Catholic Charities sees increase in service delivery

Youngstown, OH – Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Youngstown recently completed the 2012 Catholic Charities USA Annual Survey, which gathers information on services, collaborative efforts, social action initiatives, parish relationships, personnel, finances, and implementation of mission-related activities from Catholic Charities organizations across the United States. Five institutions in the Diocese of Youngstown participated in the survey: the Catholic Charities administrative office located in the diocesan chancery; Catholic Charities Housing Opportunities; Catholic Charities of Ashtabula County; Catholic Charities Serving Portage and Stark Counties; and Catholic Charities Regional Agency (serving Columbiana, Mahoning and Trumbull Counties).

Catholic Charities served a total of 55,799 unduplicated clients in the Diocese of Youngstown last year, an increase of 17% over the previous year. Nearly three-fourths (3/4) of those served receive some type of public assistance, including TANF, SSI, food stamps, and Medicaid benefits. Eighty-one percent (81%) reported incomes below the federal poverty line, which was $23,050 for a family of four in 2012.

The Catholic Charities agencies serving the Diocese of Youngstown provided over $1.2 million in direct assistance to clients last year. Additionally, twenty-six percent (26%) of Catholic Charities’ total operating budget consisted of pass-through funds to clients from grants and contracts with government entities, as well as other direct assistance monies from both diocesan and local sources.

Catholic Charities devotes 86% of its total budget to programs that meet basic human needs, strengthen families, build communities, and empower low-income people. Nine percent (9%) of Catholic Charities’ operating budget is used for administration, which is well below the national average for nonprofit organizations. Five percent (5%) of Catholic Charities’ budget is devoted to fundraising for its various programs and services.

In terms of programming, Catholic Charities’ top priority is emergency assistance to individuals and families. Last year, Catholic Charities helped 20,204 people with food, utilities, prescriptions, clothing and other basic needs, reflecting a slight increase over the number served in 2011. An additional 3,021 people accessed Catholic Charities’ First Step Pregnancy and Family Support, a program that incorporates material assistance with case management to help pregnant women and families with children ages 0-3.
The need for food represented the greatest increase in Catholic Charities’ emergency assistance program last year, with a 35% increase over the previous year.

“Media attention seems to focus on the number of children who are hungry, which has increased to unconscionable levels in the past few years,” explains Mary Ellen Andersen, President and CEO of the Diocese of Youngstown Catholic Charities Corporation, the organization responsible for the oversight of social services across the Diocese of Youngstown.

“About one in seven American households were food insecure last year, and one in five American children go to bed hungry each night.”

Andersen also adds that the number of older adults (ages 65 and over) who are hungry has also increased in recent years.

“Both local and national statistics reflect an increase in the number older Americans visiting food pantries on a regular basis. For a number of years we have heard about seniors choosing between purchasing medications and groceries. This dilemma has become the reality for a greater number of older adults, particularly those on fixed incomes. When the costs of food, gasoline, and other goods go up, they are forced to make tough decisions.”

One measure that Catholic Charities agencies in the Diocese of Youngstown have taken to address the needs of people who are hungry is the development of small, on-site pantries. Families visiting a Catholic Charities agency for help with food are often given non-perishable food items to meet their immediate need, and/or a food voucher to obtain groceries at a local supermarket.

Catholic Charities’ Regional Agency received a Fighting Hunger Together grant from the Wal-Mart Foundation last spring, and has been working collaboratively with other organizations to help enhance infrastructure and provide education around issues of food insecurity and nutrition. The Regional Agency has also initiated a community meal at its East Liverpool site one day per month as a way of addressing hunger and building community.

Both Catholic Charities of Ashtabula County and Catholic Charities Serving Portage and Stark Counties have hosted cooking classes and demonstrations to help clients stretch their food resources and introduce them to new and healthy ways to prepare food for their families.

Financial literacy education is often used in tandem with emergency assistance to help clients make lasting life changes. Catholic Charities’ agency directors agree that their financial literacy services make the greatest impact in helping families out of poverty.

