

Neighbors Helping Neighbors Quarterly: Winter 2018



Corporate Crews Contribute

Each September, the Contra Costa Crisis Center, with presenting sponsor Chevron, offers Corporate Caring Volunteer Week, the largest corporate volunteer program in the Bay Area. This week-long event



brings employees from local companies together to volunteer at nonprofit organizations throughout the East Bay. This year marks the fifth consecutive year that Chevron has chosen SVdP as one of their main service sites. Chevron employees from the greater Northern California area, many of whom had never met in person, gathered and volunteered in the kitchen and dining room. Corporate Caring Volunteer Week provides an easy way for Chevron employees to get involved in community service

while allowing them to foster stronger work ties and team-building skills. We also saw multiple visits from groups from Wells Fargo and Kaiser. Wells Fargo has proven to be a consistent supporter of SVdP, through their monetary and in-kind donations, participation with our Kitchen of Champions program, and volunteerism. The Kaiser groups came from downtown Oakland to volunteer in our free dining room twice in September and had matching aprons for the occasion. We appreciated the abundance of volunteers during what turned out to be a busy month!



MULTIPLE GROUPS FROM WELLS FARGO (TOP LEFT), CHEVRON (LEFT) AND KAISER (RIGHT) SERVED IN OUR FREE DINING ROOM THROUGHOUT SEPTEMBER. WE ARE SO GLAD TO HAVE THEIR CONSISTENT SUPPORT.



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



It's the holiday season, when so many of us count our blessings and try to bring cheer to someone who needs us.

St. Vincent de Paul is a place where, as an employee told me last week, you can both be blessed and be a blessing to another. The gifts we each bring as we gather in this collective act of kindness, whether it's our hands, our hearts, or our material support, weave together to create a healing environment for those who need us, now more than ever. We are a blessing to someone like Michael, whom you can read about in this issue. We're a blessing to the family facing eviction after a medical scare who can stay in their home thanks to our help; a blessing to the homeless veteran who's been down on his luck for far too long. And we ourselves are blessed to be able to reap this reward, blessed to do this work in fellowship with one another, and blessed to make a real change in the lives of other human beings.

Each of our gifts forms part of the whole, a network of healing and support. If a part were missing we'd all be less strong, less able to care for one another, less of a blessing to a child whose holidays aren't happy but could be, to a senior who's more alone than she should be.

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. My contact info is on the last page. Thanks to Ava Gambero for her work writing and publishing both our quarterly and our monthly newsletters.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Blase Bova".

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

News Briefs

■ The year 2019 is approaching and many of us are reviewing our plans for year-end giving. Nonprofit service organizations traditionally receive nearly half of their charitable contributions during November and December. We invite you to consider a gift to St. Vincent de Paul to help put our mission into action by serving the impoverished living throughout Alameda County. Our work is especially important at this time as more and more families and individuals face housing and health care costs that are rising at an alarming rate. Homelessness, mental illness, hunger, joblessness, addiction - these are just a few of the challenges faced by those we serve. Your generous gifts sustain the essential services we provide. We couldn't do our work without you.

■ The Clothing Closet at our west Oakland direct service campus provides clothing, shoes and accessories. As the weather gets colder, we are especially asking for donations of warm coats for our guests. For more information about making a clothing donation and/or volunteering to help collect, sort and display Clothing Closet donations, contact John Sterns, community engagement manager. (See back page for contact information.)

■ Check out our Facebook page for more updates about our service in Alameda County.



The Elements of Neighbors Helping Neighbors



G **Guests: Michael.** "In 1970 I ended up in Vietnam as a demolition special tech. I got my leg blown up and...I got an honorable discharge. Even though I get my medical care and housing from the VA I have not received my benefits. They say they lost my records. I have waited 42 years to get my military pension. I am currently taking a class for ex addicts and I am ten years clean and sober. I am also taking a business class. I now own Diamond Truck Detailing."



Vi **Vincentians: St. Raymond Parish.** Rosann Russo, St. Raymond conference president, extended an invitation to serve in October through a mini Ozanam orientation at the parish, which had over one dozen new participants. The "students" were so moved that they all prayerfully agreed to move forward to serve their neighbors in need. "I look forward to encouraging and nurturing our new Vincentians so our conference can grow and continue to serve the poor as Christ commands us to do," Russo said.



St **Staff: Jamie.** When Livermore Store Manager Jamie Aubry began working as an assistant store manager, she planned on leaving after two years. Nine years later, Aubry is still at SVdP with no signs of stopping soon. "St. Vincent de Paul is a wonderful organization. I never anticipated I would be here for this long. Once I started working here and found out all that they do, I have not left. I wanted to be a part of that," Aubry said.



