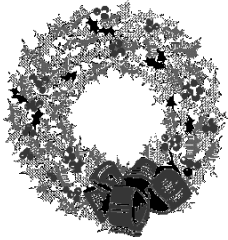


The TACO Times

Celebrating 31 Years of Bread Day

Volume 5, Issue 4

November 2008



Christmas Wish List

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

To give any of these gifts to TACO this Christmas season, 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!

Volunteer Appreciation Christmas Party!

When? 12/13 at 2 p.m.

Where? At First Lutheran

What to Bring? See pg. 4

Why? To be together, to celebrate Christmas, and to be appreciated!

Director's Report *by Jim Lovell*

Wow, what an amazing Fall season we have had! We started with a fantastic Autumn fundraiser, *Sunset by the Sea!* Thank you to all who helped, volunteered, donated your time, energy, & partners, bought, ferried, sold, procured, supported, cheered on, and sponsored our event. It was a great evening and we were able to raise more money than we have ever raised from this type of event before. It seemed that everyone had a great time too.

We continue to see the results of the downturn in the economy. Whether that is a greater number of people coming to eat, or people choosing rent over their medical insurance, only to find that they have a medical crisis arise, or a new need at our Com-

munity Law Project, a foreclosure clinic. Our numbers are rapidly increasing. We continue to welcome anyone who comes, though we have noticed also a decrease in the number of agencies we can refer people to. This limits our ability to assist people off of the streets for good.

In October, we went out on the street with our medical team through our Homeless Medical Outreach (HMO) team. We were fortunate to have a guest along, Dr. Jim Withers from the Pittsburg with Operation Safety Net, an organization who has been doing street medicine for around 17 years. Dr. Withers is an amazing MD who works so comfortably and respectfully with folks who have been on the street sometimes for 20 or more years. Our



Jim Lovell, Diana Little, and Gregg Rayo at Sunset by the Sea 2008

own Dr. Ellen Beck, who created and runs the UCSD Free Clinic, brought this concept to our programs here many years ago after meeting Dr. Withers. This is always such a powerful event for me and for all those who attend medical students, social work interns, and physicians. We have the opportunity to be welcomed

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What Simon's Walk Means to Me *by LaVerne Neuman*

What does being part of Simon's Walk mean to me? In a nutshell!

One of the things I am learning, and have been learning and re-learning, is that trying to summarize the why-I-do-things almost always changes my understanding so that I have to again do the inventory of things learned, things changed or dropped...and of the things, habits, expectations that hang on and on....

I have never really had a life plan: "B" follows action "A", "C" follows "B". I have always heard that effective people early on know where they are headed,

what they want from their life. But my life has been serendipitous. Opportunities present themselves, and if I notice, I seize them. I have been able to do much more than my formal training suggests I could, and have always been grateful for the people who help make these opportunities happen. One of these opportunities is Simon's Walk.

In my 40's, I began to volunteer with people who had the new and little understood disease that came to be called AIDS. At that time, most of those folks were young adult males, and they tended to be gay. I began life-school. Like al-

most everyone, I knew next to nothing about AIDS, and I knew even less about homosexuality. My teachers were the same people I wanted to help, and they welcomed me into their lives, even as they were losing, piece by piece, their lives. I understood that this was their story, and my job was to help them live it as fully and with as much grace as possible—and to do this, I had to have a language that would help me explore new territory. I chose the Christian language, and gradually moved into participation in Christian culture; I began to think

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Sunset by the Sea Recap *by Melanie Novak*

September's successful "Sunset by the Sea" fundraising event has raised \$15,000 for TACO and its ministries, the most so far for a TACO fundraiser. And an elegant time was had by all who attended!

"What a beautiful evening of fun and fellowship," TACO director Jim Lovell said. "Thanks to Deb Hoistad and Jo Koch for providing the place, an unbelievably beautiful home in La Jolla." The home is owned by friends of Deb and Jo, the Doctors Nagala, who are doctors in North Dakota and familiar with the work of TACO. They agreed to open their home for the fundraiser, which had a tremendously positive effect on our bottom line.

More than 100 guests enjoyed a sampling of passed hors d'oeuvres and a late-

summer buffet supper featuring sumptuous marinated beef and chicken kebabs and an array of salads. Rev. Doug Knutson-Keller and an army of volunteers were masters of the grill, and the salads were provided by Lisa Rosa-Retamoza from Dinner-a-Go-Go.

Other treats included a wine tasting with wines from the San Diego Wine Company, and a tea tasting ceremony by Blissville Tea.

The silent auction consisted of a wide array of gorgeously wrapped baskets with carefully thought out themes, coordinated by Francie Montgomery and Nance Lovell. Joe Slevacove again conducted our live auction to cap the evening off, and he made it such fun.

Thanks also to Kristin Westerman & Linda



Eric Martin, Joe Slevacove and Carl Ross display live auction items

Bright, members of the TACO board: Francie Montgomery, Kit Brothers, Pastor Wilk Miller, Lois and Dave Case who even from far away helped to create the event, Dagmar Miller, our joint TACO volunteer coordinator and First administrative assistant, Rachel Line who wrangling things throughout the night, Marian Setmire, John Hoff, Richard Philips and all of you who financially supported this event.

Simon's Walk *(continued from page 1)*

of what I wanted to do when I was with people as a *kenosis*. If I could empty myself of the need to control and direct the "being-with" event, I would best serve the people I hoped to help. Over time, I came to understand that while I wanted to help other people, I really hoped to help myself, and they were the teachers in many ways.

About four years ago, I was invited to volunteer in the Spiritual Care Dept. of Sharp-Grossmont Hospital. While doubting that I had much to offer, I was proud to be accepted, and began a new chapter in my training. The chaplains, and the spiritual care volunteers, at Grossmont are expected to serve the spiritual needs of the patient, staff, visitors, and volunteers. It doesn't matter what our own spirituality is other than it is expected that we are there because we have one. And it doesn't matter if the person we are supporting has a hang-nail, or is dying, or even dead—it is their event, and we are to meet their needs. (This is not the case at some hospitals, in which the chaplain speaks very much from their own religious affiliation.)

At one of the inservices I learned about a program in San Francisco—street hospice. It was something I had never heard of, never thought of—and immediately I knew this was something I wanted to know more about, to be part of. It was

as strong a calling as I have ever felt. There was no sitting with the idea, no waiting to see if I would be nudged by life into the adventure—it was an active search for a way that I could learn about, and how to do, hospice-without-walls.

Simon's Walk is the vehicle. It is also the way I am learning about me. Yes, I have a whole new demographic to learn about in our clients. I was not totally green about being with this population, but I had never been with so many people at once with such poverty. The moving chaos of so many people with so many problems is overwhelming. But my experience with it is refined somewhat by trying to really be with one person. How do I offer anything to someone who has none of the things I take for granted, who seemingly has none of the attachments to people in their life, who is unwilling or unable or both to care for themselves in ways I have accepted as "normal"? How I do I "just be" with this person when in very many ways we do not speak the same language?

I thought I had it figured out. I thought I was practicing "detached compassion" and was piercing the veil of mystery described by St. John of the Cross, and of Buddhism.

Until I came away from a visit with a client, upset, angry, and unfulfilled. As Nance asked me to explore what happened at that visit, and the post-visit emotion, I could see

(it took awhile) that I had huge expectations of my new teacher (the person *I'm supposed to be helping*)--I had come to believe that these visits were occasions of closeness to the Transcendent Other (who is not the person I am visiting, it is the power of presence that I feel between us). I would say, if asked, (and Nance does ask) that those occasions of knowing were gifts, given in divine gratuitousness, but not inevitable ... not to be expected nor looked for. But my heart, in real life, did look for, and had come to expect, what was no longer a gift, but a payment.

So a new lesson in the newest adventure—and the structure and discipline of being a part of the Simon's Walk school team makes it possible. One day, I think, I would like to sit and let the moss grow between my toes—but I think I'll be quite awhile learning this lesson. Walking the road to Emmaus, I meet the strangest people who want to teach me always one more thing, and I am always amazed at who the teacher turns out to be.....you'd think I'd have it figured out by now!

If you are inspired by this story to have a closer relationship with our Going Home End-of-Life program or with the Simon's Walk Ministry, you can contact Nance Lovell at nance.taco@firstlutheransd.org

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

into the hospitality of those who are cast out in our communities. We are so warmly welcomed that I am struck by the dichotomy of how we would be received if we were to go door to door. Dr. Withers was very excited by us and in turn we took inspiration from his work.

As we come toward Christmas and year's end, we are conscious around here of Christ's Birth in a stable as there was not enough room for everyone in that town. That is also true in San Diego, that there is not enough room. There is only shelter for roughly 44% of all of those on the streets and this means that the shelters

are full all of the time. This will include our city's Winter Shelter due to open in December. As in years past, as soon as the shelter doors open, they will be full. Many will wait night after night hoping that someone in the shelter fails to arrive on-time so that they might have a place for the night, or month.

