

# 2015 STVCC ANNUAL REPORT



*St. Vincent Catholic Charities*  
PROVIDING HELP. CREATING HOPE.

# A DIALOGUE WITH PHYLLIS KITCHELL & JOSE CARERRA

## HOW MANY YEARS OF SERVICE TO STVCC?

**JOSE:** 9 years, three months, and 7 days. But who is counting?

**PHYLLIS:** Around 28 or so (better check my files to be absolutely sure).

## WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT JOB TITLE?

**JOSE:** Director of Clinical Services

**PHYLLIS:** Don't laugh. I am in the same position that I was hired in at. Over the years the title has not changed, but the position has. The agency has changed substantially over the past 28 years and I have always been here to serve the CEO in any way that is needed. My title is Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer/CEO Liaison.

## IF YOU COULD CHANGE YOUR JOB TITLE TO BE MORE DESCRIPTIVE OF WHAT YOU DO... WHAT WOULD IT BE?

**PHYLLIS:** For those of you that remember the TV series MASH I kind of think of myself as a Radar O'Reilly type. Always trying to anticipate what needs to be done. Having my finger on the pulse of the organization at all times. Also, I sometimes think of myself as the Mother around here, making sure everyone is always safe and sound and

assuring that people get what they need from me as soon as I can – so that they in turn can do their jobs. Just like a mother hen I am here to see that they are all right, both physically and emotionally.

**JOSE:** In my current position, I'm really a "jack-of-all-trades." At times I try to conceptualize new programming and seek new, innovative ways that allow us to provide quality clinical services for our at-risk and in-need consumers. At other times, I might function more as a mentor, guiding staff members and interns. I believe I'm an advocate for our staff and clients, fighting for the best solutions that will improve their lives.

## WHAT HAS YOUR SERVICE TO STVCC MEANT TO YOU? PROFESSIONALLY? PERSONALLY?

**PHYLLIS:** Right out of college I found myself at a place where the work wasn't very rewarding. There was no helping; there was no service. When I saw the posting for this job, I had a sense that it would be perfect for me. As soon as I got into the work, I knew that in my own way I was helping. I have always known that this is where God wanted me to be. He placed me here. I have loved and been honored to work in an atmosphere where God is the center and that my family is valued and treasured as well.

## HOW HAVE YOU GROWN WHILE HERE AT STVCC?

**JOSE:** I learned a combination of patience and perseverance. As I get older, I joke that I am losing my patience as I become increasingly obstinate and stubborn. But seriously, when it comes to developing a new program or service, it can take a very long time to go from generating the idea to an actual program implementation. It's the ability to maintain that belief and conviction that a program can provide a high return for the clients it would serve, while also being financially viable.

## WHAT ARE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF WORKING WITH ANDREA AS YOUR CEO?

**PHYLLIS:** I am proud to have been included in her interview 20 years ago and emphatically supported that we hire her as the Director of Accounting. Even then she carried herself so well and with such dignity that I had an immediate sense of her values. It has been a pleasure to watch her rise to the responsibilities of COO and then CEO. There has never been a day that I haven't seen her conduct the business of the agency in grace, with knowledge, and with an aura of confident spiritual leadership.

**JOSE:** Andrea is that steady influence who isn't afraid to ask the hard questions. Coming from different professional backgrounds, she approaches situations differently than

I may view things, which provides a different perspective and allows us to view things in a different light. At the same time, she is very supportive of our programs and services and she is equally committed to providing quality services. While I'm evaluating the vision of where I believe our clinical services can be, she keeps me grounded and helps to make our dreams a reality.

## WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

**JOSE:** Without a doubt, I'm most proud of our staff. Not only do they face some exceptional challenges, but they always tend to exceed my expectations. We go to great lengths to help each client, and the sacrifices that our staff makes are remarkable. They each deserve to be recognized in this spotlight, as without them, I wouldn't be able to do the work that I do.

