Acting Justly at Seton Family Center

By S. Joyce Richter

As a sponsored ministry of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Seton Family Center (SFC) has provided quality mental health services to children and families of all backgrounds and socioeconomic levels for nearly 25 years. Acting justly permeates our mission and is at the core of our unwavering commitment to helping strengthen family relationships and to being accessible to all families, particularly those in financial need.

The Center responded to the community’s increasing demand for its services by expanding its staff and capacity. SFC moved from Price Hill to a larger facility in the Western Hills area in 2011. Careful consideration was given to ensure the office was accessible and was a warm, welcoming environment. An ideal location was found that continues to meet the needs of the Center and of the families we serve. SFC’s Western Hills location is spacious, accessible, easy to find, on a bus line, and has off-street parking. Clients continue to come from all over the Greater Cincinnati area, including our former Price Hill neighborhood!

There are challenges, too, in what we do. Whereas health and mental health care practices in the private sector usually limit or exclude families with Medicaid and other government-sponsored insurance, we remain inclusive. SFC continues to accept families with commercial/private, public, or even no insurance coverage. Of particular concern are families with low incomes and with commercial health insurance who are especially vulnerable to changes in the health care environment as increasing deductibles result in high out-of-pocket expenses, which many cannot afford.

SFC has evolved in a number of other ways to anticipate changes in the health care system. We actively seek grants to offset the diminishing reimbursement rates of government-sponsored health insurance and to allow us to continue providing services to all who seek our help.

Despite the challenges, SFC has more than doubled the number of families served over the past four years and we continue to have an even greater impact on the well-being of our community.
Students and teachers from DePaul Cristo Rey High School joined peers from three other Cincinnati high schools – Cincinnati Christian Hills Academy, LaSalle, and Mother of Mercy – for a shared service retreat at the St. Vincent de Paul Ozanam Center for Service Learning. The retreat included activities, prayer and reflection around the theme of homeless awareness. It ended with service at the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry including sorting canned food donations, cleaning, and writing uplifting messages to be included in the food bags given to the pantry’s clients.

The Seton Latin Club set a goal of sponsoring 10 Water Women for a total of $600. Since each Water Woman must train three more women, the number rises to 30 families affected!

The students were encouraged to almsgiving by donating money from the drink or snack from which they “fasted,” and to prayers of thanksgiving for the water in their own lives, as well as to ask God’s blessing on the many Water Women who are working to bring clean water to their families.

Debbie Weber, SC Associate and director of the Office of Peace, Justice and Care for Creation, presented the Water With Blessings project to the Seton High School student body as part of the Campus Ministry Lenten series. Debbie showed slides of places where the WWB filtration system is being used as she explained the process, the results and the excitement that always follows. Afterwards, Debbie invited students to come to the stage to see the bucket of dirty water, watch it being filtered, and then taste the clean water.

Both St. Joseph Home and the College of Mount St. Joseph celebrated their patronal feast with special activities. St. Joseph Home invited those who have invested in their past, present and future to a special Mass, groundbreaking for the first Waiver Home, and a reception. The College of Mount St. Joseph also celebrated a special feast-day Mass and luncheon. In addition they had special attention-raising activities about their patron and unveiled a new banner celebrating Joseph as the patron of the college.