



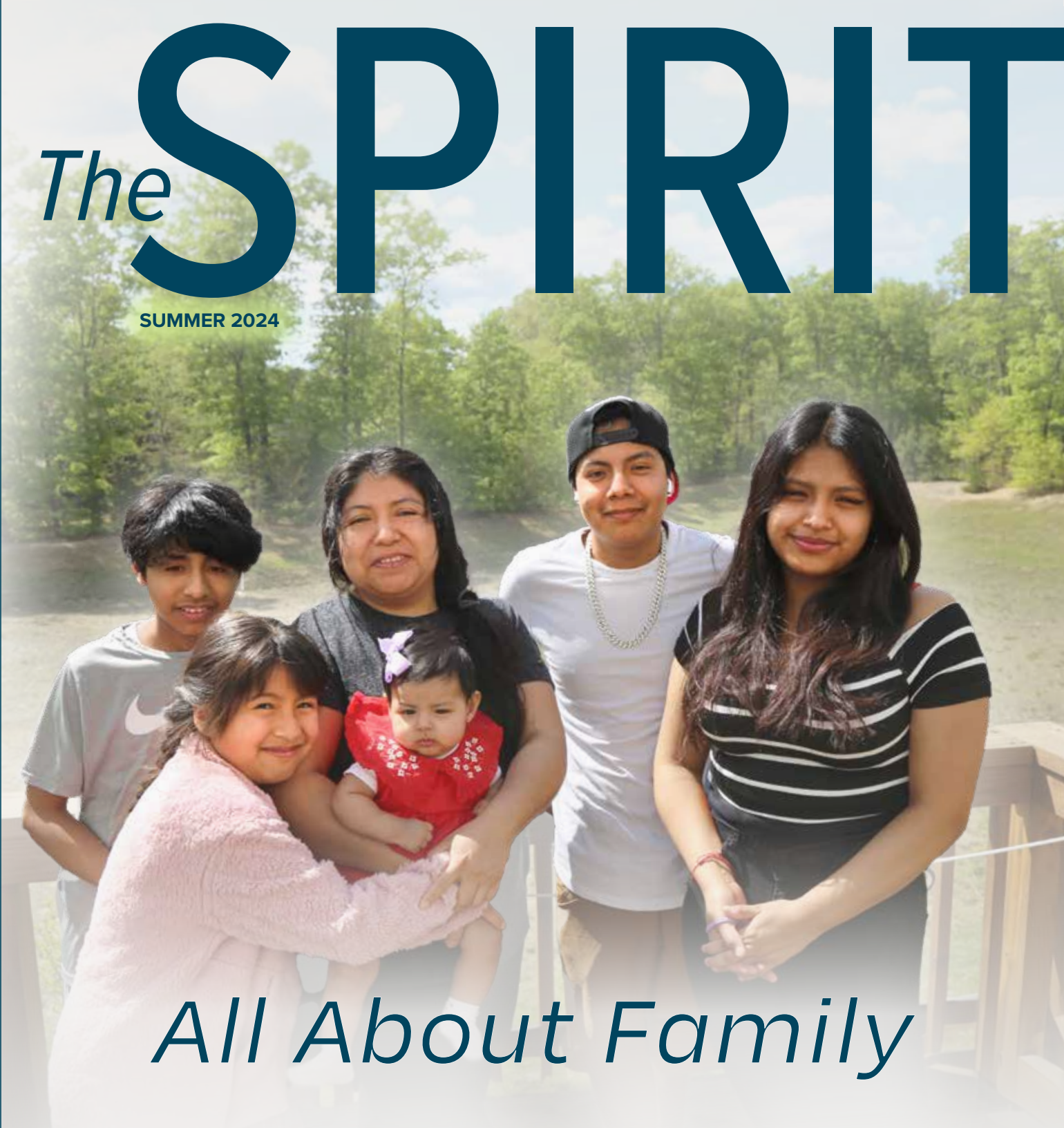
2023
Annual
Report

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The SPIRIT

SUMMER 2024



All About Family



from the **BISHOP OF TRENTON**

Dear Friends and Supporters of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton,

As Bishop of the Diocese of Trenton, I continue to be so grateful to the board, administration, staff, volunteers, and benefactors who make the presence of Christ and the service of Catholic Charities possible for those most in need. Services that are provided not only in times of crisis but throughout the year! In fact, throughout the more than 110 years Catholic Charities has been serving those in need.

