Helping children is a Priebe family value

Long-time friends have a way of becoming family and Rod and Darla Priebe are certainly part of the Catholic Charities’ family. Their relationship with Catholic Charities goes back to the late 1970s and continues to this day.

When they were just a young couple, they decided to check into being foster parents. Over the years, they made many visits to St. Joseph’s Home for Children to pick up children who needed a safe place to stay.

Year after year, the couple would have up to two children at a time, in addition to their four preschool children. They’ve lost count of how many called their house home—but they have memories of all of them. The children undoubtedly have memories, too.

“Our hearts just kept leading us to do that. There were so many kids out there that needed unconditional love, routine, to see what a normal family looked like,” Darla said. “I strongly believed that each one of them took a little bit of that love with them and it was with them for some time.”

“These days, with their children all grown and grandchildren needing their attention, the Priebes no longer take in foster children. They now support those in need with financial contributions.”

“We believe in the cause. This is where we are at right now, we can financially help,” Darla said. “There’s a whole lot of people out there who are just trying so hard. We can certainly give an opportunity to move forward.”

They’re participating in enriching opportunities including hip hop dancing, volunteering and swimming. The youth also will be going to parks, playing chess, knitting, roller skating, cooking in the kitchen, playing group games like kickball and taking regular walks to the library.

Elementary school teachers Daryl Seifert, Kathy Fore and Anne Redfern have volunteered their time to assess each child’s reading level this summer. Not only did they bring their skills, but boxes and boxes of books! Kids are reading at their level and advancing their skills over the summer months.

The kids are working hard and learning this summer, but they’re also enjoying the simple pleasures of summertime.

“We’re really trying to include some opportunities for the kids, some things they don’t normally get to do,” said Kim Osborn, Northside’s program director. “We try to find ways for them to learn and avoid the summer slide, while still having fun.”
Volunteering makes a difference in our community! Thank you to all of our volunteers for the work you do year round to brighten the lives of those we serve.

Valerie spreads her wings

When you advocated for the Homeless Youth Act, you helped Valerie and other Minnesota youth. Valerie’s journey into homelessness began in her late teens when she told her parents she could not abide by the rules of their strict religion. Instead of accepting and understanding, her dad picked her up, carried her out the door, set her on the stoop and shut the door.

Valerie has moved around a lot the last couple of years, staying with siblings and friends, sleeping in a tent in the woods and at Catholic Charities’ Hope Street Shelter.

“She has come so far and worked very hard to get where she is today,” Neaton said.

Because of you, Valerie has been able to get the skills she needs to transition to an independent life.

“I enjoyed my experience here. I’m glad I was able to get the help I needed to finally be able to push off on my own,” she said. “I feel at home here, but it’s time to move on and spread my wings.”
You helped Kerry on the path to stability

Kerry’s life has undergone dramatic change in the last few years—and he has you to thank for it.

“Catholic Charities looked out for me; they reached for me,” he said. “I was working, but I wasn’t making enough money to hold down a $657 a month apartment.”

He once slept at Higher Ground Minneapolis’ predecessor, Secure Waiting. When Higher Ground opened in the summer of 2012, Kerry moved from shelter to the Pay-For-Stay area on the second floor. The transition made a marked difference in Kerry’s life.

“Higher Ground gave me a lot of confidence in myself and helped me physically and mentally. I got stability,” he said.

In Pay-For-Stay, Kerry paid $40 a week for his bed on the second floor of the Minneapolis shelter. Those funds were set aside to assist Kerry when he moved into an apartment. He enjoys his 12th Avenue apartment near downtown Minneapolis.

Money is tight, but Kerry doesn’t complain. He often returns to Catholic Charities’ Opportunity Center for meals, to meet with his housing counselor and for fellowship.

“This system will help you if you want to help yourself. They are helping you and they help you. I am so thankful to Catholic Charities and to Hennepin County for helping me,” he said. “I have too much confidence in myself now, I think I’m strong enough and stable enough to never be homeless again.”

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Valarie’s journey into homelessness began in her late teens when she told her parents she could not abide by the rules of their strict religion. Instead of acceptance and understanding, her dad picked her up, carried her out the door, set her on the stoop and shut the door.

Valarie has moved around a lot the last couple of years, staying with siblings and friends, sleeping in a tent in the woods and at Catholic Charities’ Hope Street Shelter.

“I was kind of scared about staying at Hope Street, but the staff was genuinely nice,” she said. “I remember that first night I just wanted to stay in my room but then they said it was dinner time and I hadn’t eaten that day, so I came out.”

Valarie, now 20, is about to move into a place of her own. Christi Neaton, Valarie’s case manager at Hope Street, said she has seen her transform and mature at Hope Street.

“She has come so far and worked very hard to get where she is today,” Neaton said.

Because of you, Valarie has been able to get the skills she needs to transition to an independent life.

“I enjoyed my experience here. I’m glad I was able to get the help I needed to finally be able to push off on my own,” she said. “I feel at home here, but it’s time to move on and spread my wings.”
We couldn’t do this work without you!

Every single day of the year—no matter the weather, no matter if it’s a holiday, no matter if it’s so early the sun hasn’t risen—volunteers come to Catholic Charities sites and help those most in need.

Hundreds of groups and thousands of individuals come out every year to help prepare and serve meals to the hungry. They paint walls and beautify spaces; they brave the sun and heat to complete landscaping chores so our sites are more inviting. Some of their work is highlighted in this issue. Over the years, we’ve developed great relationships with our volunteers: individuals, groups and corporations. From young people to retirees and CEOs, volunteers give us the best of their talent and we appreciate it. Volunteers also have a lot of fun! They build stronger teams and friendships. While they’re volunteering and interacting with our clients, they not only learn about Catholic Charities programs—but our entire community. We all benefit when we work together!

Applications for Volunteer Opportunities are available. Call 612.204.8442 or email ellen.sexton@cctwincities.org.

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Contact Ellen Sexton at 612-204-8442 or ellen.sexton@cctwincities.org.