



CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

2620 Lebanon Ave • Belleville, IL 62221
(618) 235-9601, ext. 1332
www.ccsil.org

AN UPDATE OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

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One Who Has HOPE Lives Differently

Because of the impasse with the state of Illinois regarding the Religious Freedom Protection and Civil Unions Act signed into law last year, the decision was made by Catholic Social Services (CSS) to become Christian Social Services and to sever ties with the Catholic Diocese of Belleville. One of the results of this severance is that they will no longer be a member agency of Catholic Charities of Southern Illinois (CCSIL). CSS was a significant member agency to CCSIL, not only because of their response to passionate concerns of the Church, but also because of their administrative assistance, and especially their collaborative association with other member agencies through the networking/coalition model of CCSIL. While they will certainly be missed, we know the change enabled the opportunity to continue their mission, confirmed with a record of excellence, to protect abused and abandoned children throughout Southern Illinois, children who no one wanted to see become victims of the State's unwillingness to accommodate conscience protection of a faith based institution. Our Bishop and CSS have made the important life decision to protect these vulnerable children residing in our Diocese, and CCSIL is proud of our Diocese under these difficult circumstances.

Moving forward, Catholic Charities of Southern Illinois will continue to function in service to the Diocese to foster inter-agency communication and networking, collaborative efforts and service opportunities, promote financial efficiencies, and heighten awareness of membership benefits with Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), all of which are vital to the continuation of agency services. As of February 1, the member agencies will include: Catholic Urban Programs, Day Star, Poverty Services, Catholic Campaign for Human Development, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Ministry to Sick and Aged, Hispanic Ministry, Prison Ministry, Respect Life, and Rural Life Ministry. Each member agency manages its own staff and operations, and is responsible for all day-to-day operational decisions. Current CCSIL officers are: Chairperson Laurie Edwards, Vice-Chairperson Jessica Slater and Secretary Sister Mildred Gross.

Expanding briefly about CCUSA, and how important it is that we continue forward with them, the collective membership of CCUSA represents America's largest private provider of services to the poor, with a network of hundreds of food pantries, soup kitchens, homeless shelters, etc. Within this association the Diocese of Belleville has been recognized and respected as having some of the most active, most efficient agencies of Catholic Charities in the nation. This reputation is an honor to be proud of and a challenge to live up to.

Working under the banner of "*One Who Has HOPE Lives Differently*," CCSIL agencies are committed to continue to provide HOPE and life-changing differences to the multitude of poor, needy and abandoned in our communities. Thankfully there are many staff and volunteers who quietly and tirelessly work day after day, year after year. This same HOPE we encourage for others we want to also remember ourselves. The truth is our Diocese is blessed with generous lives all around us. You can join them by reaching out and learning more. You can stand in solidarity with them through your continued support (time and treasure) and prayers. In addition to reaching out directly to the member agencies, examples of ongoing initiatives of CCSIL that welcome your help include: 1) Awareness media initiatives to help more people in our Diocese learn about what the agencies are doing to bring HOPE and help to the poor and needy and abandoned of our Diocese 2) Identification of CCSIL Parish Liaisons in each parish of the Diocese to communicate CCSIL agency needs, opportunities and initiatives, and 3) Support of our 125th Diocesan Anniversary of "*Fanning the Flame*" to better understand and practice our Catholic faith in these challenging times.

Submitted by CCSIL Board of Directors