



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

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

St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County 2025 Fall Newsletter



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St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Federal Tax ID 94-1448577

SVdP Walks with a Senior in Need of Aid

Carmen, 78, worked hard for decades as a grocery buyer. She gets by on a small pension and Social Security that usually only covers her basics, but she still tries to help others. “I know there are people in need. It’s very tough, but I love to help people when I have a little extra,” she said.

Then her car broke down. The \$500 repair kept her mobile for trips to the pharmacy, but it pushed paying her rent and utilities out of reach. “It’s such a struggle,” Carmen said. “I think I’m doing ok, but then something happens, like my car breaking. I need my car to do anything.”

A friend pointed her to St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County’s conference (branch) at Our Lady Queen of the World in Bay Point.

At check-in, a volunteer asked if she was there to see Conference President Danny Vu. “A man asked if I needed help,” Carmen said. “I felt so moved. I prayed for help and it was being offered.” Danny sat with her, reviewed overdue bills, and explained how SVdP might assist. Soon, he called with good news: rent support to stabilize her housing.

“He told me SVdP could help with my rent,” Carmen said. “Lord, I started to cry. I felt so relieved and so thankful.”

Carmen still visits the pantry each week. Volunteers greet her by name, and groceries help stretch her budget. “The food is such a huge blessing,” she said. “It makes things a little easier and less stressful.”

This is SVdP’s mission in action: person-to-person care and assistance that keeps a senior neighbor safely housed.



Carmen receives food weekly from SVdP, and is grateful for the rental assistance that kept her housed.

Trinity’s Story: Finding Hope Through SVdP

At 25, Trinity has endured homelessness, addiction, jail and abuse. Today she is sober, working, and building a life she can be proud of with support from St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County (SVdP).

“My boyfriend, who passed away in 2024, got me into drugs,” she said. “My clean date is October 2024.”

After treatment, she moved into a sober living home and now serves as its housing service manager. “I come from generations of addiction,” she added. “I didn’t have a stable home until I was 13.”

Her childhood was hard. At 16, she was out on the street. “Being on the street was awful. Predators are ready to hurt you,” she said. “I couldn’t trust anyone.”

Trinity spent 6 months in jail for possession of a stolen vehicle in 2020. After, she tried college and worked nonstop to afford her rent, but addiction was taking a toll. The death of her boyfriend was a shock for her, and she knew she had to change and get clean.

“He was my last tie to that lifestyle,” Trinity said. “I loved him, and still do, but once he passed away, I was able to start fresh.”

A flyer led her to SVdP’s Workforce Development Program, which offers part-time paid work, a mentor, and training for people struggling with employment.

“I’m learning how to communicate better and work in a team,” she said. “The program is amazing. I love it.”

Her on-the-job training has her helping people using clothing vouchers and participating in the shower program, in addition to her store duties. “I love that I’m working somewhere I can help people,” she said.

For the first time in years, Trinity feels her life moving forward. She is proud of her sobriety and hopeful about what comes next.

Thanks to the community that believed in her - Trinity is writing a new story, one grounded in hope.

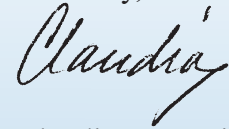
A New Fiscal Year, New Opportunities

We began our new fiscal year on October 1st, and with that come some changes. Several of our conferences (branches) will be installing new conference Presidents and new officers. Change, change, change – and how do we adapt to it? We continue to focus on our mission – *to grow in holiness and build a more just world through personal relationships with and service to people in need*. We focus on meeting our neighbors in need where they are and walking with them to help them out of their crisis. Whether providing a bag of groceries from our food pantries, helping with utility bills to keep their lights on, or paying a car repair bill to keep their car running to be able to get to work, we are helping them with respect and dignity through challenging times.

Along with leadership changes, we are experiencing changes in our funding streams – government, corporate, foundation, and individual – that have us reflecting on how we can share news of the good works that we do with the community, so that we can continue doing these good works. Thanks to the hard work of our development team, led by Barb Hunt, our Development Director for the past 15 years, and supported by Brian Boyle, our Senior Communications and Development Associate, we tell our neighbors’ stories and show how any gift to the Society can help change lives.

We are blessed to have widespread support, not relying solely on specific grants and donations to keep our programs and services going, but complementing those with the personal support of our Vincentians and volunteers. Your time, your talents, your treasure—each is a gift. Will you share yours?

Sincerely,



Claudia L. Ramirez, Executive Director



SVdP Executive Director
Claudia L. Ramirez

James Finds Hope Through Support from SVdP



James receives food at SVdP to help him get by.

James said what is helping was finding a steady, welcoming place to catch his breath.

“Honestly I’m so thankful,” he said. “The food I get is keeping me alive.” James comes to the St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County Family Resource Center in Pittsburg. He gets groceries from the food pantry and uses the Saturday shower program for a hot shower and clean clothes.

He eats daily at the Loaves and Fishes Pittsburg Dining Room at St. Vincent de Paul, which serves hot lunch seven days a week. “Everyone here is so nice,” James said. “They’re so helpful and kind. It feels safe here and like people care.”