V **Volunteers: Giorgio** began volunteering in our free dining room in September, and quickly became a reliable dishroom helper. Over the coming weeks, we found out he was a professional football player who was spending time volunteering while in between NFL teams. On October 22, he made his debut with the Atlanta Falcons. Tavecchio executed a perfect game and kicked a 56-yard field goal in the fourth quarter that led the team to beat the New York Giants 23-20. Good luck, Giorgio!



Celebrating Our Graduated Champions

Our Kitchen of Champions job training program's cohorts 59 and 60 graduated in September and November, respectively, at the West Oakland direct service campus community center surrounded by

family and community. We wish sincere congratulations to our graduates: Alonzo Curry, Leander Sellers, Anthony Randall, Trina Hewitt, Aniqua Jones and Juan Salinas of cohort 59, and Michael Coleman, Brea Cox, Malcolm Daniels, Ron Teat, Kia Fortune, Rynika Hodge, Larry Hoover, Marie Schreiner, KelaShawn Spears, William Chavez and LaDale Gill of cohort 60.



Each graduate prepared a favorite meal to share with all attendees, including po boys,

gumbo, enchiladas, sweet rice, steak, chicken salad, green beans, pupusas, chicken stew, fried rice, chicken wings, banana pudding and more. Each graduate was able to address their guests and teachers, while receiving their certificates of completion and brand new knife sets. The September ceremony featured keynote addresses from local chef, media star and entrepreneur, Chef Aminah Robinson, and KoC Cohort 47 alumnus Chef Marshawn Howard, who now owns his own catering company. The November ceremony featured guest speaker Nicole Dixon, a local artist who spoke about the many connections between cooking and her mixed media art, and the need for us to express our creativity, especially to release intense stressors. She brought four beautiful art pieces to display, and really made an impact on the crowd with her elegance and talent.

The graduates were essential to serving over 500 meals per day in our free dining room, and even were able to use their own recipes to feed our guests.

Our cohorts always bring many different skillsets and backgrounds into the kitchen. From young people to people who have had multiple career changes, the groups had much to learn about themselves and each other. "The groups are so vibrant, and I miss seeing them around," Volunteer Coordinator Katie Troy said. "They inspire us more than they realize." We are excited to see what the graduates do next, and will



always be here to support them in any way they need. Congratulations to cohorts 59 and 60! Pictured: Cohort 59 (top left) and Cohort 60 (bottom right) with their instructors.



Conference Feature: Transfiguration



TRANSFIGURATION CONFERENCE MEMBERS AT THE NATIONWIDE FRIENDS OF THE POOR WALK SEPT. 29.

The Transfiguration Conference has 24 active members, who served 2,029 people in 2017, and conducted 776 home visits, including visits with the homeless and in public with people outside of their homes. As many Vincentians know, the home visit helps foster connections, and can even lead to a greater service than what the recipient could have expected. Another advantage of home visits is the ability to spiritually connect through prayer.

Conference President Mike Dresen says that is his favorite part of the ministry. "I get a warm fuzzy feel

when praying with people. Some are reluctant to do it, but having that connection together when we pray is one of the more rewarding parts," Dresen said. Like many conferences, Transfiguration is open to adapting to the growing homeless crisis, and figuring out how best to serve the homeless in their community, on top of assisting with eviction prevention services. Luckily, there is a great team at Transfiguration that can help with the growing challenges. "I think we have a really well-run organization and there are many dedicated people and a good infrastructure, and we want to keep that at a high level," Dresen said. The Conference will be gearing up for a busy holiday season, where they will give out turkeys and nonperishables for Thanksgiving, and toys for Christmas.

Donor Spotlight: Michael Lane

SVdP benefited from gifts collected by a generous supporter who held a fundraising event on our behalf. Michael Lane, a residential real estate broker, hosted his second annual Summerfest at Corica Golf Course in Alameda. Michael's guests, who included clients, family and friends, made contributions to benefit programs at our west Oakland direct service campus. In total, nearly \$2,000 was donated to SVdP.

"Michael is a wonderful supporter of ours," said Executive Director, Blase Bova. "He understands our mission and programs and serves as a generous ambassador for us."

If you are interested in hosting a fundraiser for SVdP like Michael, please contact John Sterns, our community engagement manager (see back page for contact information).



Celebrating 80 Years in Alameda County

SVdP celebrated its 80th anniversary of service in the Oakland diocese with two special events on Saturday, September 15. The festivities began with a Vincentian-oriented Mass at the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland. The Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, S.J., Bishop of Oakland, celebrated the Mass, joined by concelebrants from parishes with SVdP conferences. More than 100 Vincentians and their families, friends and supporters attended the Mass.

