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Please consider joining **Arms Outstretched**. Help us care for God's blessed poor every day of the year.

# The TACO Times

*Celebrating 35 Years of Bread Day*

Volume 8, Issue 3

July 2011

## Director's Report *by*

This TACO Times is full of hope. You will find in here great results from the Empty Bowls fundraisers (yes there were two). You will see the launch of the 8<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas in July, a call for items for a Summer Rummage Sale to be held at Clairemont Lutheran, and exciting news about our fall fundraising party (note the name change). Also, information about volunteers and Simon's Walk and the results of all your support of our organization and its work to bring health and healing with the most vulnerable among us. Thank you for your support and your work to bring this message to the community at large.

Nine months ago a group of volunteers, most of whom had never met before, came together for three mornings to walk the streets of downtown San Diego with the

goal of meeting with every homeless person that could be found. This was "Registry Week" as downtown joined the 100,000 homes campaign across the country. This program, which began in Massachusetts, aimed to identify the most vulnerable, sick, and frail homeless individuals downtown and help them off of the streets. Volunteers encountered 1,000 people on our downtown streets, surveyed 700 of them, and identified those who were thought most likely to die on these same streets because of their frailty. Of all of those people, the County and the Veteran's Administration committed to helping the 125 most ill to move off of the street and to receive support services in staying housed. The City's Housing Authority created a special program by which these homeless persons would pay just 30% of

their income for housing, even if their income was nothing in the moment.

So, 9 months has gone by, what has happened?

- 32 of the 125 homeless persons are in permanent rental units of their own. They will not have to leave housing because of rent increases, or because the property has now changed to upper income rentals.

Another number:

- 56 of the 125 homeless persons are off of the streets in more temporary living situations. They are in residential hotels, weekly rentals, and rooming houses with bathrooms down the hall and no kitchens, and other down-

*Continued on page 2*

## Empty Bowls Raises \$14,000! *by Rachel Line*

Did you get the best bowl? There are many out there saying that their bowl is the best. Roughly \$14,000 was raised for the Third Avenue Charitable Organization with the help of everyone who got the "best bowl" from Empty Bowls. Potters from all over San Diego county put their skills to work by creating wonderful works of art in the form of bowls. Restaurants also gave of themselves by donating gallons of soup to fill those bowls. Participants had the difficult task of picking out a bowl of their choice and filling it with as much soup as they could handle. Thank you to everyone who made this event so successful: the potters who donated their art, the restaurants who donated their soup, the many volunteers who



donated their time, and the folks who donated their dollars for those who go with empty bowls every day. Thank you to all the TACO board members who

spent their time on this event. Thank you to TACO board member, Frank DeLouise, who organized and coordinated all the volunteers.

A special thank you to Lynn Render and her fantastic team of potters who year after year coordinate and lift up this event, providing hundreds of unique bowls, teaching students the marvels of art and the awareness of hunger in their community. We are so blessed to be the recipients of such great care and beauty. With her guidance, passion, and organization skills, she made this year's Empty Bowls very successful!

## Director's Report *continued from page one*

town places where they can recoup and rest in a bed for the first time in 10 years for some.

- Combined that is 88 people of the 125 identified who are now off of the streets. Almost 10 persons each month, 70% of those who were thought to be at risk of dying in the next year. People who were veterans, who had a combination of mental health needs, physical health conditions, and drug and alcohol problems that plagued their lives. They no longer have to be victims to the elements and those who would prey on them, and their housed neighbors who call the police on them.

It is an impressive number. It says that with enough will and grace, the community can come together and support those who are most at risk of dying for

lack of income. Many say, "Wait a minute, you said above that people identified had mental health problems and drug and alcohol problems, how can you now say that they are dying for lack of income?"

In the past 10 years, more than 3,000 units of lowest cost housing have been lost downtown. These were dilapidated hotels, flophouses, dives, in some cases one time beautiful hotels that had worn down over the years to be filled with the sick, the poor, the elderly on fixed incomes, and yes, those with mental illness and drug and alcohol problems. They were not places where you would choose to live if you didn't have to. But, they were roofs and walls and locking doors. Those 3,000 units disappeared. In their place came \$300 a night hotel rooms. Those who were living in these units were largely cast out onto the streets with no options elsewhere. They

did not come to the streets because of their internal problems; they came because they could no longer afford what downtown had become.

This program is saving people's lives. It is part of a wonderful plan to help 100,000 people to leave the streets throughout the country. And it is very necessary right now, especially as the numbers of people on the streets increases. We have seen growing numbers of people in our meal lines. For the last two weeks of June we have served around 300 meals on each Monday. There are newer faces; there are more housed people who don't have enough food for their month or their families. On Monday nights when 50-100 gather for the four free clinics, we give away other foods; breads, packaged items, etc. to people who don't come for our meals but who are indeed living without necessary food. We are thankful for all your support.

## TACO's Rummage Sale Coming August 20

You know where they are. You shuffle them to the back of your closet. You stack them in your garage. You stuff them in a bag and then forget them. You think you'll wear them or use them "someday", but it's been a year, 2 years, or more and they're still there.

Yup, those old clothes, jewelry, linens, books and so much more are prime candidates for our TACO Rummage Sale. Donate those clean, gently used items

and help support TACO at the same time.

Save the Date: Saturday, August 20, 7:00AM – 1:00PM. The sale will be at Clairemont Lutheran Church, 4271 Clairemont Mesa Blvd.

We will be receiving donated items at the church the week prior to the sale. Look for donation days and times in your August TACO Times.

