

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

November 2021



THE OUTPOST & THE AFGHAN REFUGEES

To say there is a lot going on at the Outpost would be an understatement!

From the weekly distribution of food to our neighbors in need, to food boxes for Eastern Oklahoma Outreach communities and pop-up pantries, to now housing household furnishings for the 800 Afghan refugees resettling in the Tulsa area, the Outpost is a busy place.

Catholic Charities is the primary resettlement agency in Oklahoma, and recently some of our resources have been put to use helping Afghan refugees displaced and in danger of the Taliban. The U.S. State Department, along with the Refugee Resettlement program of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, is in charge of the undertaking. So far, we have welcomed about 170 refugees to Tulsa, with more people coming each week. This project has been a massive community-wide effort.

A major function of the Refugee Resettlement program involves finding and furnishing permanent housing for the families moving to Tulsa. Most of the arrivals have very few personal possessions, having left their whole world behind in Afghanistan. Through the combined efforts of charitable organizations, businesses, churches, and

individuals, Catholic Charities has been collecting household essentials for these Afghan families. These essentials range from clothing, dishware, furniture, and baby bottles. Everything that a family needs to live in must be provided, and the State Department has given us specific lists of everything each family should have.

The Outpost plays a central role in the Afghan resettlement operation. Currently, all supplies to furnish new homes and apartments are being stored here - everything from couches, bed frames, tables, lamps and sheets.

There are entire teams of employees and volunteers charged with keeping the inventory of what's coming in and going out of the warehouse, picking up and sorting donations, loading trucks and packing up furnishings to set up housing for refugees, as well as boxing up a two-week supply of culturally appropriate groceries.

Everything that happens at the Outpost - whether it's helping ease food insecurity for our fellow Oklahomans, to welcoming our Afghan neighbors - is just another way our volunteers are true examples of Love Changing Lives!

Inventory Control System

Late in 2020, a donor who was reviewing an application for a grant from Catholic Charities targeting the Food Pantry, and who was aware of the lack of automation being applied to Food Pantry operations, asked if it might be a good idea to include an Inventory Control System in the application for the grant.

The automation of warehouse operations aligns with Catholic Charities' goal to expand the number of locations to which food is delivered and distributed, as it could reduce the number of man hours spent tracking and reporting on inventory that might potentially be spread out over several locations. An inventory control system might also allow for the optimization of food purchases – taking advantage of local and seasonal price variations – to stock warehouses with non-perishables when the price is right.

A project was started in November 2020 staffed initially by Deacons Erick Bell and Craig Victor and several volunteers, including Diane and Dennis Hayes, Deacon Dave Johnson and Vic Alonzi. The task was to identify system requirements (what it should do), evaluate several commercial packages, and arrive at a “place-holder” budget number to cover system acquisition and maintenance that would be included in the grant request.

Fast forward a couple of months into the spring of 2021. Teresa Williams, who is on loan to Catholic Charities from Hilti, was named the project manager for the follow-on work that would refine the requirements, formally evaluate several commercial software packages against those requirements, and create a short-list of potential solution candidates. Formal discussions with each of the

