

Neighbors Helping Neighbors News: April 2017



A Path Out of Homelessness



After living on the street and sleeping under the freeway off and on for several years, Brian has no trouble sharing his past with others, especially if his openness helps illuminate the plight of the homeless. Brian has had many highs and lows in his life. After working in military bases and holding a job in Alameda's Navy Public Works Center for 17 years, his steady income ended abruptly in 1997 when the base shut down. He made things work for a couple years, but by the end of 1999 he found himself living on the streets, eking out a living as best he could. An electrician by trade, he took day jobs as they came.

At one point, while staying at St. Mary's Winter Relief Shelter, he learned about SVdP's culinary training program. Brian completed the course,

but soon after learned he had developed chronic tendinitis of the knee, making a career in cooking a difficult and painful prospect. In 2005 he caught a break and landed a job with Amtrak as an electrician. Still homeless and part of a community "living on the hill," Brian met many people, one of whom told him about Open Door Mission in downtown Oakland. He soon secured a bunk and over time was encouraged to apply for a job as resident electrician. Brian beams when talking about his current living situation: "I'm more than just a lightbulb changer. I feel I have a calling." Today Brian is part of their outreach team, going to resource fairs like the recent one held at SVdP's Community Center, answering questions from people looking for help and from agency professionals looking to learn more.

Brian is grateful to SVdP and shares his positive experiences with others who are looking to gain serious job training skills. While his health challenges prevented him from reaching his culinary goals, he's had opportunities to use his training in the Open Door kitchen, where he helps cook occasionally. The hardships faced by many homeless people today are vast and varied, as Brian's journey shows. By hearing his story we learn to truly see people who are often marginalized and ignored.





Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Save the Date!
Spring Fundraising Breakfast
Friday, April 28, 2017
Cathedral of Christ the Light, Event Center
2121 Harrison Street, Oakland

For more information please call (510) 638-7600.
 Make your tax-deductible donation at the event. Check or credit cards accepted.

St. Vincent de Paul ALAMEDA COUNTY ~ svdp-alameda.org

Spring Fundraising Breakfast

We'd love to have you as a guest at our Spring Fundraising Breakfast on April 28th. It's a free event but pledge forms are distributed at the end of the program so that you can financially support the many programs we offer.

If you'd like to learn more, or want to reserve a seat or two, please contact Muna Texier (see back page) or call our main number at left.

Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Monday, April 3rd, 2:00 pm, **Development Committee**, Downtown Campus (Normally 1st Monday of the month).
- Saturday, April 8th, **Regional Council Meetings**, at various locations - contact Lu Cuevas for more information at LCuevas@svdp-alameda.org.
- Saturday, April 8th, **Easter Open House**, Community Center, 2272 San Pablo Ave, Oakland.
- Tuesday, April 11th, 11:30 am, **Property Committee**, Conference Call (2nd Tuesday of the month. Contact Blase for more information).
- Monday, April 17th, **Finance Committee**, Downtown Campus, 4:00 pm (Monday before Board Meeting).
- Wednesday, April 19th, **Board of Trustees Meeting**: fellowship/ meal at 5:30 pm followed by meeting at 6:00 pm, Downtown Campus. (3rd Wednesday of the month).
- Tuesday, April 25th, 1:30 pm, **Special Works Committee**, Downtown Campus (4th Tuesday of the month).
- Tuesday, April 25th through Saturday, April 29th, **Volunteer Appreciation Week**, Downtown Campus.
- Friday, April 28th, 7:30 am, **Spring Fundraising Breakfast**, Christ the Light Cathedral, Oakland.
- Friday, April 14th, **Good Friday**, Downtown Campus closed except for regular Dining Room service.
- Monday, November 14th through Monday May 1st (extended), **Winter Shelter Program**. Our supporters are encouraged to set up a time to visit or to help out. Call us at 510-638-7600 to find out how.

News Briefs

- Shopping at SVdP helps us all. We hope we're your favorite thrift store. If we're not, let us know why not. We want to keep improving until we're the favorite thrift store for every one of our volunteers and Vincentians.
- Your online purchases can benefit SVdP. Amazon.com will donate 1/2% of anything you spend on their site, once you sign up. Just visit smile.amazon.com, and choose "Society St Vincent De Paul Alameda" as your charity. Once you're set up, every purchase you make yields a donation to SVdP. Thanks for making St. Vincent de Paul your charity of choice!



Crossing an Ocean to Serve Others

This March a small group students from Switzerland spent three weeks in the US learning English and helping the homeless along the way.

