

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Quarterly: Spring 2018

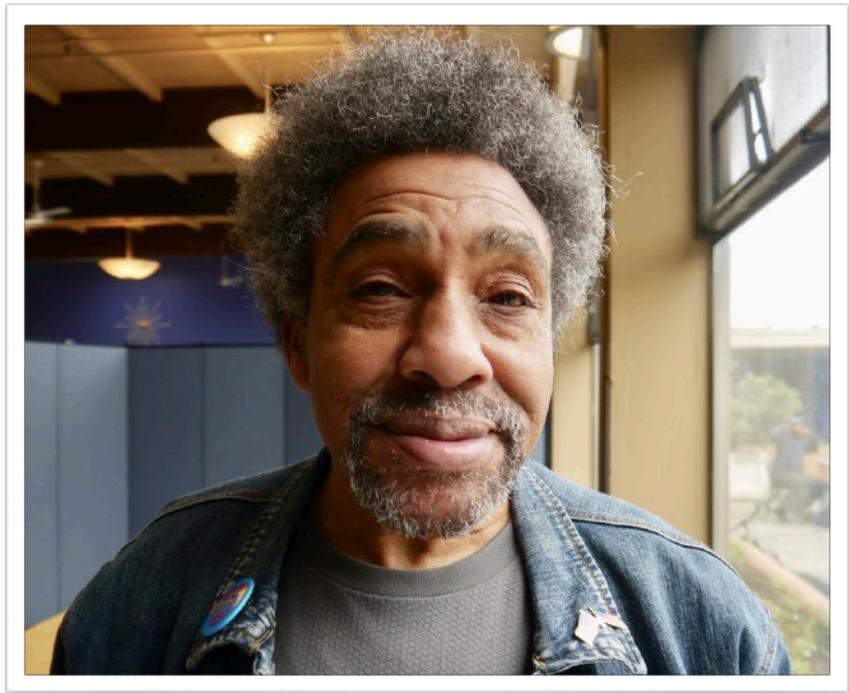


Turnaround

When R.C. first came to SVdP he wasn't interested in changing his life. "When I first came here I was out on the streets. When out on the streets, you are only looking in one direction and that is to stay out in the dark. I was in jail and on drugs and alcohol."

He reached the point where he was ready to live a different kind of life. "In 2005, St. Vincent helped turn my life around. I used to come down here to eat and in 2005 I went to the community center and a man helped me fill out the application to get into a senior citizens' building. I have been there for 10 years now. That was a huge step in helping me stay rooted. Everything changed."

Homelessness in Oakland continues to be one of the most challenging aspects of life for those we serve. Without a place to stay it is nearly impossible to take steps to bring someone out of poverty. We often work with clients who are employed or looking for a job as a way to earn enough to find permanent housing. Although housing is just one of the obstacles facing our



clients - and they must also earn enough for food, transportation and other necessities - it remains the most important challenge they face.

"I see all these tents and I know that if it wasn't for St. Vincent de Paul, I could still be out there. I live on a month-to-month basis, but I am very careful. I am not looking back, I am looking forward. After I cleaned up I reunited with my family. We were estranged for 20 years! But now all of that has changed. I have grandchildren and even a great grandchild. They are in my life again. I am really happy."



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



Homelessness is on everyone's mind these days.

If you've been in Oakland recently (or any West Coast city), you can't miss the ever-increasing tent encampments that have sprung up under overpasses, along sidewalks, and in parks, almost everywhere you look. The problem has multiple causes, the most critical in the Bay Area being skyrocketing rental costs. And there's no one magic solution. Rather, projects and initiatives are needed from all sectors: civic, nonprofit, faith communities, foundations, and private citizens, to build a short- and long-term solution set. All agree that the long-term solution to homelessness is affordable housing, but the short-term health, safety, and dignity crisis is the primary focus right now.

