



Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc.

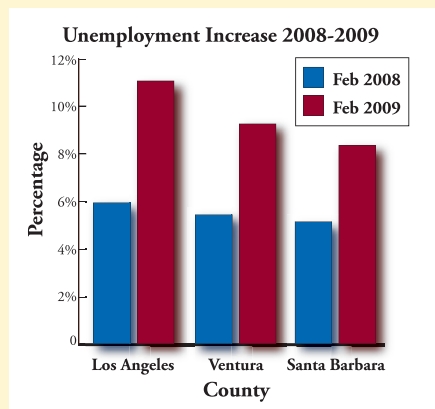
# The Sage

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## Facts from the Field

How is the economy affecting Southern Californians? Consider these facts:

- ❖ The nation's unemployment rate is 8.5%, while California's rate is 10.9%.
- ❖ Many communities served by Catholic Charities have high unemployment rates, including Compton (18.7%), Long Beach (12.1%), Lynwood (17.3%), Oxnard (12.5%), Pomona (12.2%) and Santa Maria (12.9%).
- ❖ There are approximately 73,000 people who are currently homeless in L.A. County.
- ❖ Over half of all people who rent their homes in Los Angeles County live in unaffordable housing, which is defined as paying more than 30% of their income on rent.
- ❖ At least one-third of all residential rental units in California are in foreclosure, causing renters to face utility shut-offs, eviction, loss of security deposits, homelessness and other related problems. ❖



Source: State of California Employment Development Department.

## The Tide Shifts at the Community Centers

Catholic Charities' community centers are experiencing a shift in whom they help. People who have always been financially stable are now asking for assistance with making payments on mortgages, rent and utilities. In some cases, these people are requesting food from the pantries.



It is shocking and dismaying for people who were once on the giving side of charity to now be on the receiving side. It is becoming more common for employees on Catholic Charities' "front line" to hear stories of six-figure incomes disappearing to nothing in a matter of months, leaving individuals, couples and families homeless. Many seniors who thought they had planned wisely for retirement have been forced to find jobs to make ends meet. The demographic of Catholic Charities' clients is changing due

to the tumult in the economy which affects professionals, two-parent working families and middle-class retirees.

In addition to supplying the most basic provisions of food, rental and utilities' assistance, staff at the agency's community centers have been offering quite a bit of crisis counseling



states Anne Wrotniewski, Client Resources' Coordinator in the San Gabriel Region. The stress induced by job loss and drastic changes in income is traumatic and often affects physical health, ability to sleep, interpersonal relationships, ability to concentrate and overall mental health.

Catholic Charities' case managers and professional staff offer counseling and are there to listen, which is very often what people in crisis need most. The programs of Catholic Charities respond to the needs in the communities. These days, the need is rising for people to be listened to with love and without judgment. ❖

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# A Message from the Executive Director

**Monsignor Gregory A. Cox**

Catholic Charities of Los Angeles provides services in the three counties of Los Angeles, Santa Barbara and Ventura. Every year, I try to visit some of the sites that we have throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. During these visits, Catholic Charities' volunteers and staff update me on the important issues that they are facing in their local communities.

During the end of March, I had the opportunity of visiting Catholic Charities' sites in Santa Maria and Lompoc. As always, I enjoyed visiting with old friends and meeting new ones. Each community faces unique challenges. However, almost every Community Center of Catholic Charities is experiencing a significant increase of clients seeking food and shelter. These numbers to date represent a 27% increase from last year at this time. Our food pantries are struggling to meet the overwhelming demand for food, not only for individuals and families but also for the elderly.

Catholic Charities has experienced, during the last 10 months, an increase in demand for our services by those whose income is below the poverty line. We have also seen a growing amount of middle class people coming to our doors for financial assistance. These clients were living month-to-month with their paychecks and then lost their jobs, bringing them dangerously close to losing their homes. A few of these individuals are college graduates. There is no question that the recession brings new challenges to the staff of Catholic Charities as we try to meet the overwhelming issues of our clients.

All of the services of Catholic Charities are possible because of the generosity of our benefactors. I am grateful to those of you who still make significant sacrifices and donate to our programs. I also ask you to pray for the managers, staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities so that we will continue to bring hope and dignity to those suffering most in our society. May our Lord bless you for your loyal support. ❀

# Children Read and Succeed in Pilot Program

Guadalupe Community Center in Canoga Park has launched a pilot Neighborhood Learning Center program, an outgrowth of the Center's tutoring and homework assistance program that has been serving elementary school children for the past eight years. Guadalupe Center is in an area distinguished by poverty, urban blight and gang activity, juxtaposed between the affluence of gated communities and upscale shopping centers.

