

Neighbors Helping Neighbors News: April 2019



Homeless Report Revealed at SVdP



The Bay Area Council Economic Institute, a key local think tank, released a new study on homelessness in the Bay Area, and, at Mayor Schaaf's suggestion, they wanted the study to be rolled out to the press and the community at St. Vincent de Paul. Executive Director Blase Bova was invited to participate in the roundtable discussion, along with some noted civic and corporate leaders including

Permanent Bernard Tyson and Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf. Participants discussed the need for a

regional plan to address homelessness, as well as unity amongst the entire Bay Area, including the Sacramento area, to support each other's efforts in housing the unhoused. The Bay Area has the third highest homeless population in the country with over 28,000 homeless residents, behind New York City and Los Angeles. The report says part of the problem is low income people are becoming homeless at a faster rate than communities can move existing homeless people into housing. "We can subsidize rents when they fall on hard times, we can purchase buildings and turn market rate housing into affordable housing, we can provide rental assistance, so they don't have to choose between medical payments and rent payments," said Jim Wunderman with the Bay Area Council. St. Vincent de Paul thanks the work of our Vincentians across the county through their eviction prevention work. You are addressing a crucial aspect of the homeless crisis that needs more widespread support, and the Bay Area Council agrees.



Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Saturday, April 13th, **District Council Meeting**, 9:00 a.m., St. Bede Parish, 26950 Patrick Ave., Hayward.
- Monday, April 15th, **Finance Committee**, 4:00 p.m., West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Wednesday, April 17th, **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, April 23rd, **Special Works Committee**, 1:30 p.m., West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Sunday, April 28th, **Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon**, 1:00-3:00 p.m., West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.
- Thursday, May 2nd, **Spirituality Committee**, 1:30 p.m., Nob Hill Market, Alameda.
- Tuesday, May 7th, **Development Committee**, 1:30 p.m., West Oakland Campus, 2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland.

Vincentians Pack Hygiene Kits

Members of the St. Philip Neri Conference in Alameda helped package hygiene products to give out in our West Oakland direct service campus men's and women's centers. We always appreciate when Conference members join us at our Alameda County locations in Oakland, Fremont and Livermore. If your Conference would like to work at our direct service campus or thrift stores, please contact our volunteer team. (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
- 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.)

Day of Reflection Rejuvenates Conferences



Thomas P. Bonacci C.P. is the Interfaith Peace Project's Executive Director. Tom offers friendly and hospitable programs to help participants cope with inherited stereotypes, innocent misunderstandings, embarrassing questions or general knowledge of the many faith traditions of humankind. In March, over 60 Vincentians gathered to hear Fr. Tom Bonacci speak for a day of

reflection. This was a great opportunity to bring Conference members together in prayer and reflection with an important church leader. Vincentians commented that the day was "rejuvenating" and appreciated the chance to have people of faith from all over the Bay Area come together in community. They wished that every member of their local Conferences was able to attend, because the experience was so worthwhile. The day of reflection promoted the importance of serving the poor, and urged all Christians to acknowledge and act on their obligation to serve. Attendees were able to ask questions of Fr. Tom as a part of the program. When asked what a Vincentian should say when they are called an enabler of the poor, he replied, "First, I believe you deserve an apology and second, you are serving and caring with love. How do people in need stand on their own two feet, if their needs are beyond a one-time rule of help? You continue to help with compassion." Vincentians have already reached out to Fr. Tom's scheduler for a commitment to a March 21, 2020 Day of Reflection. It will be the ten year anniversary of the day of reflection, marking ten years of reanimating and rejuvenating the Conference members. Emphasizing spirituality, friendship and service is what keeps the mission of Vincentians alive, relevant and serving. We look forward to the next day of reflection and will remember our experiences until we meet with Fr. Tom again! Thank you to all who arranged this special day.



Cohort 62 Graduates with Pride

Congratulations to our Kitchen of Champions Cohort 62 who graduated on Thursday, March 21! Thank you to John Jones, Chef Armando, Chef Ryan, and everyone involved in putting on a special day and successful training, and to our speakers, Blase Bova, James Lee, and Chef Ian Johnson from Lost & Found Brewery in Oakland. Our Kitchen of Champions workforce training is a nine week program that teaches culinary skills and 'soft' skills needed to pursue a career in the industry. The graduates have all received their ServSafe food handlers certification so they are ready to work in any kitchen upon graduation. Many of our graduates secure jobs before graduating from the program, or shortly after. Our graduates have returned to the kitchen to serve in the weeks since graduation. Our graduates prove that they can achieve whatever they set their mind to, and we are so proud of their accomplishment! Cohort 63 began the week of March 18, and we are looking forward to watching them



PICTURED L-R: CHEF AND LEAD INSTRUCTOR ARMANDO CORPUS; GRADUATES SANDRA BLAKENLY, PIETER GALISTAN, AND MARGARET DUNSON.

