



The TACO Times

Celebrating 31 Years of Bread Day

What happened to the color?

The TACO Times is usually printed in black and white on a premade color shell. Unfortunately during the last printing we ran out of color shells and have had to print in black and white since then, though this month our insert page (pages 3 and 4) will be in color.

We're sorry for the inconvenience, and hope to have the shells back soon.

TACO's Wish List

- * Meals for hungry people: \$3 per meal
- * Blankets for those cold on the street: \$12 per blanket
- * Duffle bag or backpack \$20 per person
- * Transportation for one person in need of medical care: \$30 per person
- * One months of shelter for a vulnerable person recovering from medical problems or surgery: \$500 per month

To give any of these gifts to TACO, simply write which of the above gifts you plan on giving in the memo line of your next donation. Thank you for all your support!

Volume 6, Issue 1

February 2009

Director's Report by Jim Lovell

The days of Advent and Epiphany have been tumultuous ones at TACO. These are amazing and yet frightening times. We are blessed with the amazing opportunity to serve people facing desperate needs and yet, in spite of your astonishing end-of-the-year giving, we face a financial crisis.

As with so many nonprofits these days, TACO has been impacted by a cruel economy: we have a far greater number of people coming for our services and yet, in the face of such needs, we currently receive no grant funding.

Donors: Get More Bang for your Buck with the Feinstein Foundation's \$1 Million Challenge!

For each of the last eleven years, Alan Shawn Feinstein has made one million dollars worth of donations to anti-hunger organizations all over the country.

This year, the Feinstein Fund is keeping the tradition alive with their March/April 2009 one million dollar challenge. They will divide one million dollars among hunger fighting agencies nationwide, based on how much money each agency can raise between March 1st and April 30th. These donations

The astonishing news is that, in the midst of this crisis, your giving to TACO is up! You have responded to the cries of those in need by increasing your giving. During the last two months of the 2008, you gave more than \$27,000 dollars.

We greatly concerned about our financial situation nevertheless.

More and more people come for our services. I see folks who tell of sleeping on the street or in a car for the first time, of finding it impossible to pay the rent for their mobile home. There are few stories



Volunteers wrap duffel bags for Christmas in July

of magic gone awry with sudden falls into homelessness. Rather, we hear, over and over again, of long downward spirals, of people desperately trying to put on the brakes but

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can be made in cash, checks, pledges, or food items (valued at \$1.00 per item or pound).

To participate in the challenge, simply make one or more donations to TACO during the months of March and/or April. All donations received during that time will be applied towards the challenge. You can also donate online by clicking on the "Donate Now!" button on the upper right-hand corner of our website at tacosd.org.

Although all donations made in

March and April will be eligible, if you wish to donate specifically for the purposes of the fund, include "Feinstein Fund" in the memo section of your check, or select "Feinstein Fund" from the drop-down menu on our online donation form. That option will appear on March 1st.

In lieu of a donation, you can also send a letter making a pledge of a future donation to Jim Lovell here at TACO (contact information can be found on page 6).

Director's report *(continued from page 1)*

sliding further out of control. People are overwhelmed with job losses and unemployment, absence of health insurance and prohibitive health insurance costs, increased credit card debt and foreclosures, an absence of secure support systems and no where to go, moves to apartments or hotel rooms and then to cars and the streets. No overnight failure stories here—just long, painful spirals downward.

As people face these terrible challenges, we try to address these increasing needs with no grant funds. We will be forced to cut back staff hours and/or lay off staff by the end of March. Such cut backs will almost certainly mean that we will be unable to provide the most basic of services. **Your donation is vitally important if we are to avoid staff cut-backs and meet the enormous needs of these days.**

Since 2001 when Pastor Bill Radatz became the first hired TACO staff, we have relied on grant money to support the majority of our staffing. A year after I began working at TACO, we hired the first part-time

paid Volunteer Coordinator. Since 2003, we have added three other part-time positions: our Simon's Walk Coordinator who supervises, supports, and trains volunteers who walk along with the dying on our city streets; our administrative assistant who tracks and securely keeps information and data and coordinates office management (she works 8 hours a week); and our program assistant who updates our information and website, organizes our donations and thank you letters, and creates the newsletter (he works ten hours a week).

I am proud to say that 97% of the money you donate to TACO goes to providing services to people in need! Our administrative costs are a mere 3% of our total budget (\$212,722). I recently read of a large non-profit that spends 43% (\$9 million) of its budget providing services and 57% (\$7 million) for fundraising. **Almost everything you give to TACO supports people in need!**

We will need \$12,500 a month if we are to run our most basic services and maintain our entire staff without cutting their hours. We typically receive

\$35,000 a year from general contributions (your gifts); if that giving pattern remains the same, we will be forced to cut back our current programming as early as April of this year.

