

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors News: May 2017



# Kitchen of Champions

Five trainees of Kitchen of Champions Cohort 52 completed their nine-week program and graduated on Thursday, May 4th. These individuals worked hard to learn their way around SVdP's kitchen. Chef Ryan could tell early in their training that "this was an extremely good group." The trainees worked cooperatively and were not afraid to let their individual strengths shine



throughout the course. They learned how to prepare the meals in our dining room, sort and organize reclaimed food, and perfected many different sauces under Chef Ryan's instruction. Natalya, our AmeriCorps VISTA intern, provided guidance for the trainees, helping them with transportation support, their orientation, and any needs that arose throughout the nine weeks.



Natalya is optimistic about the KoC Program: "I am very passionate about this program because I see how it changes peoples' lives." Cohort 52 trainee, Natasha Richardson shared: "I love this program.

When it comes to this place, SVdP is really a family. I love the sense of unity and the strength of prayer that is found here. There's a sense of humor here that makes it a comfortable, family-like environment. This program is for everybody - it's here for you if you really want it. It's genuinely loving here. It feels like home for people who do not have a home."



# Upcoming Meetings & Events

- Saturday, May 13th, **District Council Meeting**, Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Castro Valley. Mass at 8:30, meeting at 9:30 am. Detour in effect, check traffic apps.
- Monday, May 15th, **Finance Committee**, Downtown Campus, 4:00 pm (Monday before Board Meeting).
- Wednesday, May 17th, **Podiatry Clinic**, 9:00 am to 11:30 am, Downtown Campus. (3rd Wednesday of the month).
- Wednesday, May 17th, **Board of Trustees Meeting**: fellowship/meal at 5:30 pm followed by meeting at 6:00 pm, Downtown Campus. (3rd Wednesday of the month).
- Tuesday, May 23rd, 1:30 pm, **Special Works Committee**, Downtown Campus (4th Tuesday of the month).
- Friday, June 2nd, **Spirituality/Extension Committee**, Nob Hill Market, Alameda (1st Friday of the month.)
- Monday, June 5th, 1:00 pm, **Development Committee**, Downtown Campus (Normally 1st Monday of the month).

## Women's Center Yoga



Volunteer yogi Genevieve came to share her yoga knowledge in the SVdP Women's Center, and her students embraced the chance to stretch and breathe alongside her. Angel, pictured on left, was quite pleased with the session: "I liked how she helped me take the tension off my body. She really helped alleviate some of my stiffness."

## News Briefs

- We need volunteers in our Community Center at our Help Desk and in our Clothing Closet, on any morning or afternoon Tuesdays through Fridays, for 3 hour shifts between 8:30 am and 3:00 pm.
- Our Fremont Thrift Store needs volunteers to hang clothing, sort donations, straighten items on shelves, bring donations into the store, and greet donors and customers.
- 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.
- 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](https://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!
- Thanks for being a part of St. Vincent de Paul's mission of neighbors helping neighbors, serving those in need.



## Garden Party

SVdP hosted a Garden Party to celebrate Earth Day in our courtyard adjacent to the Dining Room. Volunteers and guests enjoyed the inviting green space together on what turned out to be a sunny Saturday afternoon. While some volunteers planted and weeded, others oversaw a DIY crafts table where simple rocks were painted into decorative plant labels and markers. Aluminum cans were

transformed into practical receptacles for cigarette butts and other bits of waste. Nicole Jones, head gardening volunteer, emphasized the importance of guest participation in the everyday upkeep of the space: "We want to encourage everyone to take pride in maintaining the garden. Having these cans out here is not only a social prompt, but a lesson in building esteem. There is a sense of worthiness that comes from helping keep this a nice and peaceful garden." If you're interested in sharing your green thumb with our garden, please contact our Volunteer Team (see back page).