St. Vincent de Paul is working closely with civic, philanthropic, and faith leaders to address this crisis, and we're proud to be a critical resource for the humanitarian and compassionate response that's most needed now. We offer help in three critical areas: first, our local volunteer chapters called Conferences make home visits all over the County and can prevent homelessness by paying a rent bill when a normally sustainable household has encountered a crisis that could otherwise lead to eviction; secondly, we're well known as one of the largest providers of safety net services in the East Bay, including our Free Dining Room, our Winter Shelter, and our drop-in centers where someone who's homeless can get a shower, clothing, laundry, and encouragement from caring staff and volunteers; and finally, our Kitchen of Champions can help someone who's housing- and income-insecure to land a job that provides a living wage to keep their family safely and comfortably housed.

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

Blase Bova, Executive Director
St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County

News Briefs

- Your online purchases can benefit SVdP. Amazon.com will donate 0.5% of anything you spend on their site, once you sign up. Just visit smile.amazon.com, and choose "Society St Vincent De Paul Alameda" as your charity. Once you're set up, every purchase you make yields a donation to SVdP. Thanks for making St. Vincent de Paul your charity of choice!
- 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
- Legacy gifts, also known as planned gifts, have made a tremendous difference for St. Vincent de Paul, our programs, and those we serve. Legacy gifts offer a way for donors to ensure that their charitable giving continues to have an impact that reflects their beliefs, priorities and values. If you are considering making a planned gift for SVdP, we recommend you consult with an attorney, tax accountant or other legal and financial advisors. For more information about legacy gifts for SVdP, contact Blase Bova or John Sterns. (See back page for contact information.)



Kaiser Bay Area Recruitment Team

The end of November brought a new Kaiser team to our direct service campus. Kaiser's Bay Area Recruitment team was 14 strong. Two volunteers shared their thoughts on how the day of service broadened their perspectives about the community we serve:

"I think I was surprised at seeing people from different backgrounds. Some people look as though they have a home, but maybe they couldn't afford food for the day. Seeing the diversity in the population SVdP serves is eye-opening."

"We're all here trying to do the same things. There's not that much difference between us and the people we served today."



GUEST PROFILE

Langston: A Man of Courage

Langston is a Marine who has served three tours of duty. He was raised in Oakland by a grandfather who worked for Southern Pacific. He likes to tell stories about the old days in Oakland. At 18 he served in Vietnam and was injured by shrapnel. He recovered and returned for two more tours of duty so that he could support his family. His stories reflect the many sacrifices our troops make. Hard times have followed, yet his strength and courage are clearly apparent in how he relates and carries himself. He is now sleeping in SVdP's winter shelter, at his spot right beneath the cross. There is a great dignity that surrounds him. He is very grateful to be inside this winter.



Meet John Jones, Workforce Coordinator



SVdP's new workforce development coordinator, John Jones, brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to his role. John's background includes professional and academic time in Chicago, Baton Rouge and New Orleans, most recently working with youth in Chicago schools. When he returned to Oakland from Chicago he was immediately hit with the growing homeless population throughout the Bay Area and the real issues that required attention in order to help those in need. SVdP is a "perfect

spot" for John to put his skills to work because of the range of programs we offer and the diverse solutions we apply to assist those we serve. "I am someone who wants to be the nexus, the connection point, for providing all of the services our clients need," says John. "I wake up every day knowing that I am doing exactly what I want to do."

Gift Drive a Huge Success. Thank You!



