Offering hope, comfort and love to children seeking refuge.

San Fernando Valley REFUGEE CHILDREN CENTER, INC.

Annual Report 2020
Table of contents.

Reflecting on a year of growth despite the COVID-19 pandemic ..................... 3
Facts and Figures .................................. 5
Programming and Services ................. 6
Leadership ....................................... 8
Donors .......................................... 9
Reflecting on a year of growth despite the COVID-19 pandemic

The mission of the San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center Inc. in North Hills is meant to be a healing embrace to hundreds of unaccompanied children making the perilous journey from Central America to seek refuge in the San Fernando Valley. Our overarching goal is to reach out to them and their families, offering our center as a welcoming and healing place, partnering with community organizations that can provide for basic needs, services and resources.

Pastor Fred Morris came out of retirement to North Hills, California, in 2014 to start a new faith community. In July, 2015, the San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center was launched with three refugee children and one part-time staffer in response to the surge of unaccompanied minors arriving at unprecedented numbers to the U.S.-Mexico Border.

Since then, the SFVRCC has welcomed over 400 minors and their families who received direct and referral services in a holistic approach. This includes mental health, social services, spiritual support, personal and academic growth, food and basic needs and, of course, legal assistance.

The vision of the San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center, Inc. is to be a place that protects the rights and well-being of all children who seek refuge in the United States.
It has been quite a year for our community of refugee and asylum seekers, so severely hit by the current immigration policies and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. At times uncertainty and fear of the unknown worried our participants and the SFVRCC itself. However, our resilient spirit did prevail and, with the support of many people—advocates, donors and volunteers—the SFVRCC has pulled through it. Yes, we had to adjust to the many limitations the pandemic has created, along with its financial repercussions to the families and the SFVRCC. We have adjusted from in-person services to more innovative ways to still render our valuable services. We did go through trials and errors but have found our rhythm. As we look to the year ahead, we are aware of the challenges for further adjustments that may be coming. We want to be sure we have the tools and support needed to continue fighting for them, for their legal cases and their chance to have a new life in the United States. We are beyond grateful to our staff, our volunteers, donors and of course, to our participants, who remind us why the SFVRCC needs to be here in the first place.

Sincerely,

Mayra Medina-Núñez
Executive Director
2020
Facts and Figures

36 cases.
were given legal services in 2020
Sixteen (16) unaccompanied minors
Twenty (20) families

$30,000
secured for participants’ emergency funds and rental relief. The SFVRCC received funds from the California Community Foundation, the office of Sheila Khuel and from private donors. The SFVRCC distributed these in grants that assisted our beneficiaries with funds to cover rent, utilities and basic needs.

3,000 hours.
Approximately 3,000 hours donated
Student interns, attorneys and volunteers donated an estimate of 3,000 hours in support for our children and their families.

$2,100
in pro bono legal consultations. SFVRCC received an estimate of $2,100.00 in pro bono (free) legal consultations. Those consultations were done by immigration attorneys, on a voluntary basis.

$2,000
in scholarship for higher education
One of our refugee students was accepted at Cal State Los Angeles, and received a scholarship.

$30,000
in-kind support directly benefiting participants
Our Food and Basic Needs’ Relief secured gift cards, food donations, toys, diapers, hygiene kits as well as baby formula that was distributed to our participants in 2020.

85 families.
were given social services’ support
85 SFVRCC participants were provided with social services’ support in 2020

Over $25,000
in financial grants for initial retainer’s fees
Unaccompanied minors received assistance with their initial retainer’s fees.

3 countries
The SFVRCC has worked with children from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador.
On March 16, 2020, our SFVRCC offices were closed and transitioned to a virtual plan, as employees began working remotely to ensure participants received the following services. Our programming and services were organized in four different departments:

**Immigration Legal Services**
- Assistance in completing immigration questionnaires (legal input)
- Assistance in drafting statements of facts (re: events in the country of origin)
- Referral system to legal service providers’ 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**
- Links to support services, including mental health resources, MediCal enrollment and housing assistance information.
- Continual in-person, over-the-phone support for children to manage daily life, including crisis management, school enrollment, over-the-phone interpreters and counseling for information and resources in their preferred language.
- Women Support Group. A safe space for participants to share everyday life experiences and connections.
- Adult Virtual Support Group. Every Sunday from 11 am to 12 pm. A safe space to promote mental well-being and learn stress reduction skills.
- Pre-Teen and Teen Virtual Support Group. For children ages 11-14, to learn skills to reduce stress in a fun environment.
- Tutoring and Mentoring Program. For children ages 5-15.
Personal Development Department

• Assistance in creating email accounts.

