



From Homelessness to Hope: A Mother's Journey to Stability



San Pedro Region staff brought hope to this mother and her daughter.

For Ms. Donmonique Bell, a mother of a six-month-old daughter, homelessness was unimaginable. Once a successful professional at UCLA, she faced financial hardship after her work visa expired, leaving her and her infant moving between motels and facing the possibility of living in their vehicle.

Seeking assistance, Ms. Bell visited Catholic Charities of Los Angeles' Long Beach Community Center, where compassionate staff connected her with the Elizabeth Ann Seton Residence (EASR), a family shelter.

Through supportive case management, encouragement, and essential resources, Ms. Bell began rebuilding her life. Within just 60 days, she secured employment as a teacher, obtained free childcare through her employer, and moved into permanent housing in Long Beach.

Her inspiring journey demonstrates how determination, compassion, and opportunity can transform lives.

At Catholic Charities, we believe every family deserves dignity, stability, and the opportunity for a new beginning. ❀

CCLA Board Honors Archbishop Gomez

On September 17, the Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Catholic Charities of Los Angeles was held at USC's Caruso Catholic Center. Attendees included: Archbishop Jose Gomez, Chairman of the Board; Paul Tosetti, President; Monsignor Gregory Cox, Executive Vice President and Executive Director of Catholic Charities; and members of the Board and staff.



Archbishop Gomez and members of CCLA's Board of Trustees gather for the Annual Meeting.

In his report, Msgr. Cox highlighted that this is the 250 Anniversary of the founding of the United States. He referred to George Washington's favorite play, *Cato* by Joseph Addison, published in 1713. *Cato* was a heroic defender of virtues against the corrupt tyranny of Julius Caesar. Washington clearly saw himself in the tradition of *Cato*, willing to die rather than submit to King George for the sake of freedom. Msgr. Cox explained that Catholic Charities looks to Christ, who sacrificed his life to give us true freedom,

to give us moral and ethical credibility in service to the poor and vulnerable.

In March 2026, Archbishop Jose Gomez celebrated two major milestones: the 25th anniversary of his episcopal ordination and his 15th anniversary leading the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Paul Tosetti and Msgr. Cox presented Archbishop Gomez with gifts celebrating his tenure in Los Angeles, during which time Archbishop Gomez emphasized parish ministry, Catholic education, vocations, cultural diversity, immigration reform, service to the poor and vulnerable, and the sanctity of human life. ❀

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

The motto, “In God We Trust,” first appeared on a coin of the United States in 1864. It was on a two-cent piece and, two years later, it was placed on the nickel, quarter, half-dollar, and silver dollar. It was added to the penny in 1909, to the dime in 1916, and, after having been dropped from the nickel in 1883, it was restored to that coin in 1938. Originally, it was added because of high religious sentiment during the Civil War. The Secretary of the Treasury authorized it after receiving appeals from citizens urging that God be recognized suitably on our coins.

During challenging times in our country, such as in wars and economic hardships, we tend to direct our attention to God to guide us. According to the most recent estimates, 4.6 million (12%) of Californians live below the Federal Poverty Line with an estimated 5.2 million (13.3%) living in poverty according to the California Poverty Measurement. These are challenging times.

The people served by Catholic Charities of Los Angeles cover highly vulnerable populations with elevated numbers of persons living in poverty, the uninsured, undocumented, homeless, and those experiencing unemployment. Additionally, a high percentage of households (45%) experience significant housing burdens.

Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, last year, served 87,069 clients with 711,149 services. These figures represent an 11% and 33% increase respectively. The staff and volunteers provided a wide range of services including childcare, youth clinics, housing, shelters, disaster relief, immigration, job training, elderly services, food security and public health outreach.

Catholic Charities is able to provide services to the poor and vulnerable because of the generous support of our donors. We are grateful to religious organizations such as parishes, churches, synagogues and faith-based social services. The federal, state, counties, cities, businesses, schools, hospitals, and individuals have also been loyal supporters.

Overall, Catholic Charities is dependent upon generous groups who fund and support us. However, our success is, ultimately, based on the motto, “In God We Trust.” ❀

Employment Support Services Assists Afghani Refugees

Catholic Charities’ Employment Support Partnership (ESP) program’s core mission is to support refugees and immigrants. For the past year, ESP has been privileged to provide backing to 397 newly arrived Afghani refugees through the Aghan Newcomers Support Program (ANSP), funded by the State of California.

The ANSP program aids Afghan families as they adapt to living in the U.S. and provides orientation and ongoing support to assure families understand and can navigate resources independently in their new communities.

In addition to services provided directly by ANSP staff, the team has partnered with organizations such as Deseret Industries, LA CARE, Rolling Hills Pathfinders,



ESP Case Manager Masumeh Hassani delivers donated toys to the daughter of ANSP client Zarlash. The young girl is in the hospital awaiting a heart transplant.

to increase access to food resources, household items, and school supplies. ESP has also collaborated with the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA), to provide workshops on mental health and adjusting to life in the U.S., and with the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), to provide a series of financial literacy workshops covering topics such as establishing bank/credit accounts and saving for the future.

