

# **LIVING FAITH, CHANGING LIVES, MAKING A DIFFERENCE: ONE PERSON AT A TIME**

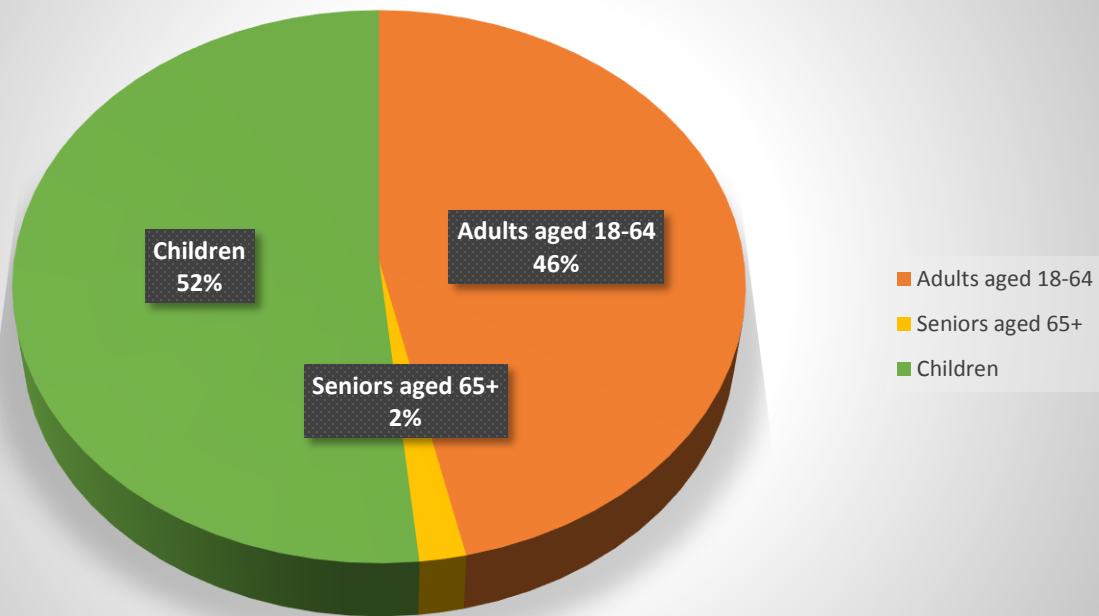
## **QUARTERLY REPORT FROM SOCIAL SERVICE MINISTRIES**

SJV's Social Service Ministries Department, through its Emergency Assistance Ministry, provides food, clothes, financial, and other types of assistance to those in need. Working in conjunction with the Food Pantry, Joseph's Coat Resale Shop, our Employment Ministry, the Gabriel Project other ministries within Social Services, and partnering with ministries such as Memorial Assistance Ministries and Catholic Charities, our volunteer interviewers meet with those in our neighborhood who are facing financial crises. These difficulties are often due to unemployment, low income, medical costs, or unforeseen family crises. Acting on their commitment to the Corporal Works of Mercy and through the donations of our very generous parishioners, the volunteers are able to compassionately respond to the needs of our clients and help them overcome the "bumps in the road."

The interviews for assistance are held on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. Assistance is available to those in need who live within our service area: zip codes 77043, 77055, 77077 and 77079. Expectant women who are enrolled in the Gabriel Project are also eligible for these services. We currently have six experienced and trained volunteers plus our staff who interview the families for assistance.

Although most activities here at SJV tend to slow down during the summer, this happens to be one of the busiest times for our Emergency Assistance Ministry. During the months of June, July and August our volunteers saw record numbers of clients in need of assistance. **We had 314 emergency service visits, assisting a total of 1,064 individuals in this past quarter.** Although the individuals interviewed for assistance were adults, the report is designed to show the makeup of the families assisted. As such, the majority of those assisted through the visits were children (52%), and only 2% of them were 65 years of age or older. This is consistent with the Houston Food Bank's report that children account for approximately 47% of the people who receive assistance from them, and that on any given day, one in four children in Harris County does not have consistent access to enough nutritious food.