Nine high school students and two teachers from Zurich spent a shift volunteering in SVdP's Dining Room. As part of their foreign exchange curriculum, these students focused on helping nonprofits in the Bay Area.

Switzerland encourages most of its high school graduates to move on to apprenticeships directly after high school, with job placement soon following. Next on the group's itinerary was a sightseeing tour of San Francisco, but before leaving our campus a few students made sure to share with staff how memorable and meaningful it was to serve meals in the Dining Room.



Fishnick Field Trip

On March 29th, our Kitchen of Champions Cohort 52 visited Fishnick, PG&E's Food Service Technology Center in San Ramon. Our trainees had fun getting first-hand experience testing out state-of-the-art kitchen appliances, and especially enjoyed comparing two different fryers by tasting french fries!



Senior engineer Richard Young made an example of using low heat to cook french fries, prompting a trainee to exclaim, "Richard, your fries are horrible!" The group erupted in laughter and the lesson was clear: the faster the heating process, the tastier the fry. Big thanks to Fishnick for hosting and educating our trainees - we look forward to another visit with the next cohort. If you'd like to join us on an upcoming field trip, contact Natalya at nferdinandi@svdp-alameda.org.



Boy Scouts Spruce Up Community Center

Boy Scout Troop 73 showed up to SVdP on a Monday in early April ready to work. Thanks to their teamwork

and enthusiasm, we now have a janitor's closet, a freshly-painted wait area, and some very clean chairs and walls in our busy Community Center. Come back anytime and keep up the excellent work, Troop 73!



The Box Brothers

Jacob and Michael, two reps from the Pandora Sales team, pose with their donation of men's clothes and shoes. After volunteering a few times in the SVdP Dining Room, these "box bros" hosted a workplace clothing drive to collect men's wear for our Clothing Closet. SVdP benefits greatly from strong community partners like Pandora. Thank you to all who participated!

Guest Profile: Charles

A former nurse, Charles has been staying in SVdP's Winter Shelter for the past month. After leaving a dangerous living situation in West Oakland and having many of his medications stolen, Charles is regrouping his mind and spirit and is looking forward to securing a room where he can feel safe and comfortable. "Each day brings new tests and lessons for me. No one is perfect, as we are all human. I need to take better care of myself so I can continue to give from my heart and respect everyone no matter how people may treat me."



St. Patrick's Day Dinner and a Movie

What originated as a simple question has turned into a crowd-pleasing evening: how can we bring some levity and fun to the guests staying in SVdP's Winter Shelter? Christ the Light conference members decided to host a series of movie nights, and after a successful first go in late February, they decided to add a second movie night in March.

On the evening of March 17th, parishioners from Christ the Light of Oakland cooked a corned beef and cabbage dinner for our Winter Shelter guests, and hosted a showing of the comedy film *Medea's Boo*. The St. Patty's Day theme stretched beyond the night's menu, with volunteers from both parishes decorating the Community Center tables with green plates, napkins, and cutlery, and covering the festive white and green tablecloths with popcorn and snacks aplenty for all.

All the meal's ingredients were provided by Christ the Light, courtesy some very generous donors. St. Joseph Basilica of Alameda provided \$270 worth of gift cards from Starbucks, Subway and Taco Bell. These gift cards became prizes that were raffled after the movie - anyone who did not



win a prize received a food gift card, making everyone a winner.

Jackie Mallory, SVdP's Vincentian Support Coordinator said it was a successful endeavor from all perspectives: "Thank you to our donors who made this possible and to all the volunteers who cooked, arranged and



served in our Community Center. Our Winter Shelter guests appreciated an evening full of laughter and good food."

The Winter Shelter team hopes to recreate this fun event when the seasonal shelter reopens in late fall of 2017. If you are interested in sponsoring a Movie Night, please contact our volunteer team (see back page).



Swift Emergency Response from SVdP



On March 27, a fire swept a residential building two blocks from St. Vincent de Paul's West Oakland campus, displacing roughly 50 men, women, and children. Two managers, Muna Texier and Ryan Uyehara, and Executive Director Blase Bova, met to strategize a way to provide emergency help to the community. They devised a plan to house 22 residents of Project Pride, a supportive living agency which assists mothers in recovery and their children.

James Leeper of the American Red Cross and one of the first responders on the scene expressed the necessity of SVdP's swift action:

"The American Red Cross can do a lot of things and we have a lot of capacity, but we can do very little without the partners that we work with. Organizations like SVdP make it possible for us to do our job. We have no place to put people. We have no shelter, so as soon as we need a shelter, we need a partner. And you guys are aces. SVdP

took care of a particularly needy population right when they needed it and we are grateful for that."

