

Adoption Services Creates Lifelong Relationships

▼ **Open Adoptions Offer** ▼ **Flexibility for Families and** ▼ **Birth Parents**

Meg and Chris Nelson's two daughters couldn't be more different. Six-and-a-half-year-old Lizzie and three-and-a-half-year-old Kate each take after her own birth mother in looks and personality.

"Lizzie is a string bean, and Kate is our pumpkin," Meg says. "Introverted, extroverted, blue eyes, brown eyes."

The Nelsons always considered adoption an option and began the adoption process not long after they decided to start their family.

"My sister adopted all three of her kids," Meg says, adding she was concerned about her chances of getting pregnant. "Chris said, 'Why wait?' So we started pursuing adoption early."

Known as open adoption, ongoing communication between adoptive families and the birth parents has become the norm.

Closed or anonymous adoptions aren't common.

They chose Catholic Charities' Adoption Services because they felt it provided personal care in domestic adoptions. Adoption Services places 10 to 15 infants a year with local families. Neither adoptive families nor birth mothers need to be Catholic. Because the

Nelsons planned to raise their children in the Catholic faith, they were drawn to Catholic Charities' values.

"The two birth mothers chose us partly because they were raised Catholic and wanted faith and education to be important for the family they chose," says Meg.

The Nelson family sees each birth mother four times a year, even though one lives in Washington, D.C. They keep in touch through monthly e-mails and phone calls. Lizzie's birth father came to two visits before the adoption and again when she was a year old. Ongoing communication between adoptive families and the birth parents, known as open adoption, has become the norm. Closed or anonymous adoptions aren't common.

"When we started the process, we knew open adoption was common, but we were 100 percent against it," Meg says. "We were willing to communicate for a limited amount of time. Open adoption was something we came to over time and now wouldn't have any other way."

Exploring What's Best

To help parents with this major life decision, Adoption Services provides counseling and one staff person who stays



Chris and Meg Nelson adopted Lizzie and Kate through Catholic Charities' Adoption Services.

Welcome

We welcome you to Catholic Charities' Voice newsletter, which combines the St. Joe's Voice and Catholic Charities Voice newsletters. To conserve fiscal and environmental resources, increase our efficiency and share program news with more of our friends, this newsletter will be distributed three times a year to our individual, parish, corporate and foundation supporters. If you have questions about the changes, please contact the Development office at 612-664-8554. You can help save the environment and help us save money by receiving this newsletter electronically. To subscribe to the electronic version, please send an email to newsletter@ccspm.org. ♦

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News Briefs

Aging Services Steps Up to Meet Increased Demand

▼ The number of clients age 65 or older receiving services at the Dorothy Day Center increased 7 percent in the last year. Catholic Charities' Aging Services helps meet that increased need by offering outreach services for elderly homeless clients. Care managers assess clients' needs and develop plans for getting them the help they need, such as housing, income or a doctor's appointment. ♦

Boston Scientific Cleans Up at St. Joe's

Employee volunteers from Boston Scientific volunteered to do yard work at St. Joseph's Home for Children June 2. The group of 18



spent about three hours raking and cleaning in the afternoon sunshine. The grounds at St. Joe's looked great after the group left, says St. Joe's Director Keith Kozerski. ♦

Walk to End Hunger Thanksgiving Morning

What better way to celebrate your blessings on Thanksgiving Day than by helping ensure everyone has enough to eat? Save the date for the second annual Walk to End Hunger at the Mall of America, which will be from 7 a.m. – 10 a.m. Nov. 26. Organize a team for the walk or volunteer at the family-friendly event. You can designate the pledges you collect to Catholic Charities' food shelves. Learn more at walktoendhunger.org or by calling 612-807-2228. ♦

From the Interim CEO

Since 2005, Fr. John Estrem served as CEO, and the agency and community benefitted from his strong leadership. As you may know, Fr. Estrem resigned effective June 30.

When Archbishop John Nienstedt asked me to serve as interim CEO, I didn't hesitate.

Catholic Charities' work and its staff's and supporters' dedication impressed me before and during my seven-year tenure — including two as chair — on the Board of Directors.

I'm a retired hospital executive and have bachelor's degrees in accounting and economics from St. John's University and a master's degree in healthcare administration from the University of Minnesota.

Most Catholic Charities agencies are led by a lay CEO who handles day-to-day operations. With the archbishop's approval, the board will recommend a lay person as its new CEO. The archbishop will decide what role a priest will have at Catholic Charities.



Our focus remains on serving those most in need, on ensuring those who cry out the least and suffer the most have a voice and have their basic needs met.

At St. John's, I was schooled in the Benedictine tradition. One of St. Benedict's more well-known prayers simply says: "Listen carefully and attend with the ear of your heart."

For those who work with, graciously support and speak on behalf of those most in need, that prayer contains wisdom and direction.

If we hear them, we will further resolve to end poverty and bring justice to our community.

