

HARVESTING HOPE: FOOD SECURITY MONTH AND THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

October marked Food Security Month, a time when communities across the country, and right here at home, came together to raise awareness and take action against hunger. For Catholic Charities, this effort is more than a month of slogans. It's a call to live out our mission with fresh energy, compassion, and collaboration. It's the heart of Harvesting Hope: neighbors offering skills, talents, and treasure to nourish each other, body and soul.

At the core of our work is the belief that hope is something we grow together. When parishes, schools, farms, businesses, and generous donors all bring something unique to the table growth happens. It looks like crates of fresh produce from BoysGrow and Drumm Farm Center for Children, cookbook donations from Half Price

Books and First Watch, and even compost collections at Urbavore Farm that transform waste into new life. Every act- big or small- becomes a root system that allows our mission to flourish.

Nowhere is this transformation more visible than in the Serve & Lift Market. What once was a simple food pantry is now a vibrant hub where dignity, choice, and connection thrive. Families browse shelves lined with culturally familiar foods, fresh vegetables still carrying the morning dew, and pantry staples ready to be turned into family meals. Cookbooks are available to borrow, swap, or keep- helping neighbors build confidence in the kitchen, reduce waste, and bring creativity and joy to mealtimes. The best part? It's all free, powered by the generosity of community partners and the compassion of volunteers.



Erin-Michelle with community cookbook library

Food insecurity can feel invisible. You might not see it in your life. But maybe you do? It might look like a parent working full-time but still falling short at the end of the month after covering school clothes and shoes. It might look like a grandparent rationing their medicine, choosing instead to stretch every dollar to keep their grandchildren fed. It might look like your child's classmate or a fellow parishioner quietly going without a meal to make ends meet. Food Security Month reminds us that for one in seven people in our region (including one in six children), hunger is not an abstract problem, but a daily reality.

In response, we're planting seeds of change. This fall, the Market has launched new initiatives: nutrition workshops, cooking demonstrations,



Erin-Michelle Luttrell examines a thriving okra plant, checking its leaves and pods for health and growth.

Please continue reading on page 2

FROM THE DESK OF THE CEO

Welcoming More Veterans

Each year during the second week of November, Americans pause to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's veterans. On November 10th Catholic Charities will host Veterans Day celebrations in Kansas City and St. Joseph as a time of reflection and gratitude for the men and women who have worn the uniform of the United States Armed Forces. Their courage, resilience, and unwavering commitment to our country deserve recognition not only on this day, but every day of the year.

This year, we are especially proud to highlight the expansion of the *Supportive Services for Veteran Families* (SSVF) program, a critical initiative created by the VA aimed at preventing and ending veteran homelessness. We are grateful to continue our partnership with the VA to assist very low-income veteran families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to secure housing and start a path towards self-reliance.

The expansion of our veteran's program enables us to serve 23 total counties in MO and KS. Including two counties in KS: Johnson & Wyandotte. This is up from 18 counties last year. This increase reflects a

strong vote of confidence in our team's performance to meet the need of every homeless veteran in our area. It also showcases a national commitment to the principle that no veteran should be left without a safe place to call home. With new funding and resources, twice as many veterans will be provided rapid rehousing assistance, help obtaining VA benefits, medical assistance, workforce training and housing stability. Our veterans have fulfilled their duty in serving our country and Catholic Charities will continue our duty in support of rebuilding their lives with dignity.

On this Veterans Day, I extend our deepest thanks not only to those who have served in uniform, but also to the individuals who stand beside them in civilian life - spouses, children, parents - who share in the sacrifices of military life. Your strength and support form the backbone of our military community, and your role in the well-being of veterans after their service is irreplaceable. Thank you, veterans, for your service. Thank you, community, for your support. Together, we can ensure that every veteran receives the respect, care, and stability they have earned.



By Karen Noel, Chief Executive Officer
of Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph

THINGS TO NOTE:

You can support veterans and their families through your employer with a Catholic Charities dedicated United Way gift during their annual community fundraising campaign.

Kansas City residents use #1302.
St. Joseph residents use #0203.

