

New Program Provides Supplemental Food at St. Margaret's Center

On the third Tuesday of each month, 150 predominately senior clients of St. Margaret's Center in Lennox receive food through the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP). The U. S. Department of Agriculture funds the program, which is administered by the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. One CSFP kit contains 30 pounds of nutritious food, such as meats, canned fruits and vegetables, dry milk, cereals, grain products, juice and cheese.

St. Margaret's Center, located in Catholic Charities' Our Lady of the Angels Region – Western Area, was chosen as a pilot location for this program because of its long history of providing emergency food and supportive services to residents of the LAX area of Los Angeles. Mary Agnes Erlandson, Center Director, indicates that "most of the groceries supplied by the food pantry have a shelf life of three to five days. The CSFP supplemental food provides nutritious staples that can be used at any time during the month, and prevents clients from choosing between buying food and paying for rent or medicine." ❖

Students Offer Free Medical Clinic at Brother Miguel Center

On Saturday, November 20, medical students from Western University of Health Sciences (College of Osteopathic Medicine) held a free clinic at Catholic Charities' Brother Miguel Center in Pomona. The students, accompanied by faculty physicians, Dr. Alan Cundari and Dr. Kay Kalousek, were able to see 18 patients during the four-hour clinic. Homeless and extremely low-income families participated in the program and received basic medical care.

This was the first clinic for the homeless organized and staffed by the students from Western University. The students' campus club, named Pomona Homeless Outreach Project (PHOP), had earlier held an educational night and collected surveys about health needs of the homeless. That education & information session was also organized at the Brother Miguel Center. During the clinic in November, approximately 25 first and second year students were in attendance and offered medical services to the poor. In addition to medical care, patients received blankets, hygiene packs, and shower passes. As the program

grows, the students hope to regularly organize free clinics at the Brother Miguel Center (at least two in the next semester) as well as mobile clinics serving the greater Pomona area.



Students from Western University of Health Sciences organized a free medical clinic for the homeless and extremely low-income people at Brother Miguel Center in Pomona.

Access to healthcare remains one of the main problems facing the homeless and extremely low-income residents of the area, many of whom have no health insurance. By volunteering their services to care for the poor, Western University students affirmed their commitment to their chosen profession of future physicians, dedicated to saving and improving lives. ❖

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A Message from Executive Director Monsignor Gregory A. Cox

The recent devastation in Southeast Asia is a reminder to us of the fragility of life. We daily read of the increase in loss of life and the destruction of entire village communities. People are struggling to find family members, food, water and medical care to help them during their time of need. These situations, that are seen on television and read in newspapers, call out to the world for help. The United Nations has played a crucial role in bringing humanitarian aid to Southeast Asia. It is also inspiring to hear about the response of individuals who contribute to organizations such as Catholic Relief Services and the American Red Cross. On the one hand, a natural disaster brings sadness and despair, but on the other hand it brings opportunity and hope. Opportunity, that nations set aside differences in

order to aid people in need. Hope, that through international collaboration we can rekindle the flame of a bright future.

By the time you read this article, much of the television coverage of the Tsunamis of Southeast Asia will have subsided. However, the needs of the people will be just as great as when the natural disaster occurred after Christmas. Let us journey with the disaster victims for the long haul. The short term goal is to rebuild the infrastructure for a devastated people; the long term goal is to rebuild their lives. May our Lord bless those who died with eternal peace; may He bless those who survived with eternal hope; and, those of us around the world with eternal generosity. ❖

Immigration and Refugee Program Aids New Arrivals

For many years, Catholic Charities has provided considerable assistance to many of the immigrants and refugees arriving in the area. One of those helped is Loc Nguyen, who, at the age of 29, fled Saigon as the city was falling to the North Vietnamese in 1975. He was aided by the Catholic Charities' resettlement program, and soon began working for the agency. Now, Nguyen, who was an attorney in Vietnam, serves as the head of Catholic Charities' Immigration and Refugee Department.

