

LOGO



ABOUT US

Caritas of Austin believes that when every person has a stable place to call home, they can realize their full potential and contribute to our community. We help to build wellbeing by ensuring people have a safe place to live, access to healthy food, jobs that allow them to provide for their families, and the knowledge and skills to reach their goals. Together, our professional staff partners and clients construct a strong foundation to withstand the storms of life that affect all of us, such as an unexpected job loss or a family illness. Our innovative, personalized, and proven approach to ending homelessness creates a more vibrant Austin for all.

MISSION AND VISION

Our Mission: We prevent and end homelessness for people in Greater Austin.

Our Vision: We aim to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring in Austin.

OUR NAME

“Caritas” means love/charity in Latin (pronounced Care-it-ahs).

HISTORY

Caritas of Austin founder: Monsignor Richard McCabe

Year founded: 1964

Caritas of Austin was founded 55 years ago with the belief that all people deserve to have their basic needs met. Our founder, Father McCabe was known for seeing needs and addressing them. Food was one of the first needs Father McCabe addressed at Caritas of Austin, and our Community Kitchen today is a continuation of that vision. While our services have grown tremendously since then, treating each person with dignity and respect remains at the core of our work.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Jo Kathryn Quinn is the Executive Director at Caritas of Austin. She has been on the Caritas of Austin staff since 2005; and served as Director of Housing Services prior to taking the Executive Director role in 2012. She holds a Master of Divinity (Theology) Degree from Southwestern Seminary, and has more than 25 years of experience in nonprofit management. She is a passionate advocate for ending homelessness.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

Everyone is unique. Our professional staff and our clients work together to create a personalized plan for stability and wellbeing. At the heart of our services is the partnership between our staff and the people we serve.

With a stable home comes a stable foundation. Once our clients are in stable housing, they can consider job options, receive vocational training, learn life skills and address physical and mental wellbeing.

Ending homelessness happens together. Caritas of Austin works with community partners to be more strategic and effective in addressing homelessness. We also rely on the Austin community for volunteer support and generous donations.

WHO WE SERVE

Everyone we serve at Caritas of Austin has experienced the devastating reality of homelessness. Some people have lived on the streets of Austin for years. Others are less visible, living in their car or other temporary shelter. An unexpected crisis such as an injury, illness, or a lost job can leave people on the brink of homelessness with nowhere to turn for support. Caritas of Austin knows there are many faces of homelessness, and our many programs address each of those populations and ensure that homelessness does not define people's future.

OUR PROGRAMS

Supportive Housing - Long-term housing and support services for adult individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness and have a disabling condition.

Rapid Rehousing - Short-term housing and financial assistance with case management support for families and individuals who have more recently become homeless.

Supportive Services for Veteran Families - Rapid rehousing services for veteran families experiencing homelessness.

Community Kitchen - Daily lunch service Monday – Friday to anyone who is hungry.

Pantry - Groceries for families currently enrolled in one of Caritas' programs.

Education - Cultural orientation, life skills, and workforce development classes offered to all clients.

Employment - Resume and interview assistance, job placement, vocational training, and career development for current clients.

OUR UNIQUE APPROACH TO ENDING HOMELESSNESS

We have over 50 years of proven leadership in the community.

We offer comprehensive housing, food, education, employment, and mental health services.

Housing is always our first intervention with clients, and there are no pre-conditions to housing people.

Our housing programs employ methods with proven national and local data to reduce homelessness.

Our highly trained social work professionals treat the people we serve with the utmost respect and dignity.

Case managers work as partners with clients to develop a personalized plan that's unique to each person's situation and goals.

We believe in fully integrating people back into the Austin community and housing them in any part of town that fits their life and goals.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why are people homeless?

People lose stable housing for many reasons, and for most, it's a process that happens over time. People living in poverty without a strong support system are most at risk, especially when an unexpected crisis occurs.

Q: How many people are homeless in Austin?

Last year's annual Homeless Point-In-Time Count identified **2,255** people experiencing homelessness in the Austin area, but it's estimated that over **10,000** people access homeless services over the course of a year.

Q: Who makes up the homeless population in Austin?

Only a fraction of the overall homeless population are the "visible homeless" you may see on the street corners. The majority are people you don't see or consider: families experiencing homelessness, with people staying in their cars or with others, youth without a stable home, and veterans struggling to transition to civilian life. Despite rapid population growth in Austin, the number of people experiencing homelessness has remained steady, which means our solutions are working and we just need to scale them as a community.