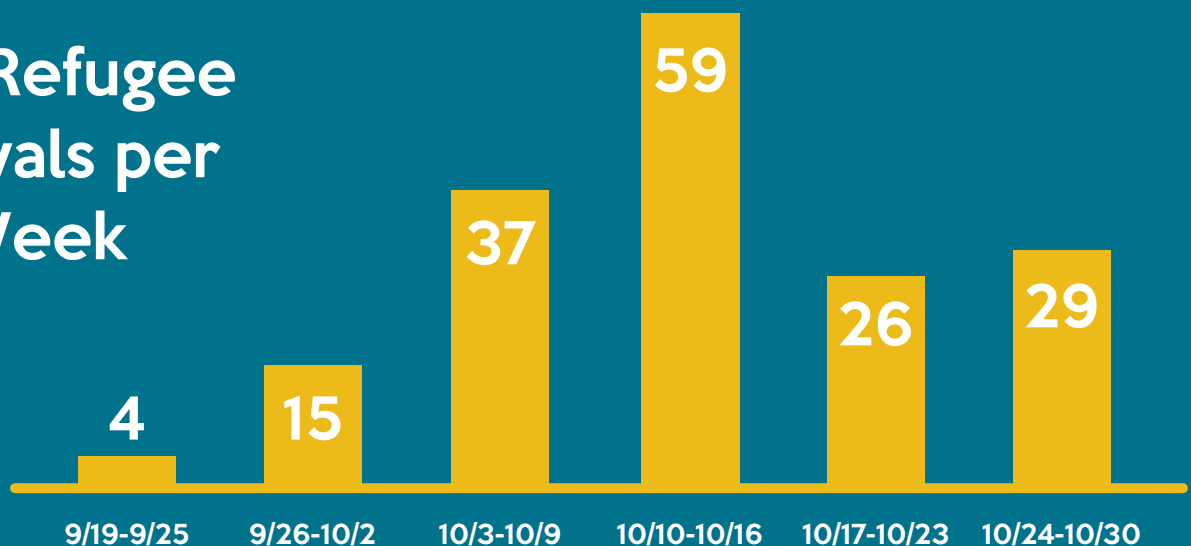
short-list candidates' representatives would then be used to refine the evaluation, resulting in one or two software options that would be recommended to the system owners for their final selection.

Teresa set up semi-monthly meetings in the late spring and throughout the summer where each of the tasks listed above were completed. At the end of the process, a food bank-specific solution called “P2” or “Primarius” from Erie Custom Computer Applications (ECCA) was selected as the inventory management solution that Catholic Charities would use. ECCA developed their application some years ago in response to a request from a food bank that was operating in the Erie (PA) area and has been making modifications and improvements to the system based on the feedback they've received from their many food bank customers. Sr. Lucy Marie joined the team in August, and was given the responsibility to oversee the installation, configuration and operation of the system.

At present, pricing and legal discussions with ECCA are underway, while Sr. Lucy and others are getting initial experience with a test version of the system. A startup date has not yet been set, as other activities have taken precedence. It is expected that soon after the move back to the main campus, the system will be installed and configured to manage certain types of food inventory in the new warehouse.

When the system is fully operational, it is expected to reduce the amount of time and effort involved in distributing food through the warehouse, and allow Catholic Charities to expand its reach into other areas of Eastern Oklahoma, and allow for the distribution of more food to those who need it most.

of Refugee Arrivals per Week



STAFF SPOTLIGHTS: Susan Edwards and Felix Cuellar

If you've spent time in the Food Pantry since COVID, you've undoubtedly run into either Susan or Felix – or both – as they generally volunteer together helping with unloading, unpacking, shopping, or loading carts. Felix and Susan both help wherever there's work to be done, and since Felix is bi-lingual, his help interacting with clients who speak little English has helped on many occasions.

Both Felix and Susan volunteered at Neighbor for Neighbor before CCEOK, but took a “short break” from volunteering to raise their children.

After retiring in May 2019, Felix saw a flyer – “Come Cook with Michael Fusco” – he and Michael also knew each other from Resurrection, so Felix began working in the kitchen during the summer of 2019 with Chef. During idle time in the kitchen (pre-heating an old oven??) Felix would come over to the pantry to see where he could help. Pre-COVID, Felix would interact with clients to see what other services they might need to get them back on their feet.

Susan retired in 2014 from teaching elementary school full time for 35 years in Tulsa Public Schools but continued to teach part time. Susan began her volunteer career at CCEOK in 2018 teaching a class for mothers with children called “Talking is Teaching”, an early literacy program offered at Madonna House. She continued to help in the Food Pantry at various positions when school wasn't in session until she formally retired for good in February 2021. Both Susan and Felix volunteer at least two days a week (and many weeks Felix is there more often than that) in the Food Pantry ever since COVID shut down or suspended most of the other programs at CCEOK.

