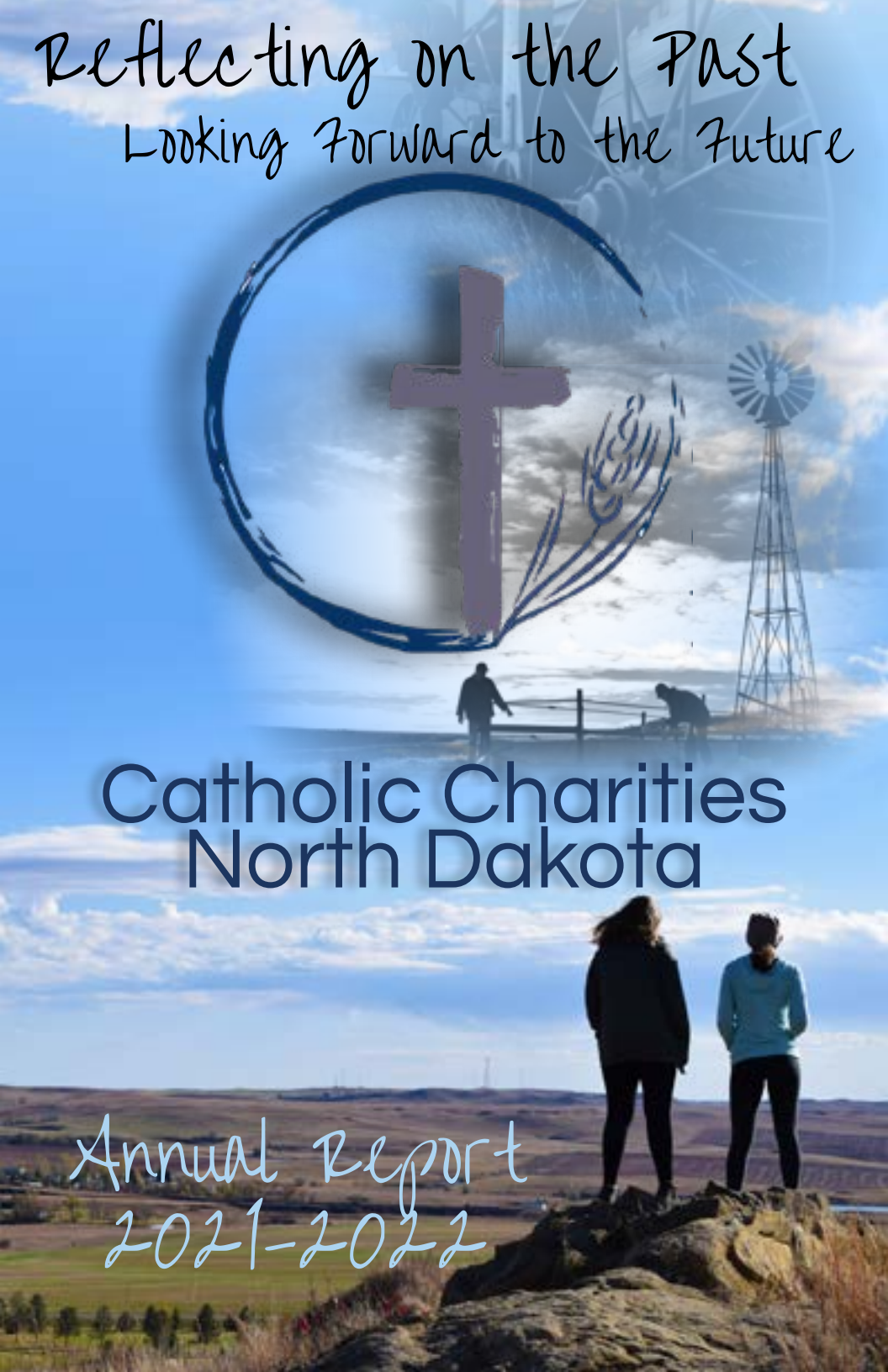
Reflecting on the Past

Looking Forward to the Future



Catholic Charities North Dakota

Annual Report 2021-2022



Dianne Nechiporenko
Executive Director

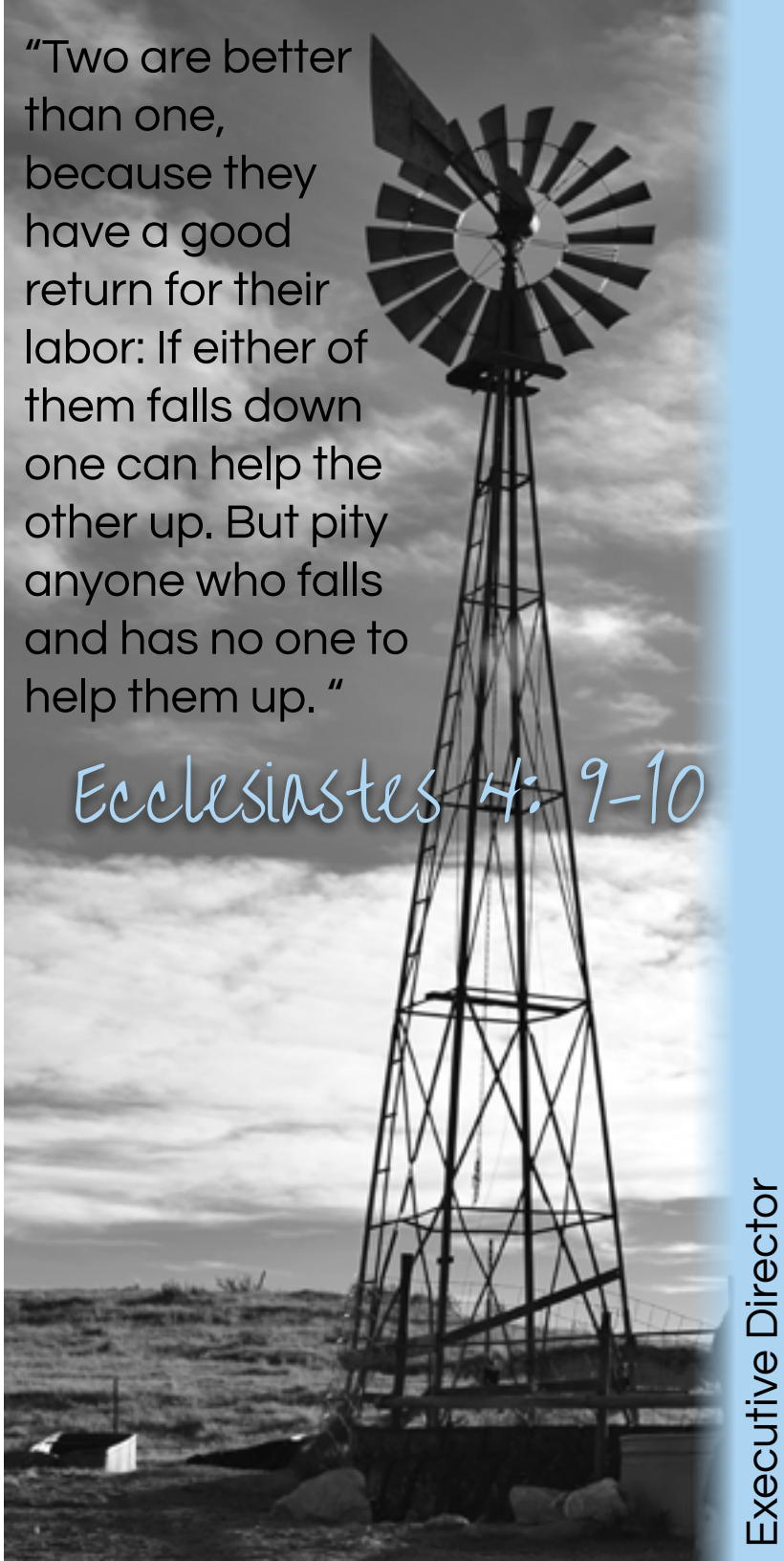
In 1923 Father Vincent Ryan, pastor of St. Anthony's Church in Fargo, saw the need for a planned approach to working with unmarried mothers and to locate adoptive parents. He solicited the voluntary services of Mrs. Kathyrn Wehlitz to begin working in 1924. Mrs. Wehlitz was to be the first social worker of the Agency (Catholic Welfare Bureau).

