



T E N N E S S E E

REGISTER

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175 years of charity and service

THERESA LAURENCE

Feed the hungry. Give drink to the thirsty. Clothe the naked. Give shelter to the homeless. Visit the sick. Visit the imprisoned. Bury the dead. These chief corporal works of mercy, these seven charitable acts, have been carried out countless times by Catholics in Middle Tennessee since the Diocese of Nashville was founded in 1837.

As the diocese heads toward the 175th anniversary of its founding next July, the *Tennessee Register* is looking at various aspects of life in the diocese. This month's installment is about the charitable activities of various Catholic institutions, agencies and

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Photo by Rick Musacchio

St. Mary Villa Child Development Center teacher Yvonne Henry reads a story to 4-year-old Sofie Taylor on a recent weekday. Other 4-year-olds play in the gross motor area in the background. Operated by the Diocese of Nashville since 1978, St. Mary Villa serves working families with a sliding scale fee model, enrolling children from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

Bishops fight mandated coverage of contraceptives

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Agrowing list of Catholic institutions is decrying a proposal by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that would require nearly all employers to provide sterilization and all FDA-approved contraceptives, including some that can cause an abortion, at no cost to women covered by their health insurance plans.

A key issue of contention in the proposed rule is that the conscience exemptions are so narrowly drawn that a wide range of Catholic institutions, such as Catholic social service agen-

cies, Catholic hospitals and schools, such as those owned and operated by the Nashville Dominicans, would not qualify.

The exemptions are so narrow, said Sister Mary Diana Dreger, O.P., a member of the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia Congregation in Nashville who is a medical doctor, "I don't know who would qualify." As the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has noted, she said, "Jesus and the early Christian community would not qualify."

HHS will close a 60-day period to receive comments on the proposal on Sept. 30. The U.S. bishops have launched a campaign to urge Catholics

to file a comment with the HHS objecting to the mandated coverage and the wording of the conscience exemptions. Information about the issue has been sent to parishes across the country to be included in bulletins this weekend and next.

The bishops also are asking Catholics to contact their representatives in Congress to support passage of the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act (H.R. 1179/S. 1467) "to ensure that such federal mandates do not violate Americans' moral and religious convictions."

The Dominican Sisters provide insurance coverage to 160 employees at

See letter from Bishop Choby on page 3.

the Dominican Campus in Nashville, which includes Overbrook School, St. Cecilia Academy and Aquinas College, many of whom are not Catholic. The sisters in the congregation are covered under a separate insurance policy than the employees, Sister Catherine Marie said.

The insurance policies for the employees now exclude family planning services, said Sister Catherine Marie

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175 years of charity and service

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organizations.

Charity, "the greatest social commandment," according to the "Catechism of the Catholic Church," has, in the wake of the Civil War, inspired women religious to provide a home for orphan children and, the wake of the devastating 2010 flood, compelled parishioners to help friends and strangers alike sort through their soggy, decimated homes, and begin rebuilding their lives.

Volunteers from parishes in the Diocese of Nashville are out every day, stocking the parish food pantry, visiting homebound parishioners, tutoring children after school.

Two of the city's most essential resources for the homeless, Safe Haven Family Shelter and Room In the Inn, were originally founded in Catholic parishes. Both have grown far beyond the confines of a single parish, but still enjoy support from many churches.

Volunteers from Holy Name, St. Philip and others regularly prepare meals and stay overnight with the homeless families at Safe Haven. On cold winter nights, volunteers from Christ the King, Our Lady of the Lake and others provide homeless men with a hot meal and place to sleep at their churches.

Other organizations in Middle Tennessee regularly benefit from the volunteer efforts of members of the Diocese of Nashville, including Hope Clinic for Women and Habitat for Humanity.

Every holiday season, parishioners participate in the Catholic Charities Angel Tree program, donating gifts to needy families, and high school students pack food boxes for the Ladies of Charity to distribute.

