



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

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Upcoming Events

- November 25: Thanksgiving Meal for our Neighbors in need at the SVdP Family Resource Center
- November 25: Thanksgiving Day
- November 30: Giving Tuesday 2021 - International Day of Charitable Giving
- December 25: Christmas Day - SVdP Office and Thrift Stores Closed
- January 1, 2022: New Year's Day - SVdP Office and Thrift Stores Closed
- 2022: Incredible, fulfilling ways to build lifelong friendships and help your community.

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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 2021 | Newsletter

Helping People in Need for 57 Years!

**SVdP Opens New Free Dental Clinic for Uninsured Adults**



Dr. Jeannie Shimane, Dentists on Wheels Founder Shab Farzaneh, and Dentists on Wheels Dental Director Dr. Neda Oromchian welcome one of the free dental clinic's first patients, Billy Bowman, as they prepare for his examination.

A toothache is a dull, incessant pain that is a sign to visit our dentist. For our neighbors in need without dental insurance, it is the beginning of a life-altering crisis. To help our neighbors in need in the throes of dental pain, St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County has partnered with Dentists on Wheels to construct and operate the new Dentists on Wheels Pittsburg Free Dental Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul – the first dedicated free dental clinic in the County.

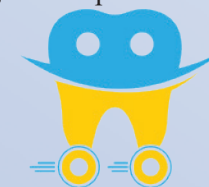
Executive Director and Founder of Dentists on Wheels Shab Farzaneh said, "My family volunteered to pass out food to the homeless, and we noticed that we were handing food to people without teeth. My husband is an oral surgeon, and he explained that for many it is just cheaper to solve their tooth pain by extraction."

SVdP has a history of providing care to the uninsured having opened the RotaCare Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul more than 10 years ago. The partnership with DoW

presents an opportunity to expand care. With a permanent dental clinic located at the SVdP Family Resource Center in Pittsburg, volunteer professionals have a dedicated space from which to offer care. The new free dental clinic will not only help those in need with acute pain issues, but provide preventative care to transform the lives of our neighbors.

The ribbon cutting for the free dental clinic was on September 23rd. SVdP and DoW were proud to host Pittsburg Mayor Merl Craft, who said, "It is hard to overstate how essential dental care is to a person's well-being – physically and mentally. When you're living with pain or without your teeth, it affects your self-esteem and it can affect your ability to find and hold a job. Fighting poverty and providing dental care go hand-in-hand."

Hundreds of our neighbors in need have already signed up to receive care at the free dental clinic. Thanks to **YOUR** extreme generosity, SVdP and DoW will improve the lives, and the smiles, of thousands of our neighbors in need.



Dentists on wheels

The Dentists on Wheels Pittsburg Free Dental Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul



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*Together we can end poverty one person, one family, one community at a time.*

[www.svdpc.org](http://www.svdpc.org)

## SVdP Volunteers Help Veterans in Need



A veteran herself, SVdP Vincentian Arlesa Miles knew the SVdP team at St. Callistus could help our service members in need.

Adapting to the shutdowns has been challenging, but for more vulnerable groups in Contra Costa County, such as veterans who have found themselves on the street, the pandemic has had a much harsher effect. For countless homeless veterans across the County, the shutdowns impacted the availability of services on which they rely. Luckily, the St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County Conference at St. Callistus Church in El Sobrante provides a safety net for this often overlooked population.

the VA's HUD-VASH program, said. "For our veterans dealing with homelessness, getting around in the county can be almost impossible if they don't have transportation. Many of them are suffering from mental health issues as well, so the pandemic's disruption of their routines has been hard."

James Cherry is a Peer Support Specialist with the VA's HUD-VASH program. He was connected to the SVdP branch at St. Callistus through a veteran "Vincentian," Arlesa Miles. James said that SVdP volunteers at St. Callistus called him to ask how they could help veterans in the County. Since then, SVdP's St. Callistus branch has been providing necessities for veterans, such food and hygiene products

"Arlesa is a rock star," James said. "She started calling me up saying she knows there are people she and her fellow volunteers could help. She told me to send veterans her way. Having an organization like St. Vincent de Paul helping veterans-in-need is deeply touching."