While scrambling to come up with a solution for the emergency, the SVdP team thought to set up a list of volunteers who can be "on-call" for emergencies like this one that occur on days and hours our direct service campus is closed. If you feel called to be on such a list, please contact our volunteer coordinator, Brianna Glanzman at

bglanzman@svdp-alameda.org.

Your Gift Transforms Lives

Your support for St. Vincent de Paul ensures that our critical services help those in greatest need. Our Free Dining Room provides hot, nutritious meals to thousands. Our Winter Shelter gives refuge from cold and rainy weather to hundreds of men and women.

- For \$1,000 you can give 50 packages of diapers, formula and family hygiene products in our Women's Center.
- For \$500 you can provide 120 sets of new socks and underwear for people sleeping in the cold and rain.
- For \$250 you can serve 100 hot, nutritious meals in our Free Dining Room.
- For \$100 you can wash a week of bedding for our Winter Shelter.

Please consider a gift to St. Vincent de Paul. Contact Blase Bova or Muna Texier (see last page) to learn more. If you prefer to donate online, please visit www.svdp-alameda.org/donate



Project Homeless Connect Resource Fair

Sponsored by the City of Oakland's Human Services Department and Community Housing Services, several organizations of Alameda County came together in SVdP's Community Center on Friday, March 24th. A one-stop

many people made me appreciate how appropriately named our facility is. I am proud of the SVdP staff who work so hard, believe in our mission, and can work cooperatively to pull off such a special day."

Talia Rubin, lead Licensed Clinical Social Worker from the City of Oakland team, was equally enthusiastic about the success of



referral site for housing resources, medical referrals, legal services, veteran resources, and more, Project Homeless Connect served as a resource fair not only for homeless in Oakland, but also as a networking opportunity for many local agencies. The event was an incredible day full of connection and on-site learning. From the exchange of handshakes and smiles to the exchange of applications and informative pamphlets, our busy Community Center was filled with wonderful interactions at each table station.

SVdP's Executive Director Blase Bova was happy to see the Community Center live up to its name: "Today our bustling campus was a Community Center in its very best expression. Seeing so much help being provided to so many people by so

the day: "Today has been amazing. We had 21 agencies participate and close to 200 participants in total. People are here getting connected - we are building a network right here for clients to get linked with services and for agencies to get linked with each other. That is the beauty of this event. We are so grateful to have this huge space to work in and to have the SVdP staff host us and support us in this project. We couldn't do it without you guys, so thank you!"



For More Information Contact

Name	Position	Phone	Email
St. Vincent de Paul 2272 San Pablo Ave Oakland, CA 94612	Main Phone Number/Call Center	(510) 638-7600	callcenter@svdp-alameda.org
Blase Bova	Executive Director	(510) 435-2625	bbova@svdp-alameda.org
Carmen Jones-Weeks	Human Resources Manager	(510) 385-8934	cjonesweeks@svdp-alameda.org
Julia Catania	Administration Manager	(510) 692-0460	jcatania@svdp-alameda.org
Muna Texier	Community Engagement Manager	(510) 719-0774	mtexier@svdp-alameda.org
Patty Breslin	Social Enterprise (Retail) Manager	(510) 289-3891	pbreslin@svdp-alameda.org
Ryan Uyehara	Special Works (Programs) Manager	(510) 593-4120	ruyehara@svdp-alameda.org
Wesley Palmquist	Facilities/Tenant Services Manager	(650) 796-7349	wpalmquist@svdp-alameda.org
Volunteer Team	Volunteer Coordinator	(510) 877-9252	volunteer@svdp-alameda.org

SCU Immersion

Santa Clara University students stayed at our West Oakland campus for a week-long Immersion experience at the end of March.

In addition to off-site visits, they were a joyful presence in helping us prepare for our Easter Open House on April 8th. As Skylar said: "The work SVdP does is so necessary, with many tasks to get done, that it has forced us to spend less time doing needless things."



Yoga Tree Gives Mats to Women's Center

Yoga Tree Telegraph studio manager Ana Evans and her husband Kyle dropped off an impressive load of yoga mats. After spring cleaning her studio's lost and found closet, Ana decided to donate all the unclaimed mats. The timing couldn't be better as SVdP prepares to host free volunteer led yoga and meditation classes in the Women's Center. Thanks, Yoga Tree!

