

With Catholic Charities' help, Filipino orphans seek adoption in Baltimore area

By Catholic Review Staff

Four orphaned children from Manila, Philippines, are visiting Maryland for four weeks in hope of finding an adoptive family.

The children - Criselyn, 14; Clarita, 13; John, 11; and Cristina, 9 -are participating in the Catholic Charities of Baltimore Philippines Summer Program. Since its founding in 2004, the annual program has featured 144 children, 109 of whom have found adoptive families.

Criselyn, Clarita and John are siblings and staying with a family in Rockville. Cristina is staying with a family in Edgewater. Catholic Charities did not publicize the children's last names.

Each year Catholic Charities seeks host families to commit to hosting a child or sibling set, and who are willing to help raise the \$3,000 cost for each child's participation.

According to Catholic Charities, most of the children participating in the program live in orphanages. They no longer live with their birth family for a variety of reasons, including family breakdown due to abuse, neglect, poverty, mental or physical illness, incarceration, addiction or death.

The adoption process for these children could take 10 to 12 months, and adoptive parents must travel to the Philippines to receive their child. Adoption fees, including travel, cost an estimated \$25,000 for a single child, and \$3,000 for an additional child.

Catholic Charities of Baltimore may be the only Catholic Charities program in the country to offer this kind of partnership with orphanages in the Philippines, said its director Laurie Vozzella-Bell.

The agency is hosting a picnic Aug. 12 for families who are interested in adopting the visiting children or hosting children next year. For more information on Catholic Charities' Philippines Summer Program, contact Ellen Warnock, Catholic Charities' associate administrator of the Center for Family Services, at 401-659-4050.