**PHYLLIS:** I am proud of the fact that I am still here, that I have weathered everything that came this way over those 28+ years – the joys, the sorrows, the trials, tribulation and the accomplishments! I feel very proud that in some small way I have played a part in helping all those who have served and continue to serve at STVCC and that together we have helped thousands and thousands of people in need. I truly love this agency, her people, and her clients. I am blessed!



## Dear Friends & Supporters

Being uncomfortable is no picnic. Many find comfort in sameness. But, in an ever-changing world, at St. Vincent Catholic Charities we believe we simply don't have the luxury of existing in the status quo. Pushing forward, stepping out and leading the way, even when it might be uncomfortable – that is our call.

Across all of our programs, we have so much to be thankful for, especially some programs which are products of courageous leaps of faith. Leaps which were made because it was the right thing to do, but not necessarily the comfortable thing to do.

Agency wide our mission continues to call us to provide help, create hope and transform lives. This has never been truer than in 2015. In this annual report not only will you review the numbers, but you will read about some of our most proud moments and accomplishments in each of our programs.

In this Annual Report we have chosen to highlight two staff members who are essential to our success, Phyllis Kitchell and Jose Carerra. Both have been valued collaborative partners to me and have truly made a mark on our culture. Phyllis with her incredible energy and attention to every detail, and Jose with his visionary approach to clinical service, have contributed immeasurably to our best work here at STVCC. It is an honor to serve alongside these two and the other staff members who live out our mission and values every day.

And for you, our friends and supporters, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for your sustaining support of our mission.

Sincerely,

*Andrea E. Seyka*  
Andrea E. Seyka  
CEO, St. Vincent Catholic Charities



# Staff Spotlight

# WE ADMIRE YOU

Dear Foster Parents,

We want to thank you for your undying resolve and commitment to our Foster Care program. Each day we admire the sacrifices you make to help our children and teens. It fills us with joy when you share your latest accomplishments, and we empathize with you on those days when your resolve is tested. We acknowledge that this past year has provided us with its own set of challenges, and we appreciate the patience you've shown as we've met each challenge that has come our way.

We share the belief of all of our staff here at St. Vincent Catholic Charities that we have the most amazing group of foster parents we could ask for. From those who have been fostering for decades and have welcomed countless children into your homes to those who are newly licensed, you provide us with the diversity and openness that is needed to find placement for each child that we receive. The flexibility and ability of those who provide respite is incredible; that at a moment's notice you're able to bring a new child into your home and to care for them as your own for such a short time is remarkable!

For those children whose experiences have left them feeling like nobody wants them, you are the individuals who help them feel loved and safe. The comfort that you provide creates much needed hope in their lives. Each child we touch is another life that has the potential to be transformed. To our 60 licensed families, we thank YOU for everything you do. You inspire us, and we will be forever grateful for the services you provide to those children and teenagers in need.

Sincerely,

**Heather Akers**

*Foster Care Program Manager*

**Stephanie Stanley, LMSW**

*Foster Home Licensing Program Manager*

*Wendy's Wonderful Kids Supervisor*



# Foster Care

# OH THE LENGTHS WE'LL GO

Meet Whitney, our Adoption Recruiter who spends her time at St. Vincent Catholic Charities managing the Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) program. The WWK program is part of the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, and specializes in finding homes for children who are considered to be "unadoptable." Whitney's selflessness is on display on a daily basis, as she crisscrosses Michigan searching for homes for children on her caseload. Yet as you'll soon learn, Whitney is not restricted to just Michigan when it comes to finding a home.

Whitney had a particularly challenging case, a non-verbal autistic teenager who had been on her caseload for four years and was about to turn 18. Although a juvenile adoption was no longer an option, Whitney was able to secure a guardianship placement in Kansas. Funds were unavailable for transportation. Whitney petitioned the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption to provide financial support to help with the transition.

Whitney encountered several obstacles along the way, but persevered and continued to find more resources for the trip. One and a half years later, Whitney's persistence paid off, and she was finally on a train heading to Kansas with her soon to be placed teen.

