

BIG THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

BY BETH GRIFFIN

In Lawrence, Kansas, a successful seven-year-old business gives its employees a hand up while giving its satisfied customers a handout.

The company is Good Dog! Biscuits & Treats, and the employees are current and former residents of the Lawrence Community Shelter (LCS), a comprehensive social service program for homeless men and women. The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) is a longtime supporter of both the shelter and the job training program.

By all measurable standards, the seven flavors of treats are a huge hit with the people who buy them and the dogs who eat them. More importantly, Good Dog! has revitalized the hopes of people at the shelter and helped put the employees on track to a more positive future. "It gives people an opportunity to have a meaningful job and move forward," says Mary Easterday, a shelter volunteer who brought the program to CCHD's attention.

"Homelessness is really complicated," says LCS director Loring Henderson. "We don't give up on people, and Good Dog! helps homeless people learn, tweak, or refurbish skills."

Dianne Huggins, who coordinates the Good Dog! project, says there are five employees now baking, packaging, and distributing the treats

and biscuits to pet stores and selling them at farmers' markets. She counts 18 people so far for whom Good Dog! was the path from homelessness to permanent housing or a full-time job. Dianne says the most successful Good Dog! client employees like dogs, have a strong work ethic, are motivated to get out of homelessness, and are not shy about meeting new people.

There is a waiting list of shelter clients who want to be Good Dog! employees. Dianne says the current workers choose the new trainees and have made unerringly successful hires. "The people who work in the kitchen at Good Dog! hire people who will also work hard," she says.

Loring says it is inspiring to see the employees work together as a group to make decisions about the finances and the product line, and also share light moments. "They talk about the balance sheet and which flavors are marketable," he says. "They've all tasted the products, which are made from all-natural ingredients. It's a rite of passage to eat a dog biscuit."

Dianne describes the joy of the first payday. "Folks get so excited about getting a paycheck and paying taxes. It's a matter of pride and it's quite emotional," she says.



Photo courtesy of Lawrence Community Shelter

GOOD DOG! BISCUITS & TREATS COME IN SEVERAL DIFFERENT FLAVORS, INCLUDING "MUTT MIX."

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The United States Census Bureau recently made us aware of the stark, sad reality of poverty in our country. Forty-six million people, with rising numbers of children, are currently trapped below the poverty line. But for faithful Catholics, we don't see numbers or graphs on pages. Rather, we see faces, souls, and lives of those we are called to defend and protect: children, seniors, and immigrants struggling for survival in a less-than-welcoming economy. This time last year, many of these brothers and sisters gathered around tables to share meals and thank God for their many blessings. Sadly, millions of those who gathered with joy last year will experience the hopelessness of homelessness and the agony of hunger this year.



This issue features a Catholic Campaign for Human Development economic development initiative that focuses on ways to alleviate both homelessness and unemployment in a creative way. This effort, born from despair and desperation, has helped men and women develop ways to make a new start.

This effort is made possible by the leadership of the Catholic bishops of the United States and generous people throughout the country. In a recent letter to his fellow bishops, Archbishop Timothy Dolan wrote, "In these tough economic times, we turn to the God who loves us. We pray for those who need work. We lift up the poor and suffering. We ask God's guidance for our nation. This is not a time to give in to discouragement. It is a time for faith, hope, and love. Faith offers us moral principles to guide us in the days ahead. Christian hope gives us strength. Christ's love calls us to care for those left behind in this broken economy."*

In answering that call, this Advent season we turn toward him who showed love for the poor and preached liberty to captives. We pray:

Gracious God,

We know that your love is infinite and that you care about all areas of our life.

In this time of economic insecurity, help us to trust that all of our security is in you.

Keep us mindful that you always have and always will provide for our needs.

Apart from you we can do nothing.

Merciful God,

We ask that you give our leaders the wisdom to guide our nation and the world out of the current economic crisis.

Help us to protect the poor and all those who are struggling during this difficult time.

Provide for their needs and give them hope.

Open new opportunities for them and furnish the resources they need to live with dignity.

Encourage those who have enough to share essential resources with those who lack the necessities of life, and to do so with humble, grateful, and loving hearts.

We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ralph McCloud'.

Ralph McCloud

Director, Catholic Campaign for Human Development

* The entirety of Archbishop Dolan's letter can be found [here](#).

