

# CHARITY WORKS

**SUPPORTING NEIGHBORS. TRANSFORMING LIVES.**

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TO HELP VICTIMS OF FIRE** PG 3

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# SUPPORTING NEIGHBORS. TRANSFORMING LIVES.

## MARISOL SERVICES

- Marisol Health
- Marisol Homes
- Marisol Family



## SHELTER SERVICES

- Samaritan House (Denver Downtown, 48th, Smith)
- Samaritan House Fort Collins
- Guadalupe Community Center (Greeley)

## ARCHDIOCESAN HOUSING

- 30 service-enriched affordable housing complexes

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Kinship Services
- Senior Services
- Little Flower Assistance Center
- Emergency Assistance
- Immigration Services
- Western Slope Services
- Bottom Line Diaper Bank



## SUPPORTING NEIGHBORS. TRANSFORMING LIVES.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- 7 ECE facilities
- Early Head Start & Head Start Programs

## COUNSELING SERVICES

- St. Raphael Counseling
- Homebased Counseling



## FAITH IN ACTION

- Volunteer Relations
- Respect Life Denver
- Respect Life Radio
- Ecumenical Outreach
- Parish Ambassador Program



## JOIN US

Help address homelessness by becoming a member of Catholic Charities' Team Samaritan. Join our cycling, running or walking teams to raise awareness and funding for people who need a hand up. Team Samaritan isn't your typical athletic team because our mission is greater than health and community (though those are bonuses!). Team Samaritan members are making a real difference by helping Catholic Charities' Samaritan House address the challenging issues associated with homelessness. Together, we are giving individuals and families hope and a second chance at a better life. Learn more by visiting [teamsamaritan.org](http://teamsamaritan.org) or by contacting Samaritan Cycling Captain Tom Schwein at [tom.schwein@samaritancycling.org](mailto:tom.schwein@samaritancycling.org) or Samaritan Running and Walking Captain Joe Lowrey at [joe.lowrey@samaritanrunning.org](mailto:joe.lowrey@samaritanrunning.org).



From left to right, Joe Lowrey, Bill Onacki, Tom Schwein, and Paul Doherty attend the Beacon of Hope Gala on January 22 at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center. See more on PG 4.



God of hope and mercy, we lift up to you all victims of natural disasters and those responding with assistance and aid. Protect all who are in any form of danger; provide practical help to those in need; strengthen the weary, console the grieving, heal the suffering; and bless those engaged in disaster relief efforts with safety and courage. Help all people of good will respond with compassion and generous hearts. Amen.

— Prayer for Disaster Relief (Catholic Charities USA)

## THE COLORADO CATHOLIC COMMUNITY MOBILIZES TO HELP SURVIVORS OF THE MARSHALL FIRE

One woman broke into tears after walking up to the Catholic Charities' table inside the Disaster Assistance Center in Lafayette. The day before the Marshall Fire ravaged hundreds of homes on December 30, 2021, she and her husband had donated to Catholic Charities. The next day, her home was destroyed in the fire.

"She never imagined that the family who would be helped would be her own," shared Stacy Baum, VP of Marketing and Community Engagement for Catholic Charities of Denver. "She and so many other families like hers had suffered unimaginable loss just as 2021 was coming to a close and are now facing such a long road to rebuilding ahead."

Baum and other members of the Catholic Charities' team rallied with several local parishes, the Archdiocese of Denver, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and area disaster relief organizations to share resources and collaborate to help meet the needs of families displaced and suffering after the unprecedented wildfire. The fire quickly gained national attention after it roared through the Boulder County towns of Superior and Louisville, destroying more than 1,000 homes and other structures. Thousands of people are starting over with support from the community.



Photo courtesy of State Farm



Volunteers activated to serve at the Disaster Assistance Center (DAC) by providing gift cards and spiritual support to hundreds of impacted neighbors.