In order to continue the wonderful services that TACO currently provides, we will need increased financial gifts from TACO's generous friends. We pray that, in these challenging economic times, you might be able to increase your financial commitment to TACO or make a first time gift. Whenever you give to TACO, you join us in keeping our doors and tables open to those who come to us in need of the basic necessities of life. Our future literally depends on your generosity. Please join us in these tumultuous economic times as we struggle to care for God's neediest children with dignity and grace.

Simon's Walk Update *by Nance Lovell*

We are half way through our third year of service, building caring relationships with those who are terminally ill and homeless. I think that our Simon's Walk volunteers would agree that this has been an extraordinary process to move through. What was initially created out of a request for "research and program design" to see if there was any need for homeless people dying on our city streets, has grown into a life-changing service ministry. In recent months, we have memorialized two Simon's Walk clients. We may have started our service believing we would bring honor to our clients, yet through time we have learned that we have been the ones honored to

share in their lives and death. Recently, one of our Simon's Walk ministers shared a quote from Tennessee Williams, "sometimes there's God, so quickly". This in some ways captures the Simon's Walk ministry. When we spend time with people, we see glimpses of God in our midst or in the face of those we serve. It is the inevitable gift that comes out of our relationship together.

Simon's Walk has become a bridge between the unhoused and the housed communities. Our volunteers have found themselves compelled to care and build deep caring relationships. The bonus that comes from this is that the communities that surround us (both

housed and unhoused) witness the care. The relationship moves homeless people from being objectified and invisible--into real and beautiful friends.

Interestingly, Simon's Walk began from a 2-year grant from Wheat Ridge Ministries. When that grant ended in June 2008, personal donations allowed us to continue. We thank you for your support and prayer. We exist largely due to your support! If you would like to know more about volunteering with Simon's Walk, please see the article on page five.

Donor Recognition

TACO owes its existence to its donors and its volunteers. This past November, our board wrote letters to some of our donors asking for additional assistance. We wish to honor those who donated at the levels below.

\$300—\$499: Meal Sponsor

- James and Sharon McKenzie
- Abbe Wolfsheimer

\$500—\$999: Fundamental Needs Sponsor

- Geraldine Jenkins
- Ted and Marietta Johns
- John and Marjorie Wahlstein
- Kristin Westerman and Linda Bright

\$1,000—\$4,999: Clinic Sponsor

- Anonymous
- Calvary Lutheran Church
- David and Lois Case in honor of the staff and volunteers of TACO
 - Anonymous
 - Kevin Gannon
- Robert and Donamay King
 - Pastor Laurie Line
- Lemon Grove Lutheran Church
 - Dianna Little
 - Craig Spruce
 - Anonymous

\$5,000+: Staff Sponsor

- Wayne Spruce

We are thankful for these folks who made a one-time end-of-year donation. If you have the ability to donate at these levels and above and would like to be listed here, please contact us for more information. We are thankful to all who donate and many have donated at even greater levels than this in the past. Thank you.

Volunteering with Simon's Walk Ministry *by Nance Lovell*

If you have ever wondered if you would be a good match to minister to people living on the street in a more personal manner, consider Simon's Walk. Simon's Walk is the volunteer portion of TACO's Going Home End-of-Life Services. As a volunteer, you become part of a team effort to provide honor and dignity through personal relationships. We strive to offer comfort and mercy by spending time with those who are suffering from a terminal illness.

Volunteers build relationships with clients through regular visits. Visits may occur in any setting; often we see people at the TACO offices, sometimes in hospitals and nursing

homes, sometimes in downtown hotels if they are housed, sometimes on the streets where they live. Staff and volunteers work together with the clients to plan for their best care.

Our current active Simon's Walk ministers include Jan Bluemer, Rachel Mueller, LaVerne Neuman, and Lori Roads. If you would like to talk with any of them about their experience, you may contact them directly or contact me, Nance Lovell to arrange for that. Simon's Walk is now in its third year and has opened a new vision for embracing the humanity and brokenness in us all. Our volunteers have commented that the service of caring is both a giving and receiving of grace and trust and love.

As a Simon's Walk Minister, we request that you be committed to at least one year of service. Over 30 hours of training and mentoring are given prior to active service. You will be required to attend 2 group supervision meetings each month and available for an average of 2-4 hours a week for direct client contact. Should you find your interest peaked, please contact Nance at nance.taco@firstlutheransd.org for an application or information. I will contact you for a personal interview to see if this is a good match for you as well as this grass roots ministry.

