Darcel’s boys, Larry, 4 and Leelan, 2, have been coming to Northside since they were babies. She intends to keep them there until they age out of the program. Catholic Charities’ Northside Child Development Center is more than a childcare center. Staff work to provide quality educational opportunities to help kids achieve.

“I love this facility,” she said. “This is not just a childcare place. They go above and beyond for you.”

Darcel is working hard to make sure her boys live a positive, educated and peaceful life. Darcel and her sister were the first in their family to earn a high school diploma and pursue higher education. Darcel went to school to be a medical assistant but now pays the bills as a driver for Metro Mobility. She wants her boys to go even further.

“I want them to do something bigger,” she said. “It’s not that I’m strong. I’m a parent. I’m a mother. There have been days where I didn’t want to get out of bed, but I have to stay positive for my kids.”

She believes the education Larry and Leelan are receiving at Northside is preparing them for their ‘something bigger.’

“More than a childcare center, Northside represents family.”
Minneapolis home makes a world of difference

Suad Gele and her nine children — the oldest 16 years-old and the youngest 11 months-old — came to Minnesota on a cold December night. They had been living in a Kenyan refugee camp, driven away from their home in Somalia due to civil war. Because of Beth Brown, the family has a place to call home in Minnesota. She rents the large blue and green colonial style home she absolutely lives out at a break even rate each month to the family of 10.

“Suad doesn’t have big dreams for herself, the mother is at peace knowing her children will have a better life in America. My kids have a better place to live and they have a chance for a better education,” Suad said with a smile. “I’m thankful to be here.”

Catholic Charities’ New American Services program had been struggling to find a landlord who would rent to the family of 10. “This was a really wonderful opportunity,” said Marie Schuetze, a case aide for New American Services. “We don’t get offers like that.”

The program works to reunite refugees with their families and help them work toward independence in their new country. For Beth, it was the right thing to do.

“You have to ask yourself, where are you falling on these issues? Are you able to sleep at night?” she said. “You have to think, ‘what can I do?’ and how are you living your values out loud?”

While Suad doesn’t have big dreams for herself, the mother is at peace knowing her children will have a better life in America.

“She was one of the charter runners of the Mile in My Shoes team at Higher Ground Saint Paul and even completed the Minneapolis Aquatennial Torchlight 5K. While Rosie said she never liked school, she’s now enrolled in Adult Basic Education classes at the Hubbs Center.

“Catholic Charities’ Higher Ground Saint Paul, which opened in January 2017, provides permanent homes for 193 residents, including Rosie.

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Positivity, gratitude help Rosie achieve

“God on my side so I’m okay. I appreciate my room.”

Rosie, 51, lives on the fourth floor of Catholic Charities’ Higher Ground Saint Paul, though she’s most often outside moving, as long as her knees cooperate.

“When they took me to my room... it was so beautiful I did want to cry,” she said.

Rosie entered homelessness when she needed to get out of a relationship and also suffered a knee injury which made her unable to do the work she knows. Despite the relationship, career and physical losses, Rosie has been working to take charge of her life and rather than counting hardships, she counts victories.

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“I really want to work to change my life. The staff here has been so great;” she said. “I’m getting my life back. I am healthy, happy and stronger than ever. Whether my knee is messed up or not, I still want to work.”

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Mountain biking changing lives at St. Joe’s

The simple ritual of learning to ride a bike is a luxury for some youth who spend time at St. Joseph’s Home for Children.

Children often enter St. Joe’s because of trauma experienced in their home. The safe environment provided there is key to helping children overcome barriers.

This was all made possible thanks to donor Sharon Schroeer who provided the funds for the bikes and David Bole from The Bicycle Chain in Roseville who sold the bikes at a significant discount. The effort was the brainchild of Mark Hartney, who said biking has made a positive impact on his life many times over.

“When I was a kid, I stayed in places like this. It’s my turn to give back,” he said. Some are just learning to ride, but they come back with an eager spirit.

