

Father English Community Center (FECC), Our History

November 14, 1974: Bishop Lawrence Casey announces the proposal from the Diocesan Youth Department merging St. Bonaventure Parish with the Youth Department. The CYO Office takes on administration of the former St. Bonaventure Parish as the Father English Community Center. Rev. Louis Bihl named as the first full time Director of CYO/Youth Services. Bishop Casey directs that the facilities of the parish be renamed as the Father English Community Center in memory of the deceased former pastor of St. Bonaventure, Fr. Francis English. Bishop Casey charged the FECC to become a comprehensive multi-purpose center to meet the recreational, social, cultural, educational, and counseling needs of families, senior citizens, other adults, and children in the local community.

1974: The After care and Summer camp Program started. It has offered programming for School-age children of working or in-school parents. Services include meal provisions, academic tutoring, recreation, enrichment programs, and family support.

1974: Started in 1974 the El Mundo Del Nino childcare has provided quality education to Paterson's children. The certified teachers and dedicated assistants work with 105 children without regard of their race, creed, color, gender, national origin or religion. The program gives our students a safe place to grow and learn while preparing them for success in Kindergarten and beyond.

1974: Project Youth Haven began operating in 1974 as a 14-bed home for girls ages 11-17, who have experienced abuse, neglect or homelessness and are involved in the NJ Department of Children and Families. Placement may be made on an emergency basis for up to 30 days, or for long term care - several months to a year.

1975: The Child Care Food Program started in 1975 and funded by the State of New Jersey, Department of Agriculture, provides meal service "in-house" to all children enrolled in the agency's preschool and school-aged child care programs. This on-site food program provides approximately 175,000 meals annually including breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack, and dinner.

1976: The Father English Community Center (FECC) was incorporated as Tri-County Youth Services, the fifth Catholic Charities Agency in the Diocese of Paterson. Joe Ward

who had been the Director of the Youth Department for the Diocese was appointed its first Executive Director in 1976. Mr. Ward resigned in April of the same year. Dr. Daniel Grazer was appointed to succeed Ward in June. On July 4, 1976 St. Boniface Church was closed as a parish. The Church building was renovated over the summer and reopened in the fall as the El Mundo del Nino child care center. Gail Manning was hired as the Director of the FECC (reporting to Dr. Grazer) and Deacon Bob Vesota was hired to manage the food programs at the Center.

1979: In June of 1979 Bishop Rodimer announced a restructuring of his Diocesan administration into a Secretariat model of governance inclusive of secretariats for business/administration, communications, education, pastoral ministry, and social ministries. The FECC became one of five separately incorporated agencies of the new Secretariat. On July 16, 1979 Gail Manning was appointed Executive Director of the Father English Community Center. She was charged with oversight of existing programs including child care, a meals on wheels and senior nutrition program, a food stamp distribution program, a home for runaway teens, ESL, summer camp for children and a senior recreation program. At the same time she was charged to oversee the application process to a new senior housing project soon to open as the Father English Village, now known as the Martin De Porres Village an independent 501 (c) 3 corporation not connected to FECC.

1983: In June of 1983 Bishop Rodimer formally established the Secretariat of Social Ministries, naming the Rev. (now Msgr.) Robert Vitillo as the first Executive Secretary for Social Ministries. The Secretariat consisted of the FECC and four other agencies, Hope House in Dover, Catholic Family and Community Services, Straight and Narrow, Inc., and the Department for Special Education (now called the Department for Persons with Disabilities – DPD). Deacon Vesota was promoted to the position of Director of Community Services. Elisa Leib was appointed the Director of Youth Services.

1988: Since it opened in 1988 when about 60 clients were being served monthly, the food pantry has continually expanded in its mission to meet the food needs of the working poor families and individuals from this community. While most local food pantries distributed pre-bagged grocery items, our food pantry functions as a “client choice” pantry, where clients are free since 2005 to select products that they need and use. The program serves over 4,900 families a month.

1991: A World of Colors/El Mundo De Colores Child Care Center founded in 1991 provides full-time educational, social and wraparound (after-school and summer care) services to hundreds of children year-round. The Center provides comprehensive State Mandated preschool services that make a difference in the lives of the children and families we serve.

1992: Our English as a Second Language (ESL) program began 1992 when we took over the program from the United Way. English classes are taught in consecutive ten-week sessions each academic year (September through June), with basic, intermediate and advance levels. The program serves about 650 multicultural adults (primarily Hispanic, Arabic and Eastern European) from Paterson and surrounding areas.

1995: Deacon Bob Vesota succeeds Gail Manning as the Executive Director of Father English Community Center.

1995: The Computer Training classes developed in 1995 as a means to make area residents more competitive in the job force. Beginner and advanced classes are offered in the morning and evening. About 155 students complete the computer courses yearly.

1995: Since 1995 through our Clothing Boutique we have provided donated clothing to babies, children and adults in the Paterson and the surrounding areas. In some cases the clothing is necessary for a job interview.

1995: Since 1995 our Furniture Depot has provided donated furniture, beds, couches, TVs, cooling fans, chairs, etc. to working poor families and individuals who need these items due to fires, flooding, hurricanes and other natural disasters.

1996: Father English Community Center signs a Covenant Agreement with St. Joseph's parish in Mendham establishing a twinning relationship. Since 1996 each year FECC benefits from hundreds of St. Joseph's Operation Santa (gifts at Christmas), their Back-Pack (school supplies every September) and Beach Bags (beach wear and supplies every June). The Covenant also is a source of volunteers, scholarship assistance for child care clients, frozen trays and food items for our pantry, and recreation/cultural trips for our youth clients

1999:The Work Assistance Program, started in 1999, was suspended effective January 1, 2013. With limited funding we could not provide the robust work and job assistance program required in a city with a 16 % unemployment rate. We hope to restart the program in a revised and enhanced way effective July 1, 2013.

2000: The Passaic Teen center was transferred from Catholic Family and Community Services and moved from a temporary site in Totowa to its Passaic location on Hoe Avenue serving boys age 11 to 17. The Center provides a variety of treatment services, which include shelter, clothing and food, individual rapport counseling, individual therapy, group therapy, recreation, case management, and educational assistance.

2008: Joe Melosh succeeds Deacon Bob Vesota as the Executive Director of the Father English Community Center.

2008: Bob and Carol's Food Pantry - The Food Pantry was named for Bob and Carol Vesota.

2011: Senior Transportation Program serving the elderly and persons with disabilities in the City of Paterson closed on 12/31/2011 after providing service for 25 years. The City chose to administer the program directly.

2012: On December 14 Joe Duffy as President of the FECC Board of Trustees and President of Catholic Charities announces he will serve as the Acting Executive Director of the Father English Community Center following the granting of a leave of absence to FECC Executive Director Joe Melosh.

2012: On January 20, 2013 Joe Duffy announces that the FECC Board of Trustees has approved the merger of FECC into Catholic Family and Community Services as part of a wider restructuring of the Catholic Charities agencies in the Diocese of Paterson in which CFCS acquires through a merger the Father English Community Center, the Hispanic Information Center, and Hope House, said merger to occur in approximately 90 days. Duffy announces he will continue to serve as the Acting Executive Director of FECC until the merger takes effect.

2012: On July 1, 2012 FECC is merged with CFCS and becomes known as the Father English Community Center, a Division of CFCS. Deacon Robert Head is appointed to the new position of Site Director reporting to Diane Silbernagel who was the Executive Director of both CFCS and Hope House prior to the merger and remains Executive Director of the merged CFCS entity.