For non-verbal autistic teenagers, routine brings comfort in their life. Drastically changing that routine, such as traveling across the Midwest on a train, can be very challenging. Yet Whitney's familiarity and compassion for her child helped mitigate many bumps in the road. Whitney prepared his favorite movies and games, and gently awakened him once they'd finally arrived at their destination. At one point, the teen even found himself locked in the train's bathroom. But Whitney was there with her calm demeanor, counseling him that everything would be okay until he was able to open the door.

For an Adoption Recruiter, it's more than just matching a child with an adoptive parent.

It's years of connecting with a child and learning their personality, inside and out.

It's attending event after event, reading bio after bio, searching for that one person or family who is the best fit. At St. Vincent Catholic Charities, we are willing to go to the greatest of lengths to ensure that each child can find that family, no matter the challenges or obstacles.



# Adoption

# IT'S ALL FOR THE KIDS

2015 was a year full of highlights for the Children's Home and one of the greatest was the arrival of Promise as our therapy dog. Naturally, we had great hopes for Promise's therapeutic effect on the children and of course she delivered big time on that promise. But, the ongoing normalizing effect of having a dog as part of the family at the Children's Home was immeasurable and unexpected.

Staff skill development has been a huge area of attention this past year based on our new filter of trauma informed services. It is our mission to help all staff understand that a negative behavior from a child is not an action to respond to, but a cry for help to heed. The lengths that our staff go to understand what a child may be feeling and to be cognizant of the root causes is so important. There is a shared value to maintain, an unwillingness to create new trauma in a therapeutic pursuit.

## OLD PROBLEM, NEW SOLUTION

The young boys who come to us at the Children's Home very often come with a very real deficit which, if not addressed, will cement the course of their life on a negative trajectory. These boys, regardless of their age, often have very little experience with positive male role models. These boys, rapidly growing into young men, need to know what it means to be an adult male – to understand masculinity, to embrace a positive male gender identity. We want the boys to understand that they are building a statue of the man that they will be (even in their flawed understanding of masculinity), and it becomes set in stone. Our goal is to give them a different and better understanding of masculinity.

At the Children's Home we are very hopeful about a new volunteer driven effort which comes, oddly enough, from the MSU Women's Resource Center. The Resource Center has a Men's Advisory Council made up of men from all the different departments at MSU. These men are serving as role models for the boys of the Children's Home and serve as a valuable and credible outside resource.

Throughout the year there is an outpouring of activities designed to strengthen the boys and girls, give them tools for the rest of their lives, and to create an appreciation for values which might serve them well in their future families. These activities include: music therapy, yoga therapy, and all sorts of community-based events and outings – just like a normal family.

We are so aware that the riches that come to the children here at the Children's Home come because of the generosity and heart of so many volunteers, families and donors. You help us operate in a strength-based, family oriented spirit – for the kids.



Children's Home

# A PURPOSE UNDER HEAVEN

Once again, St. Vincent Catholic Charities is on the leading edge of solving a very real problem in our community. One of the newest arrows in the Counseling program's quiver is *Seasons: Supporting Families Through Serious Illness*. It is a program dedicated to helping families in crisis who are facing a critical or terminal illness. "We are proud of the fact that Seasons is among just a handful of similar programs across the country," shared Megan Spedoske, STVCC Therapist and Seasons Program Coordinator. "We are in a community which is blessed with great resources for helping children and families through the grief of a permanent loss. Seasons is a program whose purpose is to provide intervention and assistance before a death occurs."

The program's name comes from distinct seasons or cycles in the course of an illness. At times the family may find themselves in a dark moody place because of a new diagnosis full of unknowns or an impending loss – a time of winter. At other times there may be a hopeful prospect for remission or a cure – a spring time of new beginnings.

