President’s Corner

The holiday season is one of reflection. As I reflect on the events of the last year I am reminded of how grateful I am. I am grateful for the new home I call San Antonio. I am grateful for the many opportunities for growth Catholic Charities has been afforded over the last 12 months. I am grateful for the many community partnerships, steadfast and loyal volunteers, committed staff and board members and the numerous clergy members within the archdiocese who support our mission without fail or question.

In early December we hosted our annual fundraiser, St. Nicholas Ball, at the JW Marriott Hill Country Resort and Spa. The event was an overwhelming success and I am especially grateful for all the supporters who joined us. I would like to acknowledge our main sponsors, Mr. and Mrs. Chris Avery, IBC Bank and Visionworks for their dedication to our mission. Words cannot express how deeply moved I am by their kindness and generosity. In addition, I was witness to many attendees selflessly giving of their treasure by supporting our various initiatives. Again I am reminded that only through the support of those who believe in our mission are we able to continue to serve those most in need.

This year provided Catholic Charities with such great abundance. We began the year by serving those in need of a special New Year’s Day dinner. What a gift each of us received by spending our New Year’s Day serving Christ in others. We were supremely blessed by the outpouring of support we witnessed as our local, state and national communities mobilized to serve unaccompanied minors. I will forever be changed by the selflessness I witnessed in others. I am grateful for the unending dedication of our board members who helped make our health and wellness fairs a success, as well as our Halloween event for children and families. I am moved by the grace our staff and board members extended to our refugee clients, our veterans, our elderly, our homeless mothers, our parents in need and our precious future, our children.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the gracious support Archbishop Gustavo lends our agency daily. It is only through his kindness, his grace, his wisdom, his prayers that we continue to be a force which selflessly serves our community. His leadership is an inspiration to us all.

May you and your family experience a most blessed holiday season.

To another prosperous New Year.

ANTONIO FERNANDEZ

PRESIDENT, CATHOLIC CHARITIES, ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

St. Nicholas Ball is a joy-filled success

The Grand Oaks Ballroom at JW Marriott Hill Country Resort and Spa was alive with holiday cheer on Dec. 6. Over 500 guests came out to support Catholic Charities by attending our annual fundraiser, St. Nicholas Ball. This year marks the inauguration of this annual event and fell on the Feast Day of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas was a bishop in Asia Minor. He was known for his generosity, secret gift giving and relentless defense of the oppressed, most especially oppressed children. We are grateful to our major sponsors Mr. and Mrs. Chris Avery, IBC Bank and Visionworks for their generous support of our endeavor. In addition we experienced overwhelming support from many community organizations, parishes, local businesses, friends and family of Catholic Charities. This event would not have been possible without the gracious giving of so many individuals.

Guests of honor included Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MsSpS, Bishop Emeritus John Yanta of the Diocese of Amarillo, Bishop Emeritus Michael Pfeifer, OMI, of the Diocese of San Angelo and St. Nicholas, himself. Guests were treated to a silent auction, live auction, dinner and dancing. A special message from Pope Francis was presented to the guests, as well as the premier of a new agency video including former and present clients. Imelda Villarreal, current client at Guadalupe Community Center (GCC), delivered a heartfelt testimonial about her experience as a client of GCC and how the support of our agency has allowed her to return to school and complete her Medical Assistant certification. Her words inspired a standing ovation from those in attendance.

Plans are currently underway for the second Annual St. Nicholas Ball. Please keep early December in mind as you make plans for the upcoming year.

So please help us we

He snuck out in the nighttime. He left gifts in the darkness. He helped many, many people. Because he loved God so much!

Who is this secret person? Who is this mystery? He’s called St. Nicholas, But he’s also you and me!

So, good saint, please help us To love and give to one another. We know that is what God asks us. So please help us we pray!

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Content of Catholic Charities News provided by Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc.

Catholic Charities Briefs

DECK THE HALLS — JIM HENKE ENDOWMENT CHRISTMAS SHOPPING SPREE
BY JAIME KARNETSKY

Catholic Charities’ Guadalupe Community Center took 24 excited children to Target to shop for Christmas gifts for their whole family on Dec. 13! Each child was gifted $100 to shop and wrap for their family. Children were paired with a volunteer to help secure all of the items on their list. Father Jim Henke graciously donated the necessary money in order to benefit all of these children.

The children had a blast shopping and wrapping gifts. Some children had never been to Target before or wrapped presents before. The event was very successful and all children left with a smile.

ANNUAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION DAY AT GUADALUPE COMMUNITY CENTER
BY LIZZY NEMETH

Annually, the first Saturday in December marks a special day at Catholic Charities’ Guadalupe Community Center. Every year, over 900 25-pound boxes of food are assembled, packed and delivered by Redeemer Presbyterian Church and their generous volunteers. This opportunity continues to be a blessing for the clients we serve and brings the community together in a special way to give back for the holidays.

Vouchers for the food distribution were given out to about nine hundred clients starting in October at GCC. The distribution began a little before noon but clients started arriving as early as 9 a.m. eager to get their box of food for the holiday. With the help of over 50 volunteers and eight dedicated staff, about 450 of the 900 boxes were given out within two hours. A great relationship was established with the Lanier High School Police Explorers. About 18 of the student Explorers directed traffic and helped put out boxes to help the event run smoothly.

On hand were volunteers from Kappa Delta Chi Sorority at Our Lady of the Lake University, Randolph Air Force Base, Metropolitan Health Neighborhood Engagement Program and with other friends and family.

The boxes were distributed from both the side of the GCC and out front of the center on West Cesar E. Chavez Boulevard so that the event moved more quickly. A special thank you goes out to the many volunteers whose helping hands and feet supplied us with the energy, willingness, and patience to serve the community.

Our Lady of the Lake University, Randolph Air Force Base, Metropolitan Health Neighborhood Engagement Program and with other friends and family.

FIRST ANNUAL LITTLE PUMPKINS PALOOZA
BY PATSY VELA

The evening prior to Halloween, Guadalupe Center was alive with the spirit of the holidays! Over 500 people, big and small, made their way to the latest and greatest Halloween party to hit the San Antonio social scene. Little Pumpkins Palooza was an overwhelming success. The air was rich with baby giggles, toddler amazement, children’s excitement along and adult nostalgia.

Fred Flintstone, Little Bo Peep, Hot Dog and Mustard, a Jellyfish, Michael Jackson and a Motorcycle Group were all on hand, in addition to several Elsa’s, all the Superheroes, many kittens, baby pumpkins and bumble bees.

The guests were treated to hot dogs and popcorn, games, activities, dancing, a pumpkin contest, costume contest, costume shop and much more! Families were invited to meander through a pumpkin patch and take photos with The Pumpkin King. They were also invited to take a pumpkin home with them.

The winning costume was a dynamic duo of Superman Dad and Baby Boy. The winner of the staff pumpkin decorating contest was a creation imagined by the Counseling Center. Perhaps the most exciting event of the evening was the CCAOSA staff Flash Mob of “Thriller.” It was such a hit; an encore was demanded by the crowd.

The success of this event was due in large part to the commitment of Catholic Charities’ Volunteer Services Committee. They worked tirelessly to make certain many, many, many children and their parents celebrated in a safe and inviting manner. The staff and volunteers of Catholic Charities are looking forward to a successful and entertaining second annual Halloween event.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS FAIR
BY LIZZY NEMETH

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc. hosted its fifth Wellness and Community Resource Fair at St. Bonaventure Church on Oct. 18. This was the first time the fair was held on the South Side of San Antonio. The event provided free health services including preventative, preventive screenings such as blood pressure, BMI, glucose and cholesterol along with education on wellness to ensure the whole family can stay in good health.

With the cold and flu season approaching, this event provided a great opportunity for families to receive health screenings and raise general health awareness. WellMed provided 35 seniors with free flu shots which is an essential service for this population. Additional screenings included eye exams provided by the University Of Incarnate Word Rosenberg School of Optometry, Bowen Eye Care & Health Center; Kidney Health Screenings by the State of Texas Kidney Foundation, and blood pressure/glucose screenings by the University Of Incarnate Word Pediatrics.

Over 100 individuals participated in our final Wellness and Community Resource Fair of 2014. This event included 32 vendors who provided a range of cultural, linguistic and health services, information and educational resources to the community promoting overall wellness. We especially want to thank all of our vendors as well as the Catholic Physicians Guild for sending physicians. We also would like to thank the UT Health Science Center of San Antonio for sending two resident orthodoxists who were in attendance at the fair.

We would also like to thank all of the wonderful volunteers who offered their time and talent to this event. We extend a gracious hand of appreciation to...
Catholic Charities Briefs (cont’d)

the Catholic Charities Wellness Advisory Board for their guidance, attendance and service at the Wellness and Community Resource Fairs held over the past year.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT
BY PATTY VELA

Catholic Charities’ Guadalupe Community Center was alive with the sound of maracas in celebration of National Night Out the evening of Oct. 7. National Night Out is a national effort aimed at raising awareness in communities and developing partnerships with law enforcement agencies to combat crime in local neighborhoods.

