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THE MISSION OF THE SFYC

Salesian Family Youth Center

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INTRODUCTION

A lighthouse of hope in Los Angeles



In this vast ocean of urban life in Los Angeles, where the waves of helplessness and challenges often whip the youngest souls, the Salesian Family Youth Center (SFYC) emerges as a ray of light to help the Boyle Heights Community.

Remembering the words of the Nobel Prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda: "They could cut all the flowers, but they can't stop the spring." in this Salesian corner, where love and education interlace, young hearts feel that there is a spring, a refuge, and a meeting point to help them face their challenges.



Since 1966, our mission has been to inspire and train young people so they can develop their true potential as responsible, supportive, and productive citizens.

But far more than only the activities or programs, we have adopted the essence of the Salesian charisma, an inheritance from St. John Bosco, whose pedagogical approach was based on amiability, sweetness, and firmness for the development of all human beings. Being "Salesian" is being educative. Here, each activity, each program, and each interaction is permeated with that educative spirit.



Los Angeles, with its diversity and complexity, and especially with the high socioeconomic contrast, presents unique problems for the low-income, poverty-level population, and even more so for their young. On the one hand, problems like depression, bullying, sexual activity from a young age, and drug consumption are realities that a lot of our kids face every day. On the other hand, the contrast of an increasingly higher cost of living makes it challenging to realize basic human needs, like education, with which to fight poverty.

In this context, and with the Salesian principle that "education is a matter of the heart," the work of the SYFC, of being a lighthouse of hope and love in the community, is more critical than ever. And so, we invite you to learn more about what we do, our challenges, and why your help is fundamental in continuing to reach more kids and young people in our community.



CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Boyle Heights: A community that fights socioeconomic adversity



One of three families in Boyle Heights lives in or under the poverty line. This situation worsens if we consider that more than half, precisely 57%, depend on public assistance to survive. 69% of adults, those over 25 years old, have yet to achieve an educational level superior to ninth grade. At the same time, this lack of formal education is present in the new generations, where many students still need to reach the California state levels required for fundamental classes such as English and mathematics. Many of them do not even consider university education as an option.



Those statistics are alarming, but they are not only numbers; they represent a community's lives, dreams, and aspirations. It represents young people who have to work extra hard against adversity daily in search of a better future.

In this environment, where the shadows of gangs, drugs, and family discord are the common denominator, the team of SYFC tries to create new strategies to protect Boyle Heights youth. It is far from a simple task. Resources are scarce, and the reality that

the economic viability of the center could be affected is a daily preoccupation.

Every worker and volunteer of SFYC struggles to balance living in one of the most expensive cities in the USA with continuing their mission to help while facing low or zero remuneration.

In this environment, the programs of SFYC, such as the "After School Program", help working parents and guardians who would find it necessary to leave their children alone at home, sometimes for hours. We are here to safeguard their kids who, otherwise, could get lost in the abyss of negligence.

The following testimonies were selected from many of the young people who benefited or continue to benefit, from our programs. "Is our mission being accomplished?"



Is the center fulfilling its role as a catalyst in the human and spiritual development of our community youth? These testimonies will speak for themselves.



TESTIMONIOS:

"I didn't feel accepted anywhere, but when I pass this door (of the center), I feel at home."



"It contributes to my development; I found abilities I didn't know. Thanks for believing in me, giving me a family, and helping me find this gift that I can share with everybody."



"I have found people that have changed my life in so many ways and made it better."

"This center has allowed me to connect with a lot of people. For the last 20 years, I have realized that I'm a broken person, but I also recognize that this community has strengthened me. Without them, what I have done has no meaning."



Juana Rodriguez, in 2023, did not want to remain anonymous. She expressed her sentiments with a tenderness that transcended her words: "I believe that the center is a home for most of them, especially for the little ones. In this community, many fathers have two jobs or are single mothers or fathers. They don't have support from their families, or most of them don't want to deal with their kids, so they send them to the streets or tell them: "Do whatever you want, get lost for a minute. "Most of them find their home here. They learn and grow with us"

"It has been where I have returned as many times as I wanted and felt loved. I'm grateful to the center for letting me grow. The center has given me the capacity and acknowledgment to be myself."



LIFE-CHANGING STORIES



If one day you decide to ask any club member a little bit about their life, most likely you will find yourself facing a myriad of answers—some that will touch your heart. Each youth is a world containing stories of challenges, light, and hope.



Juan Carlos Montenegro, the current director of SFYC, does this daily. With enormous empathy, he has dedicated himself to listening to these stories and finding solutions to any challenges they may present.

JC, as he is affectionately known over the years, has quite an interesting personal story. JC has faced adversities since his childhood in Ecuador. Still, his vocation for helping people has taken him, by contrast, along various paths that are now used in the development of SFYC. Living in a wealthy country and not having



enough resources to help poor kids, he has a Ph.D. in sociology. He had to leave academic investigations to devote himself to the pragmatism of working every day with kids and young people from the community. Despite being a layman and enacting Christian values in a Salesian Center, his role as the leader of SFYC has marked a before and after in the institution.

