it,” Sandra said. “I just wanted to have my kids in the States with me as soon as possible, but I did not have any money to hire a lawyer.”

Although she was discouraged, Sandra was not going to give up hope on getting her children to the United States. She started investigating and discovered Catholic Charities through a distant relative. In August of 2018, In desperate need of guidance and support, Sandra set up an appointment with Catholic Charities’ Immigration Services Department. “When I first came to Catholic Charities, there was so much going on in my life,” Sandra said. “I knew I was in America. I knew I wanted to make something of my life, but I was lost without my kids.”
Over the course of several months, Yessenia Baquera, Immigration and Hispanic Services Specialist and Diana Hernandez, Immigration Services Assistant, guided Sandra through the process of getting her two daughters’ permanent legal status. But then, amid this long, grueling process, Sandra received devastating news from her family in Mexico. Her youngest daughter, Eileen, 6, had passed away unexpectedly due to complications from undiagnosed juvenile diabetes.

Losing her daughter under such tragic, unexpected circumstances was a heartbreak Sandra never expected. “In the midst of the process of getting my kids to be able to live with me in the States, I was dealing with the death of my youngest daughter. It was so hard,” Sandra said. “While I was incredibly heartbroken and devastated, I was grateful I at least had the chance to see her after she passed and give her one last hug and one last kiss. There are people who cannot even go back to their countries when a family member passes away.”

This mindset of gratitude carried Sandra through her darkest days after Eileen’s passing, as she still had her eldest daughter, Jazmin, to fight for. A few months after Eileen’s death, Jazmin was granted permanent legal status and joined her mother in the United States in July 2021. Sandra said she was incredibly thankful to be reunited with Jazmin, but it was bittersweet because Eileen was not there with them. “I went back to Mexico to bring back one daughter when it should have been two,” Sandra said. “Through everything I do, I try my best to be positive. I still have two other kids that need me.”

Through all the adversities Sandra has faced, one thing has remained constant: her abiding and unconditional love for her children. “Everything I make in my life, every decision I make, is all for them,” Sandra said. “The foundation I built here in America is all going to be for their future.”

Yessenia shared that Sandra’s strength and resilience throughout this process speaks to the greater mission of Catholic Charities’ immigration program. “Sandra is a mother who wants her children to be safe and have a good life, as any parent would. She went through a long and trying journey to try to get her two daughters to the United States of America, a country she was born in,” she said. “Our immigration services at Catholic Charities aided Sandra’s family journey. We interviewed, researched, filled forms, along with other tasks to try to get two young children to reunite with their mother. These services provide support in navigating, educating, and supporting families through this process.”

Sandra expressed that if it were not for the guidance and support she received from Catholic Charities, she would not have the life she does today. “If it were not for Catholic Charities, I would not have my kids with me,” Sandra said. “If I were not able to get my kids, I would not be here. Catholic Charities cared about me as a person, and it is because of them that I have my family back.”

-Sandra Gonzalez, Immigration Support Recipient

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When Kaycee found out she was expecting a child, she felt she had nowhere to turn. Kaycee learned of her pregnancy amid an already turbulent time in her personal life. Additionally, Kaycee’s small business had gone under due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving her with no financial stability for her family. “My life at that time was like a storm inside of a storm,” Kaycee said. “When I hit rock bottom, I had started reaching out to community resources, and that is when I found Catholic Charities.”

Kaycee came to Catholic Charities with the hope of receiving the resources she needed to support her herself, as well as prepare for the upcoming birth of her child. “I needed to get my life together and provide for my family,” Kaycee said. “Catholic Charities was one of the best resources I was given.”

Because of generous donors like you, Kaycee received essential food and hygiene items, as well as pregnancy and baby supplies through the Catholic Charities Pregnancy Support Program. Kaycee expressed that support she was given by Catholic Charities was the safe haven her family desperately needed amidst all the turmoil.

“I was never judged, I was never questioned. It was always a loving environment,” Kaycee said. “I got so much support.”

After receiving assistance from Catholic Charities, Kaycee gave birth to her daughter, Kelcee Hope, on March 15, 2021. Since Kelcee’s birth, Kaycee has established a home and is working to provide a fruitful life for herself and her family. After the hardships she has faced, Kaycee’s outlook on her life is one filled with hope and optimism. “The dust has settled, and we are all healing,” Kaycee said, “And we are healing in a loving environment.”
$100,000 Donation Match - Double Your Impact!

Give the Gift of **Hope** to Our Neighbors in Need

Fill out the form below or give online at: [ccnks.org/annualappeal](http://ccnks.org/annualappeal)

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- □ $1,000
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Thank You! Your Gift of Hope is Changing Lives!