

Sociable Client Enriches Others



77 year-old Sinclair Henry remembers when meals used to be served at Catholic Charities' Santa Barbara Community Services Center, and can tell you about the entrance door and details not experienced by current staff. Originally, from Shreveport, Louisiana, he held a job in Santa Barbara for 25 years before retiring, and now his Monday mornings include a visit to the community center.

When asked about his favorite part of coming to the center, he talked about associating with and meeting other people. These interactions happen in the lobby, in the parking lot, and in the food pantry, with both staff and fellow clients.

Sinclair is a sociable guy, proud of his freshly shined dome and always up for a fist bump. He accesses the center's weekly food program, monthly thrift store vouchers, and Edison assistance. Sinclair is a good example of a client who enriches the people who serve him. ❀

Esperanza Community Education Services

In 2025, Catholic Charities' Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project's Community Education (CE) programs faced significant challenges, including stop-work orders, termination of federal funding, and shifting legal policies. Despite these obstacles, the mission and objectives of the program remained as critical as ever, with Esperanza's CE team continuing to deliver essential services at a time of heightened need.

Following the termination of federal funding in the Spring of 2025, Esperanza was fortunate to receive support from local funders, allowing this vital work to continue. Since then, the program has served more than 700 unrepresented individuals, including over 300 people who were able to submit asylum or other immigration applications, offering them an opportunity to pursue safety and stability in the U.S.

Esperanza's CE team ensures that individuals navigating immigration court proceedings can better understand their



On the left, an Esperanza client, Jhoselin Gabriela Ventura Saena, is about to speak about her experience in removal proceedings and the impact of Esperanza's support for her at an Esperanza event. Esperanza Directing Attorney Evelyn Naik, is interpreting for the client.

legal options and what to expect throughout the process. Participants receive accurate, timely information about their legal rights, available pathways, and current court and appointment procedures. By providing trusted legal education and guidance, Esperanza empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their cases during profoundly difficult and uncertain times.

At a time marked by fear and uncertainty for immigrant communities, Esperanza remains proud to serve as a trusted and reliable resource for those seeking clarity, dignity, and hope. ❀

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

The late Dr. Thomas Dooley, who gained world acclaim for his sacrifices to relieve suffering in the outer reaches of the world, wrote as follows to a young doctor, challenging him to spend his life in service: “Dedicate some of your life to others. Your dedication will not be a sacrifice. It will be an exhilarating experience because it is an intense effort applied toward a meaningful end.”

As we begin 2026, we tend to look at things that will improve our health and appearance. A proper diet and exercise may be on the top of the list. This year, I recommend that we seriously consider what Dr. Thomas Dooley advised a young doctor. Volunteering our time is beneficial to others but also to the one who volunteers.

A question that is frequently asked when we approach retirement is, “What can I do that is meaningful and helpful to others?” Volunteering your time to your church, synagogue, school or a social service agency would be meaningful. Those organizations would welcome your additional support. You can learn about an organization by clicking on their website. Follow up by visiting the organization and talking to someone who can share more information with you.

When we are young, we may not volunteer our time because of our other responsibilities. Dr. Dooley encouraged a young doctor to dedicate some of his life to others. Service to others is an ingredient that enhances family, work and relations with others.

Catholic Charities has nine shelters, a residence and 17 community centers that provide food and other necessities for the poor. These facilities are open to volunteers who want to serve the homeless and working poor. Not only would you provide an invaluable service to those in need, but also, you would better appreciate the struggles of those who are working but are barely making ends meet.

If you would like to learn more information about volunteering at Catholic Charities please call or email James Batiste at (213) 251-3421 or JBatiste@ccharities.org.

On behalf of Catholic Charities may you have a healthy and enriching New Year! ❖

Carlos is Grateful for St. Margaret's Center's Christmas Program

Carlos was a hardworking father of two waiting at a bus stop on Hawthorne Boulevard when a tragic accident changed his life. Two cars collided, and one crashed into the bus bench where he sat. Carlos survived, but he lost his right leg and, soon after, his job. He had previously been the provider for his family. Now he relies on his wife's modest income while learning to walk again with a prosthetic leg.

At Christmas, Carlos and his family experienced a moment of light through St. Margaret's Center's Annual Christmas Program. For one special day, hardship gave way to joy. His wife carefully selected gifts for their children while the kids played games, met Santa, took photos, and made crafts with volunteers. The family shared a warm meal, received wrapped presents and a grocery gift card, and left feeling supported and respected.

“For the first time since the accident,” Carlos said, “I saw my kids' eyes light up again.” Thanks to the generosity of St. Margaret's Center's donors and volunteers, families like Carlos's are reminded that hope, dignity, and joy are still possible—even after life changes in an instant. ❖



On December 20, 2025, St. Margaret's Center's 37th Annual Christmas Program treated families, such as this one of Becky Williams and George Casas and the four Casas children.

ESP Provides Holiday Support to Participants

Catholic Charities' Employment Support Partnership (ESP) program helps newly arrived refugees and immigrants during their first critical years in the United States, with a focus on economic stability and successful integration into the community.

