

Six-Year-Old Boy Donates Birthday Gifts



Joshua Swiatkowski (right) hands out birthday gift donations to children at St. Martha's Early Learning Center.

Sarasota – Joshua Swiatkowski, a kindergartener at Incarnation Catholic School, celebrated his sixth birthday in a unique way. His birthday party invitation asked each child to bring either money or a gift for the children at St. Martha's Early Learning Center.

St. Martha's Early Learning Center, located in downtown Sarasota, is a Catholic Charities program that offers affordable, quality care for the local, low-income community.

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USDA Awards \$6 Million

Venice - Catholic Charities Housing, Inc. was awarded \$6 million by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development on Friday, April 21, for the Casa San Juan Bosco farm worker community housing project in DeSoto County outside Arcadia.

The check presentation was held at the Catholic Center in Venice with representatives from the offices of U.S. Senators Bill Nelson and Mel Martinez, U.S. Congresswoman Katherine Harris, and HUD along with DeSoto County commissioners. Guests also included representatives from area growers such as the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association and Peace River Growers Association, Catholic Charities, the Diocese of Venice and the Diocese of St. Petersburg. Governor Jeb Bush sent a letter to mark the occasion.

Casa San Juan Bosco is an answer to the lack of affordable, quality housing in DeSoto County for

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Haitian Center Re-Locates – Again

Fort Myers – In June 2005 the summer rain came and the roof leaked. The leaks were so bad with subsequent mold issues that the staff of the Haitian Center of Catholic Charities had to move out of the building immediately.

To maintain the program that began in 1994, the Haitian Center temporarily shared office space at Hispanic Services of Catholic Charities. Haitian Center furniture was stored in portable units, and the conference

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seasonal farm workers and migrants. The homes will exceed national building practices by including child safety and other measures of the Healthy Homes Initiative and the energy efficiency and disaster resistance standards recommended by the Partnership for Advancing Technology in Housing.

“The partnerships forged are indicative of the wide support Catholic Charities has to do this project,” said USDA Rural Services State Director Charles Clemons. “Florida government is keenly aware of the iniquities of affordable housing in the State of Florida.”

“Casa San Juan Bosco is core to the mission to provide good housing for the underprivileged we serve,” said Jack Martin, chairperson of Catholic Charities Housing. “We are indebted to USDA for recognizing the need to provide farm worker housing in Arcadia.”

Catholic Charities President Peter Routsis-Arroyo said when Hurricane Charley ravaged DeSoto County in 2004, around 60 percent of the farm worker housing was destroyed. “There was a need for housing prior to the hurricane. Out of the devastation, this project was born,” he said.

To help farm workers to build



(L to R) Chair, Catholic Charities (CC) Housing, Jack Martin; Chancellor, Diocese of Venice (DOV), Dr. Volodymyr Smeryk; Vice President, CC Housing, Sister Cathy Buster; Vicar General, DOV, Rev. Edward Moretti; CC President/CEO, Peter Routsis-Arroyo; and Rural Development State Director, USDA, Charles Clemons.

greater self-sufficiency, Casa San Juan Bosco will offer on-site childcare, education and employment training, health care and home ownership training. These supportive services will initially help stabilize agricultural workers and their families, then increase their skills to earn a living wage, and finally to assist each family into home ownership.

Catholic Charities Housing will construct the Casa San Juan Bosco community in three phases. Eventually almost 700 people will be able to live in the single-family homes. The housing project, designated for farm workers, will be the first in Arcadia that is not

employer owned. Casa San Juan Bosco will feature a community center, play area, park, soccer and baseball fields and a nature preserve.

“Casa San Juan Bosco,” said Sister Cathy Buster, SP, vice president of Catholic Charities Housing, “is not just a housing complex, but a community—a place where parents can come out to watch their children play in a safe environment, where families can be good neighbors and where helpful services are just outside their doorstep.”