Cohort 63 Serving Record Numbers

Our newest Kitchen of Champions cohort is in full swing. We are happy to welcome seven trainees to St. Vincent de Paul: Andrea Bradley, Michelle Fee, Mae Jones, Feng Lan, Liddon Levino, Yarazel Lopez and Brandon Penny. Trainees work in our kitchen five days per week to prepare over 500 meals per day for our dining room guests, as well as prepare treats for our volunteers and shelter and occasional catering



orders. We have enjoyed providing close to 600 meals on any given day, above our average meal count. So far, the menu has featured homemade biscuits and gravy, spaghetti and meatballs, BLT sandwiches with soup and more. Every cook earns their food safety certification so they can be prepared to work in any kitchen. We are excited to continue watching this group grow and sharpen their culinary skills. Their teamwork and commitment is inspiring. Keep it up, cohort 63!



The Oakland Volunteers Create Community



The Oakland Volunteers is a local group with a unique story. Eddy Lee began his work with SVdP years ago as an individual volunteer in the dining room. Once he realized the importance of our mission and how our services benefit our guests, he began bringing others to volunteer with him. He made a commitment to bring at least five volunteers to the dining room on the second Saturday of every month. This group is now called The Oakland Volunteers (TOV). "The formulation of The Oakland Volunteers was the result of friends, friends of friends and local volunteers coming together to serve their community with the understanding of the importance of SVDP's services and community impact," said Lee.

Lee also started a 501(c)3 nonprofit called Positivity Tribe, an organization that recognizes, promotes and creates movements of positivity. The Oakland Volunteers is a subgroup of Positivity Tribe. They recognize that they have an opportunity to spread positivity by helping feed and being in fellowship with their neighbors. Positivity Tribe is committed to providing one hundred wellness kits with hygiene products

every month to the homeless encampments all over Oakland. The group is run and funded by volunteers, who organize via word of mouth, over Facebook or by invitation to participate in community service and assemble the wellness kits at various homes in the community. The group always welcomes committed volunteers.

The Oakland Volunteers groups have been joining our dining room for a few years, and we are so grateful for their commitment to SVdP and our mission. "We are humbled by the dedication of the staff, volunteers (some we see often), the gratefulness and appreciation of the clients which continues to energize and keeps us coming back. We are grateful for the opportunity and ability to serve but truthfully, we feel that this is a never ending gift," Lee said. They are a demonstration of what the community can do when like-minded individuals come together for the greater good.



THE OAKLAND VOLUNTEERS SERVE IN OUR DINING ROOM ONCE EVERY MONTH, AND DISTRIBUTE HYGIENE KITS THROUGHOUT THE CITY THE WEEKEND FOLLOWING THEIR DINING ROOM VISIT.



Meet Our Staff: Marcus Carson

Shelter Lead Marcus Carson has been with St. Vincent de Paul since 2015. He began as a member of our former Transitional Employee workforce program. Carson originally heard about SVdP at a job fair, and earned his food handling certification while in prison. He intended to join the Kitchen of Champions, but came to SVdP when it was too late to join the current cohort. So, he worked at the Community Center front desk instead, meeting guests and helping them receive services. He was also



MARCUS CARSON (RIGHT) POSES WITH A SVDP GUEST, LARRY, WHO GENEROUSLY HELPS OUR STAFF SET UP THE COTS EVERY DAY.

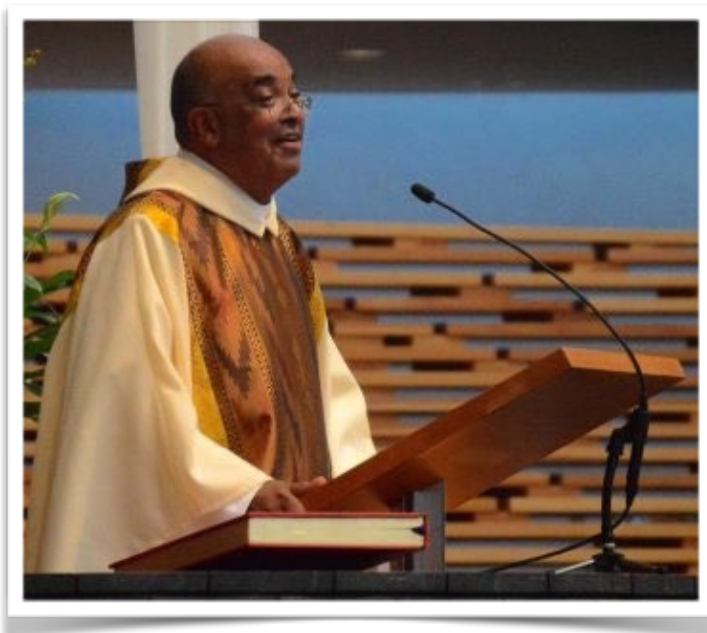
able to pick up a second shift in our shelter that winter as a shelter monitor. He is the only current shelter staff member who has returned to work in the shelter since the beginning. "I liked how I ran the community center and thought I could do a good job in the shelter, so I started there and kept coming back," Carson said, "I feel like this is where I need to be."

