

Love changing lives. We see it here at Catholic Charities every day! CCEOK volunteers are a very big part of showing the love of Christ to our brothers and sisters in many types of need.

We're blessed with numerous examples of exceptional volunteers whose selfless service is inspirational. One of those individuals was a humble woman named Heidi Gleb, whose service at Porta Caeli House (and at other places like the Tulsa International Airport and the Tulsa Performing Arts Center) embodied this at its very best.

At PCH, Heidi volunteered as front desk hospitality from October 2022 through September 2023. Heidi had breast cancer, which had been in remission but then came back and the cancer spread all over her body. Heidi was not afraid to talk about the cancer and would share that the diagnosis was not good. But Heidi refused to give in to the disease or to the effects of the cancer treatment she was undergoing. She didn't let it stop her from volunteering – always showing up for her normal front desk role and she would substitute anytime help was needed, if possible. When it was slow at the front desk, Heidi even worked on crocheting blankets for children in the hospital.

Her optimistic, outgoing, generous spirit made an impression on everyone at PCH. Heidi would come in and eat lunch with the other volunteers and with the families of guests at the house because she knew the importance of spending quality time and building relationships. Everyone who interacted with her was enamored with her strength and her sweet spirit.

To the families of guests at PCH, Heidi was a source of great comfort. One family attending a Day of Remembrance event asked to be put in touch with Heidi because she had made such an impact in their lives while they were at PCH with their loved ones.

Heidi passed away this past November. Her example helps us to know that no matter how many days we have on this earth, every day is an opportunity, in big and in little ways, to be Christ's merciful love to those who suffer.

In loving memory of all our CCEOK volunteers who passed away in 2023.
"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14-16

MUSKOGEE OUTREACH

Perched in the middle of the block on West Broadway in Muskogee is a modest, non-descript metal-roofed, brick building that is home to Catholic Charities Muskogee. This outreach location began in the 1980s by offering peanut butter sandwiches out of St. Joseph Catholic Church. This small operation became the first parish outreach center in Oklahoma. An effort years later, organized by Deacon Ed Falleur, resulted in the construction of the existing standalone building, which originally contained office space and a few small storage rooms. A later expansion resulted in a bulk food warehouse, a walk-in refrigerator, and several food freezers.

Catholic Charities Muskogee is led by Liliana Carbone. Liliana and her staff of about 25 regular volunteers have grown to now operate a food pantry for about 10 to 30 families a day, provide English as a Second Language (ESL) and high school equivalency (HiSET) classes, and provide formula, diapers and clothing to infants and toddlers (to about 4 years old) to needy families in the area. In addition, some emergency assistance is available – in the form of rent, utility bills and deposits - to those families who otherwise might be homeless.

The services are available to clients from 9 am to noon each weekday, but in an emergency, these resources can be available at any time.

Clients register through AssistOK. CCEOK staff will help obtain IDs for clients who don't have one, and where a birth certificate or other identifying document might be required, they may be able to help them get those as well.





Some bulk food for the pantry is ordered from the Food Bank. Other food, like fresh vegetables and meat, are sourced from CCEOK's Tulsa warehouse or are either bought or donated by local grocers and businesses. CCEOK Muskogee also hands out Commodity Food Senior Program boxes to those older than 60 who qualify.

Infant clothing, formula and diapers are donated by individuals and businesses throughout the year and through the collections at St. Joseph Parish.

Lilana organizes an appreciation lunch for volunteers several times a year, where news and other information can be distributed to the group.

Again, it is just amazing to see what can be accomplished by a dedicated, passionate group of volunteers!

HANDS OF CHRIST

By Deacon Bill Anderson

We do all we can at Catholic Charities McAlester to provide warm clothing, food, and financial assistance when available. Our volunteers are great and very dedicated. We've become like family, hugging each other when entering the building in the morning. Jesus tells us in the Gospel: "Where 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there I am among them." We certainly feel the presence of Jesus among us as we assist those in need.

Our volunteers are also very generous, not only with their time but also with their resources. More than once, I have seen them dig into their pockets for a few dollars to give to someone in need when our finances were empty. Is this not living the Gospel?

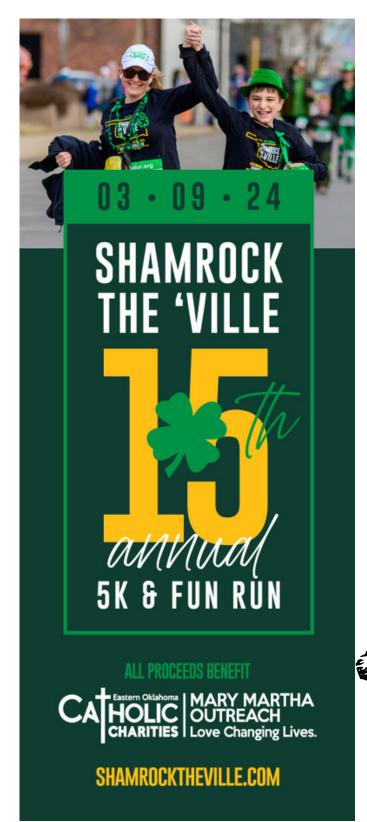
Volunteering helps us to realize how fortunate we are. I and others have brought food to those who are homeless, living under bridges, or in cold tents. My 12-year-old granddaughter loves to go with me. She has a big heart and is sometimes in tears to see young children like her whose eyes light up when they get a basket full of food.

One volunteer really proclaimed the Gospel, not with words so much as with an act of generosity and kindness. It was in late November about two years ago, a cold rainy day. The door opened and a man came in, shivering from the rain. His clothing was ragged, and as I looked down, he was wearing wet worn-out stockings and no shoes! A volunteer took the man to the back of the helping center and seated him in a chair. We gave the man a cup of hot coffee to warm him. The volunteer went to a local store and soon returned with some new stockings and shoes. The volunteer did not just hand them to the man. The volunteer knelt down, removed the man's wet stockings, dried his feet and put on the new stockings and shoes, and even laced them up for him! I immediately thought of the Last Supper when Jesus washed the feet of his apostles. Now that is living the Gospel!





Phalyn Andres - Dental Sen Boih - Dental Makina Croft - Dental **Kyah Dixon - Dental** Kennedy Field - Dental **Shelby Godbey - Dental** Kenley Hayes - Dental **Carter Henry - Dental** Ryan Henry - Dental Gabby Hua - Dental Sarah Isaacs - Dental Jason Nguyen - Dental Jade Petersen - Dental Paige Resler - Dental **Taylor Treat - Dental** Katelyn Wilson - Dental Patrick Easterling - Education Anna Gormley - Education **Linda Lawson – Education** Elder Daniel Morgan - Education & PCH Caroline Villafana-Quinones - Education Stephanie Pomeroy - Education Sarah Steffes - Education Michael Amberg - The Market Victoria Moore - The Market Jonathan Nataprawira - The Market Ashley Brashers - Ministry of Compassion Patricia Lovell - Ministry of Compassion Tina Wilkins - Ministry of Compassion Elaine Yarnall - Ministry of Compassion Lydia Fortney - MMO Lindsay Fick - Porta Caeli House Marian Henton - Porta Caeli House Anna Lampkin - Porta Caeli House Brenda Stukey - Porta Caeli House John Stukey – Porta Caeli House Samantha Romo - Refugee Resettlement Va Yang - Refugee Resettlement Virginia Floyd - Sallisaw Angela Key - Wilburton





Thanks to all of the Cascia Hall sophomores who volunteered at CCEOK Wednesdays in January!





GET INVOLVED



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

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

