

# Neighbors Helping Neighbors Quarterly: Winter 2016



## 40th Anniversary of Free Dining Room

Our Free Dining Room served its first meal on Monday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 1976, and by the end of September had served 2,279 meals. By July 2016,

who operated the truck in picking up the donated food and supplies. The Dining Room is funded through the generous support of donors, grants, and in-kind donations. In fact, the large majority

of operations of the facility are carried out by volunteers, around 20 or more at a time, who handle the daily duties of food preparation, serving, and cleanup. The kitchen itself is staffed by Kitchen of Champion trainees, while the dining room is run by a dining room manager, a security guard, and a host of dedicated volunteers. Together staff and volunteers work to prepare and serve nearly 600 meals a day.



St. Vincent de Paul had served almost 6 million nutritious meals. The dining room is currently open Tuesday through Saturday from 10:45 am to 12:45 pm, including holidays (except New Year's Day). When the Dining Room opened, there were only four paid employees - the cook, janitor, and the crew of two



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



We live in challenging times, amid problems that sometimes seem insurmountable. Hunger and homelessness can feel that way. Luckily, each holiday season, we see a joyful outpouring of generosity and compassion for those less fortunate among us. Our challenge is to help each person who encounters our mission (whether through volunteering, a financial donation, or collecting food, coats, or toys needed by our guests) to feel the deep and special sense of fulfillment that drives us to do this work. Once you've felt that connection and that joy, we know you'll want to keep coming back.

St. Vincent de Paul is a place where anyone in need can come for critical help like food, clothing, and shelter. It's also a place where a whole community of dedicated staff, volunteers, and Vincentians can encircle someone in need, with genuine love and respect, to help them break the cycle of poverty through programs like our Kitchen of Champions culinary training program, or through ongoing home visits made by our network of Vincentian volunteers.

It's a unique way to look at helping your fellow human being, and it's been a critical resource in our community for almost 80 years. 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 on the last page.

Thanks to Muna Texier, Sacha Kawaichi, and Natalya Ferdinandi for their contributions to this issue.

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

- 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.
- 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](http://www.donatingiseasy.org)
- The *Tiny Tickets* Program lets BART riders donate their partially used tickets to St. Vincent de Paul. You can bring your tickets to any SVdP campus. We're also setting up donation boxes at various retail locations. Let Blase know if you'd like to help with this. Thanks to the East Bay Community Foundation, St. Vincent de Paul will receive 100% of the unused value on each ticket.
- 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](http://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!





## Celebrate 40 Years

On Tuesday, September 20th, SVdP celebrated 40 years of serving nutritious meals in our Free Dining Room. We decorated the dining room with streamers and balloons, and the Chefs and the Kitchen of Champions trainees prepared a special lunch. We hosted a corporate group from Chevron, which

we were so blessed to have since it was extremely busy: the line to get food was all the way down the block! Here's to another 40 years!

## Kitchen of Champions Trainee Profile

Adrianna King, a trainee of KoC 50, says that she learned a lot through her training at SVdP. She was surprised to learn how important social skills are in the workplace. The kitchen can be a very stressful place, especially when you are helping cook over 500 meals a day for the community. She said, "I learned how to communicate. Sometimes you just have to walk away and cool off," she joked. She said that she was eager to learn how to work the equipment in the kitchen, and that things like the industrial oven and the tilt skillet are no problem for her now. But her specialty is seasoning profiles and sauces.

When Chef Ryan was on vacation recently, Adrianna stepped up to help ensure that the food for the day was perfect. She said, "I don't want to stop. I want to please the people we feed everyday." It meant a lot to her that our clients got



*ADRIANNA, RIGHT, FILLETING SALMON.*

the best meal each day.

She referred to the Kitchen of Champions as a second chance and a fresh start. She said that this is her time, and she is very excited about that. As a mother of four boys, ranging from 15 to 1 years-old, she knows how to cook even better now for her toughest critics, her family. She commented, "I did not get my boy to be 6 feet tall by feeding him bad food."





