

helping PEOPLE help THEMSELVES

breaking the cycle of poverty for 35 years

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

31 Years, One Unchanged Vision

GIVING SAN ANTONIO'S RESIDENTS A VOICE

BY BETH GRIFFIN

“Never do for other people what they can do for themselves,” says Ramon Duran. He is reciting what is often called the “Iron Rule,” which he and the groups he leads have been practicing for more than 30 years. Ramon is the lead organizer for San Antonio *Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS)* and *Metro Alliance*. The two affiliated groups are coalitions that collectively include 70 member churches, schools, and labor unions in the San Antonio area.

The groups date back to COPS's founding in 1974, and both have received significant funding from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), which celebrates its 35th anniversary this year.

Power in Numbers: Working Together to Influence Public Policy

“We help organize neighbors and connect people to existing institutions, like churches, so they act on their own behalf and find solutions to their problems,” explains Ramon. “We’re non-partisan groups that teach people how to be active participants in the democratic process,” he continues, “because we know that decision-makers pay a lot of attention to neighborhoods where voter participation is high. We develop an action agenda that is important for our community and then we ask candidates if they will commit to working with us.”

COPS grew from the eye-opening experience of a parish that held a candidates' night 32 years ago. None



Photos courtesy of Today's Catholic, Archdiocese of San Antonio

CURRENT DIOCESE OF AMARILLO BISHOP JOHN W. YANTA IS SHOWN AT A COPS GATHERING ON OCT. 10, 1986, WHEN HE WAS PASTOR OF ST. JAMES CHURCH ON SAN ANTONIO'S SOUTH SIDE. PICTURED ARE (CLOCKWISE STARTING WITH UPPER LEFT): BERNARDO CHANEZ, BEATRICE GALLEGO, WALTER MARTINEZ, RAUL GONZALES, AMPARO RAMIREZ, THEN-FATHER JOHN W. TANTA, STEPHANIE GALLEGO, AND RUTH FUENTES.

of the candidates attended, presumably because voter turnout in the parish neighborhood was historically so low. Andy Sarabia, founding president of COPS, was angry that his community was ignored, so he devoted more than three decades to helping people channel this sort of anger into good results for their neighborhoods.

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FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of CCHD:



This newsletter reaches you as we all transition into summer. School children and their parents look forward to the end of school sessions, newly graduated students look toward college or careers, and, hopefully, family vacations are on the horizon.

We at the Catholic Campaign for Human Development are beginning a new cycle of grants, considering \$18.2 million in requests from community groups across the country. Our committee of bishops will review all the requests and make final decisions this month when they meet in Chicago, Illinois.

Our former director, Father Robert Vitillo, has settled into his new position in Geneva. As Interim Director, I continue to lead our staff and committees in the vital work of CCHD while a search process is conducted.

I have served the Campaign since its inception 35 years ago, and it has been my privilege to experience firsthand the changes made in local committees throughout the country by empowered groups of poor and low-income people. Such is the story of communities in San Antonio, Texas, featured in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading about how CCHD support for **Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS)** and **Metro Alliance** over the past decades has helped develop leaders from the low-income community who empower themselves to bring about much needed change.

These changes can only happen with your ongoing prayers and financial support. We are grateful for your partnership with us as we work to break the cycle of poverty across our country.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Timothy F. Collins
Interim Director

WHAT IS CCHD?

Through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholics and friends of CCHD across the country help poor and low-income Americans to help themselves and their communities out of poverty.

Since 1970, the Catholic Campaign has contributed more than \$260 million to more than 4,000 low-income led, community-based projects that strengthen families, create jobs, build affordable housing, fight crime, and improve schools and neighborhoods. CCHD requires that projects develop community leadership and participation so that their solutions to poverty will be long-lasting and effective and so that CCHD's investment will help break the cycle of poverty. CCHD also educates Catholics about the causes of poverty and seeks to build solidarity between the poor and non-poor.

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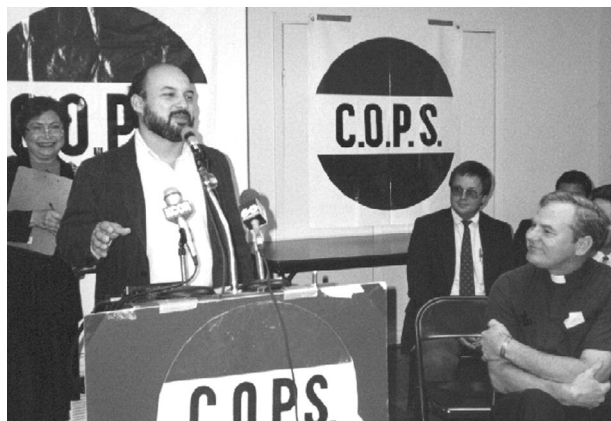
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USCCB PUBLISHING

COPS *continued from page 1*



CCHD HAS SUPPORTED COPS & METRO ALLIANCE FOR THREE DECADES. HERE, COPS FOUNDING PRESIDENT ANDY SARABIA SPEAKS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE REGARDING A NEW SUBDIVISION NEAR ST. LEO THE GREAT CHURCH ON SOUTH ANTONIO'S SOUTH SIDE ON JAN. 8, 1983.

He says, “controlled, focused anger can be productive.” If properly handled, he says, anger over a situation can lead to creativity and negotiation for change. And that is what has transformed COPS and Metro Alliance from a small group of people trying to capture the attention of local leaders into a San Antonio institution that candidates and business leaders alike seek out for discussion and support of local development and municipal plans.