## AGE OF PERSONS HELPED JUNE-AUGUST 2015



Of the 314 visits, sixty-one of them were expectant mothers who belong to our Gabriel Project, and we have actually had over 150 Gabriel Project visits so far this year! The number of expectant mothers whom we've seen through the Gabriel Project has increased by about threefold in the last year or two. The severity of problems that these expectant mothers face has also escalated in the last few years. So far this year, we have assisted Gabriel Project mothers with the following problems: domestic violence, sexual abuse, teen pregnancies, mental illness, homelessness, etc. Most of the Gabriel Project mothers are not married and receive little to no support from their families. We owe so much of the success of the program to our Gabriel Project volunteer coordinator, Dee Twomey. Dee and her team of Angels meet with the expectant mothers in crisis pregnancies and provide them with practical and spiritual support, referring them to resources as needed, guiding, and mentoring them through their pregnancies. We assist Gabriel Project mothers with baby items as needed and available, and each mother receives a layette filled with baby supplies, including diapers, bottles, and baby clothing. Without the assistance from the Gabriel Project and our amazing Angels, these mothers might not choose life for their babies.



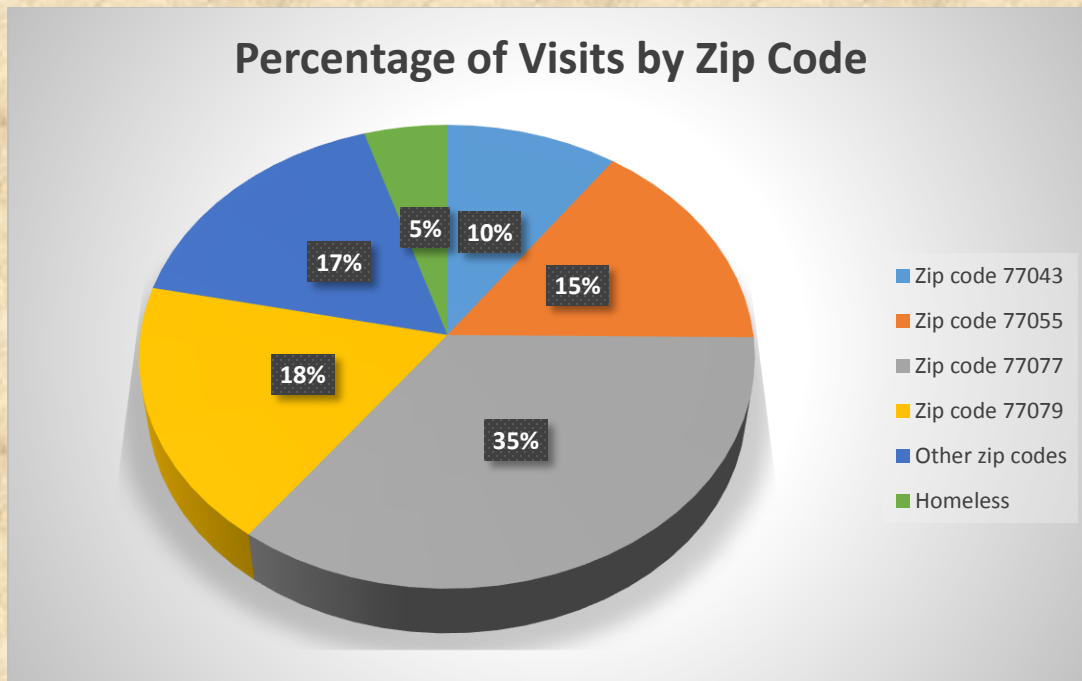
Families in need were assisted with either food, clothes, financial assistance for utilities or rent, or a combination of these:

TYPE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED	
Food	244 individuals
Clothes	148 individuals
Financial Assistance	73 individuals
Other (transportation, Gold Card, résumé, referrals to other ministries, baby items, etc.)	58 individuals

Through the Food Pantry, 374 bags of food were distributed, and 535 individuals received assistance with clothes through Joseph's Coat Resale Shop. We also assisted ten homeless individuals with our Hope Bags. Our Food Pantry is stocked largely through donations (primarily through our Monthly Food Drives) and purchases with a wholesale supplier. Our volunteer Food Pantry Manager works very hard to keep our pantry well-stocked. We also have about 14 volunteers who assist us in collecting food during our monthly Food Drives. Finally, we have about 25 volunteers who work in the Food Pantry on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays distributing food. It takes a lot of work and coordination to keep our Food Pantry running!

