THIS IS EVERYTHING WE COULDN’T DO WITHOUT YOU.
Within these pages you’ll find stories and statistics of all the work The Don Bosco Centers is able to do right here in our community, thanks to you. Although the work being done is impressive, what’s even more important are the people behind these stats and stories. I hope you choose to look beyond these pages, to see the hope that your support can bring to the good people we are fortunate to serve.

-Mo Orpin, Executive Director
For more than 80 years, The Don Bosco Centers has been committed to cultivating self-sufficient neighbors for a stronger community. This past year, not only did we see a significant rise in prices, but we saw an increase of those in need. The Don Bosco Centers’ mission stands strong even in more difficult times. We will continue to serve despite the challenges.

The Don Bosco Centers is able to stand strong because of the amazing community we have surrounding us. We’ve laughed, cried, served, and fundraised together. These numbers are not a reflection of any one individual, but they are a collection of memories made and lives impacted together.
This year our cost to serve increased by 27%. However even with the continued rising prices, we were still able to increase the number of individuals served and the services we provided. We grew by cutting costs when possible, but never at the expense of our clients. We will continue to see the person, not the price tag.

Below are a variety of ways to help alleviate some of the costs:

- A donation of $50 will purchase household items for those we serve.
- A donation of $75 will purchase meals for a week for one of our lovely seniors.
- A donation of $100 can help fuel a van that will deliver meals to many.
- A donation of $250 will help purchase durable medical equipment.
- A donation of $500 will help provide emergency assistance to someone in need.

Every donation is important. The Don Bosco Centers cannot continue to serve without you. Please continue to read on and see the impact your support has had this past year.
THIS IS WHAT YOU ARE DOING.
Beloved World War II veteran and wonderful Don Bosco Senior, Vernon, recently spoke to us about what the Don Bosco Centers means to him. However, what Vernon doesn’t realize is how much he means to not only us here at Don Bosco, but to all of us living freely today.

Vernon is a Navy veteran with 33 years of active duty. He served in both the Pacific and Atlantic during World War II. He then later served in Korea and Viet Nam. “I flew nearly every airplane used by the military, even blimps,” says Vernon. He mapped enemy territories, then New Foundland, Alaska, and Labrador. The mapping he did was used to determine the route of the Alaskan pipeline. Vernon, his four sons, two grandsons, and one granddaughter, have dedicated a total of 125 years of service our country. “The military is in my family’s blood,” Vernon explains.

We can never repay Vernon for the amazing dedication and loyalty he and his family have shown our country. However, The Don Bosco Centers is here to support Vernon, and other veterans like him who may need some extra love and care.

Vernon took care of us, it’s our time to take care of him.

Vernon first came to The Don Bosco Centers in 2018 after his doctor insisted this was the place to be. At the time, Vernon was living alone and needed to be around other people, interacting and doing activities that would help his body and mind stay active. Vernon had been married to his first wife for 40 years before she died of ovarian cancer. Vernon says, “I was lucky to find love again and was married to my second wife, of 20 years, until she died of Alzheimer’s in 2017.” Vernon took the advice of his doctor and visited The Don Bosco Centers shortly after her passing. “I made lots of new friends with whom I could catch up on news, tease each other, and just enjoy personal contact and communication, something that we all needed,” explains Vernon.

At 97 years old, Vernon calls himself the “senior” of the Senior Center. He enjoys the camaraderie of the people here at Don Bosco, and he loves the activities offered, especially dance!

Although, we don’t see Vernon around as much as we used to, we still make sure he has everything he needs. “I had COVID-19 last year and it took a toll on me. I still have lingering effects with my balance, so I don’t go to the Senior Center as much as I used to, but Don Bosco is still making sure my needs are met,” Vernon states.

Vernon receives a meal, delivered right to his door, every day! He describes the meals as outstanding. He says, “The Don Bosco Centers offer a great variety, and it’s important to me that they work with a nutritionist that makes sure the meals are nourishing and well balanced. If I was left to cook for myself, that might not happen.”

