

An Unwavering Commitment to Neighbors in Need

Eight months into the COVID-19 pandemic, life as we know it has changed forever. This remains especially true for the individuals and families that we're proud to serve across our programs and services, some of whom are facing the biggest challenges of their lives.

As we ready to turn the calendar to the new (and hopefully much better!) year, we spoke with staff to learn how some of our programs are responding to the crisis and the changing needs among our clients, and how donor support is critical to help navigate the uncertain road ahead.

Providing Emotional Healing Mental Health Counseling Services

How has the program adapted through the pandemic?

When the pandemic began and office visits were prohibited, we shifted our in-person counseling model to virtual-only appointments. This required us to learn new technologies, new regulations, new insurance billing practices, and heavily altered the way we're used to working. But it was also a time of great opportunity. Telehealth services enable us to have a positive impact on many more residents statewide and reach underserved communities that we haven't been able to before. This means someone in Pittsburg, for example, can receive support from one of our counselors on the other side of the state in Nashua. This broader reach wasn't possible pre-pandemic.

How are the struggles that your clients face different right now vs. this time last year?

The pandemic has been a precipitating factor for increased levels of anxiety, stress, depression and troubles adjusting to the "new norm" of life. Many are dealing with job loss, sudden financial strain or difficulties coping with constant feelings of uncertainty.

There's also been a shift in the demographics of our clients. For instance, we're working with many more parents of school-aged children as they struggle to balance their jobs, parenting, life at home and everything else. It's overwhelming and stressful for them. More seniors are reaching out for help, too. They're a high-risk population



Danielle Capelle

*Licensed Clinical Mental
Health Counselor*

making significant sacrifices of some of the things they most value. They're unable to see family members, go to the store or attend weekly Mass. They're feeling more alone and more isolated, and it's taking a toll on their emotional health.

As we move into the new year, what worries you most about the next few months?

The next few months will be challenging. We normally see a higher volume of clients in the winter, as holiday stress, flu season and winter blues take shape. This is a very stressful time of year, and it can be tough to lose sight of positive coping skills. Adding COVID to the mix will likely leave many more individuals vulnerable. But we will continue to be there, thanks to our donors.

Why is donor support so important at this time?

Many individuals we work with have fallen on hard times and normally would be unable to afford the mental health services they need. Because of donor support, we're one of the few agencies in the state offering sliding scale counseling services that make it more accessible. Without this support, these individuals might not have anywhere else to turn, especially at a time when most need it more than ever.

Addressing Isolation & Food Insecurity Among Seniors **The CareGivers**

What has life at the CareGivers been like since the pandemic began?

It's been a year of challenges, increased expectations and a few surprises. When the pandemic began, we expected a sharp decline in rides through our Caring Rides program, as many doctor's offices canceled non-essential visits. But that was quickly offset by a significant increase in ride requests for dialysis appointments and trips to the grocery store. We're at a point now where overall rides this year have increased 30%! Because of incredible donor and volunteer support, Caring Rides continues to thrive in spite of a challenging world. Many other programs that offer transportation services similar to ours have ceased operations due to lack of funding or volunteers.

The Caring Cupboard program, in which volunteers deliver groceries to homebound seniors across Greater Manchester and Greater Nashua, continues to persevere amid adversity. Requests for food spiked in the spring and we had initial difficulties in meeting the demand. Normally, dozens of volunteers stock shelves and pack specialized orders weekly, but they were temporarily restricted from the warehouse for several weeks. Thankfully staff from both CareGivers and Catholic Charities chipped in, which was a huge help. Then there was the challenge of distributing the food – many of our drivers (understandably) weren't comfortable directly interacting with clients over health concerns. This required us to be more creative, identifying ways to streamline operations as well as the delivery process.

How have the struggles that seniors face changed over the past few months?

They face a lot more uncertainty in their lives. Many have lost regular caregivers or home health aides since the pandemic began and fear that another wave or more restrictions will leave them adrift once again. They're also



James Wilkie

Executive Director

Your Legacy

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facing unprecedented feelings of isolation and depression, having little to no physical interaction with the outside world. Those in senior housing can no longer congregate with friends or enjoy group activities. Some worry when they will see their families again; others are afraid of dying alone. One client shared, *“I have nothing to look forward to.”* It’s heartbreaking.

But we’re doing all that we can to be there for them and give them something to look forward to. The frequency of check-in calls to clients increased; we’ve made nearly 2,500 since the pandemic began. Our staff and volunteers really stepped up to let our clients know that they’re not alone and we will get through this together. One client recently shared, *“It’s just me here and I easily get lonely. It’s nice to talk with someone.”*

The pandemic has also exacerbated food insecurity among seniors, especially as the price of food has skyrocketed. Despite increasing the amount of product in each Caring Cupboard delivery, thanks to donor support, clients often call seeking additional foods, unable to make it from one delivery to the next. While the Caring Cupboard has been blessed to be in a position to distribute thousands of pounds of food to hundreds of seniors, the need will continue to grow.

Why is donor support even more critical this year?

Continued donor support is critical to ensure we can stay ahead of growing client needs and be in a position to offer adequate transportation and food delivery services that make seniors feel less alone, address their food insecurity and bring them much-needed hope for the days ahead. The next few months won’t be easy, but knowing we have the support of incredible people who share in our commitment of protecting the elderly will carry us forward.

Monadnock at Home

How has Monadnock at Home adjusted to the pandemic?

With COVID-19 posing its greatest threat to the health of seniors, we’ve refocused with more urgency, looking at our clients’ immediate needs as a whole. We make sure they have proper access to food and medications, are informed of changing CDC and other safety recommendations, and maintain adequate connection to the world around them.

