



Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.

The Sage

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REAS Case Manager Anait Yehiazarian assists Ukrainian families apply for housing support.

ESP assists Ukrainian Refugees

In October 2023, the Employment Support Partnership (ESP) program was awarded the Refugee Employment Acculturation Services (REAS) contract through the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services. ESP began providing services to clients in January 2024, and, since then, nearly 700 clients have been provided comprehensive case management and services that will lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Through ESP's REAS program, L.A. County is currently offering housing assistance for Ukrainians who were living in Ukraine at the beginning of the war. REAS Case Manager Anait Yehiazarian has assisted more than 50 Ukrainian clients to obtain funding for housing. As more Ukrainian refugees settle in the Los Angeles area, the number of people needing help will continue to increase.

To learn more about the work of ESP or to make a donation, contact James DeRose, Program Director, at jderose@catholiccharities.org or visit the ESP website at www.catholiccharitiesla.org/esp/. ❖

Good Shepherd Shelter Mom Spreads Her Wings

When Brenda and her two daughters came to Catholic Charities' Good Shepherd Shelter (GSS), a transitional shelter for mothers and children impacted by domestic violence, she shared that one of the main reasons she wanted to enter our program was because, "you won't make me get a job right away." That is one of the key differences in our GSS program compared to other programs. We ask that the moms focus on healing in their first six months with us.

Brenda regularly attended her therapy sessions, enrolled her girls in therapy, and she attended every class available in our Learning Center, both those required and those that were optional. But she still struggled with depression, a lack of self-esteem, and anxiety. She pushed through and always asked questions with a determination to make a better life for her family.

After graduating from our classes, she worked closely with a volunteer to become a certified Notary Public.



Brenda is a success story.

She was accepted into a time-limited subsidy program that would assist her with rent. And she took full advantage of our savings program and saved over ten thousand dollars.

She is now working as an in-home healthcare aide and is studying to become a pharmacy technician. Brenda shared, "I never really saw myself as a success story. But now I see it. My family will be forever grateful to GSS for helping me turn our lives around." ❖

In This Issue...

- Volunteers Find Joy in Helping Others page 2
- Staff Help Lifetime Dream Come True page 3
- San Juan Diego Center Serves El Monte page 3
- CYO Helps Underserved Schools. page 3
- CalFresh Healthy Living Team Educates page 4

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

A couple, living in an apartment, used to argue, loud and long, almost every night. Through walls that were not very soundproof, another couple in the next apartment could hear them yelling and screaming and wondered what could they do to stop this annoyance, to help the first couple talk things over more quietly?

They decided to start an argument themselves, to give their neighbors some idea of how terrible it sounded. Standing close to the wall, they began yelling and screaming at each other. Almost instantly, their neighbors stopped arguing. Never again could they be heard hollering at each other.

All of us have arguments, because no two of us are exactly alike. No two of us look at the same thing in exactly the same way. We have differences of opinion and we express those differences.

Disagreements can be healthy in many ways, if we exchange ideas, viewpoints and reasons. We can learn by sharing thoughts and beliefs with others.

When we disagree, we should follow the Golden Rule: Do to others, as we would have others do to us. Disagree with others, as we would have others disagree with us. Admit that others may have information or experiences beyond our own.

Do not be unfair, unjust or insulting. Speak calmly; do not make threats of any kind. Try to listen to our self as well as to the other person and hear how senseless a violent argument sounds, as did both couples in our story.

Many of the clients of Catholic Charities struggle with their emotions and communication skills, especially when they disagree with others. In some of our programs, we provide training to clients on ways to cope with their emotions when they disagree with others. We have found that carefully listening to others can be the biggest challenge when dealing with sensitive issues.

The clients who come to Catholic Charities usually need food, shelter, clothes, job training, and more. One of their additional needs is to learn the art of communicating that will strengthen their relationships with those they encounter in their everyday lives. ❖

Volunteers Find Joy in Helping Others

When Imelda Figueroa began volunteering at Catholic Charities' Isla Vista food distribution nine years ago, she could not have foreseen the twists and turns life would take. During COVID, that face-to-face distribution was halted, so she began traveling ten miles to volunteer at the Santa Barbara pantry, at first for one day a week.

The days that Imelda volunteered increased, but were dependent upon her husband Juan's health. He had problems with his vision due to advanced kidney disease. He survived seven years waiting for a kidney transplant and was diagnosed with cancer three months before the scheduled transplant.

All that time, Imelda was taking him to appointments. Juan waited in the car while she volunteered, too weak to come in, but Imelda wanted him close by. Juan spent two months in the hospital before the transplant, then three months at UCLA before returning to a rehabilitation facility in Santa Barbara for another month. Imelda continued volunteering at every chance between trips to Los Angeles to check on Juan.

The transplant was successful, but, since his kidneys had to work so hard with his liver out of commission, they suffered damage as well. Juan goes for dialysis twice a week in Santa Barbara, and on the other days he is in the pantry helping with the morning tasks and assisting the clients. Being there has lifted his spirits and he looks forward to coming, where there's a lot of laughter among the volunteers and the food pantry coordinator Tony Fernandez. ❖



Imelda and Juan Figueroa are faithful volunteers at the Santa Barbara food pantry.