After a brief period, Mrs. Wehlitz was joined by Mrs. Catherine Murphy, to see to the housing needs of single girls moving into Fargo and the daily needs of families, supplying food, rent, clothing, and medical care. In 1937, Father Anthony Peschel became the first professionally trained social worker in the agency and one of the first in the state.

In the mid 1940's Catholic Welfare Bureau became a licensed child placing agency. The courts turned to CWB to assist in serving delinquent and neglected children. Our office in Grand Forks opened in 1955, followed by Bismarck in 1961 and Minot in 1977.

Catholic Welfare Bureau, Catholic Family Services and now Catholic Charities North Dakota has provided child welfare and family life services throughout its history. A third division, Guardianship Division: Intellectual Disabilities began in 1986 to serve adults with intellectual disabilities, and Counseling services began in 2003. Catholic Charities North Dakota was in a collaborative partnership to offer the AASK program (Adults Adopting Special Kids) since 1993 and has been the sole recipient of the program since 2020. In 2020 we also began our Guardianship Services for the Vulnerable includes vulnerable elderly persons and adults with mental health issues or any other vulnerability.

As history has it, we started out in Fargo and now cover the entire state for most of our programs. All our programs work within a team approach, as does our CCND leadership team. We currently employ 82 staff throughout the state which collectively have great strength, knowledge, and skills. Together we can move mountains, help people, and change lives. Our strength comes from our employees and the love and compassion they have for the people we serve. Our strength also comes from the people of North Dakota who put their faith and trust in us. Together we are stronger and are there to help each other.



Executive Director

When we reflect back over our lives, it is often easy to see how God's plan has played out to get us exactly where we need to be, doing exactly as God has intended us to do. However, the path that got each of us here is not always the path that we originally envisioned for our future. There are usually many bends and turns along the way. God alone knows all the pieces of the journey that need to fall into place to mold us and shape us into the person that He has lovingly anticipated since our birth.

Think about a young woman who recently found out she's pregnant. What do I do now? How does this fit in with my plans? These are common questions that arise when someone finds out that they are unexpectantly pregnant, and interestingly, these are often the same questions that families struggling with infertility ask themselves during those difficult times. Each family stands at a cross-roads facing a decision that they had not envisioned for themselves, and each family will begin a new, unexpected journey.

The **Pregnancy Parenting and Adoption Services (PPAS)** Program takes pride in walking this journey alongside families. Meeting each of these families exactly where they are, getting to know them, understanding their hopes and dreams, and helping them to realize all the blessings that life has to offer.

These unexpected journeys are not always easy, but they lead to a future full of hope and possibility. With the unconditional support of the PPAS team, expectant families are supported in choosing life, and helped not just to get by, but to thrive as they begin this new chapter in their lives. Families interested in adoption are supported in learning more about the adoption process and how to embrace the beauty of forming their family through adoption, being a source of hope for both their child and his/her biological family.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Jeremiah 29:11

Find us on Social Media!

adoption.nd

Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services at Catholic Charities ND



3: Bundle Up You Baby Bump Events
(over 700 total participants)
6: Forever Families Made ***(includes ND infant, babies going out of state, and babies coming into ND)***
18: Babies Born to PPAS Moms
11: Identifying Searches
32: Pregnancy Clients Served
1: Non-Identifying Searches

Pregnancy, Parenting, and Adoption Services

The **Counseling Services** program has many reasons to celebrate this year! Helping individuals, couples, and families is the reason we became counselors. Providing the best, evidence-based counseling services possible remains our focus. We would like to share some of the most recent ways we are staying up to date with evidence-based modalities for our clients.

