



**The Society of St. Vincent de Paul**  
of Contra Costa County

2210 Gladstone Drive, Pittsburg, CA 94565  
(925) 439 - 5060 - [www.svdpc-cc.org](http://www.svdpc-cc.org)

Non-profit Org  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Pittsburg, CA  
Permit No. 307



**The Society of St. Vincent de Paul**  
of Contra Costa County

*"A network of friends, inspired by Gospel values, growing in holiness and building a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need."*

Fall 2020 | Newsletter

Helping People In Need For 56 years!

## SVdP Food Distributions Kick Into High Gear To Meet Demand



Stephen Krank helps hand out food during a SVdP Free Food Distribution event in Richmond, CA.

For millions across the country, 2020 has been a continuous stream of challenges. The need for emergency assistance has grown considerably in the East Bay, with many people seeking aid for the first time. Together, with our Vincentians, volunteers, donors and community partners, SVdP has been able to help thousands of residents face these times with more certainty and security.

Since April, with the help of our community partners, we have been able to host 30 drive-through and walk-up food distributions feeding over 70,000 people. At these Free Food Distributions, thousands of pounds of healthy food are distributed. We have seen many new faces at these food distributions - people who have never requested help before. Additionally, SVdP has been helping to get food to community members who have been unable to leave their homes.

In addition to the large scale food distributions, the SVdP Conferences (branches) continue to operate 18 food pantries and have served over 30,000 people since March. Some SVdP food pantries, (Bay Point, Oakley and Pinole), have doubled and almost tripled the weekly number of people helped during this crisis. The SVdP Free Dining Room, operated in partnership with Loaves and Fishes of Contra Costa, is offering meals "to-go" 7 days per week, ensuring safe distribution of hot meals to the hungry every single day.

With over 15,000 cases of the virus documented in Contra Costa, the health and economic inequalities are hitting our low income neighbors very hard. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and volunteers, SVdP is helping many of our neighbors in the county shoulder these burdens. Your compassion during this crisis is admirable and awe-inspiring.

### Upcoming Events

- October 22 - SVdP Food Distribution at Our Lady Queen of the World Church 3155 Winterbrook Dr., Bay Point, 9AM-Noon.
- October 27 - SVdP Food Distribution at Catholic Charities East Bay 217 Harbour Way, Richmond, 10AM-1PM.
- October 30 - SVdP Food Distribution at The Pentecostals of the Bay Area 310 Central Ave, Pittsburg, 9AM-Noon.
- November 2 - Gianni's Italian Bistro Fundraiser to benefit The Rotacare Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul.
- November 10 - The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, An Introduction for New Members Meeting on Zoom, 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM.

### Meet The New President

My name is Bob Liles and I am the new president for the District Council of Contra Costa County Society of St. Vincent de Paul. I've been a Vincentian volunteer in Antioch for more than 15 years. As the new president I need a little bit of assistance from you. I need your help.

I don't know the way to end poverty. I don't know the answer to the homeless problem. And I am not a tech billionaire that could pay everyone's rent. I don't have the time to volunteer at the thrift stores every day. And maybe you can tell from reading this I was not an English major, engineering was my path. I like to convey my thoughts in a clear and direct way. I believe in what SVdP does and in our mission and I hope I can inspire you to help us help our neighbors in need.

If we share some ideas we might improve how we help the needy. If I take a little bit of my money and pool it with a little of yours, we might be able to prevent some people from being evicted. If we each spend an hour working at a thrift store, we might be able to sort all the donations that come in.

I know that we all have a million things going on, but if everyone just helps me out a little then I am sure that we can fulfill the mission of the Society and have a profound impact on lot of people's lives. Please join me and learn more at [svdp-cc.org](http://svdp-cc.org) or email me at [president@svdp-cc.org](mailto:president@svdp-cc.org)



Bob Liles assumes the role of SVdP Board President as of October 1, 2020.





## Executive Director's Letter

**REACT.** Resilience. Eagerness. Adaptability. Compassion. Trust. These five words sum up how St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa has responded to the challenges presented to us in recent months. Resilience - In our 175 years in the United States and our 56 years in Contra Costa, St. Vincent de Paul is here helping our neighbors in need. And we are still here. Eagerness & Adaptability – Since the onset of COVID-19, the spirit of helping the poor has not waned in our Vincentian volunteers and staff. We have adopted new procedures for food distribution, “home visits” and Thrift Store operations to be able to continue to provide much-needed help to our most vulnerable. Compassion – one of the core values of how we **serve all** with dignity, and with a loving heart and a desire to give a hand up, not a handout, to those who come to us for help. Trust – The trust that our neighbors in need have in our ability to help them with care, respect and confidentiality. The trust that our generous supporters will continue to provide us with the necessary resources to let us serve our neighbors in need.

