

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors Quarterly: Fall 2018



# In His Own Words: Glen

"I think St. Vincent is good because a lot of people would be hungry without it. There are many services here. I am just beginning to find out about them. I am borderline diabetic and I have neuropathy. My feet are numb and sometimes I can't even feel them. It keeps my balance off. Sometimes when I lay down flat it feels like my feet are in the arctic. It is the nerves. It really is painful. It runs in my family. I am glad to know about the podiatry clinic here. And the medical van on Fridays.

"St. Vincent saves a lot of lives. I grew up in Oakland. I am inside right now. But I really need a senior bldg. A quiet place. I am not into hanging out on the streets. I have a social worker that I hope will help me. I have done my share of being homeless. It has been a journey. I thank God I am still here. My wish is that they had a dental service. That is what seniors really need. It is so expensive. I'd give anything to get that.

"I took some left turns when I should have made a right. Now I am trying to get back on track.

"You have to keep things in perspective. You have to learn how to live. You have to learn how to take the bitter with the sweet. A lot of people depend on St. Vincent. It helps people get through."

The SVdP motto is "neighbors helping neighbors." Join us and become part of the caring response to homeless women, children and men who are neighbors in need for all of us.

Visit [svdp-alameda.org/volunteer](http://svdp-alameda.org/volunteer) to learn more about how you can join us as a volunteer at our West Oakland direct service campus, or connect with a SVdP volunteer group (called a "conference") at your local Catholic parish. Help us to help others.



## Service, Hope, and Opportunity at St. Vincent de Paul



Volunteerism is the secret sauce of St. Vincent de Paul. From our network of 800 Vincentian volunteers who make home visits to bring food to families in need all over Alameda County, to the dedicated individual and group volunteers in our Dining Room, Community Center, and Women's Center, we run largely on volunteer energy, compassion, and love.

This model of engaged and dedicated volunteers creates a unique and positive outcome - for the guest or client, for our donors, and for the volunteers themselves.

Our guests benefit because the people who serve them at St. Vincent de Paul are there because they choose to be, purely out of the goodness of their hearts. Guests who need extra time, a listening ear, or a shoulder to cry on, can get it.

Our donors know that every dollar possible goes directly to those we serve, and not to pay a large staff to do our work. Our volunteers save us hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in labor costs.

And the volunteers who work with St. Vincent de Paul often remind us that they get more out of being here than the people they help. They thank *us* for the *opportunity to serve*, which to me means that our system is working beautifully.

Whether or not you have time to be a St. Vincent de Paul volunteer, we so appreciate your support in all its forms: financial, gifts-in-kind such as clothing, your leadership and ideas, your spreading the word about our work, and your prayers. Thank you for being a key part of the goodness that our model offers to all who help, and are helped, by it.

In service,

Executive Director  
St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County

## News Briefs

■ The year 2019 is approaching and many of us are reviewing our plans for year-end giving. Nonprofit service organizations traditionally receive nearly half of their charitable contributions during November and December. We invite you to consider a gift to St. Vincent de Paul to help put our mission into action by serving the impoverished living in Oakland and throughout Alameda County. Our work is especially important at this time as more and more families and individuals face housing and health care costs that are rising at an alarming rate. Homelessness, mental illness, hunger, joblessness, addiction - these are just a few of the challenges faced by those we serve. Your generous gifts sustain the essential services we provide. We couldn't do our work without you.

■ The Clothing Closet at our main West Oakland campus provides women and men with clothing, shoes and accessories. For more information about making a clothing donation and/or volunteering to help collect, sort and display Clothing Closet donations, contact John Sterns our community engagement manager. (See back page for contact information.)

■ Check out our Facebook page for more updates about our service throughout Alameda County: <https://www.facebook.com/SVdPalameda>



# The Elements of Neighbors Helping Neighbors



**G** **Guests: Gloria.** "I sleep on the streets. Last night a man came over and stood right by my feet. It woke me up. It was scary. It was past 12 o'clock. I asked him to please go over on the other side. I am not used to living like that. I want go back to North Carolina, but all my ID was stolen. I am waiting on my replacement. I am a Vietnam veteran and I was a civil service worker downtown."



**Vi** **Vincentians: The Assumption Conference** is one of our most active, with twenty-five active members. The Conference's services extend throughout San Leandro and the desert areas in Oakland, places where a SVdP Conference presence is needed. As a group, the Conference conducts between fifteen and twenty home visits per month, where they bring a food box to the resident and spend in fellowship and assess their situation and what needs the Conference can support.



