

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Catholic Extension launches new program for Uvalde children in wake of Robb Elementary shooting

Camp I-CAN offers Uvalde children a safe space, hope and joy as community looks to rebuild

Uvalde, Texas — [Catholic Extension](#), a Chicago-based nonprofit, whose mission is to build up Catholic faith communities in underserved regions, launched the first of many initiatives to support Uvalde, TX, this week, following the devastation of the Robb Elementary mass shooting. Camp I-CAN, which stands for *Inner strength, Commitment, Awareness, and Networking*, provided 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders a safe space to heal, have fun, and gently reintegrated the children into a school-like setting around their peers. The majority of the children who attended the camp are survivors of the Robb Elementary mass shooting, although all Uvalde children of age were invited to participate.

The camp, led by Sister Dolores Aviles—a Uvalde native—as well as 13 other religious sisters, was held July 25 to July 28 at the St. Henry de Osso Project Center in Uvalde, TX. The camp offered a host of programs for the children, including faith-based activities, arts and crafts, 30-minute intervals of physical activity, a game room for playtime, music and entertainment led by the sisters, and a family supper for the children and family members.

Father Jack Wall, president of Catholic Extension, said, “Uvalde has experienced an unspeakable and senseless violence, and the community is undoubtedly still traumatized and processing grief. It is our goal, that through the spiritual accompaniment of religious sisters, the children and their families of Uvalde, TX feel God’s presence, and are reminded that they are not forgotten or alone in the coming year and beyond.”

Born and raised in Uvalde, Sister Dolores Aviles felt a strong calling to minister to the very people she grew up with. Among those who perished in the school shooting were her own family members—three children of her cousins. Although heartbroken, she committed to her

mission of serving the local church. With the support of Catholic Extension, and with her fellow Uvalde-based Teresian sisters and other sisters from across the country, Camp I-CAN was born.

Sr. Dolores said, "Jesus simply said to me, 'Let the children come to Me', and that is exactly what this camp was designed to do. This week, we wanted the children and their families to know that we are praying for them, we love them, and that we will also take action for them. That's what community is. We support each other. God sends us out two-by-two."

Catholic Extension and Uvalde, Texas share a long and rich history. Uvalde was one of the first-ever communities Catholic Extension supported, helping build Sacred Heart Church in 1906, and Sacred Heart Catholic School in 1912, both of which remain relevant institutions in this grieving city.

For over a century, Catholic Extension has supported this and 1,400 other church communities in rural Texas and along the U.S.- Mexico border. Catholic Extension's most recent activity in Uvalde, TX, involved the Teresian sisters, along with 20 other sisters from the San Antonio, TX area, who participated in a COVID-19 initiative, "Sisters on the Frontlines." A member of The Catholic Extension team, Sr. Maritza Cisneros, who plays a key leadership role in the Catholic Extension U.S.-Latin American Sisters Exchange Program, is also a Teresian sister with close ties to the Teresian sisters in Uvalde, TX.

Camp I-CAN is the first of many initiatives Catholic Extension will fund in Uvalde over the next 18 months. As part of the funding, Catholic Extension will also dedicate funds to support ongoing mental health programs to augment existing services as needed, with the help of Catholic counselors.

For more information on ways to support the Catholic Church and children in Uvalde, please visit catholicextension.org/uvalde.

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About Catholic Extension: Founded in 1905, Catholic Extension works in solidarity with people to build up vibrant and transformative Catholic faith communities among the poor and in America's poorest regions. For more information visit www.catholicextension.org; follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/catholicextension or on Twitter at [@CathExtension](https://twitter.com/CathExtension).