

"Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

- Ephesians 5:1-2



Director's Letter

Providing Help. Creating Hope. Serving All.



Dear Neighbors,

As I write you in the second week of January 2025, it remains a sacred time for our Catholic faith – the Christmas season.

This season invites us to reflect on the boundless love that God has for us. I've known people who have tried as hard as possible to give God every reason not to love them. Despite that, the Gospel tells us that He will love us all no matter what we have done. In a world with things like trauma, poverty, violence, terrorism, and abuse, it can be difficult for us to understand how this endless love could be possible.

God's ultimate act of love and sacrifice – sending His son to save us! – inspires us to serve others with kindness, compassion and generosity.

As you read this newsletter you will find stories of people embodying that love through service. Volunteers like Sandy, Skip and Linda have made the Christmas Store a place where families can create joy-filled holiday memories that will last a lifetime. Their dedication is not just about filling shelves or sorting donations – it's about building connections, fostering community and sharing hope.

You'll also read about Lenar, a remarkable young man from Ryves Youth Center who turned a personal frustration into an inspiring journey by developing a talent that has opened doors for him and has sparked big changes in his life.

TIME for Me at Ryves Youth Center is another way we are building connections and transforming lives. With the support of caring adult mentors, 26 young people expanded their horizons last year. Programs like this demonstrate the power of relationships and the importance of investing in the next generation.

When we give of ourselves, we truly live out the Gospel's call to love one another. But service to others doesn't just impact those we help – it transforms us, too. Acts of kindness, volunteering or giving create what scientists call a "helper's high." It's a natural response that occurs when levels of serotonin and dopamine increase in our brains giving us a sense of joy and fulfillment.

At Catholic Charities Terre Haute, we are honored to provide opportunities for you to make a difference. To support our amazing volunteers, we recently brought on Emily Freeman as Volunteer Coordinator. If you are looking for a way to give back to the community, please reach out to Emily at efreeman@ccthin.org or visit ccthin.org to learn how you can help.

Thank you for walking alongside us in this mission. Together, we are building a stronger, more compassionate community rooted in love and service.

God Bless,

John C. Etling
Agency Director

Volunteer Highlights



Skip and Linda have spread holiday cheer through their dedicated volunteer work at the Christmas Store for 10 years. But for them, it's more than just giving back—it's about fostering community, building connections, and sharing kindness.

When asked what keeps them returning year after year, Linda shared, "Working with the other volunteers, building relationships, and seeing the difference the Christmas Store makes – that's what keeps us coming back."

Both Skip and Linda take great joy in knowing the donations they carefully sort and stock throughout the year truly make an impact. Skip reflected, "I enjoy coming in on those days [Christmas Store shopping days] to find the shelves cleared out. You know items go to a family in need—especially the toys."

Delivering Hope: Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank Responds to Jasonville's Water and Food Needs

The water facility in Jasonville caught fire on December 8. As a result, residents of the community were left without running water until December 13, when a boil order was put in place. (Essex, 2024) According to WTHI-TV10, "In total, 5,500 people in Jasonville, Coalmont and Hymera were impacted." (Essex, 2024) Shortly after the fire, they called Terre Haute Catholic Charities Foodbank and asked if we had any water we could donate. The Foodbank team immediately loaded up some water and delivered it to the area. Since the residents did not have any water, it made a huge difference to receive some bottled water.

A few days later, Amy Hammond from Shakamak Elementary School called needing help. Many of their students rely on eating breakfast and lunch at the schools, and with school being closed because of the lack of water, the need was even greater. So, they decided to make bags of food for the students. Unfortunately, they ran out of food to pack, so the Foodbank staff jumped into action. They loaded 2 pallets of kid-friendly nonperishable food and a pallet of fresh produce and rushed it to the school. As a result, 75 children received bags of food, that provided them with a nutritious meal, while they waited for the school to reopen. In total, the Foodbank staff delivered 2,672 pounds of water and food.

New Year, New Baby: Bethany House Welcomes a New Resident

One of the women living at Bethany House, gave birth to a baby boy on January 9. The staff is excited to welcome him to Bethany House, which will be his first home. They are also proud of his mom, who, until giving birth, had been working at Pizza City. While living at Bethany House and working at Pizza City, she has saved up enough money to purchase a safe and reliable vehicle for her and her newborn son.

At Catholic Charities, volunteers don't just lend a hand—they become family. One special member of our community is Sandy, who has been making a difference at the Christmas Store for 20 years!