This program offers a whole family solution and each family is unique in their needs. We have four therapists ready to assess and then recommend solutions. For the primary caregiver in the family it might include tools for caring for themselves and maintaining life balance in a stressful new environment; for the one with the illness or terminal diagnosis it may be addressing feelings of sadness, fear and depression; and for the children in the family, depending on their age, Seasons provides peer group sessions which provide language, context and understanding to allay fears and concerns about their losses or adjustments because of the illness in the family.

Seasons welcomes individual family referrals, or referrals from medical practices. The program accepts payment via insurance or private pay and has processes for families struggling with co-pays. It is our conviction to help these families regardless of their ability to pay.

To learn more about this program or access the pre-enrollment packet, go to [www.stvcc.org/seasons](http://www.stvcc.org/seasons).



Counseling

# SAVING THE WORLD, ONE REFUGEE AT A TIME

An intern recently reflected at the end of her semester with Refugee Services that when she was a child, she wanted nothing more than to save the world. But when she started studying at MSU, she learned about how messed up the world really is, became cynical, and doubted that anyone could be saved. Because of her time with Refugee Services she now knows that there is hope and that she has helped save many people.

Saving people is what St. Vincent Catholic Charities Refugee Services is really about. There are so many great things about resettling refugees – cultural diversity, rejuvenating the economy, bringing the world closer, new businesses, and delicious ethnic restaurants. But most importantly, refugee resettlement saves lives. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees there are over 19 million people seeking refuge around the world. We save over 600 of them every year.

We know that refugee camps are unhealthy and dangerous, and that people languish, suffer and die in these situations. We hear terrible stories of life in the camps from our clients; stories of torture, rape, starvation and disease. We see their scars and the panic in their eyes. We work hard to build their trust – to reassure them that there is hope and there are still people on earth who care, who will welcome them, and show them kindness and love.

In 2015, we resettled 616 refugees from 18 different countries. An additional 63 refugees came to us for services having moved to Lansing from other places in the United States. We provided employment services for 407 clients and supported health services for 662 individuals.

But 2015 was not without some pain. First, the Syrian crisis that spread across the Mediterranean and through Europe covered the evening news with images of desperate people taking huge risks. The death tolls rose and we learned the terrible fate of many beautiful children. Then the terrible tragedy in Paris led some politicians to link violence to refugees even though it was quickly proven that no refugees were among the perpetrators. The negative, hateful rhetoric grew and continues to grow as some try to scapegoat the most vulnerable in the world in order to achieve political gain. But we are proud that our community pushed back against the hate and continued to open its arms to refugees.

God comes to us in the form of refugees and gives us this special opportunity to serve Him by loving and welcoming them. At STVCC we look forward to another successful year in 2016 and continue to dedicate ourselves to loving, welcoming and saving our brothers and sisters from all around the world.

## Refugee Resettlement

# "I THINK I CAN" TO "I KNEW I COULD"

"I Think I Can, I Think I Can..." A slogan made famous in the children's story *The Little Engine That Could*, this saying is repeated by many foreign nationals across the United States with immigration and citizenship aspirations. In the story, a stranded train is unable to find an engine willing to take it over the hill to its destination, feeling overlooked and ignored. Many of our clients can relate to these feelings as they strive to become a citizen, or to renew their legal status in the United States. Yet a little blue engine that many thought would be too small to even think about achieving an impossible task takes the train over the hill, allowing it to continue on its path, just as our small Immigration Law Clinic is able to impact the lives of many. At STVCC, we help our clients achieve their dreams, assisting them in overcoming obstacles in their path. With a staff of three, we further exemplify that *Little Engine That Could* spirit. Although the program comprises just 1.5% of staff at STVCC and 2% of the annual operating budget, it accounts for nearly 25% of clients served by the agency. How do we do it? Through the expertise of our amazing staff.

In the state of Michigan, there are just 19 non-profit immigration law attorneys. Here at STVCC, we're lucky to have two of them. Immigration Law Clinic Director Lesley Glennon J.D. and Melissa Indish J.D. together have a combined 28 years of professional immigration law experience, a number that many private practices struggle to match.

