

Sick, elderly and poor can turn to Los Guadalupanos for help

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



JONESBORO — On the first Saturday of each month, a group of Hispanic men venture out from Blessed Sacrament Church in Jonesboro to work.

However, these men aren't working for themselves. They're serving the community.

The men, members of a group called Los Guadalupanos (translated to mean Servants of Our Lady of Guadalupe) seek to help members of the community through service to those who need help, mainly the elderly and the sick.

"Their plan is to help the invalid, the elderly and the sick," said Sister Elaine Willett, OSB, who oversees the Hispanic ministry at Blessed Sacrament Church. "They make repairs to houses and do yard work. That type of thing. And they're not limited to just helping Catholics. They'll help anyone in need."

The group plans to give back to the community by providing a free service to those who need help.

"We founded it for people who needed help, especially older people," group member Dario Aquino said.

The group organized last November and currently has eight members at the parish.

Community members contact Sister Elaine throughout the month to introduce new projects for the group.

"If people need help, they can call Sister Elaine and she can get in touch with us," member Jesus Flores said.

Los Guadalupanos meet the first Friday of each month to pray and decide on the projects that they'll tackle the next day. Monthly dues are also collected at the meeting.

"Every member pitches in at least \$10 a month, that way we have money on hand to help people," Flores said.

And the group takes their mission seriously.

"There is a \$25 fine for each group member that doesn't show up for the work day," Flores added.

After the Friday meeting, it's off to work the next morning.

The group worked in May to help clean up a portion of church property, while the group's June

project was repainting the outside of the church's office building.

The group's efforts have been noticed, and they have provided a positive example to the community.

"I've heard people in passing give them very favorable comments," said Father Mark Wood, pastor at Blessed Sacrament Church. "People are impressed with what they're doing."

Although the group was founded less than a year ago, many of its members have been involved in the parish for some time.

"Most of them have been active in the church for years. They serve within the church and help out at the Spanish Mass," Sister Elaine said. "They wanted to do this to give back to the church and the community."

"They just wanted to serve their fellow man, so they asked permission to start the group," she added.

While the immigration debate is enveloping the nation, the group has also provided another positive example of Hispanics giving back to their community.

"It's been my experience that when people from two different languages, two different cultures are together, there can be misunderstandings," Father Wood said. "This is generally because of a lack of contact with each other."

"My hunch is once people see their willingness to serve and volunteer, any negative stereotypes they had will go away."

And service is just what this group is all about.

"We just want to do good things for the good Lord," Flores said. "We just want to help people."