



# The Valley Catholic

EL VALLE CATÓLICO

The Good News in the Diocese of San José

## Catholic Charities USA names Silicon Valley trio 2009 Volunteers of the Year: refugee work

Catholic Charities USA has named Elsa Amboy, Melissa Kreisa and Andrea Lee 2009 Volunteer of the Year co-winners for their refugee work with Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County.

"Elsa, Melissa and Andrea spearheaded an effort in their respective communities to generate a commitment of over \$200,000 for housing for newly-arrived refugees," said Ellen Dumesnil, division director of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County.

"They are incredible human beings who have recruited and galvanized a significant number of other volunteers who are passionate about 'welcoming and helping the stranger.'"

The leadership and commitment of Amboy, Kreisa and Lee has allowed Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County to create a broader network of support and community for newly



Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County volunteers Andrea Lee, Melissa Kreisa and Elsa Amboy have been honored as Catholic Charities USA 2009 Volunteers of the Year because of their work with refugees.

arrived refugees, Dumesnil said.

The agency has been recognized as one of the leading refugee resettlement agencies in the county and is the only

agency authorized to resettle refugees who do not have an "anchor" (i.e., a family relative) in the community.

Through the efforts of all  
*Continued on page 3*

## Local Catholic Charities volunteers honored by national organization

*Continued from page 1*  
three volunteers, volunteer ESL tutors have been linked with stay-at-home refugee moms and a new group of volunteers has been formed committed to working with newly arrived refugees.

Other critical links and partnerships have been forged, too, such as a partnership with Salvation Army to provide \$300 vouchers to refugees and the creation of an additional special emergency fund.

"They never lose sight of the people and the human touch that is essential for each person," said Dumesnil. "For example, two young women came here as refugees from Rwanda—one 17 and one 18—and had met on the plane.

"The 17-year-old had an immediate loving foster home to go to, but the 18-year-old was ineligible to be part of the

same—she was placed in our refugee transition home.

"She was lonely and confused about why she, too, could not join the foster home with her 17-year-old new friend. Thanks to the advocacy of Andrea, the 18-year-old now lives in a loving home with a couple that will provide nurture and guidance," Dumesnil said.

Joining the local trio as a co-winner of the 2009 Volunteer of the Year award is Dr. William Rainford, associate professor and chair, Master of Social Work program, Boise State University, for his work on behalf of Catholic Charities of Idaho.

Amboy, Kreisa, Lee and Rainford will be receiving their 2009 Volunteer of the Year Awards at Catholic Charities USA's Annual Gathering, September 24-27 in Portland, Oregon.