Winter Shelter 2016

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Winter Refuge 2016
Written by Joseph Arnhold
Winter Refuge Co-Coordinator and Reality LA member

This year the Refuge at FPCH partnered with the following churches: Blessed Sacrament, Broken Hearts Ministry, Hollywood Lutheran, The Gathering, Saddleback-Hollywood, Reality LA, Ecclesia, Beverly Hills Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist-Hollywood and Vintage Church

The Hollywood Winter Refuge is currently finishing up its 5th year and I’ve had the wonderful opportunity to be involved with this program since the beginning. The first thing that immediately attracted me to it was the strong focus on collaboration. This program truly could not exist if it weren’t for the continued support and work put in from the many churches that are involved. I attend Reality LA. When I first heard about the idea that a shelter would be funded, staffed, and supported by churches from the Hollywood area, I was immediately on board. From a Christian standpoint it was exciting for me to see churches come together and take on a mission as a larger, complete body of Christ. The shelter program is one of the prime examples of what can happen when churches come together to accomplish a unified goal.

The Refuge is a place where not only rest is found, but a place where case managers can consistently and easily set up meetings with their clients. I’ve seen first-hand this year the advantage for case managers to know that they can easily engage with clients and assist them more effectively. The eight weeks also allows a time of rest which helps towards alleviating some of the anxiety that can be associated with all the required steps they must take for housing. It doesn’t stop on the last day of the Refuge. The journey for our friends from
Hollywood has just begun. Consistency and long term support is needed in order to be effective. The friendships created in the Refuge form a community that continues year round. Monthly gatherings called “Dinners with Friends” has been held in the past and I hope that continues. Ideally, friendships strengthened between volunteers and our guests create a support system that will continue as they enter their future homes. According to Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (http://file.e.lacounty.gov/dhs/cmsl_217171.pdf), 70 million a year is spent on inpatient costs for our friends experiencing homelessness. Once housed our friends experience 77% less emergency room visits and 85% less inpatient days. Being the church we can assist with not only the physical health of our friends but the spiritual health as well. All of our guests who walk through the doors are looking for a strong community they can be allowed into to call their own. They find comfort and peace in a Christ-centered setting. It has been so encouraging to see the Church meet spiritual and physical needs in such a tangible way. It has also been a blessing when our neighbors and visitors look at our Christian community and recognize this genuine, reciprocal love that is filled with the spirit of Christ.

I've just concluded my time of living in Los Angeles after six years. This past summer I moved abroad to Phnom Penh, Cambodia to volunteer for a local Counter Human Trafficking organization called Chab Dai. (www.chabdai.org) That time of volunteering led to a job offer that will lead me back to Phnom Penh in April for an undetermined amount of time. I'll be assisting in online communications through social media and assisting in global partner support for the greater counter trafficking movement. I am thankful for my time and experience both volunteering and working at the Winter Refuge at FPCH. I look forward to seeing the progress and future of the Refuge and hopefully being involved again someday.

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