



Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.

The Sage

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Moorpark Pantry Plus Hosts Back to School Shoe Program

Catholic Charities' Moorpark Pantry Plus, in Ventura County, hosted a large-scale community shoe giveaway in partnership with Kohl's in Moorpark. Thanks to the generous support of numerous organizations, churches and businesses, over 300 children from low-income families received a backpack of their choice filled with school supplies tailored to their grade level. They also received masks, hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes to keep them safe. Participants must remain committed to consistent, academic performance by maintaining a B average on their report card throughout the year to be eligible for a sleek, new pair of shoes.

Moorpark Pantry Plus will continue the momentum by offering families a Thanksgiving meal and Christmas give-away to celebrate the joy of the holiday season. ❖

Client Grateful for Second Chance

Destiny Rodriguez is a former foster youth who resides at Catholic Charities' Jobe Transitional Living Program. She aged out of the foster care system on her eighteenth birthday with no stable housing set up. Destiny originally entered the Jobe program in May of 2017 and struggled with expectations and structure. She chose to leave the program in May of 2019.

Destiny continued to struggle with housing and realized that she wasn't prepared to live on her own. In March of 2021, Destiny contacted Program Director, Keith Wieser, and Case Manager, Teshee Stamps, and asked if Jobe had any openings. There was opening at the women's program and she interviewed and was accepted into it for a second time.

During Destiny's second tenure at Jobe, she has obtained her driver's license, secured employment with a school district, passed all her classes with a 3.3 GPA and purchased a car, all within the first four months back in the Jobe program. Destiny is very grateful for a second chance at Jobe.



Destiny is grateful to be given a second chance at Jobe.

She is now thriving with structure and is thankful everyday for a second chance with Jobe. Destiny is a great example that "second chances" are new opportunities and people can change and succeed. Jobe believes in "second chances" and reaching the potential in all their residents. ❖

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

In a famous movie entitled, *The Elephant Man*, Dr. Frederic Treves discovers Joseph Merrick in a circus-like sideshow. Merrick was born with a congenital disorder; he used his disfigurement to earn a living as the “Elephant Man.” Dr. Treves welcomes Joseph into his home and learns to look beyond his rough exterior and discovers Joseph is a refined gentleman.

Mrs. Kendal, a famous British actress, appears in a particular scene walked with the Elephant Man. She went to visit him and, when they met each other, she held out her hand to take his hand. He extended to her his less deformed hand. Mrs. Kendal looked straight into his eyes and shook her head indicating that was not sufficient.

The terribly deformed elephant man paused for a moment. Finally, he pulled out his more horribly disfigured hand. Mrs. Kendal took his hand into hers and she smiled. This was a tremendously moving experience for Joseph because this was the first time in his life that a woman held his hand.

Every day, Catholic Charities’ staff serve “Elephant Men and Women” in our streets and community centers. Their lives are deformed because of mental illness, addiction and poverty. While most people ignore them, Catholic Charities’ staff, like Mrs. Kendal, reach out their hands to welcome them. Our Mission calls us to look straight into their eyes and hearts so that we can change their lives.

Shelter, job training, food, immigration services and counseling are some of the programs that Catholic Charities provides to those who are severely deformed by life’s setbacks. We not only served over 320,000 people last year but, most importantly, like Mrs. Kendal, we took their hands and walked the journey of recovery with them. ❖

Good Shepherd Shelter Autistic Youth Transforms

Five year-old, “Victor,” joined Catholic Charities’ Good Shepherd Shelter (GSS) community six months ago, along with his mom and two older siblings. Upon entry, he had great difficulty with managing his emotions and struggled to communicate verbally. Victor’s management of his motor skills was an obstacle for him as he was unable to hold a pencil for any length of time and he often stumbled while on the playground.

After the GSS family services’ team and mental health team assessed him, Victor was referred to Wellnest, an agency partner that provides mental health and supportive services to families. The determination was made that he is on the autism spectrum. In early September, Victor began to attend morning classes and treatment sessions five days a week and his mom supported him with the curriculum and treatment plan created specifically by the Wellnest team.

Throughout this process, Victor has discovered a love and talent for art. He has developed much stronger motor skills that, not only enable him to hold a pencil and other instruments, but also help him to be much calmer and more able to focus. Victor uses art as a form of communication and that has opened him up emotionally and verbally.

Deana Payne, GSS Program Director, remarked, “It has been a blessing to watch Victor’s transformation in such a relatively short period of time at Good Shepherd Shelter.” ❖



Five-year-old Victor says this is a picture of his mom picking him up from school during a thunderstorm.

OASIS Helps Senior Clients Thrive

Since Colleen Keegan Falcone began employment at Catholic Charities' OASIS (Older Adult Services and Intervention Systems) program, in March of 2021, she has aided many of the senior clients in her short time with the agency. Colleen helped a senior, Laurie, whose situation is familiar at OASIS. Other agencies had offered services to Laurie, but none of them did the needed follow up.

