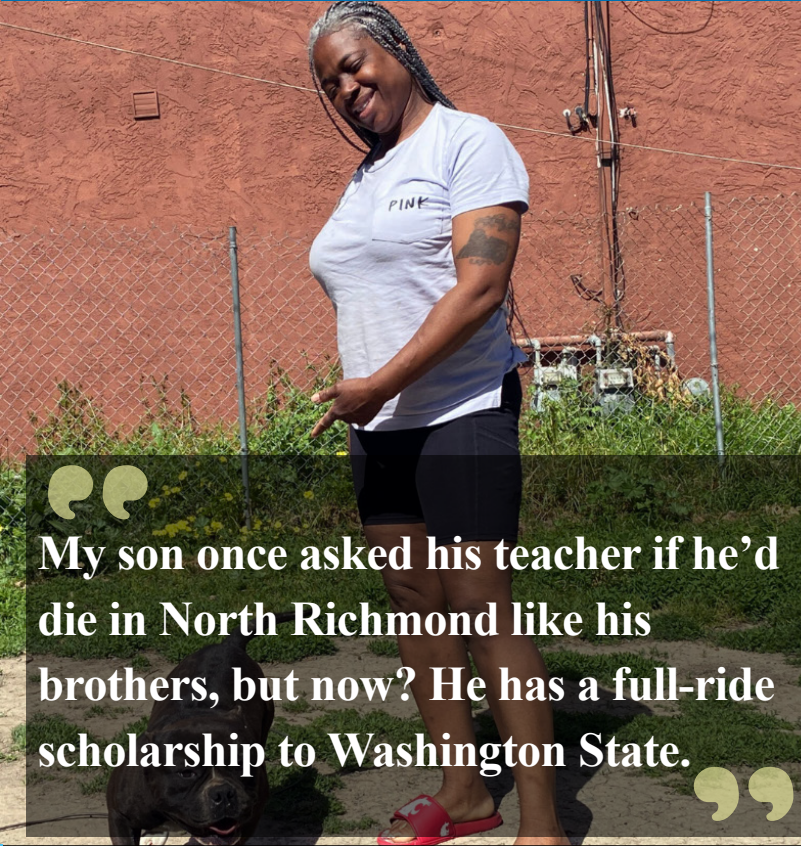


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“
My son once asked his teacher if he’d die in North Richmond like his brothers, but now? He has a full-ride scholarship to Washington State.”



St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County | 2210 Gladstone Drive | Pittsburg, CA 94565
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St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County Honored as a 2023 California Nonprofit of the Year!

Thelma & Warren's Lives Transformed With SVdP

In honor of the work St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County (SVdP) has done in the county for over 59 years to provide basic needs assistance to thousands of vulnerable families, District 7 California State Senator Steve Glazer has selected St. Vincent de Paul as the 2023 California Nonprofit of the Year.



St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County Executive Director Claudia Ramirez (right) was grateful to accept this honor from District 7 California State Senator Steven Glazer (left).

“SVdP is a vital lifeline to people and families in need. Their work is more critical than ever given the difficult times faced by many,” said Senator Glazer, D-Contra Costa. “The volunteers at SVdP treat people who use their services with kindness that allows people to get through the day with dignity and hope. I am proud to choose them as my district’s Nonprofit of the Year.”

Since 1964, SVdP has been one of the most trusted nonprofits in the county, providing aid to help families in need. SVdP’s programs help feed, clothe, shelter, and heal our most vulnerable neighbors.

Thank you for all of your support. Without the dedication and compassion of SVdP’s volunteer Vincentians, donors and supporters, none of this would be possible.

Your compassion and support for St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County transforms the lives of your neighbors in need every day. Your generosity not only helps people make it through a crisis, it also helps them transform their lives, like Thelma Sutton and her son Warren of North Richmond.

“I’m so blessed for everything we’ve received,” Thelma said. “My son once asked his teacher if he’d die in North Richmond like his brothers, but now he has a full-ride scholarship to Washington State University. We’ve lost so much to violence, but now he’s safe, and none of that would have been possible if it wasn’t for help from the people at SVdP.”