The story of Juan Carlos Montenegro is usual. Over the years, SFYC has been the scenery of innumerable histories of success. Despite their adversities, young people have found in the center a place where they could discover their talents, develop their abilities, and build a promising future. These testimonies, which you can find on the center's walls in photos, cards, and memories, are a constant reminder of the importance and impact of SFYC's work.



PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

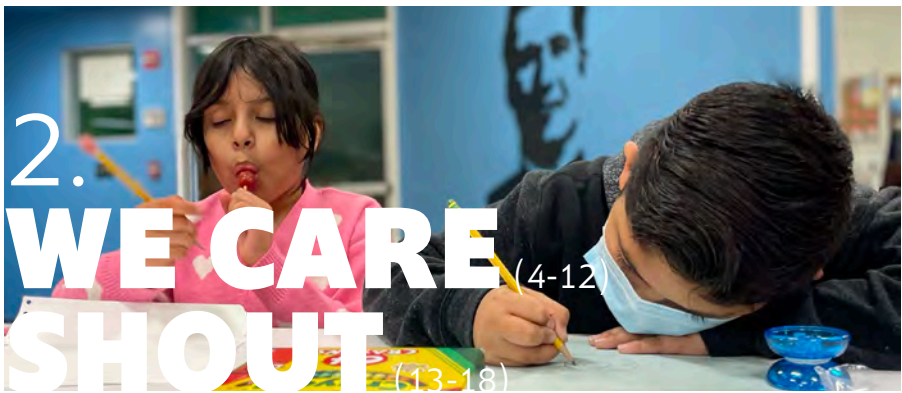


The programs and activities that SFYC offers have been designed meticulously to nurture, educate, and empower the young people from Boyle Heights. These programs, spanning from our initiatives to collaborations with other institutions, are the engine that runs the positive transformation of the community. These are primarily the ones that necessitate your help.





This summer experience is designed for kids and young people from limited economic conditions and with low parental assistance. The camp offers playful, cultural, and associated activities in a familiar environment. Teens and older youths assume leadership roles in the planning and implementing of the activities, serving as inspiring and positive models for the younger participants.



A program where we receive kids and young people after school hours so that they can interact in a safe space, do homework, and play with other kids. All this with an approach that enables every activity to teach an ability or acknowledgment, build character, and promote values.



SFYC offers a variety of sports activities, from foosball to basketball and volleyball leagues. We collaborate with the public school system. These activities serve as a means and a tool to channel emotions, encourage teamwork, and develop leadership.



These programs focus on serving and empowering young people to seek to strengthen the bond with the parish of St. Mary through sacramental activities and leadership formation. We offer workshops to develop practical communication abilities and teamwork. From the Salesian perspective, young people are being formed in faith through the Confirmation program.

Another program with allied institutions:



ADOPT A FAMILY

This program provides economic help to families with greater need. It also becomes a support network so those families can continue using the center and its programs.

BABY TO BABY

This program helps mothers most in need, offering essential items for the care of their babies.



With so many programs, how can I help?

These programs are not only activities, but they also support methodologies put into practice to solve the community's needs. If you want to help, we are always searching for volunteers, donations, and people to help us share the message.

A CALL TO ACTION: **WE NEED YOUR HELP!**



Through the years, we have witnessed innumerable success stories, many of which have been possible thanks to the generous support of our donors.

We need your help because, at this place, each donated coin transforms into a brush stroke on the canvas of a brighter future. Each contribution will become a note in the symphony of dreams realized.

Helping SFYC is not only a generous act. It is an action that means weaving the tapestry of tomorrow, with you becoming a co-author in a work. Your help will enable every young person to be the protagonist of their own story of overcoming adversity.

In the words of one of our current donors, "Seeing the direct impact of my contribution in the lives of these kids is immensely rewarding, knowing that I am helping to build a better future for them. It is the best investment I have ever made". - María González, donor since 2015.



Monetary donations:

A direct support that allows us to maintain and expand our programs.

Material donations:

From school materials to sports equipment, every contribution counts.



Volunteering:

Your time and abilities can make a significant difference in the lives of our young people.

Event sponsorship:

Financial help is needed for specific events or programs during the year: the Gala, A Christmas Dinner, Thanksgiving, Children's Day, and more.



PROPOSALS & FUTURE VISION

While we look at the future, our objective is to strengthen our mission even more. We want to expand our programs, offer more educational and recreational opportunities, and continue being a safe refuge for the young in Boyle Heights.

We invite you to join us in this noble cause. Your help will not only change lives but also build futures. Together, we can continue transforming the present and the future of Boyle Heights. Join us and be part of this marvelous mission.





Join us in the noble task of inspiring and supporting the growth of youth at **SFYC**, where every help counts and together we build a future full of opportunities and hope for young people.