Responding to current needs, Nguyen has changed the emphasis of his department to help people who seek political asylum. Los Angeles has one of the busiest political asylum programs in the country. Basic needs of the individuals are met in the first 90 days, while they are helped to be self-sufficient. Education, healthcare and social services are provided as needed. They may keep their refugee status as long as they wish, but most go on to apply for permanent residency status and naturalization.

Along with offering many services, the department tries to make the transition as comfortable as possible for the new arrivals. "We have an outreach program with churches to encourage people to organize so they can provide services to new refugees," Nguyen said. "New refugees need help with cultural activities and ethnic group advocacy." Former refugees have built a supportive environment. "The volunteers and sponsorship from the mainstream community are more of a problem today, so we get the ethnic community involved," said Nguyen. "We learned a lesson from the Cubans, because the early Laotians and Vietnamese were once resettled with Cuban families." ❖

Catholic Charities Offers Hope to the Homeless in Ventura

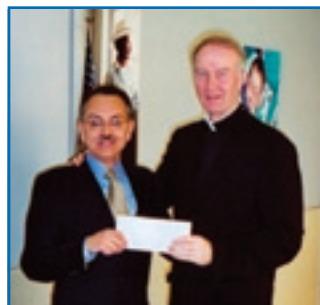
Serving the poor and vulnerable is the mission of Catholic Charities. Last fall, Ventura Regional Director, Robert Bagdazian, and staff from Catholic Charities' Ventura Community Services office participated in Camp Hope. The purpose of the three-day event, a collaborative effort of the City of Ventura and social service agencies, was to transition as many homeless people living in the riverbed area of the city into Ventura's Winter Shelter Program before the onset of rains and potential floods. Catholic Charities distributed clothing and assisted with intake. Participants were given a place to sleep and shower, as well as clean clothes, hot meals and medical services. Approximately one-third of the riverbed residents chose to use the winter shelter and 30 individuals moved to a temporary tent city, River Havens, set up on a nearby beach.

A resident of the River Havens tent city elected to participate in the new 12-week culinary skills training program developed by Catholic Charities and the nonprofit, Family to Family. Currently, five unemployed and homeless people are learning skills that could eventually lead to jobs in restaurants and hotel kitchens.

For more information about programs which assist the homeless in Ventura county, visit Catholic Charities' Website at www.CatholicCharitiesLA.org. ❖



Residents of River Havens visit Ted Hayes, center left, founder of the Dome Village in Los Angeles. The village provides transitional housing that is non-threatening to the homeless or to the neighboring community.



California Commerce Bank's Jorge Sandoval, Director of Community Relations, generously presented Monsignor Gregory Cox with a \$10,000 grant to be used for Guadalupe Community Center's computer-training room and El Santo Niño Community Center's before-and-after-school childcare. Catholic Charities has historically devoted its resources to addressing the root causes of the plight of the poor, and developing programs and services that meet the unique needs of the individual.

San Pedro Region Works to Ensure Diversity in the Community

Virginia Torres, Receptionist and Community Outreach and Resource Coordinator at Catholic Charities' Community Services Center in Long Beach, was recently nominated to the Cultural Diversity Congressional Council founded by Congresswoman Juanita Millender-McDonald, Representative to the United States Congress from the 37th District. The district covers a portion of the City of Los Angeles, Carson, Compton, Long Beach and Signal Hill.



"I feel that I can contribute a great deal to the Cultural Diversity Congressional Council because of my experience working at Catholic Charities," said Virginia Torres, of the San Pedro Region.

Ms. Torres' two-year appointment will enable her to work with other agencies and community members to: identify the needs of the district from a cultural diversity perspective; organize, develop and coordinate community resources; promote and enhance awareness and understanding; and effect change in policy and legislation with respect to cultural diversity issues.

For more information about the programs and services offered in the San Pedro Region, contact Anna Totta, Regional Director, at (562) 591-1641. ❀

AYE Launches Bank Training Course



The graduates of the AYE Bank Teller Training Course display their certificates.