Now, as you read the articles in this newsletter, I hope you will recognize that by supporting Catholic Charities, you are contributing to the well-being of families across the diocese. When we nurture families, we shape our future with love. When we strengthen families, we

fortify our communities. When we welcome families, we heighten our ethos.

These stories truly bear beautiful witness to the good work of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton. Work that reflects what YOU make possible each time YOU have made an amazing contribution. Through YOUR support, Catholic Charities will never stop serving our brothers and sisters in need.

Thank you! May God bless you, Catholic Charities, and all those we serve!

Gratefully yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend David M. O'Connell, C.M., J.C.D.



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from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

During an interview shortly after Pope Francis was elected, he boldly stated families are vital to the continuation of humanity. Without them, he said "...the cultural survival of the human race would be at risk. The family, whether we like it or not, is the foundation."

In so much of the work we do at Catholic Charities, we see firsthand how fragile families can be. It is why we have so many programs dedicated to healing them and keeping them together. Our team assists pregnant and parenting mothers who have substance use disorders. We support these women in their recovery. In doing so, we are helping end, in some cases, multi-generational cycles of addiction. Our team also bolsters families who are struggling when a member has a behavioral health diagnosis. We are available to listen when they need it. And we connect them to a community who understands what they are going through.

Our team also does the work of and for the people! We have helped hundreds of families who are new to this country become citizens. We were honored to help reunify Rocio and her husband with their children and help them all become acclimated to living in New Jersey. When you learn more about their journey, I am sure you'll be heartened by their determination to become an American family.

Because all of us derive strength, comfort and belonging from our families, the work we do fortifying them is vital. As a supporter, I want to thank you for helping us provide these services — making togetherness possible for so many.

With gratitude and blessings,

Marlene Laó-Collins

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CELEBRATING A NEW SPACE

and Community Partners

On May 10 the Community Services team in Ocean County hosted an Open House to celebrate the new space it shares with Seeds of Service. Bishop David O’Connell blessed the facility and then cut the royal blue ribbon, welcoming all those in the community who need support.

The building houses a large, fully accessible food pantry, clothing and household goods, a team providing citizenship and family reunification, the Ocean County Fix-It Program and Parish Services.

“When Community Services’ lease was up in Lakewood, we needed a place to go,” said Service Area Director Arnold Valentin. An extensive search for a new location led Valentin to Christie Winters and Seeds of Service (SOS). He noted that Catholic Charities had worked with SOS in the aftermath of Super Storm Sandy on a hurricane relief program that lasted five years. “We are excited to be working with Christie and her team again,” he said. “The partnership is mutually beneficial. Together we

(From left to right) ►
Marlene
Laó-Collins,
Christie Winters
and Arnold
Valentin.



are here for the poor, the hungry, people who need clothes and people who need help.”

Executive Director Marlene Laó-Collins said Catholic Charities would not have been able to purchase the building had it not been for funds raised through the Restoring Dignity, Giving Hope campaign. “We are so grateful

to those who donated to the campaign and all the people who helped us navigate the process of acquiring this building,” said Laó-Collins. “There are so many things going on inside. I am excited about the difference we will be able to make in the community working along with Christie and her team at Seeds of Service.”

◀ Thank you to everyone from Donovan Catholic High School for coming out and showing your support.

COMMUNITY SERVICES 2023 HIGHLIGHTS



93,376

Visits to our food pantries

4,063

Families received Supplemental Nutrition Program Assistance (SNAP)

398

Elderly residents received help with home repairs

1,561

People assisted in obtaining permanent housing

846

Households received financial assistance and/or counseling through Parish Services

ALL ABOUT FAMILY

A Brave Journey to Reunification



▲ The youngest member of Rocio's family charms Immigration Case Worker Kaira Marinez.

Like many migrants across the globe, Rocio and her husband Ernesto dreamed of coming to America. Today, the couple and their children live that dream in Toms River. Rocio's three youngest children attend school and love learning, and her son and husband work.

Rocio is taking ESL classes and loves spending time with her new granddaughter, born last December. "I feel very blessed and I thank God every day," she said.