We’ve also modified our programs in creative ways. Our regular “coffee klatches” were converted into “parking lot meetings,” where our members can bring chairs and socialize at a safe distance. We’re also using Zoom more regularly, whether for special online informational programs, holiday/member events, or even tutorials on how members can use the platform to stay connected with their own family and friends.



Sandra Faber
Executive Director

How are the struggles that seniors face different right now vs. this time last year?

Isolation is a more widespread issue. Many aren’t seeing family members and friends and have limited in-person contact for safety reasons. With the holidays approaching, these feelings of loneliness and despair could greatly increase. We’re expanding the frequency of check-in calls and offering weekly telephone conference calls where seniors can talk with each other, offer ideas on coping with all that’s going on and simply share in the feeling that they aren’t alone. Many times, the conversations steer away from the pandemic – and frankly, that’s important. It gives them a welcomed distraction, and some fun and laughter to lighten their days.

Why is donor support so critical in supporting seniors?

Support from donors enables us to grow our programs and reach even more seniors in need across the Monadnock Region. They help provide our clients with proper access to groceries, prescriptions and other vital assistance. It's because of them that we're able to keep clients continually informed about what's going on in the world and help them get proper access to necessary care and services. Think about the COVID-19 vaccine – when it's ready to be distributed, some clients' inability to drive may normally inhibit them from receiving it. Donor support ensures it doesn't have to come to that.

Welcoming Newcomers Immigration Legal Services

How would you characterize the program over the past few months?

We've had to innovate and adapt to how we continue to meet the needs of immigrant Communities across New Hampshire. The most significant change was a complete shift to virtual platforms, relying exclusively on tools such as Zoom or the phone to meet with clients and share key information and policy changes. We've also conducted various presentations online and created an informational video on the new Public Charge rule, which was a major change in the processing of family-based green card cases. While the way we do our work is much different than this time last year, it's been a fairly seamless transition.



Kimberly George
Managing Attorney

How are client struggles different right now vs. this time last year?

Generally, our clients are facing more direct financial difficulties because of the crisis. Food insecurity and access to basic necessities is a growing issue. Our staff has done an excellent job recognizing the need and going above and beyond, in some cases even personally securing and delivering food to many of our elderly clients. This dedication and commitment have been incredible to witness.

As we move into the new year, what worries you most about the next few months?

There's a lot of anxiety over the financial and emotional impact of the pandemic. Many of our clients are families struggling to get by, literally on a day-to-day basis. There has also been a rise in domestic violence cases among immigrants over the past few months as families spend more time at home. Our legal team is doing all they can to help these victims escape devastating cycles of abuse.

Why is donor support critical to helping immigrant communities during this time?

Donor support ensures that vulnerable and low-income immigrants will continue to receive critical services in these uncertain times. Our clients are experiencing much more than immigration needs; they also require financial, mental health and family-based support, among other areas. Because of donors, we're able to more holistically address their challenges through both immigration legal services and referrals to other Catholic Charities NH programs, creating more successful paths forward for them.

Save the Date! Tuesday, February 16, 2021

Catholic Charities is hard at work preparing for the 2021 Virtual Mardi Gras celebration. While we won't be able to get together as we have been in the past, we're creating an exciting new Fat Tuesday experience for you to enjoy! There are several ways to participate, including becoming a Krewe Champion – it's easy and fun and you could win some great prizes. Visit our cc-nh.org/mardigras for more details or contact Rosemary at rhendrickx@nh-cc.org. And be sure to tune in on February 16, 2021!



Calling All Volunteers!

Looking for other ways to make a difference? Check-in calls are a wonderful opportunity to let people know we care, especially for seniors facing increased isolation this holiday season. How are they doing? Do they need anything? Sometimes just a friendly voice on the other end of the line can make someone's day. Please consider helping us reach out to others. Contact Ryan at rnoronha@nh-cc.org or 603-663-0223 and let him know you'd like to participate!



Crisis Fund in Action: Susan's Story

We cannot thank you enough for the overwhelming support of the Crisis Fund, which has raised more than \$380,000 to assist individuals and families facing overwhelming hardship and despair during these chaotic times. This includes Susan, a devoted single mother with three young children who made some hard sacrifices to help her family get by. Read her story: cc-nh.org/susan.

Mission Renovate & Restore Completed!

For homeless and at-risk veterans across New Hampshire seeking to get their lives back on track, the future just got much brighter! Liberty House recently completed Phase II of its "Mission Renovate & Restore" campaign, which supports the renovations and retrofitting of Liberty House's new home in Manchester. This includes the creation of its new Center for Veterans, a 2,000-square-foot space that includes a large gathering area for community programs, recovery meetings, job skills seminars, financial counseling sessions and recreational activities, an expanded food and clothing pantry, as well as other services for veterans.

Phase I of the campaign was completed in early fall, with renovations designed to nearly triple the size of the program's transitional living program for retired, disabled and other veterans in need.



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Grant Recognition

Thank you to the following for awarding grants to support Catholic Charities New Hampshire’s programs and services:

- Alice J. Reen Charitable Trust Community Services
- New Futures Immigration Legal Services
- The Nordson Corporation Foundation The CareGivers
- Pearl Manor Fund of the Mary & John Elliot Charitable Foundation The CareGivers
- Tufts Health Plan Foundation The CareGivers
- Vermont Mutual Insurance Group Charitable Giving Fund The CareGivers

Give a Special Gift This Holiday Season

Not sure what to get that special person on your gift list? Consider making a gift to Catholic Charities NH in their honor! It’s easy – simply go to cc-nh.org/donate. Note the name of the person your gift is honoring in the Honor/Memorial Name and Address fields (or ‘Comment’ section) and we’ll be thrilled to let them know you were thinking of them and helping our neighbors in need at the same time!

