

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Quarterly: Fall 2019



In His Own Words: Marlon



Marlon is a regular guest at the St. Vincent de Paul West Oakland direct service campus. He manages to keep himself occupied all day at the center by helping clean in the morning and evening, eating in the dining room and socializing. He has made a community at SVdP. Marlon's artistic passions prove the value of hearing someone's story. Please read more about Marlon below, in his own words.

"I graduated high school in Memphis, Tennessee in 1990. I did drafting work

after that. I was in the army national guard from 1989-1991 and received an honorable discharge. I went to college in Wichita, Kansas. I graduated from cooking school in San Diego in 1991. It seems like I've lived all over America by now.

"I am a highly disciplined, motivated person and I work well with others. I come to St. Vincent de Paul and help clean up at the end of the day. I go to the Berkeley drop-in center and to a drop-in center in San Francisco and volunteer there every month, too. I've been going to all these places almost for five years now. I do handyman work, sanitation, landscaping and street cleaning.

"I want everyone to be good to each other. I want to inspire others. I want to prevent people from hurting each other by being an example. There's so much hurt in the world and in our community.

"I go to church organization functions. I am a painter. I draw. I have paintings on canvas that I have completed at the Berkeley drop-in center. I brought the paintings in at St. Vincent de Paul to show people. They are all for sale. I try to use a lot of color to show how I imagine paradise. I want to display my work so people can see it. I'm proud of it. I'd be willing to sell to anyone who is interested and likes my work. That will allow me to have supplies to create more. I write poetry, sing, rap and dance. My motto is 'love conquers hate.' I know love is the answer. May God lead and protect us all."



Service, Hope and Opportunity at St. Vincent de Paul



We have a new social enterprise, which everyone here at St. Vincent de Paul is excited about.

Champions Catering is an outgrowth of our Kitchen of Champions culinary arts training program, and it's now ready to roll. This program can raise funds to support all our programs, and also teach our students new skills in preparing and serving specialty dishes for larger groups.

Our volunteers are excited because we've been making such delicious creations and building a unique Spanish-flavored menu, and because they love working with Chef Javier, who's heading up the catering program.

Our managers are excited that we're investing in an enterprise to help us remain fiscally sustainable for many years to come.

I'm excited about *Champions Catering* because we're well positioned for success: we have great culinary talent from two exceptional chefs; we have a large commercial kitchen that has a little down time; we receive lots of donated food and have labor available at low cost from our K of C students who are learning on the job; and we have a strong mission tie-in to make us the logical choice for anyone who wants to change the world with their pocketbook.

You can help *Champions Catering* succeed. Just mention us to someone you know who may be planning a party, has a work group that likes lunches delivered, or needs a caterer for anything else. Please give interested friends this phone number and web page to check our prices and request our services: 510-681-3301 and svdp-alameda.org/catering. Thank you!

In service,

Executive Director, St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County

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.

■ 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 services throughout Alameda County: facebook.com/svdpalameda.

■ Reserve Champions Catering for your next event! We can provide food for any occasion, from office parties to weddings to church events. Chef Javier and his staff of Kitchen of Champions graduates will work with you to develop a custom menu, or you can order from our Spanish-style menu. To see the menu and submit an order request, visit: svdp-alameda.org/catering, call 510-681-3301, or email championscatering@svdp-alameda.org.



The Elements of Neighbors Helping Neighbors



G **Guests: Darnell.** “When I was staying at the shelter, I saw a sign about Kitchen of Champions and I said ‘I have to do something with myself.’ Little did I know it would be such a rewarding experience. It gave breath to my life. I’ve been happy ever since. Sometimes St. Vincent calls me to do catering jobs and they pay me. Now I’m volunteering here and still staying in the shelter or in my car. Bay Area Community Services is helping me with housing. Here at St. Vincent’s I can say that, despite all the stress in my life, I’m able to breathe a lot better.”



Vi **Vincentians: SVdP Contra Costa County.** Over 280 Vincentians, volunteers, board members and staff gathered in the parish hall of St. Stephen Parish in Walnut Creek on June 29 to celebrate the 55th anniversary of St. Vincent de Paul in Contra Costa County. Awards were presented and a meal was shared in fellowship. Congratulation to SVdP Contra Costa on this amazing milestone! We pray for you as you continue to faithfully fulfill the mission of the Society.



