

Voices of Hope

SUMMER/FALL 2023



Groundbreaking held for two new Charities Housing developments

Meet our amazing clients from Employment Network, Parish Engagement, Parent Cafe

Catholic Charities joins appreciation event for the Sobrato Family Foundation

Fun with a purpose at our upcoming 15th Annual Bocce Tournament

FROM THE CEO

Dear Friends,

When the Loma Prieta Earthquake struck the Bay Area on October 17, 1989, Catholic Charities' response to the disaster led to an amazing legacy. Starting with a \$10,000 disaster response grant from Catholic Charities USA, we created a housing program at John XXIII Multi-Service Center that by 1993 morphed into our affiliated Charities Housing Development Corporation. Now thirty years later with a lot of hard work and specialized expertise in the complex world of affordable housing financing, the staff of Charities Housing have developed over 1,500 units of permanent affordable housing and are on track to build and manage another 2,500 units. Even with this tremendous growth, the need for affordable housing is even greater, and by federal standards Charities Housing would still be considered a small business. While there are many larger housing development firms, the power of Charities Housing is its community-based presence, its longstanding trusted relationships with local governments and community partners, and its role as the housing development arm of Catholic Charities.



Calendar

OCTOBER

5 15th Annual Bocce Tournament
Campo di Bocce

NOVEMBER

28 #Giving Tuesday
Join us on this international day of online charitable giving

NOV-DEC

Season of Sharing Christmas Gift Donation Drive

FEBRUARY

15 Annual Caritas Mass and Celebration
Location to be announced

Visit ccsc.org/events for more information

Cover photo: Representatives of local government and nonprofits joined representatives from Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County and Charities Housing for the June Groundbreaking Ceremony for the property on Alum Rock.

As CEO of Catholic Charities, I am honored to serve as President of Charities Housing and our organizations benefit from the guidance of shared board members. Meanwhile Catholic Charities Supportive Housing team assists Charities Housing residents by connecting them to services and resources. Through our onsite staff, this ensures that resident families and individuals have the support needed to maintain stability in housing.

This year we celebrated the grand opening of our Page Street Studios and the groundbreaking of two apartment developments on Alum Rock and on Keyes streets in San Jose. We look forward to the upcoming grand opening of the Blossom Valley Senior Apartments in San Jose and the groundbreaking of the Montecito Apartments in Mountain View. We congratulate Charities Housing Executive Director Mark Mikl and the team on their success.

"The power of Charities Housing is its community-based presence, its longstanding trusted relationships with local governments and community partners, and its role as the housing development arm of Catholic Charities."

While Catholic Charities and Charities Housing can't solve the housing crisis by ourselves, we do what we can to prevent homelessness while we also advocate for policies that enable more quality affordable homes to be built faster with less red tape and expense.

I invite you to come and visit some of our apartment homes and see the difference Charities Housing and Catholic Charities together are making in the lives of our neighbors as we alleviate, reduce and prevent poverty through affordable housing. If you would like to support this work, please indicate Supportive Housing on your donation designation.

Many blessings to you and your family,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory R. Kepferle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gregory R. Kepferle, CEO

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Employment Network: Zohair's Story

On a recent spring morning in downtown San Jose, Zohair Al Wakaa wears a crisp white shirt and a welcoming smile as he readies to see clients for his job as a barber. It has been a journey for him to be working again in his profession of many years. Zohair, who is Syrian, came to the U.S. with his wife and children three years ago. A refugee asylee, he and his family fled for their safety, traveling through Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Jordan to eventually arrive in the U.S. in August 2020.

To find a job, Zohair connected to Catholic Charities Employment Network and Frida Benjamin, who is part of the program's Individual Placement and Support services team. She began assisting him with his search process as the family received multiple support services from other local social services agencies.

"At first, it was difficult for him," Frida says. "We would use a translation app on my phone to communicate. His initial job interviews and placements were not successful, with one hiring manager refusing to even speak with Zohair because of the language barrier. He was so broken that day, apologizing to me a million times for wasting my time. I reassured him that he

definitely was not wasting my time and I expressed my sadness for the manager not giving him a chance." Soon after, he successfully found a job as a truck driver making deliveries for a food specialty company.

His ultimate dream job was to return to his profession as a barber and eventually own a barber shop as he did in his country for many years. "I was always determined to get a job to support my family," said Zohair, who also has worked as a ride-share driver to make extra money.

In the months since his arrival, he has quickly achieved some milestone accomplishments: Learning English, obtaining his driver's license, volunteering at his mosque, and finally receiving a license to work as a barber in Santa Clara County.