## Graduation Events

Graduation is a time to celebrate our workforce programs. Our graduation ceremony on September 15th (Cohort 49) brought together the community of friends, family, and supporters. Our keynote speaker was Oakland Fire Chief Teresa DeLoach-Reed (in photo). The 50th cohort of Kitchen of Champions graduated on November 10, in a very touching ceremony where tears were shed by nearly every speaker and graduate, and by many in the audience. The keynote speaker was Suzan Bateson, Executive Director of the Alameda County Community Food Bank.



*COHORT 49, WITH FIRE CHIEF DELOACH-REED, CENTER RIGHT (IN TIE)*

## Hunger Action Month at SVdP

St. Vincent de Paul's direct service campus is located in a food desert, which means that affordable and nutritious food is difficult to obtain, especially for those who do not have a car. The community of West Oakland is home to roughly 25,000 residents. The neighborhood is one of the poorest in the Bay Area and suffers from some of the highest rates of unemployment, poverty, and diet-related disease in Alameda County.

In West Oakland the density of liquor stores is about three times higher than in the rest of Oakland. There are almost no full-service grocery stores in West Oakland. Instead, residents gravitate towards stores that are close by, such as liquor stores and fast food restaurants. St. Vincent de Paul helps alleviate food insecurity by serving a free hot lunch 5 days a week, including holidays.



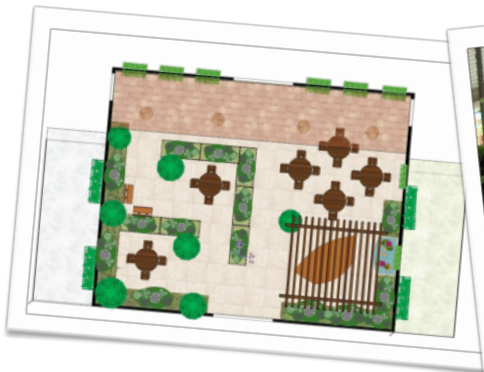
In honor of Feeding America's Hunger Action Month in September, we asked our volunteers to share facts like these with their social networks through selfies and group photos like the one at left. Together we can work to combat the injustices of poverty.





# Young Vincentian Beautifies Campus

Nicole Jones, a former Young Vincentian and a Special Works volunteer, has begun a really exciting campus beautification project for our



Downtown Campus. Nicole, who is studying permaculture and landscape design, leads a team of fellow student volunteers who plan, design, and implement all aspects of the project.



Some of the features she is creating for us are:

- A vertical edible garden installation on the fence along 23rd St, which borders our courtyard, where our dining room guests can enjoy a meal in the open air on nice days.
- Landscaping the courtyard itself, with shade canopies and even a water feature.
- More projects in the future facing San Pablo and West Grand.

The vertical garden was installed in late August,

thanks to a team of volunteers which still needs your help for future phases of the project. With or without a green thumb, if you'd like to lend a hand, please contact Muna Texier.

## Refugee Resettlement

This summer, the Alameda Deanery sponsored a young immigrant family who were fleeing Afghanistan. It was truly a community effort! At the request of Bishop Barber, the Alameda Deanery recruited all three Alameda parishes; Vincentians sat on the various committees that do the things required when you agree to sponsor a refugee family. The three Alameda SVdP Conferences and St. Barnabas parish provided furniture and basic household items, and the family "shopped" at one of our stores to choose them. SVdP drivers delivered their selection to their new apartment, and helped set it up.



SVdP is proud to have been a small part in the effort to make a refugee family feel welcome and at home in a new community!



# The Elements of Neighbors Helping Neighbors



Gu

**Guests: Willie** is homeless, yet so full of light. His smile really does light up the room. Willie is anguished about young people, worried about children and teenagers who don't have any trust in their parents' generation, and who get into trouble because they turn to their peers for advice. It is much different now than when he was growing up. "It was a real community then. People watched out for each other, and for each other's children..."



