



CHERISHING THE DIVINE WITHIN ALL

With extraordinary spikes in unemployment, new help for families

In the last month, as the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically slowed the U.S. economy, more than 500 Maryland families asked Catholic Charities for help with expenses.

In response, on April 22, Catholic Charities expanded its Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, hotline to reach a wider community throughout the state, and added Spanish-language capability.

“A lot of people lost their jobs, college students have returned home and a lot of people are just struggling to make ends meet, but SNAP is the No. 1 thing that can help stabilize a home, by putting food on the table,” said Christine Gedim, manager of client services at Our Daily Bread Employment Center.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a record 26 million Americans have filed for unemployment, including more than 350,000 Marylanders as of late April. Typically, Catholic Charities counselors field an average of 187 calls a week, but the day the expanded hotline launched, there were 106 calls in just eight hours.

Expanding the hotline required bringing in additional benefit counselors who work from home to assist in processing new SNAP applicants.

“We are bringing the services to the community,” Gedim said. “We educate and screen applicants on what programs they qualify for such as SNAP or temporary cash assistance.”

Catholic Charities is classified by the state’s Department of Human Resources an authorized community-based organization to help people complete the application process over the phone. That classification is a signal that the organization is credible and reliable, and that applicants’ privacy is secure. State agencies that fund the assistance determine whether an applicant is eligible for benefits. In March, Catholic Charities enrolled 97 households for SNAP benefits, totaling \$272,182.

Catholic Charities’ SNAP program has been serving the Baltimore area for more than 10 years.

If you or someone you know are in need of nutrition assistance, call the Catholic Charities bilingual SNAP hotline: 667-600-2291, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.