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THE BUFFALO NEWS

Another Voice: Catholic Charities remains strong and welcoming

By [Another Voice](#) | Published September 16, 2018

By David Uba and Robert M. Bennett

We want to affirm our continuing support for the wide range of services provided by Catholic Charities in the eight counties of Western New York, and assure the community about the progress for the transition of the Foster Care and Adoption program. We also express our sadness and share understanding for the concerns of some in our community regarding the program.

Catholic Charities is moving forward, attentive to the needs of the children, families, funders and employees. The organization is diligently working with Erie County and New York State Office of Children and Family Services for the careful provision of foster families. Children will remain in the same homes. Staff is being supported in their search for internal positions or in their employment search.

Our CEO, diocesan director and other senior leaders have been very attentive to communicating with groups that are or may be impacted. Leaders met with program employees, foster and adoptive parents, and the county and state. All employees were invited to listening sessions and given the opportunity for private conversations if so preferred.

We wrote to our government and other funders and partners, met with leaders of the LGBTQ community, emphasizing that Catholic Charities remains a strong, welcoming organization committed as always to nondiscrimination. When each of us chaired the annual appeal, we communicated constantly about the services of Catholic Charities and its intra-agency network of care, as well as its external partners. We listened to the needs of people in parishes, schools, companies and agencies. We want people to ask for help. We also engaged with our professional staff who provide quality care and are ever mindful of the changing needs of individuals and families whom they serve.

What Catholic Charities does, day after day and year after year, truly defines what it is – the most comprehensive and valuable provider of human services across Western New York. Nearly 153,000 individuals were impacted in 2017. Food and clothing is provided by our outreach program; students receive help through in-school programs; social workers help veterans and their families; mental health treatment is given in two counties; the Women Infants and Children program provides nutritional support; job readiness skills and placement are provided. Many more programs serve people from all faiths.

These services must not be reduced. If Catholic Charities could not sustain these services, the direct victims would be neighbors in need, those who are vulnerable, those who struggle in poverty, and those can't afford to turn anywhere else for care.

David Uba is vice chair of the Catholic Charities Board of Trustees. Robert M. Bennett is a member of the Board of Trustees.