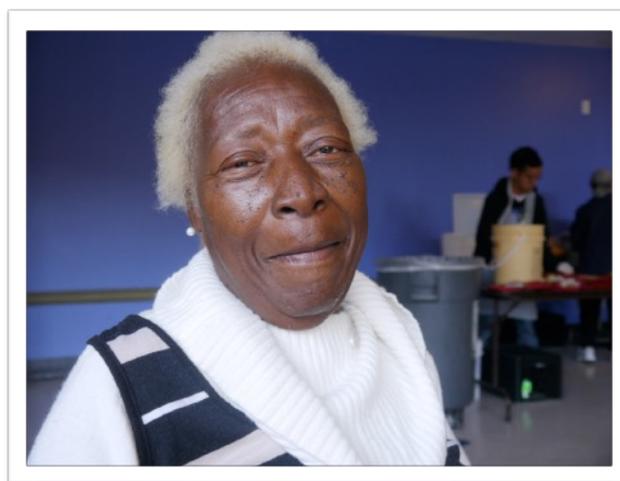
Thank you to everyone who donated to our annual gift drive and coat drive. With your consistent support, SVdP wrapped up 2017 with some impressive numbers. We have collected more than 500 coats with 21 bin locations throughout Alameda County. More than 400 toy donations were collected in time for our successful Christmas Open House in mid-December. 100% of the new toys came from conferences and community partners throughout the Oakland diocese, with a special mention to two conferences in Contra Costa County that donated as well. We are thrilled with the

outpouring of support and hope 2018 continues with an abundance of generosity in spirit. Our One Warm Coat drive is still in full swing! Should you want to donate a gently-used warm coat or host a collection bin at your place of employment, please contact John Sterns at jesterns@svdp-alameda.org.



Norma Jean's Story

"I grew up in Oakland as an only child and my parents taught me compassion. It was very important to them and it is very important to me. No matter how people treat me or what they say to me, I always try to be kind and uplifting because you don't know what people are going through. I encourage people whenever I can. Just walking down the street, a kind hello can change someone's day. I'm in a wheel chair now.



I saw on a pamphlet that 3.5 million children go to bed hungry in California alone. That should never be. We have enough to feed everybody.

In the old days you'd see one or two homeless people, but now so many have no place to live. I've seen a lot of changes in Oakland. It's a completely different city now.

I live in transitional housing now, but you cannot eat in the dining room there. You can shop and cook in your room but that's hard for me. So it's good I can come to St. Vincent's to eat. I come to the podiatry clinic here as well. And for the two years I was homeless, I stayed in the winter shelter here. It wasn't so bad. It was very lucky for me that it was here."

New Board President Louise Astle

Louise Astle has been elected president of the Board of Trustees for SVdP Alameda County. She will serve as president until September 30, 2018. She previously served as a regional representative for the Alameda deanery. Louise is a parishioner at St. Joseph Basilica in Alameda. She attended an informal meeting about St. Vincent de Paul about three years before her retirement. "I got involved so when I retired I'd have something to go into," she said.

She was involved in our reorganization and that role led her to seek the presidency. "I wanted to see it through," she comments. Her priorities as president include updating our strategic plan and gathering a nominating committee so SVdP can hold its next board election on a normal cycle.

"I want to reach out to the presidents of the different conferences on what it means to be a servant leader," she said, noting that she, herself, serves as the president of the St. Joseph Basilica Vincentian conference.



Christmas Open House

SVdP held its annual Christmas Open House on Saturday, December 16th. Seventy-five families and nearly 250 children attended the event, which would not have been possible without the generous contributions we received for toys, clothing and grocery gift cards, and the selfless donation of time and materials offered by our volunteers.



“We couldn’t do any of this without our donors and volunteers,” says John Sterns, SVdP’s community engagement manager.



“They make this event a bright spot for our children and families.”

The time for celebration and gift giving continued after the event as more toys and clothing were distributed to families and children on our waiting list. In total, we provided gifts to 302 children and 88 families.





Every child received a gift and every family was given a gift card for groceries.

“Because of our generous donors,” comments Blase Bova, SVdP executive director, “we were able to extend our giving beyond the event itself. It was truly a special holiday for those we serve.”



Solar Mosaic

December brought a new community partner to SVdP's direct service campus. Solar Mosaic, an Oakland-based company, provides affordable solar loans to homeowners across the United States, bringing clean, safe solar energy accessible to as many as possible. Mission-driven and ready to work, this group fit right in during kitchen prep and lunch service with our regular



volunteers. Seventeen Solar Mosaic employees volunteered over two days and the experience inspired Nakayla to do more: "Volunteering at SVdP with some of my colleagues from Solar Mosaic was so heart-warming that I want to do more. I have a bin full of women's shoes, boy's shoes, and gently-used clothing to donate to SVdP." We are grateful for Nakayla and her work mates for a great first visit to SVdP.

