

4-Star Rating for 4th Straight Year

Venice – Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent evaluator of charities, has awarded Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice, its highest rating of 4 Stars.

“Charity Navigator salutes your commitment to prudent fiscal management and congratulates you for receiving a 4-star rating for the fourth consecutive evaluation,” said Trent Stamp, Executive Director of Charity Navigator.

4-Star Rating on page 7

School On Wheels Brings English Lessons Home

Immokalee – Mariata Boss is 41 years old and has four small children. She is Haitian and speaks no English. She cannot go to a classroom to learn because she must care for her children. So, the classroom comes to her in the form of “School On Wheels.”



Lynne Moretti teaching English to Mariata Boss and her children.

Sister Lorraine Soukup, a caseworker at Guadalupe Social Services in Immokalee, created this Catholic Charities program seven years ago. “Many women want to learn basic English so they can communicate, but they can’t

leave their children,” Sister Soukup said. “We began to enlist volunteers to go out to the trailer

and apartments to help teach the women in their homes.”

One such volunteer is Lynne Moretti. From Boston with the accent to prove it, she has been a volunteer tutor for more than a year. Each week she visits several students 25 miles from her home in Naples.

She tutors Boss, whose four children are all under age 6. Boss, her husband, the children and Boss’s mother live in a five-room,

School On Wheels on page 4

Summer Youth Programs and More in Lee County

Fort Myers – The youth and children of Lee County are the major focus of summer programs provided by Catholic Charities in Fort Myers and Bonita Springs.

low-income families, are now underway at the Haitian Center in Fort Myers and the Hispanic Services offices in Bonita Springs and Fort Myers. “We are one of

Summer Youth Programs, which each serve 40 to 50 children from

Summer Youth on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Volunteer Spotlight	2
Guadalupe Social Services	3
Wish List	4
President’s Corner	5
Upcoming Events	5
CC Counseling	6
Counselors Awards	6
Our Mother’s House	7
Good Samaritan Guild	8

Volunteer Spotlight: Joyce Merritt

Sarasota/Venice - Standing at the gravesite of her young adult daughter who just passed away from a long battle of diabetes, Joyce Merritt found solace in a nearby statue of the Virgin Mary and prayed for help.

"I was not a Catholic then," said Merritt. "My daughter guided me to the Virgin Mary and led me to find comfort in religion." Merritt immediately took the steps to become a member of the Catholic Church.

Soon after her daughter's death, Merritt at age 55 decided to take early retirement from a long, successful career at Corning, Inc. in New York State. "After all that I had been through, I knew what was really important in life and I wanted to get out there and help people," Merritt said.

She began by volunteering at nursing homes around her hometown, but it was on a visit to Fort Myers when her life really changed. Checking the Diocese of Venice web site to find the local Catholic Church to attend Mass, she saw an advertisement for Catholic Volunteers in Florida.

"I decided to put it into God's hands and applied for a full-time volunteer position," Merritt said. Merritt was sent to work for two programs for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice: St. Martha's Early Learning Center in Sarasota and Bethesda House and Joseph's Place, HIV/AIDS Community Centers, in Sarasota and Venice, respectively.

"I had to simplify my life," Merritt said. Catholic Volunteers are paid a very small salary. Unloading "all the stuff that did not matter," she now lives in a small



apartment where everything she owns fits. She said she appreciates the wonders of nature more and finds enjoyment in a walk on the beach.

A former accountant with Corning, Merritt began by helping to organize the financial books for St. Martha's Early Learning Center, Bethesda House and Joseph's Place. Over the past two years, she not only volunteered her financial skills, but also has worked in a variety of capacities to serve the programs from reading stories and changing diapers at the day care center to stocking the food pantry and lending her ear for support at the HIV/AIDS community centers.

At St. Martha's Early Learning Center I can relate to the children and parents as I, too, am a parent," said Merritt. "I relate to the clients at the AIDS community centers because they have many of the same troubles that my daughter had trying to manage an incurable illness."

Merritt, a single mom, raised her daughter and son without much

assistance, she said. Her son is now studying to get his PhD in science.

"Having Joyce with us for the past two years has truly been a blessing," said Peter Routsis-Arroyo, president of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice. "She came with a set of skills that were much needed at our sites, but, above all, her belief in the human dignity of every individual has been an inspiration to all of us."

"Catholic Charities has been a wonderful organization to work with," Merritt said. "I really feel as if I have found a place where I am needed. My daughter always lived life to the fullest and I want to follow her example."