Join us November 10th (the day before Veterans Day) for a Veterans Celebration:

11:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Ceremony and meal at
8001 Longview Road, Kansas City MO

4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. Ceremony and meal at
4520 Mitchell Ave, St. Joseph, MO

**Mark your calendars for
Hope Ball, Feb 28, 2026.**

We will be honoring our veterans as we join with our country in celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.



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and a community cookbook library, all **designed to help families turn groceries into nourishing meals and meals into moments of joy.** These efforts were shaped by the voices of our volunteers, our board, and our partners whose insights continue to guide our growth.

And speaking of volunteers... they remain the heartbeat of The Market. Whether it's stocking shelves, mentoring families, offering a warm smile, or hauling in boxes of donated food from a golf tournament, their presence transforms every interaction. During Food Security Month, we were especially grateful for the tireless energy they brought and the stories they shared.

Looking ahead, plans are underway to expand our outreach, strengthen infrastructure, and create more opportunities for engagement. Together, we're not simply distributing food. **We're cultivating resilience, equity, and hope.** We're transforming empty shelves into abundant tables, loneliness into community, and uncertainty into stability.

Thank you for standing with us. As we celebrate this season of harvest, let's continue to sow compassion and connection, so that every neighbor has what they need to thrive.

By Erin-Michelle Luttrell, Market Program Manager
at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph

blessings abound

**Blessings Abound Thrift Store -
A Partnership That Makes a Difference
Shop. Donate. Volunteer. Multiply Hope.**

We're proud to partner with Blessings Abound Thrift Store- 13637 Washington St, Kansas City, MO 64145

A portion of the store's proceeds is given to Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph to help fund our programs and services across the diocese. So, when you support Blessings Abound- by shopping, donating, or volunteering- you're also investing in the mission of Catholic Charities.

SOW IN TEARS, REAP IN JOY



A show of hands for the gardeners, please.... How did your tomatoes do this year? My heirlooms were yummy but few and far between. My cherry tomatoes, however, had a banner year! The whole family was popping them straight from the vine into our mouths. I'm actually a late bloomer when it comes to gardening. I didn't really enjoy watching things grow (or the work it takes!) until the last few years, but each year now, I add something and see spiritual principles literally come to life in front of my eyes.

For instance, have you ever planted a corn kernel, and it grew a tomato? Of course not, as a rule, reaping what you sow is a theme that threads throughout the Bible. One of the remarkable exceptions is that scripture tells us what you sow in tears, you will reap in joy.

“Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed, will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves.”

(Psalm 126:5–6)

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How does that happen? How can you begin weighed down, even brokenhearted, and end up overflowing with joy? You see, sowing is the vulnerable and hard part. It asks for trust before you can see results. It requires sacrifice: time spent, resources stretched, hope dug into soil that doesn't look fertile. Tears often fall. It's hard to start, to sow, to believe in what you cannot yet see.

That's why this newsletter's theme, **Harvesting Hope**, resonates so deeply. The programs and stories you'll read about here didn't just appear overnight. They are the result of seeds planted long ago- seeds of faith, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control, and love. At times, there were tears. At times, there was doubt: *Can we really do this?* And yet we kept sowing.

Just look at what has taken root! Because of seeds sown years ago, today we have a self-choice food Market serving hundreds of families with dignity. Because of faithful tending, we're now walking alongside 500 veterans, ensuring they're not forgotten. Because someone dared to sow the dream, we're building an adoption program for children of every age- even teens about to age out of foster care- because everyone deserves a forever family. These are not just good works; they are harvests of hope.

One more lesson gardening has taught me is you have to sow your best. If you put a shriveled up seed in the ground, you'll likely get a stunted plant or even no growth at all. But a full, healthy seed can become something vibrant. We can't throw leftovers on the ground and expect a harvest. We don't sow our bad seeds expecting good things. We sow our best, and then we water, nurture, and protect until the harvest comes.

That's how Catholic Charities approaches its mission. We bring our best to the work. We don't skimp on the seed. We don't cut corners on care. We don't accept “good enough” when dignity calls for more. We commit ourselves fully, because lives are too precious for half-measures. From volunteers greeting families with compassion, to staff members who stay late helping someone fill out a housing application, to donors who give sacrificially so programs can grow, each person is sowing their best. Our executive team doesn't just steer programs; they pray, strategize, and give themselves fully to the mission. We prune where we must and pull the weeds of distraction when they appear, but always with an eye toward nurturing growth.