"Our community came together to give more than \$10,000 worth of donated gift cards for groceries and other household items to Catholics and non-Catholics alike who stopped by our table," Baum shared. "We even had the privilege of making one 10-year-old boy's face light up when we added in gift cards to Wendy's. He was thrilled to be able to 'take his family' out for dinner at his favorite place."

Catholic Charities' first priority was to reach out to area parishes who were on the front lines of helping their parishioners directly impacted. The number of "God moments" abounded. One mother and son stopped by the Catholic Charities table, saying they had lost everything but were most heartbroken because they lost rosaries in the fire. When volunteer Deacon George Thierjung, of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Longmont, handed the young man his rosary and asked him to keep it, the boy broke into tears of joy. There were no dry eyes around as they all prayed together.

The support from the entire community has been overwhelming and generous. As the months and years go on, the entire Catholic community will continue to work with, support and stand together with the Marshall Fire survivors. ♥

### HELP FIRE VICTIMS RECOVER

The Marshall Fire quickly devastated many hundreds of structures and homes, but the recovery process for thousands of people will take years. To find resources available for survivors of the Marshall Fire and Disaster, and learn how you can help, visit [ccdenver.org/marshallfire](https://ccdenver.org/marshallfire).

## HELP FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Marisol Services provides comprehensive care that includes health care, housing and human services. It offers an innovative model to provide individuals with a seamless range of services, including helping families with unexpected pregnancies; providing medical care for those who are unable to access high-quality reproductive care; and offering counseling, housing, early childhood education and additional supportive resources.

# MOTHER SAYS LIFE CHANGED FOR BETTER AFTER GIVING BIRTH



Ilene was shocked. She recently graduated high school and found out she was pregnant after taking a test at Marisol Health in Denver.

After talking it over with her boyfriend, "We decided we were going to go to Planned Parenthood and get it over with."

Ilene did not feel prepared to care for a baby.

"Financially I wasn't ready, mindset I wasn't ready," Ilene shared. "I wanted to party and have fun and just do what I wanted to do."

The 21-year-old shared her story in a video shown at the Beacon of Hope Gala on January 22 at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center in Aurora. The annual gala, which raises funds to support women facing unexpected pregnancies and ongoing support for families in need, highlighted the 63 million children lost to abortion in our country since the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision in 1973. Thanks to generous donors, more than \$880,000 was raised for Marisol Services, which includes Marisol Health, Marisol Homes and Marisol Family.



Ilene and her children

Ilene said that she couldn't go through with the abortion, calling Planned Parenthood a depressing and uncompassionate clinic. Then she returned to Marisol Health where she received an ultrasound and prenatal care.

"We want to alleviate the burden of what someone might be feeling when finding out they're pregnant and feeling like they can't do it," said Sara Lugo, program director of Marisol Health Denver, in the video. "Knowing that they're not alone and really walking with someone during that time is extremely valuable."

Ilene had her first son with the support of Marisol Health, and she later returned for assistance before giving birth to her second son.

"Now that I have both of them, it's like my life changed for the better," Ilene proudly shared. ♥

Watch the video of Ilene's story at [ccdenvr.org/beacon](https://ccdenvr.org/beacon).

Attendees at the Beacon of Hope Gala on January 22 show support for Marisol Services and its work to help women and families. Look for more photos online at [ccdenvr.org/beacon](https://ccdenvr.org/beacon).



Photo Credit: James Baca



## CELEBRATE LIFE BOLDLY PROCLAIMS DIGNITY OF LIFE, HONORS MOTHERS

Thank you to everyone who attended this year's Celebrate Life Rally and March on January 15. You were a bold witness to life at all ages and stages. See stories, photos and videos of the rally and march — and learn more about Respect Life Denver, a ministry of Catholic Charities — at [respectlifedenver.org](http://respectlifedenver.org).

