



Offering hope,
comfort and love
to children
seeking refuge.

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Reflecting on a year of growth despite the COVID-19 pandemic

Life is a continuous learning experience, regardless of the seasons. We have all been enduring and processing the chaos and the uncertainty that the pandemic brought in 2020 and which continues to be felt this year. It has been twenty months since our state and the world went into “Safe at Home” mandates and everything (for the most part) transitioned to virtual services. Earlier this year, we welcomed the news that vaccines were available to all adults and now to all children five years of age and over. The COVID-19 infection rate began to go down and as our city began to reopen, our

Center increased more in-person services and enrichment activities for our children. Life as we know it, has slowly started to feel like before. But for the refugee children and families that we serve, it means that the threat of deportation is still very present, toppled with financial difficulties, food insecurity, high living cost expenses, very limited work opportunities and the educational gap that is wider than ever before for our children. These are only some of the issues that the pandemic exacerbated.

Mothers with young children like Ana, who arrived from her home country looking for refuge, learned about the Center 15 days prior to her one-year arrival and deadline to apply for asylum. She sees the Center as a glimpse of hope. With the Center’s support, she retained legal representation, she received her employment authorization document and while she is undergoing her immigration process, she has created her





own catering and cleaning services. Many doors have been opened for her and her children since she accessed all programming offered at the Center, including our food pantry program, along with entrepreneurship training. Ana and her children are one of the many families who have been positively impacted by our mission to be a healing embrace and desire to provide a dignified welcome to families who enter our Center. It is your support that enables us to open our doors for refugee families like Carmen, another young mother of two children under five years old, who receives essential services and referrals that alleviate the financial burden and transition to life in the United States. However, working around immigration issues is not easy. It can be emotionally and physically depleting. How do participants, staff, volunteers, student interns, supporters and advocates cope with cruel immigration policies and injustices committed against children and families who are simply looking for refuge? Well, we build community with our supporters who “show up” in so many ways. We feel embraced by all of you and appreciate your volunteer work along with in-kind and monetary donations that ensure that our doors continue to be open over the years, especially during these continuous trying times. Thank you for holding us in your thoughts and for supporting us this 2021 when we most needed you.

With a grateful heart,

Mayra Medina-Núñez

Executive Director

2021

Facts and Figures



73 New Referred cases for legal support

73 families with children were welcomed at the RCC immigration legal services department in 2021.

4,000 hours

Student interns, attorneys and volunteers have donated an estimated 4,000 hours by supporting our children and their families.

\$4,500

Unaccompanied minors received assistance with initial retainer fee. In other words, the Center made the initial payment to their low bono attorney.

\$50,000

Our Food and Basic Needs Relief Program secured gift cards, food donations, toys, diapers, baby wipes, hygiene kits and formula totalling \$50,000 that was distributed to our participants in 2021.

\$10,000

The RCC has received an estimated \$10,000 in pro bono services in 2021 that range from bono consultations, support with divorce process, translation and interpretation services, to pro bono training for staff and administration.

109 participants

Over 109 RCC participants were served with social services support in 2021.

5 countries

RCC has worked with children from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico.

Our programming and services were organized in the following ways:

Immigration Legal Services

- Assistance in completing immigration questionnaires (legal intake)
- Assistance in drafting a statement of facts that occurred in the country of origin.
- Referral system for legal service providers to carry out pro bono evaluations of asylum cases. (2 consultations max.)
- Referral for an internal grant, for partial payment of initial legal retainer fees. (Available only to unaccompanied minors)
- Asylum and SIJS overview: What is asylum? What is a refugee? What is the difference between affirmative and defensive asylum? What is SIJS?

Social Services Referral Program

- Links to support services, including mental health resources, MediCal enrollment rent relief information and housing assistance information.
- Continual in-person, over-the-phone support for children who go through everyday life, including crisis management, school enrollment, over-the-phone interpreters and counseling to find information and resources in their preferred language.
- Women Support Group. A safe space for participants to share everyday life experiences and connections.

Enrichment Activities Program:

- Tutoring and Mentoring Program. For children ages 5-15.
- In-person and virtual art programs every month, including art therapy.
- Virtual youth gatherings, like Sunday Funday where children get to connect online to visit virtual museums, and more.
- In-person and virtual music classes with Santa Monica Youth Orchestra and Nueva Vision Community School.





Personal Development Program

- Assistance in creating email accounts
- Assistance in enrolling on ESL or vocational classes
- Assistance in becoming a member of COOPERE (Cooperativa de personas Refugiadas), a refugees' cooperative, an initiative that seeks to inspire and equip refugees and immigrants, in particular women, to become financially independent and self-sufficient.
- Assistance in submissions for a higher education RCC Scholarship Application.
- Assistance in job seeking and finding resources, such as classes and training.

Food Relief and Basic Needs Program

- Assistance in providing general information and resources for families who experience food insecurity.
- Securing donors to sponsor families who are in need of basic supplies (diapers, wipes, hygiene kits)
- Enrollment in our weekly Food and Basic Needs Relief Program that assists our participants with food donations, diapers and formula, among other basic needs.
- Enrollment in our Family to Family Initiative, a program that provides extra support on a monthly basis.

Leadership

Executive Board

Sumangala Bhattacharya, J.D., Ph.D.

President

Professor of English and World Literature at Pitzer College, Immigration Attorney, Private practice

Anchulee Raongthum,

Secretary

Agent & Broker Outreach, Education & Technical Assistance Program, Federally Facilitated Marketplace

Charles E. Laing, CPA.

