



## Navidad Con Obispo David O’Connell

This year, families from more than 12 parishes enjoyed Catholic Charities’ San Gabriel Region’s annual Navidad Con Obispo David O’Connell at San Antonio de Padua Parish. This joyous event gave families the opportunity to hear the beautiful story of Christmas, narrated by Bishop David O’Connell, and to receive food baskets and toys for their children.

In addition, families in El Monte and the surrounding area were provided with a food basket and toy distribution party at Epiphany Catholic Parish.

These two events gave San Gabriel Region the opportunity to serve over 350 families and 1,000 children.

Xochitl Zendejas, San Gabriel Regional Director, stated, “We are grateful to Bishop David O’Connell for blessing our community with his presence at the Navidad Con Obispo celebration. And



*San Gabriel Region Auxiliary Bishop David O’Connell shared the story of Christmas with 12 parish communities at San Antonio de Padua Parish.*

thank you to our community partners who contributed to the success of the parties, especially, Macy’s, Chase, Ss. Felicitas and Perpetua Parish, St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, St. Denis Parish, St. Rita Parish, Epiphany Parish and San Antonio de Padua Parish.” ❖

## Food Drive Benefits Long Beach Residents

Local Los Angeles TV stations hosted a food drive on December 15, 2022, at the Foodbank of Southern California, Long Beach office. The Long Beach Fire Department and CCLA’s San Pedro Region’s Long Beach Community Center volunteered, with Regional Director, Bruce Hackman, and Associate Program Director, Veronique Johnson, pictured next to care packages ready to be given to residents in need. The care packages included items from notable brands such as Don Francisco Coffee, Goya Foods, and Baby2Baby. ❖

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

George Eliot, a British author, once said, “What do we live for if it is not to make life less difficult for each other.” We all experience joys and difficulties in our lives. We especially appreciate people who make our lives less difficult. One of the goals of Catholic Charities is to make the lives of those we serve less difficult.

Catholic Charities makes the lives of the elderly less difficult with our Older Adult Services and Intervention System (OASIS) program. The goal of this program is to support the independence of the seniors living at home. A case manager meets with them in their home and evaluates their safety, health, and nutritional status. They also evaluate the seniors’ ability to live independently. Last year, 320 clients (80%) were able to remain in their homes with the assistance provided by OASIS.

Catholic Charities makes the lives of mothers and children suffering from domestic violence less difficult with our Good Shepherd Shelter (GSS) program. This program offers a trauma-informed, holistic approach, by which family survivors heal emotionally, reawake their dignity and self-confidence, and learn skills that will help them lead violence-free lives. This service provides individualized, comprehensive services to mother and child survivors of domestic violence. Families live in one of GSS’s 14, rent-free, fully-furnished, on-site apartments for 10 months to one year, during which time they access a wide array of programming that sets them up for success on every level when they transition out of the shelter.

Catholic Charities makes the lives of those unemployed less difficult with the Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services (AYES) program. This service provides adults and youth with a focus on job readiness, career awareness, employment, individual occupational training, job matching and high industry growth careers. Last year, AYE and its network partners provided comprehensive services for 1,456 youth and adults.

During fiscal year 2021-2022, Catholic Charities served 151,000 people with 221,000 services. We are grateful for all the private and public support we received last year from our loyal donors. You made life less difficult for us so we were able to make life less difficult for others. ❖

## New Director for Our Lady of the Angels Region

Armine Lalaian began 30 years of employment at Catholic Charities of Los Angeles (CCLA) in 1992 as an MSW intern for the Adeste program, a low-cost, quality, before-and-after-school childcare program that offers working families affordable childcare. She became the Adeste Program Coordinator in 1993 and worked closely with the Program Director and Assistant Program Director for the early childhood program that originally operated in parochial and public schools and in CCLA community centers.

In 1994, Armine was Assistant Director and helped in managing 85 Adeste programs in CCLA and, in 1996, became Adeste Quality Assurance Director.

In 2011, Armine moved from the Adeste program to



*Armine Lalaian is a new member of CCLA Senior Management.*

become Quality Improvement Manager II in the Continuous Quality Improvement Department (CQI). In that position, she interacted with most of the programs within CCLA and learned more about the entire agency. In 2019, she became Associate Program Director and, in 2020, the Continuous Quality Improvement Director.

Another change in the direction of her work at CCLA occurred recently in 2022 when she became Our Lady of the Angels Regional Director, supervising community centers and programs in the region.

