CORAL Celebrates 10 Years of Inspiring Young Minds

All you have to do is sit in a CORAL classroom and watch the young participants eagerly engage in the lesson at hand and the goal of Catholic Charities’ after-school program becomes abundantly clear. CORAL inspires children to become enthusiastic learners through a laser focus on literacy skills.

“We want children to love to read,” says Sara Reyes, Director of Catholic Charities’ Children, Youth and Family Development Division. “You have to be able to read proficiently to learn. We know that students who are not reading at grade level by third grade are at much higher risk of dropping out of high school. So literacy skills are critical for academic success.”

CORAL was launched in 1999 by the James Irvine Foundation to improve academic achievement in five California cities, including San Jose. Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County first implemented the program in 2003. In the 10 years since it started, CORAL has helped thousands of students and their families, and become an integral part of the schools and communities it serves. A recent study of the CORAL program showed that English scores among students who participate in the CORAL program improve at twice the rate of students who do not participate. CORAL is offered at 23 schools sites in San Jose. The majority are located in the Franklin McKinley School District, with four sites in San Jose Unified and one in Alum Rock. The sites are located in some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in San Jose.

Students walk over to the CORAL classroom at the end of the school day, where they spend three to four hours depending on their school

Continued on page 7

CORAL Instructors Stay Involved

Several CORAL after-school program instructors first became involved with Catholic Charities through its Washington United Youth Center on South First Street. Their commitment to Catholic Charities and the youth they serve is a testament to their positive experience at the youth center and their admiration for the caring adults there who helped guide them.

Nancy Mendoza, an instructor at the Meadows Elementary School CORAL program, was part of Catholic Charities’ Young Women’s Empowerment program when she was 14. Five years later, she is enjoying her job as a CORAL instructor and attending San Jose City College.

“When I got the job with the CORAL program, it felt like I was coming back to family,” she says. “The CORAL program really called my name. It’s rewarding to watch the students’ progress. I’m studying to be a teacher so I can continue to help children learn and grow.”

Alexi Garcia was also part of the Young Women’s Empowerment program at Washington United Youth Center. Now she is a CORAL instructor at Shirakawa Elementary School.

“The adults at the youth center were so welcoming and caring,” Alexi says. “They took us on field trips. It was really a positive experience.”

Alexi attends Evergreen Community College and is considering a profession in childhood development or social work.

“No matter what kind of day I’m having, it always gets better when I get to CORAL and see the kids,” she says. “They are so enthusiastic and eager to learn. It just reminds me to keep going and stay focused on what is positive.”

A young CORAL student working on her literacy skills during independent reading.
Dear Friends,

Imagine a child being able to learn and play at school without fear of gangs. Imagine a grandmother caring for grandchildren, comforted that she is not alone. Imagine a young parent learning how to help her children grow healthy and safe. Imagine youth escaping the life of gangs and developing a new purpose in life. Imagine a senior faced with mental illness finding a doctor who listens and cares. Imagine an immigrant learning English, finding work and caring for her family. Imagine a senior in a nursing home protected from abuse and neglect. Imagine a homeless veteran finally finding a home and someone who cares. Imagine a struggling family saving hard-earned money through free tax assistance. Imagine a prisoner being able to communicate with his family. Imagine a refugee child without parents finding a caring foster family. Imagine an entire neighborhood committed to helping their children succeed. Imagine an entire community organized and committed to ending poverty.

Thanks to the work we do at Catholic Charities, you don’t have to imagine. This is the reality of a day in the life of Catholic Charities. With more than 500 staff members and 1,000 volunteers and peer supporters, we put our faith into action every day by helping more than 36,000 people each year of all cultures and beliefs right here in Santa Clara Valley.

I thank all of our friends and supporters for making this possible. If you want to make an amazing difference in one person’s life or in the lives of 1,000 of our neighbors, I invite you to join us this year and donate to our Annual Catholic Charities Appeal. Imagine what an amazing difference in one person’s life or in the lives of 1,000 of our neighbors, I invite you to join us this year and donate to our Annual Catholic Charities Appeal. Imagine what you can do!

All the best!
Gregory R. Kepferle, CEO
PS. New and increased gifts are being matched by a generous grant from The Sobrato Family Foundation.

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Moving Beyond the Bars

Getting back into the workforce can be difficult for those who have been incarcerated. Employers are not always willing to hire someone who has a criminal record no matter how many skills they have. Catholic Charities’ Focus for Work program is partnering with the Probation Department to help those who were recently released from jail or prison re-enter the workforce. The program offers job development and placement services and helps participants build skills like resume writing and interviewing.