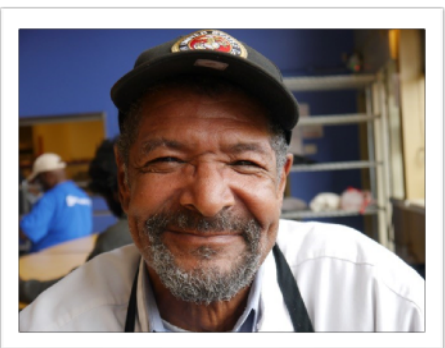
Vi

**Vincentians: Nancy** is an amazing volunteer who is here week after week, year after year. Her warmth and kindness are contagious. This is evident through her talent of crocheting clothes for dolls that she herself has purchased, to give to the sweet children who come to St Vincent de Paul. Each one is made with love, unique and beautiful in its own way. Nancy works in our Free Dining Room, as well as sorting clothing for the Community Center Clothing Closet.



St

**Staff: Elvis** has worked at St Vincent for almost 15 years. He is extremely quick and knows everything. He helps train new chefs as well as assistants into the workings of the St. Vincent kitchen. His father was a cook in Vietnam. If anyone has a question about anything, they turn to Elvis. He makes sure everything is done well and completely. If it is not, he does it himself. He is tireless and always so kind.



Vo

**Volunteers: Oscar** has gone through the Kitchen of Champions culinary training and now returns to volunteer. To be around Oscar is to be happy. You can't help yourself. He carries his spirit with him. He is a disabled Marine with PTSD. Oscar is also a lay minister. Every morning he gets up at 3:30 am to send personal messages of hope and prayer to the 500 people who follow him on Facebook. He does this every day. When I asked why he gets up so early, he answered that people ask for prayers from all over the world, and he wants

them to receive the prayers early in their day. Oscar has fallen in love with a wonderful woman and is leaving to go to be with her in Mississippi. I feel very lucky to have met him.





# The Faces of Our Downtown Campus

The photos on this page, taken by our very talented volunteer Sacha Kawaichi, illustrate the many faces of our work and the fellowship we share day to day with staff, volunteers, and the people we serve.





# Holiday Food, Coat, and Gift Drive

Our direct service campus in West Oakland is preparing for the Christmas season by determining the best ways to serve the needs of our neighbors. This year we're focusing on three holiday drives: toys, coats, and food.

## Christmas Gift Drive:



This year we will distribute gifts to 250 children, from infants to 18 years old, at the invitation-only Christmas Open House

on Saturday, December 17th, at our Community Center. The day will also include Christmas stockings, candy, stocking stuffers, arts & crafts tables, and a visit from Santa. We're asking for donated new games, toys, gift cards, and books. Bring your unwrapped presents to our direct service campus by Monday, December 5th, or let Santa's helpers do the shopping for you.

## Warm Coat Drive:

As the weather turns colder, we are getting ready to participate in the national One Warm Coat drive.

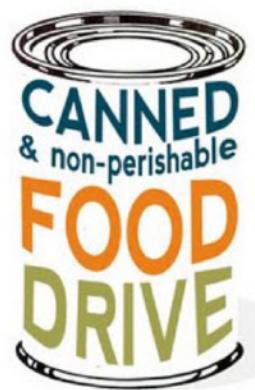
We're asking for gently-worn warm coats for adult men and women, especially men's coats and larger



women's coats. (Our Women's Center already has plenty of warm children's coats, thankfully.) The coats can be dropped off throughout the winter - there's always a need for warm coats in our Clothing Closet. We'd love to get your help in sorting, hanging, and distributing those warm coats, too!

## Non-Perishable Food Drive:

This year we're reviving a tradition from years past: a non-perishable food drive. We're reaching out to community partners to ask them if they'd like to participate, and hope to invite more participants in the future. Like the coat drive, the food drive can continue into the New Year, allowing us to further support Conferences who offer food boxes to local families.



