

# Love Changing Lives.

Summer 2021 Newsletter



Your gift in action.

## GED/HiSET students keep their eyes on the prize

2020 was a lost year for education for many students, but not for the 101 GED/HiSET graduates of the Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma Adult Education program. Among these graduates are young mothers living in Catholic Charities Transitional Living programs, a young woman who was forced to drop out of high school to watch her younger siblings, and refugees whose educations in their home countries weren't accepted in the United States.

While most of the graduates attend classes at our Tulsa campus, several came from our Muskogee and Stillwater Adult Education programs. All of these students have one thing in common: they each wanted to better their lives by graduating high school. About 50% of these students took their high school equivalency classes in Spanish.

Catholic Charities celebrated these accomplishments with a graduation ceremony on Tuesday, May 25th, at Bishop Kelley High School's Auditorium in Tulsa. The program included a keynote address by Bishop David Konderla and a speech given by the class valedictorian, Jay Williams.

**"You are graduating today, but you are not finished seeking education. The wisest person among us is the one who knows how much they don't know and who nurtures their curiosity to become a lifelong learner,"** said Bishop Konderla in his address in both English and Spanish. **"Always ask yourself: What am I curious about? What do I want to learn about next? And where can I learn more about it?"**

The 101 graduates included students from the 2019-2020 school year, who were not able to celebrate with a graduation ceremony due to the pandemic. We are so proud of all of our graduates, and we thank our many volunteer teachers and tutors for their dedication to our students. **Together, we are Love Changing Lives.**

*"One interesting feature of our experience or journey, I believe, is our diversity. Among us graduating tonight, there are immigrants who fought hard for the right to be who they are today. There are moms, some old, some young, that found time throughout everything to make it to this stage. And people like me, that after being hit by wave after wave of obstacles, finally made it to shore."*

*- Jay Williams, valedictorian*



Eastern Oklahoma  
**CATHOLIC CHARITIES** Love Changing Lives.

# “Thank you for the opportunity to serve.”



Barry Corum reflects on this past year as he sits in an empty warehouse at Catholic Charities' main campus in North Tulsa. An upcoming renovation project has temporarily moved the food distribution to a warehouse at 59th and Mingo. Hundreds of volunteers alongside Barry stepped up since March of 2020 to serve as many as 400-600 families per day with food.

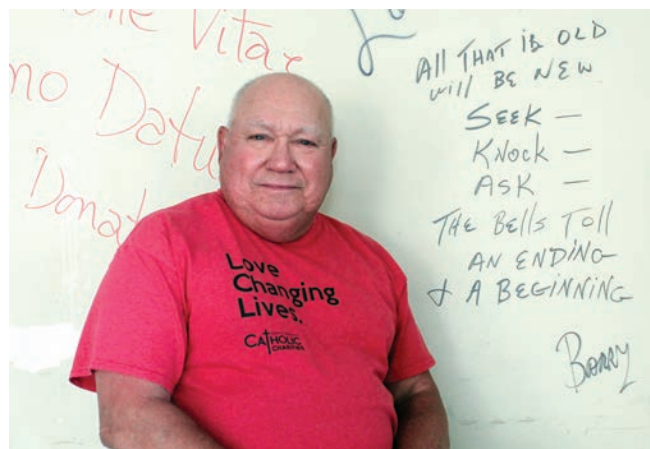
Barry began his work at Catholic Charities when he retired in 2016. After learning of different opportunities available to him, he was called to volunteer as a caseworker in Emergency Assistance, where he counseled those coming for food, clothing and financial assistance and sometimes referred them to other programs available on campus.

“In the past year, our role has changed to serving the poor who come to us by the hundreds each day to answer one great need, hunger. As a volunteer caseworker, I used to see maybe 15 clients in a day, now I see 15 clients in ten minutes,” said Barry.