Women's organizations also provide integral charity work in the diocese. Women's clubs in many parishes offer hospitality and bereavement ministries; Daughters of Isabella circles are active in several parishes and offer friendship and charitable outreach opportunities.

The Legion of Mary, which has had an active chapter at the Cathedral since 1952, meets every week and carries out a variety of apostolic works, including visiting patients at Baptist and Bordeaux hospitals.

The Nashville Catholic Business Women's League volunteers with Magdalene House and offers scholarships to qualified and financially needy female students attending each the diocese's three Catholic high schools.

Members of the diocese have also answered the call to serve the needy far beyond the borders of Middle Tennessee. Currently, Franciscan missionaries are serving in Bolivia; other volunteers are stationed in some of the neediest parts of the globe.

The Parish Twinning Program of the Americas, started in Nashville, offers essential support to the people of Haiti. Dozens of Middle Tennessee parishes send medical and water purification teams, sea containers of supplies and prayers to Haiti every year, and the program continues to grow.

Charity and service have been the basic tenants of the Catholic faith throughout the church's history, and members of the Diocese of Nashville answer the call to serve day in and day out, for the good of their fellow man, and the glory of God. For indeed, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

For other articles in the series on the 175th anniversary of the diocese, visit www.dioceseofnashville.com. ✦



Courtesy of the Dominican Campus

Sister Margaret Mary, O.P., reads to residents of St. Mary's Orphanage in this undated photo. The Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia cared for orphans and children in need at the Diocese of Nashville's orphanage throughout its 114 years of operation, from 1864-1978. St. Mary's Orphanage provided an early model for charity care of children, and St. Mary Villa and Catholic Charities today carry on that tradition.

St. Mary's Orphanage provided early model for charity care of children

THERESA LAURENCE

Evan Riley was only 4 years old in 1925 when he first made his way down the long, dusty driveway of St. Mary's Orphanage, the place that he and two of his four siblings would soon call home.

Now 90, the retired Lt. Col. Riley still remembers that "big, big building, and my little bed."

Riley fondly recalls how the Dominican nuns who ran the Diocese of Nashville's home for children welcomed confused and frightened youngsters like himself and made them feel safe and loved.

"I had no bad experiences there," Riley said, rattling off a list of nuns who cared for him some 80 years ago. "Sister Mary Charles, she was a saint," he said of his favorite teacher there, a former superior of St. Mary's.

For 114 years, St. Mary's Orphanage took in thousands of children like Riley, either orphaned, or brought there by their own parents who were unable to care for them. It stood as a shining example of the Catholic church's commitment to charitable outreach to children.

"St. Mary's has written a glorious chapter in the history of charity in Tennessee," the future Bishop Joseph Durick wrote to Sister Mary Patrick, O.P., superior of St. Mary's during the orphanage's centennial celebration. "St. Mary's has been not only a home, but also father and mother, to thousands of God's little ones."

The sisters did their best to make St. Mary's as much like home as possible, which included a daily routine of Mass, school and chores, but they also made sure to sprinkle in a healthy dose of fun. The children had ample time on the

playground and even got to attend the circus when it came to town.

Every Saturday afternoon in the fall, Riley and other children would gather around the radio with the nuns to listen to the broadcast of Notre Dame football games. "I remember listening the day Knute Rockne died," he said, reminiscing about the day in 1931 that Notre Dame's legendary football coach was killed in a plane crash.

Riley, who lived at the orphanage for seven years, remembers that his school lessons were tough. "I didn't get too many gold stars," while a student at St. Mary's, he said. But after he left the orphanage and enrolled in the Birmingham, Ala., public school system, "I made the honor roll. Now what does that tell you?"

Like many children who lived at St. Mary's Orphanage, Riley was not an orphan in the strictest sense of the word. His mother brought him and two of his siblings to live there after Riley's father abandoned the family, leaving his mother to single-handedly raise and support five children under the age of 10. She simply couldn't do it, so she sought refuge for her children at St. Mary's.

"There was no welfare in those days and St. Mary's was the only place we could be together," Riley said.

