



THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL OF CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

SPRING 2014



*“The spirit of the Vincentian ministry ... is to **always** help those in need.”* - Father Col. Anne, Carl Stephen Poole, Pittsburg

Newest Conference Finds Footing in West County

“Unusual” is the way Patrick Moran describes a recent activity of St. John the Baptist parish’s St. Vincent de Paul (SVdP) conference when it stepped in to pay the moving costs of an elderly woman into subsidized housing.

The woman had been waiting four years for decent housing. When accepted she used all her money to pay the deposit and had nothing left to pay for the move. In a flurry of 15 phone calls one day, Moran arranged for the conference to pay for her move. “It was quite an effort, but we got it done!”

New Conference President Moran, 45, a research scientist, is heading the effort to serve the poor in the El Cerrito parish’s local community. It is the newest of St. Vincent de Paul’s 27 Contra Costa conferences. With about a dozen Vincentians actively involved, the conference is developing and increasing involvement of the parish.

“In an urban environment like this the big concern is homelessness,” says Moran, who moved to the Bay Area two years ago from the Rio Grande Valley in Texas, where housing is much cheaper.

About half the people helped are elderly on fixed income who have trouble paying their rent or utilities. Half are mixed age families, mostly

headed by women, with children or grandchildren, some with a disabled adult child—and not enough income to cover basic costs of food and shelter.

Moran’s desire to help people in need of housing—and other problems that come with that—led him to revive St. Vincent de Paul at St. John the Baptist with the support of the parish. Parish involvement is growing. “We are getting people who this is their first activity.”

A recently opened food pantry provides good food twice a month. The conference helpline is getting calls. Last Christmas, even though it had only organized the month before, it ran a toy drive for 31 children. Its kindergarten class raised \$900 for the program, supported by an interested teacher.

Moran is eager to have the new volunteers participate in the Ozanam orientation. “It is about the essence of being a Vincentian. “It is about the ‘why’ of what we do, not so much the ‘how.’”



Ready to serve: Vincentian Support Services Coordinator Steven Krank, left, with Conference President Patrick Moran.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

2 Executive Director's Letter
Client Profile

3 Workforce Development
Volunteer Spotlight

4 Announcements & Events
Nov. 8: 50 Years

Dear Friends,

I am so pleased to be writing you on this happy occasion. St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

This is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of service in our community, what it means to be a Vincentian, and how we can continue to meet people where they are and provide timely, responsive services to people who are in desperate need of a little hope.

As we reflect on these important goals, we also reaching honor our dedicated Vincentians who have worked unflaggingly and with little recognition for years helping their neighbors in need. I ask for for your help to tell the story of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Contra Costa County. Please send us your stories, photos, and contact information for outstanding longtime volunteers. You can send them by email to Steve Krank at s.krank@svdp-cc.org. Everyone matters!

In the last fiscal year, we helped more than 200,000 people in Contra Costa County—a 47 percent increase from last year. More than anything, the numbers show that the need for your help is not decreasing. I am lucky enough to see the effects of your efforts reflected in the faces of people we serve every day, whether with food, job training, medical assistance, or a warm place to spend a winter day off the streets.

We could not do it without your support, time, and generosity of spirit. Thank you so very much for your work!

With gratitude,



Melanie Anguay
Executive Director

CLIENT PROFILE: Nana Bediako



“
Just keep
learning!
”

Full of fresh ideas for his future and armed with new skills, 2014 SVdP Workforce Development Graduate Nana Bediako is focused on finding work that makes him happy and which serves others.

We caught up with him about his experience and plans for the future:

What was the most helpful part of the program?

Learning transportation planning. I figured out how to make a list for packing and loading, when and how to call people for deliveries, and how to navigate new areas without GPS.

What are your plans moving forward?

Eventually, I want to own my own carpentry business. But that requires money and time to get a license and insurance to comply with state laws. Until I have that together, I want to apply my

skills, looking for work in facilities management in a hotel or other corporate environment.

What would that sort of work entail?

The work requires the skills I learned in transportation planning: scheduling orders, knowing who to contact, and how to handle lots of different tasks at once. I enjoy work that keeps me doing something slightly different every day.

Anything else?

It is especially hard to be an older person without a long work history here. The program helped me get something steady to build on.

I keep waiting for that strong wind to blow me where I'm supposed to end up. I don't have any regrets in life. I just keep learning!

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Moran is able to work as President while working full-time. "I am lucky enough to have a flexible enough work situation to be able to take time off to stock our pantry or go pay bills during the day. My job as a scientific researcher doesn't allow me to help people directly. But I can do this without any desire for reward or accolade. I want to motivate and organize others to help."

Moran is motivated by his own experience of childhood poverty.

"It feels good to help and give thanks to God for what we have by helping people by sharing what we have. It's personal for me. When I was little, we were on food stamps. My mom was a single mom. I know what it means to be in need. I like the idea of alleviating that need."



Volunteer Mentors Needed

Have experience and ideas that might benefit our program participants?

