



1200 Second Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 664-8500

Contact: Rebecca Lentz
612.664.8556 | cell 612.978.2849

NOTE: Those wishing to obtain photography, visit the Dorothy Day Center or any program site or interview staff or clients must contact Catholic Charities' communications office. Non-client visitors are not permitted to access the sites. Program staff are not authorized to provide information or access to the building to non-client visitors.

Dorothy Day Center to Remain Open During Convention

Catholic Charities to leave open Mary Hall, Dorothy Day. Most services at St. Paul Office to relocate.

(MINNEAPOLIS – June 12, 2008) The Dorothy Day Center will remain open during the Republican National Convention Sept. 1 through Sept. 4, however Catholic Charities may change some services provided to clients.

The Dorothy Day Center is located across the street from the Xcel Energy Center, which will host the RNC. Catholic Charities administrators and program directors made the decision to remain open after considering options that included temporarily relocating the entire program. The Dorothy Day Center provides meals to about 300 people per day and overnight shelter to 200 men and women each day.

“Providing a familiar space and ensuring availability of a continuum of services during the convention will help our clients adjust to the expected large crowds, increased law enforcement presence and changes in transportation options,” says the Rev. John Estrem, CEO of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis. “Our goal was to make the decision in the best interest of our clients, and we believe staying open is in the best interest of our clients.

“We received excellent cooperation from St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, his staff and the St. Paul Police Department. While the final decision was ours, the city has been extremely helpful,” Estrem said.

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During the days immediately preceding the convention and during the convention itself, the Dorothy Day Center will modify and, in some cases, enhance services provided to clients. Catholic Charities will work with its service partners to determine how best to serve clients.

Mary Hall, an emergency, transitional and permanent housing facility located behind the Dorothy Day Center, will also remain open. The St. Paul Office, located next to the Dorothy Day Center, will relocate the majority of its services and staff during the convention.

Catholic Charities will also provide an alternate site with some services for clients who would prefer not to be near the crowds expected with the convention. A site has not yet been chosen.

“We feel an obligation to find ways to best meet the needs of all of our clients,” Estrem says. “We are exploring alternatives for clients who may feel overwhelmed.”

Catholic Charities will take steps to provide increased privacy to clients at Mary Hall and Dorothy Day. Program staff and administrators will determine what measures will best meet client needs. Plans haven’t been finalized. Catholic Charities safeguards the privacy of all its clients.

Catholic Charities will work with the City of St. Paul and appropriate law enforcement to determine the best transportation arrangements for Dorothy Day and Mary Hall staff and volunteers. Details and instructions will be sent to staff and volunteers.

The Dorothy Day Center, one of 42 programs offered by Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, opened in 1981 to serve what experts believed would be a short-term homeless population.

More than 25 years later, Catholic Charities served 6,098 unique individuals (unduplicated count) at the Dorothy Day Center during fiscal year 07. If the current pace continues, the Dorothy Day Center will serve about 1,000 more people in fiscal year 08 than it did in fiscal year 07. Catholic Charities’ fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

The Dorothy Day Center daily serves meals to hundreds of people who are homeless or living in poverty. The drop-in center and overnight shelter provide refuge to hundreds of people who otherwise would be on the street. A women’s shelter, located on the second floor of the Dorothy Day Center, opened in 2007 in response to the increase in the number of unaccompanied women who are homeless. Catholic Charities collaborates with agencies providing supportive services—such as health care, county services, veterans’ services—and provides office space for those agencies in the Dorothy Day Center.

More than half the clients at the Dorothy Day Center self-identify as having a mental illness. The percentage of clients who have mental health concerns is likely higher since people are often reluctant to admit to having mental illnesses.

Mary Hall, located on Main Street adjacent to St. Joseph's Hospital, provides emergency, supportive and single-room-occupancy housing to 175 men and women. Many clients from Mary Hall eat meals at the Dorothy Day Center.

For more than 10 years, 100 to 150 people have been on waiting lists to obtain housing at Mary Hall.

Though Mary Hall was not designed to provide emergency shelter to families, 562 people slept in two rooms reserved for families at Mary Hall in calendar year 2007. Families will frequently arrive late at night with no place to go, and Catholic Charities staff work to help them.

The St. Paul Office, located on Old Sixth Street, provides counseling, migration and refugee/reception and placement, senior care management and caregiver support services. During fiscal year 07, 100 percent of counseling clients reported an improvement in emotional state and functioning. Seventy-three percent of school children identified as having problems with their peers improved their social interaction during fiscal year 07.

In fiscal year 2007, Catholic Charities' Reception and Placement Services served 1,789 people. Reception and Placement Services works with people approved by the State Department to resettle or join family already in the United States. The State Department contracts with the US Council of Catholic Bishops, which in turn contracts with Catholic Charities agencies around the country.

Aging Services served more than 500 people in the last fiscal year. The program allows people to remain in their homes as long as possible. The average annual cost of a nursing home is \$72,000. The average cost of Catholic Charities' Aging Services is \$1,200.

Catholic Charities annually meets the needs of more than 40,000 people, regardless of faith. The agency's 42 programs provide services ranging from prenatal care to in-home care for the elderly in 12 counties in and around the Twin Cities. Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis is a member of Catholic Charities USA and was honored by the Charities Review Council for meeting the Council's strict accountability standards, demonstrating responsibility, integrity and transparency as a non-profit organization. Further information on that approval can be found at smartgivers.org. Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis is fully accredited by the Council on Accreditation. More information on Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis can be found at www.cctwincities.org.

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