Riley and his siblings were able to see their mother, who lived in Birmingham, only about once a year.

After returning to his mother's home in Birmingham and graduating from high school there, Riley went on to graduate from the University of Maryland. He then spent 31 years in the Army and "jumped out of airplanes in three wars." He was married for 61 years and had four children.

Riley attributes his success in life to the instruction and care he received at St. Mary's. "I've done real well for myself if I can say that," he said from his home in Pinellas Park, Fla., where he is a member of Sacred Heart Parish.

Roots of an institution

Ever since the diocese's founding bishop, Pius Miles, came to Tennessee in 1838, he envisioned a series of orphanages around the state caring for homeless children.

In the earliest days of the diocese, orphans found refuge in other institutions, such as Memphis' St. Agnes Academy and Nashville's St. John's Hospital, run by the Sisters of Charity.



Lt. Col. Riley

The Sisters of Charity also ran St. Vincent's Female Orphan Asylum, across from St. Mary's Cathedral downtown, and St. Joseph Orphanage, on Whites Creek Pike, in Nashville during the 1850s. These were all shuttered when the Sisters pulled out of the Diocese of Nashville, and an official orphanage was not revived in the diocese until 1864 when the Dominicans arrived in the midst of the Civil War to run St. Mary's.

At that time, Nashville was desolate. Its hills were fortresses and its homes and churches had been transformed into hospitals for wounded and dying soldiers.

Diocesan administrator Father Joseph Kelly, was moved by the plight of helpless children, orphaned by the war, and set out to establish a new orphanage to take them in.

"Now that orphanages are virtually anachronistic, it is hard for today's young people to imagine how very important they were to religious groups of all sorts throughout American history until the very recent past," wrote Thomas Stritch in his 1987 book, "The Catholic Church in Tennessee."

"Taking care of the parentless young, and the young whose parents were unable to take care of their offspring, was the very hallmark of Christian spirit," Stritch continued. "No appeal to a Christian community was as successful as one for the orphans, and none needed less hype."

Indeed, as the story goes, Father Kelly was easily able to persuade several of his St. Mary's Cathedral parishioners to donate to his cause of opening an orphanage. When, in 1863, the men came by the rectory to offer donations to cover needed repairs on the church building, Father Kelly showed them three little children sleeping peacefully by the fire. The meeting ended with each man contributing \$100 on the spot to establish a home for orphaned children.

Soon, an eight acre plot in south Nashville was purchased for the site of St. Mary's Orphanage, close to where Trevecca Nazarene University now stands. At the request of Father Kelly, three Dominican sisters from Somerset, Ohio, arrived in Nashville, and the first orphans were placed there in May of 1864.

Even as the Civil War crept closer to Nashville, things at St. Mary's were going remarkably well. Then, on the eve of the Battle of Nashville, in December of 1864, a Federal officer galloped up to the gate of the orphanage and informed the sisters that they must leave the premises immediately and take the orphans to a place of greater safety.

The sisters and the children were escorted to St. Mary's Cathedral downtown, where they took up residence in the basement for four long weeks. They then moved to an old house on Franklin Pike for several months while their destroyed orphanage was rebuilt.

As the orphanage recovered from the ravages of the Civil War, crisis struck again in 1878 when deadly yellow fever swept through Memphis. Bishop Patrick Feehan and Father Kelly arranged for 60 orphans from St. Peter's Orphanage in Memphis to take refuge at St. Mary's. They ended up staying for eight weeks in a hastily erected new building on the orphanage grounds.

After the yellow fever epidemic passed and the Memphis orphans returned home, St. Mary's Orphan Asylum entered a period of relative calm. The Dominican sisters cared for about 75 children in adequate, yet cramped facilities.

