

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors News: September 2018



# Volunteer Feature: Javier Silvares

Kitchen prep room volunteer Javier Silvares has worked with St. Vincent de Paul for over one year. He was attracted to kitchen work all his life, and even when working various jobs in other industries he said he has always “come back to working in a kitchen.” Since he was a child growing up in León, Spain, it was clear he had a talent for cooking. When he moved to Madrid at age nineteen, he solidified his cooking ability to take care of himself away from home.

Silvares enjoys experimenting in the kitchen and cooking foods from other cultures, like msemen, a type of flatbread eaten in Morocco and other parts of north Africa. His favorite recipe to make is “preñaos,” which are bread rolls stuffed with sausage. Silvares can be found every day in the kitchen prep room with Elvis and sometimes surprising staff and volunteers with fresh baked goods or a Spanish tortilla, paella, or gazpacho. In fact, he loves to show the Kitchen of Champions cohorts Spanish recipes when he gets the chance. Though he has learned English over the years, he appreciates working in the prep room and communicating through the universal language of food, where he finds great comfort and enjoyment. Silvares is so reliable and dedicated that he was hired on temporarily to cover for our prep room chef, Elvis, when he planned some time off work in August.

Since volunteering at SVdP, Silvares has been struck by the harsh realities of poverty in America and the effects it has on physical and mental health.

He plans to keep cooking to do his part in aiding his neighbors. “I like this country. This country gave me a lot. There’s something we don’t see in Europe and that is this poverty. Since I’ve volunteered here I saw that poverty is so close to us. It is on the street, throughout the country, and in this building. It makes me feel sad that those who need the most help do not receive it. Everyone has an obligation to do something to help. If you have money, give some away. If you don’t have money, give time,” Silvares said. We are grateful for Silvares’s passion for food and social justice.



# Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Tuesday, September 4th, **Development Committee**, 1:30 p.m., West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Saturday, September 15th, **80th Anniversary Mass and Reception**, 5:30 p.m., Cathedral of Christ the Light, Oakland.
- Monday, September 17th, **Finance Committee**, 4:00 p.m., West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Wednesday, September 19th, **Board of Trustees meeting** - fellowship/meal at 5:30 p.m., meeting at 6:00 p.m. West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Tuesday, September 25th, 1:30 p.m., **Special Works Committee**, West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Thursday, October 4th, 1:30 p.m., **Spirituality Committee**, Nob Hill Market in Alameda.

## Save the Date!

Save the date for our Fall Fundraising Breakfast on Thursday, November 8 from 7:30-9:00 a.m.

We welcome all community members, Vincentians, and friends to join us for a morning of delicious food and fellowship. We will have a special visit from Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, Bishop of the Diocese of Oakland, and testimonials from clients, staff, and volunteers about their experiences with St. Vincent de Paul. Tables can be reserved in advance by contacting John Sterns or Blase Bova. (See back page for contact information.)



## News Briefs

- Donating a car or boat to SVdP is easy, through the National SVdP Vehicle Donation Program. Call 877-537-5277 or visit [www.donatingiseasy.org](http://www.donatingiseasy.org).
- Want to show the love you feel for SVdP? Come volunteer with us! Play the piano for clients in our Community Center, chop vegetables with Elvis in our kitchen, or help run a craft demo in our Fremont or Livermore stores. There's so much happening here, and most of it goes better with more hands involved. We'd love to train you in a new, rewarding volunteer opportunity. Contact John Sterns for more details. (See back page for contact information.) Your free time can make such a difference in the life of someone in need!
- Legacy gifts, also known as planned gifts, have made a tremendous difference for SVdP and those we serve. Legacy gifts let your charitable giving have a long-term impact reflecting your beliefs, priorities and values. "From general support to job training to our Dining Room and Women's Center, these gifts have literally transformed lives", said Blase Bova, SVdP's Executive Director. For more information about legacy gifts, contact Blase Bova or John Sterns. (See back page for contact information.)

# Ways to Give This Holiday Season

Did you know most charitable giving is done during the months of November and December? St. Vincent de Paul seeks the following to prepare for the winter months and ensure that our guests receive quality care and warmth this holiday season. Please consider participating in any way you can. To setup a donation or volunteer time, contact John Sterns (see back page for contact information).

- Volunteer in the free dining room during the season.
- Hold a warm coat drive at your school, work, church, gym, etc. and bring the donations to SVdP.
- Donate new and unwrapped toys, children's clothes and books to be distributed at our Christmas Open House.
- Give a monetary donation to help support the purchasing of all of the supplies listed above.
- In-kind donation opportunities:
  - Diapers , toiletries and travel-size soaps, toothbrushes and toothpaste, family-sized bottles of soap, baby formula

Thank you for your continued support of SVdP!



## Cohort 60 Turns Up the Heat

Cohort 60 is shaping up to be our largest Kitchen of Champions cohort this year. Due to an increased recruitment effort from Workforce Coordinator John Jones, a total of eighteen individuals attended orientation and have been in training with Chef Armando for two weeks. Cohorts 60 and 59 are going to be working in the kitchen together until graduation, which is scheduled for Thursday, September 13 at our West Oakland campus, 2272 San Pablo Ave. All are welcome to join and celebrate the accomplishments of our hardworking trainees.

