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AUGUST 2008

NEWSLETTER, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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## CALENDAR

**September 25—28, 2008**

Catholic Charities USA Annual Gathering 2008  
New Orleans, LA

For more information please contact Elizabeth Lilly at 408-325-5262 or [elilly@ccsj.org](mailto:elilly@ccsj.org)

**November 1 – December 31, 2008**

Season of Sharing  
Santa Clara County Catholic Schools and Parishes

For more information please contact Rubén Solorio at 408-325-5129 or [rsolorio@ccsj.org](mailto:rsolorio@ccsj.org)

## SAVE THE DATE

### Caritas Society Annual Dinner

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County will hold its 22<sup>nd</sup> annual recognition dinner for Caritas Society members on October 1, 2008.

The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with Mass at the **Cathedral Basilica St. Joseph**, followed by a reception and dinner at **The Fairmont San Jose**.

For reservations or additional information please contact Cindy Zbin at (408) 325-5125 or [czbin@ccsj.org](mailto:czbin@ccsj.org).

## Health Access Cuts Poverty

### Poverty and Poor Health Intertwine

Poor health is a serious barrier to self-sufficiency and a major reason for financial decline. Those who lack health coverage, including the working poor, often don't get treatment for debilitating chronic diseases, affecting their ability to hold down well-paying jobs. Families and individuals fortunate enough to have health insurance can lose the coverage if they become too sick to work, often triggering a freefall into poverty. Medical problems contribute to about half of all bankruptcies, according to the journal *Health Affairs*.

There are a number of research studies linking poverty to poor health. One study at the University of Michigan showed people with annual incomes less than \$10,000 are three times more likely to die in a given year than those who make more than \$30,000.

Poverty and poor health are intertwined. That's why healthcare is a major focus of Catholic Charities' *Campaign to Cut Poverty* in Santa Clara County.

As cash-strapped families struggle to cover basic needs such as food, shelter and the increasing cost of energy, health coverage falls to the bottom of the list. One in eight adults in Santa Clara County lack health insurance, according to the California Health Interview Survey. That number jumps to almost one in three for young adults ages 18 to 24. Nearly 32 percent of Hispanic adults in Santa Clara County do not have any health coverage.

Asthma, diabetes and other chronic illnesses often require expensive medicines to keep symptoms under control. But those who lack health coverage or regular access to a doctor often go untreated and continue to suffer serious health consequences.



Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County hosted a health fair at its Washington United Youth Center that attracted hundreds of people who came to receive information and support from various community health agencies.

"Unfortunately, people who are living in poverty have little to no access to affordable healthcare and bear the burden of poor health," says Gregory Kepferle, CEO of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County. "They suffer higher mortality rates and fair much worse when it comes to chronic diseases. Good health is the key to a productive life. It is difficult to hold down a job or concentrate on schoolwork when you are in poor health."

Catholic Charities is working to increase the number of county residents who have affordable health insurance while helping families and individuals get access to services they need to improve their overall health and well-being.

"We have to find solutions to poverty, and healthcare is one of them," Greg says. "Improving access to health care will go a long way toward ending the cycle of poverty."

For uplifting stories about clients who are overcoming barriers, turn to page 4.

Dear Friends of Catholic Charities,

Imagine a place where no one is so poor they do not have something to give, or so rich they do not have something they need. Imagine a place where those who are sick in mind or body are healed; where those who are imprisoned by alcohol, drugs, mental illness, or social isolation are set free; where strangers – whether homeless, refugee, or immigrant – find welcome; where the naked and vulnerable are clothed with dignity; and where those hungry and thirsty for justice and truth are filled.

Imagine that we live in that place.

For indeed we do. Not fully, but we are taking steps to get there.

Some of those steps are being taken through our Campaign to Cut Poverty in Santa Clara County. The community coalition continues to grow and refine its work. We are focusing on five key areas: food, housing, health, education and resources, and are measuring success by whether households are surviving, striving, or thriving in each of these areas.