The fact is law is changing constantly, making it imperative that each client receives legal representation from someone well-versed in this form of work. Many of our clients fail to understand the complexity of their cases, as their immigration proceedings are often times viewed as 'just paperwork,' and not a civil proceeding that can have serious consequences. The reality of immigration proceedings is that just one incorrect statement can lead to deportation. At STVCC, we understand that a single mistake can follow an individual for their entire life. With so many pitfalls and traps that clients can fall into, Lesley and Melissa are there to help them navigate their path.

So, what are we most proud of in 2015? During the past year, we were able to serve 968 people. That's 968 people whose lives we had the chance to change forever. STVCC Immigration Law Clinic – taking "I Think I Can" to "I Knew I Could."



## Immigration Law Clinic

# A LEGACY OF SERVICE TO OTHERS

At St. Vincent Catholic Charities, our volunteers play a vital role in our agency's success. From those who serve on our Board of Directors, to our mentors at our Children's Home and in Refugee Services, they fulfill roles that assist in fulfilling our mission of performing the corporal and spiritual works of mercy to our clients. Each of the 157 individuals who volunteered on a regular basis with our agency in the past year are deserving of being recognized, but there is one individual whose generosity to this agency perfectly demonstrates the selflessness of our volunteers: Pat Hepp

Pat originally started at the agency in 1979 as an employee, leading to roles as Director of Refugee Services and serving as Interim President (1997-98), before retiring in 1999. Even after retirement, it was hard for Pat to stay away, and she quickly became a volunteer. Pat eventually joined our Board of Directors in 2007, where she is concluding her third and final term this month, completing nine years of service and volunteer spirit.

Pat has always been willing to help in any way imaginable, sharing her time, talent, and treasure to those in need. She has been instrumental in increasing our fundraising efforts, serving as the Chair of the Development Committee, working closely with our Director of Development, and always finding a way to introduce new individuals to our agency each fall at our annual Guardian Society Breakfast. Pat also has been a key member in providing management and direction for the agency through her time on the Executive Committee and as the Chair of the Board of Directors. In addition, Pat and her husband Ralph are members of our Guardian Society, providing sustained gifts to ensure the future success of the agency.

Pat's generosity has not just been directed at STVCC, as she's volunteered with Meals on Wheels, Zonta, and P.E.O., served as a Spiritual Eldering Facilitator, and is very active at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish/St. John Church and Student Center in East Lansing. Pat still plans on staying involved with St. Vincent Catholic Charities, but will also use her free time with her husband of nearly 54 years, her nine grandchildren, perfecting her garden, starting new woodworking projects, and hitting the links at our local golf courses. Although Pat will be retiring from our Board, she has left a legacy that staff, board members, and volunteers will carry on for years to come. Thank you so much Pat for your 37 years of service and counting!

## Volunteer Spotlight



Pat Hepp

**157 INDIVIDUALS** provided  
**16,847 SERVICE HOURS**  
to STVCC

**46 GROUPS** gave  
**1,008 SERVICE HOURS**  
to STVCC

**VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS**  
were valued at **\$411,915**

St. Vincent Catholic Charities annually provides services to thousands of people of all beliefs, in need, living in this community.

