

Education/Nonprofit

Celebrating its 75th anniversary, Catholic Charities NH has grown into one of the state's largest nonprofit social services agencies, serving 1-in-13 residents statewide with nearly 1,000 employees, 20 locations and 2,000 volunteers.

"A lot of people know that we do good work, and they understand the value of it; I don't think they understand the depth," says Thomas Blonski, president and CEO of Catholic Charities NH. "There is still so much to do. We are living in a time of so much disparity—poverty, ever-widening income gaps and broken families—and we continue to have our work cut out for us."

One of its most impactful endeavors, the NH Food Bank, delivers 1.2 million pounds of food and products each month to more than 435 partner agencies. In 2009, the Food Bank expanded, moving from a 16,000-square-foot facility to a 60,000-square-foot modern warehouse in Manchester, allowing distribution to grow by 131%.

Catholic Charities NH's social services programs also include adoption and maternity services; parish and community services to create pathways out of poverty; counseling services for those who struggle with grief, addiction, or depression; immigration legal services; and "Our Place," which provides pregnancy and parenting education. Additionally, the St. Charles School in Rochester provides services for students who display severe behaviors in a typical classroom setting. The CareGivers program provides groceries and rides to medical appointments for homebound and disabled elderly; while Liberty House supports homeless and at-risk veterans.

Central to their programs is creating self-sufficiency. "We are really trying to focus on meeting each person where they are and looking at that person who has worth, dignity and value as a human being," he says. "It's one thing to provide food, counseling, or assist with bills, but we must truly honor them as a person so they can fully realize their potential. If the work we do is creating a greater sense of co-dependency we have failed."

Catholic Charities NH has grown its healthcare services division, including an extensive renovation of its Mt. Carmel Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Manchester and an expansion at Warde Rehabilitation and Nursing Center in Windham.

The key to success, says Blonski, is being true to its Catholic mission, focusing on the poor and vulnerable of all faiths and backgrounds and being adaptive. "When others give up, we don't. The work that we do is not motivated by compulsion or obligation; it is motivated by love." ■

Editor's note: Catholic Charities NH, as the Nonprofit of the Decade, will receive a \$5,000 grant from the NH Charitable Foundation.

Catholic Charities NH

Thomas Blonski,
President and CEO

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