A significant development within Counseling Services this year is the change from utilizing therapist assigned scores for measurement of client change during therapy to the utilization of the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) and Session Rating Scale (SRS).

The Outcome Rating Scale is a rating of the client's well-being by the client. The ORS rating occurs during the first session with the therapist and every session (up to once per week) thereafter. The ORS is a much more sensitive scale to client well-being and provides insight into how the client perceives they are doing from week to week.

The Session Rating Scale (SRS) is a measurement tool that has begun to be utilized in 2022. The SRS asks the client 4 questions about how the session went for them. It asks:

1) Whether the client felt heard, understood, and respected

2) Whether the goals and topics discussed where what the client wanted to discuss

3) Whether the therapist's approach feels right to the client and

4) Whether the session overall was right for the client.

We have a small, but dedicated staff:

Talia Biederstedt, LMSW (Licensed Master Social Worker), continues to provide individual and couples therapy in Bismarck full-time. She is working on getting her LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) through supervision. Through Talia Catholic Charities ND is proud to offer PCIT (Parent-Child Interactive Therapy).

Barb Boesl, LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor), just started her thirteenth year with Catholic Charities ND and continues at the site in Langdon, ND. Barb continues to provide individual, couples and family therapy 20 hours per week. She also completes premarital and annulment work in Langdon. Barb is a very independent and skilled counselor. She has good judgment and is well respected in Langdon and the surrounding communities and is always in high demand being the only clinician in the area.

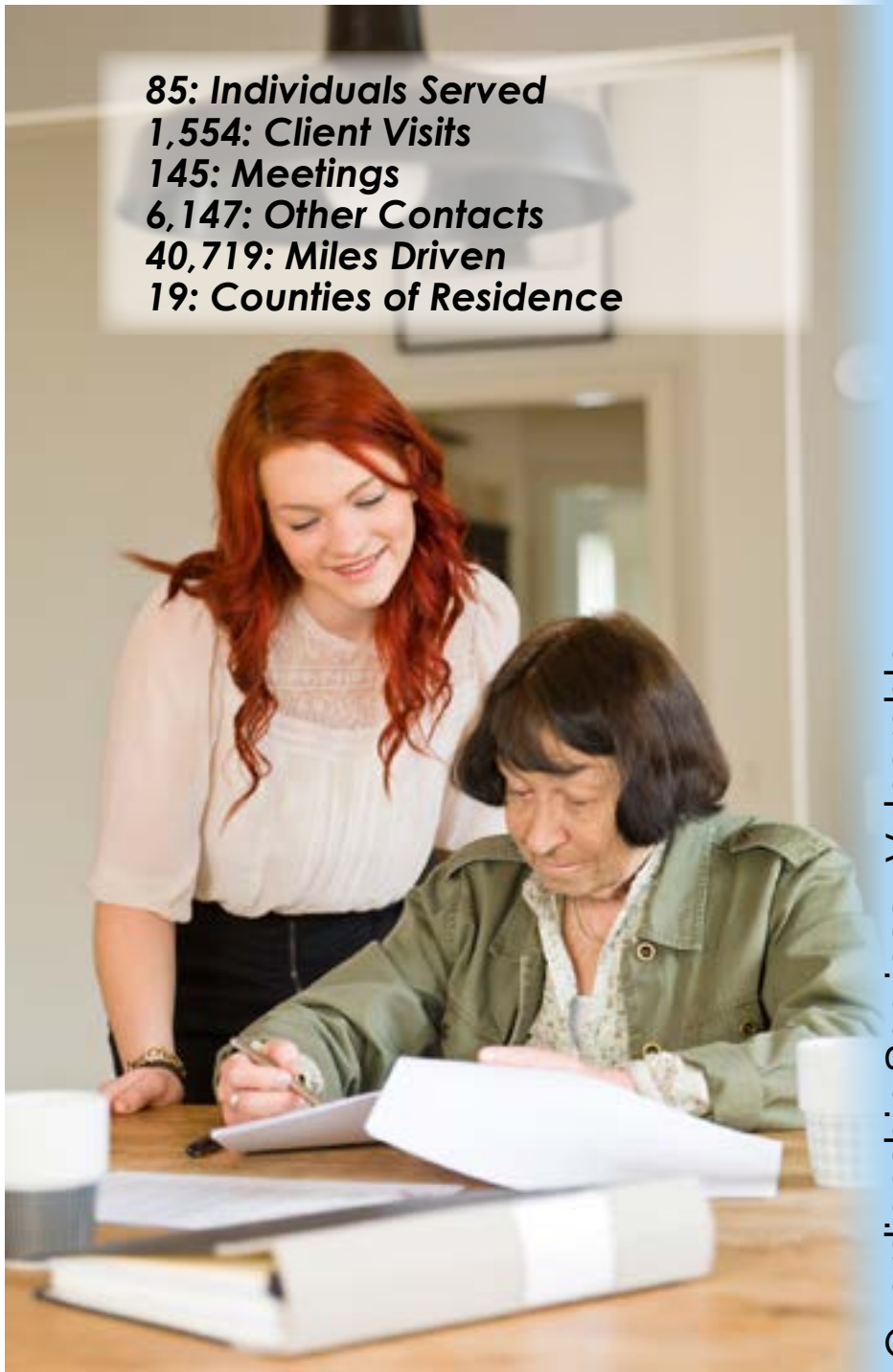
Ken Scheller, LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker), joined Catholic Charities ND in January 2022 as the Director of Counseling Services. Ken splits his time between 60% administrative and 40% clinical counseling. Ken provides counseling services for couples as well as individual counseling services.



