



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Immigration Legal Service Director Receives Beacon of Lights Award**

#### *Subheading*

What: Beacon of Light Awards Ceremony

Who: Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County's Immigration Legal Service, County of Santa Clara

Why: Robert Yabes, Program Director at ILS to receive the Beacon of Lights Award from the County of Santa Clara for innovation in development of programs and services for immigrants and refugees

When: Friday, February 26 from 5:30-7:30 pm

Where: 2310 North 1st Street., Ste. 102, Training Room 1 & 2, San Jose, CA 95131

SAN JOSE, CA, February 26, 2016 – This year, Catholic Charities' Immigration Legal Service (ILS) program celebrates 40 years of serving the immigrant community in Santa Clara County. ILS has made a difference for approximately 100,000 individuals through a number of programs and has served generations of immigrant families, refugees, asylees, and survivors of crimes and violence.

On February 26, 2016, Robert Yabes, Program Director at ILS will receive the Beacon of Lights Award from the County of Santa Clara for innovation in development of programs and services for immigrants and refugees. Robert has been with ILS for more than 20 years and his dedication to helping the immigrant community has never wavered. Robert's empathy for his clients, colleagues, and the community can be seen every day. Whether he is meeting with clients who need representation before the immigration service, or when speaking at a community event



about how ILS can help immigrants in need, Robert is an example of how one person can truly make a difference.

Established and recognized by the federal Board of Immigration Appeals in 1976, our ILS programs provide legal immigration and citizenship services to moderate to low-income immigrants seeking to improve their immigration status and gain U.S. citizenship. We inform, guide, empower, and assist individuals to understand the process and the challenges about their immigration situation so that they can make informed decisions. We also work with other community-based organizations to expand services to different populations within the community.

Gabriella, a former client, came to Catholic Charities because her abusive husband threatened to deport her. She did not have immigration papers. Robert and the ILS team helped her file a self-petition under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). For several years after her successful petition, she was required to renew her employment authorization annually until she finally was granted her lawful permanent residence. Her self-confidence grew tremendously. Her employment skills also improved and she started her own successful housecleaning business.

It is clients like Gabriella who inspire Robert and the ILS team to give their best each day so that underserved communities and those who feel powerless can have the best legal services possible.

“I want to express my deepest gratitude to the Catholic Charities family, from leadership to our clients, for the many opportunities that made me who I am,” said Robert. “Every person is a ‘Beacon of Light’ to another, and that’s what makes our world brighter and more hopeful.”

#### About Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County has worked to strengthen families and build economic self-reliance for the poor and vulnerable in the county for 60 years. Each year, more than 500 employees and 1000 volunteers serve more than 54,000 individuals of all cultures and beliefs through 42 programs in more than 80 sites. Program areas include behavioral health, youth and family services, economic development, employment, financial education, housing, immigration legal services, in-home and long-term care, older adult services, refugee resettlement, refugee foster care, and more. Catholic Charities is working to reduce poverty with social change goals that target the alleviation, prevention, and reduction of poverty in our communities.

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