



*Iran Castillo shows off her Mother's Day gift with daughter, Julianna, in-tow.*

## Moorpark Pantry Plus Brings Smiles to Clients

**"I am grateful for the annual Mother's Day event at Moorpark Pantry Plus,"** says Iran Castillo. Iran occasionally visits the pantry whenever she needs supplemental food assistance. In May, she was one of 110 women who received Mother's Day gifts and participated in 39 raffle drawings for various household goods and appliances.

Additionally, the pantry gave away items such as clothing, purses, and jewelry. "It feels nice to be treated so special and to receive items that I can use at home or add to my wardrobe. This year, I walked away with a nice set of earrings and more!"

The Moorpark Community Services Center in the Ventura County area of Catholic Charities Santa Barbara Region serves clients at their Moorpark Pantry Plus, which offers basic needs assistance: food pantry, clothing, information and referrals, rent and utility assistance, and holiday programs. ❀

## Santa Barbara Community Services Center Offers Compassionate Assistance

**I**n serving clients, an easy way to classify their needs is long-term vs. short-term. Unfortunately, attempts to place a person who has been on the street without a home usually fall into the long-term column, which means there are a host of ongoing needs that keep repeating in the short-term.

Robert Lancaster, a client in Santa Barbara, is a person we continue to advocate for his long-term needs of housing, but it's also the multiple things that come up for which he depends on us for help.

He is without a phone, so when issues arise with his benefits card (and they frequently do), we sit down and go through interminable wait times to talk to a human, then scan and email appropriate verifications and then wait for them to be approved so he can survive with access to his benefits.

We called for medical assistance when he had been falling with stroke-like symptoms, then checked up on him in the rehab facility. We are frequently on the lookout for the odd-size pants that he needs when they become available in our thrift store.



*Robert is grateful for the empathetic support provided at the Santa Barbara Community Services Center.*

We're able to do these things for him solely because of the trust that has been built. The long-term needs are always there but it's the things that come up each day. Those are the things that frequently mean survival for folks in a "holding pattern," and he counts on us to be there. ❀

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

It was on July 4, 1776, that 50 people gathered in Independence Hall in Philadelphia to declare this nation free from Great Britain and they affixed their signatures and the Liberty Bell rang out. From the American Revolution to the present, Catholic social services have evolved from small-scale charitable acts to a vast network of care and advocacy.

Charles Carroll, a Catholic, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and his cousin John Carroll became the first bishop of Baltimore. Benjamin Franklin, one of the signers of the Declaration once said, "He who shall introduce into public affairs the principles of primitive Christianity will revolutionize the world."

During this time, Catholic social work was personal charity and community support. Small parishes and communities sprang up in the original colonies. Elizabeth Ann Seton, founder of the Sisters of Charity, established schools and charitable institutions to serve the poor and immigrant communities.

With the increase of Irish and European immigrants, dioceses and parishes expanded their roles in education, healthcare and welfare. Catholic women's organizations founded foundling homes, orphanages, reformatories and foster care programs for children of the poor. These institutions provide shelter, education and vocational training.

In 1910, the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC) was formed, uniting local and diocesan charitable agencies. By 1986, the organization became Catholic Charities USA with 1,735 branches nationwide, serving millions annually through professional staff and volunteers.

Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, founded in 1919, and other Catholic Charities in the United States today provide a wide range of services including: child welfare, foster care, adoption, youth clinics, housing, shelters, mental health, disaster relief, immigration, job training, elderly services, food security and public health outreach.

Catholic social services in the United States has evolved over the last 250 years from localized charity and education into a large scale, professional, nationwide system. Early efforts focused on sheltering and educating the poor, especially children, and by the 20th Century, Catholic Charities became a force in America social welfare, offering comprehensive care across housing, education, disaster response and community support. ❖

## A Place Where Hope Begins Again

When Danny Ventura arrived in the United States as a refugee from El Salvador in November 2023 with her two sons, Nelson (13) and Alejandro (10), she was searching for safety, stability, and a better future for her family.

After experiencing domestic violence and years of uncertainty, Danny found the support she needed at Catholic Charities of Los Angeles' Guadalupe Community Center. Through the Transitional Subsidized Employment Program, Danny was given the opportunity to work, build new skills, and become part of a community that believed in her.

The Guadalupe Community Center has become a place of healing and support for Danny and her children. While she works toward permanent housing, the Center provides her sons with free summer camp, tutoring, meals, and enriching experiences that allow them to learn, grow, and simply enjoy being children. Nelson now volunteers in the tutoring center, while Alejandro participates in programs that help him thrive.

Catholic Charities has also helped Danny learn English, access food resources, and prepare nutritious meals for her family when she otherwise would not have a place to cook.