▶ ▶ ▶ Robert K. Spinner
Interim CEO

Join us for a Conversation with Catholic Charities Sept. 22

You are invited to join Interim CEO Bob Spinner and members of the Board of Directors for breakfast and to learn more about Catholic Charities' work in the Twin Cities. The event will be held from 7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Sept. 22 at Catholic Charities' Administration Center, 1200 Second Ave. S., Minneapolis. Board members Jan Conlin and David Bromelkamp will host the event. RSVP to Mary Langfeldt at 612-664-8604 or mlangfeldt@ccspm.org ♦

Funding Renewed for Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

The state allocated \$218,000 for the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act during the last legislative session. Hope Street Director Andrea Simonett says she's happy to have

received some funds for homeless teens, especially in light of the economic climate. However, the allocation is a significant cut from last year, when \$1 million was directed to street outreach programs for homeless teens. ♦

Thanks to Family Foundations

More than 40 family foundations make it possible for us to serve people in need and work to end poverty in our community. We are deeply grateful for the support. Each issue we will feature some of these foundations.

Thank you to:

Buuck Family Foundation
Gilligan Foundation
LeJeune Family Foundation
Mark and Karen Rauenhorst Family Foundation
Patrick and Aimee Butler Family Foundation

Clients Build Skills with New Computer Labs

▼ Corporations fund labs at several Catholic Charities programs

The computer labs at the Dorothy Day Center and Northside Child Development Center recently underwent major upgrades, thanks to support from Securian and Best Buy.

The Dorothy Day Center lab, sponsored by Securian, allows clients to search for jobs and improve their computer skills. Northside received two sets of computers, one for school-age children and one for the teen room, courtesy of Best Buy. The children use the new computer stations for activities such as homework.

The new labs got up and running June 29.

“We’re really grateful for this help from Securian, Best Buy and others,” says Catholic Charities’ Information Technologies Director Theresa Sarff.

“These computers are a huge asset to our clients at Dorothy Day and the children at Northside.”

She added that Catholic Charities wants to add similar computer labs to other program sites. The Family Service Center in Maplewood will

soon get a new lab, sponsored by ADC Telecommunications.

For more information about how you can help provide funding for labs to benefit Catholic Charities clients, please contact Kate Kelly at kkelly@ccspm.org or call 612-664-8584. ♦



Children at Northside Child Development Center complete homework in the new computer lab.

Adoption Services *(continued from page 1)*

with them throughout the process.

“Adoption Services focuses on the needs of birth parents, whether they decide to place their child for adoption or parent their child,” says Connie Roller, Adoption Services program manager. “We work with birth parents to explore what is best for them. There are reasons for adoption, and it’s the right choice for some people.”

A birth parent chooses the adoptive parents from about 20 families who have been approved through Catholic Charities’ adoption process. The birth mothers who chose the Nelsons were 22 and 23 years old, the average age of a birth parent.

“Birth parents have a lifetime relationship with the adoptive parents and the child,” Roller says. “You’re not giving

up your baby. You’re making a plan that’s best for your baby.”

Birth Mothers Share Experiences

In July, Adoption Services and the Archdiocesan Office for Marriage, Family and Life co-hosted the second annual healing event for birth mothers. The day offered women an opportunity to share their experiences with other women who’d gone through the same process.

“Most were birth mothers who placed their child for adoption at a time when there was more stigma attached to the situation of unwed pregnancies,” Roller says. “It’s so helpful to be with other people who understand. It was very positive for the women who attended to see the church involved and accepting of the difficult decision that was made.”

Support Continues for a Lifetime

With more than 90 years of facilitating adoptions in the Twin Cities, Adoption Services serves 500 people a year. The Post Adoption program stays busy with requests for information from adopted adults or birth parents. Because most adoptions were closed before 1977, birth parents and adoptive parents had no contact or communicated anonymously through the agency. Adopted adults return to Catholic Charities to request a search for their birth family or an updated medical history.

“Sometimes people aren’t ready for contact,” Roller says. “But out of 100 searches a year, about 60 to 70 percent eventually end up at full, open contact.” ♦

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Robert K. Spinner, Interim CEO
Mary W. Frey, Chair, Board of Directors

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Five Year Old Holds a Birthday Party with a Purpose

- ▼ For his fifth birthday, Zach Valento gave away his gifts. At Zach's birthday party with a purpose, his family asked guests to contribute so Zach could purchase food, books and stuffed animals for Catholic Charities' programs. The Valentos donated to Catholic Charities food shelves seven grocery bags of food, two boxes of ramen noodles and cases of juice, fruit and vegetables. Zach also assembled and donated 13 totebags with books and a stuffed animal. The "books, bag and a buddy" totes were given to Northside Child Development Center.

"We wanted the boys to see this experience full circle. We went to drop the



Zach Valento delivered his birthday party donations to the food shelf and Northside Child Development Center.

donations off and did a tour of the food shelf and Northside Child Development Center" says Zach's mother, Ann Marie Seidl-Valento, explaining she wanted her sons to see how their donations help Catholic Charities. "It

was an awesome experience for all of us. Catholic Charities does so much good."

When Zach's big brother Jack turns 11, the family plans to repeat the birthday-party theme. ♦