

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

**Quarterly Report from SJV's Social Service Ministries  
August, 2016 – October, 2016**

The mission of the Social Service Ministries at St. John Vianney Catholic Church is to act on Catholic Social Teaching and our commitment to the Corporal Works of Mercy by providing a compassionate response to those parishioners and families in our community in need of assistance.

Our Social Service Ministries provide an opportunity for our parishioners to get involved and to answer God's call to grow in faith by sharing their unique gifts and talents while serving and reaching out to those in need. Our ministry is part of the continuous support that St. John Vianney Catholic Church provides to the surrounding community and its parishioners.

In honor of her canonization, our Parish Mission Council hosted a **Mission Movie Night**, showing the documentary film, "Mother Teresa." Parishioners enjoyed a little taste of India with Indian snacks, desserts, and chai (Indian tea). Following the movie, our mission team members along with parishioners who actually knew and worked with St. Teresa of Calcutta participated in a very moving and lively panel discussion. Over 200 parishioners participated in the celebration.

We began another semester of **English as a Second Language (ESL)** on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. A total of 138 students registered for this Fall Semester. We currently offer seven different levels of ESL ranging from Introductory English to Advanced Conversation, have 11 volunteer teachers, and every class is full. Lelia Buerger, our very experienced volunteer and teacher, coordinates the ESL program along with an ESL committee of some of our resident expert teachers. Graduation is scheduled for December 15<sup>th</sup>.

August also marked the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> year of **The Gathering Place at St. John Vianney**. Our volunteers and guests marked the anniversary with a celebration on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Over the course of the last nine years, The Gathering Place at SJV and our band of very dedicated volunteers have served more than 200 families coping with memory loss. 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. During this past quarter, we have had about 25 participants, plus their caregivers. In the words of our Interfaith Care Partners liaison, SJV's Gathering Place coordinators and volunteers' "example of service and compassion inspires others to serve along with them to foster a truly incredible team... Their leadership and spirit embody Christ's call to care for one another... [and to] lovingly respond to families facing the challenges of memory loss."

We continued to deliver hot lunches to all of the homebound and disabled seniors in our **Meals on Wheels** program every weekday during this quarter. That's about 850 meals delivered! We have approximately 40 Meals on Wheels volunteers who make this program possible. As the school year resumed in August, our SJV **Mentors** resumed their volunteer work with their Spring Branch ISD students. We have 35 returning Mentors this year, plus 3 new Mentors.

So far this quarter, we've assisted 791 individuals in need of **Emergency Services**. Forty eight percent of those who were assisted were children. This is well above the Houston Food Bank's report that children account for approximately 7.5% of the people who receive assistance from them. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one in six Texas households struggled to avoid hunger between 2012 and 2014 despite a fully-recovered economy. With the current economic downturn for the Houston area, we can only expect those numbers to rise.

We've also assisted 21 expectant mothers so far through our **Gabriel Project**. The severity of problems that these expectant mothers face has escalated dramatically in the last few years. We have assisted Gabriel Project mothers with problems such as 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 Angels. These 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.

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

<b>TYPE OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED</b>	
<b>Food</b>	646 individuals
<b>Clothes</b>	410 individuals
<b>Financial Assistance</b>	110 individuals
<b>Other (transportation, gold card, résumé, referrals to other ministries)</b>	42 individuals

Two hundred ninety-one bags of food were distributed through the **Food Pantry**. We also assisted 8 homeless individuals with our Hope Bags.

Among the “other” types of assistance provided through the Social Services’ Emergency Assistance Ministry, it’s important to mention the referrals to other ministries. By partnering with organizations like 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 came from the zip code 77077. The remaining families come from other zip codes within our service area – 77043, 77055, and 77079 – as well as outside zip codes when the emergency situation merits it.

Our **Joseph’s Coat** volunteers provided 410 individuals with clothing over this past quarter. Plus, they earned approximately \$38,000.00 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 assist those in need this past quarter.

We currently have a total of four full-time staff members in the Social Service department, and we are moving along with ever-increasing efficiency and plans and goals that are bigger and bolder than ever! However, we still wouldn't be able to do everything that we need to do without our office volunteers. Currently, we have 4 volunteers who work various shifts. They assist us at the front desk and on projects as needed. We have lost a few office volunteers in the last few months, however, so we are currently looking for more friendly faces to help us out at the front desk.

We also couldn't put together all of our various publications without our fabulous **Communications Team!** As you may know, Social Services produces the Spanish bulletin every week, transmits an informative weekly newsletter to all of our volunteers, and publishes the Salt & Light Quarterly Review. We have a team of 4 volunteers who assist us in translating, writing, and designing these various publications. Additionally, we have approximately 10 guest contributors to our Salt & Light publication, and we are always looking for more talented writers and collaborators!

In addition to all of the work that took place during this last quarter, our Social Service staff and volunteers were also involved in planning various events for this fall and the coming spring. We recently launched a **Disaster Relief Committee** and a **Social Concerns Committee**. We have also been planning and will soon embark upon three **Mission trips to Eagle Pass, Texas (on the border of Mexico)** and a **Medical Mission to El Salvador**. We are also planning **Financial Peace** and **Just Faith** courses for the spring of 2017 and will launch a **Faithful Citizenship & Advocacy Core Team** shortly. Such planning involves tasks such as room scheduling, budgeting, evaluating programs, developing goals, planning calendars, updating the website, and developing newsletters and informational literature, etc.

Social Service staff and volunteers also participated in our annual **Ministry Fair** and **Parish Bazaar** and assisted in our **Quarterly Blood Drive**. We are also involved in the development of several new programs for the next fiscal year as well as collaborations with Catholic Charities, several of our neighboring parishes, and the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

Finally, St. John Vianney is building a **Habitat for Humanity** house in thanksgiving to Our Lord for the blessings He's bestowed upon us and in honor of our Golden Jubilee. We raised the walls on the SJV Habitat for Humanity house on July 9th. This has been a major undertaking which will ultimately require the assistance of over 230 volunteers. We took the month of August off from Habitat due to the heat, but began building again in September. To date, we have participated in 9 build dates with over 150 volunteers who contributed over 800 hours of labor. Our SJV volunteers have raised the walls, built the trusses, decked the roof, added shingles and siding to the house, and painted the exterior of the house. Thanks go out to all of our parishioners who have volunteered so far. This month, we will begin painting the interior of the house. We've also signed up parishioners to pray for our volunteers (so far, over 20 hours of prayer), the safety of the building project, and the Estrada family who will receive the home that we've built. Volunteers have also provided and served lunches (approximately 150 lunches) for all Habitat volunteers on two build dates. The home should be completed and dedicated in early January 2017. The dedication is tentatively scheduled for January 14th.

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 marvelous ways to live your faith, change lives, and make a difference!