The guests were invited to SVdP of Alameda County's west Oakland campus for a reception held in our Free Dining Room. Food was prepared by our chefs and by alumni of our Kitchen of Champions culinary arts workforce development program. Memorabilia from our 80-year history delighted the guests and helped start many conversations about "back in the day." The 85 guests were welcomed with remarks by outgoing SVdP Alameda president Louise Astle, incoming SVdP Alameda president Jim Lee and SVdP Contra Costa president Ron Costanzo. Many thanks to all who helped make this a special celebration for our Vincentians.



Fall Fundraising Breakfast a Success

We held our 2018 Fall Fundraising Breakfast at the Cathedral of Christ the Light. The fundraiser featured breakfast, meaningful speeches from Homeless Services Manager Leslie Thomas, Mayor Libby Schaaf, Executive Director Blase Bova, KoC alumnus Marshawn Howard, Reverend Ken Chambers of the Interfaith Council, Reverend Laurie Manning, and The Most Reverend Michael C. Barber, S.J., Bishop of

Oakland. All worked together to show our guests and donors the incredible partnerships we have with leaders of the faith, civic, nonprofit, and business communities, to better achieve our mission. Thank you to everyone who helped create a successful gathering. We look forward to continuing our mission with support from our compassionate and caring community.



Q&A with District Council President Jim Lee

Every three years, the Conference Presidents hold elections for a new SVdP Board President, also known as the District Council President. Our new District Council President, Jim Lee, presented his platform to the Vincentian voters, was elected, then began his tenure on October 1. Lovingly referred to as the “servant of servants,” the Board President is responsible for supporting all Alameda County Conferences and leading the Board of Directors. Read below to get to know our new president.

How did you get started with SVdP?

About six years ago I attended the hospitality Sunday (coffee and sweets), sponsored by the St. Albert SVdP. Vincentian Steve Tao, who is now sadly deceased, asked me if I would join. I agreed to attend the next meeting, and my journey at SVdP commenced.

What is being the Board President like for you, compared to other Vincentian roles you’ve had?

This position has a much broader perspective. You are much more the representative and spokesperson for the association, and less the hands-on deliverer of services.

What made you want to be President?

It is a wonderful opportunity to grow spiritually and as a person, and to expand my Vincentian world.

What are you looking forward to the most?

The opportunity to meet with and interact with other Vincentian volunteers, both in Alameda County and in other locations.

What is something you wish to learn?

I wish to learn more about the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and to communicate effectively this knowledge to our district members.

What can Vincentians look forward to during your term?

My goals are to be present and available in this District, listen to the Vincentians and try to carry out their vision of our society.

What are your main tasks as President?

As my predecessor Louise Astle said, as President you are piloting the plane at 32,000 feet. Your goals are to keep the plane aloft, fly in a correct direction and make a safe landing. It is not to micromanage. Steve Kerr, the very successful coach of the Golden State Warriors, stated his goal as a coach is to guide the players to success. We have a wonderful staff at SVdP and excellent volunteers, and my goal is to continue our recent successful reorganization, and direct it to even greater success.



*Thank you, Jim, for your service to the District Council.
We look forward to the years ahead!*



Shelter Now Open; Welcoming Guests

The St. Vincent de Paul shelter opened on Monday, October 29. Our staff has been working hard hiring a new team to cover the nighttime shifts.

This year, our partnership with the City of Oakland has expanded to allow for more staffing. We have two Kitchen of Champions alumni hired to cook dinner and prepare breakfast every day. We also have a janitor and budget for another security guard.

With the housing crisis in Oakland at its peak, we are glad to be able to provide a warm place to sleep and have two additional hot meals. Thank you to all who helped prepare for and execute a successful shelter. If you'd like to volunteer during one of the night shifts, please contact Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Troy, ktroy@svdp-alameda.org.



SHELTER STAFF PREPARE FOR THE OPENING NIGHT ON OCT. 29.

Facebook Makes Connections at SVdP

A group of 15 employees from Facebook volunteered in the West Oakland free dining room on October 26. The group brought a good energy to the dining room as they helped serve the meal, clean, socialize with the guests, staff and volunteers, wash dishes and more. As the end of each month approaches, our direct services get busier, so it is always nice to have the participation of great corporate groups who are personable and willing to learn and work hard.

Volunteer groups have the opportunity to connect with our guests and have meaningful conversations with staff, volunteers and each other, and bring those experiences back to work with them.

Thank you to Facebook; we sure 'liked' working with you!



