



March 2015

A monthly newsletter from Catholic Charities for families.

Photo: Volunteers from Bishop Eustace Preparatory school at Catholic Charities' free tax filing clinic: Janell Taylor, Alicia Podwojniak, and Gabby Pietrangelo

# Family-First Teen Parenting

Building and maintaining a strong relationship with your teen

By Jose Sanchez, program director, Camden and Gloucester County Family and Community Services Centers and Community Services Warehouse

As of October 9, 2014, I am the parent of a teenage daughter. As teens, our children want to become independent, and we as parents want to help them, even while we remember that they are still developing. It's important to provide teens with new opportunities, and at the same time keep them close and strengthen the bonds of family.

I'd like to share a few of the things our family tries to do to in the midst of our busy schedules and as our daughter grows up.

## Involve Your Teens in Financial Decisions

Having a teen or teens in the home brings its own new financial challenges. Our egos tell us not to share those struggles with our children, but finances are something that shouldn't be kept secret from the family. Never having the conversation as a family can actually end up causing additional stress. It may seem counter-

intuitive, but allowing teenagers into your family's finances can have several beneficial consequences.



*The Sanchez family*

For example, many parents find themselves facing the decision of whether to take on extra hours at work, especially when finances get tight. Recently, my wife started working full time. This was a big change for our family, especially for our daughter, so we had conversations about

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it together.

We let our daughter know that her job is to come home, relax a little, complete her homework and help around the house. As parents, our job is to support our family. Her main job is school. We want her to look at her schooling and homework as preparation for her future.

Conversations related to finances and extra hours at work show teens that they contribute to the family and that they are old enough to listen and to be heard. Our children make surprising contributions; you may even end up discovering a new idea.

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# What's a Social Worker?



We're celebrating National Social Work Month by highlighting a few of the social workers who work at Catholic Charities. In their own words, they talk about their profession and the profound impact it has had on their lives and the lives of others.

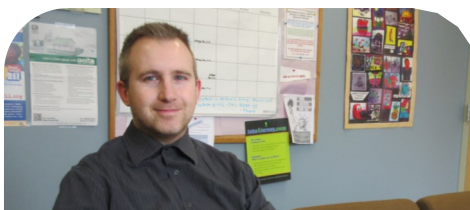


**Sylvia C. Loumeau, MSW, LCSW**  
Director of Clinical Services

“ For years I ran a women's group . Most of the women were recently separated from their spouses and were at the lowest point in their lives. The connections they made with one another really helped them to heal and I felt privileged to observe the process. Several years later, one of those group members called me. In the course of our conversation, she said "you saved my life. If it weren't for you, I don't know where I'd be now." I had no idea that my role in that group process was so influential, and I will never forget that comment.”

**Sarah Garrod, LSW**  
Senior Case Manager, Veteran Services

“ The great divide between the privileged and the voiceless in our society is present in every facet of our lives. You can see it manifested in the places we live, the educations we receive, the opportunities and entertainments we enjoy, the food we eat, the healthcare we have access to, and our sense of safety and belonging in this world. For too long I stood watching on the sidelines. At some point, I realized the only way I could feel natural again would be by devoting myself to helping those with the least among us gain something of a footing with so much stacked against them.”



**Randall Clark, MSW student**  
Clinical Services Intern  
Senior Case Manager , Veteran Services



**Caitie Jones, BSW**  
Coordinator of Refugee Services

“ Working with refugees, I love to see the hope that prevails in people who have endured great suffering. I regularly have the opportunity to meet with refugees within a few days of their arrival in the US. During these meetings, they share their goals, plans and dreams for their new lives in America. While challenges certainly do lie ahead, they gather their strength and press on in every way that they know how. It is inspiring to see the way that our clients persevere.”

**Rod J. Herrera, MSW, LCSW**  
Director, Child & Youth Protection



“ When I read the statistical data on how many veterans are homeless compared to the civilian population, at that moment, I realized the work we are doing at Catholic Charities is monumental. I feel privileged to have the opportunity to learn about military culture, and, In addition, be able to serve veterans who once served for my freedoms.”

“ Cynthia was an 11 year old girl with leukemia. She knew she was going to die. She became suddenly critically ill and was being transported into the intensive care unit. I accompanied her into the ICU and we had a conversation about her dying. She asked me if it was OK if when she died if she asked God why children got sick with cancer. She wanted to know if she could be insistent with him until she got the answer she wanted.”





# Called to Serve

## Engaging Teens in Service as a Family Activity

By Greg Coogan, Director of Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministries for the Diocese of Camden

*The National Study of Youth and Religion* ([youthandreligion.nd.edu](http://youthandreligion.nd.edu)), a ground-breaking study on teens and their faith, reminds us of the importance of parents on the faith life of their children. In the study, teens identify their parents as the most influential people for their faith.

Service is a great way of helping teens connect with their faith, especially in the form of service projects that the family can do together. Below are a few service ideas for you and your teen.