**Are you a valued
volunteer for the
meals served at
TACO?**



**Are you drawn
to find deeper
meaning to the
service you give?**

**Do your spiritual
and life experi-
ences blend with
a calling to be
with the poor?**

2009 TACO Eleos Training/retreat

Eleos is the Greek word for Mercy. Much of the services provided at TACO are with the need for a deeper understanding of mercy. You may be familiar with a focus on "what would Jesus do?" approach to service. What we have come to learn is that perhaps in our service, we see the face of Christ in those we serve. It might not be so much that we are being Christ to others as much as Christ comes to us through our service with others. It is not often that the people we serve are alone in their brokenness, we come together as broken people and the service we offer is a reciprocal process.

TACO is offering a two-day training/retreat on Saturdays, March 7 & 21. This time is geared to both educate as well as offer a retreat setting for introspection and growing. During our time together, you will have a fuller introduction to what TACO is all about and have the opportunity to explore deeper meaning for your service. One of the highlights we are privileged to be able to offer is a panel discussion in which a few people share what their experience is like to live on the streets. You will also gain education regarding the greater scope of homelessness, the common features of the people we serve, as well as developing skills in your relationship with them.

Whether you are fairly new to TACO or a long term volunteer, we believe Eleos is geared to both. TACO Staff and Board members have participated and come away with a greater understanding of themselves and the service they give. Volunteers who are interested in the Simon's Walk ministry will also attend this training retreat as the initial portion of their training.

**WHAT?
WHEN?
WHERE?
WHY?**

**THE ELEOS TRAINING
SATURDAYS: MARCH 7TH & 21ST
FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH
TO GROW, CREATE, & EMPOWER!**

If you are interested, please contact:

Jim Lovell jim.chacha@firstlutheransd.org or Rachel Line rachel.taco@firstlutheransd.org or via telephone (619-235-9445) for more information or to sign up. Deadline is Friday, February 27 for the first 20 people.



Rachel Line with Mike Tolbert (left), Vincent Jackson (second from left) and DeJuan Tribble (right) of the Chargers. The team and TACO both participated in the "Lift Up America" program at the San Diego Food Bank.



More from the board retreat



The new Frank Lloyd Wright: TACO Board Members Bill Radatz (left) and Kit Brothers (right) complete a team-building exercise at the board's annual retreat.



Volunteer Kim Naour helps wrap the duffel bags TACO and First Lutheran gave away as part of the Christmas in July fundraiser.



Volunteers at one of TACO's biweekly meals

TACO's 1000th Volunteer by Rachel Line

TACO began keeping track of its volunteers in a database in July of 2002. The very first volunteer entry was Vivian Dillahunt. From July 2002 to October 2006, she accumulated 623 volunteer hours. These were only her recorded hours. Bread Day started 32 years ago. Volunteer hour tracking began 7 years ago. On January 19, 2009, I entered the 1,000th new volunteer into the database. For a brief moment, as I entered the 999th volunteer, I had a flashback to Y2K. Will this program be able to recognize over 1,000 entries? Will my computer self-destruct with such a huge number? This tells me two things.

One: It's been over nine years since computers changed from 1999 to 2000.

Two: There have been over 1,000 volunteers that have donated their time to this organization.

I am blown away by both statements.

The 1,000th recorded volunteer belongs to a Cub Scout troop from Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Encinitas. He volunteered on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In 1994, this day was designated as a National Day of Service. We had over 40 volunteers that day. Over half were first time volunteers. The website mlkday.gov describes this day as one that "brings together people who might not ordinarily meet, breaks down barriers that have divided us in the past, and leads to better understanding and ongoing relationships." Every Monday and Friday is a Day of Service at TACO. Our volunteers come from all over the county and from various faith backgrounds. They form bonds with each other as they work towards a common purpose. They learn about the issue of hunger and homelessness while getting to know the people they serve.

Besides our regular Monday and Friday meals, we had several other events. In December we wrapped 175 duffel bags. A group of hard working volunteers wrapped all the duffel bags in two hours!

These bags were distributed a week later after a Friday meal to very thankful guests. A week after that, we distributed 200 hygiene bags that were put together by the second grade class from Olympic View Elementary School. At our next meal, a group from St. Luke's Lutheran Church in La Mesa gave out almost 200 flannel shirts that they had collected from church members. Another week later, we gave out a new pair who make every Monday and every Friday a Day of Service.

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Your Address Line 4

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First Lutheran Church

Member Pastor Andy Taylor,
St. Andrews Lutheran Church

A place where healing of body, mind and spirit

Your business tag line here.

Join us

- Preparing and serving meals
- Set-up and cleanup
- Driving, shopping and picking up food
- Gathering other supplies and donations

Sponsor us

- Urge your company or corporation to contribute
- Organize your church or youth group
- Make an individual financial contribution

Support us

- With your prayers and voice of advocacy for the people we serve

Are you a medical professional? Consider donating your time and services to our medical, dental and acupuncture clinics.

Contact us

We can not close our eyes to the realities of our community, and we will not close our doors when outside there are people in need.

Jim Lovell

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Rachel Line

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The TACO Times

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