National Assembly Meets in San Diego

The St. Vincent de Paul Annual National Assembly was held in San Diego from August 29-September 1. The conference is open to everyone involved with SVdP, full of Masses, opportunities for fellowship, meetings among leaders throughout the country, and a plethora of informative workshops with topics ranging from how to make social media work for you to disaster preparedness to spirituality and formation. Representatives from SVdP Alameda County included staff, Conference presidents,

Vincentians, and board members. Though there were over 750 attendees, much of what people took away from the experience was focused on the unity of the group and their shared vocation. "The solidarity that was shared demonstrated the oneness of our ministry and vocation," Steve Tedesco, co-chair of our Spirituality, Formation and Extension Committee, said. Blase Bova, executive director, was also struck by the collective talent and commitment among the attendees, saying, "All of them are smart, dedicated, true-believers in selfless service to others, in advocacy for those without a voice, and are tirelessly working to grow and improve the Society."



SVDP NATIONAL PRESIDENT RALPH MIDDLECAMP GIVES A PRESENTATION AT THE ASSEMBLY.

Corpus Christi Hosts Ministry Fair

A great way to invite and encourage parishioners to accept the invitation to serve is through the ministry fair at Corpus Christi in Fremont. In order to connect the various ministries within the parish, Fr. David, along with the Pastoral Council, announced that each ministry, if they chose, could staff a table and explain to the parishioners how they served their communities. Members of the Corpus Christi Conference spent the weekend sharing their ministry and Vincentian vocation. Led by their Conference President Carol Snyder, they made posters, brochures and flyers and tabled to explain their service. The Conference had tours of their pantry operation including the Meals of Mercy program. If your Conference wishes to recruit and display your great work, hosting your own ministry fair could be a good opportunity to engage your community and get them thinking about Vincentian service. For questions, contact Vincentian Support Coordinator, Lu Cuevas, at lcuevas@svdp-alameda.org.



Oakland International High School

A group of Oakland International High School students volunteered in the free dining room in early November. The group took time out of their school schedule to help us serve hundreds of meals to our guests. Oakland International has 380 students from thirty-five countries, who speak thirty-two languages. All students are English-language learners, and almost all have immigrated to the US in the last four years. Five percent of the student body is homeless. We are so thankful for the students hard work, and their willingness to serve. They prove that service is a language of its own.



Volunteer Coordinator, Katie Troy, appreciates the ways in which the students help each other navigate their English-speaking surroundings to make sure everyone can succeed. "The students were so supportive of each other and they worked hard to help each other out as well as help our guests, and they were happy and willing to do any job," Troy said.

Volunteer Feature: Javier Silvares

Kitchen prep room volunteer Javier Silvares has worked with St. Vincent de Paul for over one year. He was attracted to kitchen work all his life, and even when working various jobs in other industries he said he has always "come back to working in a kitchen." Since he was a child growing up in León, Spain, it was clear he had a talent for cooking. When he moved to Madrid at age nineteen, he solidified his cooking ability to take care of himself away from home.



Silvares enjoys experimenting in the kitchen, cooking foods from other cultures and teaching them to the Kitchen of Champions cohorts. His favorite recipe to make is "preñaos," which are bread rolls stuffed with sausage. Since volunteering at SVdP, Silvares has been struck by the harsh realities of poverty in America and the effects it has on physical and mental health. He plans to keep cooking to do his part in aiding his neighbors. "I like this country, this country gave me a lot. There's something we don't see in Europe and that is this poverty. Since I've volunteered here I saw that poverty is so close to us. It is on the street, throughout the country, and in this building. It makes me feel sad that those who need the most help do not receive it. Everyone has an obligation to do something to help," 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
Blase Bova	Executive Director	(510) 435-2625	bbova@svdp-alameda.org
Carmen Jones-Weaks	Human Resources Manager	(510) 385-8934	cjonesweaks@svdp-alameda.org
John Sterns	Community Engagement Manager	(925) 323-5848	jsterns@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
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
Volunteer Team	Volunteer Coordinator	(510) 877-9252	volunteer@svdp-alameda.org

Volunteer Feature: Ala Costa Center

A group of four to eight volunteers from Ala Costa Center have been coming to serve in our free dining room every Thursday for years. The group assists with cleaning tables and trays, prepping vegetables in the kitchen, and working in the family room. Volunteer Sakaie Thrower has been volunteering here for two years, handing out the desserts in the family dining area. “[Plating the desserts] is my favorite thing to do. I like coming here because it’s my favorite work site I’ve gone to with Ala Costa,” Thrower said. Fellow volunteer, Tenzin Shekhang, also likes his assignment of cleaning tables in the dining room, and does it consistently. “I get to talk to people and I get to help. It reminds me of a similar experience I had working in Alameda where I gave food to elderly people. I got to use my manners and I want to keep doing it,” Shekhang said. When they are not volunteering, both Thrower and Shekhang enjoy watching all types of television and movies, ranging from superheroes to Disney movies.

The mission of Ala Costa includes empowering school-aged children with developmental disabilities to find, use, and express their unique strengths and talents. The Ala Costa volunteer group is a great example of young people’s ability to make a difference at SVdP, and we are happy to have them with us.

