



The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Archdiocese of Edmonton

OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL, PRAY FOR US

COMMUNITY LIFE ANNUAL REPORT 2014

49 councils reported

"A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step." (Laozi)

Sisters in the League

Most councils reported being satisfied with their Community Life accomplishments in 2014. However, recurring feedback was received with regard to how many activities fall under Community Life, the importance of sharing Community Life activity ideas between councils, and the increasing need to serve the vulnerable within our CWL councils as well as the vulnerable outside of our councils. Councils also continue to report that the Community Life standing committee chair is often difficult to fill, leaving many council presidents to try to fill the vacancy themselves or to combine it with another standing committee.

DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF PERSONS

The activities of diocesan area councils are local, provincial, national and international in scope. I continue to be impressed with the level of engagement which our CWL councils have within the greater community with regard to the dignity and rights of persons, with almost all Edmonton Diocesan councils getting active in tangible ways to help the marginalized in society through hands-on service in addition to financial assistance. The CWL is known for its good works and hands-on approach to helping others and it shows!

Many councils reported educating their councils, parishes and local communities about women's rights, native and aboriginal women's issues, the rights of the disabled, the plight of the homeless, elder abuse and assault, human trafficking and exploitation, domestic abuse and violence, and international social justice (just to name a few!). Many councils reported writing to their MPs and MLAs about national CWL resolutions related to social justice, aboriginal rights, domestic violence, and human trafficking concerns. While many councils report few responses back from MPs and MLAs, other councils have received positive responses indicating an MP brought a matter up in Question Period or will continue to study an issue brought to his/her attention.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Edmonton Diocesan councils are involved with a HUGE number of activities within their communities! Councils have been involved with food bank and clothing closet donations, helping with school hot lunch programs, working at thrift shops, serving meals at soup kitchens and shelters, attending events for Magdalene House Society, collecting coats for kids, raising funds for Catholic Social Services, spreading messages of anti-bullying, helping women's shelters, delivering for Meals on Wheels, preparing Christmas Hampers, visiting the sick and dying, helping with funeral teams, and more! St Michael the Archangel council prays the rosary every Thursday at a local lodge. Parkland Holy Trinity's council has been active in promoting Transformation Textiles and their Dignity Kits so that girls can continue to attend school throughout their menstrual cycle. Sacred Heart in Edson provides assistance to Mother Hubbard's Cupboard to feed children that don't have lunch. St Albert, St Albert council provided a meal for Habitat for Humanity when the volunteer builders included women from the women's correctional institute and

men working-off community service hours. The council indicated this was an “eye opener” as the appreciation the CWL received for the meal was “wonderful to be a part of”. St Anthony’s in Lloydminster took part in the Coldest Night of the Year walk. Sacred Heart in Wetaskwin sponsored an inner-city woman to attend a retreat at the Star of the North. Many councils assisted with making prayer shawls for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission held in Edmonton in March 2014. Other activities included asking the parish priest to dedicate a month of Eucharistic Adoration to the victims of human trafficking and participating in candlelight vigils to bring greater reflection and awareness to issues such as mental illness as well as for murdered and missing aboriginal women. 27 councils reported participating in the sale of Fair Trade products (up from 22 in 2013)

REFUGEES/IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Most councils take an active part in supporting the CWL Diocesan Refugee Welcome Kits, with St Charles organizing these kits. Several councils help new refugee families in their parish by teaching English, donating household items, assisting with clothing, and participating on parish committees raising funds to help sponsor refugees from Iraq and Syria.

I encourage councils, to continue to support these efforts as well as to think of ways to support girls around the globe.

CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

19 councils are currently involved with CCODP through the 1% program (up from 14 councils in 2013). Please note that updated brochure materials for the 1% program are available through the National CWL. Almost all councils take an active part in Development and Peace’s Share Lent, emergency disaster relief (e.g. Phillipines), and Fall campaigns. Materials for all CCODP campaigns are provided free-of-charge at www.devop.org.

DEVELOPING COUNTRIES/MISSIONARY SUPPORT

Some of the projects supported by councils were: Father Hebert’s work in Nicaragua, Save-A-Family Plan, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Catholic Missions in Canada, On Eagles Wings, CNEWA, Northern Mission in Onion Lake, Esk-OMI Missions of the North, Mater Care, Hope Mission, Roots of Change, education support in Jamaica, providing assistance to families in India, and VICS (Volunteer International Christian Service). St Anne’s in Trochu participated in a Mission to Mexico in which they visited a dump outside of Mexico City and were struck by the deepness of the impact felt due to the poverty witnessed in the people they met. Our Lady of Peace council from Innisfail held a special fundraiser for young girls from mountain villages in Honduras to allow them to board at St Marguerites Garden. They also support a girl through Chalice.

Many young women report being drawn to the Catholic Women’s League through these types of active works in our various communities. As membership recruitment becomes an emerging issue for the CWL, Community Life may be a particular area to talk about in your parish communities with young women looking for opportunities to get more involved in their faith community. For councils that are looking for additional ways to get more involved in Community Life activities, St Maria Goretti council in Devon suggested that diocesan council hold a workshop to help parish councils share Community Life activity ideas and suggestions. I, too, think it would be very helpful to hold this type of workshop every few years and will pass along the recommendation to the next Community Life chair.

All of these activities must also be balanced with making sure our councils are serving our own Sisters in the league. Many of our Sisters are aging and becoming less mobile. In some cases, CWL members are caring for spouses with health concerns or grandchildren. Providing rides to meetings, visiting or phoning those who cannot attend meetings regularly are good ways to “check-in” with one another. Establish a buddy system, look out for one another in the community, and stay in touch.

Remember, service comes in many forms. The call for help may come in unexpected ways. St Charles in Mearns found called to serve their parish community by spearheading a campaign to reach out to past and present parishioners to help its parish through a financial crisis. As Faith Case wrote in her report, “Our CWL looks forward with great intention. As women of faith, we will continue with our ministries and aspire to answer the call of our parish.”

Respectfully submitted,
For God and Canada

Clover Oryschak