Growth through community support

When Bishop Thomas Byrne took the reins of the Diocese of Nashville in 1894, he made the orphanage one of his pri-



Photo by Rick Musacchio

Nasya Austin, left, and Gwyn Grady, both age 4, play together on a recent weekday at St. Mary Villa Child Development Center. When St. Mary's Orphanage was closed in 1978, the child development center was opened in its place to better meet the needs of area families.

mary concerns. He purchased the land off Harding Turnpike and what is now White Bridge Road, and oversaw the building of a "handsome and imposing" new structure that would be home to St. Mary's Orphanage for the next 60 years.

The day after the new building opened in 1903, the orphanage held one of its largest ever Fourth of July fundraising picnics. According to news archives from that day, "some 4,000 people attended the grand picnic that afternoon and agree that the new orphanage was the finest of its kind in the South."

The new orphanage was located on 50 acres of land, and a farm was soon begun, tended primarily by the nuns and some of the older boys. They grew corn and other vegetables and raised cows and chickens.

For the next two decades, St. Mary's grew, and the buildings and grounds were well maintained and continually expanded. Electricity was added in 1915, a sprinkler system in 1922.

The orphanage continued to rely on the July 4th picnics and an annual subscription drive for revenue. When the Nashville Community Chest, a precursor to the United Way, was organized in 1921, St. Mary's became one of the charter members. By the 1960s, St. Mary's was receiving nearly half of its annual operating budget from Community Chest donations.

Realizing the importance of caring for children with monetary and material support, companionship and prayers, several lay Catholic organizations were actively involved in supporting the orphans.

The St. Mary's Orphanage Auxiliary was organized in 1916 exclusively to help with orphans' needs – everything from sewing clothing for the children to raising funds to pay for new kitchen appliances and laundry equipment. When the auxiliary learned that the older boys were riding over to Father Ryan High School in the back of a pickup truck, they purchased the orphanage a new van. The Auxiliary continued to meet, pray, socialize and perform good works until 1995, when they officially disbanded.

Starting in 1920, Knights of Columbus Council 544 began delivering truckloads of Christmas presents to the orphans during the holiday season. They also opened up their nearby clubhouse and swimming pool to the children in the summer. Whenever transportation was needed for a day trip, all the St. Mary's superior had to do was call the council, and a bus would be dispatched.

A time of transition

Until the late 1960s, St. Mary's remained a bustling home for children; demand for slots was particularly high during the lean years of the Great Depression. Many new children arrived during the 1930s, and the orphanage was at times caring for 100 young people, far above its capacity of 80.

After World War II, when the nation enjoyed a time of relative prosperity and stability, the number of orphans at St. Mary's began to slowly drop off.

St. Mary's celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1964, and the next year broke ground for a new St. Mary's Villa campus to replace the aging orphanage that housed so many children for 60 years. The new building was designed to house 70 children in a home-like atmosphere with semi-private accommodations. However, just over a decade after the new building was completed, the orphanage would be closed for good.

As the number of children living at St. Mary's dwindled into the mid 1970s, the

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Courtesy of the Dominican Campus

Children enjoy the playground at St. Mary's Orphanage in Nashville in this photo from 1929. St. Mary's moved from its original location into a new stone building off of Harding Pike in 1903, where it remained until 1965. It then moved into the building that now houses St. Mary Villa Child Development Center and the Catholic Charities administrative offices.

Lay people carry on long tradition of charitable service in diocese

THERESA LAURENCE
ANDY TELLI

Lay charitable organizations have had a long presence in the Diocese of Nashville, providing monetary, material and spiritual aid to those in need. Several of the larger organizations that have served Tennesseans in need for many years are highlighted below.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Barbara Hackett joined the St. Vincent de Paul Society in her Cookeville parish, St. Thomas Aquinas, in 2000, because "I felt like the Holy Spirit was leading me to be involved. I wanted to do something to help other people."

Over the last 10 years, Hackett has met and interviewed countless people seeking assistance from the Society. "We do in home interviews with everyone who calls," Hackett explained.

Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul offer tangible assistance to those in need in a one-on-one setting, and it is this personalized involvement that makes the work of the 178-year old Society unique.

Founded by Blessed Frederic Ozanam in Paris, the St. Vincent de Paul Society was named after the saint who devoted his life to meeting the needs of the poor.