And the harvest? It's visible in a mom who no longer must choose between paying rent and buying groceries. In a veteran who says, “I finally feel seen.” In a man who goes to bed knowing he has work tomorrow, providing for his family. These are not just outcomes; they are bundles of hope being gathered in.

Friends, here's the good news: you're part of this, too. Every gift, every prayer, every hour volunteered- it's all seed. Thank YOU for sowing your best and creating a harvest that overflows with joy in the bounty!

Let's keep sowing faithfully. Yes, there may be tears in the planting. But joy is promised in the reaping. And together, as we sow our best, we will keep harvesting hope.



By Jody Breuer, Senior Director of Development at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph

FROM GOLF TEES TO BOW TIES

Although the 2025 Driving for Hope golf tournament has wrapped, the energy of the day still carries forward- like the smack of a well-hit ball driving across the fairway. In our second year of play at Lakewood Oaks Country Club the weather was soggy but the hearts were light. Together we raised almost triple the amount of our inaugural tournament last year! Every dollar helps us serve our neighbors in need and lift them to a better life. Thanks to each of you who registered early - we sold out 6 weeks before our tournament! Next year we're making plans to accommodate more teams and create greater impact for the neediest among us.



Because events like Driving for Hope are more than sporting events; they are community moments that plant seeds of change. We haven't yet begun to understand the fullness of the harvest coming filled with compassion, generosity, and, above all, hope.

Scan the QR code to sponsor or purchase tickets today.



Now, as we turn toward Hope Ball season, our inspiration is rooted in John 1:5: *“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”* In a world that often feels uncertain, we cling to those bright lights that remind us of connection, faith, and possibility. For us, that light is most visible in the next generation- the young people who are quietly, yet powerfully, shaping the world with their integrity and kindness.

To that end, each year Catholic juniors and seniors are nominated by those who have witnessed their character in action; whether through community service, devotion to their faith, or the simple yet profound way they live out Christ's call to love one another. This nomination, culminating in their presentation to Bishop Johnston at the ball, is not just recognition; it is a proclamation of hope. These young men and women embody the light that

cannot be extinguished, and their example becomes a beacon for us all.

At the heart of Catholic Charities' mission is the call to lift our neighbors toward lives of dignity and self-reliance. Every dollar raised, every hand extended, and every act of generosity tied to the Hope Ball helps transform that mission into daily reality. This season, may we continue to cultivate the light within our youth and within ourselves, so that hope, once planted, grows strong enough to brighten the darkest corners and harvest a future filled with possibility.

By Molly Sullivan, Event Planner
at Catholic Charities of Kansas City–St. Joseph

Thank You!

TO OUR DRIVING FOR HOPE GOLF TOURNAMENT 2025 SPONSORS!

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Students at St. John LaLande Catholic Middle School prepare baby bottles for the Serve&Lift Center

*“The harvest is abundant,
but the laborers are few.”*

-Luke 10:2

Here in the Diocese of Kansas City–St. Joseph, the harvest is indeed ready and abundant! Across our diocese, many people need help- and with this need comes the call for more laborers, more volunteers. At Catholic Charities new volunteer opportunities open regularly. Some require a steady commitment, while others are one-time or seasonal events. As needs shift and goals expand, so do the opportunities to serve. With this growth has come an especially exciting engagement with our youth.

Recently, 8th grade classes have joined us at the Serve & Lift Center for Exploration Field Trips. During these visits, students tour Catholic Charities, learn about our work, and participate in hands-on service, all within a two-hour experience. This is just one way we’re planting seeds of hope in the next generation.

We are also partnering with high schools across our 27 counties. High school students often need service hours, and we are grateful to partner with schools for their “Days of Service” as well as individual

opportunities. To make student serving easier, we’ve launched a monthly newsletter highlighting Our Lady of Hope Service Society activities designed specifically for high school students. Each issue highlights a community need and how Catholic Charities is responding, while also sharing ways students can get involved through current volunteer opportunities.