Greg Kepferle

One area key to cutting poverty is improving access to quality affordable healthcare. This includes access to mental health services on the same basis as physical health services. We are working hard at Catholic Charities to integrate our mental health services throughout the agency, making sure that everyone we serve has access to mental health resources.

As you read the stories of the amazing people we serve, imagine the courage and persistence they must have to take those first steps toward healing. I am honored that Catholic Charities could be a part of helping these people on their journey of hope. Thank you to

all our donors and volunteers who made this possible.

I invite all of our readers to join us and take the next step in helping Catholic Charities Cut Poverty in Silicon Valley.

Many thanks.

Gregory Kepferle, CEO

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## Father Larry Snyder Speaks Out on Poverty

**Rev. Larry Snyder, President of Catholic Charities USA, is scheduled to be the keynote speaker at the annual fall Caritas Society Dinner. The following is a message from his office.**

Throughout the great history of this country, our nation's leaders and its people have demonstrated a capacity to come together in times of great crisis to secure the common good of our nation. With more than 36 million people living in poverty, this is a crisis that demands the immediate attention and collective will of the country. Reducing poverty will help not only those in need, but also our country as a whole.

That's why Catholic Charities USA last year launched its **Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America** to confront this challenge. The goal: to cut the nation's poverty rate in half by 2020.

The Campaign seeks to give voice to those living in poverty so those elected to government posts are reminded of this obligation as they consider legislation

on critical issues such as housing, hunger, access to health care, and economic justice. On Capitol Hill, Catholic Charities USA staff, with the help of its grassroots efforts, continue to urge our elected leaders to ensure that the poor are a priority in making decisions about government policies and spending decisions.

The Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America is a multi-year, multi-faceted approach to alleviating poverty in the United States. The goals of the Campaign are:

- To reduce poverty in the United States by 50 percent by the year 2020.
- To call upon the government to do more to serve those who are poor, and to improve public policies that strengthen families.
- To educate policymakers and the public about the struggles of those living in poverty and the good work of those who serve them in local communities.



- To engage those who are most impacted by government policies to be active participants in developing solutions to reducing poverty.
- To work with individuals and organizations across the country to address poverty here.

We need others to add their voices to this call for change and get involved in this Campaign. Catholic Charities USA calls on all people of good will to endorse our **Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America** by visiting <http://www.catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty/>.



### Junior League of San Jose Awards Foster Grandparent Crystal Bowl

A longtime volunteer for Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County's Foster Grandparent Program was named a 2008 Crystal Bowl winner by the Junior League of San Jose. Than Vo works tirelessly in the program that pairs senior volunteers with children, volunteering more than 25 hours each week at Fairwood Elementary School and Columbia Middle School to work with severely autistic children. During Grandpa Than's 11 years with the program, he has made a significant impact on the hundreds of children whose lives he has touched.

### Catholic Charities Launches New Website

Catholic Charities recently launched its newly redesigned website to better serve its clients, donors and volunteers. The site features stories and pictures of the agency's people and programs, with clearly marked portals to direct users to the information they need quickly and easily. To view the new site, go to [www.catholiccharitiesscc.org](http://www.catholiccharitiesscc.org).

### Project Cornerstone Honors Catholic Charities' Youth Leader

Catholic Charities' youth leader So'o Poumele received Project Cornerstone's Adult Role Model Award in recognition of his efforts to provide Santa Clara County youth with an alternative to gangs. He was honored at Project Cornerstone's Fifth Annual Asset Champions Breakfast at the Fairmont Hotel, which was emceed by San Jose Police Chief Rob Davis and attended by nearly 900 people. A video featuring testimonials from young men crediting So'o with changing their lives for good was shown at the event.

## CORAL GIVES UNDERSERVED KIDS A CHANCE TO SUCCEED

Catholic Charities is giving underserved kids living in some of Santa Clara County's highest poverty areas the chance to succeed through its innovative CORAL program. The after-school literacy program for students in kindergarten through eighth grade has grown from five to 20 sites during the past year thanks to state and federal funding.