In the meantime, the groups will be able to learn from each other while they cook 500 meals per day for our free dining room, practice "soft skills" in our computer lab, and celebrate their progress together at graduation. According to Jones, the new cohort is filled with fresh talent and commitment. "We have a lot of talent in this group and I expect great things from them. And they are all really supportive of each other and I am proud of them for that," Jones said. We look forward to watching cohort 60 grow into greater chefs and harness their professional skills.



# Q&A with Outgoing DC President Louise Astle

Every three years, the conference presidents hold elections for a new SVdP District Council president. Outgoing president Louise Astle was appointed ten months ago when the elected president resigned. Lovingly referred to as the “servant of servants,” the DC president is responsible for supporting all Alameda County Conferences and leading the Board of Trustees. Her tenure has been eventful, and as it comes to a close, we decided to ask her some questions about her experience. Below is an interview with Louise Astle.

## **How did you get started with SVdP?**

I became involved with SVdP after hearing an invitation to serve given by Deacon David Young at my parish, St. Joseph’s Basilica, in early 2011. This was followed by some introductory meetings to give me, and several others that were interested, some background information about the history, spirituality and the work of the Society. After that I became involved in my parish conference.

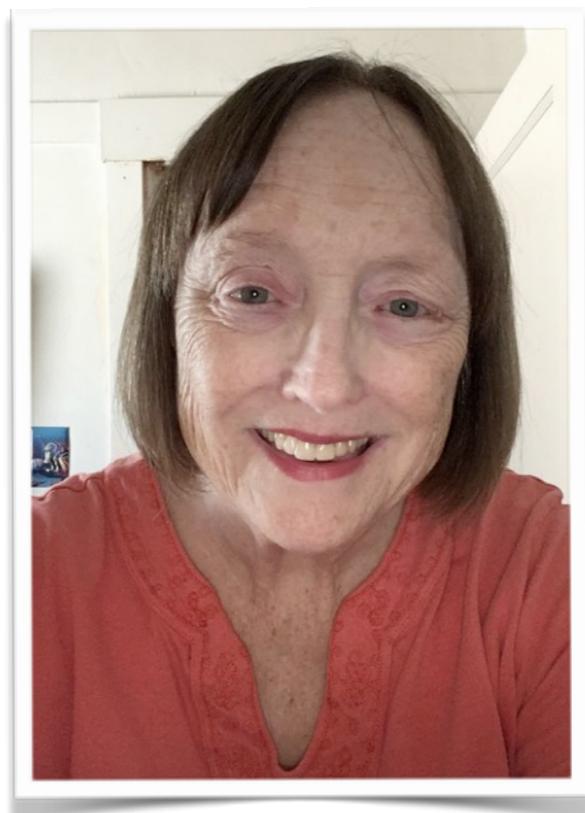
## **What was being the board president like for you, compared to other Vincentian roles you’ve held?**

I think being the board president (aka President of the District Council) is like being a coach, keeping things moving forward, keeping track of time, but not rushing, being respectful. Sometimes you are, along with the executive director, the face of the Society for Alameda County. As a conference member or a board member, you can work more in the background. Being a conference president is similar, but on a smaller scale, with a smaller audience.

## **Do you have advice for the incoming president and for fellow Vincentians?**

For Jim Lee, I gave him the advice that I was given by one of his conference members and a former board member. The board really operates at the 30,000-foot level and it is the job of the staff to make sure the special works are successful and that the conferences receive the training and support that they need.

For my fellow Vincentians, be renewed in your spirituality and friendship, as that will support your work with the poor. Remember to ask at the beginning of each meeting or home visit, “How is what we are doing of help to the poor?” This question came from Sister Paule when I attended spiritual advisor’s training.



**What was the best part of your tenure?**

I had barely begun my tenure, which was already to be short, when I had to have by-pass surgery. The love, prayers, and support I received from the conferences, staff, and board was truly amazing. It made me realize that none of us do this work on our own. There is always someone to work with you.

I also learned that as a servant leader, the role is to support and encourage the talents and gifts of each person and help them grow and succeed in their work, in their vocation.



**What was the most difficult part?**

Because of my own medical issues, I was not able to get started on working on the strategic plan and putting together a task force as soon as I hoped. However, this work will continue.

**What do you see are the best opportunities for the future and the biggest challenges for the future of SVdP?**

I know that we are in the process of putting together the status and results of the tasks were set forth in the strategic plan in 2015. Once this is complete, then we need to put together a new three-year strategic plan with input from staff and conferences. The national office is also working on setting tasks for their plan, so we have an opportunity to align our plan with theirs in many areas.

I think that in the future, the conferences need to work on engaging more young adults and inviting them to become Vincentians. I know, I keep thinking that they are too busy with their work and families. But I also know that they like to be involved, have lots of energy and they are open to growing spiritually. The other area where we can grow is in the diversity of our district.



