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St. Mary Villa to open facility at Our Lady of Guadalupe

Theresa Laurence

On any given day at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church on Nolensville Road, members of the Hispanic community may be meeting with a Catholic Charities caseworker, attending a citizenship class or getting a health checkup.

Soon, they will be able to access affordable, quality childcare at a St. Mary Villa's satellite location at Our Lady of Guadalupe.

"I think this will really be a gift to the community," said Mike Miller, director of St. Mary Villa Child Development Center, noting that the neighborhood is underserved by reliable childcare.

Anticipating that many of the families will come from the Spanish-speaking Guadalupe faith community, Miller is in the process of hiring a bi-lingual site manager. Miller also expects that members of the Somali and Kurdish populations who live in the neighborhood will be interested in enrolling. "Of course, we are open to the full community," Miller added.

St. Mary Villa offers after-school care at several schools in the diocese, but it has never opened another full child care facility before. "This is our first venture outside of one location in 30-plus years," Miller said.

St. Mary Villa at Our Lady of Guadalupe will serve 60 children, ages 1 through 5. Unlike at the White Bridge Road location, it will not serve infants, at least at first. "As we gain a greater presence in the community after we get started up we may expand to add infants and older children," Miller said.

Miller hopes that St. Mary Villa will open at Our Lady of Guadalupe in early



Photo by Theresa Laurence

Catholic Charities caseworker Terry Horgan, center, meets with Isabel and Felipe Menchaca and their daughter, Victoria, 2, in Horgan's new office at Our Lady of Guadalupe church on Nolensville Road. The Hispanic Family Services offices of Catholic Charities were recently consolidated at the church, and plans are well underway for a satellite location of St. Mary Villa Child Development Center to open there, making Our Lady of Guadalupe an epicenter of services for the immigrant population in the neighborhood.

2009. While the money and the willpower are there, "the real stumbling block is we're not licensed yet," he said. The Guadalupe facility needs approval from codes and the Department of Human Services, which Miller feels confident about obtaining.

With large grants from the Daughters of Charity and United Way, Miller said, St. Mary Villa has sufficient funds for its initial operating budget, but still needs some additional money for start-up costs at the new location.

Like at the White Bridge Road facil-

ity, childcare fees will be determined on a sliding scale. "We're anticipating many families will be at the lower end of the scale," at Our Lady of Guadalupe, Miller said, a fact that has been taken into consideration in drawing up the budget.

While much work remains to be done before the new St. Mary Villa location can be opened, "we have lots of encouragement and we are well on our way," Miller said. For more information about St. Mary Villa at Our Lady of Guadalupe, contact Miller at 615-760-4425.

Charities services consolidated

Earlier this month, Bishop David Choby dedicated the new Catholic Charities offices at Our Lady of Guadalupe. Seven Hispanic Family Services employees now have full-time offices there and other staff members and volunteers come to the campus on a regular basis to offer legal counseling and health maintenance checkups.

With offices previously located at Holy Name Church in East Nashville and at the Woodbine Community Center, Catholic Charities' Hispanic Family Services offices are now consolidated at Our Lady of Guadalupe. Regular weekly office hours are also scheduled for Bridges to Care and Immigration Services at the church.

People have had no trouble finding the new offices, said Eileen Beehan, director of social services at Catholic Charities. "We have always been a highly utilized service and that hasn't changed with the location."

Last year, Catholic Charities assisted more than 3,300 people through its Hispanic Services program, approximately 3,900 uninsured people through Bridges to Care, and more than 4,000 people through Immigration Services.

Catholic Charities has long helped Hispanic families connect with basic services like health care and school enrollment. As part of a \$100,000 grant from the Frist Foundation, a new computer lab will soon be added to expand Charities' programming even further and help Hispanic adults complete their education on-line, Beehan said.

All Catholic Charities services are offered without regard to religion, ethnicity or legal status. "We respond based on the need in the community," Beehan said simply. ☩