



Good Shepherd Center Shares Success Story



Maricel is building confidence and hope for her future.

Maricel G. came to the U.S. from Colombia seeking work and new opportunities. She arrived with only a suitcase and nowhere safe to go. Catholic Charities of Los Angeles referred her to Good Shepherd Center (GSC), where she found safety, support, and a welcoming “new family” at GSC’s Languille Shelter.

Since entering the program, Maricel has actively engaged in all on-site supportive services, secured employment, passed her driver’s license test, and is able to support her mother and adult sister back home. GSC has also assisted her with legal services, including accompaniment as she works to renew her work permit.

With determination and a goal-oriented mindset, Maricel continues building independence, confidence, and hope for her future. ❀

Santa Maria Community Services Center Boasts New Location

The Santa María Community Services Center has moved to a transformative, regional resources hub at 232 North Benwiley Ave. The new Santa María de Guadalupe Center was blessed by Rev. John Mayhew, CJ and Deacon Romeo Mabansag on December 12, 2025.

The Santa María Program has served North Santa Barbara County for more than 60 years in various rented facilities. In 1986, when the program moved to West Main Street, in a small, centuries-old storefront, the city has a population of approximately 50,000. Now, the city’s population has more than doubled and is the largest city in Santa Barbara County.

In 2024, the old property changed hands, rents were raised and, despite serving the greatest number of unduplicated clients, the program was facing closure. Fortunately, an angel donor has been helping the agency to pay for rent. However, the West Main Street building has significant, long-term condition and infrastructure issues that negatively affected the program.



Rev. John Mayhew, CJ and Deacon Romeo Mabansag, Jr., bless Catholic Charities in Santa Maria’s newest location, the Santa María de Guadalupe Center on December 12, 2025. Catholic Charities USA donated the first delivery of food to the new location.

The new location, a third of a mile from the old, consists of a 5,040 square foot warehouse on .43 of an acre with loading docks and zero-threshold cooling and freezing capacity of approximately 1,262 square feet. To better serve the large, under-resourced service area, the program is pivoting to a new service model. Incorporating Catholic Charities USA’s Hub and Spoke Model, it will allow for greater quantities of food and critical supplies to be distributed (onsite as well as in other locations), as well as greater parish and community participation in the ministry. ❀

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

Too many young people are unemployed. This is clearly the experience of the youth in Los Angeles County. The unemployment rate for residents in Los Angeles County was 5% in December 2025. The unemployment rate for residents under 25 is significantly higher. Teenage youth (ages 16-19), as of April 2025, had a 19.7% unemployment rate. Young adults (ages 19-24) had an unemployment rate of 13%. They are neither in school nor at jobs. Approximately 40% of youth work in service roles, for example, in bars, restaurants and retail, with very little potential for advancement.

Catholic Charities of Los Angeles (CCLA) has a program called the Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services (AYE). Its purpose is to alleviate some of the serious problems facing young people, such as, high school dropout rate, illiteracy, crime and unemployment. This is achieved through partnerships with employers, community groups and educational agencies, which provide comprehensive youth services and leveraged, limited public resources to better serve the youth.

In 2025, under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), AYE and its network partners provided comprehensive services for 1,419 youth and adults. Another 974 youth enrolled under Summer Year-Round jobs, and other privately funded programs. AYE provided paid internships for nearly all youth who served under these combined year-round and summer programs.

AYE Youth Source Centers and America's Job Center of California received over 33,000 walk-ins in 2025. AYE also operated a private grant under Gap's "This Way Onward" program that provided job preparation and internship opportunities for 40 youth. The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation program at CCLA currently has 110 youth enrolled and is conducting weekly orientations. They are working closely with the University of Notre Dame's Laboratory of Economic Opportunity to increase the number of enrollments to meet the performance goal.

In his 1981 encyclical, *Laborem Exercens*, Pope John Paul states that human work is good not only in the sense that it is useful but also in the sense of being something worthy, corresponding to human dignity. It is capable of expressing this dignity precisely because, through work, the human person not only transforms nature (the creative aspect of work) but also and, more importantly, achieves fulfillment as a human being. AYE enhances youth's lives by providing work that is externally useful and internally dignified. ❖

Immigration and Refugee Resettlement Opens Doors to Citizenship

Celina Orozco became a legal permanent resident in 2006, but for many years she delayed applying for U.S. citizenship, unsure of how to navigate the immigration process. That changed in July 2025, when she attended a workshop hosted by Catholic Charities' Immigration and Refugee Resettlement (IRR) program. Encouraged by what she learned, Celina decided it was finally time to begin her naturalization journey.

"I felt it was time to do it," she said. "With all that is happening in the news, I felt I couldn't wait any longer to do this for my family."

Throughout the process, Celina felt supported every step of the way by IRR staff. They helped her complete and submit her naturalization application and connected her to civics classes at St. Athanasius Parish in Long Beach, where she prepared for the citizenship exam. With dedicated legal support and her own hard work, Celina successfully became a U.S. citizen in January 2026.