Armine is grateful for the opportunities and experience she has had within CCLA and is serving the region and the agency with her continued dedication and passion. ❖

## Former Good Shepherd Shelter Mom Finds Happiness and Success

When former Good Shepherd Shelter (GSS) mom, Cherry, first moved into the shelter, she had three children with a fourth one on the way. She and her children experienced significant trauma prior to their arrival. Cherry credits the shelter with giving her and her family the time and space to heal. She stated, "I experienced things at GSS that I could never have imagined. Other shelters didn't focus on the intrinsic and holistic needs to heal but GSS did." While at the shelter, Cherry worked with Legal Aid for both immigration and divorce processes.

She was also introduced to FreeFrom, a non-profit focused on empowering DV survivors to gain financial independence through entrepreneurialism. After successfully completing GSS' program a few years ago, Cherry became a U.S. citizen and she was hired to work at FreeFrom on a part-time basis as a shipping clerk. In December 2022, Cherry was promoted to Sales and Marketing Manager. Cherry shared, "If I could talk to the moms at the shelter now, I would tell them to always have hope. Success and happiness can happen for them too." ❖



*Cherry says that this photo shows what healing does.*

## Success Story from Jobe Transitional Living Program

Congratulations to Edwin for graduating from California State University Northridge (CSUN) in December 2022 with a degree in Computer Science. Edwin made the Dean's List and graduated with honors. He aspires to work in the aerospace industry. Edwin is a first-generation college student and now is a first-generation college graduate. Edwin was referred to Jobe because of unstable housing during his sophomore year.

Edwin has reached numerous benchmarks during his tenure at Jobe, including purchasing his first car, securing employment, gaining valuable work experience, building his savings account, building his credit, and graduating with honors. During Edwin's tenure at Jobe, he has become a well-rounded young man. Edwin is quite the musician and plays the guitar in numerous bands from CSUN.

Thanks to Catholic Charities and the Jobe program, Edwin is a perfect example that, when given support, a Transitional Age Youth (TAY) is able to flourish and succeed. Edwin will be another Jobe graduate who ends the cycle of poverty. ❖



*At Jobe, Edwin has become a well-rounded young man.*

## Enhanced Services Launched for Asylees and Vulnerable Non-citizens

Catholic Charities launched a new program called Enhanced Services for Asylees and Vulnerable Non-citizens (ESAVN). ESAVN provides case management, resource navigation, benefits eligibility assistance, employment assistance, and more, to newly awarded asylees and the most vulnerable populations of non-citizens, such as human trafficking survivors, victims of domestic violence, and unaccompanied minors.

The decision to leave one's home country is never an easy one and the process of adjusting to a new culture and environment is extremely difficult. The purpose of the ESAVN program is to make this transition easier by providing needed support and guidance. ESAVN is a service under CCLA's Employment Support Partnership Program (ESP), which provides a wide variety of social and case management services to thousands of low-income individuals, primarily refugees, immigrants and trafficking survivors.

To learn more about ESAVN and services available through Employment Support Partnership, contact Nancy Lupian at [nlupian@ccharities.org](mailto:nlupian@ccharities.org) or (213) 318-5725. ❖



*ESP staff working with asylees and vulnerable non-citizens under the ESAVN program are, left to right, Nancy Lupian, Lisette Reyes, Lilit Manasyan, Jamie DeRose and Karina Robles.*

# Guadalupe Center Offers Christmas Joy

Staff at San Fernando Region's Guadalupe Community Center in Canoga Park were happy to be able to offer holiday blessings, through toys and gift cards, to well over 750 individuals before Christmas.

A very special new client family, struggling to meet their basic needs, were recipients of much more. Domonique, the mother, has three children and is five months pregnant. She and her husband had been struggling financially and with food insecurity when she heard about Catholic Charities' Loaves & Fishes Food Pantry. The center offered her food for the whole family, but they received much more for the holiday season.

Domonique was desperate for hygiene products and clothing for herself and her young children. They received clothing



*Domonique is shown with her three children, on the left, and her sister-in-law and her two children, on the right.*

for the family and for the new baby on the way, as well as baby supplies, such as diapers, pacifiers, and bottles, and also a brand new stroller and a car seat.

After meeting their basic needs, staff wanted to make the family's Christmas extra special, so they invited Domonique and the children to Guadalupe Center's Annual Christmas Party to receive gift cards and toys for the children. In addition to the party,

staff made them one of a few special "adopted" families. The children received personalized presents from their wish lists, which included toys, clothing, and books. The children were ecstatic; one even exclaimed that this was "the best Christmas ever!" Their parents were thrilled and extremely thankful to receive these items, given everything they had been experiencing over the past year. ❀



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*A young girl holds a stuffed toy she received at the Community Centers' Christmas Parties for Children in San Pedro Region.*



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