St **Staff: Jesus.** Jesus Fernandez began working in our Transitional Employment program in July 2015. He was then able to apply to be a driver in the Food Locker and receive full time work. “I enjoy my job because I’m always busy. I enjoy going to the stores to pick up food and working with the helpful staff,” Fernandez said. He also delivers food to Conferences throughout Alameda County to use in their respective food pantries. Fernandez and Food Locker Supervisor Ray Carney work well together. “I can’t say a bad thing about him,” Fernandez said.



V **Volunteers: Masjid Al Salam Mosque.** In honor of Ramadan, mosque members prepared food for 100 people in our shelter and served for one hour alongside Mayor Libby Schaaf. “We welcome all who walk through our doors. We are fortunate to have such a rich variety of cultures and religions in our direct service campus. We learn from each other,” Executive Director Blase Bova said. SVdP always welcomes people of all faiths to join us for service or any event.



Champions Catering Raises Thousands

On Saturday, July 20, Champions Catering hosted its first ever fundraiser at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Hall in Oakland. Thank you to everyone involved—from buying a ticket, volunteering, preparing the food, setting up the space, donating, to cleaning up afterwards—every person made a positive impact for our newest social enterprise! We were happy to see the SVdP community come together in support for the program.

The food received amazing feedback from guests, and Chef Javier even shared his “mother of all recipes” for arroz con leche. We look forward to the next fundraiser. We would like to ask our community to spread the word about Champions Catering. Please share this information: to order from Champions Catering for your next event, visit our website at svdp-alameda.org/catering, email championscatering@svdp-alameda.org, or call 510-681-3301.





Solar Chargers to Bring Light to Guests



Mother-daughter duo Failin Au and Claire Draeger brought a gift of six solar chargers to the West Oakland direct service campus. This is a pilot project to help guests stay connected with the world. Failin's 17 year-old daughter, Claire, wrote surveys to give to the charger recipients. The results will be used as data to present to potential donors to buy more chargers. The devices are useful for homeless people who do not have electricity or ports to

charge their devices. In a society that relies on cell phones for business, social life and more, it is important to ensure that you have battery power to move forward. "I just want to be able to help one person. If I can do that, I will be happy," Claire said. Failin and Claire also brought us handmade tie blankets, which they help make to donate to local organizations. Homelessness is a crisis that brings about problems that people won't anticipate until they experience it. Thank you for showing us more creative ways to support the community.

Shelter Offers Secure Daytime Storage

Our shelter now offers storage boxes for our guests. One problem that shelter guests face is having to sell or get rid of some of their large possessions before entering our facility because we have limits on what guests can bring with them. Providing storage for shelter guests allows them to have a secure space to keep bulky bags while they go about their day. Carrying your life on your shoulders can be very tiring, and can garner unwanted attention from the public. Guests can leave their belongings with us as they go to work, an interview, a family gathering, or just want a break from carrying everything. Each guest can receive a clear storage box, with their face and name on the outside, that is stored on a rack behind locked gates within our staff parking lot. We are happy to provide this service as we strive to make our shelter more comfortable for all.



Home Visit Finds Dog an Unlikely Home



Home visits are how Vincentians respond to calls for assistance from our neighbors. This is the story of one of the most memorable ones.

On a cold December day, former Conference President Gary Flinders and his partner traveled to a home at E. 19th Street in Oakland. The sheriff had just left the couple a 5-day eviction notice. The couple had a 10-year-old son and a small dog, Pookums, along with many belongings. They decided to contact the East Bay Community Law

Group for advice on how to obtain an extension on the eviction. They were then accepted to a place that didn't allow pets. They sadly asked Flinders to find their dog a home. On the day of their move, everyone was in tears as they bade farewell to their precious dog. It was love at first sight for Flinders. Once arriving home, he shared his feelings with his wife, Lita, who agreed to keep Pookums. It was decided to change her name to Rosalie after Sister Rosalie Rendu, who guided our founder, Blessed Frederic Ozanam, to do home visits as the primary ministry for SVdP 186 years ago. "We thank God for Rosalie, our home visit dog," Flinders said.

Divine Intervention at Assumption

By Andy Stark, Assumption Conference

A chance meeting in a market. A random phone call, and extraordinary timing culminating in comfort and joy for a needy senior citizen.

