

Glimpses of Artisans of Change

Crossroads Community Services—also known as CCS—is not simply a brick and mortar food bank, but also a warm home to which some of Dallas’ most unfortunate went to seek human kindness. CCS, located in a less affluent sector of Dallas, gives low-income families and individuals access to pantry staples and fresh produce: a rarity for those living in poverty.

Not only is CCS the only food bank to offer fresh food, but they also treat all who enter through those doors with the dignity they deserve. While most food banks shuffle people in and out as quickly as possible, CCS’s structure ensures efficiency and attends to humans’ most basic need: empathy. These individuals enter “processing” where a receptionist greets them and gives them a waiting number; then, they pass “intake” where they speak with a volunteer and choose their food within a predetermined limit; and finally, with their food list in hand, another volunteer walks them to the “shopping” area to assist in gathering their food. I assisted at each of these stations because my second language, Spanish, was often needed, but I chose to spend most of my time aiding in intake and shopping where I engaged individually with those I served. Through jovial conversation, I heard about their lives, and cheered successes to help them briefly forget about the struggles. Every CCS volunteer and I knew it was our responsibility to smile, greet, and love all who came to us because this is our human duty: to be loving and respectful of all.

I found this service enlightening because I was immersed in a new environment with different people who I could empathize with. I heard their striking stories, saw their dilapidated cars, and interacted with their energetic children.

Although they lived in poverty, many came with a joy I found intoxicating and reaffirming of the truth that money does not buy happiness.

However, I was also enraged with the injustices these beautiful souls faced. The knowledge that there exist valiant veterans rejected by their country and parents breaking their backs working two or more jobs to give their children a brighter future invigorates me to study now and later break the cycle of poverty I see all around me.



I loved this service and ended up loving those I served which turned this service into an enlightening, invigorating experience that will always remind me of my human purpose: love to serve and serve to love in all one does.

Ana Paulina Quiroz, Ursuline Academy Dallas Student

Lifeway is a project of women religious in the tri-state area to assist women who have been victims of human trafficking in reclaiming their lives. The safe house was established about ten years ago. Three sisters, of whom one is our Maureen McCarthy, form a host community and live at the house which resembles other homes on its street. Lifeway provides various programs and services for the women.

When the sisters of the host community are at work, and to give them some free time on Sunday, volunteers are needed. The ministry of the volunteer is very much one of presence and availability. It is a privilege to serve these women who have each suffered a trauma. I have been touched by their resilience as I observe them prepare meals, study, interact with one another and with us volunteers. My time with them leads me to become more aware of the modern slavery that human trafficking is and to bring these women and all the other victims of human trafficking to my prayer.

Mary Alice Duggan, OSU New Rochelle, New York

This is my second year volunteering at Our Lady of Guadalupe with a program called Volunteer Income Tax Assistance or VITA, to provide low-income people with access to free completion of their Federal and State Tax Returns. Sponsored by United Way, this program encourages many people to come get their taxes done for free while making sure they have access to all the available tax credits or deductions for which they qualify. Additional resources are offered on-site which I include Healthcare and Cal-Fresh Information, Credit Counseling & Savings Program and a Save your Refund Sweepstakes. We had one of our community members actually win the sweepstakes which allowed this young mother to reach out and grab her dream of education and then begin her own business! Just amazing!

One of the things I liked the most about working in this program was helping people that live in our own community. To me it is shocking to see exactly how low income they really are. One woman, with a wonderful smile and twinkling eyes sat down with all her information spread out before her. She was wearing a colorful bandana around her head. I commented on the beauty of the scarf. She indicated that she was getting ready to begin cancer treatment for her third time. She was worried that she wouldn't have enough money to pay for the treatment without having to rely on her children. They already helped her; she did not want them to have to do more. As I completed her returns, I used my knowledge of our community and the relevant available resources, that given her income, she should qualify for Medical Financial Assistance, which would allow her free cancer treatment. When we talked about the program, she was afraid it was too late to get into the medical program. I urged her to go to her medical facility on Monday with the completed tax return and see if she could enroll.

Because she filled out paperwork on Monday, she found out that she would be eligible to start receiving free cancer treatments Thursday. Having her taxes completed, smoothed the path to get the necessary medical treatment. In her words, the best part was getting the necessary treatment without additional stress. A joyful interaction!

Caryn Inman, Santa Rosa, California

What Can You Do?