“Teaching clients about money management and working with them to create a budget puts them in control of their spending. They become empowered. When some clients look at their income and expenses on paper, in black and white, they want to begin making changes to improve their lives. Catholic Charities will support them as they work toward this increased self-sufficiency,” Andersen notes.
In addition to emergency assistance to families, Catholic Charities provided services to 3,625 older adults (ages 65 and over) in 2012, an increase of 39% over the previous year. Eighty-four (84) older adults received guardianship services through Catholic Charities of Ashtabula County. Fifty-five (55) older adults with memory loss or dementia participated in adult day services offered in Louisville by Catholic Charities Serving Portage and Stark Counties. Catholic Charities Regional Agency’s senior support program, which helps older adults with such activities as grocery shopping, banking, medical appointments, accessing community resources, friendly visitation, and assistance with Medicare forms, served 1,374 people. The Regional Agency’s Senior Center in East Liverpool served a total of 23,922 on-site and home-delivered meals to 502 older adults in 2012.

Catholic Charities Housing Opportunities (CCHO) provided assistance to 172 people last year. One hundred thirty-four (134) people received permanent housing at Eastwood Village, an apartment complex on Youngstown’s East side sponsored by Caritas Communities, a partnership between CCHO and Humility of Mary Housing, Inc. CCHO rented four homes to low-income families in the City of Youngstown, and assisted 29 people with down-payment assistance in 2012. The Catholic Charities social service agencies provided housing counseling to 642 people. Catholic Charities Serving Portage and Stark Counties provided safe, affordable housing to 83 people residing in apartment units owned by the agency in downtown Ravenna.

Catholic Charities Legal Immigration Services, accredited by the Bureau of Immigration Appeals (BIA) since 2006, experienced significant growth in 2012. A total of 138 people received help with citizenship applications, family visa petitions, removal proceedings, and legal representation, an increase of twenty-six percent (26%) over 2011. Legal Immigration Services’ staff also provided specific assistance and advocacy to seven (7) victims of international human trafficking.

All of Catholic Charities’ programs throughout the Diocese of Youngstown were delivered by a staff of 64 full-time and 36 part-time employees serving 10 locations. One hundred twenty-four (124) people volunteered over 15,000 hours to Catholic Charities last year. An additional 66 people served on agency boards of directors.

In addition to gathering data on finances, social service provision, and staffing, the Catholic Charities USA Annual Survey also collects information on organizations’ efforts to enhance mission, Catholic identity, parish relationships, and diversity.

Catholic Charities continues to build and strengthen partnerships with diocesan parishes. In 2012, Catholic Charities provided parishes with information on Catholic social teaching; current social justice issues; Catholic Relief Services and global solidarity; Catholic Campaign for Human Development; and political responsibility. Catholic Charities has defined its top parish social ministry priorities as collaborating with St. Vincent De Paul; promoting global solidarity, potentially through Catholic Relief Services; coordinating Catholic Campaign for Human Development efforts; and promoting community organizing and economic development.
In its efforts to promote an inclusive workplace, Catholic Charities recruits diverse applicants for open employment positions and provides diversity and inclusivity training for staff on a regular basis.

A significant source of funding for the work of Catholic Charities comes from the Annual Bishop’s Appeal for Catholic Charities and Church, which began its 2013 campaign in parishes across the Diocese of Youngstown last month. Sixty-six percent (66%) of every dollar raised in this important diocesan fundraising effort supports Catholic Charities’ programs and services in the six-county diocese.

“Catholic Charities has experienced various federal, state and local funding cuts over the past several years,” explains Brian R. Corbin, Executive Director of Catholic Charities Services and Health Affairs for the Diocese of Youngstown.

“The funding we receive from the generous, compassionate people in our parishes through the Annual Bishop’s Appeal for Catholic Charities and Church enables us to continue our mission of providing help and creating hope in our communities. We are thankful to everyone who supports the Bishop’s Appeal with a sacrificial gift for the benefit of the less-fortunate, especially since our donors themselves have been forced to re-think their own personal and household spending,” Corbin states.

For more information concerning the 2012 Catholic Charities USA Annual Survey, contact Rachel Hrbolich, Associate Director of Social Services for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Youngstown at 330-744-8451, ext. 328 (rhrbolich@youngstowndiocese.org) or visit Catholic Charities’ website at www.ccdoy.org.