Thelma and her family live a life rocked by the violence and lack of opportunity in North Richmond. When Warren was five, he lost his eldest brother to a drive-by shooting. By the time Warren was eight, he was Thelma’s only living son, having lost two more brothers to violence. Thelma said her son Warren grew to excel in school, and uses his pain as fuel.

“He never got into gambling or drugs,” Thelma said. “My son’s known so much violence, but he’d always say he wants to get his family somewhere safe.”

Thelma worked as a waitress during the COVID pandemic, which let her keep a roof over her and her son’s heads while sending him to school at El Cerrito High, outside of North Richmond. But when COVID-19 took the life of her sister, Thelma suddenly found herself as not only the provider for her son, but also the sole caretaker for her mother who suffers from dementia.

Thelma said caring for her ailing mother forced her to stop working, and she wasn’t sure how she would provide for her family.

“I feel lucky,” Thelma said. “SVdP helped me with food and rent when we needed it. They made it so my son had food on the table and a roof over his head, and made it so he could graduate without ending up on the streets. They even helped me find support services for my mom. They’re truly a blessing.”

Compassionate Friendship: The Core of Our Mission

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.



Claudia L. Ramirez
Executive Director

We thought that the pandemic changed the world forever. It did. Now its lingering effects have left lasting challenges for our neighbors in need, and for St. Vincent de Paul as we try to help them. There are so many who still need help with rent, utilities, food, and a compassionate friend to help them navigate the challenges ahead.

A quote from St. Vincent de Paul that our new National Council President, John Berry, shared at a recent meeting, resonated with me and with the way that we need to look at how we are helping our neighbors in need. “It is a ruse of the devil, by which he deceives good people, to induce them to do more than they are able, so that they end up not being able to do anything. The spirit of God urges one gently to do the good that can be done reasonably, so that it may be done perseveringly and for a long time.”

We want to help; it is one of the three pillars of being a Vincentian - Service, Friendship, and Spirituality. As we approach our 60th year of serving Contra Costa, and celebrate 190 years of service worldwide, we need to heed these words from our patron saint.

We may not be able to pay everyone’s rent or delinquent PG&E bill. What we can do is be a friend who listens to their concerns and helps them develop a plan. We are their hope, treating them with dignity and love.

We cannot do this work alone. Our team includes Vincentians, volunteers, donors, and generous supporters like you. Together we can make a difference in people’s lives.

From Prison to Progress with SVdP



Micah Schwerdtfeger

After 24 years in prison, Micah Schwerdtfeger emerged into a different world. Released through an excessive sentence initiative at 77 years old, Micah was faced with the daunting task of rebuilding her life from scratch. With no money or connections Micah needed help.

“When you get out of prison, you’re alone,” Micah said. “No one wants you, no one needs you, but you’re still a person and you need help. You can’t get a job, because your background check says you were in prison. You can’t get a place to sleep, because your background check says you were in prison. It can be really scary.”

A California native, a veteran, and now today a proud Pittsburg resident, Micah was adamant that she would make it outside of prison. She found a housing program while she tried to figure out her next move.

“I heard about St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County and their Workforce Development Program, a job-training program for people facing barriers to employment, and that turned out to be a real ray of light in the darkness,” Micah said. “I signed up for the program and they were wonderful. They helped me make connections I needed, and helped me develop a plan to move forward.”

Micah is working toward earning her certificate to become a counselor, to help people like her. Micah was approved for a Veteran’s Assistance Home Loan and is working on finding a home.

“SVdP made getting my VA loan possible,” Micah said. “I can’t express how grateful I am.”