Participants work with a job coach, who helps them navigate the employment application process, offers encouragement and direction, and provides job retention support for 90 days after employment.

“Focus for Work has been providing employment services to those with psychiatric disabilities for 20 years,” says Eila Latif, Director of Focus for Work. “We have now expanded our services to include those who were recently released from incarceration.”

Catholic Charities has become a recognized leader in the employment services arena and recently offered a series of workshops for other service providers. The third one, titled “Keeping the Bars Behind You,” is scheduled for May 15 and focuses on helping former inmates get hired.

“It’s even more difficult for those with a criminal record to get hired now that most employers require online applications,” Eila says. “The online process doesn’t give applicants the chance to meet with an employer in person and sell themselves before they mention their record. Now as soon as an employer sees it on the application, they don’t get a call. That’s why the job development work we do is so critical. We develop relationships with area employers, making it possible for an applicant to get that first interview.”
Single Mother Hopes to Open Restaurant

Estela left her native Mexico six years ago to give her three daughters a better life. The single mother has worked hard to provide for her children, but it has been a struggle. Thanks to Step Up Silicon Valley’s Franklin McKinley Women’s Initiative, she is looking forward to the future and hopes to open a restaurant of her own one day.

Estela had been supporting her family as a cook when she found out the restaurant where she worked was closing its doors. Then she heard about business classes for micro-entrepreneurs offered through the Franklin McKinley Women’s Initiative.

Launched by Step Up Silicon Valley in 2011, the 12-week course teaches women how to develop a business plan and other skills needed to start their own small businesses. Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County is a founding member of the Step Up Silicon Valley network.

Soon after completing the course in October 2011, Estela was able to start her own catering business, which specializes in tamales wrapped in banana leaves.

“Before taking the classes, I was afraid to start my own business,” she says. “But after everything I learned, I wasn’t afraid anymore. I am very grateful for the program. There are so many people who have helped me that I wouldn’t have had the opportunity to meet before this program.”

Estela is one of three women from the program who recently presented their business plan to business and marketing students at San Jose State University. The students are conducting market research and will develop recommendations for the women.

“It’s been an amazing opportunity,” Estela says. “I hope that someday I can open my restaurant and help my daughters get a college education so they don’t have to work so hard.”

Lifting 1,000 Out of Poverty

Step Up Silicon Valley has launched a new pilot project to move 1,000 people out of poverty over the next year. Sixteen agencies in the Step Up network, including Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, have joined the 1,000 Out of Poverty campaign.

Each agency has committed to moving a certain number of people out of poverty in 2014 using a common measurement system, with Catholic Charities committing to 200. For the first time ever, local service providers will be able to measure how effectively their combined services are in helping families and individuals move from poverty to self-sufficiency.

“The fact that 16 organizations are willing to work together to lift 1,000 people out of poverty in itself is a wonderful message of collaboration and cooperation for the greater good of the community,” says Almaz Negash, Managing Director of Step Up Silicon Valley. “We see this collaboration not as an end, but rather as a means to learn from the process, understand barriers, and improve systems to better serve those who are working to overcome poverty.”

The project will use the federal Supplemental Poverty Measure to define poverty. Based on that measure, an estimated 214,000 people in Santa Clara County are living in poverty.

At the start of the pilot project, participants will measure how well they are doing in five key areas – food, housing, health, education, and income – using objective measures on a five-point scale. This self-sufficiency assessment will occur four times throughout the course of the year.

The 16 organizations will use their existing strategies for helping the populations they serve move out of poverty. The data will be tracked to determine how many people were able to become self-sufficient and which interventions worked.

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County is a founding member of the Step Up Silicon Valley network. It was formally launched in 2009 to cut local poverty.

The Catholic Charities Golf Tournament raises funds that are directly used to help local families overcome poverty. With the goal of becoming self-reliant, these services allow many to concentrate on furthering their education and improving their job skills. This tournament allows Catholic Charities to reach more people in need with a wide range of services.

Mark your calendars for the Catholic Charities 29th Annual Golf Tournament and Auction

June 10, 2013 Cinnabar Hills Golf Course

Sponsorship Opportunities and Online Auction at www.CatholicCharitiesGolf.com

“PLAYING WITH A PURPOSE”

“The Catholic Charities Golf Tournament raises funds that are directly used to help local families overcome poverty. With the goal of becoming self-reliant, these services allow many to concentrate on furthering their education and improving their job skills. This tournament allows Catholic Charities to reach more people in need with a wide range of services.”