On October 18, Catholic Charities' Archdiocesan Youth Employment Services (AYE) initiated a Bank Teller Training Course near USC's main campus. The participants were among the first class of students to enroll in the newly created program offered by L.A. Trade Tech College (LATTTC). USC's Educational Opportunity Programs Center (EOPC) offered the classroom space and computer access.

AYE launched the cooperative effort to better prepare its young clients to compete for high demand bank teller positions. Recruiters from Bank of America, City National Bank and Union Bank of California joined LATTTC and AYE to develop a curriculum

that would provide pre-training of applicants to increase job placement rates. The banks indicated there is much need for these entry-level positions, which could lead to advancement within their organizations.

The first graduating class of 25 students was honored at a lunch reception at USC's Davidson Conference Center on December 13. Los Angeles Councilperson Jan Perry, and Lisa Salazar, Director of Youth Opportunity Systems at the Community Development Department, offered their congratulations and best wishes to the eager graduates. Several banks have set up interviews with the participants of the 8-week course. ❀

Photo: Tom Wilshurst



At the City of Angels Christmas Gala on December 4, Cardinal Roger Mahony, right, and Monsignor Gregory Cox, left, presented Gerry and Peter Nigg with a Waterford crystal bowl and a special, engraved base, in appreciation of the Niggs' 25 years of chairing the annual Knights and Dames' Christmas party at The California Club, to benefit Catholic Charities. In December 2003, the Niggs "passed the torch" to Catholic Charities to organize the annual event.

At the post-tournament reception at a private golf club on November 29, Maude and Richard Ferry were awarded special Waterford golfer trophies in recognition of their leadership in the initial planning and their faithful support of Catholic Charities' eight annual golf tournaments.



Photo: Tom Wilshurst

Photo: Dr. Maja Trachimczyk



Guadalupe Center Celebrates Thanksgiving and Christmas

On Thanksgiving Day, over 1,100 persons were served a delicious, traditional turkey dinner cooked by volunteer Dara Laski and her mother at the Catholic Charities' Guadalupe Center in Canoga Park. The food was purchased with funds from the Woodland Hills Optimist Club and the Boeing Company from Canoga Park. Magicians, clowns, and face painters, as well as volunteer waiters, assisted at the party.

By late November, Christmas preparations were in full swing. St. Bernardine Parish in West Hills and St. Mel Parish in Woodland Hills supported the Adopt-A-Family program, providing funds for food, clothing and toys to be distributed by Santa to over 300 families. The Center's Advisory Council sponsored the 2nd Annual Christmas Boutique on December 10, offering hundreds of donated gifts "for sale" to children who could buy gifts for their parents and families with "Guadalupe dollars," earned by reading books and writing reports.

Santa Claus paid two visits to the Guadalupe Center. On December 16, he distributed 250 toys to families with children enrolled in the Center's sports, recreation, and cultural programs. On the next day, Santa gave toys to 500 children from families supported by the Center's Loaves and Fishes Pantry. State Senator Richard Alarcon, his staff, and The Gift of Christmas program provided Christmas stockings and hundreds of toys. Congressman Brad Sherman and his staff drove a sleigh full of toys to the Center. Councilman Dennis Zine sent Santa's helpers to assist in the celebration. ❖

"Santa" (Sergio Arredondo, in his 25th year of being Santa for the event) was joined by Cardinal Roger Mahony and some of the 300 children who attended the 56th annual Cardinal's Christmas Party for Children, which was held in the Center at Cathedral Plaza on December 4. Santa gave each youngster a wrapped toy, and the boys and girls were also entertained by clowns, face painters, marionettes and a magician, and treated to a festive lunch.



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Photo: Don Milici



Catholic Charities is dependent upon private contributions to support our programs. With the generosity of friends such as you, 1.28 million services were rendered to over 242,000 different individuals during fiscal year 2003-2004.