Please get in touch with us at (925) 439-5060 about becoming a volunteer mentor for participants in our program.

Classes last 12 weeks, but a good mentoring relationship can last a lifetime!

SVdP Helps People Get Ready for Work

Going to work is much more than a steady paycheck: it is also a way to be involved in a community, to develop self-esteem and a sense of purpose, and, sometimes, a vocation.

critical bridge of support as participants set out on their own.

The most recent class of six participants is the latest to graduate from our three-year-old program. At an event marking their graduation in February, participants told volunteer mentors and staff they appreciated the skills they gained in their training:

"I really feel prepared to go interview now. I wasn't at all

Recognizing the importance of helping

people get to work for all of these reasons, St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County started a program to help the neediest members of our community find their way back to steady work.

Now in its third year, SVdP's Workforce Development Program helps people facing exceptional barriers to employment find support and training to re-enter the job market. The extended economic downturn has made it particularly difficult for anyone to find work—let alone someone who has a criminal record, who is older, or who has gaps in their education.

The program consists of 24 weeks of paid, part-time, on-the-job training at St. Vincent de Paul. Participants learn critical skills in retail, administrative office tasks, truck loading and driving and other aspects of logistics, like operating a baler. Crucially, it also includes weekly classes in which participants learn soft skills—communications and interviewing, confidence-building, resume writing, job search strategies, and how to access continuing education. Each participant is matched with a mentor, who agrees to stay in touch with them after the program ends to provide a



before. Now I know what sort of questions to expect and I am ready to answer them. I'm confident," one participant shared. Another noted he was unafraid to make use of resources available to him. "[Resource centers] are right near where I live. I can go there all the time, and I plan to."

A new class of participants is already underway in Pittsburg.



“The poor are always amongst us, but that is not to say their condition can't be changed.”

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Jo Ann Evans

For Jo Ann Evans, Vincentian work is an act of love. "I love being a Vincentian, and I love the people who volunteer their time, because it does take time. It takes a lot of your time to go purchase groceries, write letters and go up to businesses to ask for donations and things that will help."

After more than 30 years in the medical profession, Evans channeled her lifelong passion for helping others into full time volunteerism.

She was drawn to St. Vincent de Paul in 2001 through St. Callistus, her parish at the time, and since then has dedicated her life to helping make issues facing the poor a priority in our community.

She threw herself into St. Callistus's Vincentian work, serving not only needy area families, but also the growing homeless population in El Sobrante.

Today St. Callistus operates a food pantry and recently, under the leadership of new Conference President Elba Donnelly, expanded its program to include shoes, backpacks, and school supplies for children. The conference also works with the Bay Area Rescue Mission, the Salvation Army, local businesses, and other churches in El Sobrante to help find food, shelter, and peace of mind for the increasing homeless population. Evans also joined the Board of

PHOTOS: Clinic Volunteer Appreciation Dinner March 14

(Continued from page 3)

Directors of the SVdP Contra Costa District Council and remains the Spiritual Advisor on Contra Costa board.

Scripture shapes Jo Ann's work with the poor.

"The poor are always amongst us, but that's not to say their condition can't be changed," she says. "We try as much as

we can to not be judgmental. It's not that we are all that righteous, but we follow the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, Frederic Ozanam, and, of course, Christ, to make a difference-- however slight-- in the lives of people who need help."

Upcoming Sales at Our Stores:

Customer Appreciation Day—Pittsburg Thrift Store Only, Sat. May 3, 25-50% off donated items

Mother's Day Sale—30% off donated items- Pleasant Hill store only, May 10-11

Memorial Day Sale—50% off donated Items—Pleasant Hill Store May 24-26, Pittsburg Store May 24 & 26 only

To receive regular sale notices, sign up for our email list from the bottom of the homepage on www.svdp-cc.org. Be sure to select the option for thrift store customer news!

SVdP Announcements & Events

Donate Your Vehicle to SVdP!



Auto donation is easy and directly supports SVdP programs! We accept all vehicles, running or not, and offer FREE pick up seven days a week. Call 1-800-YES-SVDP (937-7837) or visit www.yes-svd.com to schedule a pick up.



Annual Bocce Tournament - 9/13/14

Save the date! We're getting the ball rolling for our annual Bocce tournament and fundraiser. It's going to be a blast!



Friends of the Poor Walk—9/20/14 and 9/27/14

Our annual Friends of the Poor Walk will take place in September this year. The Walk benefitting our Conferences will take place throughout the county on 9/20/14. The Walk benefitting the District Council will take place 9/27/14 at St. Isidore's in Danville.



50th Anniversary Celebration 11/8/14

Mark your calendars—we're celebrating 50 years of service in Contra Costa County with a special dinner to be held November 8 in Walnut Creek. We are collecting stories and photos from Vincentians through the years. Email stories and photos to Steve Krank at s.krank@svdp-cc.org.



2210 Gladstone Drive Pittsburg, CA 94565
(925) 439-5060 • www.svdp-cc.org

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PITTSBURG, CA
PERMIT NO. 307

