Early Intervention Teaches Coping Skills

While childhood is a time to learn, explore, and be carefree, many children battle with anxiety, depression, and behavior disorders. Catholic Charities is tackling these issues through its Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) program, which works with teachers, school administrators, and Communities Organizing Resources to Advance Learning (CORAL) staff to identify students who may be at risk for mental health issues and connect them to services.

Lucy, a nine-year-old student in the Franklin-McKinley school district, began having angry outbursts and became physically aggressive with her classmates. Lucy’s teacher noticed the change in her behavior with other students and teachers. Concerned about Lucy, she connected Lucy’s mother with Catholic Charities’ PEI program to get a screening to identify the root cause for her behavior change. During the screening process, they discovered that Lucy was having difficulty with her separation anxiety because of her mother’s divorce.

Once the issue was identified, Lucy and her mother started working with a therapist, behavior specialist, and family partner to develop replacement behaviors and learn coping skills to help with Lucy’s anxiety and depression. In the program, Lucy participated in a social skills group, learning how to process feelings and communicate openly. Her mother was highly motivated and attended a Positive Parenting Program through PEI to learn positive techniques she could use on a daily basis when conflicts arise.

Working as a team, Lucy, her mother, her PEI team, and her teacher have seen great success. Lucy is now doing well in school and at home with the support of her family and the community. Their case was closed last month, with everyone being proud of the progress they had made.

Catholic Charities is working collaboratively with the Franklin-McKinley school district and the Santa Clara County Department of Mental Health in spearheading the PEI program.

GET INVOLVED
To learn more about our Prevention and Early Intervention services, contact Angela Albright at oalbright@catholiccharitiesscc.org or call (408) 283-6151 ext. 315.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Help Us Take Care of the Poor

Every day, families and individuals come to Catholic Charities in need of our help. Last year, with your support, we provided programs and services that helped more than 40,000 neighbors in need get on the road to self-reliance. But there is more to do.

Over ten percent of Santa Clara County’s hard working residents live below the poverty line. At Catholic Charities we are focused on reducing poverty.

This May, we will make our Annual Appeal at all 52 churches in the Diocese to help us better serve the poor and vulnerable.

How can you help? “We need 40% of our parishioners to make an affordable donation that can help our brothers and sisters lift themselves out of poverty,” says Steve Volm, Chairperson of the 2014 Annual Appeal. The Catholic Charities Annual Appeal period is between April 15 and June 31. Appeal volunteers will be working closely with your Parish the weekend of May 17 and 18.

If you would like to get more involved or speak at a Mass in your parish about this critical work, please contact Linda Pippin at (408) 325-5125 or lpippin@CatholicCharitiesSCC.org.
The other day I walked through the "Jungle," a homeless encampment on the banks of Coyote Creek in San Jose. Over 200 people survive here, hidden by the traffic of Story Road and I-280. These are just some of the more than 7,000 people who are homeless each night in our valley. Our Housing Services staff visit regularly helping who they can, but the challenges are great. Many of the homeless have housing vouchers but can’t find affordable apartments. For some, mental health, substance abuse or prison background challenges are barriers to being housed and becoming self-reliant.

The men and women living in the homeless encampments once were children living in homes, but became stuck in the cycle of poverty due to the recent economic downturns, the loss of a job and housing, a series of personal crises, or because of having come from generations caught in poverty.

How do we disrupt this cycle of poverty? We prevent poverty through Catholic Charities early childhood development and parenting programs, refugee foster care, after-school literacy, youth development, and STEM (Science, Technology, Education and Math) programs. We alleviate the symptoms of poverty through senior nutrition, wellness programs, and supportive housing. We work to reduce poverty through our social enterprises, employment services, asset building, free income tax services, refugee resettlement, immigration legal services, prisoner re-entry, and behavioral health services.

And now, we are seeing results thanks to measures developed through our anti-poverty initiatives. The need is urgent. We have the solutions in our own hands. As Pope Francis points out, "We cannot tinker with the symptoms; we have to change the system."

"There are people who believe that poverty is a personal problem," said Bob Braham. "But it is not. It’s a national problem that we can’t continue to ignore."

"If we don’t solve poverty, we waste everything we do," he added. "That is why I am passionate about Catholic Charities."

