



## Raymond Rosenberger Minette Baum Award

2019 Recipient, Ana Guisti



*Annually the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation has the privilege of nominating the Raymond Rosenberger - Minette Baum Awardee. PNC Financial Services, manages the Raymond Rosenberger Trust, and annually selects the finalist and distributes a financial award to the recipient and/or their charitable organization(s).*

*To be considered for this award, the nominee shall have performed diligent and faithful service for an Exempt Charitable Organization which is organized and operated to (I) alleviate human suffering or enhance the quality of life of a persons afflicted with illness or injury, or (II) promote wellness through prevention of illness, disease or injury so that they are advancing the mission of the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation and the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.*

Ana Guisti was stunned. For 20 years, she has worked at the Center for Nonviolence, caring for Spanish-speaking clients who suffer through domestic abuse in Allen County. She has cried with victims, supported them in court, pressed for changes in the legal system, and, inevitably, trusted the process. For her, unselfishly serving women in vulnerable situations just seemed instinctive. "I am an advocate by heart."

Yet, being on the receiving end of a major honor was not so natural. Ms. Guisti sat wide-eyed while being told that she is this year's Raymond Rosenberger Minette Baum Award recipient. Finally, she says, "I am overwhelmed!"

The Raymond Rosenberger Minette Baum Award honors people who have shown faithful service that alleviates human suffering, enhances the quality of life, or promotes wellness. Each year the St. Joe Foundation's Board of Directors nominates one recipient. The Raymond Rosenberger Trust determines the final recipient and disburses a financial award for the recipient.

"Ana gently, lovingly, and professionally helps over 200 Spanish-speaking women annually who are victims of domestic violence, assisting them in rebuilding their lives," says Meg Distler, the Foundation's executive director. "Her warmth and competence inspire courage and hope. It was these traits that led the St. Joseph Community Health Foundation Board to unanimously nominate her for the Minette Baum Award."



*St. Joe Executive Director Meg Distler (left) and Board Member Margaret Sturm (right) celebrate the moment with Ana Guisti (center).*



Ms. Giusti has been on the staff of the Center for Nonviolence for twenty years. The Center serves people of all cultural backgrounds and genders in its fight to end various forms of violence. Among its services, the agency offers domestic abuse support groups for women and men, including clients who speak Spanish and Burmese, as well as those in the LGBTQ community.

On paper, Ms. Giusti's title is succinct: Senior Latina Coordinator. Her actual job, however, is wide-ranging. Routinely, she escorts clients to court proceedings for everything from divorce hearings to protective orders to child custody disputes. She ushers them through the process of obtaining visas and, eventually, legal residency or citizenship. She goes to school administrators' offices with parents whose children are being bullied. She helps clients navigate cultural and economic barriers, telling them where to get free food. She refers them to local clinics that provide health and dental care. As a trained medical interpreter, she also interprets for her many clients who don't speak English.

The broad scope of Ms. Giusti's work matches her definition of violence. Violence, she says, is anything that makes a person feel powerless. It's a feeling that she has known well. Originally from Peru, South America, Ms. Giusti spent years in an emotionally abusive marriage. In the aftermath of divorce, she sent her two oldest daughters to live with an aunt in Fort Wayne to ease the divorce's negative impact. The girls settled in and, eventually, married Americans, which afforded them legal status. When they started having children, themselves, Ms. Giusti couldn't fathom being so far away from her grandchildren. She and her two remaining children legally migrated to the United States and eventually became citizens.

Not long after she arrived, Ms. Giusti learned from another native Peruvian that the center had a job opening. That was in 1999.

Today, she insists that she's gained more than she has given.

"I have learned more from them (clients) than from

anyone else," she says. "I have learned that even if you don't have legal status, if you don't have money, if you don't have anything, you're a human being and you should be treated with respect and love. You deserve to be listened to when you are talking." Over the years, her days have been filled with listening and understanding, while fighting for client's rights.

Consider one recent morning when a frantic client called asking for help. The woman was undocumented, from Mexico, and had finally called police days earlier on her abusive husband. He was arrested, but now she was scared. She'd just received an official-looking letter in the mail. She couldn't read the English words, but she assumed he had secured a lawyer to carry out threats of taking their kids or having her deported. (Authorities do not report undocumented clients who call for help, but instead offer assistance to obtain special visas for crime victims. However, undocumented abusers may be reported.) She handed the letter to Ms. Giusti to translate. It was actually from the local prosecutor's office. Authorities wanted to schedule a time when they could discuss the charges in her case. Both women breathed sighs of relief.

Past success stories give Ms. Giusti the will to keep going. There was the woman who was too afraid to follow through with charges against her abuser. After his arrest, she went back to him. Ms. Giusti understood. So many victims are afraid. She told her to come back for help when she was ready. Months later, pregnant and suffering from another severe beating, she returned. Today, totally free of that abusive relationship, the woman is now a legal U.S. resident and a homeowner who shares her story to inspire others.

The Minette Baum award was another way to thank her for two decades of service: Said Margaret Sturm, St. Joe Foundation Board Member and former Trustee with the Raymond Rosenberger Trust: "Ana's passion and service over the past 20 years embodies the wishes of Raymond Rosenberger who was a single man who left his life's savings for these awards to celebrate and award individuals who work to eliminate human suffering."