She is especially grateful for Community Services Case

Manager Kaira Marinez, who was assigned to assist Rocio's family through the US Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Service's (USCCB/MRS) Family Reunification Program.

Kaira helped Rocio's family get acclimated. She helped them find a place to live, enroll the children in school and sign up for health insurance. For Kaira, the experience has been gratifying. "Sometimes immigrants don't know how to proceed. But Catholic Charities is here to help."

Kaira feels privileged to have been able to assist the family. "They are so close to one another. Learning about their experience and knowing how traumatic their journey to America was, I feel blessed to have been able to help them."

SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING BETTER

Last year, Rocio and Ernesto made the gut-wrenching decision to leave their home in Puebla, Mexico and embark on an 800-mile trek to the United States. Jobs in Puebla were hard to come by and living conditions were poor. The couple's plan was to travel to America, find jobs and send for their children: two sons ages 16 and 11, and two daughters ages 15 and 8.

Rocio said the hardest part was saying goodbye — even though the arrangement would be temporary. She said they begged her not to leave. Rocio said she entrusted her children to a neighbor she felt would take good care of them. It was a leap of faith, but they saw no other way. Rocio left money to pay for her children's food and care.

BARRIERS AT THE BORDER

It took three days of traveling by bus to reach the Texas border. Cold when they arrived, it was the first time Rocio had seen snow. People were standing huddled together in groups for warmth. The bitter weather didn't sting nearly as much as being refused entry.

On their first attempt, Border Patrol Agents turned the couple away. It was a two-day walk back to where they were staying. But they were determined. Rocio made nine attempts before gaining entry on March 16. Her husband presented himself ten times before he was allowed through.

Rocio went to stay with their sponsor in New York. She waited and prayed Ernesto would gain entry so they could start on the next part of their plan — bringing the children to a new home.

MAKING A BOLD DECISION

During these months, life in Puebla was not going well. Their oldest said their caregiver was friendly at first, but soon began neglecting them. He couldn't bear seeing his sisters

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES
2023 HIGHLIGHTS



1,092

Families received crisis intervention and stabilization services

10,505

Children and adults received counseling and support services for trauma

1,060

Individuals received immigration support and counseling services

6,290

Individuals received domestic violence counseling, education and legal assistance

36,584

Nights of shelter provided

4,000

Individuals assisted by NJ4S Mercer County HUB



▲ Immigration Case Worker Kaira Marinez was assigned to help the family adjust to living in the United States. She helped Rocio keep the refrigerator stocked with supplies from the Ocean County food pantry.

and brother hungry, so he stopped attending school and started working to be able to feed them. But he could not earn enough, so he started selling their household goods and the appliances.

Discouraged and running out of things to sell, their son decided he and his siblings would travel to America to find their parents. The four set out alone, hitchhiking nearly 1,800 miles across Mexico to Tijuana. He said they mostly rode with tractor trailer drivers.

As unaccompanied children, they were granted entry into the country and taken to a facility near the border operated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Their eldest was separated from his siblings and said he worried about what was happening to them in the crowded camp.

With the help of USCCB/MRS's Family Reunification Program, their son was able to call Rocio. That first phone call was a jumble of details. He shared many of the difficult encounters the children faced.

Recalling the conversation, Rocio's eyes welled with tears. She said when she hung up the phone, she was confused and unsure if all her children were in the country. She said it was stressful — not knowing what was happening and not being there to comfort them. During the next two weeks, calls volleyed back and forth. Paperwork needed to be collected and details ironed out. It took more than 20 days, but finally plans were made for reunification.

When she finally saw her children, Rocio wept tears of joy. She said she's grateful they are all under one roof again and thanks God for the help they received from Catholic Charities.

FOR INFORMATION about Immigration Services call 732-363-5322 x3236 in Monmouth and Ocean counties and 609-394-2056 in Burlington and Mercer counties.

CELEBRATING A NEW MILESTONE

on His Journey from Client to Counselor

In 2017, when Robert Brooks was participating in Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton's (CCDoT) Partners in Recovery program, he was there for help managing a substance use disorder and post-traumatic stress. While in treatment, he found himself helping others in the program — making sure they could access the services they needed or just lending an ear.