Mr. Moeed Khan, Director of Catholic Charities' San Fernando Region, said "for a long time, we have recognized that children in our tutorial program often need more intensive, remedial help. Now, there is a solution to the problem."



*Students have the opportunity to excel academically by learning from qualified tutors in small groups like this one.*

Mrs. Jeannie Wrightson, a school psychologist and educator, and Mrs. Elaine Noll, an educator with over 25 years experience in special education, have volunteered to launch the Neighborhood Learning Center. These two women, who are spearheading the program, have created a model to help children who have learning deficits gain notable increases in literacy.

With help from qualified tutors, the Neighborhood Learning Center aims to provide a multi-pronged remedial and prescriptive approach to help children achieve academic success. Strategic assessments and evaluations, which are helpful in determining the achievements of the individual as well as the overall success of the program, are performed for each child.

"Our parents are very enthusiastic and we hope to learn from this pilot program so that we may expand and serve a greater number of children," shared Mr. Khan. For more information about this program, call Moeed Khan at (818) 883-6015. ❀

## Need for food increases in Santa Barbara

Three wrapped loaves of bread sit in the waiting room of the Santa Maria Community Center. This is certainly not enough to feed the long line of families visiting the food pantry, but it will hold them over while they wait. Children, who usually shyly cling to their parents' legs, rush to the bread, quickly tearing the wrappers and gobbling up the soft slices. They can't wait any longer; they are too hungry.

Catholic Charities is seeing more and more hungry faces lining up at the agency's community centers and food pantries across Southern California. In the Santa Barbara Region, the Lompoc Community Center has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of people requesting basic needs assistance. The troubled economy and the city's 14.6% unemployment rate have made paying household bills and buying meals a challenge.



*A client shops for her weekly groceries at a food pantry in Santa Barbara County. Catholic Charities' food pantries offer fresh produce and packaged goods to those in need.*

"They're just feeding their families, keeping the roofs over their heads," says Jeannie Begley, Client Services Regional Coordinator in Lompoc. "We are just providing the basics. There's not a lot of luxury left over for most people."

The community center and food pantry have helped 39,757 clients so far this year, already surpassing the total number of people assisted in all of 2008. There has been a 40% increase in clients specifically requesting food. To meet this demand, the pantry relies on government grants, private donations and help from local grocery stores to keep food on the shelves.

For people in the Santa Barbara Region, the food distribution and bill payment assistance services provided by Catholic Charities are critical. For example a client named Louise relies on the agency to supplement her Social Security checks. "I couldn't make it without this," she says. "I'm just very grateful."

For more information about the Santa Barbara Region, contact Dr. Frank Bognar, Regional Director, at (805) 965-7045. ❖

*Join Us!*

for the Thirteenth Annual  
Catholic Charities'  
Golf Tournament

Monday, June 8, 2009.  
Call (213) 251-3495.

Proceeds from this event will feed, house and assist our clients who are poor and homeless.

## If it's between Uncle Sam and my favorite charity, guess where my IRA will go?

Your retirement plan can be subject to multiple taxes that can reduce, by as much as 70%, what you plan to leave your family.

There is a charitable alternative that benefits both your family and Catholic Charities of Los Angeles, Inc. Make Catholic Charities the beneficiary of all or part of your retirement plan and leave other, less tax burdened assets to your heirs.

Catholic Charities will receive a gift and your family will receive more from your estate. It's a good choice to make.

On October 3, 2008, the charitable IRA legislation was signed and will be in effect until December 31, 2009. It provides that donors aged 70½ or older may move \$100,000 from their IRAs directly to an eligible charity without having to pay income taxes on the donation. ❖

*Not intended as legal, tax, or investment advice.*





The St. Anastasia Girls' Basketball team won the CYO championship held at the Staples Center in February. Here the team is pictured with Catholic Charities' Executive Director, Monsignor Cox, St. Anastasia School Principal, Rosemary Connolly, and Coach, Victor Alcalá.

## In CYO, Everyone Wins!

Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), a program of Catholic Charities, is a sports league that enables children who don't have access to other sports leagues to build athleticism and confidence, gain leadership skills, make friends, learn about being team members and the values of goal setting, hard work and inner strength. Many of the children live in neighborhoods where sports leagues don't even exist. Imparting life-long values through fun and play is the aim of CYO. ❖

**Donate that old Car!**

It's easy! Catholic Charities will arrange to sell your car and the proceeds will help those in need.

**Call (213) 251-3494**



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*Address Service Requested*



Photo: Mike Richardson

Catholic Charities' community centers provide clients with donated goods, such as clothing, to help them save money to pay other bills.