CORAL was launched in 1999 by the James Irvine Foundation to improve academic achievement in five California cities, including San Jose. Catholic Charities



CORAL's focus on literacy creates a positive environment for students to be enthusiastic and successful in school.

of Santa Clara County first implemented the program in 2003. While the other cities have seen only small improvements in academic achievement, the San Jose kids in Catholic Charities' CORAL program gained 1.2 grade levels in just nine months, according to a new report from the Irvine Foundation.

Maritza Maldonado, Director of Educational Services at Catholic Charities, attributes San Jose students' success to the intense focus on literacy. At the core of Catholic

Charities' CORAL program is the 60 to 90 minutes spent on reading and writing activities each day. Students attend CORAL three hours a day after school.

"Let's face it, literacy is critical to a good education," Maritza says. "If you can't read proficiently and communicate ideas, you can't excel at school."

More than 70 percent of Catholic Charities' CORAL participants are English language learners from low-income immigrant families. CORAL offers them an exciting learning environment where they have access

to academic support and enrichment programs.

Children enjoy hands-on activities in science, technology, practical math, art, theater and sports. Field trips, such as a recent outing to the Exploratorium in San Francisco, help open the students' minds to the power of learning and the world around them.

Another key component of the CORAL program is strengthening families by empowering parents. CORAL offers parenting workshops and encourages

parent involvement. Recently, 300 parents attended a CORAL training on how to navigate the school system and become leaders at their schools.

"If parents don't know how to support their kids, it's hard for kids to be successful," Maritza says.

The majority of CORAL sites are in the Franklin-McKinley School District, with a few in the San Jose Unified School District and Campbell Union School District.

## RECEPTIONS HIGHLIGHT LIVES CHANGED FOR GOOD

Catholic Charities brought together more than 175 of its Caritas Society members and friends to socialize and hear firsthand how their contributions are helping people turn their lives around at two April receptions held at the Los Altos home of Phil and Kelly Mahoney and at the Saratoga home of David and Roxanne Peterschmidt.

Guests at both receptions heard an inspiring address by Bishop Patrick J. McGrath on the importance of Catholic Charities' work.

"Many in our community greatly need assistance and Catholic Charities is there to serve," he told the gatherings. "If we live in faith, hope and true charity, we can make a difference in our neighbors' lives."

The power of Caritas Society members' charity was emphasized when they heard from two clients who have endured life's hardships and changed their lives for good with the help of Catholic Charities.

Bu Doh told of her journey to the United States after fleeing Myanmar (Burma) and the help she received adjusting to her new life from Catholic Charities' Refugee Resettlement program.

José DeGuzman described life growing up in one of San Jose's most impoverished neighborhoods and how the Washington United Youth Center helped him escape the gang culture and prepare to enter San Jose State University this fall.



L-R: Greg Kepferle, Kelly Mahoney, Bishop Patrick J. McGrath, Phil Mahoney



L-R: Bishop Patrick J. McGrath, Roxanne Peterschmidt, David Peterschmidt, Greg Kepferle

## Vanessa Romo

WUYC Wellness Program

When Vanessa Roma first walked into Catholic Charities' Washington United Youth Center two years ago, she was only looking to fulfill her high school's community service requirement. Now the 16-year-old is a regular at the center, where she has gained self-confidence and the tools for making healthier choices.

"I wasn't looking to be a leader when I came to the center, but I would use that word now to describe myself," she says. "I've made presentations to hundreds of people, something I would never have tried before coming to Washington."

Located in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in San Jose, Washington United Youth Center provides programs and services that help young people overcome some of the challenges they face, offering recreational activities, computer labs, counseling, wellness classes, gang intervention and prevention, and leadership classes.



Vanessa Romo's participation in WUYC's Wellness program and Young Women's Empowerment group has shaped her into a leader amongst friends and family.