Guardianship Services – Vulnerable (GSV) – This program at Catholic Charities North Dakota serves individuals that are elderly, possibly with dementia or Alzheimer's, or who are vulnerable in some other way. This could include, individuals with traumatic brain injuries, eating disorders, a diagnosis of mental illness, financially exploited, or individuals unable to care for themselves on their own. GSV has been continuing to grow. Reflecting on the past, in 2020, the program began with 28 individuals. Throughout this year, we have served 85 individuals, more than tripling our size. The workers have made 1,554 visits. Workers have spread our reach from mainly the Devils Lake/Grand Forks/Fargo area to now being able to serve individuals as far northwest as Minot all the way across the top of the state to Grafton. We also travel from Grafton all the way down south along the east side of the state to Lisbon. We come back across the state east to Ellendale and up to the Jamestown and New Rockford areas. This travel pattern has us driving 40,719 miles across 19 counties.

As you may be aware, guardianship has had some bad press, as of late. GSV works very hard to be a different type of guardian. We try to be very actively involved with our individuals and support them in their decision making, in whatever way is necessary, to help them grow or remain as independent as possible. In doing this, it takes much time, learning and effort on the part of each worker, which is in no way covered by the funding we receive from the state. Most of the cases we take on are the most difficult: many families are not able to offer support, are too far away to assist them, lack the understanding of the systems that they must navigate to access the assistance needed for the individuals, or are exploited in some way, especially financially.

In looking to the future, it is our hope that we can continue to be the supportive worker that assist individuals in this personalized fashion. We believe that the individuals can have a better life situation than they were in when the guardianship began by following this path. However, we will need to continue to work with legislators, community, banking industry, law enforcement, utilities and families on education and better funding to be able to continue to provide this type of service. We do not want to have to stop assisting individuals due to a lack in funding. All lives have value and that drives us to complete our mission of "Guided by our values, CCND serves people in need and advocates for the common good of all".



The theme of this year's annual report is, "Reflecting on the past, looking forward to the future." Our guardianship workers witness our theme in action every day! Throughout North Dakota, the **Guardianship Division – Intellectual Disabilities (GDID)** provides guardianship services on behalf of individuals with intellectual disabilities who do not have family or friends available or appropriate to serve in this capacity. During the past 35 years, our agency has served as corporate guardian for more than 1,000 people with intellectual disabilities in North Dakota. Catholic Charities ND's guardianship program is unique as it is the only guardianship service in North Dakota solely dedicated to serving vulnerable people with intellectual disabilities.