For more information about Casa San Juan Bosco, contact Sister Cathy Buster at 941-349-0318.

Hurricane Preparedness

With hurricane season approaching, Catholic Charities is doing everything possible to prepare parishioners and parishes. This spring we conducted parish disaster training for over 40 parishes.

For how to be prepared as an individual or family, our Catholic Charities website—www.catholiccharitiesdov.org—is offering you hurricane preparedness information. On the homepage at the top right, click “Hurricane Preparedness” to read a helpful brochure from Catholic Charities USA. (If your computer does not have Adobe Acrobat reader, the same information with more detail can be accessed by clicking “Disaster Response” on the left under “Services.”)

To access the Florida Catholic Conference website for the parish disaster training manual, visit www.flacathconf.org.

Boots and Bandannas Supports Arcadia Programs

Arcadia – For the fourth consecutive year, Boots and Bandannas raised funds for Catholic Charities-DeSoto County with a fun evening of dinner, dance and silent auction. La Esperanza, a local Hispanic dance group, entertained guests with three exciting presentations, each interspersed throughout the evening.

Catholic Charities program director Sister Ann De Nicolo thanked attendees, volunteers and donors for their support. Sister De Nicolo has been assisting the poor in the migrant



Sister Ann De Nicolo, BVM, holds Cesar Chavez award.

community for many years and was awarded the Cesar Chavez award last November for her work,

especially during the aftermath of Hurricane Charley. Attorney/Advocate Greg Schell, a member of the Sarasota/Manatee Farmworker Supporters who recognized her, said, “She has fought fearlessly and consistently for DeSoto County farmworkers.”

Catholic Charities-DeSoto County offers those in need services such as direct assistance, immigration counseling, after-school tutoring, prescription assistance, parenting and English classes, and holiday programs.

For more information about Catholic Charities-DeSoto County,



La Esperanza dancers entertain at Boots and Bandannas.

call 863-494-1068 or visit www.catholiccharitiesdov.org.

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room/computer training area became offices for staff. With crowded conditions and new transportation challenges, the Haitian Center and Hispanic Center still provided social services for people needing help and conducted their Summer Camp programs for children.

After nine months, in March the Haitian Center moved to its new location at 3430 Cleveland Avenue. Pierrette Faustin, program director of the Haitian Center, explained the center’s work. As a Haitian who has been in the U.S. for most of her life, Faustin speaks Creole and English.

A familiar example of a client problem is dissatisfaction with income or work conditions. When Faustin meets this situation, she asks, “What



Pierrette Faustin stands by map of Haiti in her office. The teddy bear on top of bookshelf is provided for restless, small children to play quietly while family explains needs.

are you going to do about it? Where would you like to be working in three years? How can you get there?”

Many clients work picking fruit and then move to hotel work. Some

go to school later. A few have become certified nurse assistants (CNAs). One client is studying to be a licensed practical nurse (LPN). “Haitians believe strongly about the need for education,” said Faustin.

Over the years the Haitian Center has added new programs. Currently the following services are offered.

- Direct assistance
- Food pantry
- After-school tutoring
- ESOL
- Literacy program
- Translation and interpretation assistance
- Job training
- Parenting classes
- Prevention and support services
- Information referral

For information and volunteer opportunities, call Pierrette Faustin at 239-334-2234.

Volunteer Spotlight: Bob Sullenberger

Venice – Catholic Charities volunteer Bob Sullenberger was recently awarded the Unsung Hero Award from the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and the Wilson-Wood Foundation. The award provides public recognition to ordinary citizens who serve their communities in extraordinary ways.

Sullenberger was recognized for his work with Our Mother's House, a Catholic Charities program in Venice that helps homeless mothers and their children achieve self-sufficiency. He also was acknowledged for co-founding the Dad's and Mom's Sugar Bowl Fund, a collaboration with the Knights of Columbus and Catholic Charities that helps low-income families with financial assistance during an economic crisis.