— Dave Benincio
Clinic Offers More Than Basketball

Teens at Catholic Charities’ Washington United Youth Center were offered much more than tips about basketball when they were treated to a basketball skills clinic organized by Bellarmine High School students. They also received valuable advice about the game of life from the varsity basketball players who led the clinic.

The players talked about the balance between academics and sports, stressing that while sports are an important part of life, good grades will lead to educational and career opportunities. They spoke about the value of staying true to your word and being a good team player, in sports and in life.

“The talk was very inspiring,” said Mario Gonzalez, Sports Coordinator at Washington United Youth Center. “Basketball is a new sport to most of these kids. Sports are important for these youth because it keeps them off the streets and involved in a positive activity.”

Located in one of San Jose’s most disadvantaged neighborhoods, the center provides a safe haven for teens and young adults. It serves the surrounding community through recreational opportunities, gang intervention services, counseling, computer classes, and youth empowerment programs.

Every year students at Bellarmine take on a project to benefit Catholic Charities with the help of Bellarmine parents. This year parent Cindy Gion decided that the boys should own the entire project.

“I think it has more value when they are the ones actually doing the legwork and making it happen, so they organized it,” she said. “It was a good leadership opportunity for the players while benefiting the youth at Washington United Youth Center.”

A Celebration of Hope

About 25 people gathered at the Willow Glen home of Joe and Celeste Melehan, longtime supporters of Catholic Charities, to celebrate those who are bringing hope to local families and individuals working to overcome poverty. The Circle of Hope reception in February featured an inspiring talk by Kevin Velazquez, a high school junior who is excelling academically thanks to the help he received through Catholic Charities’ CORAL after-school program. He told the group that he joined CORAL to improve his literacy skills, yet also learned about the values of respect, perseverance, and giving back. Kevin has donated more than 4,000 volunteer hours to the program. He is now taking advanced placement courses in high school and will soon start applying for college. The Circle of Hope honors those who have named Catholic Charities as a beneficiary of their estate plans. These members are helping to ensure that the programs and services that are benefiting people like Kevin will continue to be available for years to come. If you are interested in learning more about legacy giving, contact Sara Johnson at (408) 325-5259 or sjohnson@CatholicCharitiesSCC.org.

New Program Focuses on Children’s Mental Health

Mental health issues can keep children from achieving academic success. While childhood is considered a carefree time, the reality is many children battle with anxiety, depression, and behavior disorders. Catholic Charities is addressing some of these issues through its Prevention and Early Intervention program, which identifies children who need help and connects them to services.

Catholic Charities launched the program in the Franklin-McKinley School District in January thanks to a nearly $1.3 million grant from the Santa Clara County Department of Mental Health. The countywide project includes a number of organizations that are working together to deliver these services. Catholic Charities is partnering with the Alum Rock Counseling Center to serve East San Jose.

Prevention and Early Intervention program staff – which includes therapists, behavior specialists, and family partners – work with teachers and school administrators, as well as CORAL staff, to identify students who may be at risk for mental health issues.

“We are working through our CORAL network,” says Melissa Santos, Catholic Charities’ Senior Program Director for Children’s Mental Health.
The first three years of life are a period of incredible growth and development. Babies and toddlers need positive early learning experiences to foster their intellectual, social, and emotional development and lay the foundation for school success. Catholic Charities has expanded its Steps Ahead program, adding Baby Steps and Just Us, to help pregnant women and parents get the tools they need to provide these critical early learning experiences.

Made possible through support from the Santa Clara County Child Abuse Council and the Bella Vista Foundation, Baby Steps is a six-month program that includes weekly in-home visits by a Home Visitor who addresses a number of issues, including parent/child attachment, maternal depression, anxiety, stress, isolation, and other early childhood concerns. The one-hour visits are tailored to meet the specific needs of each child and caregiver.

“We want to make sure we support the healthy development of the child and their well-being,” says Home Visitor Stephanie Iyescas. “We work with families from different backgrounds and many of them have limited access to resources.”

A second component of the program is Just Us, a 10-week play group for caregivers and their children. The group meets once a week at Catholic Charities’ Kinship Resource Center and gives parents the opportunity to socialize with each other and spend quality playtime with their children. Parents see firsthand how playing with their children strengthens the bond and helps babies and toddlers learn important skills and social cues.

Refugee Foster Care, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program, and Supportive Housing Services. Next, participants visited John XXIII Multi-Service Center in downtown San Jose, where they saw how Catholic Charities is helping older adults stay healthy and independent. In addition to a nutritious hot lunch, the center offers a number of educational, recreational, and wellness programs.
**San Jose Couple Lends a Hand to Sandy Victims**

Ken and Linda Bearie had been looking for a way to use their backgrounds in disaster preparedness to help people in the midst of a crisis. A month after Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast last October they were in New Jersey assisting those who were still reeling from the devastation.