Physical activity and commitment are two of the things Sharon was hoping for when she provided the funds, a gift made in memory of her mother. She wanted the gift to be used for an activity that could be sustained and would be fun for the children. They fall, but they get back up again.

“I have a strong belief in cycling’s ability to change lives.” —Mark Hartney, volunteer

Business, philanthropy make sweet combination

Calvin and Fritz make and sell maple syrup with the help of their parents, Mark and Katey McCabe.

Fritz is just 6-years-old and Calvin is 9, but they’re serious business partners, even showing up to their meeting with Catholic Charities’ Food Distribution Supervisor Aaron Hassmend in pressed white shirts and ties.

Hollis and Ozzie’s Pure Maple Syrup Company isn’t a big operation, but it is mighty. Their parents are hoping the syrup side business not only teaches the boys about earning money, but the importance of giving back.

During their recent meeting with Hassmend at Catholic Charities’ Dorothy Day Center and Higher Ground Saint Paul they toured the facilities and presented a $100 check from their syrup earnings. They were curious about just how far that check could go, and were happy to learn that, because of our ability to buy in large quantities that $100 would go far.

“That makes me feel great,” Fritz said. “I just like helping people.”

The boys brought a bottle of syrup with them to the meeting. The label says “Pancakes + Syrup = Happy.” Hassmend bought that bottle for $10, but it didn’t go home with the McCabes.

“When I was a kid, I stayed in places like this. It’s my turn to give back.” —Mark Hartney

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“Mom, is it okay if we give this too?” Fritz asked.

“That’s fine with me but you’ll have to ask your business partner,” Katey reminded.

After a quick whispered consult, the boys smiled large and said “We just want to help EVEN MORE people!”

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"Often when you think you’re at the end of something, you’re at the beginning of something else."

Significant words offered by kind-hearted Fred Rogers of Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood. If you think about it, what happens at transition points—the spaces of change between one stage and the next—sets the tone for what will be. Being aware of and supporting our community members as they bridge each transition is key to our daily work at Catholic Charities.

Rosie’s transition into Higher Ground Saint Paul has given her a new outlook on life. Imagine those five-year-olds taking a big step from the security of their Northside Child Development Center classroom into kindergarten! Or our New Americans, whose refugee camp experience is unimaginably different from apartments and light rail transportation. And our Dorothy Day Center clients who will be adjusting to meals and services at Mary Hall during the construction of the new Saint Paul Opportunity Center and Dorothy Day Residence. Your kind hearts help us create successful bridges toward greater stability and new opportunities for many. We thank you!

Laurie Ohmann
Senior Vice President of Client Services and Community Partnerships

"God has really blessed me. It is a privilege to be here."

Volunteer helps mend spirits in Saint Paul

Two days each week, it’s a bit like Mom coming to visit Catholic Charities’ clients in Saint Paul.

“When I first came, I was only a chaplain, but one day I was standing here and asked God what these people needed,” said LauraRose Paradis, a volunteer extraordinare/caregiver/loving maternal figure. On Mondays, LauraRose visits with anyone who needs a bent ear. On Fridays, she brings in a portable sewing machine, a bag of patching material, a zipper repair kit and other sewing notions and spends five to six hours at the machine mending items for clients. It’s been said clothes make the person. Every week, LauraRose proves there is some truth to that.

“They walk taller when they’re not walking around in ripped clothing,” she said. “For them, it’s dignity. They don’t have to walk around with torn garments or a broken backpack.” LauraRose truly is happy to be volunteering and almost looks sad when it’s time to say goodbye to the men and women who have quickly become her friends.

Toward the end of a recent shift, one man, Tony, came and gave LauraRose a hug. Another, Roger, brought her a basket of blackberries. It seems she has truly captured the hearts of those in need. The reverse also is true. LauraRose is one of many dedicated volunteers upon which we rely. Interested in volunteering? Visit cctwincities.org/volunteer

Laurie Ohmann
Senior Vice President of Client Services and Community Partnerships

Contact us to set up your monthly gift today!

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