Don Bosco staff member Peg delivers Vernon’s meals and many others, but she’s not just dropping off a meal and leaving. Peg, and other Don Bosco meal delivery drivers, check in on every homebound senior each and every day. The drivers are often the only check-in the homebound seniors get throughout the week.

“To me, my interaction with Vernon is something I look forward to every day. He is like the grandpa I never had. I’m happy to check in on him and help him out when he allows.” Vernon loves his independence, and having meals delivered right to his door continues to allow for him to live independently.

Vernon looks forward to Peg’s daily visits just as much as Peg looks forward to visiting him. Vernon says, “When she comes to deliver my meal and make sure everything is okay, she also brings a meal to my neighbor, and collects the mail on her way in. Peg offers us both emotional and personal support that I appreciate very much.”

Vernon ends the conversation asking us to all support The Don Bosco Centers. However, we ask that you continue to support Vernon, and the many others like him, that we have the pleasure of knowing and serving here at The Don Bosco Centers.

“God bless you, God bless The Don Bosco Centers, and God bless America,” Vernon proclaims.
There are many more touching and impactful stories similar to Vernon’s that we can’t wait to share with you, but with their stories, also come their needs. The Don Bosco Centers is here to help in many different ways. Our Senior Center not only offers free hot, nutritious meals but it serves as an activities center for seniors and those with disabilities. Our seniors, come to socialize, play bingo, make crafts, attend exercise classes, get help with technology, and more. Our senior client advocates are here every day to provide assistance in paying bills, ordering medical equipment, navigating legal and healthcare systems, giving emotional support, and more. The goal is to help these seniors live more independently, in better health, and with greater joy.

With an average monthly income of $950 it is vital that these seniors get support. By providing meals, household items, utility assistance, medical screenings, and more, The Don Bosco Centers saves clients an average of $630 monthly.

A FEW DOORS DOWN AT THE COMMUNITY CENTER

The multi-faceted Don Bosco Community Center reopened in June 2020 after an extensive restoration and renovation of the original building. The Community Center features a gymnasium, fully equipped classrooms, a small business incubator space, and commercial grade kitchen.

There continues to be a steady increase of use in each of the spaces from games and practices, to board meetings, seminars, catering, and more. Some of our community partners include, but are not limited to The Sewing Labs, Crossroads Charter Schools, Kansas City Teacher Residency Program, Holy Rosary Credit Union, and Columbus Park Neighborhood Association. Thanks to a recent grant from Rebuild KC, additional upgrades are underway to the gymnasium – stage curtains, audio-visual equipment, and large fans. Having these additions will only increase the scope of what the building has to offer.

The Community Center complements the Senior Center with outreach to people in the Historic Northeast, including a monthly Harvesters Mobile Food Distribution to feed those in need. Through our partnership with Bishop Sullivan Center, we are able to provide fresh produce to over 25 refugee and immigrant families and 20 homebound seniors weekly. In addition, we serve as conduit to assist the refugee families by addressing food insecurity, and needs for housing, clothing, and more.

As a unique event space, The Center has been the perfect place to celebrate and once again become a place for the community to gather. This past year we were able to use our building to host various special events. Our first annual Mouse Races were a smashing success and we anticipate the event growing year to year. We paid homage to The Don Bosco Centers of years gone by and their annual Street Carnival by hosting our very own Bosco Block Party. The Block Party and our Third Friday pop-up art gallery are both celebrations of our home in Columbus Park.

The Don Bosco Community Center continues to work on building the vision for a unique Teen Center that will offer teens living in the Northeast access to multiple organizations such as Boys and Girls Club, Mattie Rhodes, HALO, and many more. Lastly, the Don Bosco Community Center anticipates offering a plethora of Community Education classes.

It is our hope to become the heart and soul of Columbus Park once again.
The Don Bosco English as a Second Language (ESL) School provides free education and career development opportunities to adult immigrants and refugees.

The ESL Program is made possible through our partnership with Literacy KC, where language students will progress through a multi-level curriculum centered around life skills. This program is taught by Missouri state-certified Adult Education and Literacy instructors, and is one of the largest programs in Missouri. There are currently 626 students enrolled in the ESL Program.