With the help of Greg Kepferle, CEO for Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, the couple was connected to Catholic Charities in Trenton, New Jersey, on the frontlines of the disaster. Working out of a parish in the small community of Brick, they served as case managers helping local residents hurt by the storm, many losing their homes, jobs, and possessions.

“It’s a close-knit community with an amazing spirit,” Linda says. “Many were reluctant to receive help. They were used to being on the giving end and were more concerned about helping their neighbors even though they themselves had lost everything.”

The couple spent two weeks in New Jersey, working long hours to get people the assistance and resources they needed to get back on their feet. Both agreed it was heartbreaking.

“After working with people extensively for two weeks, you build a relationship; we’re concerned about them,” Ken says. “Catholic Charities will be dealing with this for a long time.”

**From Gang Member to Valedictorian**

Jayro grew up in a neighborhood in Sunnyvale where gang activity was common. He became involved in the gang life in middle school and spent his first night in juvenile hall at age 13. By age 14, he was taking drugs and getting into fights on a regular basis. How he got from there to serving as valedictorian at his high school graduation is a testament to the dedicated Catholic Charities’ staff who helped him find his way and his own determination.

“I spent eight months in jail when I was 16,” says Jayro, who is now 20. “I just figured my life was going to be gangs and prison. I was all tattooed.”

That’s when he first met Bernice Aguilera, Justice Empowerment Services Program Manager at Catholic Charities. But he wasn’t ready to turn his life around just yet.

“I was supposed to go into a program, but I told Bernice it wasn’t for me,” he says. “I thought it was just a waste of time.”

But after a series of run-ins with the law, months of incarceration, and repeated fights with rival gang members, Jayro was ready. He got serious about earning his high school diploma and started the long, painful process to remove his tattoos. Jayro received help through Catholic Charities’ Vocational and Educational Reentry Services, which works with high-risk offenders to help them get the tools they need to become productive members of society. Guidance managers work one-on-one to connect program participants to vocational and educational services, mental health counseling, tattoo removal, and other services.

Now Jayro is the proud father of a six-month-old baby girl and is looking forward to his future. He dreams of becoming an underwater welder and is doing everything he can to make that dream a reality.

“Catholic Charities helped me get to where I am today,” Jayro says. “I wouldn’t have been able to come this far without them. They really stuck by me.”

**Employment Center Helps Refugees Find Work**

Catholic Charities recently opened a Refugee Employment Center to help newly arrived refugees secure jobs. While the agency has always offered employment services to refugees, the center provides a dedicated area at the Zanker Road site where job seekers can get help with their resumes and use computers and other office equipment to apply for work.

“Most job applications are done online now,” explains Stephen Hicken, Division Director for Catholic Charities’ Economic Development Services. “Applying for a job requires computer access, and most of the refugees we serve don’t have computers at home.”

The Refugee Employment Center was made possible by a grant from the eBay Foundation. German Scipioni, Director of Stored Value Solutions at eBay and a Catholic Charities’ donor and volunteer, even hand-delivered the check.

“It was inspiring to be at Catholic Charities and see how much the grant could do as well as the staff’s initiative and creativity in making the employment center an engaging place for the refugee participants,” says German, whose own parents immigrated from Argentina. “I met people from all over the world who just months ago were living in refugee camps. Through Catholic Charities’ work, they will now have the chance to become contributing members of society.”
**Summer School Opens Doors to Science**

Students who develop skills in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) will have a much better chance of securing good-paying jobs in Silicon Valley’s innovation and technology-based economy. Thanks to a Summer Science Project grant from the Partnership for Children and Youth, Catholic Charities will bring a STEM-based summer school enrichment program to Kennedy Elementary School in the Franklin-Mckinley School District this June.

“There is a lot of movement around bringing STEM-based programming to low-income and ethnically diverse communities, “ says Sara Reyes, Director of Catholic Charities’ Children, Youth, and Family Development Division. “There is limited representation of Latino students in science and engineering programs at the university level. They aren’t going into those fields. We need to make sure all children have access to high-quality STEM programming at an early age and pique their interest in these careers.”

The summer school will serve 300 students in third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. The four-week program will focus on inquiry-based, hands-on STEM projects and incorporating science career exploration into the activities. Curriculum and training for the program are being provided through Tech Bridge.

“This is an exciting opportunity,” Sara says. “Many of Catholic Charities’ CORAL staff will receive special training so they can effectively teach the STEM curriculum.

