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The TACO Times
First Lutheran Church
1420 Third Avenue
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The TACO Times

Vol. 12 No. 4

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40/20—On Our Way

40 years of serving weekly meals to people in need (That's 2080 continuous weeks of serving meals)! 20 years since TACO became a non-profit organization! This makes it our 40/20 Anniversary year. We have grown from a zero budget, all volunteer effort to a \$240,000 budget ministry, still dependent on our 1900 volunteers, but with professional services to do so much more than meals for folks in need. What a remarkable journey this has been. God is truly a God of abundance.

TACO is preparing for new directions and opportunities in our ministries. We are asking our supporters (who provide 95% of our budget) to consider an "over and above my usual support" gift to TACO in this Anniversary year to achieve four "dream" projects that will enable new dimensions in our program.

- 1) Going Green—ACHIEVED! Thanks to your donations, TACO is ready to go green in 2015 with new, more environmentally friendly plates and utensils, a new water heater, and a new dishwasher, both of which are more energy-efficient.
- 2) Replacing our aging van, used for picking up donated food and driving clients to necessary appointments.
- 3) Funding a second year of our new half-time social worker needed to assist clients with connecting to needed resources.
- 4) An elevator (or ramp) to give folks access to our second floor where so many of TACO's resources are available throughout the week.

The TACO Times

Celebrating 40 Years of Bread Day
and 20 Years of TACO

Volume 12, Issue 4

December 2015

Director's Report by Jim Lovell

We start this last TACO Times of the year with a tremendous Thank You for all the support that we have received in this anniversary year. Your recognition of the powerful impact of 40 years of service in this place has allowed us to do even more as we prepare to enter our fifth decade.

More than 500 of you have given this year alone to support the work of TACO! This is an unbelievable number. So many of you have given not only to our ongoing

day-to-day expenses but also to our 40/20 Visions of Caring Anniversary appeal. I should note that this does not include cash donations received from Empty Bowls!

We set very ambitious goals this year for projects that we felt befit this anniversary celebration and we have much success to report to you.

Three years ago, our TACO board in its strategic planning identified adding additional staff as a priority to meet the needs of those who come each

and every day, each and every week, and for some year in and year out. For the first time, this past year we have been able to increase our staff by adding Margaret Alba, a part-time social worker, and Silvia Covarrubias, as Admin. Assistant. These additions have been a long time in the planning, certainly going back beyond 2012. We are so thankful for the work of our board, and for the

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Our New Volunteer Coordinator—Michelle Steuber

After a many month vacancy, TACO is excited to welcome Michelle as our new coordinator of volunteers. Michelle comes with great energy and excitement and a long history of working to support those who are often underserved.

For those of you who come and volunteer you will have a recognizable face among you on your volunteer days. For those of you who as regular volunteers have been carrying the extra weight since Tori was last with us, I wish to thank you for your tremendous compassion and sense of mission here in our meals and service to the downtown community. You all helped us to soldier on in so many, many ways. Special thanks to Mary Krueger for her willingness to do the behind-the-scenes work of coordinating groups and making sure that there were not only enough of us to serve but that people had a tremendous experience to boot. I know that is no mean feat even for a paid Volunteer Coordinator much less for

such a dedicated volunteer. There are so many of you to thank for your outstanding abilities to step in and guide in this whole process.

The following is from Michelle, as we welcome her she also wishes to say some words of welcome as you come to know her.



I am thrilled to be the new Volunteer Coordinator at TACO!

Before we moved to San Diego last year, I knew that TACO was a place that I wanted to volunteer. My family and I have enjoyed serving meals here so much that I began organizing other young families from our church to serve during summer break. TACO is a special place for volunteers of all ages, for the community, and for the guests.

I am a member of St. Andrew's Lutheran. Volunteering in our church, as well as our community and kids' schools, has always been a priority in my life. I was a high school teacher for 10 years and have been blessed to stay at home to raise my three kids - ages 10, 8, and 4 - the past 10 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you! I am eager to get to know everyone and honored to be part of this amazing community.

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

Director's Report by Jim Lovell (continued from page one)

giving by our donors and volunteers to make this happen.

