

Neighbors Helping Neighbors News: January 2017



Christmas Open House



The Society of St. Vincent de Paul welcomes "all who wish to live their faith by loving and serving their neighbor."

"What can we do? ... We can offer what little we have. We certainly have a few hours of time, some talent, and some expertise." Pope Francis (7/26/15)

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County has served those in need for almost 80 years.



**Society of St. Vincent de Paul
ALAMEDA COUNTY**
2272 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, CA 94612



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Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Thursday, January 5th and January 19th, 11:00 am, Free haircuts by Angel, Community Center, Downtown Campus.
- Monday, January 9th, 2:00 pm, Development Committee, Downtown Campus (Normally 1st Monday of the month).
- Tuesday, January 10th, 11:30 am, Property Committee, Conference Call (2nd Tuesday of the month. Contact Blase for more information.)
- Wednesday, January 11th, 10:45 am to 12:45 pm, Cal State East Bay (CSUEB) Nursing Program returns to offer our clients health screenings in the dining room on Wednesdays for the next seven weeks.
- Thursday, January 12th and January 26th, Pandora in the SVdP dining room, Downtown Campus.
- Saturday, January 14th, District Council Meeting, Mass at 9:00 am, meeting at 10:00 am, 3433 Somerset Ave, Castro Valley, CA, 94546.
- Tuesday, January 17th, Finance Committee, Downtown Campus, 2272 San Pablo Ave, Oakland, 4:00 pm (normally Monday before Board meeting)
- Wednesday, January 18th, Board of Trustees Meeting: fellowship/meal at 5:30 pm followed by meeting at 6:00 pm, Downtown Campus, 2272 San Pablo Ave, Oakland. (3rd Wednesday of the month).
- Thursday, January 19th, Kaiser in the SVdP dining room, Downtown Campus.
- Saturday, January 21st, Transfiguration Youth Group in the SVdP dining room, Downtown Campus.

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
- 2016 Christmas Open House by the numbers: 67 families participated this year. 44 families received food gift cards. 1 Santa stopped by and photo ops were in high demand! 7 high schoolers comprised the Piedmont Troubadours; they sang wonderful a cappella carols. 200 children received new clothes, books, stocking stuffers, and one main Christmas toy. 50 volunteers worked the event and countless more helped with preparations.
- Your online purchases can benefit SVdP. Amazon.com will donate 1/2% 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!
- Your support of St. Vincent de Paul as a volunteer or donor has an impact on the lives of so many of our neighbors. Thank you!

■ Shopping at SVdP helps us all. We hope we're your favorite thrift store. If we're not, let us know why not. We want to keep improving until we're the favorite thrift store for every one of our volunteers and Vincentians.

■ Our 2016-17 Winter Shelter Continues through Monday, April 17th, 2017.

■ Leslie Oliver, our Winter Shelter and Community Center Coordinator, was honored at a luncheon on January 6th at the Alameda County Building in Hayward, as a success story who is a former participant in the County's CalWorks program and the Transitional Employment Program at St Vincent de Paul. Leslie has come such a long way, and we're very proud of her.

■ Volunteer needs at the Fremont store: Weekly cleaning crew to sweep and thoroughly mop the store. Books and media volunteers-daily, weekly, individuals and teams!

■ In-kind donations needed at the Fremont store: Paper bags, Books, Clean gently used living and dining room furniture, Clean gently used clothing and shoes.

■ The team at SVdP would like to thank St. Mary's High School College for donating over 250 winter coats to help keep our clients warm this winter.

■ Tuesday, January 24th, 1:30 pm, Special Works Committee, Downtown Campus (4th Tuesday of month).

■ Friday, February 3rd, 1:00 pm, Spirituality/Extension Committee, Nob Hill Market, Alameda (1st Friday of month).

■ Monday, November 14th through Monday April 17th, Winter Shelter Program. Our supporters and volunteers are encouraged to set up a time to visit or to help out. Call us at 510-638-7600 to find out how you can help. There are still beds available in our Winter Shelter. Invite those in need to arrive by 8:30pm to secure a bed for the night.



Chez Panisse Brings Talented Volunteers

Chez Panisse Chef Cal Peternell brought along some of his current and former staff to help out in the SVdP Kitchen. Chef Ryan wasted no time in putting the talented crew to good use.

Thanks to their can-do attitude and an abundance of donated veggies, this group put their culinary and creative skills to work.

Chef Cal told SVdP staff that this is merely their first visit and that he soon hopes to bring his "teaching kitchen" approach to the Kitchen of Champions program.



Oscar Polio, 27 Years at St. Vincent de Paul

Oscar can remember the day he was officially hired at SVdP like it was yesterday.

