

Neighbors Helping Neighbors News: November 2018



In His Own Words: Michael

"When I was fifteen I was a bad kid. I was charged with five counts of incorrigibility. I was given a choice of three and a half years in a youth correctional center or the military. My sixteenth birthday came and I really didn't know what was happening and I was on a bus to a naval hospital. I was sworn in four days later. I passed my medical exam and I signed my sworn affidavit and they said I was a U.S. army soldier. I was shocked. I did not understand half the stuff of what they were doing. My mom said, 'You are going to sign up for two things so you get skills and make me proud of you.' We were trained to do a pre-trip investigation of the trucks, and I made it known that I was really serious about it and made my way. I was wanting to be the best example. What my mom said stuck in my ear.

"In 1970 I ended up in Vietnam as a demotion special tech. I read everything I could so I understood it. I was there for 5 years. It was very rough. Shooting at people who never did nothing to me. I got my leg blown up and I was not good to them if I was injured. I got an honorable discharge.

"The problem has been that even though I get my medical care and housing from the VA I have not received my benefits. They say they lost my records. And this has been 42 years that I have waited to to get my military pension. Every year like clockwork I get my VA ID but they say they can't find my paper work for benefits. Even though I get to go to medical center to be treated. How can I do that if they can't find my records?

"I am currently taking a class for ex-addicts and I am ten years clean and sober. I am also taking a business class for my business. I now own Diamond Truck Detailing. I am waiting for the license to come. I need to get \$100 for the license. Then I can really begin."

Update: After speaking with Michael in the free dining room one day, volunteer Dave was able to accompany him to the VA. Michael's case was opened and now there is help and hope that Michael will get the benefits that have been denied. He said it will take between four months and one year.



Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Monday, November 19th, **Finance Committee**, 4:00 p.m., West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Wednesday, November 21st, **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, November 27th, 1:30 p.m., **Special Works Committee**, West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Ave.
- Thursday, November 29th, 1:30 p.m., **Spirituality Committee**, Nob Hill Market in Alameda.

Corpus Christi Ministry Fair



PHOTOS OF CONFERENCE MEMBERS, PARISHIONERS AND TABLING SUPPLIES FROM THE CORPUS CHRISTI MINISTRY FAIR.

A great way to invite and encourage parishioners to accept the invitation to serve is through the ministry fair at Corpus Christi in Fremont. In order to connect the various ministries within the parish, Fr. David along with the Pastoral Council announced that each ministry, if they chose,

could staff a table and explain to the parishioners how they served their communities. Members of the Corpus Christi Conference spent the weekend sharing their ministry and Vincentian vocation. Led by their Conference President Carol Snyder, they made posters, brochures and flyers and tabled to explain their service. The Conference had tours of their pantry operation including the Meals of Mercy program. If your Conference wishes to recruit and display your great work, hosting your own ministry fair could be a good opportunity to engage your community and get them thinking about Vincentian service. For questions, contact Vincentian Support Coordinator, Lu Cuevas, at lcuevas@svdp-alameda.org.

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

■ 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.)



Conference Feature: Transfiguration



TRANSFIGURATION CONFERENCE MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN THE SVDP NATIONWIDE FRIENDS OF THE POOR WALK ON SEPT. 29.

The Transfiguration Conference has 24 active members, who served 2,029 people in 2017, and conducted 776 home visits, including visits with the homeless and in public with people outside of their homes. As many Vincentians know, the home visit helps foster connection, and can even lead to a greater service than what the community member could have expected. For example, after entering an 80 year-old woman's home who had a hip replacement, the Conference members realized she needed a new bed, something they

wouldn't have known unless they visited her. So, they had a bed delivered soon after. Another advantage of home visits is the ability to spiritually connect through prayer. Conference President Mike Dresden says that is his favorite part of the ministry. "I get a warm fuzzy feel when praying with people. Some are reluctant to do it but having that connection together when we pray is one of the more rewarding parts," Dresden said.