Our Lady of Hope Society is a service organization that celebrates service to others. Students who volunteer 20+ hours at Catholic Charities are automatic members and receive a bronze pin of Our Lady of Hope. Once they become juniors or



Our Lady of Hope Society medallion



St. Patrick's students help sort canned goods

seniors in high school, they are eligible to be one of the gentlemen or debutantes presented at the Hope Ball. Students then receive a silver medallion in recognition of their service and leadership within the church from Bishop Johnston. Adults who commit to help raise critical funding or volunteer on a Hope Ball committee are called our Guardians of Hope. These Guardians ensure the mission continues and are awarded a gold Our Lady of Hope medallion at Bishop's Mass the last week of October.

Each of us has been given unique gifts that reflect God's heart. When we share them, we become part of the mission to “Serve and Lift.” Students or adults interested in volunteering with Catholic Charities are invited to connect with us. Email Volunteers@ccharities.com or call (816) 615-8205 to learn about current opportunities. High school students and parents can also request to join the Our Lady of Hope Service Newsletter by contacting us at the same email or phone number.

We are deeply grateful for all our volunteers and their servant-leader hearts. Together, as the hands and feet of Christ, we are harvesting hope across our community.

**By Alexa Schulte, Volunteer Coordinator
at Catholic Charities of Kansas City–St. Joseph**

CLEAR VISION



When neighbors walk into one of our vision clinics, they often carry more than just blurred sight; they carry the weight of financial strain, health barriers, and the daily challenges of living without something as basic as reliable vision. Through our partnership with the Lions Club, Catholic Charities of Kansas City- St. Joseph is helping to lift that burden, restoring not just sight, but dignity, opportunity, and hope.

For over a century, the Lions Club has championed the cause of vision, heeding Helen Keller’s call to become “knights for the blind.” Locally, Lions volunteers have found a strong ally in Catholic Charities, working side by side to bring free eye screenings and donated glasses to our underserved neighbors. “The motto of Lions is ‘We Serve,’” shares Mickey Beach, who spearheads these efforts. “Our desire to serve the underserved is exactly what Catholic Charities does. It’s a perfect match.”



Mickey Beach, right, of the KC Red Bridge Lions Club, assists a neighbor in choosing glasses that bring both clarity and confidence.

Beach knows that calling personally. A 13-year member of the KC Red Bridge Lions Club and secretary of Missouri Lions District 5, Beach serves alongside his wife, Martha, who is the club’s president this year. Beach first joined when community members asked him to give back locally. That invitation has grown into a life of service. “I was asked to get involved and give back to my community,” he reflects. “And now I can’t imagine not doing this work.”

Together, the partnership blends unique strengths: Catholic Charities connects deeply with those most in need, while Lions volunteers bring both training and a servant’s heart to perform eye screenings and distribute glasses. Missouri is one of only a handful of states that allows donated eyeglasses to be given directly to local residents, a blessing that makes this outreach even more impactful.

The results are life-changing. One pair of glasses can mean a student who can finally read clearly, an adult who can apply for a job, or a parent who can safely drive their children. “If there is rent to pay and kids to feed, sometimes personal eyewear gets shoved down the list,” Beach explains. “But being able to see provides so many benefits- working, succeeding in school, learning, and improving quality of life.”

The joy of these moments is unmistakable. Volunteers often witness reactions ranging from tears to laughter as neighbors put on their new glasses. It is a tangible reminder of the gospel call to serve Christ in one another, restoring dignity and opening doors to brighter futures.

This year alone, 12 Lions Clubs joined Catholic Charities volunteers for a day of service, with plans to expand to as many as 20 clinics annually across our service area. Every recycled pair of glasses holds the power to transform a life.

In this season of Harvesting Hope, we celebrate this partnership that does more than restore sight, it allows our neighbors to see the world, and themselves, with renewed possibility.

If you want to get involved or have questions, email Mickey Beach at mbeach1960@gmail.com. If you would like to help with the eye clinics, please contact volunteers@ccharities.com.

By Ashley Everett, Director of Marketing and Communications at Catholic Charities of Kansas City–St. Joseph



Please email:
Volunteers@ccharities.com to get started!
(Sign up for one or more two hour shifts)

THANKSGIVING

MEAL PREPARATION

Mon, Nov. 17 – Thurs, Nov. 20 | 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

MEAL DISTRIBUTION

Sat, Nov. 22 | 9 a.m – 3 p.m.