Catholic Charities is blessed with dedicated program staff like Paula Ramos. Paula has worked tirelessly for 30 years to improve the lives of low-income seniors in San Jose as the Senior Nutrition Site Manager at John XXIII Multiservice Center. Before joining the Catholic Charities staff, Paula worked for Santa Clara County Protective Services and the Hank Lopez Community Center. When most of us are considering slowing down, Paula was just gearing up. In her role as Site Manager, she works with a team of more than 20 people, including staff members and volunteers to prepare and serve hot and nutritious lunches to 700-875 seniors in our community each week.

Paula ensures that the seniors can look forward to ethnically diverse meals prepared with care, and served with kindness. She works in collaboration with the County to ensure all meals prepared meet the County’s nutrition guidelines. "When I started at the center most of the seniors were from the Hispanic and Italian communities, now we see seniors from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds." Paula’s menus reflect the communities the center serves, creating menus that will appeal to the seniors from the African American, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Eastern Indian communities.

Paula’s role at the center is much greater than meal planning and service. Her caring personality connects with the people who come to the center by engaging them in conversation and giving them much needed hugs and smiles. She has a special connection with the seniors, partly because she is trusted as one of their peers. "I love coming to work. Seeing these people makes my day and gives me strength. I would not be the person I am today if it were not for Catholic Charities," said Paula.

After 30 years, Paula is retiring in March. What is next for this dedicated dynamo? "I will spend more time with my family, but I also will be coming back to visit my friends and share a meal," she said.

30 Years of Caring and Dedication

Embracing Leadership Roles

When it comes to giving back, Bob Braham’s philosophy is dive in, roll-up your sleeves, and make a difference. Bob first learned about Catholic Charities through his brother-in-law, the CEO of Catholic Charities in Riverside. Inspired, he learned about Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, and was enthusiastic about joining the Board of Directors.

Bob chairs the Communications Advisory committee, and is a member of the Development committee. "The key to making a difference as a board member or volunteer is to create an action plan, commit to reaching the goal, and then provide the follow-through needed to execute the plan effectively," said Bob.

Bob’s management experience and passion for running made him a natural fit to serve as chairperson for the Spring Forward 5K/10K Run Walk. He brought together a group of Silicon Valley marketing executives who developed creative concepts to brand and promote the event. Another of his key objectives as the event chairperson is to seek out prospective Silicon Valley corporations that are interested in becoming sponsors. Microsoft Corporation was very excited about the opportunity and took on the host sponsor role, providing the event location. Other sponsors include SGI, SanDisk, Essex Properties, Joseph J. Albanese, Inc., KRAY radio, NBC Bay Area, and the Silicon Valley Business Journal.

"The great thing about the Run Walk is everyone can participate," Bob says. "Whether you are an avid runner, you walk regularly, or enjoy taking the kids out in the stroller, the Spring Forward 5K/10K Run Walk is a fun, family-oriented way to support Catholic Charities, and build a greater awareness about our agency’s programs and services."

GET INVOLVED

Invite friends, family members, office mates, or fellow parishioners to join in the fun. Register today at www.springforward5k10k.com. For more information call Ann-Marie Meacham at (408) 325-5123.
**Bold Steps for Children**

Franklin McKinley Children’s Initiative (FMCI) was honored at the 7th Annual Santa Clara Children’s Summit with a Bold Steps for Children award, recognizing organizations that make a difference for children by thinking creatively, making a commitment to changing outcomes, and working together effectively. Somos Mayfair, CommitUniverCity, and Grail Family Services were recognized in addition to FMCI.

FMCI is comprised of over 30 partner agencies working together in the Santee neighborhood on the East Side of San José. This area is rich in diversity and community leadership, but the community faces many obstacles.

The FMCI mission is to build a sustainable community partnership that supports children from cradle to career through community schools, safe and strong neighborhoods, and economic development. The goal is to ensure every FMCI child graduates high school prepared for college and a career.

In partnership with the City of San José, the Santa Clara County Office of Education, the Franklin-McKinley School District, FIRST 5 and Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, the FMCI fosters relationships between vital community partners, and connects the partners and service providers to the community they serve.

**From Desperation to Self-Reliance**

Unable to land a job for four years, Robert was at an all-time low point in his life. Depression and dealing with his bipolar condition were becoming barriers that Robert couldn’t overcome alone. Before Robert was referred to Catholic Charities’ Focus For Work program following a short incarceration, he had little hope of landing a job. “I had a negative outlook, and was so low I considered suicide. At that low point I realized that I had to get rid of the negativity. I had to get my life back on track,” Robert said.