Sandy's mom was also a longtime volunteer at the Christmas Store until she passed away. Sandy continues to honor her mom's legacy by helping bring Christmas cheer to families in our community. When asked why she keeps coming back, her words were so heartwarming: "I love to be out in the public and help people. It is a satisfying type of volunteering because you meet a lot of people from different backgrounds and get to talk to them and help people in need."

Thank you, Sandy, for your dedication to giving back to our neighbors. You have a big heart! We are so proud to have created a space where volunteers like Sandy find not only a place to give back, but a place to belong.

Want to make a difference too? Call 812-232-1447 or visit <https://ccthin.org/volunteers> to join us as a volunteer at the Christmas Store!



TIME for ME

Trauma-Informed Mentoring for Excellence, is a program at Ryves Youth Center that matches girls and boys ages 9-17 with approved Catholic Charities' volunteer mentors. This program fosters one-on-one relationships on-site. Mentors and mentees meet for 1 hour each week.

Why is mentoring so important?
1 in 3 young people grow up without a mentor.

Are you interested in becoming a mentor?

Click here to learn more, or reach out to our Mentor Coordinator, Juhi Beri, at jberi@ccthin.org.



"I haven't had anything like that in so many years. It actually brought tears to my eyes thinking about how beautiful you people were and to treat people the way you do."

- Robert W.,
Christmas Store shopper

Cutting His Own Path: Turning Frustration into Opportunity

At just 13 years old, Lenar started cutting hair out of frustration. He didn't like the way barbershops styled his hair, so he decided to take matters into his own hands.

What began as a simple personal challenge quickly grew into a passion. Through dedication and countless hours of practice, Lenar honed his skills and developed a talent that set him apart.

Last year, during Family Night at Ryves Youth Center, Shannonagins Hair Shack was offering free haircuts to the youth in the community. Lenar, eager to show what he could do, asked the barber if he could demonstrate his skills. "One of the little kids agreed to let me cut his hair!" Lenar recalls. The barber was impressed with his natural talent and precision, which led to an incredible opportunity.

This December, during Family Night at Ryves Youth Center, Shannonagins gifted Lenar a brand-new set of clippers, empowering him to continue pursuing his dream. Lenar's story serves as an inspiration to other young people, proving that with determination, creativity, and a willingness to step outside the box, challenges can become stepping stones to success. Lenar is a shining example of how a little dissatisfaction can spark big change, and how following your passion can lead to unexpected and life-changing opportunities.



Stock the Shelves

We work year-round to fill our store shelves to bring Christmas cheer to families in our community. Last year, 493 families celebrated the traditions of Christmas with gifts under their tree because of the support of people like you.

**Donations can be dropped off at
Bethany House, 1402 Locust St., Terre Haute
Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

New Items to consider are:

- Boys and girls clothing (sizes infants through kids 16-18)
- Toys
- Adult clothing (all sizes)
- Socks (all sizes)
- Underwear (all sizes)
- Household items
- Hygiene products
- Christmas decor

*Do you want an easier way to bring joy to a family at Christmas? Click **here** to make a donation. We'll go out and purchase the items most needed.*



Upcoming Events

2025 Soup Bowl Benefit

The 15th annual Soup Bowl Benefit is on Saturday, February 1, from 3:00–5:00 p.m. at Maryland Community Church.

One \$30 ticket includes a handcrafted soup bowl and unlimited soup samples from local chefs and restaurants.
Most importantly, it can provide as many as 120 meals!

To purchase a ticket, click [here](#).

How to Inspire Generational Generosity

Open Conversations with Adult Children: Parents should regularly discuss their giving practices with their adult children. Express your wishes regarding your estate and potential charitable bequests so they understand and can honor your intentions. Share your desire for them to continue the family tradition of charitable giving.

Instill Philanthropy Early: Even from a young age, teaching children about the importance of generosity helps them grow in the habit of giving back. Talk with them about how everything we have is a gift and how giving can positively impact others and the world around them.

Tools to Support Generational Giving: Did you know that tools like Donor Advised Funds can help families facilitate giving across generations? Foundations like the Catholic Community Foundation or the Wabash Valley Community Foundation offer these funds as an option to help families and individuals support the causes that matter most to them, while encouraging meaningful conversations about generosity.

For more information, contact Jennifer at (812)232-1447, Option 3 or at jtames@ccthin.org.



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