



Cassandra Huerta

Reentry Resource Center Partner Good Samaritan Project Helps Clients Achieve Their Goals

Cassandra Huerta, a mother of three small children under the age of three, never imagined she would find herself in the situation she was in. A bad decision followed by a brief stay at Elmwood Correctional Facility in Milpitas, California left her homeless, living in her car, and on her own to provide for her babies. During a visit to the Compassion Center in Gilroy, a community-based organization offering support to homeless individuals and families, Cassandra had no idea a chance meeting with The Good Samaritan Project's Reentry Specialist, Sonya Contreras, would be the answer to her prayers. The Good Samaritan Project is a faith-based resource center offering services to those recently released from incarceration. It is one of four such centers operating as programs of the Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Services Department. These four centers offer not only linkages to spiritual and social community support, but job skills development, family reunification, counseling, educational guidance, computer training, and volunteer mentors to support clients.

During the intake process, Sonya and Cassandra developed a plan and set goals.

“She knew exactly what she wanted to accomplish,” stated Sonya. Housing, employment, and childcare were at the top of the priority list. As Sonya coordinated services, Cassandra immediately connected with service providers to access the resources available to her. Catholic Charities, the social service and social justice ministry of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of San Jose, provided her with interview clothes and helped her write a resume. Shortly after, Cassandra received assistance for car repairs from The Good Samaritan Project to help her get to her first job while First 5 Santa Clara County, which provides resources for families with young children, assisted her with childcare services for her three children. Cassandra was also accepted into the Exceptional Housing Program and received one year of rental assistance. Once housed, The Good Samaritan Project helped with basic household goods and furniture through the Bay Area Furniture Bank. Life significantly improved for Cassandra and her children.

Today, Cassandra continues to thrive in her environment. Like many Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic, maintaining full-time employment and keeping current with rent has had its challenges. Now, instead of feeling helpless, she is connected to a support system and resource network to maintain stability and keep moving forward. Having graduated from the Good Samaritan Project, Cassandra is also working to earn her high school diploma. She continues to work full-time and attends church regularly at Victory Outreach in San Jose, where she strengthens her faith to keep herself accountable and motivated. Recently, she was reunited with her husband who was recently released from incarceration and is now a client of The Good Samaritan Project.