The Society first came to Middle Tennessee about 75 years ago, and at one time, every parish in the Nashville area had a conference of its own. Over the years, that number has shrunk to four.

Today, along with St. Thomas Aquinas, there are chapters at St. Henry Church in Nashville, St. Patrick Church in McEwen, and St. Christopher Church in Dickson.

Hackett and other members of the St. Vincent de Paul conference in Cookeville field about five calls every day from people asking for help with their electric bills, rent money and food. "We get funds only from parishioners, and donations run about \$400 a month," she said. Needless to say, money is spread very thin among those asking for help.

Even if the Society can only offer each family who asks for assistance \$50, they still take the time to meet with them, determine their needs, and offer referrals.

Knights of Peter Claver

For more than 100 years, the Knights of Peter Claver and the Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary have been providing opportunities for African American Catholics to live their faith.

"Our goal and mission is to support the parish priest and diocese and also (to organize) charitable activities in the community," said Michael Taylor, the Grand Knight of Council 5 at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Nashville.

Besides the Knights, St. Vincent de Paul has an active Court of the Ladies Auxiliary and a Junior Division for young boys and girls in the parish. "We all interact together," explained Taylor.

The Knights and Ladies are involved in a variety of charitable activities throughout the year, particularly during the holiday season, Taylor said, including distributing Thanksgiving food baskets to needy families in the community, participating in the Angel Tree



Tennessee Register file photo by Andy Telli
The Knights of Peter Claver and the Ladies Auxiliary at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Nashville sponsor various charitable activities in the parish and the community.

program at Christmas, and supporting the Big Brother/Big Sister program.

The Council also sponsors the Milton Ivy Jr. Scholarship Fund to provide scholarships for parish teens in the Junior Division who attend college, Taylor said. The fund is named after a long-time parishioner and Knight who was a former Junior Knights Commander at St. Vincent serving as "a very positive role model at St. Vincent," Taylor said.

"We are reaching out to our community, especially our community around St. Vincent. It's a poor neighborhood," Taylor said. "There has to be some way to show positive role models for males and females."

It's important to support the youth of the parish, Taylor said. "The youth is what is going to keep the church going. That's your foundation for the future."

Ladies of Charity

The Ladies of Charity, active in the United States since 1857, has nearly 8,000 members in local associations in 26 states.

It was founded in the Diocese of

Nashville in 1910 as an organization of lay Catholic women volunteers ready to serve the poor and elderly in the community.

"Our mission is to bring our resources together to feed and clothe the poor and to give with a charitable spirit, and our international motto is to serve rather than to be served, the needy among us – Catholic or non-Catholic," Suzanne Sevier, president of the Nashville chapter of the Ladies of Charity, told the *Tennessee Register* in an interview earlier this year.

Best known in Nashville for their semi-annual clothing consignment sales at the organization's thrift shop, the Ladies of Charity operate a year round welfare office to assist the needy with food, housing and other emergency needs. The thrift shop, first opened in 1948, helps fund the outreach work of the Ladies.

The Ladies of Charity serves nearly 10,000 women, men and children each year in Nashville.

The Ladies of Charity community outreach includes: offering a sack lunches every weekday at their welfare office on State Street; giving spiritual,

medical, and material assistance to indigent and sick persons regardless of race, creed or national origin; providing burial for indigent persons when no other provision is possible; granting need-based scholarships to four students each year to area Catholic high schools; entertaining patients monthly at Bordeaux Hospital; and distributing more than 700 food baskets during the Christmas season.

Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus is one of the largest Catholic lay organizations in the world, with more than 1.8 million members, and it was born in charity.

"It's the first principle of our order," said Mike Porter, a Knight in Council 9282 at St. Stephen Catholic Community in Hermitage and a Past State Deputy for the Knights in Tennessee.

"The order was founded to take care of the widowed children and women of Catholic men," he explained. "The insurance portion of the order soon followed so ... Catholic men could protect their families and their wives" if they died prematurely.