For information on volunteering opportunities for Catholic Charities, read the "Wish List" on page 4 and visit our website at www.catholiccharitiesdov.org. To speak to someone, call the numbers in the "Wish List" or call toll-free 1-866-410-7656.

Guadalupe Social Services Holds 25-Year Anniversary Event

Immokalee - Guadalupe Social Services of Catholic Charities celebrated 25 years of service with a night at the theater. On Thursday, March 10, volunteers, supporters and staff gathered at The Norris Center in Cambier Park in Naples for an exclusive presentation of The Pelican Players performing *Don't Dress for Dinner*, a light French comedy.

The Pelican Players have entertained Naples theater lovers for 17 years under the direction of their founder, John Lanham. Lanham, also employed by the Social Security Administration, has collaborated with Guadalupe Social Services for many years to provide Social Security service to



Yeni Gonzalez, Immokalee High student (left), enjoying her first theatre production with GSS caseworker Maria Vega (right).

residents of Immokalee.

During intermission attendees and staff chatted over soft drinks

and Mexican pastries from Immokalee. The evening proved to be a wonderful opportunity for Guadalupe Social Services to meet and thank the many supporters of the program and to put "faces with the names" of the people who faithfully send in contributions month after month.

Guadalupe Social Services, a program of Catholic Charities, was established in Immokalee in 1980 to serve the needs of farmworkers and their families. Services include food, utility and rental assistance; one-on-one advocacy; certified immigration services; and School On Wheels, which provides English tutoring for women.

Summer Youth from page 1

the few programs in Lee County that has a sliding scale fee but still offer field trips and educational opportunities," said Hoda Hanna, director of the Lee County programs.

With the beginning of a new school year in August, Catholic Charities is gearing up its annual Back to School program to provide needy students with new backpacks full of school supplies.

An Adopt-A-Camper donation will help children in the Summer Youth program, while donations and volunteers are needed to purchase school supplies and to provide the hands needed to put backpacks together.

Once schools are in session, all three Lee County sites plus a new program recently opened at St. Columbkille Parish will provide After School Tutoring programs. These special programs focus upon at-risk students and assist them

with their homework. Volunteers pair up with a student to not only tutor them but also communicate with the child's teacher and parents about performance levels.

Catholic Charities continues to help last year's hurricane victims with long-term recovery assistance for loss of housing or jobs that results in unpaid bills. According to Hanna, the Haitian Center in Fort Myers has increased numbers of clients due to the hurricanes that struck Haiti last year and forced people to move to Lee County.

Catholic Charities provides many services in Lee County. The list of services includes financial assistance, immigration, ESOL classes, case management services, computer classes, tax preparation program, DUI substance abuse program, Madres program (Spanish pre-natal education), job development/training and placement as well as special Thanksgiving and Christmas programs.



Photo by Laura Sikes, Catholic Charities USA.

"We collaborate with all of the social service agencies in the county so that we can provide our clients with quality help. It's all about partnership, volunteers and the help of Catholic parishes in Lee County. We could not do it without the help of those who support our mission whole heartedly," Hanna said.

For more information, to volunteer for a Lee County program or to send a donation, contact Catholic Charities of Lee County by phone at 239-334-4007 or by mail at 2116 Monroe Street, Fort Myers, FL 33904.

School On Wheels from page 1

second-floor apartment in a rundown part of Immokalee. The apartment walls are unpainted and the furniture, worn and tattered.

Her husband is a carpenter and works long hours in Fort Myers. Although half of their monthly income goes toward rent, they've saved \$1,000 as a down payment on a Habitat-for-Humanity home they hope to move into this summer.

English lessons begin with simple words.

"This is a cup," Moretti says and holds up a coffee cup. Boss and her kids join in pronouncing "cup" with their tutor. They work with a basic English language book, and Moretti stresses everyday conversation: "Hello." "Good bye." "How are you?" "I am fine." The five- and six-year-old children are especially enthusiastic. Boss stops to nurse her three-month-old



Mariata Boss and her three-month-old son.

son.

Moretti says that women, such as Boss, are eager to learn, happy to have company and grateful for the educational opportunity. She has one 29-year-old student, Maria Flores Perez, who is very bright and willing to work hard. Just two months after tutoring began, Perez called Moretti and said, "Happy Birthday, teacher." It brought tears to Moretti's eyes because her student had enough

confidence in her English to make the call.

Sister Soukup said she has 11 tutors who drive to Immokalee each week to tutor 27 students. She needs many more tutors.