Susan spent some time working the front desk, where she came to appreciate the breadth and number of programs that CCEOK is running concurrently, and how much those programs rely on the contributions of volunteers to accomplish their mission.

Felix and Susan most recently signed up to help with the Afghan resettlement program as airport drivers. Their first charge was a family of 11, who they drove to a hotel in downtown Tulsa. During their time with the family, through an interpreter, they began to understand what the family had been through to get here, and probably more importantly, what challenges the family still must get through to restart their life here in Tulsa.

Susan and Felix have internalized Brent's approach to volunteer work: “Be Nimble”. Each volunteer brings their own outlook to the work and

being “nimble” essentially means giving space to those who need to be able to contribute in their own way on their own terms and adapting cheerfully to what are frequently changing circumstances and personnel.

Both Felix and Susan enjoy working at CCEOK in part due to the other volunteers they have met. Felix says, “Being at Catholic Charities causes my heart to smile.” They also experience a sense of fulfillment helping people solve an immediate problem – getting food, paying utilities, getting gas for the car, etc., and believe that working through those issues at CCEOK is an example of how we care for our community.



2 TRUTHS & A LIE

Can you figure out
which is the lie?

MARATHON RUNNERS: They have both run the Route 66 Marathon in Tulsa - twice.

BEAR WHISPERERS: They recently encountered a bear in their campsite who was eventually chased away by tossing a shoe at the bear.

CHRONIC VOLUNTEERS: Felix was a soccer coach and youth group leader; Susan was a soccer coach and lifeguard at a men's prison pre-release center in Tulsa.

The answers will be in the next newsletter!

Answers to Susan Krebsbach's Two Truths and a Lie: Mountain top chili cook: True, Back Flips Forever: True, Hit by a baseball: True, but she didn't get to throw out the first pitch at the next game. She just got a cold beer to hold against her face to take the swelling down!



CHEF MICHAEL'S RECIPE OF THE MONTH: Apple Bourbon Galette

Ingredients:

- 1/3 cup bourbon
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/3 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon ground
- 3 large or 4 medium apples, peeled and cored
- 1 Pillsbury pie dough
- Egg wash, as needed for finishing
- Turbinado sugar, as needed for finishing



Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 425° F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a small pot, bring the bourbon to a boil over medium heat. Reduce until there's about 2 tablespoons of liquid remaining, then stir in the butter until it's melted.
3. In a small bowl, whisk the brown sugar, cornstarch, and cinnamon to combine. Stir this into the bourbon-butter mixture and let cool completely.
4. Cut the apples into quarters. Carefully slice each apple quarter into thin slices, doing your best to keep the section together while you slice (this makes it easier to fan the apples later).
5. On a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough to 1/4 inch thick. Transfer the dough to the prepared baking sheet, then use a pastry wheel to trim the edges so the dough is a square.
6. Fan the apples out and place them randomly across the dough, leaving about 1 1/2 inches of uncovered dough all around the edge.
7. Fold the sides of the square in over the apples, then fold the top and bottom down. Pinch a little bit at the edges to ensure they are secure.
8. Carefully spoon the bourbon-sugar mixture over the apples evenly. Egg wash the edges of the dough and sprinkle with turbinado sugar.
9. Bake the galette until the crust is golden brown and the apples are very tender, 28 to 33 minutes.

See you at
Days of Blessings!

Thanksgiving: Nov. 20th
Christmas: Dec. 18th



SAVE THE DATE FOR AN OUTPOST RETREAT!

NOVEMBER 12
9AM to 11:30 AM
with Mass & lunch to follow

Come to our main campus for a
half-day retreat including a tour
and update on The Market!

GET INVOLVED



Volunteer with us! cceok.org/volunteer
Join our Facebook Group!

For story ideas, feedback, etc.,
email: volcommunications@cceok.org