

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors Quarterly: Summer 2019



# 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 neighborhood kids fishing and even taught the girls football. When these kids grew up they turned to him, he spoke with them and he got them jobs at the ball park where he still works as an electrician. The kids rose up and felt pride in themselves, worked and realized their worth. Michael is a Navy veteran.



"My job was 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."

He recently got housing and furniture from a veterans' support group. He is so grateful for this help. Before this, he slept in our shelter. He still eats lunch in our dining room. Michael's youngest son was killed in Hunter's Point where they lived. They said it was a case of mistaken identity.

"But what difference did it really make? My beloved son was dead. My son had just said, 'Dad, I want to be just like you.' I told him 'No! I don't want you to be like me! I want you to be twice as good as I am.' The pain of this loss is indescribable."

Michael learned not to ask God for what he wants, but to ask God for what he needs. The people he helped as children still turn to him, and he teaches them this lesson.

"That is why I am here. To give people some encouragement, to show them that they are not forgotten. Every day God gives you another chance to get it right."



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



Homelessness is on everyone's mind this month. The new EveryOne Home count of homeless people in Alameda County was 8,022, which is 43 percent higher than the last count in 2017. For those who spend time on the streets and sidewalks of Alameda County, this comes as no surprise. Nor does the primary cause: fewer and fewer people can afford to rent a home here. The median rent for an apartment in our county is \$3,100 per month or \$37,200 per year. At Oakland's new minimum wage, \$13.80 per hour, you'd earn \$28,704 per year. No wonder more people are becoming homeless every day. In fact each year, while about 1,500 people **exit** homelessness, another 3,000 people **enter** homelessness for the first time.

We're proud to promote homeless solutions, through our free dining room, our emergency shelter that sleeps 100 and offers case management to move into housing, our drop-in centers, and our network of volunteers who offer eviction prevention through rent and utility payments. But this work alone is not enough to stem the tide.

The faith community is working together to turn these numbers around. The Interfaith Council of Alameda County met at SVdP in May to move plans forward for safe car parking lots, tiny homes, and mobile services on church properties. The Masjid Al Salam mosque prepared a special Ramadan dinner a week later for our guests, and brought over 25 volunteers to help serve it.

It's this "all hands on deck" energy from people of faith which keeps us working harder than ever to bring dignity and safety to all those we serve.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Blase Bova".

Blase Bova

Executive Director, St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County

## News Briefs

■ Volunteering can be one of the most rewarding experiences we have in life. It can feel good to serve with others and often we make lifelong friends with other volunteers. At SVdP, we rely on volunteers to provide services to those in need. If you already volunteer for us, thank you for your contribution. And please consider bringing along a friend to volunteer with you or sign up for another day to serve. If you don't already volunteer with us, please give it a try and contact our volunteer coordinator for more information (see back page for contact information). We couldn't do it without you.

■ Gifts of stock can not only help SVdP, they can also - at times - benefit the tax situation for the donor. If you are considering a stock gift, please call our community engagement manager (see back page for contact information) and find out how your stock gift can help those we serve.

■ Generous supporters donated 55 cars in 2018, contributing a total of \$31,000 to St. Vincent de Paul's services! It's easy to donate your car, truck, motorcycle, RV, or boat with CARS, a nationwide 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Remember to provide an Alameda County zip code to ensure St. Vincent de Paul receives your generous donation. For more information, call **800-322-8284**.



# The Elements of Neighbors Helping Neighbors



**G** **Guests: Sylvester.** "I always came to St. Vincent between November and April and I would sleep underneath the cross. But in April the shelter would close, and I would need to sleep under a bus stop. It was hard. A man tried to attack me there. Now the shelter is open year-round and what a blessing that is. Now if you need a place to lay your head you know you can count on St. Vincent. I am a Vietnam veteran. I served three tours of duty. I just got a place for homeless vets with medical problems and I can stay for two years!"



**Vi** **Vincentians: "Our Faith In Action."** The movie "Our Faith in Action" premiered in March on EWTN, Global Catholic Network. According to the SVdP national website, "It captures the spirit and charisma of a 400-year old French saint through the examples of charity by nearly 100,000 dedicated men and women of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. The feature-length presentation tells the spiritually uplifting, personal stories of our Vincentians in direct service with people in need. country." Find it on YouTube!



**St** **Staff: Simon.** Simon began volunteering at the West Oakland direct service campus in November and got hired in December as a janitor. He works to ensure our space is clean and maintained to serve clients, volunteers and staff. He brought his wife to work with him one day, and she loved SVdP so much, she joined Kitchen of Champions. He cites his family as his motivation for staying at St. Vincent de Paul and for pursuing his goals. "I know how to maintain myself now. Family motivates me. They want to see my accomplishments."