"As the order grew, we spread out," Porter said, as did the Knights' focus on charity.

"The charitable activities vary from council to council because there are different needs," Porter said, whether it's helping a needy family in the parish who needs repairs to their car or home, providing scholarships to Catholic youths, sponsoring blood drives, helping the homeless, collecting winter coats for the poor, or helping people with intellectual or physical disabilities.

"Through our programs, we're there to help wherever we're needed," Porter said.

In 2010, Knights across the world donated more than \$151 million and more than 69 million hours of service to charitable needs and projects.

Two of the larger efforts Tennessee Knights are involved in supporting those with intellectual disabilities through the MR Foundation, and those with physical disabilities, both in Tennessee and abroad, through the Wheelchair Mission. ♣



Suzanne Sevier, left, president of the Nashville chapter of the Ladies of Charity, talks with fellow Ladies of Charity members as they prepare for the annual "Stuff Galore" sale, held last June. For more than 100 years, the Ladies of Charity have been serving the poor and needy in the community.

Tennessee Register
file photo by Theresa Laurence

Catholic Charities adapts to changing needs

Theresa Laurence

Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc., started in 1962 with \$1,200 in the bank and the mission to find foster homes for Cuban refugee children.

Now, almost 50 years later, as the official social service arm of the Diocese of Nashville, Catholic Charities assists more than 60,000 people each year in 38 counties in Middle Tennessee of every religious, ethnic, cultural and racial background.

Catholic Charities has long offered a variety of services to children and working families, the elderly, refugees and immigrants, and those in need of immediate assistance.

"I'm very, very proud of the fact that we've constantly adapted. We've constantly grown and we've constantly changed," said Catholic Charities Executive Director Bill Sinclair, who has been with the organization for more than 35 years.

For example, in the early 1980s, Catholic Charities started the area's first adult day program, offering socialization opportunities for the elderly and respite for family members and caregivers. In 2000, when an influx of Sudanese "Lost Boys"

began arriving in Nashville, Catholic Charities stepped up its refugee resettlement services to better assist them. When the flood washed away thousands of homes in Middle Tennessee in May 2010, Catholic Charities quickly responded by opening the Flood Distribution and Resource Center, offering material goods and case management services to flood survivors.

With an annual budget of \$16 million, nearly 200 full- and part-time employees, and more than 50 different programs offered, Catholic Charities casts a wide net to aid Middle Tennesseans in need. Funded primarily through federal and other grants, private donations and service fees, Catholic Charities' outlook is "pretty stable" despite the sour economy and recent federal budget cuts, Sinclair said. "We haven't taken the hits others have."

Catholic Charities has been recognized both locally and nationally in recent years for its exemplary adoption and refugee programs. The *Nashville Business Journal* just named Charities Chief Financial Officer Richard Neal a finalist in its 2011 CFO Awards. Last

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Courtesy of Catholic Charities

Sister Andrea Vaughan, D.C., was named the third executive director of Catholic Charities in 1977; she was a Nashville native and the first woman to be named a department head of a diocesan agency.

Catholic Charities history

1960s

- On July 17, 1962, Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc., was organized at the request of Bishop William L. Adrian of the Diocese of Nashville. Msgr. Leo Siener was named the first executive director.

- Between August 1962 and July 1966, foster homes were established for 43 Cuban children.

- In 1964, the Nashville office of Catholic Charities made its first adoptive placement.

- Throughout the 1960s, Catholic Charities assisted unwed mothers, provided emergency aid to families, and counseled families and individuals. The organization also started a Head Start kindergarten program for children of low-income working mothers at Assumption School.

1970s

- During the 1970s, assistance was provided to approximately 45,000 people in programs ranging from family counseling, emergency assistance, geriatrics, adoptions and pregnancy counseling, refugee services, child care and social ministries.