• Assistance in enrolling on ESL or vocational classes.

• Assistance in becoming a member of COOPERÉ (Cooperativa de personas refugiadas), a refugees’ co-operative, 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 SFVRCC Scholarship Application.

• Assistance in job seeking and finding resources such as classes and training.

Food Relief and Basic Needs Department

• Assistance in providing general information and resources for families who experience food insecurity.

• Securing donors to sponsor families 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
Rev. Frederick Birten Morris, President
Pastor, North Hills Hispanic United Methodist Mission Church

Ivana de Maria, Vice President
Actress, founder and CEO at StoryPlace

Anchulee Raongthum, Secretary
Senior Manager, Statewide Outreach for Blue Shield of California

Ivette Pineda, Treasurer
Southwestern Hispanic NextGen Representative at Foursquare Church

Ninette Ayala
Development Director at South Central LAMP

Development Committee
Rev. David Farley
Director, Justice and Compassion Essential Ministry Team, Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

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

Staff
Mayra Medina-Núñez
Executive Director

Frida Aldapa
Operations Coordinator and Volunteer Manager

Nancy Avelino
Social Services Coordinator

Mairym Medina-Sanchez
Immigration Legal Services Coordinator

Magdaly Vivas Tirado
Office Assistant for the Immigration Legal Services Department

Maria Mercedes Dolores
Janitor

Consultants
Greg Pawin
Donor Analyst Consultant

Ana Lerman
Development Consultant

Board Members
Sumangala Bhattacharya
Immigration Attorney, private practice

Gloria Myles
Retired

Jaime Tapia
Area Manager at Alterra Home Loans, CA

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

Lead Volunteers
Merlin Gumm
Aimee Porter
KC Porter
Alice Williams
Charles Laing
Dana Silverman
Lily Andrew
Chloe Pacetti
Mariam Abdi Rowhani
Gabriela Lagarde
Amanda Hillsberg
Maeliss J Gelas
Louis Kravitz
Maria Hernandez
Mariana Ibanez
Marite Montero

Annual Report 2020
Donors

$26,000 - $50,000
Wilson Foundation
California Community Foundation
United Methodist Foundation
Presbyterian Disaster Assistance (PDA USA)
SAM Initiative

$11,000 - $25,000
Anonymous

$6,000 - $10,000
Rob and Patricia Scheineder

$5000
Karen Gillan and Addie Weyrich
Office of Supervisor Sheila Kuehl

Faith based organizations
North Hills Hispanic United Methodist Mission Church
California Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church
United Methodist Foundation
Baha’i Community
1st UMC of Glendale
UM Women of 1stUMC Church of LA
Presbytery Church USA
San Gabriel Presbytery
San Fernando Presbytery
Han Yang Presbyterian Church
St. Matthew’s United Methodist Church
Whittier United Methodist Church
Santa Monica Quaker Meeting

Network of low-bono attorneys and legal service providers
Law Offices of Cristel Martinez
Law Offices of Lori B. Schoenberg
Law Office of Victor Segura
Law Office of Alberto López
Law Office of Miguel Mexicano

Collaborating Organizations
Skirball Museum
North Valley Caring Services, Inc.
Baby2Baby
Valley Community Healthcare - North Hills Wellness Center
LA Family Housing
Housing Rights Center
San Fernando Valley Rescue Mission
Chrysalis
CIELO - Comunidades Indígenas en Liderazgo
MEND - Meet Each Need with Dignity
Penny Lane Centers

In-kind support
Chingón Bakery
Tortas Chago
Viva Piñata
Harper Collins en español
Editorial Penguin
Editorial The Secret Mountain.

Thank you again for your support. Together we are transforming the lives of many children and giving them a brighter tomorrow.
Thanks