



## Santa Barbara Center Holds Blood Drive

Recent natural disasters have put unusual demand on blood supplies across the country, and United Blood Services is working hard to help meet the need.

Ellie Walters-Bible, a nurse from the Cottage Santa Barbara Hospital Parish Nursing office, works at the Santa Barbara Community Services Center every Thursday, providing screenings, flu shots, medical referrals and information to clients.

She approached Regional Director Dan Grimm about holding a special blood drive at the center to help meet the emergency shortage. Dan agreed: "People have been asking how to help hurricane victims. This allows people here to act in solidarity with people suffering terrible losses on the other side of the continent."

Staffed by Parish Nurse Lay Volunteers, and headed by United Blood Services Coordinator Diane Fratela, the recent blood drive yielded 23 units of urgently needed blood to replenish local supplies. ❀

## Resource Center is Lifeline for Spanish-speaking Caregivers

Catholic Charities' Family Caregiver Resource Center (FCRC) in Santa Paula is a lifeline for dozens of local Spanish speakers caring for elderly and disabled relatives.

Rita Avila, 78, is one client who has benefited from the resource center. For the past 20 years, the Spanish speaker has been caring for her husband, 86-year-old Rojelio Avila, who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and has suffered three strokes. "It feels good because you stop and think, I'm not the only one," she said.

Since opening its doors just over a year ago, the FCRC has helped ease the burden of almost 200 family caregivers, providing them with free medical equipment, home modifications and respite care, and connecting them to Spanish-language support groups, trainings and social services. Staff members even organize monthly medical checkups for caregivers at the center, give out free adult diapers and nutritional drinks, and direct people who need help with immigration issues, setting up a will, or simply accessing food.



*Rita Avila has been a caregiver for her husband, Rojelio Avila, for the past 20 years and recently joined a Spanish-language support group run by the Family Caregiver Resource Center.*

Run by the Ventura County area of Catholic Charities and supported by an \$80,000 federal grant channeled through the local Area Agency on Aging, the resource center is unique to Ventura County and, possibly, the state.

Information for this article was excerpted from a California Health Report article by Claudia Boyd-Barrett in Ventura Star, 8/29/2017. To find out about other Catholic Charities' services in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, contact Dan Grimm, Regional Director, at [DGrimm@CCharities.org](mailto:DGrimm@CCharities.org). ❀

### IN THIS ISSUE...

Message from the Executive Director . . . . .	page 2
25 Years Homeless, Now Good Shepherd Center Client . . . . .	page 2
Brownson House 100 Year Old Client . . . . .	page 3
Elizabeth Ann Seton Shelter Residents . . . . .	page 3
St. Margaret's Center's 30th Anniversary . . . . .	page 3
Guadalupe Center Educational Programs . . . . .	page 4

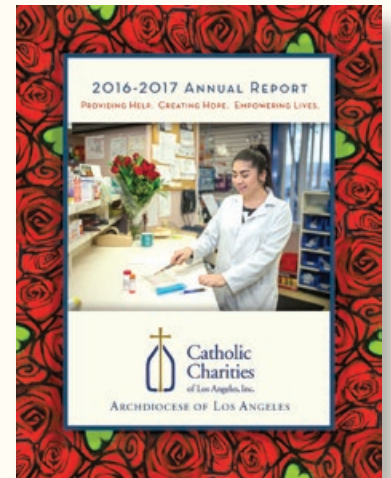
## Message from the Executive Director, Rev. Monsignor Gregory A. Cox

According to a 2016 study by SmartAsset, 62 was the youngest average retirement age and 65 was the oldest retirement age. By age 63, nearly half of the population is no longer working. Only 6% of Americans are still part of the labor force at age 80. But, since people seem to be retiring later overall, this might change and the average retirement age may eventually increase.

Patricia Boyle, a professor of behavior sciences at Rush Alzheimer's Disease Center at Rush Medical Center in Chicago, believes that it is important for older adults to maintain a purpose in life by caring for grandchildren, volunteering, becoming involved with community service work or religion. She says, "A purpose in life can arise from learning a new thing, accomplishing a new goal and working together with other people."

