



DIOCESE OF YAKIMA HOUSING SERVICES

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2005 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

HOME, SWEET HOME

Most families planting and harvesting the fields and vineyards of Yakima County, Washington, are new immigrants determined to make their children's future bright. Their first American homes, however, are often single-room apartments or even sheds or garages without indoor plumbing. These accommodations do not come cheaply—in terms of rent or in terms of their impact on children's development.

"The landlords take advantage. We saw a dire need for decent, affordable housing," says Mario Villanueva, director of the Diocese of Yakima Housing Services (DYHS), a program of Catholic Charities of Yakima.

Calling on two decades' experience in housing development and construction, in 1998 Villanueva found community partners to help break ground for the first of what are now 231 low-cost, quality family units. DYHS would own and manage the units, charging rent on a sliding scale. But Villanueva knew that building the housing was a job only half done.



OUR HOUSING SERVICES GIVE FAMILIES
THE SKILLS AND STABILITY TO BECOME
SELF-SUFFICIENT AND CREATE A BETTER
FUTURE FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

—Mario Villanueva, Director, Diocese of Yakima Housing Services

COMPLETING THE EQUATION

“We see some kids who do better in school from the very first day they move into their new home, but the traditional public housing model sometimes isn’t enough,” says Villanueva.

In response, DYHS staff developed Ministry of Management, an innovative umbrella program that addresses the diverse needs of families moving into the new housing units. Using a range of strategic approaches, the program supports families—offering financial literacy courses for parents, collaborating with schools to implement after-school programming for children and organizing healthy activities for every family member.

While making assimilation to American life easier, DYHS helps these Latino parents affirm the value their culture places on strong families and strong communities. In each housing development, parent-led tenant associations help Ministry of Management staff develop specialized activities. The associations also support staff in monitoring family-by-family outcomes.

The ultimate measure of success, according to Villanueva, is when a family leaves their unit, making room for another on the two-year-long waiting list. “It means those parents have gained the economic stability and confidence to support their family. In the best cases, they’ve bought their own home. That’s a special day.”

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Catholic Charities USA, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize Catholic Charities with outstanding programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

Among the nation's largest social service providers, Catholic Charities USA traces its roots back 275 years. Today, through innovative programs like the Diocese of Yakima Housing Services, 1,700 Catholic Charities member agencies and institutions fulfill a mission of providing help and creating hope for more than 7.1 million people annually, regardless of religious, social or economic backgrounds. According to Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA, "these remarkable programs are successful because they create strong partnerships with vulnerable families and organizations in the neighborhoods where they live. Equally important, the programs work to increase the families' economic assets with education, jobs and savings."

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE DIOCESE OF YAKIMA, WA

Award-winning Program: Diocese of Yakima Housing Services

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