Zohair says: "I love it here in America. Now I'm good and I want to help others." ■



Parish Engagement Program: Juda's Story

In the early months of the pandemic, Juda, a single mother, came to us after medical complications following the birth of her daughter left her with serious financial difficulties. Through our Parish Engagement Program, she received food, clothing, maternity supplies, diapers and gift cards to purchase other items. Juda, who was also lacking a strong support network, was connected to an Accompaniment Volunteer for continuing mentorship and guidance.

Recently she achieved a major accomplishment on her journey to self-sufficiency and reaching her goals. Congratulations to Juda who now joins the eight percent of Latinas with a Master's Degree in the U.S.

Here is her inspirational letter of gratitude to our Parish Engagement Team.

Dear Support Team,

I would like to convey that, by the grace of the Lord, I have graduated with my Masters in Arts in Counseling Psychology from Santa Clara University.

You all met me at a crucial time in my life where I needed help. It took a village to raise my daughter and help me in my journey to break many cycles. One of those cycles was the poverty/ homeless cycle. Throughout these years, I oftentimes felt in survival mode, but I was cared for by all of you and those behind the scenes.

I thank the Lord for what I went through because he allowed me to meet you all and I know that I have acquired lifelong friends and mentors. This master's degree is as much yours as is mine.

May God continue to bless you, and the work you continue to do. I am a fruit of the work you all do.

Juda



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Construction begins on Charities Housing's new affordable housing properties in San Jose

Groundbreaking ceremonies kicking-off construction on the newest Charities Housing developments were held in June. The two new affordable housing properties, located in San Jose at 1860 Alum Rock Avenue and 551 Keyes Street, will add to the existing 1,500 units currently operated by Charities Housing throughout Santa Clara County.

"These new developments will not only address the pressing demand for affordable housing in San Jose but also contribute to the overall strength and vitality of the community," said Mark Mikl, Executive Director of Charities Housing, which partners with Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County to develop and preserve affordable housing in Silicon Valley. Through Catholic Charities, critical services and resources are provided to Charities Housing residents to keep them stably housed. Project partners – representing local government, other community non-profit organizations, and private companies – help create sustainable, high-quality housing developments that align with Charities Housing's vision of fostering stable, inclusive communities.

The Alum Rock property, when completed, will be a five-story, 60-unit mixed-use development with 100% affordable housing. The ground floor will consist of 3,200 square feet of commercial space, 42 parking spaces, a large community room with a shared kitchen and food pantry, and a property management and resident services office. Amigos de Guadalupe, a local non-profit, will expand their operations in the ground floor commercial space. The second through fifth floors will have 60 residential homes, including 10 studios, 19 one-bedrooms, and 16 two-bedrooms. Also, there will be 15 three-bedroom homes to accommodate larger families.



1860 Alum Rock Avenue - property exterior when completed



551 Keyes Street - property exterior when completed

The second floor offers a laundry facility, a large outdoor courtyard and barbecue grills for residents to enjoy. A rooftop terrace overlooks Alum Rock Avenue. The project will integrate a street-facing mural to enhance its overall vibrancy and the surrounding neighborhood.

"These new developments will also contribute to the overall strength and vitality of the community."

The Keyes Street Property will be called "The Charles," named after the late Dr. Charles Preston who dedicated his life to helping the most vulnerable members of our community. When completed, The Charles will be a seven-story, 99-unit development with 100% affordable housing. It will be located on a 0.9-acre site next to the former location of one of the largest homeless encampments in the history of San Jose. The property will comprise a variety of unit sizes ranging from 30 studios, 18 one-bedrooms, 24 two-bedrooms, and 27 three-bedroom homes. Residents will enjoy access to a community room with a shared kitchen, secure bicycle storage, and laundry facilities.

All units for both the Alum Rock and the Keyes properties will be restricted to households earning between 30% - 50% of the Area Median Income. In addition, 50% of the units will be reserved for Rapid-Rehousing households who will be referred from the County of Santa Clara Office of Supportive Housing. ■

For more information, visit charitieshousing.org.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Parent Café: Nanci's Story

Nanci is the mother of three young children and has been married to her husband for 13 years. After her son's accident that left him hospitalized for six months and the unexpected death of her brother, she found herself struggling emotionally, having difficulty parenting, and needing a supportive community. In 2022, she began participating in the Parent Café through Catholic Charities and said the program "saved my life." Today Nanci volunteers with the Parent Café team of hosts and leads to help other women, like herself.

"I fell in love with what mothers like me could do to support other moms, and I said to myself, 'This is what I need in my life,'" she explains. "Our family is stronger now. I am a better mother, I can understand my children and their needs better, especially with my daughter who is five years old and has behavior problems."

The Parent Café is one of many services operated through Catholic Charities Franklin-McKinley Children's Initiative, a cradle to career collaborative of more than 30 partner service providers offering programming in and around the Santee neighborhood of San Jose. Nanci has become involved with additional Catholic Charities programs including the Family Resource Center, and helping with the senior group, youth programs,

summer meals and neighborhood events. She praises the staff who give guidance and have "become like family."

