

“I’m not afraid I’m going to leave.”

Jordan and Emma were removed from their home and placed into foster care. As with many kids in foster care, the children had to move many times. The instability of their earlier lives meant they had issues to work through and behaviors to change. But eventually they were ready to be adopted and were referred to the Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK) program, and recruitment for a forever family for them was begun.

The Heart Gallery, Wendy’s Wonderful Kids project, the *Heart Times* newsletter, Waiting Child packets and Adoption Inquiry meetings are tools the AASK program uses to find families for children. After several months

a family was identified for Jordan, the 12-year old boy and his 4 year old sister, Emma. After 2 months of visits, the children were placed into the family’s home; there were struggles to work through as the children tested the permanency of the relationship with the parents, Stan and Francine. In time, the parents realized that they were ready to finalize the adoption of the children into their family. When the children were told the news, they were delighted.

Suddenly, a change took place, much to the puzzlement of the parents. Jordan had previously kept his room impeccably clean, his items organized—everything in its place. Once he was told that the family was committed to adopting him and Emma, his room became a real mess, and reminders to pick up his room often went unheeded.

One day, after seeing a movie, Francine and Jordan were talking over dinner. She asked him about his room: Why the change? Why was it so messy when he had kept it so clean, so orderly?

“Well”, Jordan explained, “when we were in foster care, we always needed to be ready to leave. I kept everything together so that I could gather all my things and be ready to go in five minutes. I didn’t want to leave anything behind. Now that I know that I’m staying with you, I’m not afraid that I’m going to have to leave.” Having his “forever family” meant that he had a “forever home”, a place for him and his things.

Permanent, nurturing families are essential to the well-being and optimal development of children. There are many events and situations which occur within families when other family members or friends may step in to help. A society that cares for its children shows this care in many ways.

When children’s safety and well being cannot be assured in the birth family, county officials step into the picture and the children may be removed from the home and enter foster care. The parents receive help to correct the home situation, but when it is determined that the child cannot return to the birth family, parental rights are terminated.

The Adults Adopting Special Children (AASK) program is North Dakota’s program for providing adoption services to children in foster care and the families who adopt them. Through it, we promote and expedite strong and lasting relationships through adoption for children who have lost their families. Having a ‘forever family’ is an important way that children can begin to heal from the hurts and trauma they may have faced in their lives.





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Larry J. Bernhardt
Executive Director

In Constant Awe

Greetings !

I have been given the wonderful opportunity and challenge to be the new Executive Director for Catholic Charities North Dakota. I must start by expressing my personal gratitude to Mr. Briston Fernandes who served as the Executive Director for the last 7 ½ years and did so with such grace, kindness, leadership, and commitment to the Mission of CCND. We are all very thankful to Briston for his wonderful service and wish him well in his future endeavors.

As I have begun my work here at Catholic Charities *I find myself in constant awe*. I had the good fortune of serving on the Board of Directors for Catholic Charities for the last 4+ years and during that time saw the dedication of Board Members to help make Catholic Charities the excellent entity that it is.

But as I now see how the work of the Board filters down into the work of the staff and the services received by clients, *I am in awe* of the outcomes that occur. I have gotten to meet individually with almost all of the staff of the Agency, in Fargo and at the satellite offices in Grand Forks, Minot, and Bismarck. During those visits *I was in awe* of the

sense of dedication, compassion, and pride the staff expressed in their work for Catholic Charities North Dakota. They also expressed an appreciation for the allowance of spirituality to be a part of their work and of the environment they work in. How can one not be in awe of staff members like that?

I am in awe when I see the results of the work done by the Agency through the Guardianship Program, the AASK Program, the Counseling Program, and the Pregnancy/Parenting/Adoption Program and the impact of that work for the people of North Dakota.

And finally, *I am in awe* when I see the strong relationship between Catholic Charities North Dakota and the Fargo and Bismarck Dioceses. Without their support and belief in the Mission and work of Catholic Charities, none of this would be possible.

So, as I start my journey with Catholic Charities North Dakota as its “new” Executive Director, I look forward with excitement, hope, and faith that I might be able to play a small part in the continuance of such an exemplary agency and helping daily to “make a difference” for the people of North Dakota.

Mission Statement: In faithfulness to the Gospel and the mission of Jesus, Catholic Charities North Dakota fosters the common good through charitable and social services to the people of North Dakota.

A Transformative Journey

BY BRISTON FERNANDES



Briston Fernandes

Seven years ago, as I was starting my journey with Catholic Charities North Dakota, I realized that the road that stretched out before me was a challenge to my heart long before it would test the strength of my spirit. As the days, weeks and months went by, it became quite clear to me that this was not a marathon, but rather a relay and a team effort. I was on this journey with a whole lot of devoted and generous people who were passionately committed to the mission and work of Catholic Charities.

As a relay, I was handed a torch whose flame burned steadily and strong, nourished by the hard work, perseverance and self-sacrifice of generations of church and community leaders who were not only visionaries but also men and women who put their faith to work through sustained action on behalf of charity and justice. As a team, board members and staff served the mission of Catholic Charities with a genuine commitment to service, advocacy and empowerment, helping the needy and vulnerable, nourishing and strengthening marriages, supporting and nurturing strong families, and giving a voice to those who were marginalized or unable to speak for themselves.

