

# Voices of Hope

SPRING 2020



**Staff, Volunteers & Programs  
Rally for Agency-wide Response  
to COVID-19 Impact**

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## *Catholic Charities mobilizes resources to respond to community's needs during pandemic*



TOP: Fr. Jon Pedigo, Director for Advocacy and Community Engagement for Catholic Charities, (far right) gives a shout out to those individuals social-distancing while waiting in line to access Catholic Charities' services at Our Lady of Refuge.



MIDDLE: Catholic Charities' Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are open with limited staffing to serve as food distribution sites, in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank, and to provide information and service referrals. Dahl Family Resource Center recently served 350 families in one day with a drive-by food delivery system operated with the support of volunteers, and Catholic Charities' staff from the FRCs and CORAL after-school programs.



BELOW: The safety of our clients and staff is a top priority at all Catholic Charities' sites that are operating, including John XXIII in downtown San Jose where staff take temperatures, and The Window is continuing to serve the homeless.

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

**“A**ll shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.” In these times of pandemic and economic crisis, I hold fast to the hopeful vision of Julian of Norwich, who even in the midst of great suffering experienced the consoling words of Jesus.

I write this during what feels like just the beginning of the Coronavirus pandemic which is already causing, **not just a health crisis, but severe social and economic disruptions.**

While many of our programs are working remotely, others and **new efforts have launched to respond to the disaster.** We are now feeding more people than ever before by **delivering groceries** to the homebound and quarantined, by managing **new drive through grocery delivery sites** at parishes and at Family Resource Centers, by assisting Franklin-McKinley Schools with **food distribution to children** and families, and **by serving hot meals to-go to hungry seniors**, including homeless seniors at John XXIII and Eastside Neighborhood Center. We are **launching our Disaster Financial Assistance program** to support Destination: Home, Sacred Heart and other members of the Emergency Assistance Network. We have been **asked by the County to assist with mass shelter services to the homeless** who are being sheltered to protect them from the pandemic. Meanwhile **the Window remains open** at John XXIII providing homeless individuals a sandwich, mail, toiletries, health screening at the Gardner Clinic and enrollment in housing.



As the virus spreads, I am most concerned for the people we serve, and **our staff and volunteers who care so deeply for them.** As programs close down even temporarily, there is a **feeling of a loss of community** – the seniors who used to dance or study ESL, the youth who played games in WUYC, the clients who filled our lobbies. We say that we seek to build a just and compassionate community. It is hard to do that when people become isolated, whether it is staff who work remotely or a senior who is quarantined in her apartment. It's natural to feel anxious, fearful, sad, and confused.

So we trust in the One who loves us unconditionally, who tells us to “be not afraid.” And we bring that same love to those around us – our families, friends, co-workers and the people we serve. **At Catholic Charities we are trying to be as creative as possible with our services** and the technology we have, using wellness checks, telehealth, videoconferencing, and webinars to share accurate and helpful information, to educate, to provide mental health and legal advice. But bits and bytes don't feed the body. We still need to get food to hungry seniors, children and families. Refugee youth still need loving homes. Kinship families still need support. People still need to be housed. People still need jobs. People still need access to healthcare. Homeless people still need their mail.

**At Catholic Charities we continue to be steadfast in our presence in the community.** We continue to serve those most in need and are doing it with **even greater connections with our parishes and community partners.** While we have modified our programs and temporarily halted group gatherings, we still bring a healing presence to those in need, whether in person or virtually.

Thank you to all of our generous donors, supporters, and partners. We could not do our work without your help. **Our clients need our help more than ever, so I ask that you continue your generous support and help even more as their needs increase.**

Many Blessings and Stay Healthy!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory R. Kepferle".

Gregory R. Kepferle

With the quickly evolving developments in our pandemic response efforts, please visit [CatholicCharitiesSCC.org/covid19-information](https://CatholicCharitiesSCC.org/covid19-information) for the latest updates.

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

## *Parish Engagement Program pivots in uncertain times to continue serving those most in need*



*“We are committed to continue our critical services to the families and individuals who are most impacted by this virus.” ~ Fr. Jon Pedigo*

Catholic Charities’ Parish Engagement Program is tackling poverty through community building, direct services, and personal connections between volunteers and those seeking pathways to self-sufficiency. However, with social-distancing practices in place to avoid the spread of COVID-19, the program is now pivoting to find creative solutions to serve all those who seek help.

“We are committed to continue our critical services to the families and individuals who are most impacted by this virus,” said Fr. Jon Pedigo, Catholic Charities’ Director for Advocacy and Community Engagement. “Our Catholic Charities’ volunteers and staff are still working on the frontlines to meet the need during the pandemic.”



A drive-through system for delivering food to families and individuals in need is temporarily replacing the usual Tuesday evening community marketplace at Our Lady of Refuge (OLR) parish in San Jose. Additional parishes have joined OLR to help meet

the need by setting up drive-through food delivery sites.