Vanessa joined Catholic Charities' Young Women's Empowerment group at the center, which focuses on self-esteem and helps teens develop the skills they need to prevent pregnancy and dating violence and grow into self-sufficient women. Weekly sessions cover topics like relationships and intimacy, health education, emotional and physical abuse, peer pressure and refusal skills, and goal-setting.

"The peer-to-peer discussions allowed the girls to share their concerns and learn ways to overcome obstacles," says Vanessa, who will be a junior at Willow Glen High School in the fall. "I loved what was being discussed and I learned so much."

Wellness classes empowered her to make better choices. She is eating healthier, drinking water instead of soda, and trying to get more physical activity.

"I learned a lot about food and how it affects you," Vanessa says. "I'm taking much better care of myself now."

# RISING ABOVE POV

## Catholic Charities Helps

## Albert Azizian

Handicapables Program

Albert Azizian was living a full life before a stroke eight years ago left him partially paralyzed and unable to speak. He had a successful career as an engineer, working for companies including Memorex and Kodak, and spoke six languages. He was depressed and heartbroken after the stroke, but with the help of Catholic Charities' Handicapables Program, he found his way back.

"This group changed my life," says Albert, age 54. "I had been so depressed after the stroke, I never left the house. Then someone told me about Catholic Charities. They accepted me with an open heart."

Handicapables is a peer support and enrichment program for disabled adults. Members meet bimonthly for lunch, group discussions, Mass, and a guest speaker or entertainment. They also enjoy outings to cultural events, educational programs and recreational activities.



Taking part in the Handicapables program has turned Albert Azizian's life around following a major stroke that left him relearning how to talk, walk and live.

"We go on picnics, play bingo, take trips, it's great," says Albert.

When he first started attending Handicapables, he was still struggling to speak. He had suffered a major stroke and doctors had not expected him to live. He endured months of painful rehabilitation, relearning to walk and talk. For two years, he barely said a word.

"After I joined the program and I started talking to people there and feeling better, my speech really improved," says Albert, who felt so good about his progress, he started volunteering at a number of area hospitals, working with other stroke victims. "I tell them, 'There is more life for you; keep trying.'"

Thanks to the support he receives from Handicapables, Albert is living a productive life. The proud father is looking forward to the fall, when his daughter starts college.

"She's a great kid," he says. "I am happy to be alive."

## Nydia Cruz-Gonzalez

Immigration Legal Services

Seven years ago Nydia Cruz-Gonzalez left her home in Mexico with her 3-year-old son for a better life here in the United States. She settled in San Jose and married a U.S. citizen. But after a particularly violent incident, she left her husband and found herself without support or a path to legal residency.

At the time, she was five months pregnant with her daughter and raising her young son, for whom she also needed to secure legal status. Without a green card, she couldn't get a decent job to provide for her children. But thanks to the help she received from Catholic Charities' Immigration Legal Services, both she and her son are now permanent legal residents.

"I am so grateful to Catholic Charities," Nydia says. "They filed the paperwork and fought for me every step of the way."



Faced with maneuvering through a daunting bureaucracy, Nydia Cruz-Gonzalez turned to Catholic Charities' Immigration Services for assistance.

Catholic Charities' Immigration Legal Services helps immigrants navigate the often complex immigration system. Case managers offer assistance with a number of applications and proceedings, including family visa petitions, citizenship, asylum applications and appeals. Case manager Esmeralda Bustos helped Nydia file a petition under the Violence Against Women Act because she was a victim of domestic violence.

"I didn't know what to do or where to go for help, and then someone told me about Catholic Charities," Nydia says. "The next day I was at Catholic Charities at 5:30 in the morning so I could be the first one in line."

In June, Nydia received her green card. She is now looking for employment and may be starting a new job soon.

"This has opened doors to a better life for me and my children," she says.

# ERTY AND DESPAIR

## Clients Overcome Barriers

## Barbara Bell

Focus for Work

Barbara Bell is enjoying her life. She loves her job at the HP Pavilion and her apartment near downtown San Jose. But that wasn't always the case for Barbara, who has coped with depression and struggled to get her life back together.