Over the past several months, Colleen has advocated for Laurie and arranged for new housing, food and medical care, while following up with the respective agencies and coordinating all of the details. Since then, Laurie has acclimated and thrived in her new surroundings, which in turn have aided in her physical and mental wellbeing.

OASIS delivers services for over 400 seniors each year throughout Ventura County by furnishing fresh produce to homebound seniors in partnership with Food Share, delivering flowers four times a year to brighten someone's day and contributing holiday programs at which volunteers deliver personalized gifts to seniors. OASIS also helps seniors stay independent in their own homes by providing case management, resource coordination and volunteer support.

Laurie's success story is one of many triumphs made possible by Catholic Charities' OASIS program. ❖



OASIS Client Resource Coordinator, Colleen Keegan Falcone, poses with her client, Laurie.

CCLA Expands Assistance with Border Crises

Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc. (CCLA) has recently expanded the Post Release and Home Study Services for Unaccompanied Children who enter the U.S. In partnership with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, CCLA's Family Reunification program has added four new case managers and can now support an additional 160 children at any given time.

CCLA's Family Reunification case managers assess the safety and appropriateness of a home and proposed sponsor. In addition, they ensure that the sponsors of the child are aware of their responsibilities as the caretakers of the child.

Once the child is released to a sponsor/caretaker, many of the children are also provided with Post Release Services by our case managers. These services ensure that the child's residence continues to be safe and appropriate, that the child is enrolled in school, is receiving necessary medical, dental, or mental health services, is attending all required immigration court hearings and is abiding by all Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requirements.

In helping these families secure needed services, the case managers also provide them with education on other local programs and referrals for additional support that the family may require. ❖



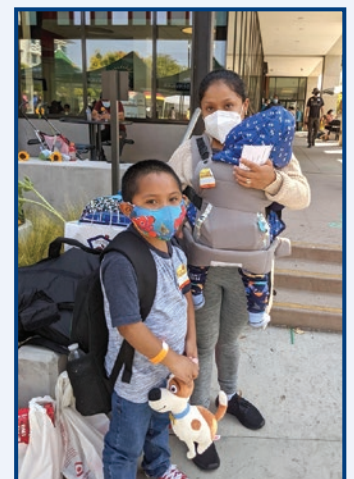
Family reunification case managers who provide services for Unaccompanied Children are, left to right, Maria Ponce, Karen Martinez, Mireya Perez and Flor Franco.

Esperanza Joins in Welcome Fair for Unaccompanied Children and Their Families

Catholic Charities' Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project played a leading role in coordinating the Los Angeles "Welcome Fair for Unaccompanied Children and their Families." On September 25, Esperanza collaborated with several community organizations, as well as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs, Office of Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice, and East Los Angeles College, to host the event.

The Welcome Fair was a free, comprehensive, community event for approximately 500 recently arrived unaccompanied children, who reunited with their family members in Los Angeles County. Children and families who attended the Welcome Fair received a legal orientation from Esperanza Immigrant Rights Project regarding what to expect in immigration court, legal options and where to find assistance. They had access to free dental and vision screenings, free haircuts, and a wide array of information and resources from community organizations, City of Los Angeles departments, and Los Angeles County departments.

Thanks to the generosity of local businesses, the families also enjoyed lunch, music and entertainment, and took home food boxes. The planning committee looks forward to repeating the event in 2022. ❖



A young family enjoys the Welcome Fair.

Macy's and San Gabriel Region Host Back to School

Sixty children and their families from the El Monte area enjoyed a Back to School event, a combined effort of Macy's and the San Gabriel Region, at Catholic Charities' San Juan Diego Community Service Center.

One way Macy's employees commit to the communities where they live and work is through the company's "Partners in Time" volunteers. Macy's volunteers delivered much needed and appreciated backpacks and school supplies to the Back to School party for the children.

Catholic Charities' staff grilled hot dogs and supplied snacks and drinks, courtesy of the San Gabriel Region advisory board, for the community members who attended the outdoor event.

Due to school budget cuts and little to no access to technology and the internet, the students were not able to keep up academically while remote learning during the past year and a half of the pandemic. Now, thankfully, the

children are back at school, wearing masks.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to negatively impact the lives of the El Monte community in many ways. Families, especially undocumented families, struggle to pay their basic utility and rental bills.

Anani Galindo, San Juan Diego Community Center Site Coordinator, remarked, "The San Gabriel Region of Catholic Charities is happy to support our families in this small but meaningful way. We hope to continue serving our community and meeting their needs whenever possible. We are grateful for the support Macy's has given." ❖



Roberto Ramirez, Brownson House Site Supervisor, grills hot dogs at the event.



Macy's employees show that "Volunteering is always in fashion."



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Address Service Requested



Every December, Catholic Charities hosts joyful events for underprivileged children and families at some of our community centers.



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