In addition to his role as a shelter lead, Carson is a community outreach worker for Operation Dignity. He was referred to the organization by a friend and was one of the first staff members of the Northgate Tuff Shed Village. Carson knows what it is like to not have secure housing. As a teenager, he left his home and couch surfed and slept in his car. As an adult, he spends his time on the ground with the community again, and this time is able to do his part to uplift them. "A lot of my skills come from being down. I chose to be homeless. Then, in prison, no one has money. Everyone is equal in that way. Because of that, you come together. You need to show people you care. Everyone needs that. In this field [of social services] you have to be firm and fair, otherwise you won't get love," Carson said. Carson has been able to use his voice on behalf of the community. Last year, he spoke to Mayor Libby Schaaf and made a case for expanding the shelter to be year-round. The 2018-2019 shelter is the first time SVdP has hosted a year-round shelter. "There were many people involved in the decision, but I feel like I had a part in that," Carson said. In the future, he'd like to see our shelter guests have access to our showers and fresh undergarments at night. He measures his success by how happy he is in doing his work. "If I feel good about something, I feel successful. I can watch someone enter the Tuff Sheds who really wanted to be there, or give out free ID vouchers, and I know that is a success because it was necessary and it made someone happy," Carson said. We are glad to have Marcus working with us and are proud of his journey.



Remembering Father Jay Matthews, 70

The Very Reverend James Vernon Matthews, Jr., rector of the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland, passed away on March 30, 2019. He was ordained on May 3, 1974 and became the first African-American priest in Northern California. He cited his "unique" experience as a black Catholic priest as an impetus to bring communities together, which was a focus of his work. He was a key leader throughout the Diocese of Oakland and served as chaplain to the Oakland police and fire departments and as vicar



and spiritual director of Black Catholics. He was the Parochial Administrator of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Oakland, and the former pastor of St. Benedict, where he served for 25 years. He worked closely with the City of Oakland and in the interfaith community with the goal of unifying communities. St. Vincent de Paul would like to offer deep condolences for all who knew and looked up to Fr. Jay. We pray for his soul to see God, for his surviving loved ones and for the Christ the Light Conference members, who are mourning his loss. We are inspired by great people like Fr. Jay. May he rest in peace.

SVdP Assists Job Seekers Nationally

People don't consider is how difficult it can be to find employment when you don't have a roof over your head, don't have clean clothes to wear and have lived with the constant expectation that you will fail. People who are not currently working are often overlooked. The Des Moines, Iowa Council of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul recognizes the challenges that come with being unemployed. Recently, they rolled out a new proactive approach to targeting those special populations and providing them with a unique opportunity to re-join the workforce. SVdP Alameda Community Engagement Manager John Sterns and Executive Director Blase Bova traveled to Des Moines to learn more about the Council's plan. We will continue to serve job-seekers through our Kitchen of Champions program and look forward to seeing our community inspire our work.



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
Marcell Lloyd	Shelter Manager	(510) 393-4259	mlloyd@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
Livermore Thrift Store	1817 Second St, Livermore, 94550	(925) 455-1104	lstore@svdp-alameda.org
Fremont Thrift Store	3777 Decoto Rd, Fremont, 94555	(510) 792-3711	fremont@svdp-alameda.org

In His Own Words: Michael

Michael had such love and support from his family and church that even as a child he helped and served others. As a father in his neighborhood, where there were few fathers, he took all the little neighborhood kids fishing and even taught the girls football. When these kids grew up they turned to him, and he provided them with jobs at the ball park where he still works as an electrician. These kids

rose up and felt pride in themselves, worked and felt that they were worth saving. Michael is a Navy veteran and was the head of the human relations committee. "I made sure everyone got along and worked in harmony. I can get along with anybody. I think God gave me some understanding to be sympathetic and compassionate," Michael said. He recently got housing and furniture from a veterans support group. He was so grateful for this help. Before this, he lived in our SVdP shelter. He still eats lunch in our dining room.

