Through the William Fitzgerald Service in Action Summer Grant, Jazmin Sanchez ‘13 created a dance program at the Good Shepherd Shelter (GSS). The GSS, devoted to providing a safe, nurturing environment in which mothers and their children can heal, provides onsite schooling in a protected educational environment. While the experience for the children is always enjoyable and supportive, the desire for dance was something that was ever-present. “The Good Shepherd Shelter’s director, Lois Lengel, expressed her desire for a formal dance program at the shelter.” Sanchez said. “[Lois] always told me how the kids would love to engage in some sort of dance activity and when the opportunity arose to apply for the grant, I made it my commitment to make it happen.”

This Fall, Sanchez with the help of her faculty mentor, Kristen Smiarowski, launched the shelter’s first dance program. The GSS Dance Program provides LMU dance majors and minors the opportunity to share their love for dance and their passion for service with the children of the shelter. With guidance from Smiarowski, LMU dance participants plan and execute dance lessons for the children, allowing them to apply what they learn in their own courses, as well as, provide the children an opportunity to become more confident and at ease with themselves and with others.

Through this partnership, the dance program has opened up additional volunteer opportunities for LMU students and has fostered new relationships between the shelter and different departments at Loyola Marymount University.