Reflecting on her journey, Celina expressed deep gratitude for the support she received. "I'm so happy and relieved that I went through it and did it," she said. "We came to this country 35 years ago, and now, for the first time, I feel safe—and that I truly belong here." ❖



Fernando Romero, IRR Associate Director, celebrates with Celina Orozco after her Naturalization Oath Ceremony in January 2026.

Santa Barbara Center Fosters Idea of “Community”

After graduating from college in Vermont in 1980, Jon Kauffman spent ten years working in Boston before buying a one-way ticket to Santa Barbara. Resumes in hand, he marched up State Street looking to land a job with an architecture firm, which he succeeded in doing. One of Jon’s talents is creating highly detailed architectural models that look so real they appear to be photographs of local landscapes.

Another turn came when he started restoring a boat in the Santa Barbara Harbor, leading to life on the water for a spell before meeting the woman who would become his wife. Jon and his wife raised a family in Santa Barbara, with one son out of the house now and young adult daughter who needs Jon to be her caregiver through in-home supportive services, taking him out of higher paying work.

Jon’s wife teaches art at Santa Barbara City College and the family accesses services that include food, clothing and utility assistance at Catholic Charities’ Santa Barbara Community Services Center. Jon’s good nature is infectious and he always brings positive energy with him, along with his daughter. This is another example of the idea of “community” that is fostered through the Community Services Center. ❖



Jon is joined by the family dog Ruffes at the community center.

Ventura Community Services Center Helps Families Move Forward

Katherine and her husband are raising five children, including one who is bipolar and a heart transplant survivor. When their son needed intensive care during his recovery, his father, a tradesman, had to stop working to stay by his side. The loss of income quickly put the family under financial strain.

Their experience is one we see often at the Ventura Community Services Center. Families facing difficult moments come to us looking for a way to steady themselves and move forward.



Katherine and her nine-year-old daughter, Rudy, are grateful for the food pantry.

“We’re a family of seven, and whenever we hit a rough patch, we know your doors are open,” Katherine says. “We can come here and get enough food to help support our family.”

Their need for assistance changes from month to month, but their gratitude is constant. “With a family our size and so many bills, we’re always trying to cut grocery costs,” she explains. “The food pantry helps our budget go further and makes a real difference for us.” ❖

Saints Felicitas and Perpetua Parish Supports Brownson House

The parish community of Saints Felicitas and Perpetua in San Marino continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to serving those in need through its ongoing support of Catholic Charities’ San Gabriel Region.

Through monthly food drives, parishioners and school families generously donate essential pantry items that directly benefit families facing food insecurity. These contributions help ensure that individuals and households served by Brownson House Community Center in Boyle Heights have consistent access to nutritious meals, reinforcing the parish’s mission of living out faith through action and compassion.

In addition to the food drives, the parish also organizes a regular second collection dedicated to supporting the programs and services of Brownson House Community Center. Funds raised through these collections provide critical resources for emergency assistance and basic needs support. Together, these efforts reflect the parish’s deep-rooted dedication to social justice and solidarity.

Thank you to the Saints Felicitas and Perpetua Parish community for being a blessing to our vulnerable individuals and families in Boyle Heights. ❖



Saints Felicitas and Perpetua Church sustodians, Jorge and Marco Sanchez, organize food donations for Brownson House Community Center.



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

Good Shepherd Shelter Alums Survive and Thrive

Catholic Charities' Good Shepherd Shelter (GSS) always encourages the families in the program to build community with one another, whether that be among the children in the elementary school or the mothers in the Adult Learning Center.

In 2023, two families entered the program within just a few weeks of one another. One family consisted of mother, Marian, and three boys ranging in ages from six months to seven years old. The other was mother, Allison, and one son, three years old. The mothers and the children all bonded very quickly, often spending weekends together outside of the shelter.

Marian and Allison bonded over their interest in continuing education. They attended classes in the Adult Learning Center regularly, even beyond their first six months, which the program requires. Marian's focus was on becoming a US citizen, taking ESL classes, and medical assistance training. Allison's focus was



GSS alum moms, Allison (back right) and Marian, (back second from right) were joined by their children when they were presented with their scholarships.

on studying psychology to work toward becoming a therapist.

After both families completed the program, they remained in close contact with GSS, often attending community events. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd reached out to GSS to offer two scholarships of \$2,500 each to alums of the program who were still pursuing higher education. GSS sent them a list of qualified candidates. The Sisters selected the two friends, Marian and Allison.

Upon receiving their scholarship checks, Allison stated, "I am just filled with so

much gratitude for what this program gave to me and my son." It is noteworthy to share that Allison now returns to GSS as a weekly volunteer. Marian commented, "My boys and I were just approved for a bigger apartment and this scholarship will help me to remain in school and make the move." ❖