The word that underlies all of this, however, is thankfulness. The thankfulness that I feel for everyone who serves our mission every day – from Vincentians at a food pantry or volunteers at the thrift stores. From the foundations who support our work with the community to the donors whose every gift makes a difference. I am so thankful to all of you for helping us weather these challenging times and provide the safety-net to our community when people need us the most.

Blessings,

Claudia L. Ramirez  
Executive Director



Larry Lynch helps distribute food during a SVdP Food Distribution in Richmond, CA.

## Keeping Volunteers Safe

Spurred on by the pandemic, new challenges have arisen in the mission of helping our neighbors in Contra Costa County. An explosion of need has arisen as thousands lose their income and healthcare. In face of growing demand, organizations like St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County are providing their volunteers the utmost in health and safety measures.

For our Vincentian volunteers, like Larry Lynch of St. David of Wales Conference in Richmond, the drive to help our neighbors has only increased. Larry and his wife Patty are regular faces at SVdP food distributions. Larry said he feels very safe volunteering with SVdP. “Whenever we volunteer, there are temperature checks and health checks,” Larry said. “Everyone wears a mask. SVdP gives us gloves and hand sanitizer and everyone stands apart.”

The pandemic has caused non-profit community organizations like SVdP to find new ways to work together.

“I’ve seen so many denominations of faith come together to give, it’s uplifting,” Larry said. “This pandemic is like the wildfires, they’ll come and go but need and poverty will be there when they’ve gone. St. Vincent de Paul has been around for almost 200 years – right now there are over 900,000 unpaid volunteers throughout the globe who believe in God and helping people, it’s really inspiring.”

“We’ve been working hard during the shelter-in-place to deliver food to our low-income neighbors who are unable to afford food.” Larry said, describing living the mission of face-to-face visits inspired by St. Vincent de Paul. “I’m not scared at all. I’ve been blessed with a wife who has done this work with me for 50 years – it’s our duty.”



Martha awaits treatment at the RotaCare Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul.

## Caring For The Uninsured

The need to provide equitable access to healthcare has certainly been highlighted by events this year.

While the COVID-19 pandemic forced the RotaCare Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul to modify service to telephone appointments initially, it is back to seeing patients face-to-face since August.

The health and safety of our volunteers and patients has never been more paramount. With an abundance of new safety equipment and protocols, the clinic is proud to provide face-to-face healthcare to the underserved and uninsured in the county once again.

Our patients, like Martha of Pittsburg, are uninsured. Working at a restaurant, her employer does not offer health insurance, and it’s too expensive on her limited income to get adequate healthcare.

Until she felt ill, healthcare was not a priority. Luckily, the free medical clinic was here to help her through her diagnosis of diabetes and hypertension. “I appreciate the volunteers here so much,” Martha says, “even when they lovingly scold me to make lifestyle changes.”

Martha uses many of the clinic’s services including primary care, flu shots, diabetes education and healthy-cooking classes.

“The clinic is for people who have no other access,” says Hamid Khonsari, M.D., the clinic’s volunteer medical director. “It makes a big impact in the community.”

## Housing Our Neighbors

Between 2000 and 2018, the average rent in the Bay Area increased by 223%, with no significant growth in wages for low-income workers. California has added 1 unit of housing for every 5.4 jobs that have been added, and as the coronavirus takes its economic toll, the threat of homelessness is greater than ever.

With support from our generous donors, SVdP’s conferences (branches) provide rental assistance to help vulnerable families stay in their homes – families like Ruby’s. Ruby and her husband Rajiv had good jobs catering corporate and special events, but that all changed with COVID-19.

“In March everything was cancelled,” Ruby said. “Our incomes disappeared overnight.” Ruby and Rajiv were faced with a stark choice: change their entire life, or face homelessness.

“Luckily, we heard about rental assistance from SVdP,” Ruby said. “Without any income, we were going to lose our home.” Ruby is scared that the coronavirus will stop her from working in her industry for years to come. “I think it might take years before things go back to normal,” Ruby said.

Ruby has been hired in the new group of SVdP’s Workforce Development Program participants, a program that provides paid training and experience. “I look forward to learning skills in the Workforce Development Program that will help me feel comfortable looking for new work.”



Ruby and her husband Rajiv outside of the apartment in which SVdP’s aid helped them stay.