Like many conferences, Transfiguration is open to adapting to the growing homeless crisis, and figuring out how best to serve the homeless in their community, on top of assisting with eviction prevention services. "One of our most significant challenges of the upcoming years is how to serve the homeless better. We have limited resources and we don't have a pantry, so we are trying our best to serve everyone," Dresden said. "Thirty percent of the people we meet are homeless now, that number is creeping up." Luckily, there is a great team at Transfiguration that can help with the growing challenges. "I think we have a really well-run organization and there are many dedicated people and a good infrastructure, and we want to keep that at a high level," Dresden said. One goal of the Conference is to recruit more young people to bring fresh perspectives, skillsets and attitudes to the group.

Another accomplishment of Transfiguration is they received two grants from the Friends of the Poor Walk on September 29, which they attended as a group. One of the grants will help support education and learning efforts of the children of the families they serve. It will be used to buy toys, books, and technology that will help nurture the children's educational life when they are not at school. The Conference will be gearing up for a busy holiday season, where they will give out turkeys and nonperishables for Thanksgiving, and toys for children for Christmas. Keep up the good work! You and all of our 38 Conferences in Alameda County are in our prayers.



St. Raymond Welcomes New Members

Rosann Russo, St. Raymond conference president, extended an invitation to serve in October through a mini Ozanam Orientation at the parish. She shared her experiences as a Vincentian, giving announcements at seven masses, and collected sign ups from forty interested parishioners. Over a dozen attended a full-day Ozanam Enrichment Workshop put on by members of the Spirituality, Formation and Growth Committee. The "students" were so moved that they all prayerfully agreed and now move forward to serve their neighbors in need. "I am encouraged by the turnout and look forward to encouraging and nurturing our new Vincentians so our conference can grow and continue to serve the poor as Christ commands us to do." Russo said.



Vincentians Observe World Day of the Poor



On November 18, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul acknowledges World Day of the Poor. In the U.S., nearly 40 million people are living in poverty, nearly one out of every eight Americans. Our faith calls to serve the poor. The U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul has been answering that call since 1845.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul offers the chance to live your faith. Members grow spiritually and develop Christian friendships while serving those in need. Through person-to-person service, food pantries, thrift stores, medical care, rent and utility assistance, disaster relief, advocacy and more, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul helps people move out of

poverty to self-sufficiency. Each year, the Society in the U.S. gives over 12 million service hours to help those in need and serves more than 5 million people.

In Alameda County, SVdP strives to feed, clothe, house and heal those in need. We provide over 500 meals per day in our free dining room, showers and laundry services in our men's and women's centers, a day shelter and mail services in our community center, a nightly shelter, thrift stores, and our Conferences aid a total of roughly \$1,000,000 last year through food donations, eviction prevention bill assistance, clothing donations, and more.

We would not be able to do any of this without our volunteers and dedicated staff. To get involved with SVdP Alameda County, contact Community Engagement Manager, John Sterns, at jsterns@svdp-alameda.org.



Cohort 60 Graduates with Pride

Cohort 60 celebrated nine weeks of intense culinary and professional training with a graduation ceremony. All were able to invite friends and family, and, as always, had a chance to address the crowd in a short speech. Each graduate prepared their own dish for the guests, including green beans, pupusas, chicken stew, fried rice, chicken wings, banana pudding and more. The ceremony also featured guest speaker Nicole Dixon, a local artist who spoke about the many connections between cooking and her mixed media art, and the need for us to express our creativity, especially to release intense stressors. She brought four beautiful art pieces to display, and really made an impact on the crowd with her elegance and talent.

This cohort brought many different skillsets and backgrounds into the kitchen. From young people to people who have had multiple career changes, the group had much to learn about themselves and each other. "This group was so vibrant, they inspire us more than they realize," Volunteer Coordinator Katie Troy, said. We are excited to see what the graduates do next, and will always be here to support them in any way they need. Congratulations to cohort 60!



Cohort 61 Enters Dining Room Ready to Learn

The 61st Kitchen of Champions cohort is up and running, with a group comprised of some former SVdP volunteers, working in our kitchen and producing 500+ meals in our free dining room each day. This is a particularly young group of students, some of whom come from as far as Vallejo five times a week. The group has been learning how to work in such a large and fast-paced environment, and how to work together as a team to execute a successful lunch service. They have been noted to be very clean, always willing to pick up a broom without being told in order to get the job done.



