



Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.

The Sage

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Roberto Ramirez, on the left, is thanked by San Gabriel Advisory Board Member, Gary Krauss.

Retirement after 40 Years' Service

San Gabriel Region celebrated Roberto Ramirez' 40 years of service and dedication to clients of Catholic Charities at his retirement celebration on January 22, 2023. His celebration included a Mass officiated by our late, beloved Bishop David O'Connell.

Roberto's journey with Catholic Charities of Los Angeles began on July 1, 1982. His time with Catholic Charities was his way of answering a deep call to service. His commitment to his calling was reflected in every client interaction. He knew each client by name and always showed great respect and compassion. Roberto's kindness was always noticed and former clients loved him. To the clients, Roberto was not an employee of Catholic Charities, but a "querido amigo," a dear friend. ❀

Learning How to be Part of the Solution to Homelessness



Service providers, committed to serving the homeless, gave out information to the attendees.

On March 18, the Office of Life, Justice & Peace of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles hosted the "United Together: Homeless Ministry Resource Fair 2023" at the beautiful campus of Bishop Conaty-Our Lady of Loretto High School. Representatives from government, business, social service, and faith-based organizations, who were interested in learning more about helping the homeless, attended the event.

The Fair provided the opportunity for people to connect with various service providers that are committed to serving the homeless. The emphasis of the morning was on discussing and learning how to be a part of the solution.

Local organizations provided staff and information for the interested participants. The agencies that attended were: Catholic Charities of Los Angeles; Habitat for Humanity San

Gabriel Valley; Harvest Home; LA Catholic Worker; LAC-Department of Mental Health; Office of Life, Justice and Peace; The Poor of Jesus Christ; Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Council of Los Angeles; and SOFSA.

Later in the morning, Michael Donaldson, the Senior Director of the Office of Life, Justice and Peace, moderated a panel discussion of three presenters, including Msgr. Gregory Cox, Executive Director of Catholic Charities. They spoke about the challenges of serving the 66,433 homeless individuals who are on the streets of Los Angeles County every night. After the presentations, the audience followed-up with a number of insightful questions.

By the end of the morning, attendees left with additional contacts and information that would help them to be "part of the solution" to the critical homeless issue. ❀

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Message from the Executive Director, Rev. Monsignor Gregory A. Cox

Work is the duty of being human. This duty arises from the very needs of life, as well as from the meaning that work holds for our internal growth. Without work, it is not possible either to sustain life or to reach the full development of one's personality.

It is enough to glance around us in order to notice everywhere the fruits of work. It gives us a chance to satisfy hunger and thirst; it shelters us, raises a roof over our heads; it makes human life possible, easy and pleasant.

Work has more than merely consumer aims. Our whole rational nature urges us to it. For work leads to the complete development of our spiritual powers and to the perfecting of our lives.

John Paul II in his encyclical, On Human Work, shares a more complete understanding of work. He says, if we exalt and elevate work, this is not merely because we find in work the means of our own elevation, but also because work is the duty of the rational being and because it is for us the way to reveal and develop all our spiritual gifts.

There is only one solution: to break with the notion that assigns only one aim to work, that is, the satisfaction of the need of our existence. It is a need of our rational nature; we get to know ourselves fully through work, and learn to express ourselves completely in it. Only then, can we influence matter in a really fitting and useful manner.

The fruits of work that is thus understood will not be wasted or badly used but will become blessings for the world. ❀

Esperanza's Community Education Programs: A Vital Lifeline for Immigrants

Access to legal counsel has an enormous impact on the outcomes of cases in immigration court. A study by the American Immigration Council found that individuals represented by legal counsel were five times more likely to obtain legal relief. However, unlike in criminal law where legal counsel is a right, there is no right to legal counsel in immigration law and, sadly, at least 40% of individuals in immigration removal proceedings today go through the process without legal representation.

To address this great need, Catholic Charities' Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project - Community Education (CE) programs help educate and empower those at risk of deportation and without legal counsel. Through legal orientations, individualized legal assistance, workshops, referrals for legal representation and social service referrals, the Esperanza CE teams provide a vital lifeline to thousands who are left alone to navigate the complex world of immigration law. In the past fiscal year alone, Esperanza served over 8,200 individuals through its CE programs.

For more information on the programs and services under Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project, or to volunteer or financially support the program, please contact Kimberley Plotnik, Program Director, at kplotnik@ccharities.org or visit their website at www.esperanza-la.org. ❀



Jonathan Vallejo, an Esperanza Managing Attorney for Community Education Programs, gives a presentation on the basics of Asylum law.