Listening to him tell it, you'd think it wasn't too long ago - until he lets slip that May 5th will mark his 27th year at SVdP in Alameda County. The sparkle in his eyes when he shares his history, first as a volunteer and then as full-time staff, reveals a loyal, kind man with sincere appreciation for his long-term workplace.



***"HASTA HOY DÍA ME SIENTO CONTENTO DE TRABAJAR PARA SVDP."
-TO THIS DAY I FEEL HAPPY TO WORK FOR SVDP.***

Recalling the past brings lightness and youthfulness to his demeanor and speech. He can't get the words out fast enough, wanting to share each memory as it comes up.

Oscar Polio began as a volunteer in 1989, cleaning the SVdP "bodega" and helping however he could. Then in May of 1990, Sister Jean Marie offered him a paying job as janitor. He smiles while telling this story, pausing to

remember her as a "very good person". The nuns were in charge those days and he begins to list off all the names that come to mind: Sister Carmel, Sister Sherry, Sister Mary, and Sister Patricia. There's a dutiful reverence in his recollection, as if he wouldn't be where he is now without their support and protection.

When asked how much things have changed in the last 26+ years, Oscar laughs. He says the cleaning staff used to be bigger, employing at least three janitors per maintenance crew. Today he is the sole janitor on campus and it's easy to see how Oscar may go unnoticed in his day to day tasks. His work is essential, yet also quiet and unassuming. And when Oscar is doing it right, it's easy to overlook his efforts, and even easier to take the empty garbage bins and clean floors for granted.

If you happen to see Oscar Polio, clad in SVdP blue, in our West Oakland campus, give him a smile and say hello. He's been a part of our family for over a quarter century. Thank you, Oscar!





Five Great Reasons to Shop Second Hand

Second-hand stores are mostly independent and local. They hire local and often have a great community around the store that know the

employees and each other. Why not choose to support local small business where you can get to know your merchants and neighbors and keep your money in the local economy.

It means stepping off the consumer treadmill.

For many, shopping can be a type of entertainment that means buying stuff that you didn't even know you needed until stepping into a store. Many impulse purchases sit unused in closets (we see LOTS of these things in our donation room). Being more deliberate about the choices we make puts us back in control of our lifestyle – and our pocketbook.

BONUS: Shop nonprofit and you serve people in your community.

Thrift stores like St Vincent de Paul exist for all of the above reasons, but also to bring revenue to our mission of helping our neighbors in need. This includes food assistance, helping find housing or providing emergency shelter, to job training to provide a path to full time employment. There are many choices you can make about where you shop for your thrift and secondhand items; choosing a nonprofit is one more thing you can use to make your shopping decisions count.

Second-hand items have a story.

There's something much more rewarding about choosing a one-of-a-kind sweater or skirt rather than a generic piece from your fashion big box store. There's the thrill of the find, the conversations you have along the way, or the truly unique looks that you can create. Second hand just creates stories – from where they've been and what you make with them, to what you tell others about their journey.

Saving (yours and the earth's) resources and reducing waste.

There is already enough stuff in the world, and every time you buy new you feed the consumer demand cycle for creation of new goods. Buying thrift is better for the environment, it saves resources, it reduces emissions, and those items don't get shipped to the landfill. Oh, and let's not forget about the \$\$ resources you save.

It's more community-friendly.

Department stores and national or international chains are where most people buy their new clothes and furniture. They rely on global supply chains and overseas manufacturing ordering huge quantities to keep costs low.



Learning to Give Back

An impressive group of 5th graders from Franklin Elementary toured our West Oakland campus to learn more about SVdP.

The students shared how they led a school wide drive to collect hygiene products for our clients.

Thank you to Upward Roots, an Oakland based nonprofit, for making this happen!



Anhvu Impacted Us All



Anhvu Nguyen, our seminarian intern, spent the past three months working four days a week at our Community Center's Help Desk. SVdP threw him a good-bye party last Friday in the Community Center, which was attended by clients, volunteers, staff, and even board members who stopped by to wish him well.

Anhvu's next adventure is hospital ministry in Hollywood, but he hopes to come back and visit when he's in the Bay Area.



Are we Involved in Politics?

