



# JUSTICE FROM THE HEART

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE  
OF SACRED HEART PARISH

## SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Catholic Church identifies seven key principles of Catholic Social Teaching that stand today as a guide for furthering the education and understanding of what our response should be to the needs of those in our midst. Our mission and vision, our programs and services are all wrapped around these vital tenants. Sacred Heart justice ministries are guided by these principles.

### **Life and Dignity of the Human Person**

All persons are sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose their dignity because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success, or race. This emphasizes people over things.

### **Call of Family, Community, and Participation**

The human person is both sacred and social. We realize our dignity and rights in relationship with others, in community. "We are one body; when one suffers, we all suffer." We are called to respect all of God's gifts of creation, to be stewards of the earth and each others.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

People have a fundamental right to life, food, shelter, health care, education and employment. All people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to respect the rights of others in the wider society and work for the common good.



"Our faith teaches us that poor people are not issues or problems but sisters and brothers in God's human family."

### **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

The moral test of society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.

### **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers**

People have a right to decent and productive work, fair wages, private property and economic initiative. The economy exists to serve the people, not the other way around.

### **Solidarity**

We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic, and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice.

### **Care for God's Creation**

The goods of the earth are gifts from God. We have a responsibility to care for these goods as stewards and trustees, not as mere consumers and users.

# NEIGHBORHOOD ALLIANCE

## FAITHFUL NEIGHBORS

Some Justice from the Heart readers may be familiar with the Empowerment Network and founders Willie and Yolanda Barney because of Sacred Heart's participation in Empowerment Network-sponsored events like "Christmas in the Village" or through attending events at the Revive Center at 24th and Lake, opened by the Barneys in 2019.

But the Barneys -- in two decades of living out their faith through community service to make Omaha a stronger, safer and more vibrant city -- have had an impact that reaches far beyond our parish community.

The most recent acknowledgement of their efforts came in January when the North and South Omaha Recovery Grant Program awarded the Empowerment Network \$10 million to support and expand its variety of community-building programs. The list of those programs is long and includes youth employment (Step-Up Omaha!), violence prevention (Omaha 360), leadership (African-American Leadership Conference),



**Willie and Yolanda Barney**

and entrepreneurship (Revive Black Business Network).

The Barneys and their programs have been recognized nationally by the U.S. Department of Justice and by the Obama Foundation's "My Brother's Keeper Alliance." The Sacred Heart Neighborhood Alliance Team is honored to know and work with such committed and faithful Omahans.

## MEET COACH GRANT

**By Kathy Gast**

Preston Grant was our special guest at the March NAT meeting. He coaches Sacred Heart boys basketball and PACE -- Police Athletics for Community Engagement -- baseball teams. He is also employed at Creighton University School of Law Community Connections and works with the Juvenile Justice Legal Clinic at Creighton as a Community Connector working with youth and families to connect them with community resources.

He provides ongoing support for at-risk youth to prevent their involvement with law enforcement and to help them prepare for job interviews.

Preston is passionate about his volunteer and career work with youth and the father of two boys. He expressed gratitude for the Neighborhood Alliance Team's support of Sacred Heart students as boosters at games and for its work to get new uniforms for the Sacred Heart sports teams.

The Neighborhood Alliance Team is also working to help Preston address the basketball team's needs, which include a more accessible indoor practice facility; equipment (particularly basketballs); and a van for transporting players to practice and games.

**North 24th Street  
Business  
Improvement  
District**

**Upcoming events**

- **June 15: Juneteenth Parade** Time and Location TBD
- **June 19: 24th & Good Morning** 7:30AM - 9AM, // Family Housing Advisory Services, 2401 Lake St.
- **June 29: Summer Community Cleanup** 9AM - 11AM // Global Leadership Group Community Garden: 3118 North 24th Street
- **July 29: BID Stakeholder Quarterly Meeting** 6PM // Mt. Moriah Heritage Center: 2602 N. 24th St.
- **August 21: 24th & Good Morning** 7:30AM - 9AM // Family Housing Advisory Services: 2401 Lake St.

We hope to see you at these events! If you have questions, please contact [no24bid@gmail.com](mailto:no24bid@gmail.com).



**PURPOSE STATEMENT:** To develop a presence in and connections to the Sacred Heart neighborhood and North Omaha.



# IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE TEAM

## OMAHA TOGETHER ONE COMMUNITY (OTOC)

Omaha Together One Community is a 30-year-old organization of 30 Omaha congregations and community groups. Sacred Heart was a founding member. St. Benedict's and St. John's have been active in OTOC for decades. OTOC is strictly nonpartisan. We support issues, not candidates.

