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Nonprofit organization helps make local, state, federal resources available

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Compassion in Action – USA, a nonprofit organization with roots in San Dimas, has one objective: help make available local, state, and federal resources.

“There’s an educational process that people have to start with,” said Barbara Case, Compassion President and founder. “People get lost in the system, things happen. But when they know who to talk to, it’s a miracle, what can be accomplished.”

Case wants to help establish a connection between communities and their local government by holding information forums. In these forums, residents can get answers directly from officials from different levels of the government.

Compassion held its first forum—an exchange between government representatives and community members—Oct. 17 at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Rowland Heights. Because the group is still in its

nascent stage, attendance hovered under 10.

“I wish this kind of thing happened in every community across the (San Gabriel) Valley,” said Rowland Heights resident James Ellison. “In fact, I like this in spite of the turnout—it’s more personal. No one feels overwhelmed.”

Representatives from the offices of Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, D-Santa Fe Springs, Assemblyman Robert Pacheco, R-Industry, and Los Angeles County municipal services fielded questions on how community members can get help. “It could be anything small, such as an obstruction in front of a house, to medical, business and social inquiries,” said David Dijkstra.

“We found a lot of frustration coming from the community’s side, because some don’t know who they need to talk to,” said Dijkstra, who represents the county’s unincorporated

area services and special projects.

His organization is fine-tuning a referral service that directs people to agencies that can help them depending on their problems. The service prides itself in following up on caller inquiries.

Case said she sees a lot of promise in the organization. Already, she’s been beseeched with requests from community groups in states as far as Pennsylvania to extend Compassion’s services.

“I know in a year or two, we’ll have this forum all around the country,” she said.

Her belief in cracking the system was cemented by the death of her friend. Case helped her friend “Cathy” access the medical help she needed before she died from breast cancer.

“We need to know how to make things happen”, she said.

Ellison, collecting brochures from representatives, said it’s invaluable information

that can make a difference.

“When I was a pastor, I didn’t know I can access this kind of information to help my parishioners,” he said. “I’m going to pass these on to my pastor. When you’re in trouble, who do you turn to-- your neighbors, your friends and if one of them knew who or what group can help, it just helps. The information is just passed on, and there’s a chain reaction.”

For more information about Compassion In Action-USA, call (909) 599-2087 or e-mail compassion@wwdb.org.

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