During the holiday season, ESP distributed bags filled with food, toys, diapers, and household essentials to 30 participants enrolled in its programs. These items were generously donated by Trader Joe's, Porto's, and individual supporters of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles.

Business Services Manager Lilit Manasyan and Case Manager Lutfullah Mangal identified families in need from ESP's Transitional Subsidized Employment (TSE), Community Service Block Grant (CSBG), and Afghan Newcomers Support Program (ANSP). Their efforts ensured that participants and their families received timely and meaningful assistance.

ESP programs offer comprehensive case management services that help clients prepare for and secure employment, continue their education, access public benefits, navigate housing challenges, and connect with social adjustment resources. With consistent support from ESP staff and a strong sense of optimism, participants are building the foundation for stable, independent lives in 2026 and beyond. To learn more about ESP's work or to make a donation, visit www.catholiccharitiesla.org/esp/. ❖



Business Services Manager Lilit Manasyan (right) provides an ESP client with food and household items to help make her family's holiday season brighter.

Ventura County Senior Receives Needed Assistance

Oscar Nunez has been receiving services through Catholic Charities' OASIS (Older Adult Services and Intervention System) program since February 2025 through the Ventura Community Services Center. During an initial home visit, Client Resource Coordinator Connie Perez identified several immediate needs, including food, supplemental nutrition drinks, and assistance completing required paperwork for the County of Ventura.

Oscar lives alone in a senior apartment complex and manages multiple health conditions. He also shared feelings of depression and loneliness. In response, Connie arranged Meals on Wheels through Oxnard Family Circle Adult Day Health Care and helped Oscar enroll in their adult day program. He now attends three times a week, where he benefits from meals, activities, and regular social interaction.

Through the OASIS program, Oscar continues to receive regular deliveries of food and supplemental drinks. He also receives ongoing assistance with paperwork, coordinated by Catholic Charities and supported by Oxnard Family Circle staff.

During the Christmas season, Oscar received additional support through a partnership with Brenda's Basket Brigade and Padre Serra and St. Mary Magdalen Parishes in Camarillo. He was given a \$100 gift card along with thoughtful gifts, including a throw blanket, activity books, and a puzzle. ❖



Oscar Nunez is grateful for Catholic Charities' OASIS program.

Bishop Nunez Celebrates Navidad Con Obispo

San Gabriel Region's 10th Annual Navidad Con Obispo event, celebrated by Bishop Brian Nunes, took place on Saturday, December 13, 2025, at Bishop Mora Salesian High School. The celebration provided a joyous morning for over 175 families from over 12 parishes in the Boyle Heights' area.

They enjoyed a delicious breakfast of tamales, hot chocolate, and sweet bread and had the opportunity to learn about the beautiful Advent Season from Bishop Nunes. All families were able to take pictures with Bishop Nunes and Santa and, at the end of the event, received food baskets and toys for their children.

On the same day, an additional 150 families in El Monte and surrounding areas were able to receive food baskets and toys for their children through the San Juan Diego Community Center in El Monte.

These events gave Catholic Charities' San Gabriel Region the opportunity to serve over 350 families and 1,000 children. Thank you to all sponsors, community partners, and Advisory Board members who supported the event. ❖



Bishop Brian Nunes, San Gabriel Region Auxiliary Bishop, on the right, and Msgr. Gregory Cox, Executive Director of Catholic Charities, at the Navidad Con Obispo event.



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Through its food pantry programs, Catholic Charities ensures that food-insecure residents in our communities have reliable access to healthy, nourishing food.



Please, like us on the CCLA Facebook page:

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

Good Shepherd Shelter Director Named Finalist for Inspirational Women Awards

The Fifth Annual LA Times Studios Inspirational Women Forum and Leadership Awards was held on November 13, 2025, at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica, celebrating exceptional women whose leadership and influence are shaping their industries and communities. This year, more than 450 women were nominated.

In the category of Education/Nonprofit/Government, the Honoree was Janisse Quiñones, CEO and Chief Engineer of the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). Among the four Finalists in that category was Deana Payne, Program Director of Catholic Charities' Good Shepherd Shelter, a role she has held since August 24, 2020.

Good Shepherd Shelter provides transitional housing and comprehensive support for mothers and their children affected by domestic violence. As a survivor herself, Deana brings profound personal insight into the trauma families endure, enabling her to lead with empathy, expertise, and a steadfast commitment to healing and empowerment.

Most recently, Deana successfully advocated before the Los Angeles City Council, leading an effort that resulted in the full restoration of a proposed \$4.4 million budget cut to city-funded domestic violence programs. ❖

LA Times STUDIOS INSPIRATIONAL WOMEN Forum & Leadership Awards

Finalist

Education / Nonprofit
/ Government

DEANA PAYNE

Program Director
Good Shepherd Shelter



Deana Payne, Good Shepherd Shelter Program Director, is a true champion for domestic violence survivors.