Please consider us and our mission at this time of year. Consider an additional gift to our work. We are financially dependent on donors to fund many of our activities and we do these activities in a bare-bones way with more than 97% of all money going to services. Peace to you and your families as we come into the time of Waiting, of Advent.



A table full of auction items at Sunset by the Sea 2008

My Time as Volunteer Coordinator *by Rachel Line*

Before I started as Volunteer Coordinator at TACO, I didn't know very many people who lived on the streets. I knew of some people as they would wander into the Lutheran Campus Ministry Center at San Diego State, looking for resources that we just didn't have. We usually gave them some food and sent them on their way. On my first day on the job at TACO, I met a couple that live on the streets. I learned their names, I heard part of

their story, I saw their faces. To me, homelessness suddenly had a face. It was no longer an abstract issue that I could brush aside. With the simple words of *Nice to meet you*, my life was changed. This couple still comes by for our meals and I will always remember them as the first people I met.

The volunteers on Mondays and Fridays see the faces. They know the names and they hear the stories. What a difference it

makes to know and see the people our organization is serving. Since June 2008, we have served 9,195 meals. I'm amazed! Thank you to all of you who make our meals possible! We will be having a special Volunteer Appreciation Christmas Party on Saturday, December 13 at 2pm at First Lutheran. Please plan to join us for a potluck, music, and celebration (you can find more details on page 4). Again, thank you for all your support of TACO!

Notes from the Treasurer *by Tom Templeton*

First of all, I would like to personally thank all of you who contributed to making our Sunset by the Sea event such a success. We are awaiting the final matching gifts to donations which will bring our net proceeds to \$15,000 available to keep TACO's programs going.

On a more sobering note, the two major grants we received in recent years (Johnson & Johnson and Alliance Healthcare Foundation) have ended. These grants enabled TACO to hire a full-time social worker and paid our Executive Director's salary. We currently have funds remaining from two other grants, but they will be ex-

hausted in the next few months.

We continue to pursue numerous grant opportunities, but, thus far, given the current economic climate, have not been successful in securing additional funding. So, at this point in time, TACO is almost entirely dependent on the generous contributions of those of you who share our vision and mission. We realize that times are tough for most of us, but ask that you keep TACO in your thoughts and prayers when you consider your charitable giving.

A possible avenue for those of you over 70 ½ years of age who wish to minimize your taxes arose when Congress, as part of their recent financial rescue package, ex-

tended the option of donating as much as \$100,000 from your IRAs tax-free to a qualified non-profit group such as TACO. This option was extended through December 31, 2009. Realizing that most of you over 70 ½ have probably already made your required minimum distribution (RMD) for 2008, please consider this option for 2009 or, if you're in a position now to make an additional distribution beyond your RMD, so much the better. Just be sure to give your IRA custodian clear instructions to transfer the funds directly to TACO, rather than through you, in order to avoid paying taxes on the distribution and also let TACO know your generous gift is coming so that we may promptly acknowledge your contribution.

**A place where healing of body, mind and spirit
can happen for any and all who come.”**

The TACO Times
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**This Christmas, consider an
online gift to TACO and receive
a Christmas gift to share!**



Donate Now

Secure donations through
Network for Good

“Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth:
Whenever you did one of these things to someone
overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to
me.’” - Matthew 25:40

This Christmas season you can help TACO in its
mission to help the poor and homeless of down-
town San Diego by making an online donation at
our website. Enter “www.tacosd.org” into your
web browser’s address bar and look for the “donate
now!” icon in the upper right hand part of the main
page.

Each online donor will receive a Christmas CD
made in honor of TACO’s work with the commu-
nity by Larry Miligan and Jesus Nieto.



**Volunteer Appreciation
Christmas Party!**

We will be having a special
Volunteer Appreciation
Christmas Party on Saturday,
December 13 at 2 p.m. at First
Lutheran.

For those who are attending,
we will be dividing up the
dishes as follows:

Last names A-H: side dish

Last names I-P: dessert

Last names Q-Z: entrée

We look forward to seeing
you, and thanks for all your
dedicated work this year!

To RSVP or for questions,
contact Rachel Line at Ra-
chel.taco@firstlutheransd.org
or at (619) 235-9445 ex. 2.

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