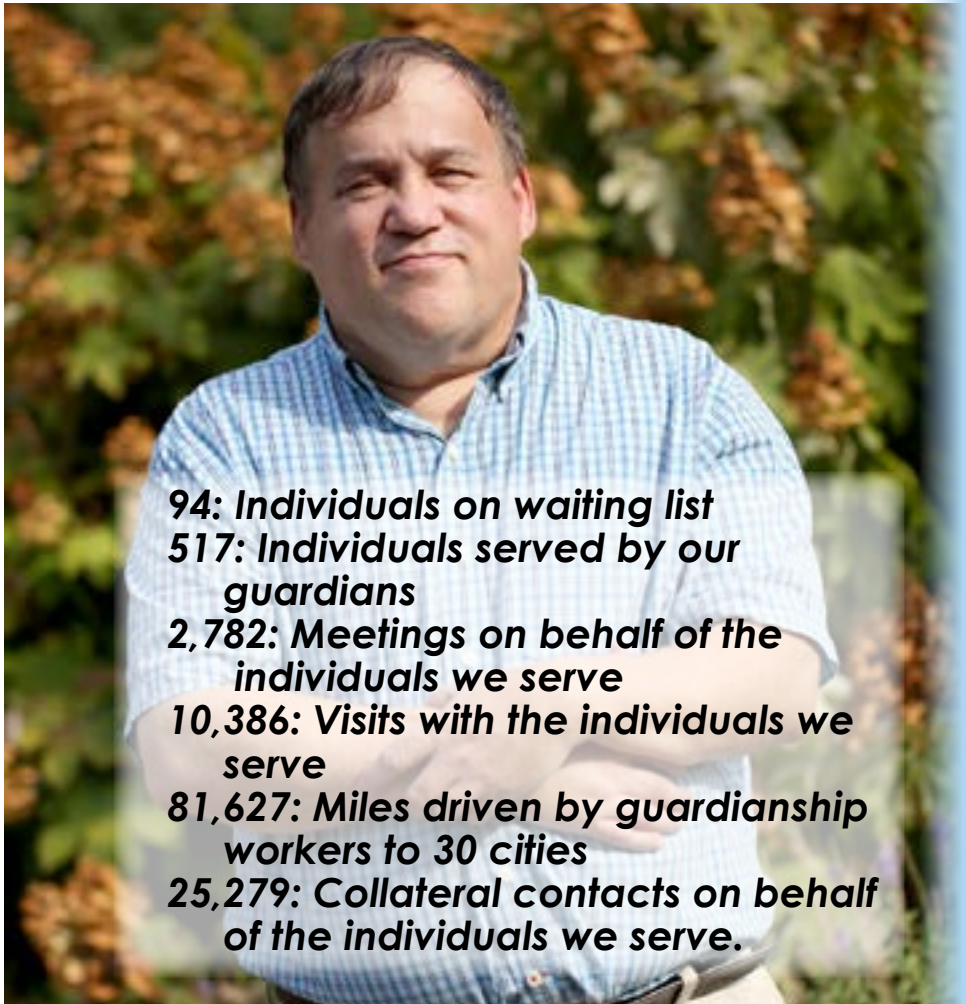
The court appoints a guardian when a person's capacity to make decisions is compromised and he or she is at risk of neglect, abuse, and exploitation. It is important to note that many adults with intellectual disabilities are their own decision-makers. However, there are critical times when an individual may need the services of a guardian, and if no one else is available or appropriate, a corporate guardianship is a necessity. Our services are initiated only if the court determines that the person is not able to make or communicate responsible decisions and that no other person is available to serve as guardian - we are considered the guardian of last resort.

Many times, when we have been appointed guardian, individuals are at the lowest point in their life. They may be in the hospital with no family support and they have nowhere to go once they are out of the hospital or they may be living in an unsafe environment where "friends" are exploiting them by taking their money, food, belongings and, at times, sexually exploiting or physically abusing them. Once our guardianship services are started, we have seen over and over that the people we serve are not locked into their circumstances or their past. Often when individuals are given the support of their guardianship worker, they are able to take positive steps to change the roadmap of their life from one of financial poverty and emotional poverty to a life of belonging within their community with friends who love them for who they are and not for their Social Security check. They learn to trust again and feel that there is a future for them. With support, we see people who now have a safe place to live, a job, friends, and goals they choose to achieve.