Photo Credit: Olivia Britt Photography/  
Denver Catholic



## SHARRY'S CHOICE BECAME HER BIGGEST REGRET



Sharry

Sharry had made her decision. Scared and shaking, she laid on a cold table with endless tears flowing. She heard the hum of the vacuum after the nurse hit the switch.

She was terrified and sick about what was to happen. She prayed, "God forgive me, I'm so sorry," and to her baby, "I'm so sorry," until it was over.

In a coarse, hateful voice the nurse told her, "It was a boy."

After the abortion procedure, her dad drove her back home and she vomited out the window on Colorado Boulevard. She had felt the life sucked out of her, not only of her baby, but her own. She was broken, empty and numb.

"I don't know why, at 17 years old, I was left to make that decision myself," Sharry reflected inside the Marisol Health clinic in Lafayette. "I wish my parents would have said, 'You're going to have this baby and it's going to be okay!' I wish I would have had an ultrasound. If I had seen that little baby, I couldn't have done it."

Sharry recently shared her story with a couple at the Marisol Health clinic who were trying to decide whether or not to have an abortion. She feels compelled to share the deep regret of her abortion that is always present. Not only the first time, but the second time, also.

"There has never been a time in my life that I don't grieve about the loss of those babies," she shared. "It never goes away, my regrets, and heartache. I think about how old they would be today, and the blessings I could have, had I not cut them out of my life." ♥

Read Sharry's entire testimony online at [ccdenver.org/newsroom](http://ccdenver.org/newsroom).

# FACES of Hope



In Lena's life, Catholic Charities was not simply the provider of food and clothing during challenging times. They restored her hope and faith in Jesus Christ.

Lena, a proud Catholic wife and mother, described her first transformative encounter with Catholic Charities like it was yesterday.

Another day of barely getting by while living in her car with two little children, she walked into a Marisol Family location to receive much-needed diapers and clothes. Lena cringed at the thought of asking for help, but she mustered up the courage to walk in. She was desperate.

A kindly male volunteer inside Marisol Family first welcomed Lena and showed her how to apply for Medicaid and receive more assistance. Then the volunteer led Lena to a room where she could pick clothes for her children and take a supply of diapers.

The volunteer turned to her saying, "I do not know what you are going through, exactly. But the best thing I can offer you is prayer."

The volunteer took her by the hand, and they prayed together inside Marisol Family, a ministry of Catholic Charities of Denver. He did not know Lena had lost her faith. Then he

shared a bit of wisdom that God picks his strongest soldiers to go through the toughest challenges. His words struck her: "Perhaps one day your story will help others."

Little did Lena know how prophetic those words would become.

Years later sitting inside a Catholic Charities' office in Denver, Lena wore a green and black blouse, a Catholic Charities' lanyard, tortoiseshell glasses and a polished appearance. She began her role as volunteer coordinator for the Denver-area shelters under Catholic Charities in September 2021.

"This is my calling," Lena exclaimed. "I want to be the cheerleader of Catholic Charities and share what a wonderful organization this is. This place really does make a difference, and the work of volunteers makes it possible."

Catholic Charities transforms lives. It is the true power of charity and compassion on a person's life that paves the way for a brighter future. Lena is living proof of that.

By the time Lena walked into Marisol Family that day, she experienced dramatic and severe trials. After a divorce from the father of her son, she entered another relationship, and they had a daughter. She described a series of harmful and dangerous encounters with her daughter's father. One day

she could not take it any longer. She told her children to fill a grocery bag with their favorite belongings. They fled their home with the clothes on their back.

"I had nowhere to turn and too much pride to ask anyone for help. We found ourselves living in the back of my car," Lena continued. "Not to mention, I was a full-time nurse, attending college to get my bachelor's degree."

They tried to maintain their life while living in the car. During the daytime, she worked a full-time job. Later she drove outside hotels or college campuses to pick up a Wi-Fi signal and study in her front seat. At night, she tucked her children in for bed in the backseat.