After the 2004 hurricane season, Sullenberger assisted the Catholic Charities Disaster Response Team by establishing the Diocesan Amateur Radio Network (DARN). Sullenberger established emergency radio stations in Venice, Arcadia, Port Charlotte, Fort Myers and Naples and recruited 21 volunteers to work the stations in an emergency.



Bob Sullenberger, volunteer for 15 years, holds Unsung Hero award.

“Bob Sullenberger is a community treasure,” said Wendy Hopkins, vice president of grant and program services of the Community Foundation. “His patient tenacity and efficiency make him the perfect volunteer. Catholic Charities is his charity of choice and they are lucky to have him,” she said.

Sullenberger moved to Venice in 1991 to retire after a 25-year career working with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Through his job, Sullenberger and his wife of 45 years, Lois, traveled the world and lived in Africa,

Europe, the Middle East and Asia. The Sullenbergers have one daughter.

Within weeks of arriving in Southwest Florida, Sullenberger became a volunteer for Catholic Charities and joined a Knights of Columbus (K of C) chapter. He has been a member of the K of C for more than 40 years. Currently, he is public relations chairperson for the K of C in the Diocese of Venice.

“When you work for a living, you don't have much time to volunteer, but when you are retired, you can pay back society,” said Sullenberger.

In addition to these many volunteer activities on behalf of Catholic Charities, he serves as a board member. During the past 15 years, Sullenberger even produced the first newsletter for Our Mother's House called “Smiling Faces.”

“Catholic Charities will forever be in debt to Bob Sullenberger,” said Peter Routsis-Arroyo, President/CEO of Catholic Charities. “Bob is very deserving of this award and our gratitude.”

For more information about Catholic Charities, visit www.catholiccharitiesdov.org or call 941-488-5581.

Wish List

Catholic Charities programs appreciate any help you can give.

LaBelle– Call Julie at (239) 826-6463.

- volunteers for Hendry/Glades office start-up

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

- volunteers – coordinator; maintenance tasks; bilingual to assist clients
- gift certificates – Wal-Mart; K-Mart; Publix; Winn Dixie; gas stations

- TV; VCR; tape rewriter for client education
- brochure rack for lobby

Venice – Call Joyce (941) 485-6264

- volunteers—child care; maintenance work
- vacuum cleaner; cleaning supplies
- disposable diapers



Catholic Charities

1000 Pinebrook Road
 Venice, FL 34285
 (941) 488-5581 • (941) 484-9543

www.catholiccharitiesdov.org

Arcadia

Catholic Charities-DeSoto County
 & Immigration Services

Bonita Springs

Hispanic Services of Catholic Charities

Bradenton

Catholic Charities-Manatee County
 Immigration & Housing Counseling

Clewiston

Hispanic Services of Catholic Charities

Fort Myers

District Office (Lee County)
 Clare House of Catholic Charities
 Community Counseling Services
 Haitian Center
 Immigration & Refugee Services
 of Catholic Charities
 Hispanic Services of Catholic Charities

Immokalee

Rural Services Office (DeSoto, Glades, Hardee,
 Hendry, Highlands, & Manatee Counties)
 Guadalupe Social Services of Catholic Charities

LaBelle

Hispanic Services of Catholic Charities

Naples

District Office (Collier County)
 Family Counseling Services
 Family Resource Center
 Refugee Related Services

Port Charlotte

Catholic Charities of Charlotte County
 & Alzheimer's Program

Sarasota

District Office (Sarasota & Manatee Counties)
 Bethesda House
 Direct Assistance Services
 Family Counseling Services
 Refugees Employed & Productive (REAP)
 St. Martha's Early Learning Center

Venice

Community Resource Coordinator Office
 Joseph's Place
 Our Mother's House of Catholic Charities
 Refugee Resettlement Program

Wauchula

Administration of FEMA Funds

President's Corner



As we begin preparations for the upcoming hurricane season, our Catholic Charities website—www.catholiccharitiesdov.org—is offering you hurricane preparedness information. On the homepage at the top right, click “Hurricane Preparedness” to read a helpful brochure from Catholic Charities USA. (If your computer does not have Adobe Acrobat reader, the same information with more detail can be accessed by clicking “Disaster Response” on the left under “Services.”)

