

The TACO Times
Third Avenue Charitable
Organization, Inc.
First Lutheran Church
1420 Third Avenue
San Diego, CA 92101-3193

Board of Directors (2010)
President Rev. Bill Radatz,
First Lutheran Church
Vice President Pastor Andy
Taylor, St. Andrews Lutheran
Church
Secretary Melanie Novak,
First Lutheran Church
Treasurer Tom Templeton,
Gethsemane Lutheran Church
(non-board)
**First Lutheran Council
Liaison** Ladonna Piper
Member Peg Ross, Calvary
Lutheran Church
Member Francie Montgom-
ery, First Lutheran Church
Member Dianna Little,
North Coast Calvary Church
Member Pastor Wilk Miller,
First Lutheran Church
Member Kathleen Sorahan,
Community Member
Member Joey Ager, First
Lutheran Church

www.tacosd.org

**This Month in the TACO
Times:**

- Empty Bowls a success!
(page 1)
- A volunteer update (page
3)
- The latest news from
Simon's Walk and Going
Home (page 2)
- The San Diego Grand Jury
report on homelessness
(page 3)

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

**Save the Date! October 2, 2010
Sunset by the Sea**



The TACO Times

Vol. 7 No. 3

**First Lutheran Church
Third Ave. Charitable Org. Inc.
1420 Third Ave.
San Diego, Ca. 92101-3193**

Return Service Requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
San Diego, CA
Permit No. 194



**TACO:
Arms Outstretched**

Last year, the TACO board created the **Arms Outstretched** program to recognize donors that went above and beyond in their financial support of TACO, and donated more than a dollar a day, or \$365 a year, to our mission.

TACO's generous donors responded, and in 2009 we recognized 34 different donors as members of **Arms Outstretched**.

In 2010 we are pleased to recognize the generosity of twenty-two different donors who have qualified for **Arms Outstretched** this year:

Anonymous (2)
Betty and Joseph Corsi
Brenda Johnson
Brian and Dianne Williams
Carol Harris
David and Lois Case
David and Carolyn Clark
Deeann Freeman
Dobrina Russell
Gary and Diana Randall
Jeannie Oestreicher
John and Donna Adler
Kathleen and Dan Sorahan
Kevin Gannon
Pastor Laurie Line
Pastor Brian Hooper
Mickey Lester
Scott Peters
Steven and Carol Hasset
Sue and Merv Rettenmund
Wayne Spruce

Every member of **Arms Outstretched** has TACO's profound thanks for their support of the homeless and working poor of downtown San Diego.

The TACO Times

Celebrating 35 Years of Bread Day

Volume 7, Issue 3

July 2010

Director's Report by Jim Lovell

"Thank you for shaking my hand." She was kneeling on a tarp that her and her partner couldn't seem to keep down flat with the wind blowing. In her later 40's, she had been concerned about stitches she had in her scalp from about 4 days ago. It was a Thursday night at 9:30pm. Our team of a doctor, a social worker (me) and two second-year medical students had been out on the street for several hours. We had been visiting people who were bedding down on the sidewalk for the night. We would drive to an area where there were several people and then out we go, up and down the street asking, "Anyone need to see a doctor?" Most are surprised when I ask, often looking behind me expecting a surgeon to be there in long coat and gloves and mask. When they do take me up on it, they are often surprised again to find two medical students in their 20's and their attending

physician, Doctor Ellen Beck, founder of the UCSD Free Clinic waiting behind them. We saw a gentleman who makes his living fishing who had received very bad sun exposure, a man who works as a painter, when he can find work, and has high blood pressure, diabetes, and several other medical issues. He doesn't have insurance and has used up his number of free visits at the neighborhood clinic.

I find these nights to often have otherworldly quality about them. Here we are surrounded by the beautiful skyline of downtown, sometimes we are at the embarcadero or we are in the middle of the financial district, or maybe we are out in Old Town just on the other side of all the celebrating and fancy restaurants, in the quieter areas. Here, many who have no choice for the night than to put a tarp down (if they are fortunate) and then blankets or sleeping bag,



TACO board 2010 and families serve the Monday meal

shoes under their head so they aren't stolen, and try to drift off for a few hours of interrupted sleep. Then up again, and on the move.

The woman knew she was drunk. She knew that she was too loud and that her partner was very rough. She laughed at her own jokes and lost track of her train of thought. She could see from our faces that she scared us more than a little. But, we were here, under

Continued on page 3

Empty Bowls Raises over \$12,000 for TACO!

Empty Bowls has once again been a huge fundraising success! Not only has it raised over \$12,000 to help feed those who might otherwise go hungry, it has raised awareness of the growing number of people who are "food insecure."