- ◆ Arrange a furniture or household item donation drive through [Catholic Charities Community Services Warehouse](#). Help pick up and deliver items. Call Jose Sanchez (856-342-8865) for details.
- ◆ Spring is almost here! Call that homebound neighbor or relative to do some much-needed spring cleaning, yard work, shopping, or straightening and organizing of closets or garages.
- ◆ Serve a meal at a nearby homeless shelter or volunteer for the [Code Blue warming center](#) in your county.
- ◆ Spend a Saturday morning volunteering with [Meals on Wheels](#).
- ◆ Plan and prepare a meal at your local [Ronald McDonald House](#).
- ◆ Make a visit to a nursing home or retirement center. If your teens play musical instruments, plan a mini performance, or bring an activity like bingo or arts and crafts.
- ◆ Contact your local [Catholic Charities site](#) to learn about service opportunities in your county.
- ◆ Get in touch with [The Food Bank of South Jersey](#) or [The Community Food Bank of New Jersey](#) to serve by sorting food or assisting a local food pantry.
- ◆ [Covenant House](#) in Atlantic City or Camden assists trafficked or runaway youth. Contact them to learn about service opportunities.
- ◆ See what's going on at your parish or if your parish has a St. Vincent DePaul society,

### Questions for Reflection With Your Teen

After your service together take time alone and together to reflect on your experience. Here are some questions to discuss as a family:

- ◆ What did we do today?
- ◆ Where did we see Christ today?
- ◆ What did we learn about ourselves today?
- ◆ How can we continue to serve others as a family?



Student volunteers from Bishop Eustace high school after a morning spent filing taxes.

## Teen Service Spotlight

High School student volunteers support Catholic Charities free tax filing service.

For the third consecutive year juniors and seniors at Bishop Eustace Preparatory School have had the opportunity to become trained, IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers and travel into Camden every Saturday during tax season to help low-income individuals file their taxes.

Catholic Charities is an authorized site for the IRS' Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. It allows individuals and families who make less than \$53,000 a year to e-file their taxes for free with the help of certified volunteer filers.

*For more information on Catholic Charities free tax filing service, see page 4.*

"They're amazing kids," said Andy Zmuda, Catholic Charities' director of asset development programs who runs the agency's VITA services. "This is a highly technical and specialized kind of service and there's a lot of training and preparation that goes into it. There's a high degree of responsibility and trust."

"When you think of filing taxes you think about numbers and dealing with mathematical stuff. But it's actually a lot of interaction with people," said senior John Brown. "It's very personal; the first thing we do is a one-on-one interview. It's rewarding to have that kind of interaction."

"There are not a lot of high school students who can say they know how to file taxes," Zmuda said. "I think young men and women can do difficult things and have a great capacity to be stretched. They really do rise to the occasion."

# Reflections on Life With a Teen

Making family a priority as children grow

*Continued from pg. 1.*

## Make Time for Quality Conversation

As adults, we need to ensure that our family is housed, fed and loved. Meeting those needs, however, sometimes makes for limited family time. As in the previous example, more hours at work enable us to house, feed and clothe our family, with some left over for entertainment and savings, but it also means that we are apart from one another for most of the day. My family has found that we need to make sure the time we do have together is high-quality time.

When I spend time with my daughter, even if it is just walking to Redbox for a movie, we have conversations. We laugh, talk about serious things, and I tell her that I love her. We put aside being tired

or stressed and try to remain connected. We do this as a family, and my wife also does it alone with my daughter. We want our daughter to know that no matter what is going on, she can tell us that she needs to talk and she will become the priority.

## Find a Community

Keeping your family together while working and meeting life's demands is difficult. Loving someone unconditionally is difficult. We need help and support to do this. For our family it helps that we are part of a caring church community.

There we find the village that will help raise our child – love, help in emergencies, keeping each other's children in check and, always, prayer for each other.

## TAX FILING SERVICES INFORMATION

As a member agency of the Camden Asset Network (CAN) Catholic Charities offers free tax filing services to low-income families. For more information, visit [www.catholiccharitiescamden.org/free-tax-preparation-services](http://www.catholiccharitiescamden.org/free-tax-preparation-services).

### Clinic Hours\*\*

Feb. 7 through April 11  
Saturdays, 10 am—2 pm  
Weeknights TBD

\*\*By appointment only.

### To Schedule an Appointment

To schedule your appointment directly through Catholic Charities, call 856-342-4193.

Or, schedule through the Camden Asset Network by calling 211 and requesting Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden as the filing site, or visit [www.CamdenAssetNetwork.com](http://www.CamdenAssetNetwork.com).

# About Catholic Charities and Year of the Family



As a way of participating in the Diocesan-wide year of the family leading up to the September visit of Pope Francis in Philadelphia for the World Meeting of Families, Catholic Charities has developed a year's worth of themes and resources. The monthly themes follow the human life cycle, beginning in September 2014 with prenatal issues and ending in September 2015 (the month of the Philadelphia gathering) with end of life issues.

Each monthly theme is an opportunity for Catholic Charities to highlight the resources the agency offers to people connected to each of these populations and to provide additional information and links to external help. These resources will be showcased in the form of a monthly newsletter about each theme.

Additionally, Catholic Charities has formed a speakers' bureau comprised of experts in these areas who are available to give presentations at parishes in the Diocese. More information is available on the [Year of the Family website](#).

The initiative demonstrates Catholic Charities' commitment to provide for the people of the six southern New Jersey counties it serves at every stage of life, regardless of religious affiliation. With a staff of over 90 employees, Catholic Charities serves more than 40,000 individuals and families at 12 sites in Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester and Salem counties. We provide high quality services to the poor and needy on a non-discriminatory, non-sectarian basis.



Visit our website for more information and to subscribe! [www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily](http://www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily)