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**The TACO Times**

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# The TACO Times

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## A Message from the Interim Executive Director by Nancy Aeling

As Charles Dickens famously wrote, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." As with the rest of the world, we at TACO continue to adjust to these times, and remain a beacon of hope in San Diego. We are a family made up of our generous donors, amazing guests, dedicated staff and those we serve...an imposing team indeed!

I am happy to say, TACO is not simply adjusting – we are growing! At a time when other organizations are cutting back on services, we are reaching out further. Brad Young has implemented a weekly clothing distribution and continues working with other agencies to extend services; Cindy Quinonez has been a networking genius and found low-cost sources for

extra meals that are distributed at TACO and beyond: seniors at The Towers, low income families at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, women and children at Nueva Vida overnight shelter in addition to TACO's walk-up clients. Bob Case and Silvia Covarrubias continue to provide the office support TACO needs along with the daily friendly smile that our clients need. The glue that holds us together... Wayne Boss!

Our operational support is growing as well. We recently dedicated the long-awaited lift, enabling us to better serve those for whom stairs are an obstacle. The kitchen boasts a new metal heat shield to improve safety and a new freezer. Thanks to the generosity of Atonement Lutheran Church

our kitchen utensils have been thoroughly restocked and an additional refrigerator installed.

We are happy for Kim Walker, whose husband was promoted to Navy Captain, but saddened that they are now deployed to Philadelphia. The Board is actively interviewing a social worker to take over the Going Home mission. As you are likely aware, Jim Lovell has asked for and been given a three-month leave of absence. Please add your prayers to ours for his continued healing.

As for your interim Executive Director, I am grateful for the love and support of our donors, staff and Board of Directors. I am blessed indeed that not a day goes by at TACO without giving me opportunities to say, "Thank you!"

### Did you know...

Last year the unemployment rate in San Diego County was 3.3%, with an estimated 1 in 7 of our residents living with food insecurity. Since COVID-19, the number of unemployed San Diegans has increased by nearly 10%, leading to significantly greater increases in food insecurity, some estimating as high as 1 in 5 residents, with one-third being children. To address this increased demand for food, TACO continues to seek ways to expand our partnerships and works with additional county organizations to address this problem.

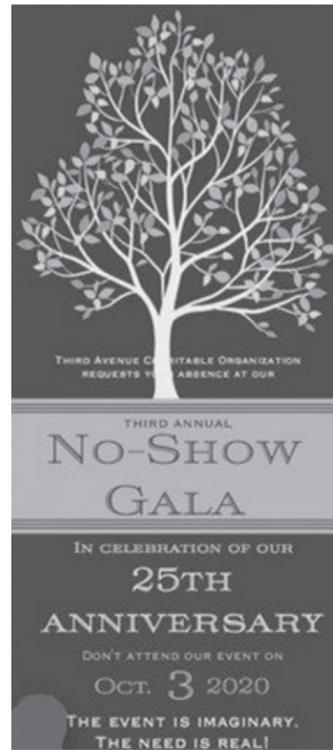
### Bike the Bay...The TACO Way! August 22, 2020

Although the official San Diego's Bike the Bay event has gone virtual due to COVID-19, a few tenacious folks are going to be making a 25 mile ride in honor of TACO's 25th anniversary. First Lutheran Church, for the benefit of TACO, is sponsoring "Bike the Bay...The TACO Way." You may choose to participate or to "sponsor a rider" from the comfort of your cozy recliner. For more information, please go to [tacosd.org/bikethebey](http://tacosd.org/bikethebey).

## October 3rd... Save the Date for TACO's Third Annual No-Show Gala!

TACO has been social distancing since before it was popular! For the third year in a row our wonderful TACO community is invited **not** to attend "The Best Imaginary Event of the Year!" The No-Show Gala is a one-of-a-kind fundraising opportunity with a twist...since we are not paying for an event space or catering, 100% of your donation will go to TACO services directly helping those we serve. Look for your invitation to our No-Show Gala in the coming weeks and remember...

**The event is imaginary.  
The need is real!**



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

## A Fond Farewell to Going Home Coordinator Kim Walker

On July 13<sup>th</sup> TACO said goodbye to our Going Home Coordinator, Kim Walker, as her husband's career necessitated a move to Philadelphia. Since February 2019, Kim has done a great job in her role with Going Home and Simon's Walk. Her expertise in building relationships with clients and volunteers was apparent; she also created written policies, procedures and documentation protocols that will benefit the program going forward. As the pandemic brought un-



certainty to the lives of Going Home clients, Kim acted as a steady constant in their lives, unflustered and pragmatic, but accepted nothing less than what was best for her clients.. We'll

miss her expertise and support - but wish her the best of luck!

We'd like to thank TACO Board Member, Jim Friedrich, who has stepped up to provide service to our Going Home clients until Kim's replacement is hired. Before retiring, Jim Friedrich had careers in both parish ministry and clinical social work, and is well-equipped to provide holistic care for TACO clients during this time of transition.

**“Do you serve food today?” by Brad Young, Volunteer Coordinator**

Countless times those words have been spoken on our property. On a Monday or Friday, the answer was always, “Yes!” however on any other day and the reply was frequently, “Let me see...”

Just for a second, imagine if you had no food or money, and no family or friends you could turn to. Imagine that your options for sustenance were the kindness of strangers or theft. I certainly don’t wish this on anyone, but to thousands of people, this is their daily reality.

As you can imagine, the pandemic has only made matters worse. More and more people we’ve never seen at TACO come to be fed, clothed and helped. With services dwindling, those not lucky enough to find shel-

ter (over 700 Downtown), must find food somewhere, and, thankfully, TACO has remained open by staying lean, adaptable, and SAFE.

On Mondays and Fridays, a smaller and dedicated volunteer group serves take-out meals to an average of 110 guests. These meals are exactly the same as before (restaurant quality), just served “to-go” in bags with disposable utensils. All safety guidelines are followed, and guests must dine elsewhere...in other words, safety first.

What about the other days of the week? TACO (thanks to our own Chef Cindy) is now serving full meals on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4 PM. A contingency of two to three volunteers help assemble our **Fish to Families** drop offs, and serve to an average of 85

guests, and growing, as word spreads. TACO has eliminated the lack of a Thursday meal Downtown, and provided a food option that the finest restaurants would be proud to serve. All of this taking place in the middle of a pandemic. The total cost to TACO... \$0.00.

What allows TACO to expand services and stay lean in the middle of a pandemic? Our volunteers! Many organizations and companies throw the word family around in regards to staff and volunteers. At TACO we mean it AND it’s true. It’s your labor, ideas, joy, and service that allow us to thrive. To all of you (past, present, and future) thank you for being part of our TACO story!

*Rebakah shows off our new bagged lunches! Now, instead of a food line with patio seating, TACO serves hundreds of take-out meals a week, including (now) on Tuesdays and Thursdays. See ‘Our Latest Catch’ on page three for more details.*



*Our food coordinator, Cindy Quinonez, helps us wrangle food from wherever we can!*

**Thanks to Our Food Sponsors!**

In addition to the help of our many volunteers, did you know that TACO is now receiving almost 5 tons of food each month from the Food Bank alone, for meals and other food distributions? Fresh Rescue from stores like Alberton’s and Jimbo’s brings in close to 2 tons of food and more per week. Endless thanks to our generous food sponsors who enable us to operate our Meals Program.

*San Diego Food Bank  
Albertsons (Downtown)  
Jimbo’s (Horton Plaza)  
Tom Fetter & Company (C-Stores)  
Yum Yum Donuts (Federal Blvd.)  
Yum Yum Donuts (La Mesa)*

*Panera Bread (Grossmont Center)  
Tierrasanta Lutheran Church Giving Garden  
And many other individual donors, whose contributions add up to one wonderful Meals Program!*

**A Volunteer’s Story: Serving in Uncertain Times by Jude Annunziata**

My husband and I had volunteered at TACO for three years – since we moved to San Diego from New York – when the pandemic struck. We worried about how TACO would safely continue to provide meals for our guests and if we should put ourselves at risk to continue volunteering. TACO figured it out! They devised a new system to prepare, pack up and serve to-go meals (plus hygiene, socks etc.), and maintain the safety of the volunteers and guests while doing so.

The first Friday morning back we returned with trepidation. We had always worn gloves and hair coverings. Now we added masks and social distancing as we packed and served the meal. In fact, Lou and I only do the packing, because the older volunteers do not go outside to serve, to lower our risk. It has

**Maintaining TACO’s Extended Services**

To an unsheltered or housing insecure individual or family, the social services offered by an organization can be immensely important. Currently both Silvia and Bob have been keeping regular office hours upstairs to help guests with: mail, phone charging, EDD applications online, Social Security claims/calls, legal clinic referrals, ID vouchers, fax/copies, document storage, hygiene kits, and snacks. Maintaining these services provides basic yet essential help for our clients. We are so thankful to have both of them, and look forward to resuming expanded services very soon.

In addition, our medical clinics are still offering pharmacy service to existing patients. Full medical, legal and acupuncture services are expected to resume once the pandemic has subsided. At TACO we are committed to maintaining as many of these services as possible, in support of our mission, even during this extremely challenging time.

quickly become a well-oiled machine. The caliber of the meals remains restaurant quality! The individual components are placed in disposable containers and packaged to go in a carry bag. All guests are provided masks (if they aren’t wearing one), a place to wash their hands and we even continue to serve hot coffee!

I have always felt that we get much more out of serving than our guests

receive. Lou and I are proud to be able to volunteer and serve during this crisis in America. God bless TACO’s ministry!



**Kitchen Update!**



We continue to improve the kitchen, getting it ready for final food certification with the San Diego County Health Department. In July we scheduled and had installed the stainless steel backsplash for the ovens and stove. Two super volunteers, Barbara Siesel and Bruce George, coordinated the contract-

ing, fabrication and installation with our Chef Cindy; the results provide additional fire safety and, quite honestly, a bit of class, to the kitchen.

Thanks to a generous grant in August from the **San Diego County Employees’ Charitable Organization**, TACO has acquired a new two-door reach-in

freezer, adding much needed, and more energy efficient, storage space. This, in addition to the chest refrigerator and kitchen floor mats recently donated by **Bootstrap Kombucha**, allows us to prep and store food in advance, and more easily to maintain social distancing while cooking our Monday and Friday meals.

The last upgrade needed in the kitchen involves evaluation and expansion of our hot water delivery system to determine the water heater capacity necessary for the kitchen permit. If you have mechanical engineering experience in determining hot water capacity and/or installation experience in this field and are willing to collaborate with us on this effort, please contact Chef Cindy at [cquinonez@tacosd.org](mailto:cquinonez@tacosd.org).