

# ‘Many Cultures, One Family under God’ Sisters of La Posada named SBN 2014 Citizens of the Year

By **HEATHER CATHLEEN COX**  
Staff Writer  
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Twenty-five years ago, the Sisters of Divine Providence in St. Louis, Missouri, established La Posada Providencia—a hospitality house in San Benito which serves as a safe harbor and fresh beginning for immigrants and asylees currently seeking legal recourse for gaining residency in the United States.

During this time, La Posada Providencia has served more than 8,000 clients from 72 countries. These individuals and children represent, “victims of political or religious persecution, violence, severe poverty, unjust imprisonment and even torture,” said Program Director Sister Zita Telkamp.

It is because of such commendable efforts that the sisters, staff and volunteers at La Posada Providencia have been named the *San Benito News* 2014 Citizens of the Year.

Among those being honored for their service to La Posada are: Sister Zita Telkamp, CDP - Program Director; Sister Theresa O’Toole, SHSp - Volunteer; Sister Therese Cunningham, SHSp - Client Mentor; Sister JoAnn Mark, ASC - Volunteer; Sister Margaret Mertens, CDP - Volunteer Coordinator; Monica Peña-Rasmussen, Client Coordinator; Francisca Gutierrez,



### 2014 COTY recipients

Pictured are the Sisters of La Posada Providencia -- the *San Benito News* 2014 Citizens of the Year -- and staff. Sitting (from left) are Sister Theresa O’Toole, SHSp - Volunteer; Sister Therese Cunningham, SHSp - Client Mentor; Sister Zita Telkamp, CDP - Program Director; and Sister JoAnn Mark, ASC - Volunteer. Also pictured are staff members, including: (standing from left) Monica Peña-Rasmussen - Client Coordinator; Francisca Gutierrez - Food Specialist; Joseph Rodriguez-Gonzalez - Program Coordinator; Michelle Yates - Data Entry Specialist; Sandra Rodriguez - Student Intern; and Alma Gonzalez - Development Coordinator. Not pictured is Sister Margaret Mertens, CDP - Volunteer Coordinator.

(Staff photos by Heather Cathleen Cox)

Food Specialist; Joseph Rodriguez-Gonzalez, Program Coordinator; Michelle Yates, Data Entry Specialist; Sandra Rodriguez, Student Intern; and Alma Gonzalez, Development Coordinator.

Of this honor, Sister Zita said, “We, Sisters, feel privileged to be hon-

ored by the *San Benito News*. During our 25 years (spent) following the Gospel mandate to ‘Welcome the Stranger,’ many Sisters from religious communities not only have volunteered their time as tutors, but they have also contributed with grants.”

Sister Zita was sure to

mention such grant donors, because the organization would not be able to operate without private funding. Dominican Sisters, Incarnate Word, St. Mary of the Woods, Most Precious Blood Community, Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Sisters of Divine Providence are

among financial contributors whose generosity allows La Posada Providencia to exist and thrive.

The Sisters help clients in a plethora of ways. Some assistance offered at La Posada provides assistance in the following ways: how to find jobs; how to fill out job appli-

cations; how to read the newspaper and search classified ads; how to use US currency; how to write a check; and how to utilize proper grammar.

Formal classes are held from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. When available, a volunteer visiting nurse provides health screenings at the facility.

Additionally, La Posada provides step-by-step assistance with regard to obtaining US citizenship. Sisters and volunteers chauffeur clients to offices such as Social Security, WIC and the Cameron County Health Department, where asylees receive medical care.

“Clients all help with some type of work and are responsible for cleaning up after themselves,” said Sister Zita. She explained it is each client’s responsibility

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State Rep. Eddie Lucio III  
(District 38)

would like to congratulate

The Sisters of  
La Posada  
Providencia  
on their recognition as the  
*San Benito News*  
Citizens of the Year

*Congratulations!*



Carlos Cascos,  
Cameron County Judge

Sisters of  
La Posada  
Providencia, for  
your honor as the  
San Benito News  
*Citizens*  
of the Year







**More from La Posada**

More scenes from La Posada Providencia are shown in which the sisters and staff help provide to documented immigrants, asylees and asylum-seekers a safe and welcoming home as well as mentors to promote self-sufficiency and cultural integration, and imparts values which witness God's Providence in the world.

(Photos courtesy of La Posada Providencia)



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 County Judge

Pol. Ad Paid by friends of Joe G. Rivera P.O. BOX 5868  
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**To the Sisters of  
 La Posada Providencia,**

for your continued dedication to humanitarianism and your efforts in educating those who would otherwise not be educated, the  
*San Benito Consolidated  
 Independent School District*

**CONGRATULATES**  
 you as the  
**2014 San Benito News  
 Citizens of the Year**

*Congratulations*  
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*For Your Outstanding*  
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 on their recognition as the  
*San Benito News  
 Citizens of the Year!*

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**SISTERS OF LA  
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*Citizen of the Year!*

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