

Catholic Charities to open second office in East Idaho

By Colette Cowman

ICR editor

IDAHO FALLS—Thanks to the generosity of two Eastern Idaho parishes, Catholic Charities of Idaho now has offices in Idaho Falls as well as Blackfoot, and staff is providing services to families, youth, the aging, and immigrants throughout the area.

"Because St. Bernard's in Blackfoot, and the Idaho Falls Catholic Community in Idaho Falls have been so generous with us, it enables us to provide these social services," said Marie Hoff, Catholic Charities of Idaho (CCI) executive director.

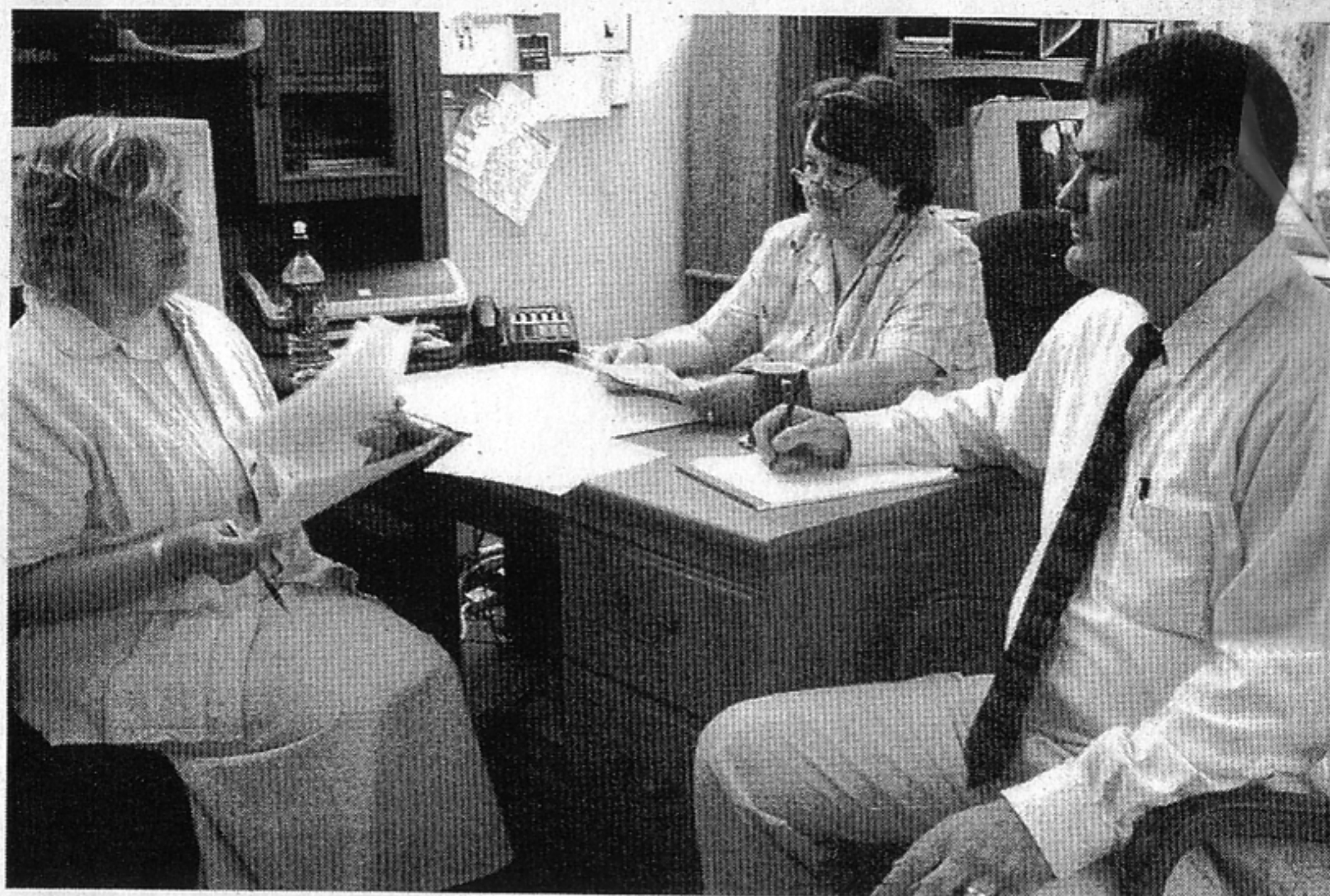
Catholic Charities will host an Open House Sept. 19 for the Idaho Falls Catholic community after all the Sunday Masses. The Open House will take place at the Catholic Charities office space at Holy Rosary Church, 228 1/2 Ninth Street, Idaho Falls. All are welcome to stop by to see the office and meet the staff.