“We had about 100 participants at the event. They had a blast. We gave them hot dogs and popcorn. We provided entertainment and we set out large tables covered in paper. Community members were encouraged to share their thoughts about GCC’s impact in the neighborhood. They wrote things such as, ‘feeling safe when I walk home from school’ and ‘it is still my community,’” said Lizzy Nemeth, director of Programs Community Outreach for GCC.

Catholic Charities’ Guadalupe Community Center is pleased to offer a safe solution to the community, most especially in communities and developing partnerships with law enforcement agencies to combat crime in local neighborhoods.

RAMPAGE AND ICE SKATING
BY PATTY VELA

A group of refugee youth, cautiously, yet excitedly tried ice skating for the first time on Dec. 7. Immeditely after, the students were treated to a San Antonio Rampage hockey game. For most students, this was their first hockey game.

Top, food distribution at the Guadalupe Community Center, with Lanier High School Police Explorers lending a helping hand. Above, refugee youth treated to a San Antonio Rampage hockey game at the AT&T Center.

The tickets were generously donated by American Opportunity for Housing, Inc. Students had the opportunity to receive autographs from three of the Rampage hockey players and play on the Rampage inflatable. This was all part of Sunday Funday at the AT&T Center. At the end of the day the students were overheard talking about how much fun they had skating on the ice and how much they enjoyed the game. Needless to say, the students had a memorable experience!

IMMIGRATION REFORM SEMINAR
BY PATTY VELA

Catholic Charities’ Caritas Legal Services provided an Immigration Seminar at the Catholic Charities’ Guadalupe Community Center on Dec. 18. The purpose was to provide accurate information on the proposed reforms. It was widely publicized and over 150 individuals were in attendance. Congressman Lloyd Doggett attended the seminar and provided information to the attendees. The seminar was conducted by staff from Caritas Legal Services and volunteer pro bono attorney San Juanita Campos, who traveled from Weslaco to assist in the seminar. Caritas Legal Services is poised to hold more informational seminars in the future.

GOYA DISTRIBUTES 20,000 POUNDS OF FOOD
BY PATTY VELA

Goya Foods generously donated 20,000 pounds of food to Catholic Charities’ Guadalupe Community Center’s Food Pantry on Dec. 23. Many volunteers were on hand to help offload the food from the truck and ready it for distribution to families in need this holiday season. Archbishop Gustavo Garcia-Siller, MSFS, and Catholic Charities President/CEO Jose Antonio Fernandez were in attendance to help celebrate this grand gesture of kindness and compassion by Goya Foods. Catholic Charities is grateful for the support of Goya Foods.

Mental Health Task Force meeting

The Mental Health Task Force meeting is Friday, Jan. 26 from 11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 404 N. Alamo. Free parking typically available in church spaces in lot across from church off Avenue E.

The speaker is James S. Castro, LPC, LMFT, CEO for St. Peter-St Joseph Children’s Home. He will be speaking about their 14-Day Model toward healing for children placed in the foster care system. Castro is a host for “Catholicism Live” on Catholic Television of San Antonio.

I’M PREGNANT, NOW WHAT DO I DO?
CALL THE NURSE FAMILY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

If you meet all four criteria, Catholic Charities’ Nurse-Family Partnership Program is for you. This is a voluntary, free maternal and childhood health program which gives first-time moms valuable knowledge and support throughout pregnancy and until their babies reach two years of age. Partnering first-time moms with caring registered nurse home visitors empowers mothers to confidently create a better life for their children and themselves, supporting them as they handle the challenges and experience the joys of motherhood.

To enroll, or for more information, please call (210) 226-3030.

YOUR CHILD’S FUTURE IS IN YOUR HANDS

JOIN TODAY!
Enroll your child in our FREE home instruction program for Parents of 3 AND 4 year olds!

Materials, supplies, curriculum, and activities are all FREE!

Don’t miss out on a great educational opportunity for you and your child!

CALL (210) 267-2567 FOR MORE INFORMATION

SAVE THE DATE:

• VITA Kick-Off, Jan. 20, Guadalupe Community Center
• Fandango Under the Stars, Feb. 6, Pedrotti’s Northwind Ranch
• 40 Cans for Lent begins Feb. 18, Guadalupe Community Center
• The Dig, Feb. 28, The Gardens at Guadalupe Community Center
• Senior Fiesta, April 23, Wonderland of the Americas Mall

Volunteers are always welcome and needed. If you are interested, contact Paul Stevens at (210) 222-1294

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Through their eyes

In every way I have shown you that by hard work of that sort we must help the weak, and keep in mind the words of the Lord Jesus who himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’

— Acts 20:35

Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc., is blessed to have a variety of volunteers serve with us every summer and school year. We want to allow them the opportunity to share their experiences with the members of the archdiocese. Below you will find one of their stories.