Prior to the shelter-in-place order, the outside courtyard and parish hall at OLR was transformed each Tuesday evening to welcome anyone seeking help. Neighborhood families “shopped” with dignity for free produce and groceries from Second Harvest Food Bank. Parish volunteers connected with those seeking services and began long-term relationships to accompany them on their journeys. Working with Catholic Charities’ programs and our community partners, services provided included a hot nutritious meal, and access to free resources for immigration legal services, referrals for housing, and medical care through Gardner Health Services.

Since opening in October 2019, the OLR program has reached 550 households through fresh food distribution (representing nearly 2,500 people), served 500 hot meals weekly, provided service navigation to 370 individuals, conducted over 120 immigration consultations, and made 100 medical referrals.

Facing Page: Catholic Charities' staff from throughout the agency get ready to begin food delivery to people in need at Our Lady of Refuge. The community market at the parish has transformed from a farmers-market style to drive-through distribution to keep both our employees and the clients they serve safe.



Beyond critical services, the program is successful because of a prevailing spirit of hope and a commitment to respecting the dignity of all who come for help. The experience of the Ramos family tells the story of one family's journey to making a better life.

Before the shelter-in-place order, visitors to the marketplace shopped for free produce and grocery items; children participated in activities while parents accessed services; and volunteers prepared hot nutritious meals provided by Martha's Kitchen

Cesar Ramos and his family sought help from the OLR program after medical issues, job loss and other difficulties led to Cesar living in his car while his wife, Ibek, and their two young children stayed in temporary housing. Thanks to the program, the family became financially secure and was able to rent a home to call their own. Most inspiring, Cesar began volunteering with the program each Tuesday night.



After receiving support from the program at Our Lady of Refuge, Cesar Ramos and his family (left) were able to get back on their feet after a difficult time. Cesar (right) volunteered to help others at the marketplace on Tuesday nights.

"We are a strong family and it was a shock to be homeless," Ibek explained. "We are blessed to find a place to get help that made us feel so welcome and comfortable. Now we are giving back to help others." ■

During this time of great need in our community, the program is seeking support and community partnerships to expand into additional locations in Santa Clara County with high concentrations of poverty. To learn more about the program, visit [catholiccharitiesscc.org/parishengagement](http://catholiccharitiesscc.org/parishengagement).

# SPOTLIGHT

## Patrick Dupuis

### How did you get involved with Catholic Charities?

After an early retirement in 2016, I immediately shifted my time to community work, starting with my parish and visiting patients at Stanford hospitals. My wife, Carolyn, got engaged with CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates).

We quickly realized that wherever we went, people were having conversations about the lack of affordable housing. I started to educate myself on the topic through meeting with people and reading about the subject. Along the way, I met Greg Kepferle, Catholic Charities' CEO, and fell in love with the agency's mission. I joined the Catholic Charities' Board of Directors, the Finance Committee for Charities Housing, and later the Housing Task Force for the Board.

### What area of Catholic Charities' impact resonates most for you?

Housing, housing, housing and the support services around housing. There are many services to support education, nutrition and healthcare. But if you do not have a safe roof over your head, you cannot live a stable life or ensure stable employment for yourself or schooling for your children or focus on your personal health. We have to find solutions to increase accessible and affordable housing for all.

### What is your personal mission of philanthropy and giving back?

Carolyn and I have been extremely fortunate. Our parents were first generation "middle class folks" who gave us great values and support to pursue our dreams. We were able to go to college, have had great careers, traveled the world and have two great kids (son Andrew and his wife Hannah, and daughter Margot). As we are still active and healthy, we have decided to give our time, talent and treasure – the "three Ts" – to the few causes that we are best equipped to support on all "three Ts."



Patrick Dupuis and his wife, Carolyn

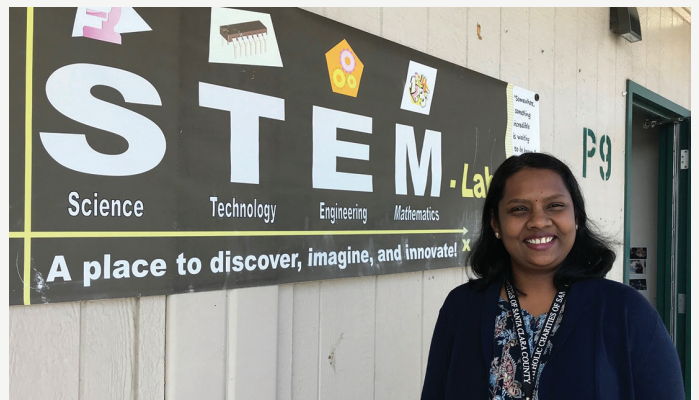
### Why would you encourage others to support Catholic Charities?