The goal of the Parent Café is to create a safe and relaxed environment where parents can engage in a rich roundtable conversation with other parents facing similar challenges, joys, and questions around the Five Protective Factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children. The program has a peer-to-peer learning process that promotes individual self-reflection.

Nanci says, "It reminded me that I am a valuable person and I am here for a reason. Every time I've been in each Parent Café, my soul is healed." ■



For information on our Family Resource Centers, visit ccsc.org/family-resource-centers

Tax EZ program secures earned refunds, credits for low-income families and individuals

Tax EZ volunteers, working with Catholic Charities' Economic Development team, helped 556 low-income families and individuals prepare and file their taxes this year, resulting in tax refunds totaling \$729,000. The average adjusted gross income for Tax EZ clients was \$32,755.

This free service, generously funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, ensures that eligible families maximize their refunds by claiming cash-back tax credits like the Federal and California Earned Income Tax Credit, and the Federal and California Child Tax Credit. ■

"I want to say thank you to the Tax EZ Team that helped me prepare my tax return for last and this year.

"As a senior, it is hard for me to understand tax concepts. I really appreciate the team as they have so much patience to explain my taxes, and also educate me in order to have better preparation with tax documents for next year's return.

"It's very nice for low-income families and seniors like us to have free tax preparation. The program helps us fulfill the requirement as a taxpayer, it also helps us get back our tax dollars and find credits that we are entitled to."

Tax EZ Client

SPOTLIGHT

Board Member Profile: Dr. Judith Sánchez

What was your initial connection to Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County?

While I was always aware of Catholic Charities, I became more involved when my friend, Father Jon Pedigo, began working at the organization in 2017 as Director of Advocacy and Community Engagement. I began volunteering at Our Lady of Refuge during the creation of their night community market. I loved the concept of allowing clients to choose their own food rather than just being handed a box of food chosen for them. I helped get Gardner Health Network's mobile medical unit to the night markets which became a valuable connection once the pandemic hit.

Fr. Jon and Program Director Bridget Balajadia are instrumental in the growth of the Advocacy and Community Engagement division. I don't know what many people in Santa Clara County would have done without their leadership and foresight during the COVID pandemic. They quickly pivoted from the night market to drive-through food distribution at several different parishes with the help of Araceli Gonzales and her Emergency Programs team. The power of community is beautiful to witness in action.



Zarina and her family benefitted from the "Everybody Loves a Baby" program, which Dr. Sánchez, an OB/GYN, says she feels is a great resource for moms and families who are struggling and need support.

Medical Center, I see many struggling moms who are trying to do the best for their families. I was impressed by the ingenuity that Volunteer Coordinator Lynda DeManti showed in creating the program and I was proud to share the program with my department. I'm grateful there are so many volunteers and donors willing to help. Breaking

the cycle of poverty begins at birth and I am hopeful that these small changes (clothes, a car seat, diapers) will lead to greater ripples throughout their lives.

What is your personal mission of giving back?

I cannot remember a time when I was not involved in service. My grandparents were active in their local Community Service Organizations. I vividly remember the yearly Posadas we would have which always culminated in distributing toys to my grandma's neighbors in Alviso.



"The power of community is beautiful to witness in action."

As I grew older, I knew I wanted to serve my community and decided to become an OB/GYN. I work at a clinic in Gilroy and a large percentage of my patients work in the agriculture industry. I feel like I have come full circle, as my grandparents and mother were farm workers when they first moved to California. I love being able to speak Spanish to my patients. There is much recent data about the importance of cultural congruence and better outcomes for patients, and I hope to make a difference as I bring new life into the world. I advocate for my patients on a daily basis – both in the clinic and outside. I remember my patient once saw me on the news as I was marching for immigration reform, and she was so happy to see me and know I was speaking up for her.

Why would you encourage others to support Catholic Charities and get involved in our mission?

Catholic Charities has so many different programs that help thousands of people throughout Santa Clara County. Whatever your passion may be, they likely already have a program devoted to that service! With the new Footsteps program, Catholic Charities is devoted to putting an end to poverty, and who wouldn't want to say they were a part of that? ■

DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Foundation Spotlight: Sobrato Family Foundation

The **SOBRATO** Family Foundation

For more than 30 years, the Sobrato family and Sobrato Family Foundation has supported Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County's mission through active participation in the agency's work and leadership, as well as generous gifts to support our life-changing work to disrupt poverty in Silicon Valley.

Catholic Charities was proud to be a part of the Arbol de La Vida event on May 13 celebrating the good works of the Sobrato Family, and the investment and impact they have made to East San Jose families. We are grateful for the Sobrato Family's continued support, including challenge dollars to excite and engage our donors to support our mission. Our recent Sobrato Challenge Match (July 2022 – June 2023) secured \$250,000 in matched funds and helped us raise additional dollars for our programs.