Juan's Transformation: Free Clinic's Life-Changing Impact

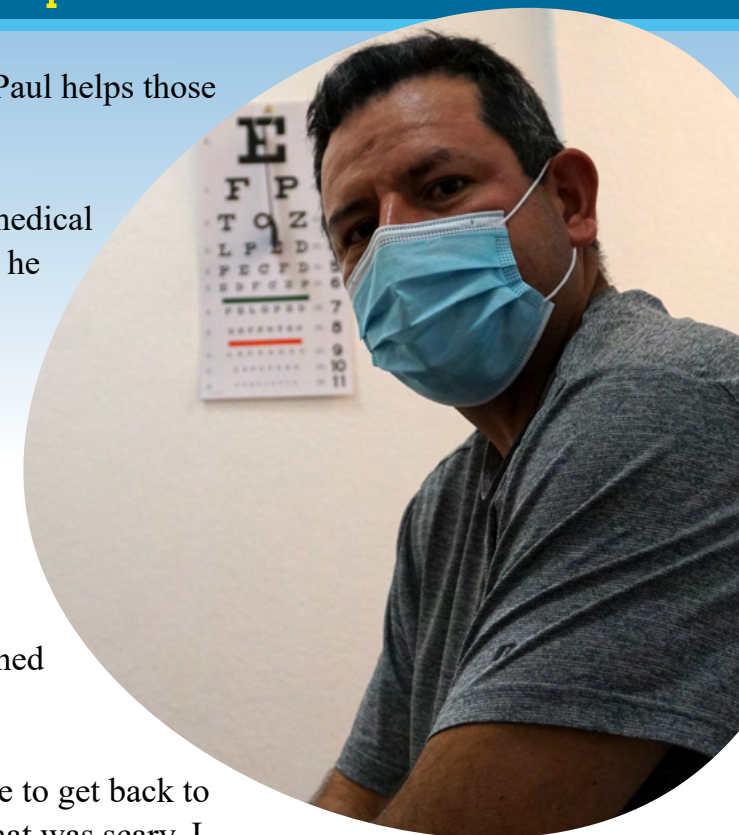
The RotaCare Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul helps those in need and transforms lives, like Juan’s.

Juan works as a cook. Juan is uninsured and came to the free medical clinic at SVdP after hurting himself at work. Juan was worried he would be unable to work.

“If I get ill, I hope things just get better,” Juan said. “We don’t get sick leave. If I get sick I’m not providing for my family.”

Juan said when he came to the free medical clinic in February, he was in excruciating pain and weighed 291 pounds. The volunteer doctors quickly diagnosed Juan with a hernia, and worked to help him receive free surgery. Juan said he was warned that he was pre-diabetic, and needed to lose weight.

“The surgery to fix my hernia happened quickly, and I was able to get back to work,” Juan said. “They also told me I was pre-diabetic, and that was scary. I started running and biking. I came here at 291 pounds, now I’m 209! The clinic really saved me.”



Juan waits for a follow up appointment at the RotaCare Pittsburg Free Medical Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul.

Pilot's Heart Soars - Finds Housing for the Homeless

Rick Richardson is a man whose heart is on fire with love for the poor. As a pilot, Rick witnessed first-hand how people across the country struggled. With a demanding schedule, Rick could never find the time to volunteer. When he retired, he found the time to live the calling in his heart – to help those in need.

“I originally joined St. Vincent de Paul in St. Louis, because I wanted to help people, and they made it possible for me to do more for the people in my community. There’s a saying we have at SVdP,” Rick said. “Giving people what they deserve isn’t charity – it’s dignity.” Rick and his fellow parishioners in St. Louis organized into a SVdP Conference, or branch. Before they weren’t sure what to do, now they had a guide.

“It was hard, but we managed to buy a motel, and turn it into a homeless shelter,” Rick said. “You could see the impact. We accomplished that.”

Upon moving to San Ramon, Rick joined the SVdP Conference at St. Joan of Arc Church, and put his compassion into action.

“We wanted to stop people from ending up on the street,” Rick said. “We formed a group, The SVdP Hope Conference, to handle emergency housing needs. The first year, we used \$20,000 to help people. Last year, we distributed \$700,000 to families in need.”

“The Hope Conference is one thing I’m proud of,” Rick said. “I like helping people, and I know God wants me to, if he didn’t he’d stop sending money.”



Rick Richardson and his wife
Buddie Maxwell