The issues arise out of conversations among members. Currently OTOC is working with other groups in Nebraska to gather signatures to put paid sick-leave on the ballot in November.

In 2010 Nebraska discontinued funding for pre-natal care for pregnant women who were undocumented.

In response, OTOC formed an action team to address immigration and refugee-related issues. OTOC and other Nebraska organizations successfully worked to restore pre-natal care funding for all Nebraskans and successfully advocated for Nebraskans with DACA (often called "Dreamers") to obtain driver's licenses and professional licenses in Nebraska. Immigrants with Temporary Protected Status (TPS) have worked in Omaha for decades. They are partners in OTOC's efforts to address immigration reform with our federal delegation.

In late 2021 and 2022 business leaders were calling Nebraska's workforce shortage "desperate." To learn more about this issue OTOC leaders conducted individual meetings throughout Nebraska with over 60 leaders of Chambers of Commerce, trade associations, advocacy groups, foundations, faith communities,



agricultural interests, and union members, immigrants, attorneys, educators, and healthcare providers.

Additionally, OTOC and allies have hosted group meetings with more than 100 Nebraska leaders in Lincoln, Omaha, and North Platte.

Individual and group meetings have resulted in the same response: Immigrant workers are the solution to Nebraska's workforce shortage, and we need a diverse broad-based statewide coalition to successfully accomplish this goal.

OTOC believes that Nebraska's workforce shortage represents an opportunity to bring together a diverse group of allies to address this shortage by seeing the value of our "newest

neighbors". Initial priorities include addressing federal policies that impede immigrants' meaningful participation in the workforce and ensuring Nebraska welcomes its newest arrivals.

**Kathleen Grant, St. John's**  
**Jeanne Schuler, Sacred Heart**  
**Co-chairs**  
**OTOC Immigration and Refugee Action Team**



### PURPOSE STATEMENT:

*The Immigration and Refugee Team works to welcome, with respect and solidarity, the "foreigners" residing among us.*

# GREEN TEAM

## 24TH STREET BOUNTY: OUR GARDEN

By Jane O'Connor

The meaning of BOUNTY is something that is given generously according to Merriam-Webster. Our community garden has given generously in fresh produce, fellowship, and beauty. We also gave to the butterflies and bees by planting zinnias and sunflowers.

The 2023 season produced 1,222 pounds of fresh vegetables and logged 303 in-garden volunteer hours. The volunteer hours did not include administrative time such as communication with volunteers, grant writing, articles, shopping for seeds, plants, and supplies. We expanded our garden to include both in-ground and raised beds, adding about 700 square feet. Our young neighbors and some CUES Elementary students helped with planting and harvesting. Vegetables were shared with CUES school student families, neighbors and immigrant families with food insecurity.

One of our immigrant family members just touched and breathed in the herb aroma with gratitude without words. Our third 2024 growing season is upon us. We are looking forward to another abundant year.

Our goals include to:

- Collaborate with school families and immigrant families to determine their vegetables wishes, which included additional recommended vegetables and herbs.
- Expand the growing space to include vertical planting as well as increase in ground planting.
- Commercially till the garden space and area outside the fenced garden for native plants and flowers.
- Build on our volunteer base.
- Continue to build garden infrastructure (soil, water, and storage).
- Educate all on ways to ensure ongoing soil improvement and healthy planting in an urban environment.

Our growing season has started with early planning, CUES and immigrant families vegetable/herb input, and the financial generosity of parishioners. As of April 30, the parish has provided \$1,720 for the garden! We are on our way.

*We continue to welcome volunteers and donations. Please contact the administration office.*



## SOLAR UPDATE

The 27-panel Sacred Heart solar array, mounted on the parish office roof, has been producing energy since July 2023. Online monitoring of energy production has been working since February of this year. In the past 30 days, the array has produced over 1,000 kWh of energy.

Summertime production will be even greater. You too can monitor real-time energy production and past totals from our array. The monitoring system is called "Sunny Portal". To get a Sunny Portal account, email Phil Alcocer at [phalconator@gmail.com](mailto:phalconator@gmail.com). Include your first and last name. Phil will enter your name and email address in Sunny Portal and it will email you the link to set up your free account.

*A big Thank You to all of you who contributed to this project.*

**PURPOSE STATEMENT:** *In partnership with our parishes and the surrounding community, the Green Team is continually learning, educating, calling all to take action, and working to care for our common home.*