The historical, strong level of accountability of Catholic Charities means that we, as supporters, are putting our money into an organization that is a wise investment. Catholic Charities is there for the long term and their top priority is the people they serve. Scale matters in a fragmented non-profit world. Few organizations have the local reach and depth of impact on poverty, homelessness and health that Catholic Charities has in our community. If you care deeply about something, then engage yourself more! ■

## Nisha Shanmugam Kokilam

Meet **Nisha Shanmugam Kokilam**, the new STEM Supervisor for the CORAL after-school program who will be designing the STEM curriculum for all 20 sites in San Jose. Her position is made possible with a generous grant from Google.org which also equipped a STEM lab at Anne Darling Elementary School for CORAL after-school participants. The grant also provides hands-on learning experiences for these students, including designing LED Christmas tree ornaments to gain an understanding of coding principles.

Nisha was previously an adjunct professor and lecturer of engineering in her native India. After immigrating to the U.S., she worked for AmeriCorps and the San Jose Public Library. We're thrilled to have such an intelligent and experienced educator on our CORAL team! ■



For more information on CORAL, STEM or ways to support the program, contact David Russo, (408) 325-5248 or [drusso@catholiccharitiesscc.org](mailto:drusso@catholiccharitiesscc.org).

## *IRA Changes: How the SECURE Act affects your support of Catholic Charities*

The SECURE Act passed in January 2019 and includes some changes to individual retirement accounts (IRAs) that may affect Catholic Charities supporters. The changes include:

- Removing the age limit for contributing to IRAs. You may now contribute to your IRA beyond the previous age cap of 70½. However, contributing to your IRA after 70½ can affect your ability to support Catholic Charities, making it more expensive to both save and give. It's vital you seek guidance if you continue to contribute to your IRA after age 70½!
- You do not have to take required minimum distributions (RMDs) until age 72. That's an increase from the long-standing 70½ or older.
- Non-spouse heirs who received IRAs must withdraw the entire balance within 10 years. That's a change from the stretch option in place prior to the new law.
- You can still use RMDs to support Catholic Charities and avoid income tax after age 70½, and before distributions are required at 72. There is now a 1½ year gap between the opportunities.

### **BREAKING UPDATE:**

#### **CARES Act Passes, further affecting charitable giving**

On March 27, 2020, the President signed into law H.R. 748, The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The relief package includes opportunities for donors to help Catholic Charities as we respond to the growing needs of our community due to COVID-19. The changes include:

- Up to \$1,200 (\$2,400 joint) in income-tax free federal benefit per taxpayer making less than \$75,000 (\$150,000 joint). Further, donating this to Catholic Charities will earn a charitable tax deduction.
- Waives the required minimum distribution rules for certain defined contribution plans and IRAs for calendar year 2020. Making an income tax-free gift from your IRA to Catholic Charities is still allowed.
- Encourages contributions to churches and charitable organizations like Catholic Charities in 2020 by permitting a deduction of up to \$300 of cash contributions for non-itemizers.
- Increases the limitations on deductions for charitable contributions by families who itemize. For individuals, the 50 percent of adjusted gross income limitation is suspended for 2020. ■

Please consider supporting Catholic Charities during our community's most critical time. Donating your federal COVID-19 relief-benefit check, using your IRA, or increasing your contributions to Catholic Charities are wonderful ways to help our community. For more information and to learn more about smart ways to use charitable giving and IRAs, contact David Russo, Sr. Director of Planned Giving at 408-325-5248 or [drusso@catholiccharitiesscc.org](mailto:drusso@catholiccharitiesscc.org).

## *Grand Opening of Hubbard Family Resource Center*

**O**n February 10th, Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County partnered with community organizations to unveil the grand opening of a new family resource center at Hubbard Elementary School in San Jose. This collaborative effort – with partners First 5, the Healthier Kids Foundation, and the Alum Rock School District – will provide seamless, cradle-to-career services to ensure that families have access to the resources they need to succeed.

The Hubbard Family Resource Center (FRC) joins the more than 20 existing FRCs operated by Catholic Charities. ■



Catholic Charities' staff members Deyanira Hurtado, Juana Bermudez and Wanda Aristorena (left to right) were joined by Natalia Hernandez and Xitali Gomez in the ribbon cutting for the grand opening.



Our clients are one emergency away from poverty.  
**COVID-19 is that emergency.**  
Please donate to help our neighbors.



 Catholic Charities  
of Santa Clara County  
CatholicCharitiesSCC.org/donate



**Needed for Pandemic Response:**  
Provide financial support  
Hand sanitizer and liquid hand soap  
No-contact infrared thermometers to test  
our staff before they work each day  
Cleaning supplies and personal  
protective equipment to help our staff  
stay safe while they serve our clients

For more information  
please contact Alison Poetsch,  
apoetsch@catholiccharitiesscc.org  
or call 408-325-5288