I have often said that we could employ several full-time social workers here at TACO, as the needs of those coming for food and coming for clinical services are so great. I was struck again this week by the fragile nature and vulnerability of those who we are called to care for here. In just this first week of December we have called the paramedics twice. The first time was for a senior gentleman who comes to receive free acupuncture services. Prior to providing treatment, an acupuncture student and their supervisor identified a problem with this gentleman's heart rate, catching a very dangerous problem in its beginnings. Two days later he was released from the hospital and stopped by to express his thankfulness for the quick action and great clinical awareness of our team. Later that day, a homeless gentleman who has been coming for meal services for over 10 years came up to the second floor asking me to call for an ambulance. As I dialed 911 I asked him what his medical problem was. His state-

ment to me was "I am dying!" As he and I talked a little bit more it became apparent that 10 days ago he began to have the first signs of what might be a stroke. As he struggled with the fear of this experience, he felt very alone and that there may be no way that anyone would want to help him. Fortunately, because of his long-standing relationship with TACO and First Lutheran Church's patio he came by to find us. The fire department and paramedics came very quickly, assisted him onto their gurney, and got him to the emergency room.

It is a strange and overwhelming thing to find ourselves in such a position to be the emergency triage site for so many who are poor in our community. Dr. Ellen Beck, founder of the UCSD Student-run Free Clinic Project, has commented over her years of being involved with those who are underserved in our community that it is disturbing when something referred to as a "free clinic" should be considered an established "safety net" program in a community as large as San Diego County. Much less something referred to

as a "Student-run" clinic.

But it is true that in an ongoing way after 40 years of serving meals and 20 years of social and clinical services we are the safety net for poor and vulnerable people. Your support and volunteerism allows us to continue as a place where those who typically experience a very hostile world can come to know caring, support, and provide blessings for us in so many ways.

We all know the hostile rhetoric that happens in our society when people are afraid. Fear has that ability to make us want to pull in ranks and be wary of the stranger, the foreigner, and often those who appear different to us. It continues to amaze me how this place breaks down these barriers, makes us rethink the perceived differences between us, how God's love opens our eyes in relationship to one another. Thank you all for making this possible on a day-by-day basis here in this place.

May you have a blessed Christmas.

Arms Outstretched and Anniversary Angels 2015

Arms Outstretched members are those who have donated \$365—a dollar a day—or more to TACO over the course of a year. Those who gave to our 40/20 campaign are included in the list below.

Jean Alme
Ed Anderson
Roger Anderson
Charlene Atkins
Anonymous
Dr. Ellen Beck
Nancy Berner
Elaine Bertram
Oliver Biederman
Linda Bright and Kristin Westerman
David and Lois Case
Jean-Claude and Rebecca Chamaa
Chasroe Enterprises
Charlotte Collins
Elizabeth Connolly
Lori Cook
Charles Costa
Betty and Joe Corsi
Joseph and Toni D'Alessandris
Charlotte Demotte
Jeff Diers
Beatrice Doblado
Randy Engel
Paul Engel
Gloria Espeseth
George and Ethel Falk

Kerrie Foss
Ronn and Dorothy Garton
Gibbons Family Trust
James Grutkowski
Christine Habib
Kathleen Harrington
Steven and Carol Hassett
Robert and Patricia Hendrikson
Bruce Henschel
John Hoff
Mary Ann Horton
Richard Hostin
Geraldine Jenkins
Frank Jessie
Pastor Ted and Marietta Johns
Brenda Johnson
Rosemary and Walt Johnston
Mary and John Kerley
Richard and Mary Krueger
Mickey Lester
Donald Line
Pastor Laurie Line
Dorothy Magdich
Pastor Karen Marohn
Stephen Mather
McCoy Enterprises

Pastor Wilbert and Dagmar Miller
Steven Moreen
Darlene Morrow-Truver
Elizabeth Moss
Laverne Neuman
Debra Novak
Jeannie Oestreicher
Harvey and Ruthann Peters
John and Suzanne Pew
Ladonna Piper
Rev. Bill and Martha Radatz
Robert and Gretchen Ravenscroft
Mark and Laure Reynolds
Ron Richardson
Peg and Carl Ross
Bob and Pat Schroeder
Jennifer Siverts
Lawrence Smith
Pastor Chuck and Cathie Sundry
Frances Taranto
Tom Templeton and Mary Erlenborn
John and Marjorie Wahlsten
Lee Wesley
John Wiehe
John Wilbur
Victoria Wilson

10 Years of Wisdom by Nance Lovell

It's hard for me to believe that Simon's Walk has been serving for a full decade – Happy 10th anniversary!