Are you interested in contributing towards one of our drives? Contact Muna or our Call Center, whose contacts are on the last page, with questions, to organize a drive, or to drop off donations.

For monetary donations, please visit [svdp-alameda.org/donate](http://svdp-alameda.org/donate) or make a check payable to St. Vincent de Paul, noting Christmas 2016 in the memo line.

Thank you for your continued generosity and for helping to make this holiday season a memorable one for our neighbors!





The St. Vincent de Paul/Order of Malta Podiatry Clinic collaboration was created in December, 2014. Podiatry Clinic is held monthly, on the third Wednesday, from 9 a.m. to Noon.

Our annual budget varies and is dependent on donations and grants.

The Order of Malta of Northern California provides key financial support by providing our Podiatrist's salary, medical supplies, and malpractice insurance.

St. Vincent de Paul provides the physical space to provide clinical services; volunteers and staff to assist with clinic operations; and coordination with other services.

Janet Waring, our volunteer Clinic Coordinator, solicits donated supplies; clinic volunteers also donate items as needed.

An average of 32 clients are seen at each clinic session - that's 384 clients per year.

The most common problems of Podiatry Clinic clients we see are fungal infections and overgrown toenails. All medical treatments by

## SVdP/Order of Malta Podiatry Clinic

our podiatrist, and prescribed topical medications and orthotics, are provided to our clients free of charge.

Eight volunteer nurses and other ancillary staff keep the clinic running smoothly at each clinic session. An additional 20 volunteer hours per month is spent keeping the clinic stocked, cleaned, and prepared for each clinic session.

Each client is provided with a new pair of socks to promote healing of the treated feet. Every client is also offered, and most receive, a pair of reconditioned (used) shoes if available at the time of treatment.

Our Clinic Coordinator spends about 20 hours a month collecting donated used shoes from shoe stores, gyms, and sports teams for our clients.

### SVdP/Malta Podiatry Clinic Wish-List

- **Cash** to purchase topical medications, baby wipes (to wash feet), and other needed supplies. Funding for 2017 has not yet been identified and is urgently needed.
- **Socks.** Men's and women's winter-weight, cotton blend socks are needed for distribution to clients during clinic sessions.
- **Shoes.** Most of our clients are homeless or living below the poverty level and simply cannot afford a good pair of shoes. New or gently used closed-toe sneakers and shoes are especially appreciated.



# Raul, from Kitchen of Champions Cohort 49

SVdP strives to create and sustain programs that not only benefit our clients, but our community. Since 2007, the Kitchen of Champions (KoC), has given our trainees, many with barriers to job training, an opportunity that might not have happened otherwise.

One of our trainees, Raul Torres, is a great example of how much this program can help individuals who go through the intensive nine-week training.

Raul is a hard worker with a positive attitude, someone who exemplifies that “what you put into things is what you get out of them.” Trainees like Raul remind us that our programs give the instruction, tools, confidence, and support necessary for success.

Raul had worked as a plumber’s assistance for two years, but the KoC program seemed like a better fit for his interests, an opportunity to get real work experience in the culinary world, and an opportunity to help feed those in need in Oakland.

On his first day of training he met Chef Ryan, Chef Charles, and the trainees in Cohort 48. From the start, the chefs showed him how the kitchen worked. One of Raul’s challenges was learning to use unfamiliar herbs and spices, but he learned through Chef Ryan’s patient instruction.

Raul is grateful for his training at SVdP. He loves the people he met here and wants to help out by teaching future cohorts. He is proud of his upcoming gradation because he has worked hard to get to this point and says, “God bless St. Vincent de Paul and its programs!”

Recently Raul has become very busy balancing his last weeks of KoC training and a new job he got through a Workforce Program placement. Raul’s talent and work ethic was recognized by the Workforce staff and his resume was forwarded with a

recommendation when a position opened up for a line cook at a local restaurant, McGee’s Bar and Grill in Alameda. McGee’s has partnered with SVdP for over two years in creating job opportunities for KoC graduates, showing community support for the KoC program.