The staff includes Kathleen Hall, Eastern Region CCI administrator, Roma Hawkins, a social worker, and Jason Brown, who provides family immigration services.

Brown will do immigration services in the Idaho Falls office the first and third Tuesday of each month and social service staff will be there each Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Some evening appointments are also available. To make appointments call (208) 782-0027 or (208) 782-1194.

The Blackfoot office, which opened two years ago, is on the parish grounds at 570 West Sexton Street, Blackfoot. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Immigration appointments are also available in American



CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF IDAHO EAST—Catholic Charities of Idaho staff compares notes and does some planning in their offices on the grounds of St. Bernard's Church, Blackfoot. They are from left Roma Hawkins, a social worker, Kathleen Hall, the program

director, and Jason Brown, who provides immigration services in the area. The staff just opened another office in space provided by the Idaho Falls Catholic Community at 228 1/2 Ninth Street, Idaho Falls. They will host an Open House after all the Masses Sept. 19.

Falls on the first and third Thursday of each month. Interested person can schedule appointments by calling the numbers listed above.

Hall, who has a Master's Degree in criminal justice, is responsible for office operations, parish social ministry and volunteer recruitment, training, and the Empower and Valuing the Aging (EVA) Program.

"EVA is a unique volunteer program which offers family-based volunteer opportunities in which children, with assistance from their parents, interact with elderly or homebound individuals," she said.

Hawkins, who holds a

Master's Degree in social work from the University of Denver, Colo., works in Youth and Family Services.

"The objective is to strengthen families and help 'at risk' youth," said Hawkins. She provides support to an after school program at a local homeless shelter, conducts community workshops and parenting classes. She also provides family and individual counseling.

"All these programs support Catholic Charities' mission by working to strengthen family life and meet the social needs of individuals, communities and groups," Hawkins said.

She said everyone is eli-

gible for services without regard to creed. Fees vary from program to program. A sliding fee schedule is offered based on income so no one is turned away.

Brown holds a Bachelor's Degree in Spanish from Idaho State University, Pocatello, and has training and practical experience with immigration services through the Boise Catholic Charities office. He has also attended CLINIC, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network training and plans to apply for accreditation through the Board of Immigration Appeals. He has also had 12 years of Spanish translation work in the courts, jails, farms and hospitals of Idaho and California.

"The objective of the immigration service is to help those who are in the process

with complete confidentiality. They can come to my office without worry of being soaked of every penny and with the confidence that the paperwork they submit will be done correctly and completely."

Anyone who has a family member who can petition immigration for them is eligible for immigration services, he said. He does refer some cases to attorneys based on previous criminal convictions, deportations and a few other factors.

Charges are \$20 for the first visit. Further visits are charged on a sliding scale based on income.

"We are here to help people," Brown said.

Another program Catholic Charities of Idaho is offering in Eastern Idaho in collaboration with the Southeast Idaho Community Action Agency and the Southeast Idaho Food Bank is "Families Helping Families," which started in June.

Hall said the self-governing group is open to families who are at poverty level and are interested in becoming self reliant and improving their skills in budgeting, nutrition, parenting, and goal setting.

Active participants in good standing have the opportunity to be part of the group food order from the Food Bank.

"As the lead and fiscal agency, CCI is responsible for guiding the participants as they learn the skills of group process and decision making," Hall said. "CCI staff also teaches the sessions on parenting, goal setting and other topics as well as overseeing food ordering and delivery."

Bi-monthly meetings of Families Helping Families are held at St. Bernard's Parish Hall. As the demand increases, Hall said a second group