"The experience is eye-opening because of the conditions in which these women are trying to raise a family," said Sister Soukup. "They want to learn to communicate so they can have a better life."

Moretti says, "I have been blessed to be given an opportunity to help empower these hard-working women."

To volunteer for School On Wheels, call Sister Lorraine Soukup at 239-657-6242 or email her at lsoukup@guadalupess.info. To make a financial donation to the program, send a check to Guadalupe Social Services, 211 S. 9th Street, Door #7, Immokalee, FL 34143.

Wish List

Arcadia – Call Sister Ann at (863) 494-1068, ext. 106.

- cooking oil (small bottles), canned tomatoes, cold cereal, jelly, canned meats/fish
- laundry detergents, liquid (small bottles)

Bonita Springs – Call Christine at (239) 390-0687.

- volunteers for Summer Youth Program
- snacks for 69 kids

Naples – Call Loren at (239) 793-0059.

- volunteers & a volunteer coordinator

- non-perishable foods, diapers, toiletries for pantry

Port Charlotte – Call Lucille at (941) 457-0284.

- volunteers to move furniture down hall to office
- volunteers to assemble office furniture

Sarasota – Call Liz at (941) 366-1395.

- digital camera for classroom projects
- Call Nancy at (941) 379-5119.
- volunteers to solicit donors/sponsors for fundraising event

Venice – Call Holly at (941) 485-6264

- volunteers, over age 18, to babysit
- diapers (sizes 5 & 6), paper towels, toilet paper, detergents (dish & laundry)

Refugee programs

Collier & Lee Counties, call Lizbelle at (239) 334-2234.

Charlotte, Manatee, Sarasota Counties, call Nancy at (941) 492-4855.

- gift certificates for Publix Food & Wal-Mart.

WANTED!! HAM RADIO OPERATORS for Disaster Response Network.
Please call Bob (941) 497-5422 or email Robertvnc9@aol.com.

Catholic Charities

Board of Directors

Chairman Mrs. Pat Tyler
 Vice-Chairman Dr. Daysi D. Mejia
 President/CEO Mr. Peter Routsis-Arroyo
 Treasurer Mr. Richard Mack
 Secretary Mr. Bill O'Connell
 Bishop Most Rev. John J. Nevins, D.D.
 Vicar General Very Rev. Edward Moretti
 Chancellor Dr. Volodymyr Smeryk
 Mr. Samuel D. Blanco, Esq. Mr. Jim Moore
 Rev. Jerome Carosella Mr. Dick Porell
 Mr. Richard Connolly Mr. Joseph Ravelli
 Mrs. Julie Fogarty Mr. LeRoy D. Sanders
 Mr. Vito Manone Mr. Bob Sullenberger
 Mr. Jack Martin Mrs. Ada Trapanese
 Honorary Director Very Rev. Thomas Anglim

Administrative Staff

Executive Assistant Silvia Suarez
 Chief Financial Officer Robert Johnson
 Chief Operating Officer George Drobinski
 Grants & Program Dev Lucille Acken
 Director of Development Catherine Baumer

Regional Directors

Collier County George Drobinski
 Lee County Hoda Hanna
 Sarasota County Nancy Shoemaker
 Rural Services Brian Bennett

Staff

PR Coordinator Judy Bokorney
 Database Administrator Julie Blount



CREDIBILITY • INTEGRITY • ACHIEVEMENT

Catholic Charities Foundation

Board of Directors

Chairman James McTague, Naples
 President/CEO Peter Routsis-Arroyo, Venice
 Vice-Chairman Richard E. Mack, Naples
 Secretary/Treasurer ... Robert W. Ramsdell, Sarasota
 Ass't Secretary JoAnne M. Kuehner, Naples
 Foundation Director .. Louis J. Baumer, Ft. Myers
 Daniel Bafia, Bradenton
 Janet Beach, Venice
 Constance S. Blum, Osprey
 John P. Foley, Bonita Springs
 Terrence C. Reid, Ft. Myers
 Kathleen Rey, Sarasota

Honorary Director John Fitzgerald, Naples
 Honorary Director Ric Gregoria, Sarasota
 Honorary Director ... Rosemary Q. Kelly, Ft. Myers
 Chaplain Rev. Joel Schevers, O. Carm.

Catholic Charities is a non-profit organization under section 501 (c) (3) of the IRS code. Our Florida registration number is SC04196. Catholic Charities receives 100% of each contribution.

 <http://www.catholiccharitiesdov.org>

Visit us at our website. 