"We actually looked forward to going to work and school as it was an escape from 'car living,'" as they called it.

The months ticked by, but Lena managed to graduate with her bachelor's degree, barely passing her classes. She eventually told her parents about her experience with homelessness and she reconciled with them. She moved into their house until she got back on her feet.

Lena, originally from Texas, loves learning and decided to continue by pursuing a master's degree in education and graduated with a 3.97 GPA. Not finding work in education, Lena was hired at the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, a local nonprofit. During her time there, she worked at the Stout Street Health Center. Later she assisted more than 160 families in finding affordable housing with the help of the Rose Amond Center, a nonprofit that helps women escape domestic violence. She was laid off after a loss of grant money and went back to nursing. She also started her own nonprofit called The Fairy Prom Mother to provide prom dresses to girls living in low-income households. Lena also married her husband Jose in 2021.

One day she saw a Catholic Charities' job posting for a volunteer coordinator. It was her calling. Lena wished to serve others as that volunteer once did for her. Even after growing up Catholic and attending parochial school, Lena lost her faith. Her personal trials made her decide that God did not exist. Yet the volunteer's compassion and time to pray with her helped restore her faith. In a desire to give back, she is also pursuing her doctorate in social work in June 2022 at the University of Denver.

As a volunteer coordinator at Catholic Charities, Lena strives to live her faith and share compassion with others while enthusiastically encouraging volunteers to make a difference.

Today, Lena is a transformed person. She is confident, joyful, hope-filled and on a mission to share the real story of volunteer work and charity.

Lena wishes others could hear the whole story of homelessness.

"There's nothing that angers or upsets me more than when people say others must be lazy or hooked on drugs if they're experiencing homelessness," Lena shares. "There are so many reasons people could be homeless. I wish people could see the true story." ♥

## MEET MORE FACES OF HOPE

Hear the stories of people overcoming obstacles as they embark on a new path filled with dignity. Walk along with them as we partner to provide support, comfort and help at the most difficult moments in their lives.

Go to [ccdenver.org/facesofhope](https://ccdenver.org/facesofhope).

## VOLUNTEER AND TRANSFORM LIVES!

*We ♥ our Volunteers*

Thanks to thousands of dedicated volunteers each year, our team serves our neighbors in Northern Colorado with life-changing support as they work to improve their lives.

We would love to have you join us! Please check online for the many opportunities available that fit your schedule and interests.

Visit [ccdenver.org/volunteer](https://ccdenver.org/volunteer).



Lena prepares pumpkin pie for women at a Catholic Charities' shelter.



Catholic Charities reaches far and wide across Northern Colorado and does more than most people expect. Here's a quick look at some of the ways we're supporting neighbors and transforming lives.



Sixty Holy Family High School seniors stepped up to help sort donations at the distribution center at the Flatiron Crossings mall for those affected by the Marshall Fire. The volunteers made sorting a much-less daunting task for our warehouse team that has worked feverishly with parishes to gather and distribute donations. We're grateful to these amazing students!

Sacred Heart of Mary Parish in Boulder and St. Louis Catholic Church in Louisville generously made their churches donation sites to serve our neighbors affected by the Marshall Fire. Our staff worked with volunteers to sort and prepare donated items.



Residents from our Mulroy Senior Center were recently gifted art boxes from the Denver Art Museum to let their creativity spark and boom! Mulroy's "Creativity Corner" came to life with a variety of art pieces. We are blessed with this ongoing partnership with the museum.

Marisol Miles is on the move! The new Catholic Charities' truck is distributing diapers and baby supplies across the Denver Metro area. With the help of volunteers, diapers were given out near the Colorado State Capitol in downtown Denver during the Celebrate Life Rally and March, as well as in Broomfield at the Flatiron Crossings mall. Marisol Family, which operates the truck, provides supplies at locations across Denver. The new truck enables the staff to reach more communities in need of support.



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