**St** **Staff: Elena Laron**, Payroll/Accounts Payable Clerk, started working at SVdP in September of 1988 as a receptionist. After one year, she was promoted to an accounting clerk. In the late 80s and early 90s, Laron calculated payroll by hand and using typewriters for 150 employees. Laron has seen many changes over the years, like switching from paper to computer programs, to working for seven executive directors, to changing offices to the West Oakland campus in 2016. "Everything was a learning process, but we were all learning together," Laron said.



**Vo** **Volunteers: John Proctor** grew up donating clothes to SVdP. It wasn't until he became a successful architect and worked with an architectural firm for over 20 years that he resumed his relationship with SVdP by serving in our free dining room. "Right away, I fell in love with this place. So I've been coming here once a week for two and a half years," Proctor said. Proctor wants to use his architectural skills to create living communities for homeless people in Oakland that include wraparound social services.



# Meet Our Staff: Lu Cuevas

In 1997, Lu Cuevas, our Spirituality, Formation, and Extension Coordinator, joined the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul as a Vincentian volunteer at All Saints Parish in Hayward. Lu saw women starting to make announcements in mass, and decided to join them in their ministry. "I saw someone [speaking to the church] who looked like me for the first time," Cuevas said. After a few years, Cuevas worked with Vincentian leadership to create her full time position, which is essential in connecting our community of Vincentians with our three Alameda County campuses, as well as ensure that everyone is receiving adequate support.

Cuevas has a long history of service, having honorably served in the U.S. Army as an EMT and dental hygienist from 1973-1979.

Lu is loved by the SVdP community and is a team player passionate about our mission. "Lu lives the Vincentian mission through all aspects of her life. She is a true blessing for the lives she touches," John Sterns, Community Engagement Manager, said.

Cuevas earned a master's degree from Holy Names University in Pastoral Ministry. Her education helps to guide her in being a spiritual advisor for our conference members. "The best part of my job is being present to the person standing before me. They're a present to me because of their presence," Cuevas said. As someone whose family benefitted from St. Vincent de Paul's services growing up, Cuevas is glad to be able to return the favor to the community. "God opened a door, and I was faithful enough to step through it," Cuevas said.



## Fall and Winter Giving Drive Opportunities

**Host a drive for toys.** We will once again ask our community partners and individual supporters to host drives for new toys that we will give out at our Christmas open house. Each year more than 250 children and 70 families receive these gifts as part of our program to make the holidays a celebration for everyone.

**Host a drive for warm coats.** Winter is an especially difficult time for those living on the streets. The warm coats that we receive are immediately used by those we serve. Last year, you donated more than 300 coats to our clients and we hope to meet or exceed that number this year.

Please contact John Sterns, our community engagement manager, if you are interested in hosting a drive, volunteering or make a financial contribution. (See back page for contact information.)



## Donor Spotlight: Nike San Leandro

The San Leandro Marina Square Nike Outlet Store generously donated over 125 pair of new and gently used shoes of various sizes to our West Oakland campus's monthly podiatry clinic. In the month of June, almost 45 pairs of Nike shoes were distributed, leaving our patients with a new, comfortable, and stylish shoe for the summer.

Donations are arranged by our dedicated volunteer, Janet Waring, who is a retired nurse and coordinates the podiatry clinic with St. Vincent de Paul and the Order of Malta. Waring spends hours each month reaching out to local shoe stores, sports teams, businesses, and individuals for donations of shoes, socks, medical and cleaning supplies, and more. The Nike store's generous donations will surely be used in the

coming months, and we are grateful for a new partnership with them.

The Nike store staff also visited and volunteered in the June podiatry clinic, expressed an interest in serving in the free dining room in the future. Thank you Team Nike!



## Donor Spotlight: Wells Fargo

The Wells Fargo team provided a pleasant surprise to the West Oakland campus in late July. The team was scheduled to give a "soft skills" presentation to our Kitchen of Champions cohort, but took advantage of their trip to our campus to bring the products of their region-wide diaper drive and



present a check for general operating support. Their visit brought together our community engagement, workforce, and client service departments through their gifts of money, an informational workshop and more than 4,000 diapers in various sizes to our women's center, which immediately helped many families with young children.

We appreciate the Wells Fargo team for their incredible amount of support, and for showing the many ways to give and make an impact at SVdP. We are happy to work with such a thoughtful and committed community partner and look forward to a successful relationship with the company. Thank you, Wells Fargo!