### DONOR PROFILE: MARIN

## Charity Starts at Five

Five-year old Marin and her parents attend St. Gregory's of Nyssa in San Francisco and volunteer at its weekly Food Pantry. This experience led Marin to express concern for homeless people, and she wanted to help. Her parents reached out to SVdP to learn about ways they could help their neighbors. Our Volunteer Team encouraged Marin and

her family to host a collection drive, and they partnered with Marin's preschool to make it happen. A few weeks later, Marin and her parents came to our direct service campus with a carload of clothes, non-perishable food, and blankets. Marin even had a personal charity jar filled with change to donate. It's never too early to start talking about these important topics with the young people in our lives. Creating awareness of charitable giving and social disparities is a gift to impressionable young minds.



# Easter Open House



SVdP's West Oakland direct service campus celebrated its annual Easter Open House on Saturday, April 8th, hosting 26 families and 77 children for a fun, safe and enjoyable two-hour event full of crafts and goodies. The Open House was well attended, despite a slow start due to nasty weather earlier in the morning. Children assembled Easter baskets, picked out books, made crafts, and took pictures with the Easter Bunny. Each family received a \$25 food gift card, and the event ended with a fun raffle.

After the Easter Bunny had hopped away and the last family had bundled up their goodies and departed our Center, we were left with enough baskets to share with some low income families in our neighborhood who were unable to attend the event, which spread the impact of the day's festivities even further.



The Easter festivities were made possible thanks to some excellent teamwork. Claire O'Reilly, our lead Open House volunteer, did a million things to make sure that everything was ready (she was ably helped on the day itself by her husband, Conor). Kudos to the volunteers who helped Claire prep for the event, with a special shout-out to Immersion students from Santa Clara University, and to two St. Mary's College students, Catherine and Kim. Nancy Hollister gets a gold star for crocheting accessories for uncounted small stuffed animals, which were a VERY popular

addition to the Easter baskets. Adele Jenkins has become our go-to Open House crafter – the cards she





helped the children make were very charming. Our lead volunteer photographer, Sacha Meyer-Kawaichi, did a wonderful job capturing moments during the Open House. Special thanks to Pledge to Humanity's and St. Joan of Arc's youth groups for volunteering at the event, as well as lovely regulars who volunteered or were "volun-told" to help. Amelia M. gets her own shout-out: she's volunteered with her mum at our Easter Open Houses for four years in a row!

On the staff side, the Community Engagement team and Jasmine were incredibly important in the days before the event. On the day itself, Brianna kept over

30 dining room and kitchen volunteers focused and happy; Flo helped run the Community Center with Muna (Flo took great pictures and Muna was our raffle queen); and Natalya and Chris helped everyone with everything just about everywhere. Ryan stood in the rain to help direct cars *and* managed to feed an additional 100 people in the dining room. Jasmine ran interference at the event, ensuring that everything ran smoothly. And John Sterns made a VERY good cameo as the Easter Bunny.



Events like our Open Houses are the product of so much love – from the donations that support the events to the volunteers who help organize them; the staff members that pour out their hearts to the families who open up theirs. All of us at SVdP send our thanks to the many people who made the day possible, and especially to our clients who made the event worth doing.



# Spring Fundraising Breakfast

On Friday, April 28th, we held a Spring Fundraising Breakfast at the Cathedral of Christ the Light's Event Center. More than 140 guests attended the breakfast, which featured an invocation by Bishop Barber and a community supporter address by Fr. Jayson Landeza, pastor of St. Benedict parish and Chaplain to Oakland's Fire and Police Departments. Mark Everton, CEO of Visit Oakland, was the emcee and testimonials were given by Brenda Cox, a graduate of our Kitchen of Champions job training program, and Jasmine Rogers, coordinator of the Women's and Children's Center. Executive Director Blase Bova spoke about the work St. Vincent de Paul does and what support is required to enable us to do even more. We were pleased to see that many donors chose to make multi-year or monthly commitments of support. Thank you to all our guests and donors for making the breakfast a memorable event.

## Your Gift Transforms Lives

The Spring Fundraising Breakfast turned out to be a great opportunity for SVdP to engage some of our core donors who chose to make recurring monthly donations.

