



## CCUSA Awards Relief for Wildfires Disaster



*CCUSA Executives visit the Palisades Wildfire site. Left to right: Anthony Sciacca, Executive Vice President; Kerry Alys Robinson, Executive Director; and Kim Burgo, Vice President Disaster Operations.*

Catholic Charities USA (CCUSA), the national organization representing Catholic Charities' agencies across the United States and its territories, has launched a dedicated disaster relief campaign in response to the 2025 Los Angeles County Wildfires.

Thanks to the generosity of CCUSA's donors during this campaign, Catholic Charities of Los Angeles has secured \$2,375,000 in disaster relief grants. These funds are essential for assisting families and individuals who have been displaced or impacted by the wildfires. Available resources include Emergency Relief Assistance, Property Assistance, Rebuilding and Recovery services, and Community Outreach and Support.

For more information about how to access resources and services at various CCLA Community Service Centers, please visit <https://catholiccharitiesla.org>.

## The Long and Winding Road

Lenny Peters' vinyl collection has a whole shelf devoted to the Beatles, Beach Boys and The Ventures. It is a collection that has expanded, contracted, and expanded again as life's circumstances have dictated. He and his wife Nancy have traveled a long and winding road they have survived with an inspiring resilience that they attribute to caring for each other.

Things changed in 2002 as their skilled jobs in the electronics industry fell prey to automation. Promises of work in Oregon led them to pack up and move for work that never materialized, leading them back to Santa Barbara, living in their vehicle when Catholic Charities secured a spot for them in the Safe Parking Program. Another move to Desert Hot Springs yielded work until unemployment came again for the third time in ten years—this time losing everything.

With a return to Santa Barbara in 2012, they both found work and, through old connections, they found a trailer park where the rent was \$900. Lenny and Nancy accessed food pantry services



*Nancy and Lenny Peters are grateful for help from Catholic Charities in Santa Barbara.*

at Catholic Charities and Lenny has expressed how vital that service has been. The rent is now up to \$1,500 in an aging trailer with their combined social security payments coming in at \$2,500 a month. Services are still needed to bridge the gap and now, at 71 and 68 years of age, they still rely on each other to cope with the years' trauma. They will get by, with a little help from their friends at Catholic Charities. ❀

### In This Issue...

- San Gabriel Assists Wildfire Victims . . . . . page 2
- OASIS Helps Seniors in Ventura County . . . . . page 3
- Jobe Boasts Aftercare Services. . . . . page 3
- GSS Provides Therapeutic Project . . . . . page 3
- AYE Staff Answer Wildfire Call . . . . . page 4

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

On January 7, 2025, I was driving West from Los Angeles to attend a meeting and I saw a black cloud of smoke over the Pacific Palisades area. After 24 days, the results of the wildfires were 57,636 burned acres, 28 lives lost, 18,000 home and structures destroyed, and 200,000 people evacuated. The majority of the damage was from the two largest fires, the Eaton Fire in Altadena and the Palisades Fire in the Pacific Palisades, both of which were not fully contained until January 31, 2025.

First responders to the wildfires were firefighters, law enforcement, emergency medical technicians and paramedics, joined by the American Red Cross. The second responders were agencies like Catholic Charities of Los Angeles. Working with the American Red Cross, Catholic Charities and other non-profits developed transition plans to continue the great work begun by the American Red Cross.

Catholic Charities and the American Red Cross have agreed to start an innovative program to fund the hosts of families of those who lost their homes. This program will provide financial assistance to 150 families hosting survivors of the 2025 Los Angeles wildfires. It will help offset increased living costs, such as groceries, utilities, and rent. It will prioritize low-income households, ensure proper intake and eligibility verification, and connect families to additional community resources.

Food, clothing and housing were some of the early needs of the people impacted by the wildfires. Catholic Charities was able to make \$400 gift cards available to families who needed to purchase essentials other than food and clothing. This occurred because of the generosity of Lestonnac Free Clinic and Americares. This partnership enabled us to serve 360 families at three churches most impacted by the wildfires.

Disaster response is all about partnerships. Catholic Charities of Los Angeles is grateful for the support of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Charities of California, the State of California, Lestonnac Free Clinic, Americares, foundations, religious communities, churches and individual donors throughout the United States. We would not be able to serve the victims of the wildfires now and in the future without your prayers and financial support. ❖

## Donations Enable San Gabriel Region to Assist Wildfire Victims

In response to the devastating Eaton wildfire, the San Gabriel Region of Catholic Charities has received a significant amount of donations from individuals, churches and schools.

Throughout January and February, Catholic Charities' Brownson House Community Services Center in Boyle Heights continued to get donations, from diapers and formula to toiletries and food items, including many cases of water.

Three parishioners from St. Patrick Parish in Riverside County's Moreno Valley drove a box truck of donated goods through L.A. traffic on a Saturday afternoon to Brownson House.

Students from Damien High School in La Verne not only donated hygiene and grooming items but also made hundreds of hygiene kits, which included full-size shampoo, soaps, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste and a prayer card. This enabled San Gabriel Region to supply parishioners of Sacred Heart Church in Altadena with hygiene kits.