“There are hundreds of us volunteers answering this call at Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma. Why? As volunteers, we get cool t-shirts and occasional appreciation banquets where we can socialize; but more importantly, we get to live the mission of Catholic Charities to share Christ's merciful love, not just with the poor and suffering, but with each other. We get to live the words of the t-shirts we wear: 'Love Changing Lives'. People continually express their gratitude to us and I often reply to their thanks or blessing by saying 'No, God bless you for coming and thank you for the opportunity to serve.'

“The bells in the tower are a constant reminder of our purpose and they not only ring 'Seek, Knock, Ask', but also those words: 'Love Changing Lives.'

“It will be a reward in itself when we enter the new food center and are better able to serve those who come. Maybe the crisis will be over, but the need will continue.”



*We get to live the words of the t-shirts we wear: "Love Changing Lives." - Barry Corum*

## USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program has come to a close.

Here is the impact of Catholic Charities efforts through the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program from May 2020 - May 2021:

The USDA Farmers to Families Food Box Program was a nationwide government initiative in the wake of COVID-19. The USDA partnered with local food producers to provide family-sized boxes of food to those in need.

1,358 different volunteers gave 20,774 hours of service

\$13,700,000 value of food given out

7,860,000 lbs of food in 357,000 boxes

241 Distributions at 18 different sites

Our efforts were only 0.2% of the total program nationwide

**CCEOK's**  
**Farmers to Families had a massive impact in Eastern Oklahoma**





## Patron support made **Cooking Up Compassion 2021** a huge success!

Each year, Catholic Charities programs depend on the funds raised by our annual fundraising gala, **Cooking Up Compassion**. In the midst of the pandemic, holding an event for such a large crowd was just not possible. Thanks to the **unwavering support** of our patrons and other donors, we were able to raise the funds needed to call the event a **huge success**. With the help of **National Charity League**, we “**took the show on the road**” to thank our patrons in a special way. We can’t wait to bring **Cooking Up Compassion** back **live** on Saturday, February 26, 2022...**save the date!**



*Hope* is an everlasting legacy.

A gift in your will to Catholic Charities can be the open door to a better future for the most vulnerable in our community.

Planned giving opportunities can provide benefits for your family and the organizations your support.

If you would like to consider a planned gift, and transfer your values through your giving, we invite you to call (918) 508-7116 to learn more about these complimentary planning services.

Eastern Oklahoma  
**CATHOLIC CHARITIES**

*Save*  
THE  
*Date*  
2.26.22

16<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
**COOKING UP COMPASSION**

FEATURING THE RETURN OF  
THE PARTY CRASHERS BAND

AT THE **NEW GRAND BALLROOM**  
AT COX BUSINESS CONVENTION CENTER

2022 EVENT CHAIRS:  
**MANDY & BLAKE ATKINS**

**Donations from individuals like you fuel our mission to be Christ's merciful love to those who suffer.**

Many are surprised to learn that Catholic Charities does not receive funds from the Diocese of Tulsa's Faith & Works Annual Appeal.

You may donate using the enclosed envelope or by going to our website:

[cceok.org/donate](http://cceok.org/donate)



## Newest Outreach Location opens in Wilburton

As the need for food and other social services has skyrocketed during the pandemic, Catholic Charities continues to provide greater access to food across Eastern Oklahoma.

On Thursday, May 20th, Catholic Charities' ninth location opened on Main Street in the town of Wilburton, Oklahoma, in Latimer County. This outreach center will initially provide food only, but will add limited financial assistance beginning in July 2021. They will be open on Thursdays from 10am to 2pm to start.

On Friday, May 21st, Bishop David Konderla was joined by Rev. Hrudaya Raj Gade from Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Wilburton and multiple staff members from Catholic Charities in Tulsa for a blessing and dedication of the new building.

Catholic Charities Wilburton is the eighth outreach location for Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma. In addition to the main Tulsa campus, outreach offices are located in Bartlesville, Broken Arrow, McAlester, Muskogee, Poteau, Sallisaw, Stillwater and Wilburton. Catholic Charities one day hopes to provide services in all 31 Eastern Oklahoma counties...we are almost there with 29 counties!