Together, we have come a long way: internal operations have been strengthened; board and committees were restructured, and their functioning clearly defined; relationships between the agency, the two dioceses and

diocesan ministries have been strengthened. There has been an expansion of services in all programs: a new statewide collaborative was formed to serve children with special needs; a counseling program was established to provide therapeutic, preventative and enrichment services to couples and families. In the area of development and community relations, the Agency has become more visible with our enhanced web site, annual dinners and annual reports. National connections have been fostered through participation and involvement with Catholic Charities USA and the Catholic Charities network of agencies. These are a few of our accomplishments as an agency that has continued to build on our strengths.

I have learned that in our journey through life we never walk alone; that a team is stronger than the sum of individual talents. There is reciprocity in the gifts and dedication of staff and the strength of our Agency. Staff at Catholic Charities exemplify Rudyard Kipling's insight that, "the strength of the pack is in the wolf; and the strength of the wolf is in the pack." I believe in transformational leadership; in the difference between doing things right, and doing the right thing. And finally, as I conclude this journey, Carlos Castaneda's sage advice in *The Teaching of Don Juan*, rings true when he instructs us that in undertaking a journey we must ask ourselves: "Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good. If it doesn't, it is of no use."

For me, the journey has been transformative. I know I have been blessed by each one of you, my fellow travelers. For in this journey, I have been formed and transformed; indeed, I have received more than I have given.



Members of the Board of Directors of Catholic Charities North Dakota are pictured after a recent meeting. From L to R, Seated: Kathy Hogan, Sonia Lunardi, Agnes Harrington, Joyce McDowall, Sr. Lois Byrne, PBVM Standing: Msgr. Dennis Skonseng, Mary Ann Votava, John Hardy, Fr. Bernie Pfau, Jerome Schwanzenberger, Jerry Clark, Jim Lyons, Brian Herding and Larry Bernhardt, Executive Director. Not pictured: Bishop Samuel Aquila, Deacon Ed Didier, Fred Arnason, Thomas Vanorny, Deacon Doyle Schulz

Board News

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4-7

As the New Year and New Decade began, Catholic Charities North Dakota prepared for a new Executive Director. In January Briston Fernandes ended his truly amazing 7 years as the Executive Director and Larry Bernhardt began his new role in leadership. Transitions are interesting and challenging times for everyone involved.

Saying good bye is hard. Recently, I visited with several staff members, who were really grieving the loss of Briston because he has been such an amazing gift to the organization, to the community and to the state. Briston's gentle spirit, deep

faith and passion for social justice have touched the lives of many. We wish him well in his retirement and we hope that he stays connected because he will always be a critical person in the history of Catholic Charities North Dakota.

We also welcomed Larry to his new position as Executive Director.

Larry and his family have moved from Dickinson to Fargo to begin this new adventure. With forty years of experience in human services, Larry brings a wealth of knowledge and experience. Larry has served on the Board of Catholic Charities so he has a good understanding of the agency and issues.

So as St. Paul says to the Philippians – we will not be anxious but we will present to God our prayer for blessings on Briston in his retirement and for grace and wisdom as Larry leads Catholic Charities into a new chapter.



Kathy Hogan,
Chairwoman
Board of Directors

Ready for a Summer of Golf



Donna and Marvin Huber from Mandan, ND love the Catholic Charities North Dakota Golf for Guardianship Golf Pass!

Instead of purchasing a golf club membership, they take their golf game to a new level by purchasing the Golf for Guardianship Golf Passes. "Each summer we take 3-4 trips to different areas of the state and golf the courses on the golf pass in that area. We usually spend a few days at a time trying out the courses," says Donna.

Since they have been doing the "Golf for Guardianship Tour", the couple has played 64 courses in every area of the state. "There are so many beautiful courses in North Dakota along with the greatest people that run them. We have gotten the opportunity to meet so many people," said Donna. Each year the Hubers purchase extra golf passes so that when friends and family visit, they can all hit the links together.

The Golf for Guardianship golf pass allows you to golf at 100 golf courses across North Dakota and western Minnesota for free or at reduced rates for only \$30 (Early bird savings—only \$25 until 4/1/2010). The Golf for Guardianship Passes support the Guardianship Program at Catholic Charities

four

North Dakota. The program provides services to adults with developmental disabilities. Guardians act in the best interest of vulnerable adults while trying to provide the highest level of independence for their wards.

To purchase your Golf for Guardianship Pass, log onto our website at www.catholiccharitiesnd.org or call 701-235-4457.

Marvin and Donna Huber, from Mandan, are ready for another summer of golfing with their golf clubs and Golf for Guardianship Passes.



A New Home in a New Land for Tegan



Denae and Marlin Dahlin proudly show off their son Tegan.

