

WALKING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF CATHERINE KASPER

Creating Hope for the Hopeless

Natalie Borjas
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The struggle that poor people face when it comes to obtaining critical services, like healthcare, is undeniable. It is even more difficult if one doesn't speak English or understand the American healthcare system. These are the people that Natalie Borjas helps each day. Borjas is bi-lingual in Spanish and English and has been in Fort Wayne with Catholic Charities since 2011, as their Hispanic Health Advocate. For those in the Hispanic community, she seeks to be "an advocate for them [and] to connect them with resources" that often times they did not even know were available. Above all, Borjas sees herself as "an extension of the Church to the people." And most importantly, she strives to "create hope when they have none."

One example that Borjas cites is of a woman and her disabled daughter. The daughter had not been getting the proper care and was not

enrolled in school. Her mother was under the impression that there were no schools that could accommodate her disability. Borjas was able to put them in touch with the right healthcare professionals and helped enroll the daughter in school. Borjas' assistance was life-changing for the daughter and her mother.

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Borjas serves as a trained medical interpreter, cultural broker and healthcare navigator during medical appointments. She explains the importance of her role: "There are so many things that can go wrong in an appointment," when symptoms and instructions are not correctly communicated nor understood by the patient. She feels there is a great need for trained medical interpreters and has been working with The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation to expand the community's network

of trained interpreters. She also has been committed to empowering clients to manage their lives when she isn't nearby, by using a successful strategy called "Ask Me 3." It asks: What is the main problem? What do I need to do? And why is it important for me to do this? This has helped many "avoid major misunderstandings."

The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, as a ministry of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ, believes in the importance of supporting people, especially people in vulnerable situations, in the same manner that St. Joseph supported his wife Mary and baby Jesus. The Foundation has supported Natalie's role at Catholic Charities since 2003. The partnership is clear, as Natalie states that this work "wouldn't be possible without the support of the Foundation."

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To learn more on Blessed Catherine Kasper and the mission of The St. Joseph Community Health Foundation, visit sjchf.org.