

tutored students in the dining room of our home during hours that the LEO Center is closed.

One student, Edward, who has been with us since the beginning, walked several blocks last Christmas to deliver two sweet potato pies his great-grandmother had baked for us. When we attend Mass in our neighborhood, we often find this same young man proclaiming the scripture readings to those gathered. Edward lives with his great-grandmother who is a member of the Friends of LEO, a support group for our work. Many of our benefactors are people from the surrounding community who find some way, despite their limited financial resources, to give us more than we ask for; I am always humbled by their generosity.

When we first started LEO, people asked us how we knew this was the mission to which we were called. Our students have provided me with the only answers I need. A young man named Brandon, in his fifth year at LEO, regularly makes use of the Center's computers to type his papers for school. As he left late one Saturday afternoon, he confided to me that he did not know what he would do if we were not there for him.

Shawnetta is one of several LEO students who participates fully by receiving help from teachers and tutors in the evening and, in turn, tutoring younger students in the afternoon. She is helping us realize the dream of creating a cycle of success and responsibility in the community.

Manuel, a high school student who has found school extremely difficult in the past, came in the other night and handed us his progress report. He had high

grades, including an A+ in science. His slight smile told me that we have been called here.

On a recent field trip, a seventh grade student was surprised to find himself standing on a hill overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. He assured me that he could not remember ever having seen it before, and he was certain that he had never traveled across it. His big question was, "Where does it go?"

Whenever we can, we pile these kids into our van and go places. We hike through redwood forests, pan for gold, descend into

that is dangerous and desperate about their neighborhood. The students thank us as they step from the van, books slung over their shoulders. We wait for them to enter their homes where the most dedicated people I know – their parents and caregivers – take over for the night. When we have dropped off the last student, I thank God that we have once again delivered them safely and that we have been privileged to be part of what God has planned for them. ☒

"I believe this space to be sacred ground and feel as though



I should take off my shoes before entering, because God is present here in ways that are astonishing."



Brother Christopher explained what happened next: "We got a very clear idea that if we were going to have an after-school program that was academic, we would have to be very tight about it. We could not have a lot of other activities. Everything had to be focused on academic development." During the following year, Brother Dan Fenton, FSC, joined them and became an

integral partner in the Center's development. Today, the LEO Center offers three programs for youth and one program for adults.

LEO has not strayed from its original insight: homework is the number one priority. Each day, students write down their assignments on cards. Then, as they complete a task, a tutor signs off on it. "This helps them stay organized and have a sense of accomplishment," affirms Brother Christopher. Completing homework tasks, learning the word for the day, inquiring about the person or country of the

San Francisco. He initially came to the Center as a sixth grader. "I come here because it helps me to be a better student," says LuShaw. His favorite subject is biology, and he is thinking of becoming a doctor.

Kelli Hubbard, a freshman at Oakland Tech High School, is following in the footsteps of her brother. She has been coming to the Center since the eighth grade. Kelli's grandmother heard about LEO from a friend. In fact, that is how many students find their way to the Center – through the testimony and success stories of friends. Kelli has her sights set on attending the University of Florida when she graduates from high school. She already has looked up the university's web site and is working on the requirements for admittance.

Like most of the educational programs started and maintained by the Christian Brothers, it takes the efforts of Brothers and lay people alike to keep the Center running and providing this educational service to students. More than 80 regular volunteers help the Center each year. Many of them are students from Saint Mary's College in nearby Moraga, California, some of whom are preparing to become teachers. It also takes people like the Lasallian Volunteers, recent graduates from college, and Mildred Dill'ard who adds her own special kind of wisdom, warmth, and education to the students she welcomes. Together, they help bring the vision to reality each and every day. ☒