Raul loves his new job and really appreciates his KoC training, as his new job is fast-paced and there is no room for error!

We are proud of Raul and all of the successful graduates of the KoC program. For more information about the program call us at 510-638-7600.





# Key Factors of Our New Program of Work & Budget

The Board of Trustees and District Council of St. Vincent de Paul Alameda County have developed and approved an FY17 program of work and supporting budget that involves changes in our direct service programs for job training, our retail thrift operations, and our staff reporting structure. The overarching goal for this program of work and budget is to move the organization onto more sustainable financial footing by increasing rental income and store profitability, and reducing staffing and program costs while sustaining key services to those in need in our community. Our budget for FY 2017 is balanced for the first time in over a decade.



The majority of our programs and services will remain the same. The following three key changes will allow us to move from a deficit budget to one that is balanced and sustainable:

1. Retool our job training programs. Our Kitchen of Champions culinary training program will retain its current format. However, we will suspend some of the more complex parts of our other job training programs while we restructure them to improve our approaches to onsite training assignments, accounting, outcomes metrics, and volunteer engagement in the programs. This will allow us to strengthen the programs we offer and help ensure that those participating are able to transform their lives and find sustainable employment opportunities using the job skills learned through our enhanced job training programs.

2. Optimize our retail thrift operations. Our stores in Livermore and Fremont will remain open and will receive donations directly from individuals; this is how they currently operate and they are self-sustaining with this model. We will move away from use of a central warehouse and donation pickups, in order to allow the thrift stores to do their own donation processing and to be more profitable without the high overhead costs associated with a central warehouse. In addition, we will close the Oakland Store and Redux. The properties currently used by the Oakland Store, the central warehouse, and Redux will be leased as a means to generate income to support our programs.

3. Organize the staff into five broad functional areas, each with a manager reporting to the Executive Director. All non-retail staff will work from the downtown Oakland campus.

The Board recognizes that changes this significant are challenging to work through and can create anxiety and uncertainty. However, we are confident that these are the right changes that are needed at this time and will allow St. Vincent de Paul of Alameda County to more sustainably serve those in need in our community for many years to come.

If you have questions about any of this, please don't hesitate to contact Blase Bova, Executive Director, at 510-435-2625 or [bbova@svdp-alameda.org](mailto:bbova@svdp-alameda.org), or Board President Maura Bonnarens at [maura.svdp.alameda@gmail.com](mailto:maura.svdp.alameda@gmail.com).



# 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
Blase Bova	Executive Director	(510) 435-2625	bbova@svdp-alameda.org
Carmen Jones-Weeks	Human Resources Manager	(510) 435-1576	cjonesweeks@svdp-alameda.org
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

## Winter Shelter Opens

With generous support from the City of Oakland, SVdP reopened its Winter Shelter on Monday, November 14th. The seven-day-a-week shelter will be open for five months, and will have beds for 75 guests. A volunteer shift is available seven days a week from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. We're proud to be able to offer such a critical basic need for those who have no homes, literally helping them find warmth and getting off the streets. Our

shelter, like all of our programs, depends not only on the gift of time from our wonderful volunteers, but on financial support from the community. We thank all of our donors, who make our programs possible, through their generous gifts. To learn more about the impact your gifts have in our community, give Blase or Muna a call. Our contacts are at the top of this page.



## We need your help

- Volunteers to help sort clothing donations at our downtown campus, to be given out in the clothing closet in our Community Center.
- Volunteers in the Fremont and Livermore thrift stores, to help process donations, assist customers, and arrange and price items for sale.
- Help feed over 500 meals daily to those in need and volunteer in our dish room! Be a part of the team that helps to feed those who are hungry! Tues - Fri, 9:30 am to 1 pm.