# Conference Feature: Corpus Christi

The Corpus Christi conference in Fremont is one of the six founding Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County and began service 80 years ago, in August, 1938. As of September 4, 2018, the conference has held 2,765 meetings and counting. Today, they have 26 active members that meet on the first and third Tuesday of each month.

One need so many people in Alameda County and throughout the country have is food insecurity. In 2017, the Department of Agriculture reported that 41.3 million adults and children were food insecure in the U.S. The Corpus Christi conference focuses their work to alleviate food insecurity. They serve on average 140 bagged lunches each month to homeless community members. Over time, they recognized a need for more grocery items being available, so they launched the Meals of Mercy program, a food pantry open on the last Tuesday each month, where neighbors could grocery shop for fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs and dairy products, rice, beans, pasta and canned goods. So far this year, Meals of Mercy has served 144 families, a total of 427 individuals. The conference has grown their pantry with the help of a Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl grant and have partnered with the Alameda County Community Food Bank.

In addition to food distribution, the Conference conducts home visits, bringing communion to an average of 50 ill or homebound individuals per month. They receive support from the parish 5th Sunday collection and in-kind donations of clothes, toiletries, food items, sleeping bags, and other necessities. It takes the hard work of many individuals and organizations to make this work happen. Conference President, Carol Snyder, takes on a leading role in the conference's service. "At this time in my life, I feel fortunate and blessed to be a servant leader in a parish with such a long history of service. I have learned that being a Vincentian is a way of life and have come to understand that no work of charity is foreign to the society," Snyder said.

Ed Frakes, conference member, recognizes positive changes over the years, and cites Snyder's presidency as one of them. "Membership has grown quite a bit since Carol took over. She's a really good leader. Her enthusiasm has brought in a lot of people," Frakes said. As one of our oldest Conferences, Corpus Christi shows a longstanding commitment to their community, as well as a willingness to adapt to the need around them.



*TABLES FILLED WITH GROCERY ITEMS ARE OPEN FOR SHOPPING AT MEALS OF MERCY ONCE PER MONTH.*



## Meet Our Staff: Jamie Aubry

When Livermore Store Manager Jamie Aubry began working at SVdP, she planned on leaving her assistant manager position after two years. Nine years later, Aubry is still at SVdP with no signs of stopping. "I never anticipated I would be here for this long, but once I started working here and found out all that they do, I have not left. I wanted to be a part of that," Aubry said.

Like all of our Alameda County locations, there is always more work happening in Livermore than meets the eye. The

Livermore store has a help desk, run by Vincentians to give vouchers to homeless guests. "Here at the stores we wear all hats," Aubry said. Each week, the store receives three forty-two foot trailers full of donations, which are sourced from the local community. "Our donations are the best. We are very well taken care of here," Aubry said. Aubry also values the importance of the thrift store customers. That is why the Livermore store is holding its third annual customer appreciation day next month. "I am adamant that we must say thank you to the community," Aubry said.

Besides working at SVdP and doing additional community service, Aubry is passionate about Kung Fu, and practices at least twice per week. Aubry calls it a "a de-stressor." As for the future of the store, Aubry would like to see increased revenue in the future, and plans to lead the store in its continued success.



## Hundreds of Vincentians Gather in San Diego

The St. Vincent de Paul Annual National Assembly was held in San Diego from August 29th to September 1st. This is a conference open to everyone involved with SVdP, full of masses, opportunities for fellowship, meetings among leaders from throughout the country, and a plethora of informative workshops. Though there were over 750 attendees, much of what people took away from the experience was focused on the unity of the group and their shared vocation. "The solidarity that was shared demonstrated the oneness of our ministry as we reminded each other that our surrender to God's will leads us to the humility of our vocation," Steve Tedesco, co-chair of our spirituality, formation and extension committee, said. Blase Bova, executive director, was also struck by the collective talent and commitment among the attendees, saying, "All of them are smart, dedicated, true-believers in selfless service to others, in advocacy for those without a voice, in the traditions and structure of SVdP, and in tirelessly working to grow and improve the Society and to have even more positive impact on those we serve."



*SVDP NATIONAL PRESIDENT RALPH MIDDLECAMP ADDRESSES THE CROWD OF OVER 700 VINCENTIANS.*



# For More Information Contact

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John Sterns	Community Engagement Manager	(925) 323-5848	jsterns@svdp-alameda.org
Julia Hancock	Administration Manager	(510) 692-0460	jhancock@svdp-alameda.org
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Ryan Uyehara	Special Works (Programs) Manager	(510) 593-4120	ruehara@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

## Cost Plus Pays a Visit to Free Dining Room

In August, employees from Cost Plus World Market volunteered at our main direct service campus in West Oakland. This was the third visit for several of the team members, all of whom offered their service in our kitchen prep room with Chef Elvis and in the free dining room with our guests. They will return to the free dining room in September.

"Cost Plus is a dedicated corporate partner for SVdP," says John Sterns, our community engagement manager. "We really appreciate all the gifts they bring to their work to assist those we serve."

Each year, SVdP hosts approximately thirty corporate volunteer groups, usually in our free dining room. If you are interested in scheduling a corporate group volunteer session, please contact our volunteer team in West Oakland (see top of page for contact information).