“We listen to people’s stories, their anger, frustration and hopes, and try to find common areas where they might be willing to challenge public entities to do the right thing. We offer people the time to reflect on what they care about and give them ‘permission’ to be involved in the democratic process,” says Andy.

In his time with COPS, Andy says that he has become more reflective and less willing to accept “peanuts.” Before COPS throws its considerable support behind new business proposals for San Antonio, it does research to make sure that the jobs that will be created actually pay a living wage. Andy explains, “San Antonio is a low-wage town with an abundance of willing hands, but COPS won’t train adults for any jobs that pay less than \$10 an hour with benefits.”

Local Wisdom Leads to Civic Engagement

Ramon says that the Greek philosopher Aristotle had it right when he spoke of “local wisdom,” meaning that the people who live in a locality have the solutions to their problems and do not need experts to figure it out for them. “They need to have enough power to make the people in charge pay attention to them and give

them what they need. Government looks mysterious until people poke around and see that the people in government aren’t much different than they are,” he says. Such participation and empowerment—essential elements of Catholic social teaching—are bedrocks of CCHD’s approach to ending poverty.

Most of the members of COPS and Metro Alliance are Catholic churches. Ramon gives the example of the parishioners of St. Leo the Great on San Antonio’s south side, where the pastor encouraged “parish stewards” to take leadership roles in their neighborhoods. “One neighborhood smelled really bad,” says Ramon, “and the people knew that the smell was not coming from one house.” With COPS’s help, the parish stewards got the neighbors together and determined that a sewer pumping station had not been buried deep enough during installation. They leaned on local officials to spend the \$800,000 necessary to fix it.

CCHD Investment Pays Dividends in Human and Community Development

Over the years, CCHD has been a consistent supporter of COPS and Metro Alliance, with 28 grants totaling \$1.25 million. Ramon says, “CCHD has been a heavy investor in enabling people to speak on their own behalf.” The CCHD funds have been used for leadership training, parent education, workplace organizing, and transportation to legislative centers. One recent initiative COPS is supporting is a municipal proposal to use a new 1/8 cent city tax increase for a Human Development Fund.

“We think the money should be used for job training, scholarships, adult literacy and early childhood development,” says Ramon, “and we have asked each of the mayoral candidates if they will commit themselves to this goal and to supporting a list of ten upcoming city projects.” He acknowledges that the real challenge for COPS and Metro Alliance will be making sure that the winning candidate follows through on whatever projects he has agreed to support. ☺



A CELEBRATION RECOGNIZING THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF COPS WAS HELD AT HEMISFAIR ARENA ON DEC. 9, 1983.

Meet Christina Castro

CONNECTING FAITH AND FAMILY HISTORY TO COMMUNITY CHANGE

The Bible and Catholic social teaching are powerful motivators for the members of COPS and Metro Alliance. Ramon Duran, the lead organizer for these two affiliated organizations, explains, “you have to connect what was said in biblical times to what is happening in 21st century San Antonio. Studying the Scripture is useless if there is no action as a result.”

The Scripture came alive for Christina Castro when she helped with a parish census of community needs at St. Henry’s in 1993. Her group reported its findings, but she found herself filled with sadness and guilt when a 90-year-old respondent was burned to death cooking his breakfast outdoors the following winter. His utilities had been turned off. Christina says that the guilt of not following up on the old man turned to “holy anger,” so she took a social justice class at the chancery office. “I was still frustrated, because I didn’t know how to act on what I was learning,” she says, until the last presenter for the course invited her to join COPS. “The network that COPS had built connected me with the resources that are out there and helped me connect people with the resources.”

In the early 1970s, Christina’s father had invited her to go with him to COPS events. She appreciates the irony that what she once did solely out of respect for

her father has become a focus to her life. “I went because my dad asked. I was doing him a favor,” she smiles. “Little did I know that I would become the city housing co-chair for COPS, trying to make sure that fair policies are in place and funding is going to the right people.”

Christina describes COPS as a “mini-university, letting people know their true worth.” She says, “I only have a high school education, my husband abandoned me when I was pregnant with our third child. I had a very low self-image. COPS selects people like myself, who have potential, but nothing to offer except sweat and educates us. It made me grow and it empowers me.”

Although Christina’s primary concern is housing, the first time she was asked to make a presentation for COPS, the topic was a moratorium on tax abatements. “I had to look up ‘moratorium’ and my knees were shaking, but I was encouraged to ‘go get ’em’ and it’s been easier since then,” she says. “You feel good belonging to something like this where your collective holy anger can be directed. The Lord *does* hear the cry of the poor.”



WHERE’S MY MONEY GOING?

All CCHD funds received are used solely for the support of CCHD’s anti-poverty mission. CCHD abides by the charitable standards set by a leading donor advisory service. Our funds are divided as follows: 87% is assigned to CCHD’s core program mission of community empowerment, economic development, education programs, and supporting services; 3% is allocated to coordinate the annual appeal; and 10% is assigned to administrative costs. We thank you for continuing to empower low-income people through your ongoing support for CCHD.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can donate your time, talent, and treasure to CCHD in many ways. You can support CCHD with a stock donation or a matching gift from your employer, or consider a lasting legacy to help people help themselves—remember CCHD in your estate planning. For more information, contact Mary Mencarini Campbell at 202-541-3365/mcampbell@usccb.org.

For more information about CCHD, or to receive our most recent annual report, contact Mary Mencarini Campbell at 202-541-3365/mcampbell@usccb.org. Visit our website at www.usccb.org/cchd, or explore the state of U.S. poverty, made up of nearly 36 million Americans, at www.povertyusa.org.