Betty Jo Reuben and her Sisters in Red

Betty Jo Reuben has been a regular Saturday volunteer for over 30 years and in late December she brought some dear friends with her. These Ladies in Red brought charm, style, and Christmas spirit to the SVdP dining room. Each Lady wore a personalized apron and handed out candy canes to our guests.

Betty shared the group's rich history with our staff:

"We've known each other for over 30 years. My neighbor Mary and I started hosting what we called hen parties. We'd host, and everyone would bring a dish, socialize and we'd get to know one another as neighbors, mothers, and friends. Over time we grew into a support system for each other. We celebrate birthdays together, our children's weddings, funerals and when health challenges come up, we are there for one another, offering support when it's really needed. It's been wonderful, and I can't say it enough how important it is to have a community to rely on."



Santa Clara University Immersion

Nine students and one staff member from Santa Clara University participated in a five-day immersion at SVdP's West Oakland campus in December. Activities included decorating our Community Center for the holiday season, serving in our Kitchen and Free Dining Room and sorting donated toys and clothing for our Christmas Open House. The group also had the opportunity to observe the Homeless and Caring Court session implemented



by the Alameda County Superior Court.

The participants visited a number of partner agencies in Oakland and Berkeley. This included CiviCorps, Jesuit Volunteer Services, ImpactHub, Kapor Center, St. Mary's Center, Mandela Marketplace and the Alameda County Family Justice

Center. Captain Mike Carroll with the Alameda County Sheriff's Department spoke to the group about community policing and the challenges faced by law enforcement personnel and community residents.

"These immersions are wonderful examples of how we make SVdP available to all members of our community," says Blase Bova, executive director.



New Look for the Community Center

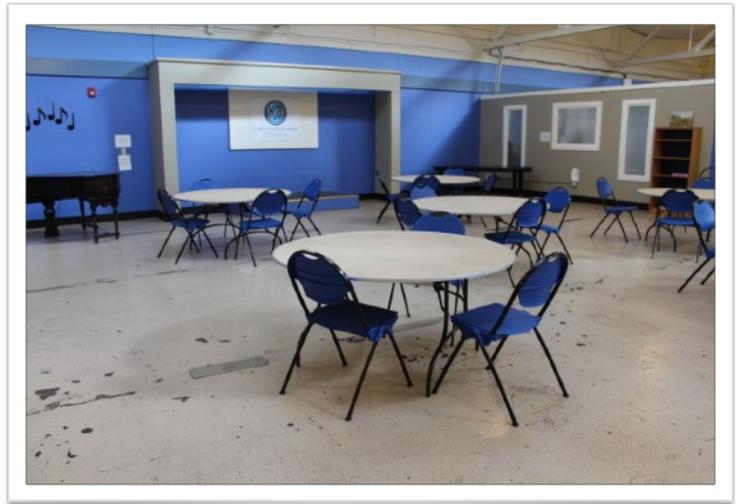


A generous donor has made a gift to install a new floor in SVdP's Community Center at our West Oakland campus. This contribution will provide a warmer feel for the room, which is used by thousands of individuals and families each year. The Community Center is open Tuesday through Saturday and is a space for clients to have a respite from street life and come together in fellowship.

The donor, Lillian Trillo, wants to know that her gift "will be visible and make a

difference." Her intention is for the gift to benefit SVdP's clients in the long term.

"Our hope is that the new floor will add to the Community Center's appeal and make it a more inviting place for clients who come to the Center to be off the streets and access our services," says Blase Bova, SVdP's executive director. "It is part of our effort to continue to focus on serving clients, and on improving and increasing the services we offer."