CHRISTMAS

MEAL PREPARATION

Mon, Dec. 15 & Tues, Dec. 16 | 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

MEAL DISTRIBUTION

Wed, Dec. 18 | 1–8 p.m.

ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES

THE MARKET

Monday – Closed

Tuesday – 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Wednesday – 1–8 p.m.

Thursday – 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

• Friday – Closed

First Saturday of the Month – 8 a.m.–12 p.m.

HARVESTING HOPE ON TROOST



Catholic Charities has opened a new Rockhurst location at 5151 Troost Avenue, Suite 100.

This fall, we're celebrating more than the turning of the seasons, we're celebrating growth. Catholic Charities has planted new roots at 5151 Troost Avenue, Suite 100, opening our Rockhurst location to bring hope, opportunity, and community resources to neighbors right where they are.

Just as a harvest brings together the fruits of labor, our Rockhurst location brings together essential services designed to help families thrive. Here, neighbors can find support they need:

- **Employment workshops** sow seeds of confidence and open doors to new opportunities.
- **Financial literacy classes** teach budgeting and saving strategies.
- **Mom's Empowerment and Social Butterflies** bring support to moms, dads and children so hope can grow in the everyday moments.
- **Referrals to community resources** ensure no one walks in their journey alone.

Our doors are open at the Rockhurst location Monday – Thursday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

With every handshake, conversation, and connection, we are cultivating a space where hope can take root and flourish.

This location is especially meaningful because of our long-standing relationship with Rockhurst University. Known for its Jesuit tradition of service and leadership, Rockhurst has partnered with Catholic Charities for many years. Through campus ministry, students have rolled up their sleeves to serve alongside us, whether it's stocking shelves, mentoring youth, or helping at events. The university even highlights Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph as a trusted community



Our new Rockhurst location brings together essential services designed to help families thrive.

resource, underscoring the bond between education, service, and compassion.

By opening our doors on Troost Avenue, we're not just providing services; we're investing in a stronger community fabric. Every class taught, every neighbor welcomed, and every connection made is another row in our harvest of hope.

But like any harvest, this one depends on many hands. We are currently seeking volunteers to serve as receptionists at the Rockhurst location. This role is the first warm smile neighbors encounter when they walk through the door- proof that compassion and kindness are just as important as classes and workshops. [Email volunteers@ccharities.com to learn more.]

As we gather and connect the gifts, talents, and treasures of our community, we see hope multiplying. With the support of Rockhurst University, the dedication of our staff, and the generosity of volunteers, we know this harvest will be plentiful.

Visit us at 5151 Troost Avenue, Suite 100, hope is taking root.

By Ashley Everett, Director of Marketing and Communications at Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph



HopeMatters



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VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT!

Brandon Scott

Brandon Scott, new Eagle Scout, spruced up the Serve&Lift Center by building and installing two picnic benches this summer. Thanks to his efforts, our staff, volunteers, and neighbors have a space to enjoy the fresh air, their lunches, and each other's company. This was his Eagle Project as part of Troop 1096. Congratulations Brandon on reaching Eagle Scout and thank you for elevating our space. Scout on!



Glenn Curtis

It wasn't long after retiring that St. Sabina parishioner, Glenn Curtis, wrapped up his backlog of home projects and found himself restless. He needed something to do. He needed to make an impact. A fellow Knight of Columbus suggested he volunteer with us, and it turned out to be a perfect fit. Our Serve&Lift Center was just a block away from where he grew up, so it was like coming home to help his old neighborhood. We're so glad that he chose to help at our food market, and that he liked it here well enough that he made the jump from volunteer to paid staff. Welcome Glenn!



Patty Sack

We often say that "We are There" for our neighbors, but Patty Sack is always there *for us*. Patty has been a board member for the last two years and a volunteer just as long, helping us with our events, and, more recently, our food market. This summer, she spearheaded our Driving for Hope auction, procuring donations and overseeing its execution. If you won an auction this summer or at our 2024 Hope Ball auction, Patty helped make it happen. Patty makes a lot happen around here, and we're so grateful!