Tara Gruenewald, a researcher from Chapman College, believes that when older adults perceive themselves as being useful, they have a stronger feeling of well-being and are less likely to become disabled than those who do not see themselves in this way. It is important, especially as we grow older, that we seek new opportunities to contribute to society.

Throughout Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, we have volunteers who provide invaluable assistance to our clients. Last year, 8,954 volunteers provided 166,405 hours of service. These individuals worked in our shelters, food pantries, community centers, advisory boards and special events. We provide many opportunities for people to volunteer in their local communities. If you would like more information concerning volunteering at Catholic Charities, please call our Volunteer Director, James Batiste, at (213) 251-3421. Not only will you enrich the lives you serve but you will also discover a great sense of purpose in your own life. ❖



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## Homeless for 25 Years, Now at Good Shepherd Center

"Lupe" was homeless on the streets of Los Angeles for 25 years. She found Catholic Charities' St. Mary's Center, adjacent to Los Angeles City College, five years ago. Lupe not only received food, but also began a volunteer job there. She showed up every day to fold clothing donations and she organized the "clothing pantry" for clients. But at 5:00 p.m. every night, the 68 year old returned to the streets of Los Angeles to lay her head inside the tent which she'd called home for nearly 25 years.

Catholic Charities' Good Shepherd Center for Homeless Women and Children, located near Echo Park, recently learned of Lupe's story and reached out to her. She had fled violence against women in Juarez,

Mexico and, when she arrived in USA, she found refuge in Church parishioners,



*Good Shepherd Center's Hawkes Residence opened its doors to homeless women in 1998.*

members of the clergy and residents of the Hollywood community cared for her by providing her with space for her tent and meals to eat. They also started recycling efforts so she could have some money for basic necessities. Lupe stated her gratitude for "those who cared."

Recently, Lupe entered her room at Good Shepherd Center's Hawkes Residence and commented that she hasn't slept on a bed in nearly 25 years and will need to get used to having a key to her new "home." She noted that the daily meals she will now receive will benefit her health. That night, Lupe gratefully took a shower and cuddled in to her new bed.

For more information about the programs and services in Our Lady of the Angels

Region of Catholic Charities, contact Lorri Perreault, Regional Director, at [LPerreault@CCharities.org](mailto:LPerreault@CCharities.org). ❖



## Brownson House Senior Group Celebrates Lupita's 100th Birthday

It is human nature to seek feelings of acceptance and belonging. Lupita Arredondo experiences those emotions at Brownson House Community Center in East Los Angeles where she is a member of the Senior Support Group that was begun over 15 years ago.

In August, Lupita celebrated her 100th birthday in the company of her precious "family friends." She was very excited and happy to share her special day with the other Seniors who showed her a lot of love. In celebration of her Birthday, members of the group hosted a potluck lunch which included home-made Mexican favorites such as posole, tamales and rice.

The Seniors gather every Wednesday from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. to listen to guest speakers, play Bingo or Loteria, socialize and tell their stories. Lupita shared that she anxiously awaits every Wednesday to be with her group. Despite her age and frailness, she rarely misses a meeting, even though she needs to take a 30 minute Metro bus ride to get to the center.

Lupita has a strong and joyful spirit. She inspires the younger Seniors to continue being active and supportive of each other. She hopes that they have found a home at Brownson House in the same way that she has, a place of comfort, security and love.

For more information about programs and services in the San Gabriel Region of Catholic Charities, contact Mary Romero, Regional Director, at [MRomero@CCharities.org](mailto:MRomero@CCharities.org). ❀



*Roberto Ramirez, Client Resources Coordinator, welcomes Lupita Arredondo to Brownson House Community Center.*

## Shelter Client Expresses Gratitude

Maria Lopez is a single mother with two children: Daniela Reyes, age 17; and Andres Lopez, age 10. They experienced their first episode of homelessness in January, sleeping in their car for three days before entering Elizabeth Ann Seton Residence, Catholic Charities' family shelter in Long Beach.

