

RESIDENT STUCK IN HEALTHCARE GAP, GETS MOVING WITH HELP FROM A NEIGHBOR THROUGH SOUTH CENTRAL HEALS

By Angelica Romero, CPHT Program Manager

South Central Los Angeles is a place where people are resilient—but where health needs pile up faster than systems can respond. Ruben lives with his wife in a trailer in South Central. Like many residents in our service area, Ruben is navigating daily life with limited resources while managing health needs that directly impact his mobility and independence. He experienced chronic pain and mobility limitations that created barriers to timely care and medical equipment access. Ruben's main challenge was simple but urgent: he needed a walker to move safely, and without it, basic tasks became physically risky and emotionally stressful. Even though he was trying to access help through his medical provider, the process was slow, leaving him stuck in the gap between "being eligible" and "actually receiving support."

A solution for Ruben was in his own neighborhood but only became readily available to him through community connection. South Central Heals had been supporting another resident, Maria, with crutches and transportation to manage severe knee pain. In December 2025, after receiving support and obtaining two walkers, Maria chose to donate one of her walkers back to South Central Heals to help someone else in the neighborhood. Later that month, South Central Heals met Ruben who shared his desperate need of a walker, and inability to obtain one through his medical provider due to a long, complicated process. Because of Maria's donation—and the community trust that made it possible—we could provide Ruben with a walker immediately following his assessment. The walker was exactly what Ruben needed in that moment, and it was only available because South Central Heals had fostered the kind of community relationships where neighbors are empowered to support one another.



For Ruben, a walker was more than equipment—it was relief, safety, and dignity. It reduced the physical risk of falling and improved his ability to complete daily tasks, leave his home when needed, and maintain independence. South Central Heals serves as a bridge that allows community members to support and uplift one another.

A key part of this story is that the impact didn't come from service alone—it came from community connection and trust built over time. Through the partnership of Esperanza Housing Corporation, St. John's Community Health, and the Department of Public Health, South Central Heals cultivated strong community relationships and social capital. Through home visits and health assessments, Ruben could share his need in a trusted environment and gained more than information—he received follow-up support.

It was incredibly powerful to witness one community member's act of kindness directly improve the quality of life of another.

“Thank you for all that you do, this is a great help.”
– Ruben