Care does not stop at the door. James said while at the dining room he was linked by the Pittsburg Police Department to the Contra Costa Health Services CORE outreach team, which helped get him on a housing list.

“I’ve just been so scared,” he said. “But it is starting to feel like there’s hope.” Through food, showers, warm meals, and community, SVdP walks with neighbors like James, offering dignity, kindness, and hope on the path to regaining stability.

James spent 15 years under the hood as a mechanic. Seven years ago, a heart condition ended his career. He said he struggled applying for disability. With no job and unsure how to get help, James said he was evicted. Now, life on the street is a maze of survival.

“Getting into a shelter is hard,” James said. “You have to be in one spot for food, another at the right time to have a chance of a bed. Catching buses & being where you have to be is hard some days.” He said paperwork and schedules are tough for him, and homelessness made it harder.

Jeff’s Story: Working Hard and Finding Help

Jeff lives in Antioch and he works hard. He is a senior with arthritis, and going back to work was not easy. He found a job as a security guard and has regular, consistent hours. Even with a steady income, however, rent and groceries strain his budget. This is where St. Vincent de Paul’s Antioch conference (branch) at Most Holy Rosary Church makes a difference.

“I’ve been working as a security guard for a little over two years now,” Jeff said. “Over the years with limited income, I’ve just found I need a little help to get by, and the SVdP food pantry here is a huge help.”

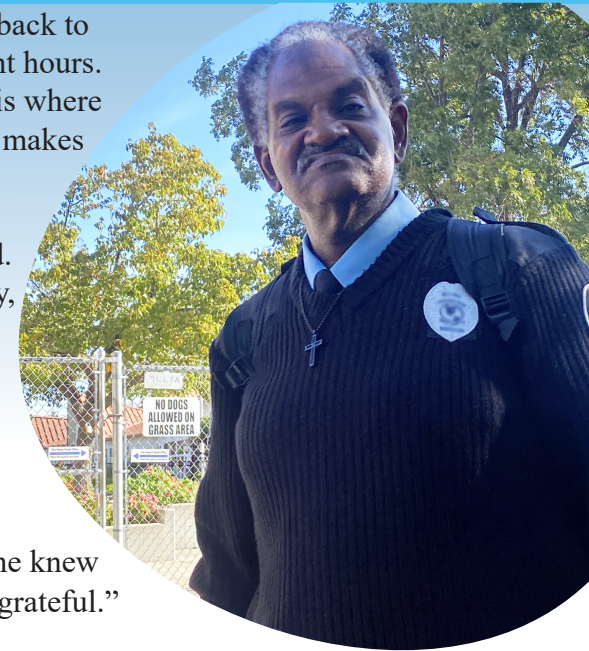
He first learned about local pantries while working security at a residential care home. Staff kept a list of food pantries for residents who struggled at the end of the month. When his own expenses grew, that list helped him too.

“Rent’s increasing, and my budget isn’t enough,” he said. “I asked my boss if she knew anywhere that helps. She told me about a few pantries. It’s a big help. I’m very grateful.”

At SVdP, Jeff finds friends who care. Volunteers know his name and understand that asking for help can be hard.

“The volunteers you meet here are very kind. They treat people with dignity and respect,” Jeff said. Vincentian volunteers aim to serve neighbors with joy, hope, and friendship. At this pantry, they do so three mornings a week.

Jeff worries about others facing the same struggles. “You can see it everywhere in Antioch, the need is very great,” he said. “Lots of people are on limited incomes, especially our seniors. Our seniors need a lot of help.”



Jeff is thankful SVdP helps seniors like him.

A New Smile, A New Start: Carol’s Story

Carol is in her 70s and has weathered decades of addiction, homelessness, and declining health. A recent stroke forced a change in her life. Her daughter, Mary, moved her to Contra Costa County and found help through the Dentists on Wheels Pittsburg Free Dental Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul. The volunteer dentists there were able to change Carol’s life.

“My mom had drug and addiction issues,” Mary said. “About 20 years ago she started to lose her teeth, and about 10 years ago she chose to make herself homeless. It’s been hard to have a relationship with her, let alone take care of her.”

Recovery has been a constant struggle for Carol. She often kept to herself and sometimes slept outside. Missing and painful teeth made her withdraw from family and community.



Carol is seen by volunteer dental professionals.

“When someone told me about the clinic at SVdP, she had eight teeth left that were rotting away,” Mary said. “They had to be pulled. She was in pain. Her face was swelling up.”

The clinic, a collaboration between Dentists on Wheels and St. Vincent de Paul of Contra Costa County, provided a full set of free dentures. The change has been profound. Carol is smiling again and talking more with her family.

“She hasn’t been confident enough to go out with us, but I can finally see that changing,” Mary said. “She wears her dentures every day now. The clinic has been a life saver for her, and for me. All I want is to see her enjoy what time she has left, to make friends and live normally, and I think she’s going to get that.”

Opened in 2021, the Dentists on Wheels Pittsburg Free Dental Clinic at St. Vincent de Paul is the first of its kind in the county, and is restoring dignity to people in need. For Carol, dentures mean confidence. They are helping her step back into everyday life.