Q: Are people homeless because they choose it or have addiction problems?

Homelessness is a traumatic and dehumanizing experience, one that very few people actually choose. While some people experiencing homelessness do have substance abuse, it's rarely the reason they became homeless. A traumatic experience, loss, or unaddressed mental health issue is most often the root cause of homelessness.

Q: What does Housing First mean?

Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that asserts it is most effective to *first* move people into permanent housing *and then* address other areas such as income/employment, mental and physical health, sobriety, and more. With a housing first approach, clients are not required to take certain steps or actions before being housed.

Q: Do you own housing properties?

Not at this time. Caritas of Austin partners with dozens of landlords and properties in the community to identify housing that meets the needs of each clients. We believe people thrive most when they are fully integrated with other community members. Our clients currently live in almost every part of Austin.

Q: Where do you get the food for your Community Kitchen and Pantry?

Our food services are heavily supported through food donations and community food drives. Food donated to the Community Kitchen must be prepared in a commercial kitchen. The Caritas Chef creates a balanced daily meal based on donations received from grocery stores, local community gardens, and restaurants, in addition to purchasing necessary groceries. The Pantry is stocked almost completely through community donations. For a list of most-needed food items, please visit www.caritasofaustin.org.

Q: Can anyone in the community come to the Caritas Pantry?

The Caritas Pantry is only available to current clients.

Q: Do clients get to choose which food they get?

Yes. Caritas of Austin uses a self-shopping model where clients get to select items from each food and hygiene items category. Quantities are based on household size.

Q: How many volunteers help in the Community Kitchen?

Each weekday, 8-12 individual and group volunteers help prepare and serve lunch in the Community Kitchen. With only two Kitchen staff members, Caritas of Austin relies on volunteers to make this service possible. If you are interested in signing up to serve, contact Loly Thomas at lthomas@caritasofaustin.org.

Q: Can anyone eat lunch in the Community Kitchen or just your clients?

The Community Kitchen serves lunch to 250 people daily and is open to *anyone* who is hungry. Lunch service is from 11:00AM-12:30 PM Monday through Friday.

Q: How can I get involved in helping Caritas of Austin end homelessness?

Volunteer in the Community Kitchen: Group and individuals are needed Monday – Friday to prepare and serve lunch to 250 people. Volunteer shifts are from 9:00am – 1:30pm, and volunteers are asked to be there for the entire volunteer shift to ensure services are possible.

Host A Community Fundraiser: Whether it's a lemonade stand, a roundup promotion, or another creative fundraiser, you or your business can host a community event to benefit Caritas of Austin.

Become a direct service volunteer: Work directly with clients in building wellbeing and restoring stability in their lives. Opportunities can include apartment setup, transportation assistance, English practice, job search assistance, and more. Caritas University classes are required, and volunteer hours are flexible. Requires a 6-month commitment.

Collect food donations: Help keep the Caritas Pantry stocked by collecting food and hygiene items with co-workers, family, friends, or members of any group. Caritas of Austin staff members can help you organize and promote your food drive and provide other resources as needed.

Assemble Welcome Home baskets: Welcome home baskets have essential household items like towels, cleaning supplies, and other bathroom and kitchen items. These are given to clients when they move into stable housing.

Make a financial donation: A donation in any amount makes a difference in the lives of the hundreds of people we serve each year. You can make a donation at www.caritasofaustin.org or by mail to: PO Box 1947, Austin TX 78767. All financial donations are tax deductible. You can also easily set up a monthly donation on our website.

Donate gift cards: Gift cards to Walmart and HEB allow clients to purchase basic food and household items, as well as cover prescription costs. Groups can host a gift card drive as an alternative to a food drive. Suggested gift card amount: \$20-25.

Donate household items: The Caritas Wish List is on our website and lists the most-needed household items.

Participating or volunteering at the ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot: This event has raised over \$3.5 million to support Caritas' work since 1991. Come out and walk or run on Thanksgiving Day or fill one of 500 volunteer slots to help with packet pick-up or race day logistics.

Rent to our clients: Caritas of Austin staff members work with dozens of landlords and property owners throughout the city to house the people we serve. Our clients pay rent just like any other tenant, and landlords also have the ongoing support of Caritas staff should any issues arise.

Become an employment partner: Partner with the Caritas team to employ the diverse people Caritas of Austin serves. See employment partner benefits in the Employment section on our website.