Kitchen Manager Chef Armando Corpus admires this group's willingness to cater the menu to please the dining room guests, and has been impressed by their ability to learn simple techniques, like making sauces, very quickly. "I look forward to seeing their skill level when they graduate," Corpus said. The goal is to have all of the trainees placed with a job in six to two weeks, and Corpus believes this is very attainable. Good luck to cohort 61!



Volunteer Spotlight: Giorgio Tavecchio

Giorgio Tavecchio began volunteering in our free dining room in September, and quickly became a reliable dishroom helper. Over the coming weeks, we got to know him better, and found out he was a professional football player who was spending time volunteering while in between NFL teams. He even played for the Oakland Raiders between 2014 and 2016, to the delight of some of our staff members.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOSTONHERALD.COM.

On October 22, he made his debut with the Atlanta Falcons after their kicker was injured. Tavecchio executed a perfect game as their kicker. Tavecchio kicked a 56-yard field goal in the fourth quarter that led the team to beat the New York Giants 23-20. He was a perfect 3 for 3 on field goals and 2 for 2 on extra points. Though Giorgio is now staying busy in the NFL, he did have time to send a message saying SVdP is in his thoughts and prayers. Good luck, Giorgio, and thank you for your work at SVdP. We hope you come to visit!

Volunteer Spotlight: Oakland International HS

A group of Oakland International High School students volunteered in the free dining room in early November. The group took time out of their school schedule to help us serve hundreds of meals to our guests. Oakland International has 380 students from thirty-five countries, who speak thirty-two languages. All students are English language learners, and almost all have immigrated to the US in the last four years. Five percent of the student body is homeless.

Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Troy, appreciates the ways in which the students help each other navigate their English-speaking surroundings and looking out for each other to make sure everyone can succeed. "The teacher was so supportive and caring for her students and the students were so supportive of each other and they worked really hard to help each other out as well as help our guests out, and they were happy and willing to do any job," Troy, said. We are so thankful for the students hard work, and their willingness to serve. They prove that service is a language of its own.



Shelter is Now Open and Welcoming Guests

The St. Vincent de Paul shelter opened on Monday, October 29. Our staff has been working hard hiring a new team to cover the nighttime shifts. This year, our partnership with the City of Oakland has expanded to allow for more staffing. We have two Kitchen of Champions alumni hired to cook a full dinner and prepare breakfast every day. We also have a janitor and budget for another security guard.

With the housing crisis in Oakland at its peak, we are glad to be able to provide a warm place to sleep and have two additional hot meals. Thank you to all who helped prepare for and execute a successful shelter. If you'd like to volunteer during one of the night shifts, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Troy, ktroy@svdp-alameda.org.



SHELTER STAFF PREPARE FOR THE OPENING NIGHT ON OCT. 29.

Facebook Makes Connections in Dining Room

A group of 15 employees from Facebook volunteered in the west Oakland free dining room on October 26. The group brought a good energy to the dining room as they helped serve the meal, clean, socialize with the guests, staff and volunteers, wash dishes and more. As the end of each month approaches, our direct services get busier, so it is always nice to have the participation of great corporate groups who are personable and willing to learn and work hard.

Volunteer groups have the opportunity to connect with our guests and have meaningful conversations with staff, volunteers and each other, and bring those experiences back to work with them.

Thank you to Facebook; we sure 'liked' working with 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 Website: www.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
John Sterns	Community Engagement Manager	(925) 323-5848	jsterns@svdp-alameda.org
Julia Hancock	Administration Manager	(510) 692-0460	jhancock@svdp-alameda.org
Leslie Thomas	Homeless Services Manager	(510) 719-1000	lthomas@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

‘Angel’ Funders Grace Our Campus

In the nonprofit world, anonymous funders are lovingly referred to as “angels.” This October, we received an anonymous and unrestricted gift from an angel donor. Though we do receive these gifts regularly, this one was especially striking, and was given during a time where people generally give less to charity and save more money in preparation for the holidays. These gifts are always greatly appreciated and are utilized to fund our client services. This donation is a validation of the hard work of our staff and volunteers, who strive each day to feed, clothe, house, and heal those struck by poverty in Alameda County. We plan to continue the work and fellowship that moved the “angel” to donate so generously. Most of all, we plan to continue our service to those in great need around us, and live out our mission to feed, clothe, house and heal our neighbors throughout Alameda County.