# Back to School Open House

SVdP hosted a terrific back-to-school open house on Saturday August 4. Sixty-seven families attended the event and backpacks filled with supplies according to grade level were distributed to 172 children from kindergarten to twelfth grade. An additional 25 backpacks with universal supplies were assembled and will be distributed to families on our waiting list.

An event like this cannot happen without the gifts of time and talent given by our volunteers, whom we deeply appreciate. We had three craft tables and a book table helmed by our students from Beth McKnight's Pledge to Humanity group, along with community volunteers. A special lunch was provided to families and children and the menu included homemade pizza. We gratefully thank our volunteers, including Claire O'Reilly, our lead events volunteer.

In addition to our volunteers, special thanks to our generous donors who made the event possible, including conferences from St. Benedict, St. Theresa, St. John the Baptist, St. James the Apostle, St. Augustine, St. Leander, Holy Spirit, Cathedral of Christ the Light, Church of the Assumption, All Saints and St. Philip Neri/St. Albert the Great.

Thank you all for making the event a success and for providing much-needed assistance to our families and children.





# The Gift of Literature: Stories of Second-Hand Treasures

By: Juli Jugan and Jessica Mott

Stories are an important way for Saint Vincent de Paul to connect to the community by showcasing our clients, staff, programs, and volunteers. To two of our star volunteers, their stories are greatly influenced by books. Renee Matsumoto and Marne Chapin Schreiber are San Leandro natives who have graciously dedicated their time to organizing the book department of the Fremont thrift store. Renee came across the thrift store due to her passion for reading. She says, "I love to read, and when I worked in Fremont, I found the SVdP thrift store. I was able to buy many books through the years at very reasonable prices. When I retired, I had made up my mind to volunteer at SVdP, but I really only wanted to work in the book department." Renee's wishes came true and she began volunteering in 2015, when the book department was much smaller, and, though enjoyable, it was too much work for her alone.

Fortunately, last year, Renee's "prayers were answered" and Marne joined the team. Marne has had a life full of book-related jobs, and the two became fast friends. She has been a library clerk at an elementary school and a high school, volunteered as a book mender and docent tour guide at Fremont's main library, and became the publicity chair for the Fremont

Friends of the Library. She worked as the publicity chair for twenty three years and had hoped to return to her volunteer work at the Fremont library upon retirement. Unfortunately, they weren't looking for volunteers at the time. According to Marne, "[...] when God shut that door, he opened another one for me directly to Patty and right into the Saint Vincent de Paul thrift store in Fremont and their thousands of books!" Marne fell in love with the opportunity to work in her own "private library."

Together this team is unbeatable. They both agree that one of the best parts is meeting and working with each other. Renee comments, "Marne loves books as much as I do. We make a good team." Marne returns the sentiment, saying, "We think so much alike and get along so well. It is a privilege to volunteer alongside her." Presently, Marne and Renee only volunteer one day a week, but they are hoping to expand to two in the near future. The love and passion for this thrift store is apparent. Marne tenderly refers to the store as "our happy place."





# Celebrating Eight Standout Vincentians

St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County awarded Top Hat and Vincentian Service Awards to eight longtime volunteers and members of the organization, called Vincentians. Janet Graham from St. Michael in Livermore and Steve Tedesco from St. Bede in Hayward were awarded the organization's highest honor, the Top Hat Award, to signify their service in their parish and local communities and following the organization's motto, "neighbors helping neighbors."

Six other Vincentians, Chuck Deckert from Catholic Community of Pleasanton, Rod Andrade from St. Raymond in Dublin, Ken Goode from St. Joachim in Hayward, Louie Barranco from St. John the Baptist in San Lorenzo, Trish Ferrari from Our Lady of Grace in Castro Valley, and Nancy Hollister from Church of the Transfiguration in Castro Valley, were awarded the Vincentian Service Award, marking their commitment to spirituality, fellowship and service.

Awardees devote countless hours to leadership roles within their parishes' Vincentian Conferences, conducting home visits to neighbors in need, and volunteering at the St. Vincent de Paul direct service campus in West Oakland. The awards were given at a celebration at the Church of the Transfiguration in Castro Valley on May 18. Refreshments were freshly prepared by the current Kitchen of Champions cohort. The gathering also coincided with SVdP's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of service in Alameda County.

