

Santa Maria Community Services, Inc.



On December 8, 2022, Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. will celebrate 125 years of serving families in Cincinnati, our quasiquintennial. Founded by two Sisters of Charity, Blandina and Justina Segale, Santa Maria began as a settlement house serving Cincinnati's Italian immigrant population. Settlement houses were part of a reformist social movement whose goal was to bring together affluent and underprivileged residents of a community in an effort to alleviate poverty. They provided educational, recreational, and other social services to the community.

Maria Maddalena Segale was born in Cicagna, Italy on December 12, 1846, followed by her sister, Maria Rosa Segale, on January 23, 1850. The Segale family emigrated to America in 1854, settling in the Basin area of Cincinnati. Both sisters attended parochial schools run by the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati and in 1866 entered the novitiate of the Sisters of Charity. Maria Maddalena received the name Justina and Maria Rosa received the name Blandina.

The Sisters both served the people of Trinidad, Colorado and Albuquerque, New Mexico in their early days of service. Sister Blandina famously met Billy the Kid's gang and prevented the scalping of four prominent citizens of Trinidad. In 1893, Sister Blandina was called back to Cincinnati, with her sister to follow in 1897. Sister Justina was working with Italian immigrants when the Most Reverend Archbishop Elder approached the sisters and asked them to expand their work with immigrant outreach in the Italian community. Together, the Sisters turned \$5 seed money into the Santa Maria Italian Educational and Industrial Home.

Santa Maria first made its home in borrowed classrooms located at Holy Trinity School. In 1899, Santa Maria moved to a former convent owned by the Sisters of St. Frances located at Third and Lytle Streets (now Lytle Park). The Sisters of Charity wrote, "This first home was a God-send and deep gratitude was felt for the Franciscan Sisters for this timely aid." The Sacro Cuore (The Sacred Heart) School was opened there in 1900. There would be many more homes for Santa Maria over the years. Whether it was in downtown, Over-The-Rhine, or Lower and East Price Hill, Santa Maria was dedicated to helping the community.

From the very beginning, Santa Maria offered financial assistance and visited homes to render social services. In the early twentieth century, Santa Maria became involved with the Juvenile Court Auxiliary and Sister Blandina even became a Probation Officer. Santa Maria created the Domestic Science Department that taught sewing, millinery and culinary classes, and the Free Employment Bureau that assisted people in finding employment. A Temporary Home for the Unemployed provided lodging for women and girls and arranged lodging for men at various

Celebrating 125 Years
of helping people help themselves

1897

December 8, Santa Maria is founded by S. Blandina & S. Justina Segale

1916

Santa Maria becomes a member of the Council of Social Agencies (United Way)

1918

Santo Bambino Day Nursery opens

1922

St. Anthony Welfare Center opens. Services move to 13th & Republic Streets

1941

Services change emphasis from Italians to the people who migrated from Appalachia

1966

Services move to Lower Price Hill. A storefront service center opens at 2112 Storrs Street

places in the city. Srs. Blandina and Justina and other staff and volunteers visited the sick, the poor and those in prison. "One of the greatest works of charity, with excellent results, we found to be the giving of a helping hand in the hour of need," wrote the Sisters of Charity in 1922 when they celebrated Santa Maria's silver jubilee.

Another service Santa Maria offered was visiting tenement homes. "Visiting the homes gave us a good opportunity to correct many abuses, promote education and keep informed of the needs of the working people," the Sisters of Charity wrote. Santa Maria opened The Santo Bambino Day Nursery in 1918, providing much needed childcare in the neighborhood. It created a Mothers' Club that met once a week under the supervision of Mrs. Charles Ginocchio. "Mrs. Ginocchio has fulfilled the hopes of the club beyond all expectations by her generosity and faithful service," wrote the Sisters of Charity. The Ginocchio's descendants and extended family members are still involved with Santa Maria today. Santa Maria conducted evening classes in citizenship, English, and Italian, and began after school activities for youth that included dance, drama, and art classes, study and social clubs and recreational activities. In addition, Santa Maria ran Mothers' and Men's Clubs, and provided entertainment in the form of concerts, lectures, and outings. At one point Santa Maria had its own choir, Boy and Girl Scout troops and even a baseball and basketball team.



After World War II, Santa Maria changed its service focus to Appalachians who were migrating to Cincinnati in record numbers in search of better-paying industrial jobs and higher standards of living. It added many services for senior citizens, continued working with school children and provided a preschool. By the 1960s, Santa Maria was beginning to take on the shape of a modern social welfare agency and moved the bulk of its services to Lower and East Price Hill.

Early contributors to Santa Maria included the Ginocchio's, Mr. and Mrs. J. Castellini, Otto Armleder and even Queen Margaret of Italy. One of Santa Maria's Honorary Board Presidents was His Grace Most Reverend Archbishop Moeller, D.D. Names like Chiotti, Fox, Cardosi, Miller, Farrell, Storer, Ginocchio, Murray, Olberding, and Fitzpatrick made up Santa Maria's Board of Directors. Some of those families still support Santa Maria today!

For our 100th birthday, Santa Maria made this analogy comparing the agency with the ship by the same name that carried explorers to the new world: "The waters have always run deep, and the sea has never been calm. As we look back, we are proud of our accomplishments. We accept that there are new horizons to move toward. We sense that our ship is afloat, and the wind has caught its sails." As Santa Maria advances through its 125th year of service, it continues to sail on with the wind at its back.

1972

Santa Maria Community Services, Inc. becomes an independent, not-for-profit agency

1987

Family Nurture Center opens at 718 State Avenue in Lower Price Hill

1992

Santa Maria consolidates East Price Hill services at 3301 Warsaw Avenue

1997

Santa Maria celebrates its 100th anniversary and the 25th anniversary of Meals on Wheels

1998

The Santa Maria Endowment Fund, with a matching gift from Bank One, is established

1999

SM contracts with the Every Child Succeeds initiative, providing home visitation services

Thank You, Our Long-term Donors!

Santa Maria would like to thank the following donors who gave for at least 15 of the last 22 years (as long as we've been keeping digital records). We are certain some of you have been giving for even longer! Thank you so much!

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Legacy Gifts

Please consider giving a legacy gift in this 125th legacy year, if you have not yet done so! Contact Nuné Sargsyan at (513) 557-7267 or nune.sargsyan@santamariacincy.org to discuss how you can leave a legacy for Santa Maria.

2001

The Jordan Center merges into Santa Maria and the Bienestar program begins

2005

The agency's first computer network and voice-over-Internet phone system is installed

2008

Santa Maria becomes a Better Business Bureau accredited charity & receives the BBB Seal

2009

The International Welcome Center is formed to assist immigrants with ESL classes & other programming

2011

Santa Maria's Price Hill Financial Opportunity Center opens & supports: Earn It, Keep It, Grow It!

2012

Literacy Center West merges into Santa Maria and offers GED preparation & job-readiness

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2014

SM adds AmeriCorps & receives Agency of the Year award from Alliance for Immigrant Women

2015

SM receives the Agency of the Year award from the National Association of Social Workers

2016

Santa Maria establishes the Joe Williams Family Center to house its Youth Development program

2018

Santa Maria adds an annual fundraising event, The Sharing Table

2020

When faced with a global pandemic, Santa Maria pivots to serve clients remotely

2022

Santa Maria celebrates its 125th anniversary of helping people help themselves