Lynn Render, a member of St. Peter's by the Sea, again picked up the reigns and willingly became our organizer for this event. She organized the potters of San Diego who donated hundreds of original gorgeous bowls, organized many of the finer restaurants to donate soups and breads. Kathleen Sora-

han, new TACO Board member, also organized the number of volunteers to help make this a smooth event of serving over 500 people!

Each year now, people tell us they are waiting to come and find their perfect bowl, or their artisan, buying one or multiple sets of bowls from the ever changing table of bowls. With music, art, fine food and friends this is a phenomenal event.

What a simple idea of an empty bowl to remind us that there will

be many people who will go without food when we sit down to a meal. Your contributions will go directly to feeding hungry neighbors here in San Diego, many of who are seniors, working poor and homeless people. TACO gives thanks to everyone who continues to support the Empty Bowls event. Same time next year, day before Mother's Day.

Thank you to all who played a role in bringing this event into being. Thank you also for helping to feed so many.

Director's Report *continued from page one*

the courthouse-jail on "B" street and she was worried about the injury. At that very moment, she was thanking Dr. Beck for touching her. She knew that most people who saw her would have crossed the street away from her, not come towards her, asked after her condition, and then examined her healing head. What she really couldn't believe is that this physician would reach across all that space and hold her hand in her own. She didn't believe that she was worth it.

Once a month, on a Thursday night we head out for a few hours on the street, helping homeless folks to get their medical needs met, to help with challenges, to make connection, to teach medical students and social work students about primary care and the difficulty of the safety net to care for those with diabetes, hypertension, and all the other chronic diseases that afflict so many of us housed or otherwise. Each night, after being out, we meet around a table and Dr. Beck asks us each to share one "learning" from the night. One of the students talked about the dignity that she saw on the faces and in the actions of the men we met with and how this challenged the view of the outside world.

We all connected with the fellow humans we saw on the street who are more like us than not.

We are so thankful to you all who support us and allow us to go out into the community, to have food to serve, to sit with the dying, to comfort the sick, and to advocate for the needs of the poor. It is a remarkable testament to the extra support of folks such as yourselves that we are moving forward today.

We have some great news too: we were recently granted an award from the McCarthy Family Foundation in the amount of \$10,000 to aid in services to our "Going Home End-of-Life Services" program. With this fantastic grant funding we will be able to expand the social work services we offer to those dying on the streets and the ability to provide for the basic needs including transportation, food, clothing, medical supplies.

We thank you for your thoughts, prayers, hands, donations, work on our behalf to raise awareness in our community and in your own communities towards the needs of the poorest amongst us.



Working with the Dying *by Nance Lovell*

For those of us who work with the dying, I would venture to guess many try to think up creative new jobs to "try on" when at social events or when a friend asks about work. I know I have, but have not yet tried to pass off any of my own musings. At the present time, I answer truthfully and then await the usual response. For the most part, when I let people know I work with and train volunteers to work with people who are terminally ill and on the street...I get an "oh, wow...hmm...silence." Then the glazed over, far away look and eventual back stepping and abrupt departure or awkward silence, awaiting the next subject matter.

The fact is people are incredibly inept at talking about death, much less admitting that someone is dying, that they themselves will die, that no one escapes death. It is one of the guarantees we have in life; we all will die. I've become accustomed to the similar responses I receive after

my morbid disclosure. There is the occasional person who has a multitude of advice for me, but for the most part it is a deal breaker, a sure fire way to end a conversation.

Let it be known, the harsh reality is "death is the great equalizer," as a dear friend and hospice chaplain once told me. It really doesn't matter if you are a millionaire who changed the world or a drunken homeless person who was in and out of mental institutions, or even if you were a middle class person who always did the right thing. The simple fact is no one wants to die alone, suffer alone, and face the trials and tribulations alone.

A few people have told me that they liken Simon's Walk to be a "Mother Theresa" type of service...perhaps because it seems like such a saint-like-thing to do, serving dying homeless people. The Simon's Walk volunteers often say

things like, "my spouse/friends/family don't really get why I do this...they say it will break my heart."

Often in meeting with our clients, many of them want it to be known that they weren't always in their current predicament. It may surprise you to know that some of our Going Home clients were firefighters, nurses, commercial painters, business secretaries, world travelers, farmers, even motivational life trainers and military veterans at some point in their lives. Some of them were even parents and grandparents. Many of them had wonderful stories to share of who they were, stories of their childhoods, stories of their proudest moments and of their deepest shames. I really am not sacrificing and doing some miraculous work as Mother Theresa has done. Rather I am deeply touched and humbly blessed to be in service to these dear friends. I get to be present with them allowing humanity to show its great beauty.