“My counselors would say, ‘That’s case management,’” said Brooks. “I guess they were preparing me for what was to come.”

Brooks said the instinct to support the people in the program with him felt so natural. “A lot of us already have that skill — helping others. People at Catholic Charities helped me develop it, to do it on a larger scale. They encouraged me to learn how to do it better.”

His journey as an employee of CCDoT began just a year after he joined the program for services. The Director of Outpatient and Crisis Services hired him as a Peer Mental Health Advocate and has been leading by example ever since.

Brooks said an individual in CCDoT’s program recognized him from when they were incarcerated together. “I told him, ‘I used to be a client here too. We’ve both come a long way.’ He sees me sitting behind my desk and wonders if he could do the same. Hopefully, I can encourage him to become a peer advocate.”

HE’S BEEN WHERE THEY ARE

“It’s my lived experience,” Brooks said, that helps him connect to the clients in the programs. “They know I’ve been where they are. Some people remember me from when I was in group. They remember my change. They have seen my transformation.”

After getting the peer advocate job, he enrolled in Camden County Community College and earned an associate’s degree. He became a Certified Drug and Alcohol Counselor. Last month, Brooks graduated with his BA in Human Services Direct Care from Rowan University. CCDoT currently employs Brooks as a



▲ Robert Brooks earned his BA in Human Services Direct Care.

Dual Disorder Coordinator in the Partners in Recovery program in Trenton and the Partial Care program in Westampton.

He says he uses cognitive behavioral therapy and motivational interviewing when working with the people he sees in his programs. “It’s a good style of treatment,” said Brooks. “It’s about building people up and focusing on their strengths. When I meet with a client, I look at what they do well and we go from there.”

He said it’s important not to give advice. “We’re not here to fix people. My job is to show people

they’re doing better than they think. If they came in for help, I remind them that’s a step in the right direction.”

He said he is very grateful for all of the staff at CCDoT who have guided him along the way and given him encouragement and opportunities. “The staff here are really supportive. They’ve helped me every step of the way,” said Brooks.

.....
FOR INFORMATION about the behavioral health and substance use programs at CCDoT, please call 800-360-7711.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES WORKSHOP

Helps High School Senior Achieve College Goals

This fall, Princeton High School senior Evan Pease will start classes at the University of Miami, majoring in Sports Administration. For this young athlete, it's a dream come true — preparing for a career that combines two things he is passionate about — sports and business. "I am looking forward to studying something I love," said Pease.

He said he is also excited to meet new people and has plans to join intermural sports teams. His favorite sport is football. Evan played running back and linebacker for the Princeton High School Tigers and was the team's captain. He has also played basketball, lacrosse, soccer and golf.

Pease got help writing his college admissions essay in one of the NJ4S Mercer Hub's "Exploring Empathy through Writing" workshops. He said Hub Director Michael Lovaglio helped him shape an impactful essay about his service work at his church, First Presbyterian Church of Cranbury. "Michael was really great. He helped me organize my thoughts and get it ready."



◀ In his college admissions essay, high school senior Evan Pease talked about volunteering at Skeet's Closet.

"Evan exemplifies many of the qualities colleges and universities look for in students. He is hard working, empathetic, thoughtful and kind," said Lovaglio. "I am so glad the coaching he received through the workshop helped him achieve his goal."

Pease wrote about his work for Skeet's Closet, a mission at his church that collects and distributes gently used or new baby clothes to families in need. Pease, who currently oversees operations at Skeet's Closet, said he spends about three hours a week sorting through the donations and preparing them for distribution. Several times a year,

he organizes drives to collect baby and toddler clothes. "It feels good to give back," he said.

"I'm so proud of Evan," said his mom, Megan Pease. "He has accomplished so much, and I am excited to see him off on his next journey. She said she was incredibly proud of her son when she learned he was already investigating the kinds of service work he could start when he gets to Miami.

.....
FOR INFORMATION about the Student Support Services' Mercer Hub, please visit https://www.catholiccharitiestrenton.org/nj4s_mercer_hub/ or call 609-394-5157 x3600.