Another Success Story for Jobe

Xina is just one of the many success stories of the Jobe Transitional Living Program. She is in her senior year at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) and will be earning her bachelor's degree in Entertainment Media Management this spring. Joining the program in 2019, Xina immediately began to flourish. She maintained a job while excelling in her studies. With money earned from her job, she was able to build her savings, as well as purchase a car. With the help of resources given through Jobe, Xina successfully transitioned out of the Jobe program in February of this year.

Like many of Jobe's alumni, Xina will be involved in their Aftercare Program, which will provide her with the necessary support and services to transition from being a college student to succeeding in the professional world. ❖



Xina successfully transitioned out of the Jobe program in February, 2023.

Family Finds Hope After Struggling with Homelessness

The Smith family wanted a better life for themselves and their children, prompting them to move from Flint, Michigan to California in search of good jobs and pleasant weather. However, their experience did not go as planned.

First arriving in San Francisco, the family soon faced difficulties due to the high cost of living. After losing his job, Mr. Smith reached out to a long-lost sibling, and soon the family relocated to Long Beach. Unfortunately, the family's situation worsened when the sibling passed away shortly after their arrival, leaving them homeless and without any resources.

They discovered Catholic Charities' Long Beach Community



The Smith family is grateful for Catholic Charities' assistance.

Center, which provided them with essential services such as mental health counseling, CalFresh benefits, and stable housing.

With the help of Catholic Charities, the Smith family was able to secure a new apartment through the Rapid Rehousing Program, which covered the move-in costs and provided 60% of their rental expenses for up to a year. Their adult son was able to enroll in Long Beach Community College, and Mr. Smith received workforce development assistance

from a local non-profit agency.

The Smith family have settled into their new life in California and are dedicated to creating a better future for themselves and future generations. ❖

Lompoc Community Center Helps the Most Vulnerable

Cynthia Villarreal is a Senior client of Catholic Charities' Lompoc Community Center and has lived in Lompoc for 40 years. She previously volunteered at the community center for five years.

A couple of months ago, Cynthia came to Ryzbel Pack, Client Services Coordinator, with a problem. She was suffering from the cold weather due to the old windows in her mobile home, which were drafty with dried out seals.

Thanks to the MERG program (Mobile Home Emergency Repair Grant), which Lompoc Community Center operates under the city of Lompoc, the windows were completely



Cynthia is grateful for the new windows in her mobile home.

replaced. Those repairs for her home came to \$4,965., which would have been very difficult for Cynthia to afford.

Keeping Cynthia healthy allows her to continue to be active in her church activities and to be part of a caring community. She informed Ryzbel that not only has her mobile home become warmer but that the repairs have also beautified her home.

The Lompoc Food Pantry provides food and other services daily to many Lompoc

individuals and families needing assistance, emergency or otherwise. Please visit the website at www.lompocfoodpantry.org for more information about the services provided. ❖

Love of Service Sowed at Loaves & Fishes II

Loaves & Fishes II in Van Nuys operates as a food pantry, thrift store, and safe haven for local homeless and struggling individuals. What makes Loaves & Fishes II especially remarkable are the volunteers, like Barbara Ausburn, who run the community center.

After traveling with her husband, she felt that something was missing from her life. Then she found Loaves & Fishes II, which became a “home” to her, giving her many wonderful stories, lifelong connections, and fulfilling her ambition to make a positive difference in people’s lives.

Barbara has been volunteering at Loaves & Fishes II for over 35 years, building a rapport with many of the clients serviced there, and becoming a staple in the community. Her face has become dear to the clients at Loaves & Fishes II and she has many inspiring stories of those she has served



Barbara Ausburn embodies community service at Loaves & Fishes II.

and who identify Loaves & Fishes II as a safe haven.

One of Barbara’s qualities that is apparent when talking with her is her humility. Barbara speaks fondly about the other senior volunteers, affectionately calling them “family” and singing their praises, even when the attention is focused on her. She speaks fondly of high school and college-aged youth who earn community service hours at Loaves & Fishes II, and then come back to

tell her what a difference the volunteering has made in their lives as well. In fact, one such former volunteer donates every year to Loaves & Fishes II, personally, to commemorate her time there.

Thank you, Barbara, for over 35 years of volunteering and making a positive difference in so many people’s lives. ❖

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Catholic Charities’ programs for Seniors help the elderly through food delivery and support services, maximizing their independence and affirming their value and dignity in society.



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