This way of giving is especially important because it provides a level of ongoing support that helps us meet the most pressing needs of those we serve. These regular contributions are most often made through a monthly credit card charge.

Visit <http://www.svdp-alameda.org/donate.html> to make your monthly gift.

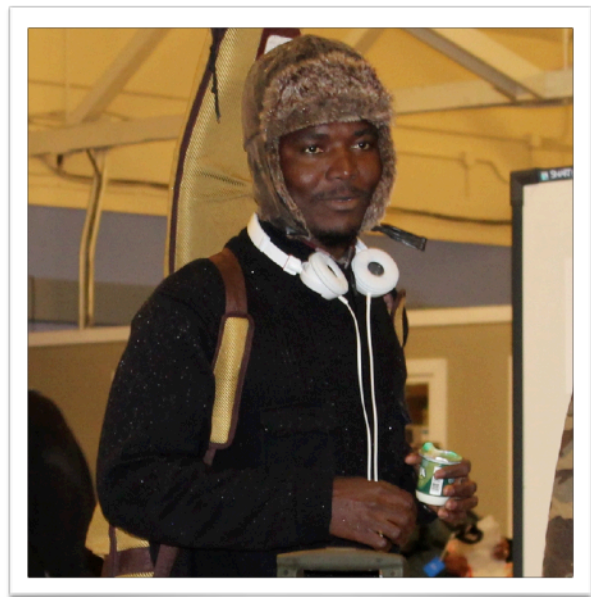


## Guest Profile: Matthieu

Matthieu has been in the states for the past year, and in Oakland for just over one month. He spent a few weeks in the Winter Shelter and these days you may see him in the Community Center playing the piano, or strumming his six-string bass guitar. One staff member noticed him waiting in line outside the Dining Room and described him as having a protective musical bubble around him. He comes in peace and his demeanor shows it.

Matthieu hails from Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire and has toured Europe and the U.S. as part of a band he joined while in Bamako, Mali. He's played in NYC, Los Angeles, and at the Savannah Music Festival. He's mostly toured playing West African music, but grew up listening to a lot of Gospel. His smile widens as he sings a verse of Don Moen's God is Good All the Time.

Matthieu is a serious and devoted musician and is already playing a weekly church service in Oakland. The Pastor introduced Matthieu to the



church's organ player and that was that: Matthieu now receives the songs he must learn on Wednesdays, the band rehearses on Saturdays, and on Sundays they play.

Matthieu is eager for more regular gigs in the Bay Area. He is also looking to secure more stable housing now that the Winter Shelter has closed. He remains positive and confident that Oakland is where God wants him to be.

## Holy Names University

Players from the Holy Names University men's basketball team volunteered in SVdP's kitchen in April. Assistant Coach Geral Lowe said, "Coach Sanchez gets the credit for jump starting our being here three times. We love SVdP. It gives us an opportunity to not only prepare food but to meet and put names to faces of people in our community. We're coming off a great season and our program is focused on preparing our guys to be student athletes AND citizens of our community."



# For More Information Contact

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Wesley Palmquist	Facilities/Tenant Services Manager	(650) 796-7349	wpalmquist@svdp-alameda.org
Volunteer Team	Volunteer Coordinator	(510) 877-9252	volunteer@svdp-alameda.org

## All Saints Shoes

On April 20th, we received three *big* bags of gently-used and new men's shoes donated by a Vincentian from All Saints in Hayward. Within a day, all the shoes had been given to some very grateful clients. Please keep our direct service campus in mind if you are planning a little spring cleaning: our Clothing Closet always needs gently worn casual men's and women's clothes.



## Winter Shelter Closes

Our Winter Shelter closed on Tuesday morning, May 2nd, after five months of operation. We want to give a huge shout out and THANK YOU to Ryan Uyehara and Leslie Oliver for running operations on SVdP's side of things, and to Talia Rubin with the City of Oakland for trouble-shooting and coordinating to help keep the shelter open. We look forward to partnering with the City again so that we can reopen our doors as a Winter Shelter later this year!