We are in need of volunteers to help pick up items, to help price and sort items the week leading up to the sale, and to do many jobs the day of the sale. We are also in need of gallon size pots for plants, bags, boxes, and hangers. If you have questions, please contact Dagmar Miller (619-403-6117, dagmaremil-ler@yahoo.com) or Martha Radatz (619-575-2845, mradatz@cox.net).

## Volunteer Update *by Rachel Line*

It's summer time which means TACO gets to welcome groups from all over the country! At the beginning of June, we had a group from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Arizona who helped serve the Friday meal. In mid-June, we had a group from Living Christ Lutheran Church in Flagstaff, Arizona who cleaned up the kitchen. In late June, we had a group from First Lutheran Church in Sauk Centre, Minnesota who helped serve the Monday meal. Also at the end of June, we had a huge choir from First Baptist of Nashville, Tennessee

sing for our volunteers and patio guests during the Monday meal. We are so grateful that people from all over the country can help serve God's people at Third and Ash. We are also always grateful for those local congregations who come regularly: Carlton Hills Lutheran, First Baptist of Clairemont, St. Timothy's Lutheran, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, Bethlehem Lutheran, Calvary Lutheran, St. Peter's by the Sea Lutheran, and St. Luke's Lutheran. We also have regular volunteers who come weekly who are part of area congrega-

tions including: First Lutheran, College Lutheran, Clairemont Lutheran, St. Andrews Lutheran, and Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran.

Not all our volunteers come from churches! There are also several Girl Scouts, Brownie troops, and students from the Life Day Program that have helped serve the meal.

We are so thankful for the gift of time that our volunteers give. Serving over 400 meals a week would not be possible without the help of so many people!

## Empty Bowls 2011



## Christmas in July

Each year for the past five years, TACO and First Lutheran have joined for our Christmas in July fundraiser. Thanks to your generosity, we have been able to give approximately 250 brightly wrapped Christmas gifts each year—sleeping bags, duffle bags, backpacks—whatever is needed for the community of downtown San Diego.

We begin taking donations for this program in July; a donation of \$25 buys a single gift for a member of our community in need. Please consider contributing whatever you can to help our homeless neighbors.

We'd also like to extend our thanks to Ladonna Piper, First Lutheran Council Member and TACO Board Member, for organizing and managing this year's fundraiser.

## Called to Simon's Walk by Nance Lovell

"Working with dying homeless people, that is like Mother Theresa. I could never do that."

"Why would you want to do that, it will break your heart."

"What do you actually do, what do you talk about with a homeless person?"

These are typical comments that our Simon's Walk volunteers and I have heard. These comments come from friends, church members, and even other professionals. I wonder how it is that we as a community have become so distanced from one another. The more I serve homeless men and women who are dying, the more I see the commonality and equality we live with and certainly die with.

With these thoughts it is again time for me to post the question to you, "Are you called to be a Simon's Walk volunteer?" Perhaps more accurately the question

would be, "Are you willing to give of your time and perhaps examine your own brokenness?"

Simon's Walk has been serving the most vulnerable amongst us for 5 years now. One of the observations I have made during a recent assessment of our program for our original grantors is that the endurance of our volunteers seems to be directly in correlation with their ability to recognize their own issues of mortality and ability to be fully present with someone else's woes and pain. Simply speaking, it is not necessarily a matter of your educational brilliance or in-depth work with dying or homeless people. Due to the intensive nature of our service, it becomes inevitable for a client's story or situation to touch on familiar ground. We all have the same fears, failures and struggles. We all have hidden areas of our lives to be reconciled. These will be the touchstones, as Simon's Walk becomes your way of being.

If you have been wondering if this might be a valuable way to give of yourself to someone who calls the street his or her home and who's health is failing – consider Simon's Walk. Like Simon of Cyrene, he carried the cross of Jesus before he dies. What an honor that must have been for Simon – likewise each person we serve gifts us with the honor of being present with his or her innermost being.

Please contact me via email at [nance.taco@firstlutheransd.org](mailto:nance.taco@firstlutheransd.org) or via phone at 619-235-9445 ext. 110 or in person so we may begin the conversation about your serving with Simon's Walk. We anticipate training classes to begin in October, with interviews mid-August – September. Training involves approximately 20 hours of class, and up to 10 hours of mentoring. We ask for a commitment of 2 years with mandatory supervision/support meetings twice a month.

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

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**This Month in the TACO  
Times:**

- Empty Bowls raises \$14,000! (page 1)
- TACO's Rummage Sale is coming on August 20th! (page 2)
- Christmas in July is here again! (page 3)
- TACO's wish list for hygiene donations! (page 4)
- Read about our new fall fundraiser, Bread Upon the Waters! (page 4)

**"...gathering as a community in service with  
the most vulnerable among us..."**

**Items most needed by TACO!**

- Men's socks (white, crew)
- Disposable razors
- Toothbrushes
- Toothpaste
- Small size deodorant
- Travel size sunscreen
- Travel size shampoo/conditioner

**Contact us**

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Vol. 8 No. 3

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

Return Service Requested

**Bread Upon the Waters**

TACO's annual fall fundraiser is coming this September, but now we have a new location—and a new name to match!

"Bread Upon the Waters," named after the verses of Ecclesiastes 11:1-2, will be held on Saturday, September 24 from 5pm to 8pm at the Southwestern Yacht Club. The event will feature a live and silent auction, and Autumn Harvest Supper, and the lovely weather and scenery of the San Diego Harbor. For more information, call (619)235-9445 x124 or email [info@tacosd.org](mailto:info@tacosd.org)

TACO would like to thank Drs. Rup and Vani Nagala for donating the use of their beautiful home for the Sunset by the Sea fundraisers we've held in past years.

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