- In August 1975, the Refugee Resettlement Program, funded by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, began and resettled approximately 3,000 refugees from 1978 to the early 1980s. In response to the turmoil in Southeast Asia, refugees were mostly from Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

1980s

- In the fall of 1980, the Diocese of Nashville completed Villa Maria Manor, a 214-unit apartment complex for low income elderly or handicapped citizens.

- In 1983, Charities joined with Assumption and St. Vincent de Paul



Tennessee Register file photo by Theresa Laurence

Eileen and Rick Githens of Nashville adopted Elizabeth, left, and Nicholas, right, from Murmansk, Russia in 1999 with assistance from Catholic Charities of Tennessee. Catholic Charities offers a wide range of services to aid children, such as finding adoptive families for children in state custody, and counseling for at-risk families.

parishes to open an office in the North Nashville area, serving many elderly and single parents living below the poverty line.

- In 1984, Charities opened the Adult Day Care program for frail elderly persons.

- In 1986, the Creating Hope by Assisting Parents (CHAP) program was established to provide crisis intervention to families whose children are vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

- Refugee Resettlement expanded by offering longer term services and a job development program.

- Pregnancy and Adoption services continued to place children for adoption

and provide pregnancy counseling to hundreds of women.

1990s

- In 1990, an AIDS Spiritual Companion program was begun, using trained volunteers to provide support and spiritual companionship to people and families of those who tested HIV positive.

- A transportation program was added to the North Nashville Outreach program.

- In 1991, the Model Approach to Partnerships in Parenting was started, offering training to individuals and families to adopt or foster special needs children.

- In 1992, Charities began the CHAP

PLUS program to provide counseling and parenting training for families who have children with special needs.

2000s

- From 2002-2009 Catholic Charities linked more than 50,000 uninsured Davidson County residents to healthcare providers through the Bridges to Care program.

- In 2003, Charities assumed the management of Loaves and Fishes, a program feeding hungry people in Nashville since 1983.

- Charities started providing clinical counseling for the Spanish-speaking community.

- In 2004 Charities' Families First department changed its name to Family Assistance and Community Employment (FACE) to reflect its new purpose, function and services operating three programs, Families First, North Nashville Outreach, Short-Term Emergency Assistance and Bridges to Care.

- Charities began the Refugee Youth Program to help young refugees adapt to the U.S. school system offering tutoring, test preparation and social activities.

- When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck the Gulf coast in 2005, Catholic Charities provided services to more than 1,700 evacuees who were relocated to Middle Tennessee.

- In March 2008, Catholic Charities was selected by the Federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to manage and disburse federal funding for refugee services throughout Tennessee.

- In the fall of 2008, the two offices of Hispanic Family Services were consolidated into a larger space at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in South Nashville, offering a computer learning lab, tax preparation services, women's groups and other programs.

- In May 2010, Catholic Charities responded to the needs of a flooded city by opening a warehouse center to distribute supplies in Bellevue. Case-workers provided additional support and resources for flood survivors. ☩

St. Mary's Orphanage provided early model for charity care of children

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Diocese of Nashville undertook an extensive study to determine the best path forward for St. Mary's.

"We studied residential care facilities throughout Middle Tennessee, and all were dramatically underused," said Bill Sinclair, executive director of Catholic Charities of Tennessee, Inc. and the first executive director of St. Mary Villa Child Development Center.

At that time, "there was a major change in child welfare thinking," Sinclair said. Caring for children in more institutional settings like orphanages had been the norm for the last 100 years, but heading into the 1980s, foster homes, adoptions and other arrangements were favored.

St. Mary's Orphanage was closed in 1978, the same year St. Mary Child Development Center opened.

The study committee determined that the greatest need was for a daytime childcare facility for working families. "We knew we did not want just another daycare center," Sinclair said. "We created the first we knew of in the area for all income ranges." St. Mary Villa still utilizes the sliding scale fee model at its White Bridge Road facility as well as at the newer facility at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church on Nolensville Road.

Continuing the legacy

While Catholic Charities always operated independently from St. Mary's Orphanage and the Villa it began in Tennessee with

a parallel mission of caring for children. Upon its founding in 1962, Charities' first order of business was to find foster homes for Cuban refugee children.