The new floor is a wood laminate that extends throughout the Community Center's area. The previous floor, which has not been updated since the building was built in 1976, was filled with holes and bumps and, in general, was not an inviting feature for the room. In addition to the improvement to the Community's Center's look, the new floor will also provide a safer environment for our clients and entail easier maintenance going forward.

"We are very grateful for this gift, which will have a long-lasting impact for our clients and our services," says Bova. "We want our clients to know how important they are to us and how much we want to improve the setting in which we offer our services."

The new floor was installed in late February and early March.



Oakland A's Back at SVdP

In mid-November Marcus Semien was just another volunteer on the line, serving trays of food with the best of 'em at SVdP. The Oakland Athletics star, along with members of the team's front office staff, joined SVdP for a day of service in the kitchen and dining room. Our KoC trainees were so busy prepping for the day's meal, they didn't realize one of their favorite players was on campus until the end of service. Mr. Semien and his group were great sports. Thanks to local partners like the Oakland A's SVdP continues to shine as a hub where folks find fellowship in serving others.



Clif Bar Visits Free Dining Room

For the first time in two years, representatives from Clif Bar returned to the free dining room for a day of service. This time, an all-new group of employees came to work in the prep room, serve the meal, clean tables, and more. The group was arranged by Jill Hammond, who chose SVdP because they had previously worked at the SVdP warehouses in San Francisco, and our Oakland location is close to their Emeryville offices. SVdP aligns with their company values, which include giving back to their community and to the planet. Jill hopes to bring Clif Bar groups here again, and sees the value in direct service and "knowing that we're participating positively in people's lives." SVdP is glad to continue to foster a relationship with a meaningful community partner.

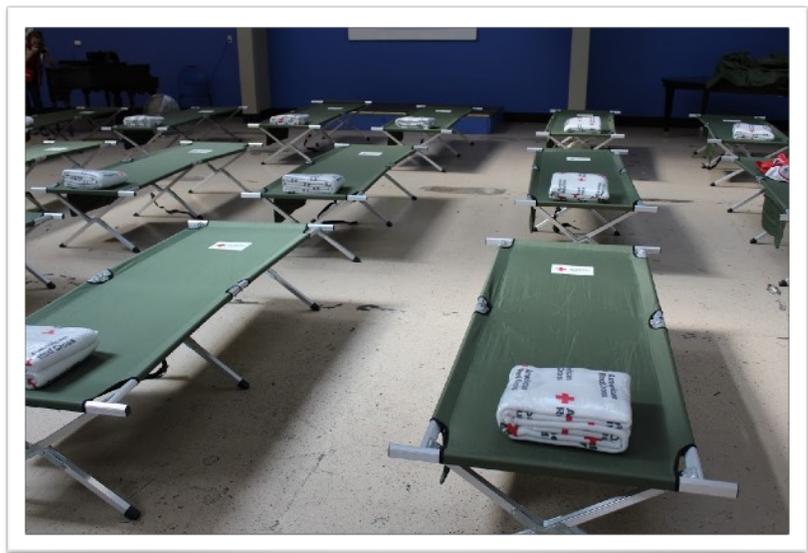


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Volunteer Team	Volunteer Coordinator	(510) 877-9252	volunteer@svdp-alameda.org

Winter Shelter Expands

The SVdP Winter Shelter, which operates from mid-November through mid-April, has expanded to a second room that adds 35 more beds for clients. The Shelter now includes SVdP's Community Center space, bringing the total number of beds offered to 100. The program, offered in partnership with the City of Oakland, is the largest temporary shelter in Oakland.



"Homelessness is an issue on everyone's mind," says SVdP executive director Blase Bova. "Rising rents and a shortage of housing have fueled a crisis. More and more people are displaced with nowhere to go."

The program has also been able to expand its services to clients with the help of volunteers. On Tuesday evenings, a couple of volunteers lead art projects and new volunteers are beginning to help with the setup and check-in processes. If you are interested in volunteering in the Winter Shelter, contact John Sterns (see above for contact information).