These past two years of hurricane devastation have brought a dire need for affordable housing. Catholic Charities Housing is meeting this challenge in Sarasota, DeSoto, Charlotte and Manatee Counties. In Sarasota, Casa San Jose will provide low-cost, rental housing for the special needs population. We expect to have the certificate of occupancy sometime this summer.

In DeSoto County, Casa San Juan Bosco will be a farm worker housing community outside Arcadia. For details, please read the front-page article, “USDA Awards \$6 Million,” in this newsletter. Also, a new home donated by St. Thomas More Parish was given to a needy family in Arcadia. That article appears on page 6.

In Charlotte County, Marian Manor will offer 31 apartments for single-parent families. We are currently seeking additional funding for construction.

In Manatee County, Village of Hope is workforce housing in the development stage. In both Manatee and DeSoto Counties, the Catholic Charities housing counseling program promotes and helps people to attain home ownership.

These major projects to assist individuals and families in need are possible because of our Catholic Charities supporters and staff. Your generosity, hard work and prayers are the driving force behind all Catholic Charities endeavors. Thank you for helping us *provide help and create hope*.

May God bless you and yours,

Peter Routsis-Arroyo
 President / CEO

To see a listing of our Boards of Directors, visit our website at
www.catholiccharitiesdov.org

Upcoming Events

Naples **Undy Sunday**
 Two weekends in August. Collections of children's undies and socks at local churches. For information, call (239) 455-2655.

Naples **Positive Parenting**
 Ten-week evening course in fall, to learn better skills for raising children. For information, call (239) 455-2655.



New Home for Arcadia Family

Arcadia - After 30 years of hard labor as a farm worker in DeSoto County, Fidel Arias, 48, can finally provide his wife and six sons with a safe and beautiful home.

Through a partnership with the Outreach Committee of St. Thomas More Parish in Sarasota, the Florida West Coast Chapter of the American Society of Interior Designers, and Catholic Charities Housing, a home was built, furnished and given to the Arias family. The home will also serve as a model and be shown to other low-income families as a viable alternative to unsafe, dilapidated



Fidel and Dolores Arias and their sons stand smiling in front of their new home.

mobile homes and trailers.

After Hurricane Charley wiped out the majority of low-income homes in the Arcadia area, Catholic Charities of DeSoto County Program Director Sister Ann DeNicolo saw the need for hurricane resistant, affordable housing in the community. She approached the Outreach Committee of St. Thomas More for support.

“Our parish had raised money for hurricane recovery in Arcadia and we felt this was a great way to put it to good use,” said George Forcier, chairperson of the outreach committee. “After a long day’s work, everyone deserves a safe place to rest.”

The home not only is hurricane proof, but also is energy efficient and affordable, according to Brian Bishop, president of Home Front who built the house. “We hope this home will be an example for a better alternative for housing,” he said.

Members of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID) called on clients and vendors to



George Forcier (left), chairperson of St. Thomas More Parish Outreach Committee, gives Fidel and Dolores Arias the keys to their new home.

donate items to decorate and furnish the home. “Everyone we mentioned the project to was more than willing to help,” said Harriet Stephenson, board member of ASID and a member of the St. Thomas More Outreach Committee.

Father Don Henry, pastor of St. Thomas More, blessed the home during a special ceremony for the Arias family. When handed the keys to the home, Fidel Arias said he had no words to describe how happy he was feeling.

“My heart is full of joy,” said Dolores Arias, Fidel’s wife. “I am happy that my children will have a nice place to live!”