With the ongoing support of staff and partner organizations, ANSP participants are on their way to building a stable life in the U.S.

To learn more about the important work of ESP or to donate, visit the ESP website at www.catholiccharitiesla.org/esp/. ❀

Support Groups Help Eaton Wildfire Survivors

With strong community support, the CCLA's San Gabriel Region's Disaster Recovery Program continues to help individuals recover from the devastation of the 2025 Eaton wildfires. At Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Altadena, survivors are finding connection, healing, and hope through semimonthly support groups designed to help them process their experiences and reimagine their future. The support groups provide a safe and respectful space where participants can share their stories, honor their resilience, and strengthen their sense of community. Through guided reflection, emotional processing, and creative arts activities, survivors are encouraged to express grief while nurturing hope and healing. Each session begins with group agreements, affirmations, and grounding exercises that create a supportive environment for participation. Discussions then focus on emotional and spiritual reflection, allowing participants to explore their experiences and share their hopes and dreams for the future at a pace that feels comfortable and meaningful.

For many Altadena survivors, the support groups offer more than a place to talk. They provide a pathway toward healing, resilience, and renewed belonging. Together, participants continue to rebuild not only their lives, but also the strong community bonds that help carry them forward. ❀



At Sacred Heart Ministry Center, the support group engages in expression through painting.

Moorpark Pantry Plus Provides Rental Assistance

Adriana Mendoza has depended on the supplemental and emergency food services offered at Catholic Charities' Ventura County Moorpark Pantry Plus since her twin girls were infants. As a single mother facing financial hardship, the pantry has become a lifeline that provides her and her daughters with produce and groceries that she would not be able to afford otherwise.

Adriana, who works as a residential cleaning professional, had no one to watch her girls over the summer and could not afford childcare. As a result of having to stay home to care for the twins, now 8 years old, she suffered a significant loss of income and found herself struggling to pay the rent. She turned to the pantry in a time of severe economic need. "Thanks to the rental assistance program, I was able to make it through one more month and didn't end up without a roof over our heads," she exclaimed. ❀



Adriana and her daughters are happy after finding Halloween costumes in the Moorpark Pantry Plus clothing closet.

Federal Correctional Complex Donates Meat to CCLA Community Center

The Santa María Community Service Center has found an innovative way to stretch resources and serve more neighbors. Through a unique collaboration, the vocational training meat cutting program at the Federal Correctional Complex in Lompoc provides essential butchering and repackaging services for the agency.

Local partners generously donate USDA-certified beef, chicken, pork, and lunch meats to Catholic Charities in Santa María. However, these donations arrive in massive, commercial-sized boxes intended for restaurant supply. To bridge the gap, the vocational program steps in to break down the wholesale items into convenient, family-sized packages.

"The skills developed in our vocational meat cutting program directly benefit the local community through this initiative," said Ray Williams, FCC Lompoc Vocational Training Instructor and member of the award-winning Butchers of America Team USA.

The finished packages are distributed to some of the thousands of North County families served through the Santa María de Guadalupe Center. "It is such a blessing," said the program's client resource coordinator. "We are deeply grateful for our advisory board member who made the connection and for the hard work of Ray and the program participants to break down these bulk boxes for our clients." ❀



Federal Correctional Complex in Lompoc's meat cutting program donates meat to CCLA's Santa María de Guadalupe Center for clients.

Teen Assisted by Two CCLA Shelters

When 17-year-old Vanessa entered Catholic Charities' Angels Flight At Risk Youth Services, she was experiencing housing instability after couch surfing with friends, due to ongoing family conflict. With her mother living out of state and her father unable to provide a safe and stable living environment, she was navigating adulthood largely on her own, while remaining committed to her education and future goals.

Throughout her stay at Angel's Flight, she continued to excel academically and remained focused on attending college. As her 18th birthday approached, staff explored available transition options and worked diligently to identify a safe and supportive housing placement that would allow her to continue pursuing her educational goals.

Close collaboration between Angel's Flight and Catholic Charities' Good Shepherd Center for Homeless Women and Children ensured a seamless transition for her. Guided by its commitment to responding with urgency when individuals are at risk of homelessness, Good Shepherd Center immediately accepted her into the program, ensuring there was no interruption in housing or supportive services.

On her 18th birthday, when Vanessa aged-out of Angel's Flight, staff celebrated this important milestone with a combined birthday and farewell celebration, recognizing both her accomplishments and the exciting next chapter ahead. Good Shepherd Center's Languille Shelter accepted Vanessa, where she was warmly welcomed and able to continue focusing on her education and future.

Since arriving at Good Shepherd Center, Vanessa has remained dedicated to her goals and has received multiple college acceptance offers. This success story highlights the power of collaboration and timely, person-centered care. By working together, Angel's Flight and Good Shepherd Center ensured that this young woman experienced a seamless transition into safe, supportive housing at a pivotal moment in her life. ❀



Vanessa began college this fall with the support of Good Shepherd Center and her determination to build the future she has worked so hard to achieve.

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As food insecurity grows, Ventura Service Center food pantry offers nutritious groceries and meals to families and individuals in need.



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