Treasurer

Tax Accountant and Consultant at Clumeck, Stern, Schenkelberg and Getzoff

Board Members

Gloria Myles
Retired

Reverend David Farley
Former Director, Justice and Compassion Essential Ministry Team, Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, Retired

Aimee Porter
Early Childhood Trauma Specialist, Children's Book Author and Photographer

Linda Pillsbury
Licensed Clinical Social Worker/Therapist, Private practice.

Ivelise Markovits
Former Chief Executive Officer at Penny Lane Centers, Retired

Nayeli Perez, Fundraiser/Development Committee
Psychiatric Social Worker, LAUSD School of Mental Health

Ivana de Maria
Actress, founder and CEO at StoryPlace

Advisory Board

Ninette Ayala
Development Director at South Central LAMP

Guillermo Torres, Immigration Program Director at Clue (Clergy & Laity United for Economic Justice)

Emeritus Board

Reverend Frederick Birten Morris, Founder
Former Executive Director for the Refugee Children Center and Former Senior Pastor at the North Hills Hispanic Mission United Methodist Church, Retired.

Staff

Mayra Medina-Núñez
Executive Director

Frida Aldapa
Operations and Volunteer Coordinator

Nancy Avelino
Children and Families Program Coordinator

Magdaly Vivas-Tirado
Immigration Legal Services Coordinator

Maria Mercedes Dolores
Groundskeeper

Student Interns

UCLA Graduate Students

Fares Ahmad
Sydney Galaz
Kathering Montelon
Salonee Seecharan

CSUN Graduate Students

Aimee Lyn Debacker
Clarissa Quintanilla-Hernandez
Carolyn Mendoza

CSUN Undergraduate Students

Kiki Porter

UCLA Undergraduate Students

Isabella Cortes
Erick Grajeda
Marisol Jasso
Vanessa Molina
Eleticia Rangel
Aileen Rodriguez Rosales
Dana Herrera
Jessica Hernandez
Yadilena Martinez
Jennifer Navarrete
Lynette Salas
Colm Connelly
Endri Gonzalez
Cheryl Gussman
Melissa Mendoza Garcia
Iliana Villapudua
Jaqueline Orozco
Steven Ruiz
Jazminne Rodriguez
April Karina Pazos
Michael Nirula
Estefany Ochoa Alvarez
Sofi Ghasemzadeh
Mia Nadel
Crystal Rose Snow

Consultants

Greg Pawin,
Donor Analyst

Maria Hernandez,
Social Media Advisor

Simple Data Nonprofit Consulting

Lead Volunteers

Art Program

Aimee Porter
KC Porter
Alice Williams

COOPERE

Merlin Gumm
Ana Lerman Matonte

Fem/Mentoring and Tutoring Program

Dana Silverman
Chloe Pacetti
Mariam Abdi Rowhani
Jacqueline Tolin

Food Pantry

Pastor Ervin Aguilon
Gabriela Lagarde
Amanda Hillsberg
Thea Smolinski

Media

Louis Kravitz
Victor Avalos
Victoria Schiafino
Norman Schwartz

Legal Support

Negar Sabharwal
Judith Bickel

Donors

\$26,000 - \$50,000

- Bob and Marion Wilson
- United Methodist Foundation
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA USA)

\$11,000 - \$25,000

- Anonymous

\$6,000 - \$10,000

- Louis Henson

Faith-based organizations

- North Hills Hispanic Mission
United Methodist Church
- California Pacific Conference of the
United Methodist Church
- The Baha'i Community of Malibu Canyon

- Baha'i Community
- United Methodist Foundation
- United Methodist Church of Northridge
- San Gabriel Presbytery
- San Fernando Presbytery
- Santa Monica Religious Monthly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends
- Santa Monica Quaker Meeting
- Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church
- First Presbyterian Church of Barre, Vermont
- First United Methodist Church of
Santa Monica
- Han Yang Presbyterian Church

Attorney Referral Network

- Law Offices of Martinez, Nguyen and
Magaña, Attorney Cristel Martinez
- Law Offices of Lori B. Schoenberg
- Law Office of Alberto Lopez
- Law Office of Beatriz Velezmoro Chen
- Ghacha Law Group,
Attorney Monia Ghacha
- Law Offices of Miguel Mexicano
- Law Offices of Lisbeth Mateo Jimenez

Network of Pro bono legal service providers

- Esperanza Immigrants Rights Project

Collaborating Organizations

- North Valley Caring Services
- Nueva Vision Community School
- Santa Monica Youth Orchestra

- Baby2Baby
- Valley Community Healthcare
- Providence Community Health
- Food Forward
- No Kid Hungry
- Skirball Cultural Center
- Penny Lane Centers
- Los Angeles County Department of
Mental Health
- Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti
- CIELO
- Chrysalis
- USC CalHOPE
- Temple Akiba Early Childhood Center
- Tia Chucha's Centro Cultural and Bookstore
- Center for Nonprofit Management (CNM)
Southern California
- Valley Nonprofit Resources
- Latino Student Health Project at UCLA
(LSHP)
- Asian Pacific Health Corps at UCLA
(APHC)
- Pilipinos for Community Health Health
Fairs at UCLA (PCH Health Fairs)
- Latino Student Health Project at UCLA
(LSHP)
- Asian Pacific Health Corps at UCLA
(APHC)
- Pilipinos for Community Health Health
Fairs at UCLA
- (PCH Health Fairs)

In-kind support business

- Disney
- Participant Media





Thanks



REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER