



The Center of Hope, Inc. is a homelessness prevention program and 100% of your contribution is used in direct service to the poor.

## *There was no room at the Inn...*

*Luke 2:7*



IN MEMORY OF A GREAT LADY

### SISTER STELLA

Sept. 2, 1921 - Nov. 3, 2010

Our community has lost a great advocate for the poor with the passing of Sister Stella Rosenhamer, ASC. Her gentle smile and sparkling eyes belied a will of steel when it came to helping those in need. When Sister asked for something, it was almost impossible to say "no" to her.

As Bishop Eugene Gerber, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Wichita, once told a new bishop who asked about Sister Stella: "Just shake your head and say yes and do whatever Sister asks."

Sister Stella just could not understand why someone, especially someone who was living a comfortable and secure life, would not help another in need. She could talk her way into your heart.

With a strong faith that God would lead the way, Sister Stella started her ministry to the poor in July of 1983. It was St. Anthony House originally that provided shelter to women and children and also served as a food pantry.

It soon became clear that what was needed was a program to prevent homelessness and keep families together. That idea evolved into Center of Hope as an agency providing emergency financial assistance most often for rent and utility bill payments. Additional services were added over the years.

Sister retired as executive director of Center of Hope in 2003. The recipient of numerous awards for her work with the poor, Sister inspired many to serve the needy through her example of love, compassion and action. A mention of Center of Hope brought the immediate response, "Oh, you mean Sister Stella."

I've had the privilege of knowing Sister Stella and working with her since St. Anthony House started. I have a feeling of great loss for this valiant crusader for the poor. She will be remembered with love and reverence.

A generous donation has been made to establish a fund in honor of Sr. Stella. If you would like to remember Sr. Stella and her work with the poor, please send your contribution to: The Sr. Stella Fund, Center of Hope, 400 N. Emporia, Wichita KS 67202.

All of us at the Center of Hope wish you and your family a very joyous Christmas Season filled with fellowship, warmth and much love. As we prepare for this festive time, I ask that you keep in mind the many families that will be struggling this time of year as they face the very real risk of losing their homes as their unemployment benefits end and there is little possibility of a job in the future.

My hope and prayer is that we can continue to provide some glimmer of hope to the many families coming to our door in need. We can only do this through your help and your generosity. The numbers coming to our door are so great we are rapidly depleting our resources. If you can help share a little extra this year, it is truly needed. Or perhaps you know of someone that would be interested in helping these poor families.

Jesus came to save all of us, but especially those living in poverty and suffering. Please help us to help these poor and suffering families in our community so that no family has to be turned away from our door because we have no room at the inn.

May God's Blessings and Peace be with you always, but especially this Christmas!!!

Sit Amore Dei

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CENTER OF HOPE, INC.  
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George Dinkel

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## Newman Univ. Intern Joins Staff

A student in the Master's Program in Social Work at Newman University, Deanna Ecklund is working at Center of Hope through May 2011. She's interested in working with women's and children's issues. At COH, Deanna is getting a broad range of experience and being exposed to a variety of clients with challenging problems.

Deanna finds it amazing how some make it month to month when they have absolutely no money. They have some creative ways of surviving, she says.

"We're finding many middle-class people coming in who've never had to ask for help before. They're embarrassed and it takes a great deal of humility to have lost so much and now must seek help from an agency like Center of Hope," Deanna commented. "They don't know what to expect or what kind of services are available to them."

Deanna is working with clients who need emergency assistance and short-term case management. She's working with Sr. Becky to provide parenting classes and anger management classes for clients. Another task is putting together a resource guide for case managers.

"It's especially difficult to see mothers with small children who have no utilities," she said. "I recently worked with a mother with a baby and no heat in the home. She was sleeping with the baby close to her to keep it warm and we know that's a dangerous situation."

As people seeking help continue to turn up at the COH door each weekday, Deanna's assistance to the staff is certainly needed and greatly appreciated.



## VOLUNTEER BRUNCH

Center of Hope volunteers gathered Oct. 30 at the COH office for a brunch and discussion of the growing need for volunteers to augment the staff as the COH programs expand and more people are in need of services. New volunteers are needed especially in the phone and intake capacities. As George Dinkel, Executive Director remarked, "We are blessed with long-time, loyal volunteers and we really appreciate you. If we had more people to fill the roles of volunteer, Center of Hope could help more. Right now we're turning away between 20 and 30 people each week. Since we are usually the last resort for people who've tried other agencies, you can see how great the need is. Since coming to Center of Hope seven years ago, I've seen the number of people and the amount of funds distributed almost triple."

*We ask your prayers for these clients as they continue their struggles for daily existence.*



## Families We Have Served

S, a 42-year-old who lives alone. S has cancer and can only work 2 days per week as a waitress, which netted her only \$162 this past month. Her rent alone is \$400 per month.

F, a 58-year-old who lives by himself. F had a heart attack which required by-pass surgery in July. He currently cannot work and has no income. He owes \$705 on his Westar bill.

A, a 27-year-old mom with two young children. A was just recently released from jail for check forgery. She was trying to buy clothes for her child who was going to school. She has no income. Since she was in jail, she also lost her section 8 benefits and now has to pay rent of \$485 per month. She knows what she did was wrong, but didn't realize the effect it would have on her life as now she is in very much danger of being out on the streets with her children as she has no way to pay the rent unless she can get a job soon.

J, a 33-year-old mom who lives with her four young children. J had \$537 garnished from her pay checks last month to pay for an old medical bill she could not afford to pay. This doesn't leave her with enough income to cover her monthly bills.

E, a 38-year-old mom with two children. E suffers from Parkinson Disease and is not able to work. Her only source of income is child support of \$135 per month, hardly enough to support a family of three.

F, a 40-year-old mom who lives with a relative and three of her children. F was in the hospital for surgery and has now developed blood clots. She owes Westar Energy \$800 on her electric bill.

S and her four young children. S missed work from August through September as she had to care for her infant son who had meningitis and lost his hearing as a result of the disease.

L, a 32-year-old mom who lives by herself. Her 11-year-old son just passed away as a result of a stroke after surgery to fuse his back. He suffered from MS and the surgery was to help him. L missed 18 days of work and could not pay her mortgage or her medical bills.

C, a 22-year-old mom who lives with her three-year-old daughter. Her daughter has seizures and needs braces on her legs. Her only source of income is SRS TAF income of \$367 per month, and her apartment is not in a good neighborhood. Most of this money goes to buying medical supplies for her daughter and transportation to doctor appointments.

D, a 49-year-old mom who lives with her three children and two grandchildren. Their house is in foreclosure, the electric and gas services have sent shut-off notices and she is behind on car payments. Their only source of income is from D cleaning houses.

# Hope for a Better Life Becomes a Reality for Case Management Clients

**T**he Case Management Program is a long-term commitment for clients and Sr. Becky, who is credited time and again with helping clients find the right road to a more stable and rewarding life. Two clients recently left the program having achieved the goals they set to avoid rolling into the situations that brought them to Center of Hope over two years ago. They are now in the driver's seat and no longer feel pulled along by forces they can't control.



*Sr. Becky reviews goals with Akisha West, case management client who has completed the program.*

Akisha West is a young, single mother of three elementary school-age children. Today, she's a confident, enthusiastic woman. She's articulate about the issues that once caused havoc in her life and left her wondering if she could ever achieve her dream of providing a home for her family.

Two years ago, when Akisha first came to COH, she wanted help in paying her utility bills. During the initial interview, Sr. Becky recognized a woman who wanted to change her life but didn't have the tools to fix the problems. Akisha says she was on the verge of a nervous breakdown from dodging bill collectors and being overrun with credit card debt. She knew she had to do something, but no one could tell her how to change direction.

As Sr. Becky asked questions about these issues, Akisha was amazed to find someone who understood. She'd feared sharing her difficulties with family and friends, but didn't know where to turn. As the interview continued and Sr. Becky explained some of the steps they could take to help her, Akisha said: "Here was someone who had faith in me, who believed that I could have a better life for myself and kids. As Sr. Becky talked, I began to see the possibilities. She could help me set goals and develop a plan to get where I wanted to be."

Akisha says that the case management program was her first step to reality. When she entered the program she was on the brink of

bankruptcy. She realized she had an addiction to shopping and that she'd have to give up her credit cards, probably the hardest part of the program.

In addition to developing a financial strategy and strictly living on a budget, Akisha learned parenting skills. She realized that because she was working and going to school full time she felt that she was short-changing her children, so she kept buying them things they didn't need. What they wanted was time with her. She also learned some assertive skills and how to say "no" to others.

Akisha is passionate about keeping her life on track. While in the program, she completed her medical assistant training at Wichita Technical Institute, paid off her credit cards and now makes purchases on a cash only basis. Supportive counseling and assistance was given by Sr. Becky to secure her older son a tutor and services for her younger son's behavior problems.