Volunteer Update *by Rachel Line*

During the devotion time at a recent meal, I asked the group of gathered volunteers a question: "What keeps you coming back to TACO?" Immediately a hand went up and this volunteer said, "I love it here!" Another hand went up, "This is my one day a week to be nice to people." Still another, "I surprisingly get more out of it than I give." We could have continued this conversation for hours, but we had a meal to serve.

So far this year, we have served 11,231 meals to 7300 people. Many thanks to our groups who have come through these past few months to serve: Carlton Hills Lutheran, Bethlehem Lutheran, Calvary Lutheran, St. Luke's Lutheran, St. Peter's by the Sea Lutheran, First Baptist of Clairemont. Also, a group of cub scouts, a group from Prince of Peace in

Arizona, a group of Brownies, the TACO board, and the Del Mar Montessori School.

This summer, TACO is teaming up with Lutheran Retreats, Camps, and Conferences (LRCC) and their beach camp will be with us four Fridays: July 9, 16, 22 and August 13. On those days, we will have over 20 high school kids here, so those days are full. If you would like to volunteer this summer, please call me to check the schedule.

A special thanks to our regular volunteers who serve every Monday or every Friday. You give so much of yourselves and please know that your time and efforts are so appreciated by those who receive their daily bread here at TACO.

Christmas in July

It's that time again. It is time to start thinking about Christmas. Yes, here at TACO we are once again planning our Christmas in July program. The past three years at Christmas, we have given each hungry guest a gift.

Thanks to your generosity, we have been able to give approximately 250 brightly wrapped Christmas gifts each year. In years past we have given much needed sleeping bags, duffle bags, or back packs. Please prayerfully consider contributing \$25 to purchase a gift for someone in need.

Gratefully yours,
Dianna Little
Board Member

San Diego Grand Jury Submits Report on Homelessness in San Diego

This past year, a San Diego Grand Jury took on the task of writing a report on the impact of, and possible solutions for, homelessness in the city of San Diego. On May 17 of this year, they submitted their report, entitled "Homeless in San Diego." The 17-page document included summaries of the health and housing expenses, reports on the treatment and condition of the homeless, and the Grand Jury's recommendations for the City of San Diego.

"Homelessness in San Diego County has reached a tipping point," reads the report's introduction. "Not only is the problem a blight on our community, it is a blight on our humanity."

Over the course of their investigation, the Grand Jury interviewed city and county employees, homeless advocates and homeless persons, toured the facilities of homeless service providers (such as Alpha Project and Veterans Village winter shelters), and reviewed studies of the relative costs of homelessness.

The report concludes that providing year-round supportive housing for the homeless would result in a net reduction in cost to the city. For example, in Massachusetts, a 2009 study entitled *Home and Healthy for Good* showed that the annual cost of services per homeless person was \$33,327—but when year-round housing was provided (at a cost of \$15,468 a

year), the cost of services dropped to \$8,598, for a net savings of \$9,261. A study in Portland reached similar conclusions. According to the Grand Jury report, "Studies conclusively demonstrate that providing supportive housing first for homeless persons reduces public costs."

The Mayor, City Council, and Board of Supervisors for the City of San Diego are bound to respond by August 16 of this year.

A copy of the report in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format is available on our website (www.tacosd.org) by clicking the link on our front page labeled "San Diego Grand Jury report on homelessness."

TACO Would Like to Extend its Heartfelt Thanks to...

- Lynn Gorguze and Scott Peters for the Foundational Support gift of \$10,000 towards the work of TACO week in and week out, for all that happens here. Thank you so very much. If you are financially able, consider making a Foundational Support gift to keep our doors open.
- Lynn Render, Lynn Zimmer, fellow potters, our own Kathleen Sorahan, and the many many many volunteers who made Empty Bowls such a beautiful suc-

cess this year, with over \$12,000 raised!

- Tierrasanta Lutheran Church for gifts of FRESH vegetables to our kitchen. For the past four weeks + there have been weekly deliveries of an overflow of abundance.
- Brownie Troop 3782 coming to serve and for collecting food and hygiene products.
- Del Mar Montessori for so many years of service bringing specially baked treats and all the effort of the students

age 5 to 13 to make a special moment for our meal guests.

- Thank you to TACO Board Member and Officer, Melanie Novak who has been the TACO Board Secretary for several years and leaves us to move with her family to Minneapolis. Melanie also took charge of organizing Sunset by the Sea for the past two years and did such a wonderful job. Melanie, daughter Laura, and Thom Kupper, we will miss you all."