**V** **Volunteers: Sigma Delta Upsilon.** Members of the Sigma Delta Upsilon fraternity at California State University, East Bay joined our dining room for service for the first time in February. They have a student leader who organizes service trips for the members and visits to many local organizations. We work with CSUEB, UC Berkeley, Saint Mary's College, and more with a variety of service opportunities, from kitchen work to grant writing. We welcome students of all ages to serve with us!



# Many Thanks to Our Incredible Volunteers

Thank you to all who came to our Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon on April 28! We hosted 128 volunteers and Vincentians from around Alameda County for lunch and awards. We recognized volunteers who have been serving with us from one to over thirty years with special SVdP pins and customized M&Ms. Thank you to Chefs Javier and Armando, along with the KoC cohort and alumni, for making and presenting a delicious meal. Simon and Joseph did terrific work in setting up the Dining Room

and then clearing it out for the shelter. Adrian and Tiffany were excellent security staff. The Spirituality, Formation and Growth Committee and the Board of Trustees were supportive and helpful throughout the time we worked on the event. Thank you to the Community Engagement staff: John, Jackie, Wafa, Lu, Ava, Katie and Chris for all their great work in making the day go so well. What a great end to Volunteer Appreciation Month! We couldn't do it without you all.



# Bay Area Council Reveals Homeless Report



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 President and CEO of Kaiser Permanente 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.

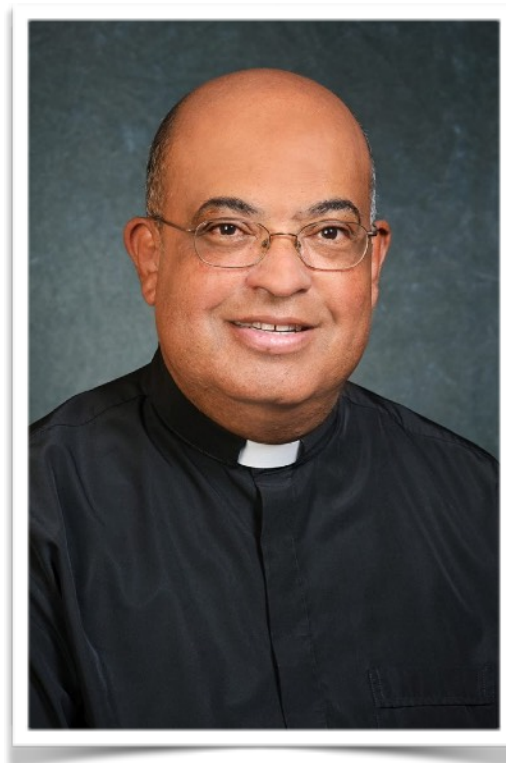


St. Vincent de Paul thanks our Vincentians across the county for their eviction prevention work. "The homelessness crisis in the Bay Area is devastating and widespread. However, what was affirming about the homelessness report from the Bay Area Council was the acknowledgement that our organization is already working hard on some of the agreed upon solutions. The eviction prevention by our Vincentians is incredibly necessary and beneficial, and we look forward to maintaining those services," said Executive Director Blase Bova. Vincentians are addressing a crucial aspect of the homeless crisis that needs more widespread support, and the Bay Area Council agrees.



# 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.



## Day of Reflection Rejuvenates Conferences

Thomas P. Bonacci C.P. is the executive director of the Interfaith Peace Project. 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.



## 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 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 every year since its opening. "I feel like this is where I need to be," Carson said. 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.



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

## Meet Our Staff: Ashley Davis

Please join us in welcoming Ashley Davis, the first case manager hired in our year-round shelter. She also works at Bay Area Community Services, where she handles SSI status for about 230 people. Davis often meets with clients at encampments. Our guests work with Davis to talk about their goals, confirm their income level and receive housing. Davis is able to refer our guests to BACS, so they often leave the shelter and see her there for additional services. She believes that with hard work, our guests can find their way from homelessness. "I can work for our clients, but not harder than them. If I could give you a little more motivation than you had before, sometimes that's all you need. Nothing worth having comes easy," Davis said. Davis wants to help our guests find links to housing support, mental health services and employment assistance. She plans to utilize her work experiences to pursue a degree in social work.



# Church Choir Fills Campus with Song



On the first Saturday of May, a choir of 40 from Brigham Young University in Utah visited our West Oakland direct service campus. They took a tour and ate lunch with our guests, and then lined up throughout the room to sing for all gathered there. The group was taking part in a 12-day trip where they were

performing concerts and doing service work. "They were truly amazing," Volunteer Coordinator Katie Troy said. "The whole dining hall went quiet and just listened to them sing." The choir is from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Some of the members echoed the sentiment that it was one of the best moments of their lives so far, including SVdP volunteer Jim Greenan who coordinated the performance. Performer Ally Christiansen spoke for the entire group and said, "It's inspiring to see people who take a stand against the poverty in our own country." This surprise performance was surely a bright spot for all involved and it brought extra light to an already beautiful Saturday afternoon.