Focus For Work partners with the California State Department of Rehabilitation, which helps people with disabilities, to offer job development and placement services. Once Robert started participating in the program his outlook and attitude began to change. “The Focus For Work staff does everything they can to make sure you succeed. They weren’t just doing their job, they became part of my life in a very positive way,” he said.

With the support of the program staff, Robert learned how to craft his resume using positive keywords, and participated in mock interview videos to get constructive criticism and encouragement from his Focus For Work Job Coach and the other program participants. “The more effort I put forth, the more my Focus For Work team was committed to preparing me to succeed.” Participating in the program helped Robert build strong job search skills, and gave him the renewed confidence he needed to be successful on job interviews. “Seeing that so many people believed in me, I was motivated to do well. They could see that the person I was before is not who I am now,” said Robert.

Using his newfound job search skills, Robert began applying for full-time positions. He was contacted by Amazon to interview for a job; the interview was a great success, and Robert was hired. He is very happy in his new role, and is even being considered for a promotion.

Robert said, “The care and support that the Focus For Work team provided helped me learn that if you work hard and have a positive attitude, you will see the difference.” The positive shift in Robert’s life has also rekindled his enthusiasm for life. In addition to starting a new career, he has found strength and a sense of community at his church, and was just recently married.

**Promoting Wellness for Seniors**

Establishing a positive health routine is important for seniors and helps to minimize chronic pain, improve sleep, retain strong memory skills, and achieve greater mobility. John XXIII Multiservice Center promotes senior wellness with programs that encourage exercise, healthy eating, and social involvement.

As part of the wellness program, San Jose State University and University of San Francisco nursing faculty and students provide health education and identification of possible health concerns in a community setting. As a part of the nursing coursework, all nursing student interactions with the seniors are supervised by University faculty. Seniors have access to wellness services three days a week, with no appointment necessary.

Inspired by the positive experiences working with the seniors at the center as part of their coursework, many of the nursing students return to the center as volunteers in a wide variety of roles once they have completed their studies.

**A Mission to End Human Trafficking**

Would you recognize a case of human trafficking if you saw it in your neighborhood? Do you think you could identify a victim of modern day slavery if he or she stood next to you in line at the store? Did you know that human trafficking is a $32 billion dollar per year industry, according to the United Nations?

There are 27 million victims of human trafficking worldwide. However, only approximately 40,000 have been identified, according to the U.S. Department of State. The Department also estimates that 17,500 people are trafficked to the U.S. every year. In the Bay Area, the number of victims are difficult to pinpoint, likely because it is underreported.

Human trafficking victims include all genders and ages. The U.S. Department of State defines human trafficking as, “The use of force, fraud or coercion to exploit a person for commercial sex or for the purpose of subjecting a victim to involuntary servitude, debt bondage, or forced labor. The use of force or coercion can be direct and violent, or psychological.”

In 2012, a local network was formed at the request of Bishop Patrick J. McGrath to focus on this issue. The Catholic Network to End Human Trafficking, a joint endeavor with the Diocese of San Jose and the Diocese of Monterey, is led by Linda Batton, Director of Social Ministries for the Diocese of San Jose. The group consists of members of seven religious communities in the area, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, the Stop Slavery Coalition, the San Jose Police Department, and parish leadership. Their mission: “As a Catholic faith community, we value the dignity and rights of all persons, and we endeavor to educate, influence public policy, and engage our community for the purpose of eradicating human trafficking in all its forms. We work in collaboration with other faith communities, law enforcement, and other established organizations in addressing the issue.”
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Our thanks to everyone who showed their compassion, dignity, and faith during the 2013 Catholic Charities Christmas Appeal. The Appeal raised $664,341 of critically needed funds to support our programs and services. With your support, we are bringing thousands of local families and individuals the help they need to overcome poverty.

STEM: PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION TO EXPLORE TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE

CORAL students experience the wonders of science and space during a NASA field trip.

During the CORAL Summer STEM Program, students were given the opportunity to attend an educational field trip to the NASA Research Center. Students received hands-on training in outer space technology, watched 3-D videos, and interacted with NASA employees. Parents of our students and CORAL staff were overjoyed by this wonderful opportunity for our youth, and look forward to attending again soon!