Denae and Marlin Dahlen, who recently experienced first-hand the joys and wonder of international adoption from Ethiopia, speak about adopting their son, Tegan, as a completion of their lives. They brought him home 3 months ago when he was six months old. The couple recently came into the CCND office for a visit and sat down with us to talk about what it is like to become parents for the first time.

When asked about the biggest surprise of having Tegan in their lives, Marlin, a proud new father, said, "I go to work and can't wait to get home to see him... and Denae of course." With a big smile, Denae, reflects back on the past few months said, "We had a pretty active social life, now we don't go anywhere.

I'm surprised at how happy we are just to be at home."

"Tegan was 6 months old when we brought him home, so he came with a built-in personality. Getting to know him and his personality and making it meld with our personalities has been the biggest challenge," said Denae.

The Dahlens describe the experience as unforgettable. While in Ethiopia, they were impressed at how nice all the people were throughout their whole experience, almost like family. They keep in touch with other families they met in Ethiopia. Their advice to other couple's considering international adoptions is to "just do it" and to pay attention to your research.



HAGUE ACCREDITED

Catholic Charities North Dakota has received notification that it has achieved Hague Accreditation through the Council on Accreditation (COA) as authorized by the U.S. Department of State. The Hague Accreditation attests that Catholic Charities North Dakota is in substantial compliance with the Hague Convention Accreditation Standards.

The Hague Convention is an international treaty created to ensure that intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of children and to prevent abduction, exploitation, sale, or trafficking of children.

This achievement makes Catholic Charities North Dakota the only Hague Accredited adoption agency in North Dakota. This is something we are very proud of not only because of having been successful in going through the arduous process to be accredited but also what this accreditation can mean to our clients.

The Hague Accreditation will help families doing Intercountry Adoptions have confidence that they will receive ethical and professional services through Catholic Charities North Dakota.

ON THE CALENDAR

May 21-22-Fargo Marathon-Join Team Catholic Charities (see last page for details)

June 2 – Catholic Charities North Dakota's First Annual Heirloom Baby Quilt Auction in Fargo. Look for information coming in your mailbox soon! If you are a quilter interested in donating a Machine or Hand-quilted baby quilt, contact Colleen Hardy at 701-235-4457 or chardy@catholiccharitiesnd.org

June 11-13 – Visit the American Poverty Display at the Bismarck Diocesan Centennial, brought to you by Catholic Charities North Dakota.

Sept 10- Catholic Charities North Dakota Annual Dinner in Bismarck

Developments



Colleen Hardy
Development
Director

Greetings!

Spring is just around the corner! We have already welcomed longer days and warmer temperatures and are looking forward to green grass and the first flowers of spring! At Catholic Charities North Dakota, we are looking forward to some new and exciting events we have coming up this spring and summer.

• On May 22, we are going to be a part of the GoFar Charity Team for the Fargo Marathon. If you or your friends and family are participating in the Fargo Marathon, sign up to be a runner for Team Catholic Charities and raise money for our agency while you are fulfilling your personal goals! You can sign up if you are running or walking any event of the marathon. There are some special perks for our members, so log onto our website – www.catholiccharitiesnd.org for more

information or to learn how to donate to Team Catholic Charities or call me in our Fargo office.

• On June 2, we are holding our First Annual Heirloom Baby Quilt Auction to raise funds for our Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Program. This program provides free confidential counseling to women facing unintended pregnancies and guides them in their decision to parent their baby or to make an adoption plan. Watch our website and your mailbox for more information on this new and exciting event for our agency! Also, if you are interested in donating a machine/hand-quilted quilt, or attending the event, please contact me!

• Our Annual Dinner is scheduled for September 10 in Bismarck and we are also in the process of building a fundraising event in the Bismarck Diocese.

Thank you so much to all of our donors and volunteers who help to make these events possible! If you would like to volunteer to be a part of any of our upcoming events, please don't hesitate to call me at 701-235-4457 or contact me by email at chardy@catholiccharitiesnd.org.

Log on to www.catholiccharitiesnd.org for more information about these and other exciting happenings at Catholic Charities North Dakota.

Thank You to All of Our Generous Benefactors

Gifts given from July 1, 2009 through February 28, 2010

With your help we can continue to provide quality community services, education and assistance to those in need in our community.

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Continued from page 6

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My Children
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Join Team Catholic Charities for the Fargo Marathon!

Join us in Providing Help, Creating Hope, Transforming Lives one step at a time.

Join Team Catholic Charities!

There are many benefits to participating in the Fargo Marathon, but there are some special benefit to running for Team Catholic Charities. In running for a cause that is larger than yourself, you have the the opportunity to directly help Catholic Charities North Dakota build and strengthen families. As a runner/walker for Catholic Charities North Dakota, we ask that you raise a minimum of \$150.00.

- You are invited to special pre-event social
- You have access to discounts at Fargo-Moorhead running stores.
- A limited edition Team Catholic Charities training shirt and singlet
- Access to online fundraising support with your own customized web page via active.com
- Catholic Charities will host VIP gear check/hospitality room in Charity Village on race day for our runners

Friday, May 21
Kids Run • 5K Walk/Run

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Sign up at www.active.com/donate/catholiccharitiesnd

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