Today, Catholic Charities' administrative offices share a building with St. Mary Villa Child Development Center, in the space that once housed the St. Mary's orphans.

Catholic Charities offers a variety of services to support children and families, including facilitating domestic and international adoptions, and finding homes for older children in state custody.

According to Donna Thomas, department director of Caring Choices, Catholic Charities' pregnancy and adoption services, "It is hugely difficult to find placements" for the older children, often between the ages of 13 and 17, who have been abused or neglected by their parents. "We turn over every bush and rock looking for families" to adopt these children, she said.

In earlier days, these children would likely have found a home at St. Mary's Orphanage. Today, however, they live with foster families while searching for their new "forever families."

To support families built through adoption, Catholic Charities offers the Adoption Support and Preservation (ASAP) program, as well as extensive counseling services to foster a more seamless connection between new parents and their adopted children.

It is virtually unheard of these days for a parent to voluntarily surrender their child

because of economic hardships, the way some did during the heyday of St. Mary's Orphanage, Thomas said. Today it is more common for other extended family members to step in and help with childcare if parents are unable to financially support their children. "There are a whole lot of grandparents raising kids now," she said.

To reduce the risk of abuse and neglect in the home and to keep families intact, Catholic Charities offers the Creating Hope by Assisting Parents (CHAP) program. Since 1986, CHAP has provided parenting education, crisis intervention and case management for families. A CHAP counselor makes in-home visits to help parents recognize and reduce everyday stressors such as financial worries, changes in family structure, isolation and lack of transportation.

In 2006 Caring Choices initiated the Healthy Marriage, Healthy Family program to assist adoptive parents of special needs children to develop better communication skills and reduce the stress of caring for their family.

St. Mary Villa and Catholic Charities today carry on the proud tradition of caring for children, just as St. Mary's Orphanage did for so many years. With the sustained support of the people of the Diocese of Nashville, these institutions will continue to carry out the Gospel message of protecting and nurturing children far into the future. As Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these" (Matthew 19:14). ✠



Tennessee Register file photo by Theresa Laurence

Fatuama Muday, 8 in this 2008 photo, is one of the many Somali children whose families have been resettled in Nashville through Catholic Charities. The local Charities office provides a wide range of services for refugees and immigrants. It also manages and disburses federal funding for refugee services statewide through the Tennessee Office for Refugees.

Catholic Charities adapts

Continued from previous page

spring, Catholic Charities of Tennessee was a nonprofit finalist in the *Journal's* "Best in Business" competition.

But Sinclair is quick to point out that while Catholic Charities hasn't quite "taken the hits" that some nonprofit social service organizations have, "it isn't easy" to fully fund and staff all its programming needs.

More people need the types of services offered by Catholic Charities these days, and the organization has very few unrestricted dollars to pour into programs like feeding the hungry. "We have very little money to supplement Loaves and Fishes," which serves hundreds of meals every week at the Holy Name Parish Center in East Nashville. "We have a big problem with getting enough flexible funds," he said.

Two Charities food programs, the North Nashville Outreach and Loaves and Fishes have lost a combined \$27,000 to recent federal budget cuts of emergency needs funding. Because funds cannot be easily

shifted from one program to another within Charities' annual budget, the local organization is left looking to Catholics in Middle Tennessee to make up the difference with food drives and extra financial support.

Sinclair also noted that it is "really difficult to get grants for services for the elderly." Catholic Charities' Living At Home program offers case management services to elderly low-income Davidson County residents. "It's a wonderful program," Sinclair said. "We would love to expand it, but there are no grant programs out there to fund it."

While money is tight, Catholic Charities continues to creatively meet the needs of its clients. Throughout its 50 year history, the scope of Catholic Charities' programs and services has undergone dramatic changes to keep pace with the changing needs of the communities served, but Catholic Charities has always focused on its mission of service to all of God's people in need with a preferential option to serve the poor. ✠

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