Representing our agency in the processional of non-profits at the event were: Robert Yabes, Program Director, Immigration Legal Services; Araceli Gonzales, Division Director, Emergency Programs & Housing Services; Sharon Miller, Director, Cathedral Social Ministries; and América Gomez, Managing Director, CORAL Extended Learning/After-school Program. ■



Planned Giving Donor Spotlight: Circle of Hope Legacy Society Members Christy and Bob Masleid

"Just as we give a portion of our income to Catholic Charities, it seems right to also give a portion of our estate. We believe it's good stewardship and chose to put Catholic Charities in our estate plan for the same reasons we give to you on a regular basis: Catholic Charities does a great job of using funds - both big and small - efficiently and effectively to help others change their lives in positive ways."

The Masleids are pictured with the Most Reverend Oscar Cantú, Bishop of the Diocese of San Jose, at the Caritas Society Annual Celebration.



Visit our new Gift Planning Website ccsclegacy.org

You can access our Estate Planning Guide and Online Wills Planner, sign up for our Gift Planning e-newsletter, and find additional resources and tools. To make your own legacy gift or to join the Circle of Hope, contact Cecilia Bynum at 408-325-5248 or cbynum@ccsc.org.

*Thank You to our 2023 Sponsors for the
2nd Annual "Toss for a Cause" Cornhole Tournament
and 39th Annual Invitational Golf Tournament*

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Your support helps us 'Change Lives for Good!'

To learn more about sponsorship opportunities for Catholic Charities events, please email our Special Events & Community Outreach Manager, Deanna Sisneros, dsisneros@catholiccharitiesscc.org or visit ccscc.org/cornhole-tournament ccscc.org/golf-tournament

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Recognizing Our Honorary Colonel and Grand Marshall at our Recent Tournaments

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, as part of our 2023 Cornhole and Golf Tournaments, was pleased to honor and recognize two dedicated individuals who have supported our mission for many years: América Aguirre Gomez as the “Colonel of Cornhole” and Mike Pope as the “Grand Marshall” of our Golf Tournament.

“América and Mike truly embody the spirit of giving back unselfishly to the communities that they are both so deeply connected to,” said Susan Lucas Taylor, Chief Development Officer for Catholic Charities. “We are only able to be successful in our anti-poverty initiatives with this kind of ongoing individual support and commitment to helping our neighbors in need.”

América has worked for Catholic Charities for more than 25 years and is currently the Managing Director of our CORAL Program operating at more than 20 school sites in San Jose. In her 16 years managing our after-school extended learning program, she has overseen its growth and expansion supporting pre-K through 8th grade students in need.

Mike has been a member of the Board of Directors for Catholic Charities since 2016 and has served on the Board’s Development Committee. He and his wife, Vicki, are 11-year members of our Caritas Giving Society and regularly promote the work of Catholic Charities in their communities and in their parish, St. Christopher Church in San Jose. ■



América is pictured with CCSCC CEO Greg Kepferle at the 2nd Annual Cornhole Tournament held on April 22 at PayPal Park.



Mike, far right, is pictured with golf teammates Wade Meyercord, Joe Pfahl and Chris Pope at the 39th Catholic Charities Invitational Golf Tournament on June 12 at Silver Creek Valley Country Club.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR

Cheers to 15 years!

'Roll Against Poverty'

BOCCCE!

TOURNAMENT

Thursday, October 5th | 5:30PM
Campo di Bocce | Los Gatos, CA



**Get the latest updates
on our Bocce Tournament**



Catholic Charities 2023 Annual Parish Appeal raises over \$160,000

Thank you to the amazing volunteers, parishioners, parish staff members and clergy who supported our work during Catholic Charities Annual Appeal weekend, May 20- 21 in parishes throughout the Diocese. More than \$160,000 was raised for Catholic Charities programs through the parish collections at 40 parishes during this year’s Annual Appeal. On behalf of those we serve, we are grateful to every family and individual who made gifts of all sizes to support our mission. Thank you!

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Supporting Families in Gilroy and South Santa Clara County



Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County and the Farmworkers Caravan partnered to host the Alegria Family Fiesta Event on May 5 at Catholic Charities' Gilroy Annex. A toy drive for children was a main feature of the event and more than 400 donated toys were distributed.

Entertainment was provided by Catholic Charities CORAL Afterschool Program's Folklorico Dancers from McKinley Elementary. Pictured are: Penelope Tupou, Aaliyah Mejia, Van Nguyen, Analyce Arias, Lidia Guzman, Amelie Luevano, and Jizel Overstreet (left); and Charly Hernandez (right).