Recently, The Church of the Assumption Conference received an urgent request from a 64-year-old disabled Oakland resident who came to us through a chance conversation at the market with one of our members. Her bed was beyond repair and she requested a hospital bed. Several



calls and online searches for a donated or affordable bed were unsuccessful. Within hours there was an inquiry on the help line. A gentleman explained that his 105-year-old mother passed away the previous week. He had a hospital bed to donate. A match made in heaven. We put together a crew of three and a pick up truck. Two days later, we delivered the bed to her home. Our crew, with help from her niece, assembled the bed. When we left, she was on the bed, remote control in hand, joyfully riding it up and down. Full disclosure: the niece was the brains of the crew. Without her we would still be there. A chance meeting brought the need to us. At the same time a hospital bed was dropped in our lap. Coincidence? Possibly. Divine Intervention? Why not?



Google Group of 40 Beautifies Campus

We hosted a volunteer group of 40 from Google at our West Oakland direct service campus. They helped create a brand new garden on the patio for our dining room guests to enjoy. The group also painted three different colors on the hallway wall outside of the kitchen prep room to streamline our garbage sorting efforts. They painted one green for compost, one blue for recycling and one grey for landfill. Thank you to Wes



who came up with the idea, in hopes of making it easier for volunteers and staff to remember to separate our compost, recycling and trash. In addition, the group organized the walk-in freezer, deep cleaned the dish busing station in the dining room, and cleaned out the three walk-in refrigerators. "Having 40 volunteers from Google allowed us to work on projects that we'd always wanted to do, but hadn't been able to give priority to," Volunteer Coordinator Katie Troy said. "They helped us create a more beautiful and functional campus for staff, volunteers and guests and we look forward to working with them again."

Thank you to HandsOn Bay Area for connecting us with Google, and thank you to everyone who helped



make these projects run smoothly and made the group feel comfortable and welcomed. And of course, thank you to all of the Google volunteers who sacrificed their time to help us beautify our campus! These projects would not be completed without your help, creativity and enthusiasm. We hope to see you again soon!



Inside Our West Oakland Food Locker

The food locker at the West Oakland direct service campus processed approximately 500,000 pounds of food in the past year. Food locker employees Ray Carney and Jesus Fernandez pick up donations from grocery stores like Safeway and Lucky's and bring them back to SVdP for sorting and inspection.

Fernandez inspects dry goods to make sure they are unopened and unexpired and ready for redistribution. Besides being used to cook our daily free meals, food locker donations are given to Vincentian Conferences, who then share them within their own food pantries and while on home visits. Conferences place orders with SVdP, and our food locker staff delivers the orders to them. The work of our food locker staff allows us to feed our neighbors while reclaiming food that would be thrown away by grocery stores, downsizing food waste in our community.



Women's Center Uplifts Local Families



The West Oakland direct service campus Women's Center serves hundreds of women each month for showers, laundry, clothing, feminine hygiene products and more. Many women bring their children, and we have a playroom to help them pass the time while their parents receive services. On average, 75 families each month utilize the largest family resource, lovingly called the "baby room," where people receive diapers, children's clothing, family-sized hygiene products, baby food and formula. Families are also serviced through our seasonal open houses. This year, over 180 children

will receive backpacks loaded with school supplies for free. Women's Center Coordinator, Jasmine Rogers, believes children bring life to the center. "The children are coming here to receive help even if they don't know they are. They always end up leaving happy," Rogers said. Rogers has hopes to make the Women's Center more fun for clients by hosting arts and crafts for the children and game days and special catered luncheons for the women. "You don't have to be homeless to utilize our services. It's beautiful that people can come here and lead a more comfortable life by utilizing our services. It is a very welcoming and safe zone," Rogers said. We are always accepting donations of diapers, wipes and hygiene products from the community. Thank you all who make the Women's Center a special place.



Warriors Donate Shoes for Podiatry Clinic

Thank you to the Golden State Warriors for donating 150 pairs of brand new shoes to our podiatry clinic last month! The shoes are all men's from brands like Nike and Adidas, and will be distributed in our free podiatry clinic on July 17. Every patient in the clinic has their feet washed, visits the podiatrist, and is fitted for a new pair of shoes and socks. Products such as insoles and creams are also distributed for those who need it. It is a drop-in clinic and no insurance is required or asked for. We see 40 patients each month. The podiatry clinic is a partnership with the Order of Malta Northern California Clinic and is necessary for those living on the street, whose feet guide them through life, but often are neglected or treated as a low priority. The difference a new pair of shoes and a doctor's work can make is incredible. Thank you to the Warriors for providing us with high-quality shoes for our patients!