Darrin* was 25 years old when we became his guardian. His beloved mother passed away and he had no family to help. He continued to live in his mom's house but soon people who he met on the city bus started staying at his house. In very short order, the house was nearly destroyed by these "friends". They had gained access to his checking account and he was overdrawn. By this time, Darrin was depressed and afraid. Eventually the police stepped in and we were appointed guardian. On the day we were appointed guardian, we were able to find a safe emergency placement for him. Darrin loved the residential service provider so much, he decided that he wanted to stay and he continues to live there years later.

With the help of his guardianship worker, Darrin began to see a counselor to help him address the trauma of his mother's death as well as the fear that was created by the people who took over his home. As guardian, we were able to see Darrin recover from the traumas in his past and have a future that will bring even more happiness into his life.

*Name has been changed due to confidentiality.



As we reflect on decades past, it is evident that adoption work has been a pivotal service of Catholic Charities North Dakota. In fact, tracing back to 1923, the Catholic Welfare Bureau was founded when the Catholic Church recognized the need to establish a licensed child placing agency to support St. John's Orphanage. Its mission was to centralize social services and the adoption work of the Catholic Church in North Dakota. Foster care placements, adoptions, and services to single mothers were provided by the Catholic Welfare Bureau. Since that time, adoption services to families have expanded tremendously.

As the agency eventually became Catholic Charities North Dakota, it has been instrumental in the development of the **Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK)** program. In 1993, the AASK program was formally developed through a collaborative effort between Catholic Charities North Dakota (formerly Catholic Family Service), Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota, and The Village Family Service Center through a contract with the North Dakota Department of Human Services. Today, Catholic Charities North Dakota is proud to deliver AASK adoption services across the state through a partnership with the Village Family Service Center and a contract with the North Dakota Department of Human Services. The program has grown to 37 staff members, who provide adoption and post-adoption supports to children and families by providing quality, family-focused services through a trauma-informed and strengths-based lens.

Training implementation, recruitment of adoptive families, and community outreach continue to be at the forefront of program growth. Over the 99 years of providing adoption services, Catholic Charities North Dakota and the AASK program continues its strong dedication and commitment to bringing families together through adoption! If you or a family you know has a desire to learn more about adopting from the foster care system, please reach out!