Our 80th Anniversary Mass will be held at the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland on Saturday, September 15, at 5:30 p.m. with a reception to follow at the SVdP West Oakland Campus dining room at 675 23rd Street. There will be refreshments and opportunities for fellowship among staff, volunteers, and Vincentians. If you would like to attend, please contact John Sterns. (See back page for contact information.)



*TOP HAT AWARD WINNER JANET GRAHAM RECEIVES THE SOCIETY'S HIGHEST HONOR ON MAY 18TH.*



*TOP HAT AWARD WINNER STEVE TEDESCO RECEIVES THE SOCIETY'S HIGHEST HONOR ON MAY 18TH.*



# KoC Celebrates Three New Graduates

After nine weeks of culinary training, the three mighty members of cohort 58 finished strong with a special graduation ceremony.



Wilton Stephens, Willie Reeves, and Tammy Samuels deserve recognition for their amazing natural cooking abilities and perseverance throughout the program.

John Jones, workforce coordinator, is hopeful for future cohorts to graduate with the same skill level and passion so we can “continue the good work and celebrations.”

Each graduate has returned to the SVdP kitchen at least once to cook with the new cohort and show them the ropes, and we hope to see their faces again so we can wish them continued success.

# Cohort 59 Showing Terrific Teamwork

The newest Kitchen of Champions has been working hard in the kitchen for close to a month. Before Cohort 58 graduated, the two cohorts were on campus working together and learning from each other. Cohort 59 even got the opportunity to go to the last graduation, giving them a glimpse of the kind of celebration they deserve for completing the program.

So far, there are six trainees who have undergone four weeks of kitchen training and soft skills lessons, including a budgeting workshop by Wells Fargo. Chef Armando Corpus, kitchen manager, values the teamwork of this cohort and appreciates their willingness to learn. “The thing about this group is they cooperate really well. They have different personalities and are different people, but they show how to share space and share responsibility,” Corpus said. We look forward to more great work and synergy from Cohort 59!



# CSM Crosses Borders to Serve

We can always count on the local chapter of City Service Mission to provide groups of wonderful volunteers to the SVdP dining room. City Service Mission is "a generation of God's people equipped to lead, compelled to serve, and committed for a lifetime to the often-forgotten in their communities." This July, these volunteers traveled thousands of miles collectively to get to us and put their faith into action. The local CSM organization hosts young leaders of faith in their community home near Lake Merritt. Each day, the group embarks on service missions throughout the Bay Area, never knowing their schedule day to day to keep them focused on the present moment.



In July, SVdP hosted over 50 CSM volunteers on six different days who were from out of state and out of the country. The volunteers traveled to us from Manitoba, Canada, Highlands Ranch, Colorado, and Rainbow City, Alabama. Each day, the volunteers brought smiles and positive attitudes, and Chef Armando and the Kitchen of Champions cohort showed gratitude for their work by providing them with flowers, drinks, and snacks at the end of the day. This gave the groups the chance to debrief after their service and relax. SVdP appreciates the constant commitment from CSM



and is glad to host volunteers who prove that there is global solidarity surrounding poverty and homelessness. "CSM is always great to work with because they have such positive attitudes. Having them come to SVdP from different countries and different parts of the country to serve is energizing because it's showing that other communities recognize that we must step up and help each other out," volunteer coordinator Katie Troy said.



# 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
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Carmen Jones-Weaks	Human Resources Manager	(510) 385-8934	cjonesweaks@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

## In His Own Words: Will

"I like to talk with young people. I tell them when they see a drug addict they might think, 'Oh that could never happen to me.' But it can. I wanted them to look around see that all these people are here at St. Vincent for a reason. You can take one turn and it can effect your whole direction in life. I tell them to be careful and wise in their decisions. Be thoughtful. And when they know when they are taking the wrong turn, turn around.

"If you see a woman on the bus and she has been drinking you might judge her but what you don't know is her child died in her arms. You don't know what she has been going through.

"I was born in Oakland. I have lived other places but I am back here now in a little tiny studio. This is my hometown. I come in to St.Vincent when I need something to eat. I do electrical and plumbing and have been doing it most of my life. I learned the trade from watching.

"It was my biggest blessing to have both of my parents around. My father used to say, 'I am here to teach you, not to be your friend.' My parents loved both my brother and me very much.

"We used to listen to the older people. It's different now. I'm glad to be at this advanced age. I am tired. It's been a great ride. I have had my ups and downs. I have been very blessed in my life."