MEDICAL SERVICES

2023 HIGHLIGHTS



324

Number of people served under Behavioral Health Home program

2,716

People received specialty psychiatric and nursing services

8,356

Individuals received crisis services

1,261

Services provided to monitor, prevent and respond to infectious diseases and outbreaks

RAISING A FLAG AND AWARENESS

for Mental Health



This May, in recognition of National Mental Health Awareness Month, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton (CCDoT) and the Municipality of Princeton hosted a flag-raising ceremony, reinforcing the message that no one needs to manage mental health challenges alone.

“Mental health is an essential part of overall well-being,” said CCDoT’s Chief Nurse Executive Dr. Lisa Merritt. “We all need to be active in reducing stigma around behavioral health to keep people safe and alive.”

In January, CCDoT opened Princeton Integrated Behavioral Health (PIBH), removing barriers to mental health treatment. Walk-in appointments are available and individuals seeking help do not need insurance.

The clinic provides substance use treatment, counseling, virtual exam rooms and connections to medical services. The Community Services team provides many wraparound services, including food and housing resources.

FOR INFORMATION about services offered at Princeton Integrated Behavioral Health, contact 609-924-8018.

IFSS HELPS

When Mental Health Issues Make Living with Loved Ones Challenging

Families are the building blocks of a community. Rooted in love and caring, they provide nurturing and a sense of belonging. Sometimes, when a family member has a severe mental health diagnosis, life at home can become challenging to manage.

“For family members of loved ones with serious mental illnesses, the feelings of isolation and disconnectedness can greatly impact their well-being. That’s where the Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) program comes in and can provide a community for family members,” said Director of Partial Care and Clinical Services Heather Alexander Mark. “Community is important for a myriad of reasons including helping to create a support system, stress reduction and creating a sense of belonging.”

Families enrolled in IFSS have a friendly ear available if they need to talk. They also have a network of peers who have experienced similar situations and operate in a judgment-free zone to call upon. The IFSS program provides

various supports, including consultations, a support group that meets twice monthly, respite care opportunities, psycho-educational programming, advocacy and service referrals.

RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-CARE

Program Coordinator Paisley Burgess and Family Support Counselor Bryana Martinez are dedicated to helping families navigate the challenges of having a member with a behavioral health diagnosis. They also stress the importance of self-care and offer coping strategies. “We encourage them to practice self-care, try meditation or take time to do something they love,” said Paisley.

If a family member in the program needs to talk, Paisley is available by phone or in-person to listen and provide guidance. Literally and figuratively, she meets them where they are. I may go to their house, or we might connect to get a cup of coffee. When I meet with one woman in the program, I wear my sneakers

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES
2023 HIGHLIGHTS



▲ One of the first things Paisley did when she joined the program was compile a binder full of resources and information for the families she serves.

because I know we will be walking around her neighborhood and talking. That's her escape."

Paisley's deep empathy for the family members she serves began when she was working as a paraprofessional in a unique education program. Many of the students she worked with had behavioral health issues, and she saw their parents struggling. "I wanted to help the parents and do more for them. I started researching the different kinds of resources that were available and would share that information."

When Paisley began her role with IFSS a little over a year ago,

one of the first things she did was compile a huge resource binder. She collected all kinds of information to share. "I want the people we serve to be more informed about all that is out there."

PROVIDING PROGRAMS TO BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Before Thanksgiving and Christmas, when extended families gather, IFSS hosts Relax, Relate & Release days. Families in the program get together, enjoy light refreshments and share their stories. Paisley said the holidays can be extra stressful for individuals with mental health

issues. "These sessions help take the pressure off," said Paisley.

The IFSS program also holds a Summer Series. The five-part psycho-educational program features fun activities to help families understand how important it is for caregivers to care for themselves. This year, Paisley and Bryana's plans for the series include Zumba classes, meditation sessions, a resource fair, painting classes and an Eating Well and Feeling Love Day with healthy smoothies and a massage therapist.

"Both Paisley and Bryana bring deeply committed hearts, knowledge and experience to the program. They provide valuable resource information and develop creative events for caregivers and families to participate in as well as bringing compassionate listening ears," said Alexander Mark.

.....
FOR INFORMATION on Intensive Family Support Services or joining the support group, please call 609-571-5312.