She says she's now ready to "step out on my own" and laughs that she is not the same person she was two years ago. As Sr. Becky says about Akisha, "She has a compassionate heart and is an advocate for the program, passing on some of the skills she learned to her family and friends. One big goal she's working on is owning her own home and with her plan in place, she's on her way to getting it."

When a client comes to Center of Hope with an over-due utility bill, Sr. Becky spends time with the person counseling them on better money management practices. And for the clients who seem motivated to get out of their financial hole, Sister invites them to join the Case Management Program. This is far from a free ride. Clients work, really hard, at changing the practices that led them to have issues affecting themselves and their families. Seeing the successes that come as a result of the efforts of clients and staff is encouraging.

Contura Billingsley is a working single mother of four...a toddler, twins in elementary school and a daughter in middle school. When Sr. Becky briefly described the program, Contura wanted to sign up immediately, but Sister encouraged her to give it careful consideration and let her know later. Contura said she was desperate and thought she had nothing to lose by entering the Case Management Program. Contura said she didn't realize that it would change her life and give her hope for the future that she'd never had before.



*Contura Billingsley successfully completes the two-year case management program.*

"Sr. Becky opened doors for me that I didn't know existed," Contura said. "For instance, I didn't know how I could afford to buy school uniforms for my daughter and Sister told me about a program that would help. It was a life-saver!"

Throughout the two-year program, Contura and Sister set up three goals to be accomplished every three months.

Then there were weekly goals to support the larger goals.

The major accomplishments Contura feels are "paying off my debts and rebuilding my credit as well as how to manage my money. I was always working but couldn't seem to make that paycheck stretch enough to cover my needs."

"I'm very grateful that Sr. Becky insisted that I give attention to my own health. I found out that I have high blood pressure and should be on medication. Now I keep my doctor appointments and I take my medication when I should. I even exercise three times a week,"

Contura remarked.

"When I was in the hospital for cancer surgery I was afraid I'd have to drop out of the program," said Contura, "but Sr. Becky visited me and soon got me back on track. I'm so thankful for Sr. Becky and this program. It really was

life-changing and I wish others had the opportunity I've had to learn these skills that give you the confidence to handle bad situations."

The primary goal of the Case Management Program is to give its participants the knowledge and tools needed to make them self-sufficient and in control of their lives. It almost always involves financial education, awareness of health issues, parenting skills, job training...whatever the client needs. And it is changing lives as Akisha and Contura can tell you.

*This is far from a free ride. Clients work, really hard, at changing the practices that led them to have issues affecting themselves and their families.*

## MEMORIALS

Lucille Polcizinski  
Robert Hinders  
Gertrude Jennings  
Jerry Mertens



## HONORARIUMS

Sr. Stella Rosenhamer,  
ASC Birthday

## Center of Hope, Inc.

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“Life is a gift that God gives to the universe and to humanity.” Acts of the Adorers’ 18th General Assembly

### CENTER OF HOPE, INC. MISSION STATEMENT

The Center of Hope listens to the cries of the poor with compassion and love, and without judgment, seeing all who present themselves as Children of God. A loving presence to those in need and advocates for the powerless, we offer hope to families, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or gender, as they deal with life’s daily challenges. We help them with emergency financial support for rent and utilities, provide case management toward resolutions of on-going difficulties, and assure the dignity and self-respect of each individual.

### VISION STATEMENT

Offering hope for tomorrow through assistance today

### CENTER OF HOPE, INC.

Celebrating 27 years of service to the Wichita community

## Because You Cared



These past three months, the Center of Hope prevented 855 families/2,451 persons from having to experience homelessness. Included in those families were 1,387 children.

\$176,244 was dispersed for rent, \$73,302 for utilities and \$2,577 for other emergency needs. On average, \$295 was spent per family. In addition to the financial assistance paid to landlords and utility companies, families were given food and other personal care products from our storeroom, provided budgeting assistance, and counseled for special needs.

Many thanks go out to all the parishes, business, and individuals who brought canned and boxed food, paper products and personal and home cleaning products. Most recently, St. Cecilia Parish, Kyle Jacobs, and Frank Kastor have blessed us with 194 bags of food and supplies.

## Mark your calendars now for Feb. 20, 2011

You won't want to miss the annual Center of Hope benefit dinner with an auction and the always entertaining Fr. Bernie as auctioneer! The theme is “*Open Your Heart*” and the place is Newman University.

Editor, George Dinkel  
Coordinator, Mary Jobe-Waddill

Watch for more information in our next newsletter.