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“Joshua wanted to invite his entire Incarnation kindergarten class as well as a few other close friends to his party,” said Lisa Marie Swiatkowski, Joshua’s mother. More than 40 children attended, and seven large bags of toys were donated along with over \$200.

When Joshua and his mother delivered the items to the center, the children at the day care were

delighted. Liz Williams, program director of St. Martha’s Early Learning Center, said there is always a need for new toys, games, books, puzzles and more. “We are so grateful for the generous donation,” Williams said, as the day care children squealed in excitement around her.

“I have a lot of toys and I wanted other kids to have fun things like me to play with,” said Joshua. “The kids came over and started playing

with the toys right away. Everybody looked so happy.”

According to Joe Swiatkowski, Joshua’s father, Joshua came up with the idea of sharing his birthday toys with other children. “We wanted to teach Joshua the importance of giving to those who may be less fortunate and in turn recognizing his own blessings,” Joe said.

For more information about St. Martha’s Early Learning Center, please call Liz Williams at 941-366-1395.

Knights Fund Sugar Bowl

Venice—A total of 34 families with 122 children received financial assistance last year through a program funded by five Knights of Columbus councils in South Sarasota County.

The program, the Dad's and Mom's Sugar Bowl Fund, is designed to help two-parent families that suffer an economic hardship because of emergency medical, housing or transportation expense. The premise of the program is based on the idea of when generations past used the sugar bowl to hold their emergency cash.

Needy families can receive one-time grants of up to \$500 for expenses for car repair, medical bills,

utilities, or rent/mortgage payments. In extreme cases grants can be given for up to \$1,000. Catholic Charities of Sarasota County administers the fund. In 2005 almost \$19,000 was raised by the Knights of Columbus and given to families living in South Sarasota County.

For the past several years, an anonymous couple has provided incentive to Knights of Columbus councils to raise funds for the program by matching \$5,000 in donations. Founder of the Sugar Bowl Fund and Knights of Columbus member Bob Hunter also matches \$5,000. Hunter said, "My family was helped with charity when I was

a child. We were saved from going into debt and losing our home."

Hunter conceived the idea for the program seven years ago when he discovered that it was hard for two-parent, working, poor families to qualify for assistance. "So many families live paycheck to paycheck, and any unexpected expense can cause major problems," said Hunter.

Knights of Columbus councils contributing to the Sugar Bowl Fund include councils from Venice, North Port, Englewood and Grove City.

For more information about the Sugar Bowl Fund, call Catholic Charities of Sarasota County at 941-496-8286.

Our Mother's House Is Full



Children of Our Mother's House

Venice—The dream of serving more families at Our Mother's House (OMH) is now a reality! After years of building the new facility and renovating the original building, OMH has 10 mothers and 12 children living there.

The Child Care Center provides babysitting in one location. Prior to receiving the certificate of occupancy, volunteers babysat the young children in their families' apartments. The enlarged, renovated space is ideal for play and naps.

A recent story of a young family explains how Our Mother's House assists and educates the homeless

clients who seek our help. Client names are changed to protect them.

Ashley came to Our Mother's House following a bitter divorce from her husband of three years. Her ex-husband provided no support for Ashley and their 18-month-old daughter Marie, and unknown to Ashley, had cleaned out their joint bank account. Ashley had no family support and no resources.

Since coming to Our Mother's House, Ashley has enrolled in college, holds down a part-time job, and participates in Our Mother's House program classes. Marie receives care at our Child Care Center daily. Both Ashley and Marie

are making progress in dealing with their difficult circumstances.

The mission of Our Mother's House of Catholic Charities is to provide a safe and secure environment in which residents can achieve increased self-sufficiency through education, vocational training and personal growth. Each mother meets weekly with the case manager to review and discuss her progress with essential tasks—employment, budgeting, parenting, education, emotional well being, and her child's development.

Volunteers are always needed to babysit in the Child Care Center. For more information about Our Mother's House, call 941-485-6264.

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 Good Samaritan Mass cards from the Guild.

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



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