## 2015 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**CHAIR**  
Kathleen M. Braunlich

**VICE CHAIR**  
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Brian McVeigh

**SECRETARY**  
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Bruce Maguire, III

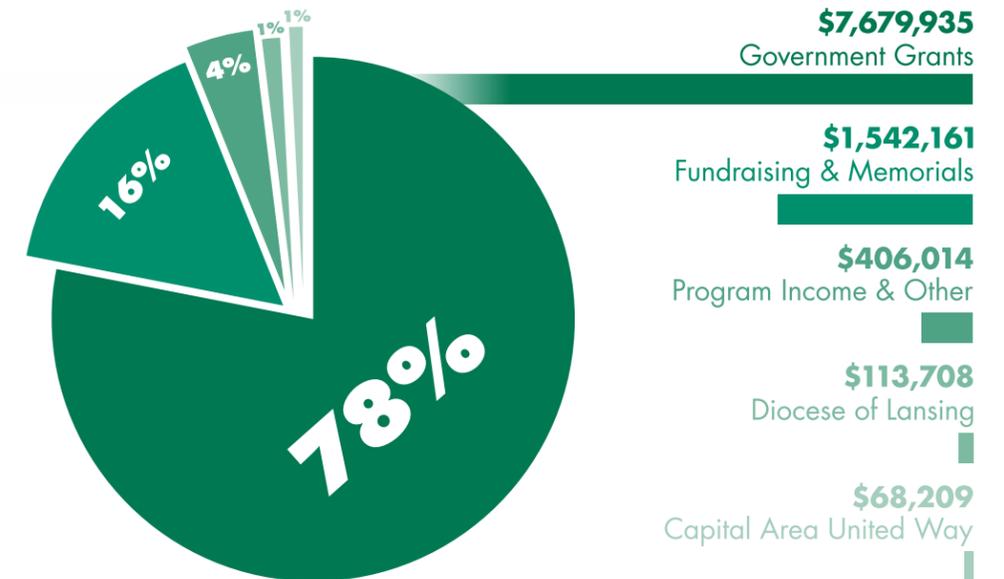
Patricia Munshaw

Kevin Neugent

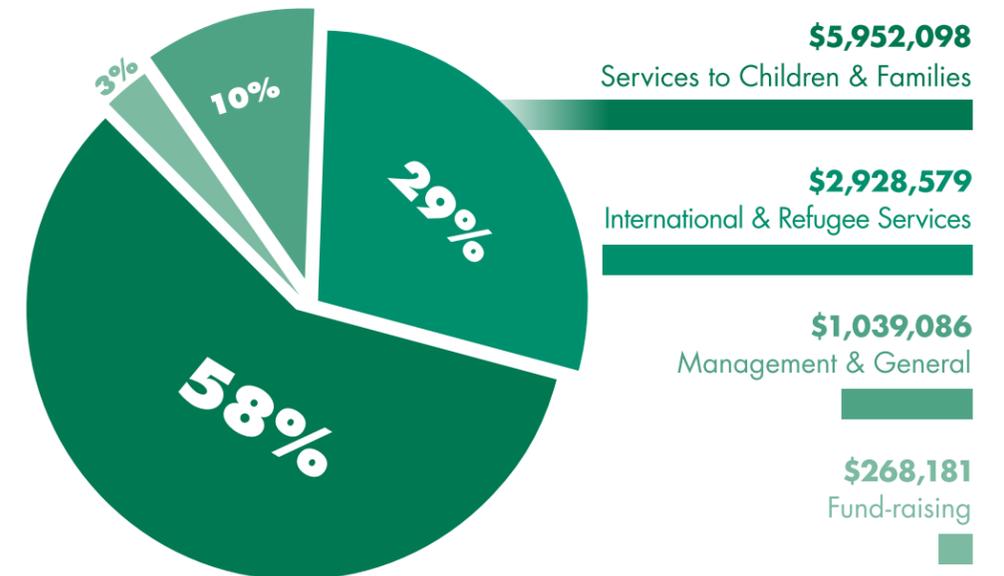
Michael Rhodes

Robert F. Selig

**2015 Total Revenue \$9,810,027**



**2015 Total Expenses \$10,187,944**





## ➤ A proud supporter of St. Vincent Catholic Charities

As a nonprofit hospital with deep roots, McLaren Greater Lansing has been at the center of our community for more than a century. While we pride ourselves on our legacy of providing compassionate, expert care, we're just as proud to partner with local organizations to support our neighbors in need.

McLaren Greater Lansing is honored to support St. Vincent Catholic Charities.



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[www.stvcc.org](http://www.stvcc.org)

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