While in the shelter, the children's grades in school improved dramatically. Daniela was able to graduate from high school with a scholarship to attend Long Beach City College, where she is now studying biology. Andres received various awards for sports and academics while residing in the shelter. Maria worked diligently with the shelter's case management team to find housing and locate other resources to help with her family's future success. Maria has now settled into her home and is excelling in classes to assist her with learning English. Because of her success story, Maria was invited to speak at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Legacy Society Mass and Luncheon at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels on Sunday, September 17. Beautifully dressed, she was brave to go to the podium on her crutches. She brought her daughter up to translate for her, which was very endearing.

For more information about the services and programs in the San Pedro Region of Catholic Charities, contact Bruce Hackman, Regional Director, at [BHackman@CCharities.org](mailto:BHackman@CCharities.org). ❀



*Maria and her daughter, Daniela, smile in their room at Elizabeth Ann Seton Residence.*

## Thirty Year Anniversary for St. Margaret's Center

Founded by then Our Lady of the Angels Regional Director, Rev. Gregory A. Cox, now Catholic Charities' Executive Director, St. Margaret's Center opened 30 years ago this past August, with the help of two local parishes, St. John Chrysostom in Inglewood and St. Joseph in Hawthorne, to provide emergency food assistance to the many poor and disadvantaged in the LAX area.

Over the years, and under the 30 year guidance of Program Director Mary Agnes Erlandson, St. Margaret's Center has grown to include monthly food assistance, outreach and housing placement services for the homeless and special needs populations, social services, utility assistance, educational workshops, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, health screenings, counseling services, immigration processing, and services for low-income children and seniors.

Today, the center, which was relocated and expanded, opening in October of 2008, provides assistance to around 12,000 low income and homeless individuals and families in the Lennox area every year. For more information about the services of St. Margaret's Center, contact Lorri Perreault, Our Lady of the Angels Regional Director, at [LPerreault@CCharities.org](mailto:LPerreault@CCharities.org). ❀



*Catholic Charities opened St. Margaret's Center on Hawthorne Blvd. in Lennox, near LAX in 1987.*



*In 2008, Catholic Charities' St. Margaret's Center relocated to a larger site on Inglewood Ave. in Lennox.*

# Guadalupe Community Center Boasts Educational Programs

Guadalupe Community Center, in the San Fernando Region of Catholic Charities, offers programs for all members of the family. From the preschool to the food pantry to the senior services, it is a community hub with, at its center, a 16-year-old tutoring program, the oldest independent education center in the neighborhood.

Amanda Cortez founded the Guadalupe Tutoring Program in July of 2001 as an afterschool storytelling initiative. During that first summer, only a handful of students gathered to read and play educational games. But, word circulated fast through Canoga Park and, by the start of the following school year, the number of Amanda's pupils had tripled.

Over the next few semesters, the program identified a strong need for homework assistance. Many students who spoke Spanish at home lacked the traditional aid of parents with their school assignments. Volunteer Elaine Knoll, a retired special education teacher, recruited other volunteers to work one-on-one with high-risk students emerging in English language development and also with students with Individualized Education Plans. Achievement soared for students in reading, writing and mathematics.

Local schools learned of the high caliber opportunity at the



*Noreen Valdes, director of the Learning Center, greets some of her students.*

center and began sending many of their students. Guadalupe Center opened an English as a Second Language (ESL) program for adults, followed by an on-site preschool, running concurrently with the other two programs. In July of 2016, Noreen Valdes began as a resident instructor and now operates the Learning Center.

With a long tradition of growth, Guadalupe Community Center looks forward to expanding its impact as an educational oasis for entire families in Canoga Park.

For more information about programs and services in the San Fernando Region of Catholic Charities, please contact Regional Director, Sandra Yanez, [SYanez@CCharities.org](mailto:SYanez@CCharities.org). ❖



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

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*Every December, Catholic Charities hosts festive Christmas parties for disadvantaged families at some of our community centers.*



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