

We Plant the Seeds: Sr. Yolanda Honored as SC LAMP 2017 Person of the Year

By Bryanna Benedetti-Coomber



Sr. Yolanda Vega, SSS

Wine and hors d'oeuvres were served as guests mingled and learned more about SC LAMP and the important work they do in the community. Colorful paper lanterns hung from the tree in the center of the plaza, each representing a donation made that night to continue the work of SC LAMP.

Against the backdrop of the towering high rises of Los Angeles, **Sr. Yolanda Vega, SSS**, was honored by South Central Los Angeles Ministry Project (SC LAMP) as the 2017 SC LAMP Person of the Year. The event was fully sponsored by First Republic Bank on Figueroa and hosted on the open-air plaza overlooking the Los Angeles Financial District. The Friars Charitable Foundation was also honored as the 2017 Institutional Honoree.

Around 80 people attended the event on Wednesday evening, including 2 dozen SSS Sisters and Associates. Half of those in attendance were from religious communities involved in the founding and sustaining of SC LAMP, along with supporters, board members, and families who participate in SC LAMP programs.



Sisters of Social Service and Associates:

[Photo: Back row (from left) Sr. Teresita Saavedra, Sr. Michele Walsh, Raquel Cruz, Sr. Chris Machado, Sr. Martha Vega, Betty A. Harbison, Sr. Mary Ellen Petrich, Sr. Rochelle Mitchell, Sr. Shaun Marie Wise, Sr. Merita Dekat; Front row: Sr. Una Feeney, Sr. Suzanne Simo, Sr. Yolanda Vega, Sr. Paulita Bernuy]

South Central Los Angeles Ministry Project (SC LAMP) began in 1992 when 8 religious organizations came together in response to the Los Angeles Riots that tore apart families and communities in the city. These women and men saw past the destructive violence that engulfed the neighborhoods in South Central and found the seeds of hope in the women of the community. Their strategy was to invest in mothers, believing that strong parents foster strong children and a brighter future for the South Central LA. Working with women and children living in poverty, many of whom were immigrants, the Center focused on providing educational programs and child care to empower women and their families.

Twenty-five years later, SC LAMP continues to be a champion for mothers and their families in South Central. The organization has served 2,000 women and more than 3,000 children, through parenting classes, ESL courses, childcare, stress management and domestic violence prevention workshops, and more – all provided free to the participants through generous donations and state-sponsored support.

Sr. Yolanda humbly accepted the 2017 SC LAMP Person of the Year Award, presented by Executive Director Diana Z. Pinto and SC LAMP participants and staff. She thanked her fellow SSS Community members for their invaluable advice and expressed gratitude for Sr. Margie Buttitta, SSL, who partnered with her during the early years of the program as they and others planted the first seeds of SC LAMP.



Sr. Yolanda accepting her award



Sr. Yolanda with Sr. Margie Buttitta, SSL

Sr. Yolanda ended her speech with a portion of a prayer composed by Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw entitled, "Archbishop Oscar Romero Prayer: A Step Along the Way":

It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us...

*No set of goals and objectives includes everything...
We plant the seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise...
We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something...*

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest...

As the evening concluded and the sun began to set over the celebration, the ever-growing collection of paper lanterns shone brightly among the tree branches: a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.



Hanging paper lanterns