

Cardinal Manning Center

Helping those in need in LA County for over 50 Years

In downtown Los Angeles, California, sits a 54-block area that is home to the nation's largest concentration of homeless people, according to CNN. This area is commonly known as "Skid Row."

CNN goes on to report that while New York has the biggest homeless population, L.A. has the biggest number of unsheltered homeless. The homeless on Skid Row live on sidewalks, under tarps and in tents.

For over half a century, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Los Angeles Archdiocesan Council has been working to help those who are most in need.

The Cardinal Manning Center (CMC) is a homeless shelter in the Skid Row area. It opened in 1955 in a converted dairy processing plant. The CMC was created as a way to offer those in need a wide array of quality services designed to preserve and enhance their dignity and self-worth while also helping them become physically, emotionally and economically better adjusted.

The center is funded mainly by donations from the public. Funding also comes from grants from local foundations as well as a small grant from the federal government.

The CMC offers a comprehensive program for homeless men transitioning off the streets and into housing through transitional housing and intensive case management services. The center serves 65 homeless men at a time.

Men who are accepted into the CMC are presently homeless, and many have been for years. They also suffer from a myriad of other issues. Those could include physical ailments, mental problems, legal troubles, substance abuse, financial troubles, educational issues and the list goes on.

Services provided through the CMC are free of charge. Upon entering the center, each resident is assigned a case manager who will work with them to assess their needs and develop an individualized case plan.

According to Larry Hurst, Los Angeles Council Director of Social Services at CMC, the case plan will identify what issues the resident wishes to work on and in which order.

Systemic change is a process that aims to achieve a radical transformation in the lives of those living in poverty. Systemic change goes beyond looking at short-term needs of food, clothing and shelter to identifying and resolving the root causes of poverty (such as needing education, a job, stable finances and other issues).

These new long-term strategies include: mentoring, collaboration with other organizations with similar aims, and advocacy to change unjust systems. The goal is to move people permanently out of poverty by empowering them to improve themselves, to make life changes, and mentoring them to take on roles leading to self- sustainability.

These programs have helped and will continue to help individuals on a new journey out of poverty into the middle class.

“All the principles of systemic change are expressed through the programming at the CMC,” said Hurst. “In addition to moving homeless men from the streets to a shelter, our efforts are to help identify their individual needs, linking them to medical, mental and substance abuse treatment, housing resources, benefit establishment, employment preparedness, education and vocational training programs, mentorship and other services.”

Working together with the residents during their stay, CMC staff assists them in learning to advocate for themselves and to develop those skills that will successfully carry them forward in their lives.

Through CMC and other social service agencies in the Los Angeles area, SVdP works with those in need to help them move out of poverty and improve their lives. They work together to build a brighter future.



Archbishop of Los Angeles, Jose H. Gomez with SVdP Los Angeles Executive Director, David Fields and Cardinal Manning Center board members. Photo: Victor Aleman



Archbishop of Los Angeles, Jose H. Gomez with SVdP Los Angeles Executive Director, David Fields says a blessing before a meal is served at the SVdP Cardinal Manning Center. Photo: Victor Aleman