In addition to donated in-kind items, San Gabriel Region is giving financial assistance to wildfire-affected families, representing Catholic Charities' mission to manifest Christ's spirit by providing services to the most vulnerable in our community, reported Nicole Ybarra, Associate Program Director. ❖



*Damien High School students, left to right, Zachary DeLeon, Bon Jacob Junsay, Thomas Butz, Emmanuel Roca, Raymond Villanueva, and Aidan Gilboy.*



# OASIS Offers Safety for Seniors in Ventura County

Stairs can be treacherous. A simple trip or fall can lead to a devastating injury, especially for seniors. So when Lydia Lovato's daughter began to encourage her to move-in with her citing a concern for safety and mobility due to a lack of hand rails into her current home, Lydia knew she had to act. Valuing her independence and not wanting to leave her residence or community, she spoke with a neighbor, who recommended she call OASIS for assistance.

Client Resource Coordinator, Rafael Morales, fielded the call at the OASIS satellite office in Fillmore and immediately sprang into action. Utilizing an emergency assistance fund awarded to OASIS through a Senior Care Action Network (SCAN) grant, Rafael was able to purchase and install a pair of guardrails for both the front and back of Lydia's home.

The OASIS program functions on the belief that aging is not a disease and that seniors live healthier and more productive lives when they remain as independent as possible, safe and mobile in their own residence. Thanks to generous donors and grant resources Lydia was able to stay in the place she values most—her own home. ❖



*OASIS client, Lydia Lovato, uses her new handrails to safely enter and exit her home.*

## Aftercare Services at Jobe Transitional Living Program

The Jobe Transitional Living Program has established an Aftercare Program to provide ongoing support for graduates as they transition into independent living. The primary objective of this initiative is to maintain a connection with former residents, ensuring they have access to continued guidance and resources beyond their time in the program.

A Jobe counselor conducts monthly check-ins with participants, gradually transitioning to quarterly reviews. These sessions assess key aspects of the individual's progress, including employment, education, and housing stability. Additionally, Jobe offers assistance with graduate school applications, access to food resources,



*"face shots" of two Jobe Aftercare Program participants*

financial aid opportunities, job referrals, and recommendations for alternative housing arrangements, when needed.

Former residents are welcome to participate in the Aftercare Program for as long as they find it beneficial, fostering a supportive, family-like environment they can rely on. Notable program graduates include Aaron, who successfully transitioned out of Jobe and is now employed as an engineer at Northrop Grumman. Destiny B. is on track to earn her LVN license this spring as she works toward her goal of becoming a nurse. Destiny R. is currently attending California State University, Northridge (CSUN) and is preparing to graduate with a degree in Social Work. ❖

## GSS Survivors See Trauma Through New Lens

One of Good Shepherd Shelter's program requirements includes all moms taking classes in the Adult Learning Center for the first six months. All the classes are intended to be therapeutic. Recently, a new class was offered by photographer and GSS volunteer Issa Sharp, who worked with the moms to transform their trauma through art in an innovative photo book project, "Through a New Lens." By combining photography and writing, moms were able to change the lens through which they viewed their trauma and to rewrite the stories that had been holding them back.

The moms reflected on their experiences with domestic violence, substance issues, teen pregnancy, and childhood trauma, but they demonstrated resilience, reframing their struggles to create empowering narratives.

After the moms revisited their experiences, they were able to set healthy boundaries and decide whether they wanted to see the project through to its completion. Ultimately, two moms, "Tracy" and "Vanessa," finished the project and were presented with printed copies of their photo books. They both gleamed with joy and pride and they were referred to as "authors."

GSS is so proud of their resilience and courage. They are shining examples of the power of transforming trauma into art. ❖



*"Tracy" and "Vanessa" were very moved when presented with their books.*

# AYE Staff Answer Call After Eaton Fire

After the devastating Eaton Fire, AYE staff became a vital source of hope for survivors who had lost homes and livelihoods. At the Altadena Disaster Recovery Center (DRC), they met people like Rita — a single mother and undocumented hairstylist whose home of 15 years was reduced to ashes. Although ineligible for FEMA aid, she found relief in a \$2,000 Worker Relief Grant from AYE.

Staff also addressed systemic challenges. At the National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON) Pasadena office, day laborers struggled to prove lost income. AYE staff collaborated to gather documentation and secure affidavits from employers, showing community solidarity in action.

Small moments mattered too. Helping a business owner navigate a grant application ended in tears of gratitude. Staff defused tense situations at the DRC with patience and



*AYE staff, left to right, Domingo Najera and Ignacio Gonzales, provided services to fire victims at the Pasadena City College recovery center.*

empathy. They even guided a food truck owner to a DMV fee refund he had not considered, providing small but meaningful wins in times of crisis.

Through compassion and resourcefulness, AYE staff reminded everyone that recovery is more than forms and funding — it's about restoring dignity, rebuilding trust, and standing with the community when it matters most. Their presence became a beacon of hope, showing that recovery is possible even in the darkest moments. With every conversation, they offered comfort. With every solution, they brought relief. And through every act of service, they demonstrated the

profound impact of simply being there.

This work reflects who AYE is at its core. When the community needs them most, they answer the call. ❖



1531 James M. Wood Blvd.  
Post Office Box 15095  
Los Angeles, CA 90015-0095  
[www.CatholicCharitiesLA.org](http://www.CatholicCharitiesLA.org)

*Address Service Requested*



*Catholic Charities' Disaster Relief Program offers essential support services to help individuals and families recover, enhance safety, and assist in rebuilding lives.*



Please, like us on the CCLA Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/Catholic.Charities.LA>