# Leaders Gather for Midyear Meeting

On April 24 - 27, more than 200 Vincentian leaders from across the country came together in St. Louis, Missouri for the 2019 Midyear Meeting. This year was the first time that multicultural and diversity topics were highlighted at a SVdP meeting.

Members of the Multicultural and Diversity Committee hosted the first general session, "Open Our Hearts," which focused on diversity training for Vincentians. One of the themes of the presentation was to remind attendees that there are different types of diversity. Executive Director Blase Bova and Board of Trustees President James Lee

attended the Midyear Meeting and returned with positive reviews. "It is important that moving forward we focus on diversity and inclusion and I am glad the national office emphasizes that. At St. Vincent de Paul we always strive to open our hearts to everyone we meet, and we look forward to spreading that message through our service," Bova said.





## 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!



*PICTURED L-R: CHEF ARMANDO CORPUS; GRADUATES SANDRA BLAKELY, 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, Yarazet 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, nightly 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!



# 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 free 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. 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. 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.*

# Tavecchio Returns After Football Season

Last fall, volunteer Giorgio Tavecchio spent some time in our dining room before he was brought on as kicker for the Atlanta Falcons. Tavecchio is a Bay Area native who played football at UC Berkeley and even played professionally for the Oakland Raiders. He began volunteering at SVdP because he was influenced by his father. After leaving to play for the Falcons, he stayed in contact with us, sending well



wishes to staff and volunteers. It was a great surprise to see him return to serve in the dining room on March 7. Tavecchio and our custodian Joseph (pictured) became fast friends, and were glad to see each other again. We are so happy he kept us in mind, and was called to serve during this trip home. "I am in town visiting family, so I had to come back home to St. Vincent," Tavecchio said. He has signed a two- year contract with the Falcons, and plans to volunteer at the St. Vincent de Paul in Atlanta. We wish Giorgio the best of luck, and hope to see him again soon!



# In His Own Words: Wendell



"I graduated KoC a little over one year ago. Being in the program was fun and very enjoyable. I loved it. I loved the people, the environment and the work ethic. I am working at BJ's Restaurant in Newark. I'm a line cook, I help with the appetizers, make the pizza and sometimes help to prep the food. I got the job by putting an application through an agency. Two days after, they called. I got an interview and then got hired. I love it there. It reminds me of St. Vincent. We will serve 800-900 people a night,

and the place can hold about 1,500 people. I enjoy my work, I enjoy working in the kitchen. I go to work with a smile. I've been at BJ's about nine months.

"I have six children and one of my daughters just moved to Texas and I miss her. My youngest daughter came to St. Vincent's with me once. I'm getting ready to retire in about three years. I enjoy where I'm working and don't want to go anywhere. I might even wait to retire. In my free time I like throwing darts, playing softball, cooking, reading and enjoying time with my family, especially family dinners."

## Catering of Champions to Begin June 4

St. Vincent de Paul's newest enterprise, Catering of Champions, will begin on June 4. The idea was brought to us by longtime volunteer, Javier Silvares. "I remember seeing the happiness in the Kitchen of Champions students' faces while they were in the program learning so much and I thought I could do even more for them," he said. "I decided to do a step more. This is really my home. It's the life I choose and the life I want to live." The program's first task is planning a fundraiser to be held this winter. Silvares has planned a menu including Spanish dishes from his home country. He cooked for 128 people at the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in April, and received a lot of positive feedback about the flavorful meal. The goals of Catering of Champions are first, to provide stable employment and continuation of culinary education for graduates of Kitchen of Champions, and second, to earn money for St. Vincent de Paul. "We are really life-changers here. People want to do better and change and we accompany them on that journey," Silvares 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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John Sterns	Community Engagement Manager	(925) 323-5848	js Sterns@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
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Fremont Thrift Store	3777 Decoto Rd, Fremont, 94555	(510) 792-3711	fremont@svdp-alameda.org

## Oakland A's Donate Time and Jerseys

The Oakland A's staff has proven to be an excellent addition to our dining room team. Groups of A's staff and players are now scheduled to volunteer at least once per month. Katie Troy, SVdP volunteer coordinator, said, "The A's group really works hard and they make connections with our guests, volunteers and staff. They go above and beyond the jobs they take on and everyone benefits." In addition to volunteering, the A's staff brought a donation of players' jerseys in April, and it was very popular with our guests. In March, one of their chief officers, Chris, volunteered with us and was able to greet our guests as they walked through the door. Catherine Aker, vice president of communications and community said, "We had a great group experience. We feel fortunate to have a partner in SVdP so we can come back on a regular basis and give back." We are excited to continue working with the A's on a regular basis and appreciate their organization-wide support of our mission.