AASK Adults Adopting Special Kids
www.aasknd.org

NORTH DAKOTA POST ADOPT NETWORK
A SERVICE OF THE AASK PROGRAM
www.NDPostAdopt.org

FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

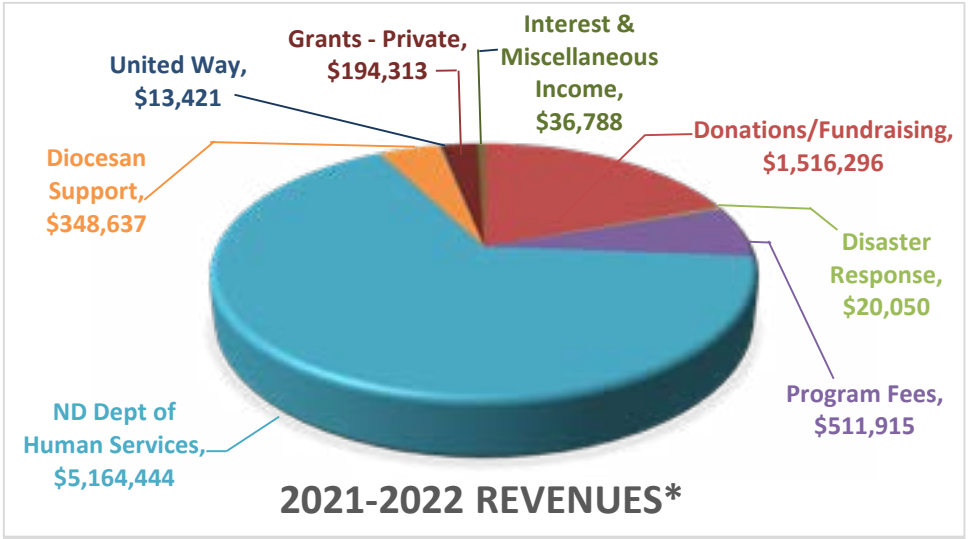
Adults Adopting Special Kids- AASK

ND Post Adopt Network

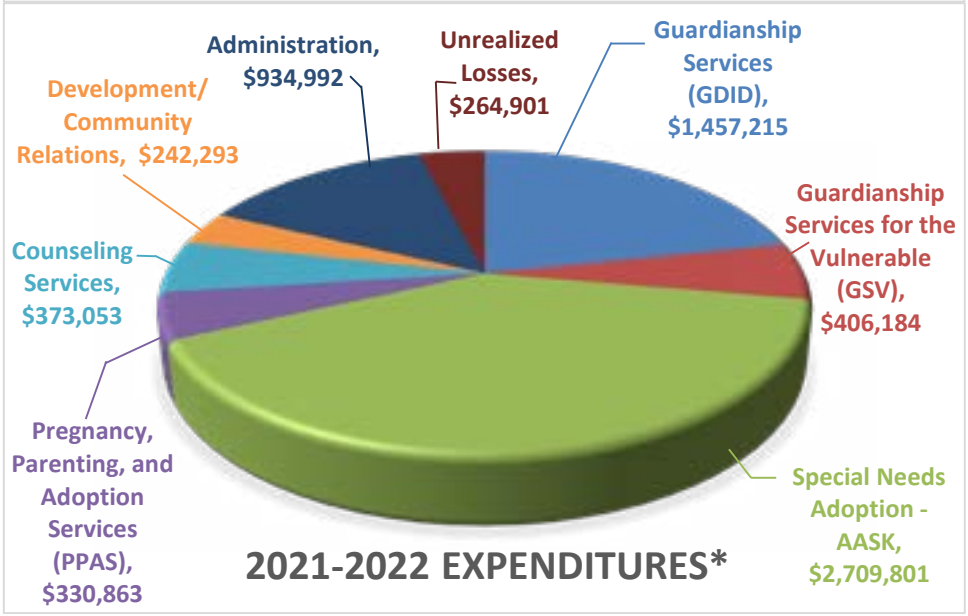


274: Total Children Placed for Adoption
271: Total Children Adopted
10: Children Adopted who Received Recruitment Services
144: Adoption Home Assessments Completed
928: Number of kids who received AASK adoption services in 2021-2022 Fiscal Year

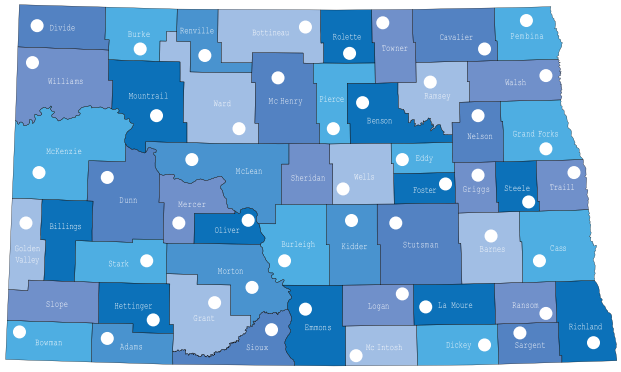
Adults Adopting Special Kids



2021-2022 REVENUES*



2021-2022 EXPENDITURES*



More than 2,900 clients served and countless more reached.

Dots signify the 50 of 53 counties in North Dakota where people received direct services from us in 2021-2022.

Guided by our values, Catholic Charities North Dakota serves people in need and advocates for the common good of all.

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Catholic Charities North Dakota

*Cover photo taken in New Salem, ND in 2015



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