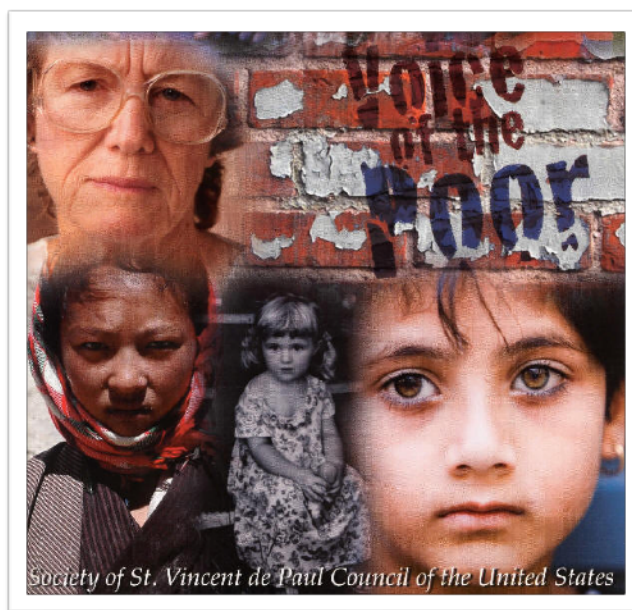
By Giulio Grecchi, SVdP Tucson Council

From time to time, it is appropriate to remind all readers of the position of the Society with respect to our work for social justice in favor of the people we serve. Part 7 of the Rule, *Relationship with Civil Society - Work for Social Justice*, describes well the principles that we follow. We invite Vincentians not familiar with Part 7 of the Rule to take the time to review it.

Our action has nothing to do with abstract ideologies or political parties' agendas. What dictates our action are the concrete needs of the people we serve, who very often experience injustice, inequality, exploitation, discrimination, or exclusion.

The Rule recommends that, besides giving immediate help, Vincentians "identify the root-causes of poverty and contribute to their elimination" (7.1). "where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political or social structures or to inadequate or unjust legislation, the Society should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements." (7.6)

The Tucson "Out of Poverty" team includes life-long Republicans and life-long Democrats, besides many Independents. Yet, as Catholics, we all work together on the issues that concern the poor. We work together for justice and we all understand that working for justice has priority



over any partisan politics.

We expect all Vincentians and Catholics in general, to understand the moral principle that involvement in public life is both a virtue and a moral obligation. As Catholics, we cannot remain neutral in situations of injustice, or we become accomplices of the injustice.

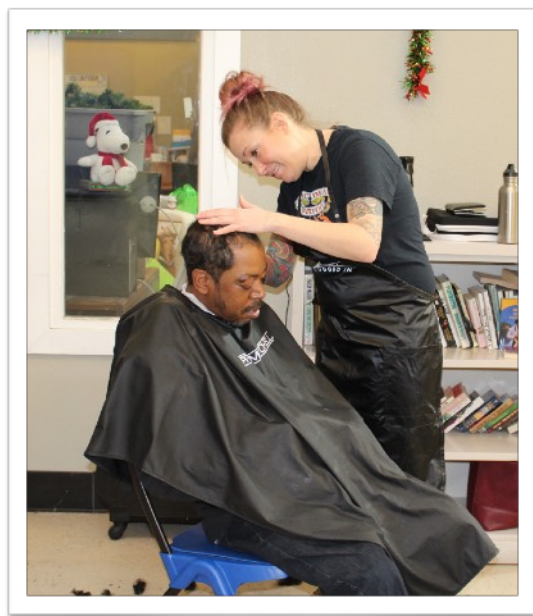
The Rule also recommends that we help the poor and disadvantaged speak for themselves and that we speak on their behalf only when they cannot. (7.5) The Rule foresaw Systemic Change even before that term was coined. As we help people move out of poverty through Systemic Change, we see many indeed ready to be part of our advocacy, especially on local issues, such as bus rates and routes, predatory lending, etc.

Coincidentally, Pope Francis echoed recently the wisdom of our Rule. "When the cries of so many go ignored," Pope Francis said, "not only do we deny their God-given rights and worth, but we also reject their wisdom and prevent them from offering their talents, traditions and cultures to the world."



For More Information Contact

Name	Position	Phone	Email
District Council	Main Phone Number	(510) 638-7600	
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Julia Catania	Administration Manager	(510) 692-0460	jcatania@svdp-alameda.org
Muna Texier	Community Engagement Manager	(510) 719-0774	mtexier@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



Haircuts at SVdP

Dudley is starting the new year fresh with a haircut from Angel, one of SVdP's volunteers. Looking good, Dudley!

Angel, our volunteer barber, will be giving free haircuts on the first and third Thursdays of the month in the SVdP Community Center from 11am to 2:00pm.

Thank you!

Thanks for your interest, and thanks for the work that you do for St. Vincent de Paul! Once you've read this, please think of someone you know who might like to learn more about us, and forward it to them. We appreciate all the ways that you make St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County a part of your life. If you'd like to learn more about our Society or its work, or if you have questions, ideas, or concerns, I'd love to hear from you. Please contact me at any time at the phone number or email listed above. Thanks to Florinda Larkin, Greg Govan, Muna Texier, Sacha Kawaichi, and Patty Breslin for their contributions to this issue!

In service,

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

