



## **A Change of Venue, but not a Change of Heart** CommUNITY Care Day IS NOW our Christmas assistance to families in need!

Dear Parish Family,

Since the 1980's, we have been serving Hamilton County residents for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Your love and care for God's poor is nothing short of miraculous. Thanksgiving assistance is well established in our parish and will continue as normal. But we have been discerning a change with our recipients and programming at Christmas.

Much of our ministry at the Merciful HELP Center is precipitated by crisis. At times when area families feel alone and are facing insurmountable odds, we lift people up. **Well, we found another crisis, and it's big.** We have been discerning solutions that are directly related to the Christmas Adopt-an-Angel program moving to a **"CommUNITY Care Day"**. **CommUNITY Care Day IS our Christmas Assistance!**

The "crisis" is within our own diocesan Catholic Community and the grinding poverty in Anderson, Indiana, a community that is only 40 minutes away. St. Ambrose and St. Mary parish operate schools, largely for poorer families in a community that has been in a long-term financial crisis and free fall. One of the two schools has a 90% poverty rate. Many of the public schools are struggling with low test scores and graduation rates.

Bishop Doherty and our pastor Father Richard Doerr have encouraged us to meet basic needs of communities like Anderson that are generally under-served. And it is ironic-that as we have worked hard to provide toys for Hamilton County children, the need in Anderson is far more basic--shoes, socks, uniforms, coats, boots, and school supplies.

Father Richard and I met with St. Ambrose and St. Mary's parish leaders recently. Both schools operate on tight budgets receiving assistance from the state voucher program just two times per year. They often lack things like copy paper and other basic needs.

We believe that the **Christmas** holiday is adequately covered in Hamilton County--being served by many businesses that do not assist the poor at other times of the year. We saw an opportunity to apply our collective and considerable resources to make a difference in the Anderson crisis. We have brainstormed the best plan **to use our Christmas resources** to meet basic needs, coming up with a "CommUNITY Care Day", unifying Our Lady of Mt. Carmel's Merciful HELP Center, St. Ambrose and St. Mary's in Anderson.

So without pulling away from providing basic needs in our own community in Hamilton County, we do feel like we need to get *back to basics* and bringing God's care to other nearby families with our Christmas Angel Tree resources! **We will still accept toys and help organizations who are sponsoring families in Hamilton County with toy donations, but our "Christmas Angel trees" will be filled with tags for coats, shoes, boots, socks, underwear, pants and tops for children, book bags, books, school supplies and food for families in Anderson.**

With these donations we will provide a "CommUNITY Care Day" in Anderson, on Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. The win-win for us is that it gives us more time to shop, organize and deliver this assistance! This is a big change! We know it. But it is a needed change that will help us keep our focus on **"NEEDS AND NOT WANTS."**

Please support the Angel trees and consider signing up on the "CommUNITY Care Day" sign up genius when it is up on our Merciful HELP Center Website, [www.mercifulhelpcenter.org](http://www.mercifulhelpcenter.org) on November 6, 2015. If you have questions, please email [CommunityCareDay@mercifulhelpcenter.org](mailto:CommunityCareDay@mercifulhelpcenter.org).

Thank you for your year round compassionate response to the needs of God's people! May God Bless you,

*Jayne Slaton*