Additionally, the ESL School offers workforce development opportunities. Students in this program create a career path with post-secondary education and/or certification in high demand jobs and fields. The program assists students in achieving both their personal and professional goals. We’re proud these programs help ensure students earn a living wage.

After fleeing the war-torn country of Congo, in 2003, Murisho and Nyerta Abwe found temporary relief at a refugee camp. Although, this was a temporary fix to what was turning into a long and difficult journey, Mr. & Mrs. Abwe were thankful for safety. It was at the refugee camp that they would start a family and continue to pray. They were held there for 11 years. 7 of their 8 children would be born at the camp. This temporary home, was the only life that they had known.

Still not at peace, The Abwe’s continued to hope that one day they would find home in America. Finally, 11 years later, they received notice that they were being granted asylum in Kansas City, MO. Uprooting their lives once again, moving to yet another foreign land, hoping and praying for safety and security for their family. The Abwe family was finally resettled in 2014.

Shortly after being resettled, they were connected with The Don Bosco Centers. They began taking classes at our English as a Second Language School and started creating a life for themselves in their new home. Both Murisho and Nyerta were taught English, received help in securing proper documentation, and eventually green cards. All eight of their children became U.S. Citizens and began attending school. Everyone continued to acclimate. “It was a huge culture shock when we arrived, The Don Bosco Centers didn’t just teach us the language, they taught us how to live in America,” says Mrs. Abwe. Additionally, Don Bosco was able to help both Mr. & Mrs. Abwe learn how to drive, and both participated in job training programs. Mr. Abwe says, “When we came, we didn’t even know how to say hello, but now I’ve been to college and have a job that provides for my family.”

8 years later, The Don Bosco Centers is proud to stay connected to The Abwe family. We have been lucky to support this family in becoming self-sufficient neighbors in our community. We have loved being a part of their journey and look forward to seeing everything this amazing family accomplishes. Together, Mr. & Mrs. Abwe note, “We put our trust in Don Bosco, they continue to help and haven’t given up on us. If someone needs help, we know who to call. There is no other important place like The Don Bosco Centers.”

Special notes from The Abwe’s
A SPECIAL THANKS

Alexis Barbosa
Allied Refreshment
John Thomas Anderson
Anne Kim
Ash Grove Foundation
Rey & Scarlet Barbosa
Barry Road Associates
Kim Belfield
David Belfonte
Bluescope Foundation North America
James Brun
Bukaty Companies Prop & Casualty
Charles & Anita Cacioppo
Joe Cali
Carrie J. Loose
Central Bank of Kansas City
Cerner Charitable Foundations
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Danny’s Plumbing
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GKC Comm Foundation
Brock and Anita Guernsey
Walter & Judi Guth
Health Forward Foundation
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Hoda Tavalali & Craig Ward
Chuck Cacioppo-Industrial Salvage & Wrecking
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Jewish Community Foundation
John & Lisa Neyens
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Joseph Turner
Joy D. Swallow
Kansas City Restaurant Week
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Kevin Dunn Charitable Foundation
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Tyler Klein
LeAnn Kridelbaugh & Dr. Leslie Moore
Laura Read-BCBS of KC
LDS Church
Lisa Jimenez
Joseph Matye & Cheryl Ritter
McCullough Family Foundation
McGee Family Foundation
Lori & Mike McGroder
MEM Missouri Employers Mutual
Michael & Marilyn Haverty Family Foundation
Greg & Danielle Wilcox- Midway Auto Parts
Mid-West Terminal Warehouse Company
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Gregory Payne
PCRE Rest Group
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Lucinda Rice-Petrie
Sarah & John Cousineau
Kimberly Schlichter
Schwab Charitable
Sexton Family Foundation
Shook Hardy & Bacon
Sioux Chief Manufacturing Company
Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth
Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet
Royce Smith
St. Vincent De Paul
Sysco
Gayla & Salvatore Tocco
Tortoise Foundation
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