President's Corner



Here at Catholic Charities, we have much to celebrate. For the fourth consecutive year, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice, received a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's premier independent charity evaluator. This highest ranking means that our Catholic Charities "outperformed most other charities in America in its efforts to efficiently manage its finances," according to Trent Stamp, Executive Director of Charity Navigator.

Also, as you read this newsletter, note the article "Counselors Recognized with Awards" about two of our counselors that received recognition for their excellent work in their communities. Congratulations to Chip Schaaff in Sarasota and Eileen McIltrout in Fort Myers.

In addition, all our Catholic Charities staff have gone "the extra mile"—and more—within this last year with the Hurricane Recovery Sites. We expressed our thanks with a Staff Appreciation Day, a barbecue lunch in a park beside the Peace River on a balmy, sunny day. Our Board of Directors Chair, Mrs. Pat Tyler, handed out Catholic Charities t-shirts that say "Disaster Response Team," as part of our disaster response planning. Congratulations to Catholic Charities staff for an excellent job with ongoing assistance to hurricane victims.

As we all know, the hurricanes created acute housing needs in our ten-county area. Fortunately, Catholic Charities had already begun the process of incorporating a housing board before then. Now, with additional federal funding available for housing in Florida, Catholic Charities Housing Corporation has four projects in initial stages of development in DeSoto, Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte Counties. As the projects progress, I will be updating you.

In closing, on behalf of everyone at Catholic Charities and the people we serve, thank you for your support of our work.

May God bless you and yours,

Peter Routsis-Arroyo

Peter Routsis-Arroyo
 President / CEO

Upcoming Events

JULY 6 – Naples – Positive Parenting, six-week evening course, to learn better skills for raising children. For information, call (239) 455-2655.

AUGUST – Collier County – Ninth Annual *Undy Sunday* collecting new underwear and socks for needy school children. For specific dates and locations, to volunteer or to contribute, call (239) 455-2655.

Catholic Charities Counseling Offers —

- individual and family counseling
- day and evening hours
- bilingual counselors, English and Spanish
- most centers accessible by bus
- weekly positive parenting groups in Naples
- mood-stabilizing medication assessment by nurse practitioner in Naples
- co-counseling with your priest in Fort Myers

For information or to schedule an appointment —

- Fort Myers
(239) 274-0757
- Naples
(239) 455-2655
- Sarasota
(941) 379-9111
- Venice
(941) 484-9543
ask for Silvia Suarez

*Catholic Charities
serves all
who seek help
regardless
of
race, religion
or
national origin.*

Counselors Recognized with Awards

Within the past year, two of our Catholic Charities counselors have received awards for their work in our communities. Chip Schaaff in Sarasota and Eileen McIltrout in Fort Myers were recipients of special recognition.

For his volunteer service helping pregnant mothers and their children, Chip Schaaff was named the 2004 Healthy Start Volunteer of the Year by the Healthy Start Coalition of Sarasota County. Initiated 15 years ago by the governor, Healthy Start is a free program in the state of Florida for all pregnant women and families with babies less than three years old. It provides moms and newborns with the resources, support and help they need to have a healthy pregnancy and birth.

About ten years ago, Schaaff started providing counseling services to Healthy Start mothers. He noticed most mothers lacked basic necessities such as baby clothes, cribs, food, baby supplies and equipment.

“When the care coordinators at Healthy Start would tell me what a mother needed, I started going to people at my church and asking them if they could help,” Schaaff said. He contacted the Women’s Bible Study group.

“The women immediately found baby cribs, equipment and clothing,” Schaaff said. “Now whenever something is needed I go to them and other church members for help. They find the items and I bring them to where they need to go.”

Now Schaaff’s assistance has expanded to include paper products and baby items that food stamps do not include.

“I was completely surprised and



Chip Schaaff, Healthy Start Volunteer of the Year.

overwhelmed by the award,” Schaaff said. “I’m just the middleman in all of this.”

In Fort Myers, the Social Worker of the Year award from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Southwest Florida chapter was recently given to Eileen McIltrout for her life’s work and especially for her response to the needs of hurricane victims. She has been an employee of Catholic Charities for the past 19 years and has provided services to the needy in Lee and Charlotte Counties through education, intervention and advocacy.

Criteria for the award include the candidate upholds the NASW Code of Ethics; has made major contributions to human services; has taken exceptional risk to better human services; and demonstrates exceptional leadership qualities.