Park Day School Returns for End of Year

A group of Park Day School students and two of their teachers returned to the dining room for the third time this school year to get in one last service opportunity before summer break. The students were able to reflect on their experiences throughout the year, noticing how the service has impacted them and how they've grown as individuals. The students shared some of their reflections with Volunteer Coordinator Katie Troy. We hope to see Park Day students return to the dining room next school year.

"I personally had a lot of fun washing dishes. At first, I was unsure what to expect because of the stereotypes against what a homeless center is like. In the end, though, I liked it." - Glenn Mah



"Before we started, the staff was helpful and nice. The first time I was the thumper and there was not much interaction with people. The second time, I was in the family room and had conversations with people and we got to know each other. The guests were equally as interested in us as we were in them." - Theo Darci-Maher



St. Michael's Staffs Help Desk in Livermore

The St. Michael's Conference in Livermore has been running a drop-in Help Desk in the Livermore thrift store for years. Open three days per week, the Help Desk is a place where people can come to receive assistance with bills like water and PG&E, receive household items like mattresses from the store and get thrift store gift cards to shop on their own. The desk is staffed by two Vincentians at a time, the same structure as home visits. The St. Michael's Conference funds all the projects, and even gives out gas cards and hotel vouchers. In addition, the St. Michael's Conference performs home visits in the community. The drop-in desk is a good resource for people who are homeless and able-bodied, and is a useful alternative to a traditional home visit. "The St. Michael's Conference is needed. We look forward to them coming out to the store each week," Livermore Store

Manager Jamie Aubry said. This is a creative way for Vincentians to reach their communities. We thank the Conference for their great work in Livermore!



Fremont Window Displays Increase Sales



The Fremont Thrift Store's sales techniques brought in record numbers last month. Their July display was decorated in the holiday spirit for 4th of July. Thanks to the Fremont Store team for their efforts in brightening up the window.

Sales for this July increased 52% from last year. Donations increased last month, and many donors turned into customers. "It's been a blessing. We've been very fortunate," Rene Campbell, store manager, said. The theme for August is "fall wedding." This year, the store staff hopes to add

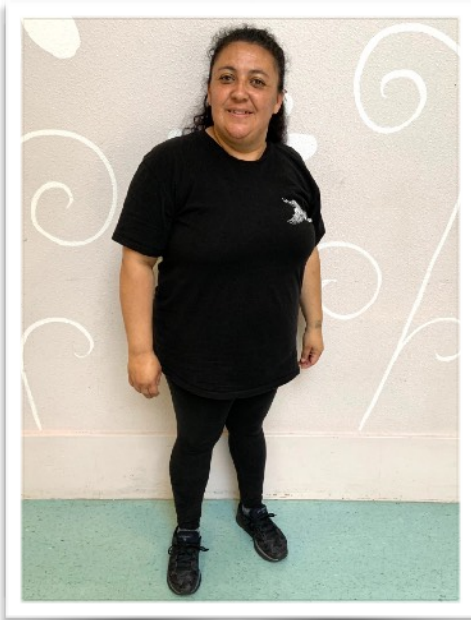
fitting rooms and to employ more staff. If you are interested in providing a donation, working or volunteering at either Fremont or Livermore thrift store, please reach out using the contact information on the back page of this newsletter.



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	wepalmquist@gmail.com
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
Champions Catering	www.svdp-alameda.org/catering	510-681-3301	championscatering@svdp-alameda.org

In Her Own Words: Flo



"I've been coming to St. Vincent de Paul since January 2016. I go to the Women's Center and eat in the dining room sometimes. I keep coming back because the staff is kind and understanding. I utilize the resources because otherwise I wouldn't be able to afford to pay for it. I get coffee and pastries in the mornings as well. I also receive resources for my daughter. My daughter started officially volunteering in the Women's Center. She likes it a lot. She told me she's going to work here during the school year. She'll be able to add the experience to her resumé. I can't volunteer since I use the services here, but I like to help by sweeping and cleaning out the showers at the end of the day.

"My career goal is to do mediation care. I have care and compassion for families that are not heard or understood and I want to be there for them. When I come to SVdP, it makes me feel

good. It makes me more aware of how important I am and how important other people are to this world. It gives me a feeling of self-worth. Before, I didn't have a lot of that. I was very insecure and protective of my daughter. But now, I can let my guard down and trust people while still having healthy boundaries."