Among the "other" types of assistance provided through the Social Services' Emergency Assistance Ministry, it's important to mention the referrals to other ministries. Through partnerships with Catholic Charities and Memorial Assistance Ministries we are able to facilitate counseling services for the families we assist, as well as opportunities to increase self-sufficiency.

Regarding the place of residence for those we assist, the majority of them come from the zip code 77077, while the number of individuals from the other three zip codes within our service area are fairly evenly distributed. The remaining 17% of those we assist are Gabriel Project clients who come from all over the Houston area:



In addition to our Emergency Services, the Social Service Ministries here at SJV also provide a number of other services to those in need. In August, we enrolled 133 students in our ESL (English as a Second Language) classes. Our students come from all over the world and all walks of life, but they all share in common a desire to learn English and improve their lives and the lives of their children. We have total of 10 very committed teachers who volunteer their time twice a week for four hours to their students. The teachers spend even more time preparing for their classes. We also have one experienced volunteer and teacher, Lelia Buerger, who coordinates the ESL program and several volunteers who substitute for our teachers on a regular basis. Our ESL classes will conclude with a graduation ceremony in December.

Our Joseph's Coat volunteers served 148 individuals with clothing over this past quarter. Plus, they earned over \$36,000 for our Social Service ministries during these past three months. We have over 100 volunteers who serve in Joseph's Coat in a variety of ways—as cashiers, sorters, pricers, managers, etc. All of the proceeds from Joseph's Coat benefit our Social Service ministries, so their work (along with the many donations we receive) allowed us to be able to serve the more than 1,000 individuals in need this past quarter.

We delivered hot lunches to all of the homebound and disabled seniors in our Meals on Wheels program every week day throughout the summer. That's almost 850 meals delivered! This is due to the work of our Meals on Wheels volunteers who often do more than deliver meals to seniors in need. They also check on them, take time to chat with them, and a few of our volunteers even take time every month to organize and play games with them. We have approximately 40 Meals on Wheels volunteers who make this program possible.



We began hosting The Gathering Place again in August (after a short summer break). The Gathering Place provides food, entertainment, interaction, and exercise (both mental and physical) for individuals within our parish who are suffering from memory loss or some form of dementia. At the same time as The Gathering Place, we offer a support group for caregivers. In August we had about 30 participants, plus their caregivers. The Gathering Place is a beautiful ministry that we provide on a monthly basis in collaboration with Interfaith Care Partners for seniors and their loved ones.

We began building another Habitat for Humanity home this summer. This is the fifth home that we will build with Habitat. We had two build dates in June and July with about 10-15 volunteers participating on each day. We are building a home this time for the Lewis family (single mother and two young children). Mrs. Lewis and her children currently share a two bedroom home with her grandmother. This will be the first home that they have ever owned.

Plans were underway throughout the summer for our three mission trips to El Salvador and Eagle Pass, Texas. Throughout the summer, the El Salvador Mission Advance Team worked to collect, sort, organize, inventory, and pack medications for the October mission. It's amazing what we were able to get done at our Medication Sorting Parties. We are grateful for all of the donations of medical supplies and to all of the volunteers who helped us to prepare for the mission.

In addition to all of the work that took place during the summer, our Social Service staff and volunteers were also involved in planning all of the various events and activities that will take place this Fall 2015. We worked on room scheduling, budgeting, program evaluations and goals, office remodeling, calendars, website updates, newsletters, etc. Additionally, our staff and volunteers translated and coordinated the production of the weekly Spanish bulletin (that's 12 issues over the summer). We added one new staff member in June, so now we have four full-time staff members in the Social Service department. However, we still wouldn't be able to do everything that we need to do without our office volunteers. Currently, we have six volunteers who work various shifts. They assist us at the front desk and on projects as needed. We couldn't do it without them!

It is our hope that more than numbers, we are able to convey to you the great work that our parish is able to accomplish through your generous donations. Without them, we would not be able to assist our neighbors in need. Your contributions to the Social Service Ministries through donations and volunteering are a marvelous way to live your faith, change lives, and to make a difference!