4,300

People served through counseling and mental health programs

679

Individuals received addiction focused treatment

4,987

Employment related services provided

330

People served through residential services

18,272

Transportation services provided

6,271

Individuals received services through the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic

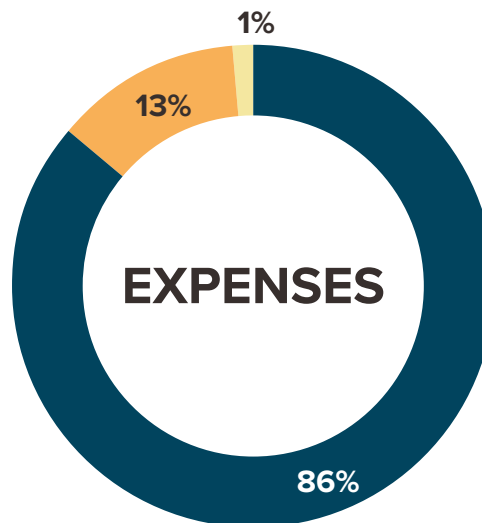
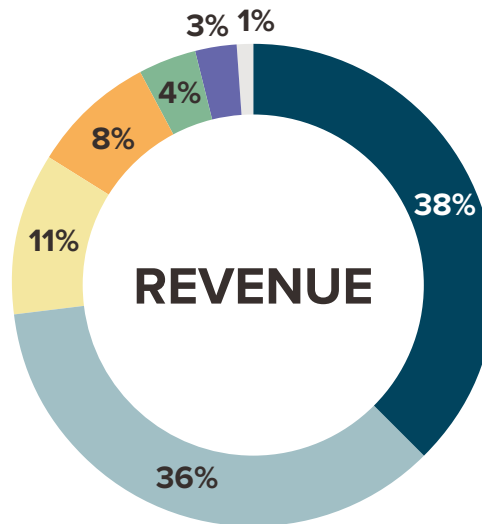
ANNUAL REPORT 2023

REVENUE + EXPENSES. Following is a pre-audit summary of revenues and expenses for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2023. Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton continues to be fiscally responsible, fulfilling the stewardship expected by our funders and donors. Approximately 13% of our budget is spent on centralized administrative costs.

REVENUES BY MAJOR SOURCE	2023
Medicaid and Medicare	\$22,057,801
New Jersey Department of Human Services	\$20,856,564
Other Federal, State, County and Municipal Funds	\$6,510,797
Contributions and Donations	\$4,874,070
Client and Third Party Fees	\$1,711,006
Diocese of Trenton	\$507,765
Other	\$2,212,753
TOTAL PROGRAM REVENUE	\$58,730,756

EXPENSES	2023
Program Services	\$49,222,250
General and Administrative	\$7,171,233
Development	\$637,433
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$57,030,916

A full financial statement may be obtained by writing to:
 Debra Elko, Associate Executive Director Fiscal Affairs
 P.O. Box 1423, Trenton, NJ 08607-1423



COVERING THE BASICS

We distributed \$2,241,149 in medicine, clothing and household items to individuals and families in need.



TACKLING FOOD INSECURITY

We distributed nearly \$1.5 million worth of food to individuals and families who did not have enough to eat.



PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

We administered \$1,487,352 in rent, mortgage and utility payments to keep people in their homes.

2023 DONORS

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton would like to thank the individuals, corporations and foundations that supported our mission in 2023. The following list contains donors who contributed \$500 or more to the mission of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Trenton.

We extend our sincere gratitude to ALL who gave generously throughout the year. Please know that each contribution is valued and appreciated.

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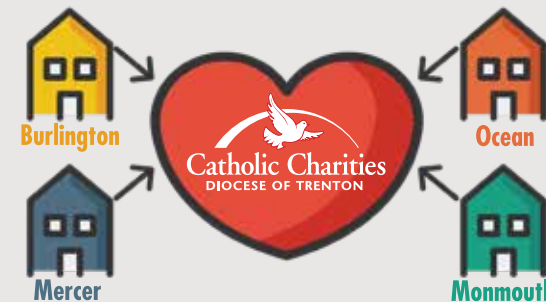


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CELEBRATING A NEW SPACE

and Community Partners

Last month, more than 100 people, including community partners, student volunteers from Donovan Catholic High School and government officials joined the Community Services team for an Open House at their new location in Brick Township.

(Learn more about the celebration on Page 3.)