Immigration Staff Help Lifetime Dream Come True

Liliana Sanchez became a legal permanent resident in 2014 but, due to her limited English at that time, she did not dare to dream of becoming a U.S. citizen.

However, in August 2023, after Liliana attended a citizenship preparation class provided by Catholic Charities of Los Angeles (CCLA) at the Echo Park Public Library, she began to see new possibilities.

“I was just there to ask a question, I wasn’t thinking of applying for citizenship,” she said, but, with the support of her instructor and other students, she realized her dream of citizenship was attainable.

CCLA staff helped Liliana prepare for the citizenship interview



Liliana Sanchez is a proud U.S. citizen.

and complete her naturalization application and, in December 2023, Liliana had her citizenship interview and passed. “I was so nervous, I couldn’t believe I passed! Through this process, I learned that if I could pass the citizenship interview, I could do anything!”

Liliana is thankful to CCLA for providing a wide range of services to the community, including citizenship preparation classes and application assistance.

To learn more about CCLA’s Immigration Services or to make a donation, please contact

Steve Lee, Immigration Services’ Director, at SLee@CCharities.org and/or visit the Immigration Services’ webpage via QR code. ❖



San Juan Diego Center Serves the El Monte Community

As a staple in the city of El Monte, San Juan Diego Community Services Center supports nearly 1,000 residents monthly with a daily food pantry, rental and utility assistance, and hot meals for the area’s homeless. On the center’s busiest days, there can be more than 60 people lined up before 9:00 a.m.

San Juan Diego is a multi-lingual, multi-cultural community center that assists a diverse population, serving immigrants from China, Vietnam, Mexico and Central America. The center serves 150 clients daily, helping to keep El Monte residents fed and safely housed.



Sister Jenny, on the right, and volunteers bring help to El Monte.

Sister Jenny Ayerdis, of the Sisters of the Guardian Angel in Boyle Heights, and a loyal group of nine volunteers - from Proyecto Ayuda, ReemployAbility and the local community - provide the work, from breaking down food pallets to coordinating client applications and distributing bags of food and produce. The Catholic Charities’ mission and vision, as well as their steadfast loyalty to Sister Jenny, drive these hard working volunteers. The center could not

operate without them or without the generous donations of food and monetary support from the Order of Malta and the Dan Murphy Foundation. ❖

CYO Provides Funding to Underserved Catholic Elementary Schools

Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), a service of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, continues its mission to serve Catholic elementary schools in need through its partnership with the LA84 Foundation. LA84 Foundation was created out of the profits of the LA84 Olympic Games. Its purpose is to distribute funds to youth sports organizations throughout Los Angeles County. CYO has maintained a partnership with the LA84 Foundation for 15 years.

In 2023, CYO requested additional funding from the LA84 Foundation to provide support for sports during the Fall and Winter seasons. The foundation agreed to expand its grant, enabling CYO to distribute \$40,000 to needy schools in order to cover costs related to CYO participation. Through the program, CYO has opened the door for many needy students, who would not otherwise have been able to participate, to take part in CYO sporting events.

CYO will extend the program into the 2024 Spring season and plans to reapply for additional funding for the next school year.

To donate to the work of CYO, please visit the website at <https://cyola.org/donations>. ❖

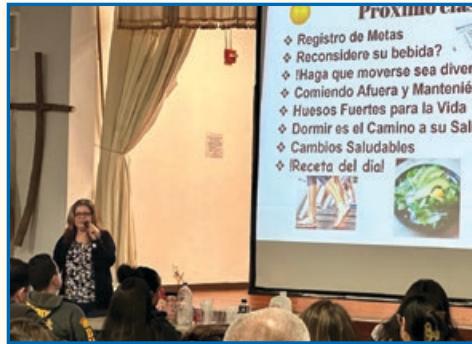


St. Benedict's Boys Basketball team from Montebello is an Open Division Finalist.

CalFresh Healthy Living Team Helps to Make the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

You may have seen the commercials – a mom, who substitutes a healthy and refreshing drink for the sugar-loaded fruit punch at her son’s baseball game, or a dad, who’s surprised by how tasty a healthy alternative to his sugary sports drink is – but did you know? The Catholic Charities of Los Angeles (CCLA) CalFresh Healthy Living (CFHL) team is helping families throughout Los Angeles and Santa Barbara counties score healthy wins like this every day!

CalFresh Healthy Living (CFHL) is a program of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service that supports communities with programming designed to improve their health. It addresses the disparities in health we see among communities that are the result of structural and systemic inequities, such as the redlining of certain neighborhoods, which have negatively affected residents’ health over time.



CCLA CFHL team member Alejandra Reyes provided a nutrition education class to 100 parishioners at Our Lady of Victory Church in Compton.

The CCLA CFHL team comprises ten members, who partner with communities throughout Los Angeles and Santa Barbara Counties to bring resources to address community needs. Their work encompasses a very broad range of activities designed to improve access to nutritious foods, create opportunities for structured physical activity, and support members in advocating for the health of their community. On any given day, you

might find a team member working with a school to start a garden and teaching students how to grow their own produce, or a nutrition educator giving a class about gut health to a group of young moms, or energetically leading a walking club for seniors at a local park. Every day, the CCLA CFHL team is helping communities improve their health, and make the healthy choice the easy choice! ❀



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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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