



PHILANTHROPY REPORT | JULY-AUGUST 2024

### Hunger & Relief Services Hosts Special Guests

Ten visitors affiliated with the Catholic Charities USA Food and Nutrition Communities Practice Group from all over the U.S. traveled to our Hunger & Relief Services' operations in Aroostook County. From farm tours and our *Threads of Hope* thrift stores to our Food Banks and recycling center, this group got a first-hand look at how this dynamic program feeds more than 33,000 annually. Dixie Shaw, director of Hunger & Relief Services, impressed the group with the scope of her operations and her fiscal responsibility. "Nothing beats being on-site and actually seeing a program in action," said Jane Stenson, VP of Food Nutrition & Poverty Reduction Strategies at Catholic Charities USA.



Our Aroostook programs hosted another special guest on July 30, when Bishop James Ruggieri toured our Caribou Food Bank and blessed the six-month-old Presque Isle *Threads of Hope* thrift store, which has already become a community fixture in the county. Proceeds from our northern thrift stores support our Food Banks, stocking 30+ pantries.

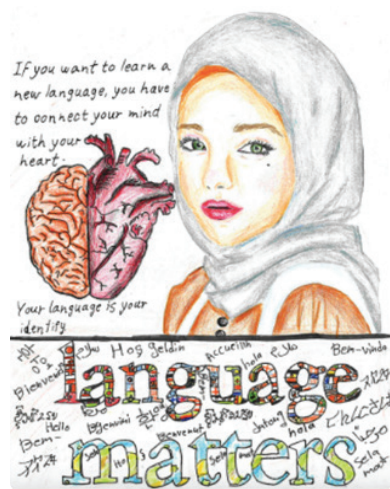
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## Program Highlights

### A Budding Artist in Bangor



In honor of this year's World Refugee Day, Kawthars, one of our young refugee clients in the Bangor area was recognized for her art in a contest held by Educators for a Multi-lingual Maine. This nonprofit organization promotes and improves the teaching and study of languages and cultures of the world and strives to further the common interests of teachers, students, and others for whom languages play an important role.

### Did you know?

The global refugee population reached 43.4 million in 2023. In the fiscal year 2023, the United States resettled 60,014 refugees, with 437 refugees resettled in Maine by CCM.

### Growing Community Connections in Bangor

Our Bangor Refugee & Immigration Services office has been resettling families for about a year and a half, but in many ways, the newcomers to the region seem like they have been there for much longer.

"It's heartening to see a new student be greeted by another refugee who has been in school for a few months and is thriving and able to guide another. The community connections are strong," said Melissa Bucholz, assistant director, Bangor Refugee & Immigration Services.

One family from Colombia is already experimenting with business ownership. Alejandra Pastrana is the founder of Casa Colombia, a restaurant start-up that has been testing the viability of opening a restaurant in Bangor, even though she has no formal restaurant training. So far, she and her husband have served their arepas, empanadas, tamales, arroz pollo and other Colombian delicacies at the European Market in Bangor and a shared restaurant incubator for part-time vendors in Veazie.



Melissa Bucholz, Alejandra Pinzon Pastrana and Fabionel Sánchez García Pastrana, Casa Colombia's Arroz con Pollo.



"I wanted to start fresh in the United States. I set goals and looked ahead to ways I can help other newcomers and provide love. This food is what my mother provided with love to my family, so that's how I decided to start working with food," said Pastrana.

While Casa Colombia has not settled into a permanent location yet, Pastrana keeps busy cooking family dinners for newly resettled families, and she recently catered an Office of Maine Refugee Services event in Augusta, where her arepas and arroz con pollo were a hit. "We get the special corn flour from Colombia," she noted, describing the main ingredient in arepas, deliciously chewy corn patties she served with cheese or beef fillings.

"The greater Bangor community has been so welcoming; our partners have worked hard to help with getting families settled in new homes, and with language and job training, and the community of New Americans are already able to help each other," adds Bucholz.

## Special Events

### Convening to Combat Maine's Opioid Crisis



Kathleen Hagy, Community Response Coordinator; Daley Lentz, Opioid Health Home Clinical Team Lead; and Francesca Gallant, Opioid Health Home Clinical Counselor, from our Behavioral Health Network were proud to represent Catholic Charities at the Governor's 6th Annual Opioid Response Summit held on July 25th at Central Maine Community College. The Summit convenes leaders from across Maine to share ideas, strategies, and best practices to help Maine people and families affected by this public health crisis. Learn more about our outpatient and residential treatment for substance use disorders at [ccmaine.org](http://ccmaine.org).

### Caring for the Caregivers

In Maine, there are more than 166,000 private family caregivers. Husbands and wives, sons and daughters, neighbors and friends who take care of the sick, the aging, the disabled and the chronically ill, who, for various reasons, have nobody else to be their primary caregiver.

It's no secret that the role of a caretaker is a great responsibility that comes with stress, exhaustion, and frustrations. Caregivers often report declining health, emotional fatigue, depression, and even spiritual depletion. To help support those in this vital role, Catholic Charities Parish Social Ministry program is launching NOURISH with Corpus Christi parish in Waterville and All Saints parish in Brunswick.

NOURISH, a faith-based ministry for caregivers, helps to build a caregiver's resilience by supporting practical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Anyone who is interested can access many of the resources of this ministry online for free at [nourishforcaregivers.com](http://nourishforcaregivers.com).

The parishes will be offering in-person meetings and ongoing support for the caregivers among us and those who would like to support them starting in August and running throughout the fall. For more information, visit their websites or contact [psm@ccmaine.org](mailto:psm@ccmaine.org)



## Community Partners Spotlight

Our Corporate Community Partners play a vital, year-long role in supporting our work to empower Maine's most vulnerable people and strengthen local communities. This month, we're shining a spotlight on our Crusader Level Partners.

We are so grateful to cPort Credit Union, FL Putnam Investment Management, and Martin's Point Health Care for the work they do in Maine's communities and for their dedicated support. Together, we can make positive change in our communities!



We provide comfort; we feed the hungry; we stand for the vulnerable; we seek wholeness; we bring recovery; we teach the children; we offer support to seniors; we strengthen families; we welcome strangers; we change lives.

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