She got the job a year ago with the help of Catholic Charities' Focus for Work program, which assists people with mental health issues and gets them prepared to go back to work. The program offers job readiness classes that focus on resume writing, interviewing skills, and cold calling. Participants receive coaching and support and get assistance with job placement.

"The program was a big help," Barbara says. "I learned how to conduct myself on an interview, complete an application, and get a job."

Catholic Charities also helped Barbara get professional clothes for



Through Catholic Charities Focus for Work program, Barbara Bell has a balanced life and is working at the Grill at San Jose's HP Pavilion.

job interviews and when she was barely making it, food to eat.

After taking the classes, Barbara attended Focus for Work meetings every week at Catholic Charities, where she was told about job openings. One week Aramark, which hires for the HP Pavilion in San Jose, came to the meeting and conducted job interviews. Barbara landed a job at the Pavilion's The Grill restaurant.

"It's such an exciting atmosphere at the HP Pavilion," Barbara says. "I love going there and everyone I work with is great."

At age 65, Barbara says she is doing better than ever. After years of feeling depressed, she is looking forward to the future.

"I'm grateful for the help I received from Catholic Charities," she says. "I'm doing so much better thanks to my church, my volunteer work, and my job."

## Golf Sponsors

We thank our Title Sponsor, Heritage Bank of Commerce, for its continued leadership and support in this tournament. We are also extremely grateful to all sponsors, auction donors, in-kind donors and volunteers whose generosity contributed to a highly successful event.

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# Golfers Play to Cut Poverty

More than 200 golfers teed off for a fun day at beautiful Cinnabar Hills Golf Club on June 9 while contributing to Catholic Charities' programs. Sponsored by Heritage Bank of Commerce, the event is a major fundraiser for Catholic Charities, this year raising more than \$226,000 for services that help the poor and vulnerable become more self-sufficient.

Participants played a challenging 18 holes of golf under sunny skies and enjoyed a full day that included lunch, cocktails, dinner, and live and silent auctions. Heritage Bank's CEO Walt Kaczmarek was on hand for dinner to express his support for the work Catholic Charities is doing in the community. It was the bank's ninth year as the tournament's title sponsor.

Leading the tournament once more was Ron Pelzel, the event's chairman for the past eight years.



Tournament winners in the women's category (L-R): Mary Sue Albanese, Majorie Honore, Mary Beth Anderson, Joelle Rokovich



Tournament winners in the men's category (L-R): Dave Mackin, Dominic Battistella, Josh McKay, Matt Vaughan

This year's tournament featured "green" beverage carts. These electric vehicles supplied golfers with the necessary refreshments out on the golf course without emitting nasty air pollutants.

Contributions were also raised during the event to support Washington United Youth Center's Summit League Tech Lab. The computer lab is helping to close the digital divide by giving low-income students access to the internet and improving their computer proficiency.

Save the date for next year's golf tournament on June 8, 2009. It will be the 25th anniversary and you won't want to miss it. Not a golfer? No problem, there are plenty of volunteer opportunities that allow you to join in on the fun.

### TITLE SPONSOR

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## PARISHES CREATE HOPE WITH MAY APPEAL

Parishes throughout the Diocese and hundreds of generous donors answered the call to cut poverty and create hope by giving to Catholic Charities' May Appeal for Neighbors in Need, raising more than \$658,000. Thanks to you, more families and individuals will get the help they need to become self-sufficient.

Today's economy has left many hurting, so these unrestricted dollars are more critical than ever. We are truly grateful for the local parishes and volunteers who supported the campaign, and pastors who gave us the opportunity to talk to parishioners about the poor and vulnerable who need our help right here in Santa Clara County.

Because of you, Catholic Charities is helping people of all cultures and beliefs change their lives for good.

## HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS HONORED FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE



Seventeen seniors from local Catholic high schools were honored at Catholic Charities' High School Community Service Recognition Awards in April, including those pictured here (L-R): Daniel P. Monroe, Bellarmine; Peter Hurtubise, Bellarmine; Raj Dhaliwal, St. Lawrence; Ashley Seymour, Mitty; Mary Kay Knight, St. Lawrence; Katelin McLarney, Mitty; Doug Thoreson, Bellarmine; Malia Jones, St. Francis; and Alex Grauke, St. Francis. Those not pictured included: Nicole Frager, Mitty; Renee Jain, Presentation; Casey Legere, Notre Dame; Becky Lindh, St. Lawrence; Megan Lott, Notre Dame; Patricia Nguyen, Notre Dame; Kirat Sachdev, Presentation; and Amna Qamar, Presentation. Students received awards for their commitment to helping those in need and earned grants of \$50, \$100 and \$250 to be presented to the charity of their choice.



L - R: Men's Second Place Winners Michael Colzani, John Kehriotis, Michael Benito, Steve Demartini



L - R: Women's Second Place Winners Roxanne Peterschmidt, Vickie Cupples, Linda Floyd, Barbara Bocks



L - R: John Aiassa, Andrea Thomas, Joe Thomas.



L - R: Rev Justin Zawadzki, Marilou Cristina, Lon Normandin



L - R: Ed Atherton, George Shannon, Jeremy Walker, Rob Haire



L - R: Dick Hagarty, Roxanne Vane, Breck Milde, Ron Witherspoon

## KINSHIP RESOURCE CENTER FINDS NEW HOME AT PASEO SENTER

When Susan Herrera decided it was time to step in as primary caregiver of her grandchildren, she turned to Catholic Charities' Kinship Resource Center for support. Over the last 10 years, the center has helped hundreds like her get the services they need to provide stable homes for their grandchildren or other relatives who are unable to live with their parents. Now the Kinship Resource Center has found a new place to call home at Paseo Senter.

Located on Senter Road in the Rockspring neighborhood of San Jose, Paseo Senter is a multi-family affordable housing complex developed by Charities Housing Development Corporation. The 218-unit complex backs up to Coyote Creek and is a short walk from Kelley Park and Happy Hollow. It features a number of amenities, including an exercise room, computer lab, and swimming pool as well as office space for the Kinship Resource Center and other service providers.

"The new site will allow us to better serve our families," says Andrea Villaseñor-Perry, Director of Youth and Family Services at Catholic Charities. "The offices allow for more privacy for meeting with caregivers and there is a play area for the children. There is more meeting space, so we can engage the community and hold neighborhood meetings, and there is room to grow."

Today more than 15,000 children in Santa Clara County are being raised by relatives other than their parents, and the number is rising. The Kinship Resource Center helps keep kids out of the foster care system by providing caregivers with the support they need, including individual case management, support groups, educational seminars, respite and recreation, information and referral services, and assistance with guardianship.

In its new home, the Kinship Resource Center will be more centrally located for the communities it serves. The new site is easily accessible by public transportation and many of the caregivers live in the surrounding neighborhoods.

"By actually being located in this neighborhood, our programs can be more neighborhood-based," Andrea says. "Our focus is on strengthening families and this new location will help us do that by being more connected to area families."



San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed speaks at the Paseo Senter grand opening

## Sunnyvale Presbyterian Working with the Refugee Program

Multi-faith based partnership benefits newcomers to our shores.



Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County's Refugee Resettlement program teams with the Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church in serving to acclimatize refugees to our area. Twice a month members from both groups meet at Catholic Charities to coordinate services for those in need. They have also been working to build additional partnerships between churches and community organizations to garner more volunteers and financial support.

Pictured are young women from the Karen region in the hilly eastern border of Burma. They arrived last September from the Mae La camp in Thailand. On the far left is Janet, a volunteer, and on the far right are the leaders of the Sunnyvale Presbyterian resettlement team, Elsa Amboy and Melisa Kreisa (the children on the top are Kreisa's).



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