SEND ME TO SERVE: MY FAITH AND MISSION EXPERIENCE AS A JESUIT VOLUNTEER

From Lizzy:

As a Jesuit Volunteer, I continue the tradition of serving the poor in San Antonio. I was inspired to join the Jesuit Volunteer Corp (JVC) while living and working with these four values: community, service, core values, and a year of service. JVC filled this call to serve and so I embarked on a year of service in San Antonio, where I would be working as a Crisis Intervention Case Manager at the Guadalupe Community Center, part of Catholic Charities, Archdiocese of San Antonio, Inc. I would be serving with eight individuals on the Westside of San Antonio. To better understand the reality of the clients we serve, JVC’s live in areas which are historically marginalized.

For a year I lived on the Westside of San Antonio with eight strangers. I worked at the Guadalupe Community Center, an intentionally diverse area of the city where I served tens of thousands of marginalized individuals each year through assistance programs to meet their most basic needs. As a case manager, I assisted hundreds of clients with rent, utilities, food, and clothing assistance through our Crisis Intervention Program. I made a living stipend and received $100 per month. I engaged in spirituality and intentional community living. These are the facts. What really happened is quite a different story.

The eight strangers I lived with became my family. The Guadalupe Community Center gradually became not just a job, but a new home. By serving my clients through charity, I was able to hear God’s message of justice for the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable in our society. Our program, which focused solely on charity, is now evolving to provide clients with Family Self-Sufficiency Services and looking for community-based solutions to poverty. I learned that even on a stipend, my community had all the basic needs met. I can’t say the same for many of my clients so I couldn’t complain about $100 per month. I began to realize that engaging in spirituality and living in intentional community became an everyday prayer. I can honestly say that everyone I’ve had this year have impacted the rest of my life.

Oddly enough, in my case, a year of service turned into a job opportunity. A foreign city is now my new home. My community housemates turned family have moved on, however, through the experiences we shared, I am able to continue living an authentic life. Once a JVC, now an FYV (Former Jesuit Volunteer) I continue the assignment God has given me at Catholic Charities in San Antonio. So be careful because God does not send us to serve: “Through bearing witness to the great faith and peace among individuals facing great injustice, was able to experience the Spirit of Jesus in a very tangible way.”

By Dulce Morales

Recipient of Catholic Charities Board of Directors Scholarship shares educational experience

BY DULCE Morales

Having been one of the selected applicants of the Catholic Charities Board of Directors Scholarship this year, I not only fills my heart with gratitude, but also I feel blessed to have this opportunity. This year, I hope to revisit a wish and desire to go back to school and continue my master’s degree program. As time passes, life happens and we have to make decisions.

Sometimes our wishes and desires have to wait. However that changed for me after being awarded this scholarship. It reignited that desire and hope to become closer to a dream that I had put on hold.

I am currently enrolled at Lubbock Christian University in an online master’s degree program in Human Services with a specialization in Administration. Working at Catholic Charities for the past four years has been the most enjoyable and fulfilling time for me. The challenges have allowed me to grow both personally and professionally. I hope to continue serving in the future, where I might have greater ability to help the less fortunate and underrepresented social and ethnic groups.

My educational pursuits would not be possible without the generous support from the scholarship sponsors. Thank you, Board of Directors, for allowing me this opportunity.

Guardian angels among us

BY MARY ELLEN Rowe

In our Catholic faith, guardian angels play a strong, and reassuring role throughout scripture and prayer. When we feel lonely, powerless, lost in our faith or uncertain about the future, the recurring message of angelic protection reminds us that we’re not alone. In fact, “we’re in really good hands!”

“Angel of God, my guardian dear
To whom God’s love commits me here
Ever this day, be at my side
To light and guard, to rule and guide.”

Is there anyone among us who hasn’t heard this beautifully simple prayer? “To light and guard, to rule and guide.” What comfort our guardians bring!

The Catholic Charities’ Guardianship Services seek to bring peace and security to those who are at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or who lack the capacity due to illness or disability. With the goal of protecting the most vulnerable in our society by ensuring that kind of comfort and peace to those who are at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, or who lack the capacity due to illness or disability, our program, which focused solely on charity, is now evolving to provide clients with Family Self-Sufficiency Services and looking for community-based solutions to poverty. I learned that even on a stipend, my community had all the basic needs met. I can’t say the same for many of my clients so I couldn’t complain about $100 per month. I began to realize that engaging in spirituality and living in intentional community became an everyday prayer. I can honestly say that everyone I’ve had this year have impacted the rest of my life.

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For information about volunteering with the Guardianship Services, call Suzy Vega, volunteer coordinator, at (210) 222-1294.