After hurricane Charley hit last August, Catholic Charities was a first responder to devastated areas. McIltrout was assigned the challenge of coordinating relief efforts at the

Counselors on page 7

Counselors from page 6

Eileen McIlltrot (middle) holding NASW award with Esperanza Liszewski, Catholic Charities Lee County Advisory Board (left) and Peter Routsis-Arroyo, President, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Venice (right).

Catholic Charities Recovery Site in Punta Gorda. McIlltrot's role was to assess community and individual needs; coordinate interventions, assistance and outreach efforts; manage donations and volunteers; and establish a collaborative working relationship with FEMA, Red Cross, and other local agencies and services.

"Our site provided direct assistance in the form of food, ice,

water, hot meals and snacks," explained McIlltrot. "We also assisted people with crisis intervention and counseling, and acted as a communications center for community members to connect with one another."

Services also included a first aid station, and home repair/cleanup by linking those in need with volunteers who could help.

"My commitment to this profession goes with my commitment to my faith," said

McIlltrot. "Principles that guide social work practice are very similar to Catholic social teachings."

"I am humbled to think my colleagues regard my contributions as fitting the criteria for this recognition," said McIlltrot.

Catholic Charities counselors are community-minded individuals who assist people in need. Anyone can use Catholic Charities Counseling programs. Sliding-scale fee payments are available for those who require financial assistance.

New Building at Our Mother's House

Venice – The opening of the new building of Our Mother's House of Catholic Charities brings new families to this pro-life program. Serving homeless single mothers and preschool children, the residential program provides them a required structure of case management and education for learning self-sufficiency.

Renovation of the old building is scheduled for completion in early fall.

The need for more babysitters is crucial. To volunteer or contribute, call 941-485-6264.



Bishop John J. Nevins (left) entering Our Mother's House courtyard with Deacon Robert Dziediak (right; ordained to the priesthood on May 25) before blessing the building.



4-Star Rating from page 1

Charity Navigator is a nonprofit organization that helps donors make informed decisions by evaluating the financial health of more than 4,000 charities. By accepting no advertising or donations from the organizations it evaluates, Charity Navigator ensures that its evaluations are unbiased. The ratings are available for free at the organization's web site.

"Our sole goal is to provide America's donors with the data they need to make informed giving decisions," said Stamp. "By using our web site to check on the financial health of a charity, givers can be assured that the charities they support are worthy of their trust and commitment."

"I am extremely pleased with the 4-star rating we have received again this year from this very objective review of our financial health and stability," said Peter Routsis-Arroyo, President/CEO of Catholic Charities.

For more information, visit www.catholiccharitiesdov.org and www.charitynavigator.org.

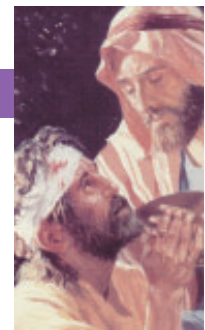
Every year fifty percent (50%) of Americans pass away without leaving a will. Without a valid will you are at the mercy of the court system as to how your estate, small or large, will be distributed. The State of Florida has a rigid set of rules (called the laws of descent and distribution) that apply to everyone, regardless of a family’s situation or circumstance. Having a valid will allows you to distribute your estate however you wish.

Reasons to Have a Will

1. distribute assets to your family
2. create trusts
3. make special bequests of personal property
4. name a personal representative
5. save administrative costs, estate and inheritance taxes
6. memorialize those you care about
7. remember your Parish and Catholic Charities

As a Florida resident — do you have an older will that was written and filed in another state? Even though you may have a valid will prior to your move to Florida, you need to be certain that your document is valid according to the laws of the State of Florida. Only an attorney can accurately determine this for you.

The **Good Samaritan Guild** can help you prepare the information an attorney will require in order to help you write a valid will. **Call us Toll-Free at 1-866-410-7656**, or fill in the coupon below and we’ll mail you a set of our **Wills Worksheets** – at no charge.



WILLS WORKSHEETS

Send a set of wills worksheets, if you do not have a will or are updating yours.

FOUNDATION

Please send me information about the Catholic Charities Foundation and the Good Samaritan Guild.

The Good Samaritan Guild

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____

MAIL TO: Catholic Charities Foundation
P.O. Box 2116, Venice, FL 34284-2116
OR - Call Toll-Free 1-866-410-7656

MASS CARDS
Send a free sample of the new Mass cards from the Guild.

Catholic Charities serves all who seek help regardless of race, religion or national origin.



Catholic Charities
Diocese of Venice
P.O. Box 2116
Venice, FL 34284-2116

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Ft. Myers, FL
Permit No. 184