**GET INVOLVED**

Help ensure that children have the opportunity to become future innovators by giving to Catholic Charities at www.CatholicCharitiesSCC.org.

**Coral Celebrates 10 Years of Inspiring Young Minds**

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

schedule. At the core of Catholic Charities’ CORAL program is the 60 to 90 minutes spent on reading activities each day. The proven literacy model includes reading aloud, a lively shout-out session where ideas are shared, and independent reading.

Time is also spent on homework, and completion logs are kept and shared with parents and school staff. Enrichment activities round out the curriculum and include sports, art, and music. A soccer league was formed to give students the opportunity to play organized sports, which is often too expensive for many of the families CORAL serves.

Much of CORAL’s success is due to the strong collaboration with the schools it serves. CORAL is aligned with the academic curriculum and CORAL staff work closely with teachers and administrators. CORAL is not just an add-on, but part of the school day.

CORAL also offers a strong parent engagement component. Many of the parents are recent immigrants and are unfamiliar with the educational system. CORAL helps parents navigate the system and access the resources they need to support their children’s educational success.

“Many of the families we serve are struggling to overcome poverty,” Sara says. “School personnel often come to CORAL staff when one of the students or their families needs help. We can connect them to other Catholic Charities’ services. CORAL has become an important community resource.”

**GET INVOLVED**

Celebrate CORAL’s 10-year anniversary and help this critical community resource continue to inspire our future leaders by donating to Catholic Charities.

To give online, visit www.CatholicCharitiesSCC.org.

**Your Gift is Improving Lives**

Life will get much better for the thousands of families and individuals we serve thanks to your generous contribution to Catholic Charities’ annual Christmas Appeal. The campaign raised $589,712 that will be used for programs and services that are changing lives for good.

Your faith in Catholic Charities’ work and mission to cut poverty means that those who desperately need a hand up will get one. The people we serve depend on your generosity: the child who now has a brighter future, the senior who can now eat, the refugee who can now rebuild her life, and the father who can now support his family.

We at Catholic Charities are truly grateful for your continued support. Thanks to you, we see hope in the faces of those we serve.

**GET INVOLVED**

Your support is needed all year long to fund programs and services that are improving lives every day. There are a number of ways to give. To find out how you can support Catholic Charities, go to www.CatholicCharitiesSCC.org, or contact Marrie Regen at (408) 325-5248 or mregen@catholiccharitiesSCC.org.

**GUIDE SHEDS LIGHT ON THE MUSLIM FAITH**

While about one-fifth of the world’s population is Muslim, misconceptions and mistruths about this faith are widespread. Even here in Silicon Valley, with its diversity of cultures and faiths, many people know very little about what it means to be Muslim. To help shed light on some of the beliefs and traditions of this faith, Catholic Charities has developed a guide called “One Nation: An Insight into Islam and Its Various Cultures.”

With more than 30 years of experience resettling refugees, Catholic Charities has deep and long-standing relationships with local Muslim communities. The guide is the result of an ongoing dialogue with these communities and organizations that serve the Muslim community, as well as meetings with other faith-based organizations. It was funded by a grant from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation.

“We wanted to clear up some of the misconceptions,” says Sergio Medina, Senior Program Director for Catholic Charities’ Refugee Services. “Knowledge about different cultures and faiths helps to build a more harmonious community.”

The guide provides a brief historical and political background on Islam and explains how the two major Muslim sects were formed. It also provides an overview of some of the beliefs and practices.

The guide includes a section called “Religious Basics” that highlights some of the rituals such as prayer, fasting, and the annual pilgrimage called the Hajj. A section titled “Differences Between Men and Women” explains the strict gender separation of the Muslim faith. There is also an extensive list of Muslim faith-based organizations as well as community resources.

**GET INVOLVED**

To find out more about the Guide or to get a copy, contact Theresa Samuel-Boko at (408) 325-5195 or tsamuel-boko@catholiccharitiesscc.org.

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**SAVE THE DATE**

**Sponsored by Catholic Charities**

**Bocce Tournament**

**Thursday, August 23, 2013**

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DID YOU KNOW?

Since opening for business in October 2010, Day Break Cares Home Care Services has provided more than 40,537 hours of care that is helping seniors age with dignity in the comfort of their own homes.

Santee Family Resource Center serves children 0 to 5 and their families via an array of services. Through these programs, children explore arts, early literacy, reading, music and movement. These classes also serve as a platform to talk to families and children about healthy eating and oral health. The programs offered at the family resource center are evidence based best practices promoting school readiness in children who otherwise would not have access to quality preschool activities. Santee Family Resource Center also provides parenting classes and Zumba.