(continued from page 1)

Good Dog! began with a conversation Dianne had with a shelter guest. They decided to bake and sell biscotti at a popular farmers' market. Dianne laughingly reports that they sold \$11 worth of cookies on their first and largest day of sales before they realized there was an oversupply of biscotti-makers but no competition in the dog treat area.

As demand grew, they moved their baking operation from Dianne's house to a church kitchen and now occupy part of the Dog House, a renovated building that is home to eight independent pet-oriented small businesses. To date, Good Dog! bakers have made more than 300,000 biscuits, which are now offered at 17 retail outlets and farmers' markets. "Peanut Butter & Honey" is the best-selling flavor.

Loring credits Dianne with being the guiding force behind the project. "She has helped the homeless participants in so many ways," he says.

Good Dog! and LCS have close ties with several Catholic parishes in Lawrence, which is in the Diocese of Kansas City, Kansas. St. John the Evangelist Parish hosted shelter guests before LCS was fully operational, and Corpus Christi Parish provides case management and financial assistance for the guests. Both parishes and the St. Lawrence Catholic Center at the edge of the University of Kansas campus welcome Good Dog! representatives, who sell their popular product after Masses.

Mary Easterday, who has served on the LCS board since it began in 1997, says the shelter guests wanted to be involved in something that would give them a positive feeling about themselves. For guidance, LCS looked to the CCHD model of helping poor people help themselves by being majority



Photo courtesy of Lawrence Community Shelter

MATT, ONE OF LAWRENCE COMMUNITY SHELTER'S GUEST EMPLOYEES, AT A GOOD DOG! BISCUITS & TREATS DISPLAY TABLE AT A LOCAL EVENT.

stakeholders in the governance and operation of a small business. Mary says Good Dog! hosts parishes participating in the JustFaith social justice immersion program. "We feel like we have a connection with the whole continuum of pro-life programs. Good Dog! is a job program that is unique to our shelter, and we feel privileged to have that to offer hope to people who are very worn down. They take complete control, and we strive to show them how unique they are."

"CCHD grants are a gift we can never repay," she says.

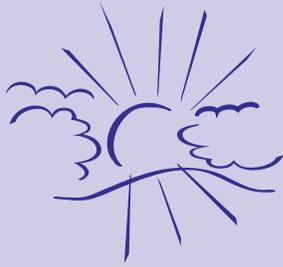
Good Dog!'s Maureen Bernhagen says employees share a unique team spirit and sense of accomplishment that engenders renewed personal confidence, learning of valuable new skills, and a more positive attitude about the future. CCHD funds have accelerated a great idea into a functioning business that helps people return to self-sufficiency—and makes lots of tails wag. 🐾

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Spotlight on Renewal

Sharing the good news of CCHD is one of ten commitments for CCHD's future set forth in the Review and Renewal. Commitment #2 states that **"CCHD will seek ways to tell the good news of what it does every day, as an arm of the Catholic Church in all of our dioceses, with better, pro-active communications strategies."** CCHD uses various approaches to share

this good news. With its organizational eyes on the signs of the times, CCHD continues to seek effective, contemporary ways to share the good news of empowerment and hope with busy social ministry advocates and the general Catholic population.

In partnership with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Digital Media, CCHD recently completed a seven-minute video entitled *CCHD: Living Our Faith, Breaking the Cycle of Poverty*. The video briefly shares two stories about how CCHD helps poor and low-income persons address poverty through community and economic development initiatives. It also conveys a Catholic priest's perspective on how the involvement of Catholics in CCHD's community-based, self-help projects can assist the faithful to recognize and implement gospel values in their daily lives.



CCHD: Living Our Faith, Breaking the Cycle of Poverty, is suitable for individual or group viewing, for those who are familiar with CCHD, and for those who want to know more. It will inspire and inform parish groups and Catholic organizations.

Watch this and other CCHD videos that act on Review and Renewal Commitment #2, like *Meet Mary*; *CCHD Testimonials* by priests; and *Winds of Change* and *Community in Action*, which profile the good work of other CCHD-funded groups. All are available for viewing [here](#).

What Is CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed over \$280 million to more than 7,800 low-income-led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that

their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective, and so that CCHD's investment in people will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between impoverished and affluent persons.



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