



# PREPARES

Pregnancy & Parenting Support



*"When the Magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Mt 2:13-15, 19-23*

Dear Friend,

December, 2022

As we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family, Matthew's Gospel reminds us that the Nativity concludes with a time of great peril and uncertainty for the Holy Family. The fate of the Christ Child, indeed of all humanity, hangs in the balance, requiring great faith and discernment from Joseph as he seeks to protect Mary and her Son.

The PREPARES ministry understands that, although young families across Western Washington do not risk destruction from a vengeful king, they are often in grave danger from the scourges of poverty and indifference. With your support, PREPARES helps families in distress find a path to stability and the hope of a better future. We share the peace of Christ with those whose hearts need it most!

On this Feast of the Holy Family we wish to acknowledge the many committed volunteers, generous donors, and prayer partners who faithfully support the ministry of PREPARES. PREPARES has enjoyed a year of blessings and growth, including these highlights:



- Eight new parishes joined PREPARES in ministry to pregnant and parenting young families in communities from La Conner to Camas.
- A brand new Diaper Grant Initiative allowed PREPARES parish programs to provide a month's supply of diapers to more than 2,000 children across Western Washington with funding from the state—the first time PREPARES has been awarded public funding.
- PREPARES welcomed two wonderful new staff members: Southwest Area Coordinator, Cindy Heick, and Northwest Area Coordinator/Diaper Grant Administrator, Peggy Behnken.
- PREPARES resumed in-person activities, with diaper drives, baby showers, and Play with Love (Jugando con Amor) activities happening across the Seattle Archdiocese. In October, Holy Family Parish in Kirkland kicked off the first ever Bilingual Play with Love program in the state!

We want to acknowledge the contribution of two incredible women who retired this year from PREPARES: Carol Ryan and Lisa Cassino. Carol and Lisa led their respective NW and SW areas for several years, and in their long careers at Catholic Community Services touched many families through their work in adoption, maternity, and parenting support. We thank them for their leadership and the strong foundation they helped build for PREPARES.

We carry them with us into the future of our ministry!



Carol Ryan and Lisa Cassino

## Annual PREPARES Impact

### Western Washington

Families served: **1,819\***  
Engaged Parishes: **88/168**  
Trained Volunteers: **460**  
Family Companions: **70**  
Counties: **12/19**



\* Unduplicated count:  
Many families received multiple services throughout the year.

We leave you with these words of thanks from "Fatima", who became homeless with her nine-month-old baby after suffering domestic violence. Our office provided a housing referral and her local PREPARES parish volunteers supported Fatima and her little one with diapers, wipes, and most importantly, *encouragement*.

*"Thank you for all your support through my journey. I'm very glad that there's still kind people like you in our community, God bless you! Thank you so much for everything you did for me!"*

We thank you for your part in Fatima's story, and on behalf of every family PREPARES has walked with on the journey. May the peace of Christ be with you and yours!

With loving gratitude,

Aleah Patulot  
PREPARES Director  
(206) 737-9264

[www.preparesforlife.org](http://www.preparesforlife.org)

PREPARES está disponible en español.

Please look for Archbishop Etienne's  
**Open Your Heart** PREPARES appeal coming in February!

A program of



CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES  
OF WESTERN WASHINGTON





***“The family is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen, to share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one.”***

*Pope Francis, Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*

***“Welcome to PREPARES!”*** A colorful sign tucked into the lower level of St. Madeleine Sophie School leads visitors through a classroom door into a rich sensory environment of music, toys, books, and art supplies. Play with Love (Jugando con Amor), a weekly playgroup for Latina caregivers and children five years and under, is meeting for the first time since COVID ended classes in 2020.

Loretta Sursely, St. Madeleine Sophie’s Pastoral Coordinator, makes a point of stopping by to say how honored the parish is by the return of Play with Love families. Teresa Cacho-Govea, PREPARES Spanish Area Coordinator, and Alicia Tapia, class facilitator, welcome arrivals with hugs and exclamations of joy. While their own children are now grown, Teresa and Alicia are sympathetic to the challenges facing many of these young families, who are far from home, family, and old friends to help them as they navigate unfamiliar systems and languages.



*After storytime, Bradley begins to make his own book.*

Bradley, three years old, is new to the program and sticks close to his abuela (grandmother), she hopes her grandson will develop social and emotional skills since he is an only child with no nearby cousins or other children his age. Gesturing towards her heart, she confides that she hopes to use the program to develop her English skills and peer relationships so she can continue to support her grandson as he moves into elementary school.

Other families greet each other by name and move easily around the space, mothers catching up with each other while their children play with toys and “cook” in the miniature kitchen. Even when classes were suspended, Play with Love mothers and children prioritized meeting in parks and libraries, strengthening meaningful relationships and mutual

support during a difficult time. Mothers credit easy school transitions for older siblings to the emotional and social skills they learned alongside friends.

Eren, an alum parent, is excited for Sebastian, her younger son, to have the same experience as his older brother Christopher, now in second grade. “Seb has been diagnosed with speech delays, so I am really excited to have him in this environment, which is so comfortable for us. We wish there were more programs like these for the Latino community—they are the basis for so many friendships!” Later, Eren adds, “It is so important to feel included, welcome. The children notice this. They feel you relax.”



*Seb has to think about what to draw next.*





*Sofia cumple dos años!*

Conducted in Spanish, the class rhythm is familiar: welcome songs, circle time with a book, a small-motor-skills activity and, finally, a special snack to celebrate Sofia's second birthday!

The morning ends with a warm happy feeling—children and caregivers leave with their culture affirmed and more socially connected.



The PREPARES program is a ministry sponsored by the statewide Catholic bishops to provide a nurturing response to mothers and fathers who have chosen the precious gift of life: the promise of direct support and assistance from pregnancy to their child's fifth birthday. Regardless of religious beliefs, this parish-based program, administered locally by Catholic Community Services, offers low-income families vital, life-affirming services.



## Ways to Help



### DONATE

Support PREPARES by donating to the February, 2023 **OPEN YOUR HEART** campaign by mail or online at **PREPARESforlife.org**



### VOLUNTEER

Become a trained PREPARES volunteer at a local Catholic parish as a **FAMILY COMPANION** or **SUPPORT GROUP** member for Moms and Dads. Both opportunities provide practical, emotional presence and support to families in need.



### ASSIST

Sponsor a parish based **NEEDS DRIVE** to collect and distribute food and household goods or a **CLOTHING CLOSET** accessible to PREPARES families. Establish a parish **TRAVELING CRIB** for the collection of baby essentials. Provide-age appropriate **PREPARES BAGS** filled with infant and child items such as diapers, wipes, blankets, toys, and books.

**Aleah Patulot**  
**PREPARES Program Director**  
**(206) 737- 9264**

Learn more at [www.preparesforlife.org](http://www.preparesforlife.org)



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