It has been said, "The greatest gift you can give someone is your time. Because when you give your time, you are giving a portion of your life that you will never get back." This is most certainly true for Simon's Walk. Time is the ultimate avenue to build a trusting relationship. Over this decade, there has been much wisdom I have gained from serving our clients. With abundant gratitude, I give thanks.

Judy – who taught me the value of spending the time with clients. I wasn't sure how much assistance I was providing to her as we would often just chit chat during visits even though there were tragic problems she was facing. However, during one hospital visit, she told all the staff that I was like a sister to her and the "best kind of friend." From there forward, she depended upon me as one might a family member.

Ruben taught me to work through my fears (of violence and sexual predators), as long-term prison gangsters also needed mercy and assistance. In the words of Pastor Wilk, "it will be the Rubens who greet us at the gates of Heaven." He challenged my humanity and my compassion.

Lissa taught me the importance of the homeless community and the astounding durability of the human body. She had a large circle of friends whom she depended upon and who kept her alive. She was also an exemplary example of how humor (even sarcasm) has its place when dying. To our dismay and her broken-heartedness, her family refused to be a part of her dying and death. She is still remembered by the homeless community and is buried at First Lutheran in the columbarium.

Dominic taught me about the importance of dignity. When he died, Jim and I had the responsibility of cleaning out his SRO hotel room. His clothing was impeccably hanged and folded, his papers organized in a drawer and the only personal extras he had was a drawer full of hard candy. He lived simply and elegantly in a humble space.

Henry taught me the miracle of care and companionship. He was deemed "terminally ill" for the final 7 years of his life. With top-

notch health care and caring compassion, he lived much longer than anyone would have predicted. Truly a miracle, he called himself "the cat with 9 lives." He also taught me the importance for clients to be able to give back in whatever manner they are able. Henry kept pockets of tamarind candy to give to any healthcare worker, in response to their care for him.

Kenny confirmed to me that if we live our faith rather than proselytize to others, they would be invited to ask on their terms and in their time. Kenny was a self-titled atheist, who asked about God and heaven in his final days. This was truly a beautiful story.

Robert taught me that it is possible to provide therapeutic counseling to someone who is perpetually inebriated. Over many sessions, Robert was able to confront and heal some of his childhood scars and reconciled with his family before dying. I also learned about the pride and street codes that some people live their life outdoors by. Robert was an educated man who loved to read every day.

Mario taught me how to accept love and affection more freely. Mario would greet me with a huge bear hug and kiss my forehead in his final days. He was a wandering soul who had suffered with memory loss and therefore lived each moment with gusto.

Kirk taught me to trust my instincts and also taught me how deep mental illness pervades the homeless community. Kirk was probably the hardest loss I have suffered over the decade. He took his own life when he was on an upswing.

Sonia taught me how important it is for us to help other professionals see people who are mentally ill and/or homeless as equally deserving of care and respect. I was in awe to watch this quiet woman who had nothing to say while she was healthy, come to life and become outspoken in her dying. My role was simply to be sure she was taken seriously and given the same care and opportunities as anyone else.

Andy taught me not to underestimate the strength of a person's past. Andy's needs were funded by a childhood friend who raised monies via a crowd funding site in his final days. Although Andy was estranged from family due to alcoholism, he was able to reconcile in his final days and I heard end-

less stories of his life and friendships before he ended up on the street.

There are many others that have shared their wisdom and that I have learned from in their dying and death. I am thankful for 10 years of learning Street Wisdom. These are the chunks of wisdom that cannot be learned in a college classroom or text. They run deeper than schooled knowledge because they are felt deeply and personally. May they rest in peace.

If any of these gems of wisdom have appealed to you in a greater sense, give some prayerful thought if you might give of your time by serving. Simon's Walk will likely have a training of new volunteers next Spring. We give thanks for our growth and stability.

FIESTA!

Thank you to everyone who helped to make this event such a smashing success! Were you there? What do you remember as your personal highlight? Was it the beautiful views of boats and vistas? Was it the Auctioneer with the funny sombreros? His wife as Freida Kahlo? The great food? Perhaps it was meeting with one of our clinic partners at your table and hearing their amazing stories. We raised over \$35,000 due to your generosity. Thank you! Please visit our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/TACOSDFb) to see photos and tell us about your favorite moments!