Arlesa said she began volunteering at the SVdP branch at St. Callistus Church 7 years ago because she wanted to give back to her community and be more active. An army veteran, Arlesa said she suffers from agoraphobia, and becoming a Vincentian with SVdP helps her mental health.

"We have a lot of veterans that come to us that have just been hit hard by this pandemic," James said. "It's amazing the work that the SVdP team does. I encourage the veterans I work with to volunteer if they can, because sometimes when you're in a dark pit, helping others is a way to set yourself free. The SVdP team at St. Callistus are helping a lot of people to go a place where they can set themselves free, it's humbling."



SVdP volunteers work hard to source and distribute healthy food.

Over the summer, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program reached out to the SVdP branch at St. Callistus, to recognize their service to Veterans in the county and to thank them for their work to help veterans struggling during the pandemic.

"Since the start of the pandemic, SVdP volunteers have helped tons of veterans, I don't know how we would have done it without the help from the SVdP volunteers at St. Callistus," Hannah Frank, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Case Manager with

## SVdP Car Donation Program Restores a Senior's Autonomy



Sharon Patty receives a new lease on life thanks to the SVdP Auto donation program.

The Auto Donation Program at St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County matches donated cars to people in need. For those who donate their unwanted cars, this program provides a tax deduction and extra garage space. For those who receive the donated vehicles, the program means so much more. For Sharon Patty, her donated car means the world.

"It's so surreal I still don't believe it actually happened," Sharon said. "This car is going to change my life. If I was younger, I would be jumping for joy."

A senior citizen, Sharon became homeless 2 years ago. She struggled depending on shelters, food pantries, like the SVdP food pantry at St. Mary's Church in Walnut Creek, and others for transport to medical appointments. Sharon said dealing with her disabilities while being dependent on public transportation was draining. Sharon said she is excited to drive again, and is overjoyed to have a car.

Sharon found SVdP after becoming homeless. She depended on the SVdP Food Pantry at St. Mary's. Sharon is no longer on the street, after securing housing through the Trinity Center in Walnut Creek. Now that she has a car, Sharon is positive her life will continue to improve.

"I am just so grateful. Everyone that has helped me from SVdP has been so kind and so patient with me," Sharon said. "I'm disabled, and being without a car has been so hard. This is going to let me to take care of myself. It's going to help me turn my life around."

## SVdP "Vincentian" Volunteers Need You



SVdP volunteers build relationships with their neighbors, and work to help them return to a sustainable lifestyle.

Shuttering organizations across the globe, the pandemic has spread suffering like nothing in recent history. Incomes, social interaction, and therapies many in need relied upon disappeared. Here at St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County, volunteer "Vincentians" stepped up and met the suffering, delivering aid in volumes never before imagined. SVdP's Vincentians fed over 120,000 people during large-scale food distributions, distributed over \$1 million in rental assistance to help keep their neighbors housed, and they did it because they care for their community.

"I have been so blessed in life, it's the least we can do to give back," SVdP Vincentian Larry Lynch said. "One family we help – they have 7 kids and have been homeless for the last 5 years. They finally got Section 8 housing, and while we were over there helping them the eldest asks if we can help her learn to read."

Being a Vincentian is more a vocation than a volunteer position. Vincentians seek to help their neighbors, becoming friends and forming deeply personal relationships. The core of the Vincentian

work is the home visit. Vincentians meet with families in their homes, and learn as much about them as they can so they can help comprehensively and return the household to sustainability.

Vincentians work out of local Catholic churches in what are known as "Conferences." St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County has 29 branches across the county, with hundreds of volunteers seeking to relieve the suffering of their neighbors, but over the past year the need has grown increasingly dire. SVdP's Vincentians need dedicated individuals who wish to help their neighbors in transformational ways. If this is something you find that calls to you, email Steve Krank at [s.krank@svdp-cc.org](mailto:s.krank@svdp-cc.org).