

MEDIA ALERT

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Help the Unaccompanied Children (UAC) at the Border – Press Conference

Featured Speaker: Gregory R. Kepferle, CEO, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Hear local leaders discuss how they will help the Unaccompanied Children (UAC) from Central America.

When: August 5, 2014, 8:00 a.m.

Where: Santa Clara County Government Center, *Front Plaza*, 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose, CA

Overview of Current Situation

(Source Statement by USCCB Migration and Refugee Services, July 17, 2014)

Children from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras are migrating to the United States on their own in record numbers. While not a new phenomenon, the number of children who are making the perilous journey alone has increased exponentially. Between the years 2003—2011, an average of 6,775 unaccompanied children have arrived annually.¹ For the current Fiscal Year (October 1, 2013—September 30, 2014) upwards of 90,000 are projected to arrive.²

A delegation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) traveled to Central America in November 2013 and issued the report: Mission to Central America: The Flight of Unaccompanied Children to the United States. The report asserts that multiple interrelated factors are contributing to the increase in forced child migration. Some of these factors include: a lack of strong social institutions and civil society support, abuse in the family stemming from pressure on family units due to violence and family separation, a lack of viable economic and educational opportunities, and environmental factors affecting crop production. However, the delegation reported that “one overriding factor has played a decisive and forceful role in recent years: generalized violence at the state and local levels and a corresponding breakdown of the rule of law have threatened citizen security and created a culture of fear and hopelessness.”³

Catholic Teaching Provides the Underpinnings of Our Work

(Source Statement by USCCB Migration and Refugee Services, July 17, 2014)

*The sanctity of the family and the need to protect the vulnerable is an integral element of Catholic approach to service and pastoral care in the United States. This is evidenced in the pastoral statement on migration of the US and Mexican Catholic Bishops, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* (January 2003), which specifically speaks of the unaccompanied child. The statement notes this special population’s heightened vulnerability and the corresponding need for special consideration and care that these children should receive.⁴ It is the view of the Roman Catholic Church that protecting family values should not depend on a family’s nationality or immigration status and through its “Justice for Immigrants Campaign”, the United States Conference*

of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) promotes humane and compassionate immigration reform that preserves the family unit as the cornerstone of the immigration system.

Expected Developments

People across all sectors of the United States are working together to provide safe haven for the unaccompanied children seeking safety in our nation. We are also working to address the root causes of this massive migration. It is unclear what outcomes these children can expect, but guided by compassion, we are working toward solutions that will preserve the dignity of the individual children and provide support to the affected families.

Our Response

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County is working with USCCB and leading in the effort to provide humane and compassionate care for these children. Locally, we are partnering with the County of Santa Clara and the Bill Wilson Center to develop a model program that is based on best practices for serving vulnerable children and teens. There are a multitude of additional organizations that are contributing to the response to this humanitarian crisis such as the City of San Jose, churches, local foundations, and not for profit social service organizations, all combining resources to provide for these children.

How to Help

- 1) **Call your Federal Representatives** - Follow the guidelines presented on the attachment "USCCB UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN REFUGEES.PDF"
 - Senator Barbara Boxer (202) 224-3553
 - Senator Dianne Feinstein (202) 224-3841
 - Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (202) 225-8104
 - Congressman Mike Honda (202) 225-2631
 - Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren (202) 225-3072
 - Congressman Eric Swalwell (202) 225-5065

- 2) **Please Volunteer to help:** – For information Email: helpchildren@catholiccharitiesscc.org or telephone 408-325-5100, Ext. 5335.

- 3) **Please Donate** - Your contribution will be directed to support efforts to provide safety and support for unaccompanied children. To donate:
 - Online: Go to: <http://www.catholiccharitiesscc.org/donate-now>. Enter the donation and contact information. IMPORTANT: Be sure to Click "In Honor of" and enter "Help Unaccompanied Children". This assures that your contribution will be applied to help unaccompanied children.
 - By Phone: Please telephone: 408-325-5248 to make your donation by telephone.
 - By Check: Make your check out to Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County. IMPORTANT: In the memo section be sure to write: "Help Children". This assures that your contribution will be applied to help unaccompanied children. Mail your check to: Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County 2625, Zanker Road, San Jose, CA 95134-2107

1 About Unaccompanied Children Services, "General UAC Statistics", ORR/HHS website,
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/uac_statistics.pdf (7/7/14).

2 According to recent estimates from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Health and Human Services.

3 The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). "Mission to Central America: The Flight of Unaccompanied Children to the United States," (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2013), 2.

4 Strangers No Longer, Together on the Journey of Hope, Pastoral Statement Concerning Migration from the US and Mexican Catholic Bishops, ¶82
January 2003

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MEDIA CONTACT:

Adelene Ramos

Public Affairs Assistant

Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

(408) 325-5264

aramos@catholiccharitiesscc.org