

Our Latest Catch: Fish to Families

TACO is participating in a 13 week pilot project, **Fish to Families**, designed to double our hot meal distribution by providing additional Tuesday and Thursday meals. Through the leadership of our own TACO chef, Cindy Quinonez, twice a week, 300 meals prepared by local chefs and packaged by TACO volunteers, are distributed at no cost to our clients and other San Diegans in need. Our local guests are served, as well as people in surrounding food-insecure communities, like the residents in The Tower adjacent to First Lutheran, which provides housing to low income seniors.

Sponsored by a grant from **The San Diego Foundation**, fishermen of the **San Diego Fishermen's Working Group**, our local commercial fishing industry association, supplies fresh protein rich catch to be prepared by professional chefs at **Craft Meals SD**. Food is then delivered to TACO by **I Love to Glean**, an organization that collects and dis-



tributes food to families in need throughout San Diego. The meal to-go boxes and delivery costs are covered for TACO by a generous grant from the **San Diego Food Bank**.

The benefits of this partnership multiply beyond just feeding those who need healthy nourishment. The fishing fleet keeps working with an expanded market

for their catch; San Diego chefs continue preparing delicious protein rich to-go meals; delivery drivers remain employed by delivering those meals to families in need. Every link in the chain contributes to keeping our friends and neighbors not only fed but employed. Private money funds the work of local craftsmen to supply San Diego's nutritious bounty of sea and land, empowering them to address our region's growing food insecurity. With the help of TACO and others, this is a win-win-win for our community in our time of greatest need.

With the support of our faithful volunteers, and at minimal cost, we are able to partner with these agencies to double meals distribution to food insecure individuals and families in our local area. Working with these collaborative partners allows us, now more than ever, to maximize resources and expand services to the growing number of San Diegans in need of health-building meals.

The Latest... Volunteers and Donations by Brad Young

By now, you may have concluded TACO is in need of **volunteers**. For the first time in months, the answer is yes...

As Volunteer Coordinator, this makes me extremely happy, because it gives me a chance to bring people back in. The safety guidelines we are following do not allow for large groups anymore (...it's **not** that we don't still love you!) However, we are in need of small numbers of volunteers for our new services.

Mondays and Fridays are pretty much spoken for, because it is simply safer to have a designated crew. But we **DO** need 2 to 3 volunteers for each of the following days/times:

- Tuesday Meal 2 until 4 PM
- Wednesday Donations 10 until noon
- Thursday Meal 2 until 4 PM

In regards to **donations**, we can use the following items:

- Men's gym and casual shorts Men's and Women's underwear
- Men's sweat pants/casual pants Belts
- T-Shirts
- Women's clothing (summer)
- Hoodies
- Backpacks
- Blankets
- Hygiene kits
- Men's and Women's Shoes 9 to 12

If you are interested in volunteering or donating, please email me at

byoung@tacossd.org and let me know your availability. I look forward to seeing and hearing from you!



Masks for All in Need

We all remember the day clearly...the stay-at-home order was given, gathering size was limited, and mask wearing was mandated in San Diego. Almost immediately wonderful groups began to provide TACO with masks to be distributed to the most vulnerable among us.

The **First Lutheran Merry Mask Makers** were quick to organize and sew hundreds of masks for TACO guests, staff and volunteers. A group of talented sewers and quilters at **Tierrasanta Lutheran Church** also took up the cause and made hundreds



more to be distributed at meals. The **Good Neighbor Project** coordinated with several other South Bay organizations to make even more masks for TACO and many others in need.

Thanks to our sewers and the others who support their efforts, TACO continues to distribute masks to all whenever needed. Our ability to supply these masks not only protects our guests and volunteers, but enables TACO to stay open in the midst of this growing pandemic. They also allow our guests access to other areas and services that require facial protection. These masks, so lovingly sewn, have allowed TACO to remain an island of hope in a very uncertain time. Many thanks to all our mask makers!

Donation Day is Here to Stay! *by Brad Young, Volunteer Coordinator*

“Everything I own was stolen...”
 “I have a job interview, but nothing to wear...”
 “Can you please help me...”

When I began as Volunteer Coordinator, I soon realized that donations were actually a vital and stand-alone service of TACO. Over the years I did my best to increase donations and selection of necessary items within the time constraints of the meals.

COVID-19 changed all that. As we adapted to our new world, we realized that safety protocols wouldn't allow for the distribution of large-scale donations, particularly clothing. For a month or so, we were relegated to socks, and hygiene kits as donations piled up in the office. However, new realities offer new opportunities, and taking advantage of extra space in the classroom upstairs, we came up with the idea of safely offering clothing to our guests.

Every Wednesday, from 10:30AM until noon, people safely line up and are offered donations by three to four volunteers. Social distancing is practiced, and masks are required as



well as offered to those in need. This new format allows us to help an increased number of guests meet their clothing needs. As one volunteer pointed out, it allows us to get a better feel of what they are facing, and what their needs are. And, indeed, their needs are great, as often people come to us with only the clothing on their backs. Some are without shoes, some in desperate need have soiled their clothing, and many, for once, just want something nice to wear. Needless to say, the program has be-

come a big success. Every week approximately 40 guests are served, and your donations have been more than generous. A special thanks to Leah, Rebekah, Colleen, Victoria, Francis, Jessica, Suzanne, and Paula for helping this new program get off the ground...you are all amazing!

To all the individuals and organizations who have donated items, we are blessed to know you. Thank you. As one guest exclaimed the other day, “You are a Godsend!”