Through tears, Danny shared how grateful she is for the Guadalupe Community Center. "I feel so blessed to have Catholic Charities in my life," she said. "They have helped my children and helped me believe in a better future." ❖



*Because of the support of Catholic Charities and its generous community, Danny and her sons have found more than assistance. They have found hope, belonging, and a place to begin again.*



# AYE's Youth Council Shines at LA Zoo Showcase

Catholic Charities' Archdiocesan Youth Employment (AYE) program receives funding through the City of Los Angeles' YouthSource system to provide workforce development services to youth. On June 6, fourteen YouthSource Youth Advisory Councils (YAC) from across the city gathered at the Los Angeles Zoo to present their community advocacy efforts over the past year.

AYE's YAC team collaborated to research and develop an advocacy-driven "Zine." The publication addressed real-world socio-economic barriers affecting their peers. Topics included: inflation, workforce equity, mental health, and the impact of AI on future labor markets. The team plans to share their findings with local policy leaders to drive systemic change.

The inspiring day concluded with complimentary admission to the zoo, which was a first for many of our council members, making it a memorable milestone of community exposure and celebrated success. Congratulations to our youth leaders for excellently representing Catholic Charities/AYE on a citywide stage and working for the good of our city! To learn more about AYE, please visit the website at <https://ayela.org/>. ❖



*AYE Youth Advisory Council members attend the YAC conference at the Los Angeles Zoo.*

## San Gabriel Region Summer Camp: The Gift of Music

Every summer, Catholic Charities San Gabriel Region's Brownson House Community Center provides children in Boyle Heights with opportunities to learn, grow, and discover new talents through enriching experiences. This year, in partnership with Tree House Music, children ages 7 to 17 are participating in a three-week music program where they receive personalized instruction in ukulele and guitar, building confidence and creativity in a supportive environment.

The program concludes with a special performance where students proudly showcase their new musical skills. For many, it is their first opportunity to access free music classes and perform in front of an audience, a milestone that celebrates not only what they have learned but also the confidence they have gained along the way.

These life-changing experiences are made possible through the generosity of supporters like the Dan Murphy Foundation. Their investment in our summer program is helping children explore their potential and develop new skills. ❖



*Children at Brownson House Community Center create lasting memories at Summer Camp.*

## Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project Partners with Local Law Firms

In March and April, Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project hosted three Employment Authorization Clinics in partnership with law firms Mayer Brown, Sheppard Mullin, and Willkie Farr & Gallagher. Volunteer attorneys from these firms worked alongside Esperanza staff to guide pro se applicants through the Employment Authorization Document (EAD) process.

In addition to providing legal support, the law firm partners generously covered application fees for individuals who could not otherwise afford them. As immigration policies continue to shift and application fees rise, this assistance is critical—especially for asylum seekers facing housing insecurity and financial instability. By helping participants secure work authorization, these clinics open the door to greater economic security and independence.

Thanks to these meaningful collaborations, Esperanza helped prepare 22 EAD applications for community members in need. These pro bono opportunities allow volunteer attorneys to earn MCLE credit and fulfill service commitments, while making a lasting, positive impact on the lives of individuals and families Esperanza serves.

If you would like to get involved with Esperanza and support their work, please go to their website: [Get Involved](#) | [Home](#) | [Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project](#). ❖



*Scott Ventrudo, Senior Attorney for Pro Bono, leading a training session for pro bono attorneys at the Pro Se Legal Clinic.*

# Angel's Flight Shelter Helps Siblings

Over the course of two stays at Angel's Flight Youth Shelter, a brother and sister demonstrated remarkable resilience as they navigated family instability and homelessness. After relocating from New Jersey to California following significant family challenges, the siblings entered Angel's Flight when their mother sought emergency placement because she was unable to provide stable housing.

During their time at the shelter, both youth flourished in meaningful ways. The older sibling, who had spent years feeling responsible for caring for her younger brother, gradually learned to embrace being a teenager again. Through the support of staff and individual therapy, she developed healthy coping skills, discovered a love for cooking and baking, graduated from junior high, attended prom and successfully completed her first year of high school.

Her younger brother arrived shy, withdrawn, and reluctant to interact with others, relying heavily on his sister for comfort.



*Angel's Flight Client Resource  
Coordinator Christi Rublecava  
worked with the youth.*

With encouragement from staff and the structured, supportive environment at Angel's Flight, he became more confident, built friendships, improved his personal hygiene, and successfully completed eighth grade.

Although the youth were briefly reunited with their mother in July 2025, after their mother obtained housing, financial hardship led to the siblings returning to the shelter in November. Angel's Flight staff continued working closely with both parents to identify a long-term solution that would provide the stability the children deserved.

That solution came when their father successfully completed a halfway house program in New Jersey and was able to welcome his children home. On June 3, 2026, he traveled to California to reunite with them and fly them back home. Father expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the Angel's Flight team for keeping his children safe, supported, and cared for during one of the most difficult chapters of their lives. ❖

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*Along with a delicious meal, parents of youth ages 14-24, and their children, enjoy refuge and relief at The Landing at St. Robert's Center, a one-of-a-kind daytime wellness center.*



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