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*Our donors listed contributed \$1,000 or more to the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, between 8/7/15 - 8/7/16. Gifts to individual conferences are not included.*



St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin County  
 P.O. Box 150527  
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**Can you help our hungry neighbors by sending a gift in the enclosed envelope?**

Please help to keep up with the demand...an astounding 500 meals per day for our hungry seniors, veterans, children and their families.

**Are you able to pick up something to help the Free Dining Room?**

*We always need:*

White or brown rice	Canola oil
Dried black beans	Tube pasta
Frozen ground beef	Paper towels
Milk	

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**The Society's annual fundraising gala *Pennies from Heaven* took place on Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup> at St. Hilary Church in Tiburon. Thank you to everyone who made this special night a success!**



## 2016 NEWS

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin County

You Save Lives!



# SPEAKING UP



## Launch of the Homeless Outreach Team is HOT

David was raised in a family of well-established Marin business owners. After graduating from a local high school, David started to experience the first signs of mental illness. His family was understandably concerned and did the best they could to help. But David's illness made him feel confused and anxious, resulting in outbursts and unpredictable behavior. His relationships with family became strained, and he was evicted from a series of apartments.

Despite these challenges, David's family was able to secure a unit in a single room occupancy building where he lived contentedly for several years. When the building was deemed unsafe due to building code violations, he had to vacate the apartment. David's stability was upended. Homeless once again, he could no longer easily access his medications or find an affordable place to live.

In his forties and homeless, David's mental health deteriorated rapidly. His symptoms increased and his hygiene and physical health were affected. David became one of San Rafael's chronically homeless and mentally ill residents and lived on our streets for many years. A hulking man well over six feet tall, David presented as a scary figure to others. In truth, David was child-like, confused, and struggled to follow simple directions. The Society did everything possible to keep him clothed and fed, but we were deeply afraid

that David was going to die on our streets. Could we not do better for one of our own – a resident of Marin County who was not getting the life-saving help he needed and deserved?

### **This is when you stepped in.**

With your support of the Society's launch of HOT (Homeless Outreach Team), David became the first individual to be served by this innovative program.

With HOT, we gathered various Marin County social service agencies, county leaders, police and fire departments and street outreach workers to focus solely on David's case while stressing our motto, *"Housing is a must. Failure is not an option."* With this determined approach, our team navigated complex county systems for David and managed to secure housing for him in a residential program to end his homelessness once and for all. Now David lives with dignity. He is not wandering our streets. He is taking his medication and he is happy.

### **Today, HOT is working with a dozen more chronically homeless people like David to get them off the streets, too.**

Your care, your advocacy, your dollars and your compassion are a driving force for a meaningful change, and for this we say: thank you, thank you, thank you.



### Who Eats in the Free Dining Room?

It is sometimes thought that everyone who eats in our Free Dining Room is homeless, penniless, and came from somewhere outside Marin to get services. We would like to dispel some of those perceptions with results from our recent survey of 84 diners:

- 85% have lived in Marin 5 years or longer; 49% have lived here for more than 20 years.
- 80% have some income, and 42% are disabled.
- 57% of those who are housed said they were worried about becoming homeless.
- 36% said that they would go hungry, and another 35% stated that it would be a financial hardship, if they couldn't receive meals at the Free Dining Room.
- 20% of our diners are families.

Thanks to your support, the Free Dining Room is open 365 days a year and has served over three million meals since 1981, ensuring that none of our neighbors in Marin County will suffer from hunger.



### Volunteers make the difference!

We couldn't do the amazing things we do without our amazing volunteers! Serving hundreds of meals a day in the Dining Room, sitting down with our homeless neighbors to find a solution to their problems, sharing meals with our shelter guests, calling families in need of financial aid...

Volunteers are there helping in every instant where help is needed, giving their time and talents to serve their neighbors.

It's easy to become a volunteer! To join our team simply go to our website at [vinnies.org](http://vinnies.org) and apply, email us at [volunteer@vinnies.org](mailto:volunteer@vinnies.org) or call 415-454-3303 x18.



### RENT IN MARIN SKYROCKETS

Kimberly is a 38 year old mother who works in a professional job in Sausalito with good benefits. She is proud of her success and feels that she sets a good example for her children. When Kimberly moved into her apartment six years ago, the rent was \$1,200 a month. Every year since, she earned a raise at work, but her rent increases have always exceeded her salary increases. Today, her rent is \$2,300 for the same apartment. As a result, she must be very careful about budgeting and has not been able to save money even though she recognizes the importance of an emergency fund.

When Kimberly's car broke down last month, she faced a sudden crisis. She could not afford both an \$1,100 car repair and her rent. A cautious spender, she knew that using a credit card was a bad idea that might lead to long-term financial chaos. Suddenly, Kimberly's sensibly crafted life was teetering on the edge of eviction. **But you were there for Kimberly in her time of need.** Our Society volunteers met with her in her own home at a convenient time so that she did not need to divulge her troubles to her employer or pay for childcare while looking for help. Much to Kimberly's amazement, you brought her family groceries and paid half of her rent so that she could afford the vehicle repair and move on with her life.

**The average rent in Marin County has increased by 20% in the last two years, causing tremendous stress for families.** With your help, every month the Society visits dozens of struggling families and helps keep a roof over the heads of admirable parents like Kimberly.

### REST PROGRAM RESCUES

Harry was a Cal engineering grad and veteran who worked for Bechtel for 25 years. After a successful career, Harry took early retirement and lived happily in his Mill Valley apartment for more than 20 years. But when his building was sold, his rent doubled, and Harry's life was in crisis. At the age of 72, Harry found himself sleeping on the floor as a guest of our REST shelter. Harry never imagined that he would be homeless, but he had an upbeat attitude about his experience. He told volunteers, "You won't get to know me very well. I'll only be here a few weeks until I find something." A year passed, and Harry's can-do attitude wore thin. In his second winter at REST, he kept to himself and seemed too tired for conversation.



Recently, Harry was accepted into the Veteran's Administration housing program and was provided with a studio apartment in San Rafael. He contacted one of our REST volunteers to tell her about it. She was thrilled with the news, but finally said, "Harry, is there something you need? Did you call me for a particular reason?" He replied, "I just wanted to thank you so much for your REST program. You were so helpful. I am so grateful, and I knew you'd want to know I got my housing. I can't thank you enough."

How else did REST lead to a happy ending? Ted, another homeless man Harry met in REST, is now Harry's official caregiver. He lives with Harry and earns \$500 a month for helping Harry with his medication and physical limitations. This means that two more men are off of the streets, thanks to you. **Your support of REST continues to give respite, fellowship and hope to people facing terrible crisis.** Harry felt he needed to thank all of you who support REST..... and we thank you, too!

**310 people received shelter from REST this past winter.**

### A Gift From Heaven



Carla and Raul lived a quiet life in a Canal apartment. While Raul worked in construction, Carla worked in a restaurant and took care their sons, Joaquin and David. One day, Raul was caught in the crossfire of an attempted bank robbery. Traumatized, he began to experience the signs of a mental breakdown, which caused him to lose his job. Without his income to pay the rent, the family was evicted and was suddenly homeless. They stayed with family when possible or allowed the children to stay with friends while Carla and Raul slept in their car. Homelessness exacerbated Raul's condition, and he was hospitalized, leaving Carla and the boys on their own and frightened.

Carla came to our Housing Help Desk in desperation. **You were here to help. Thanks to your generosity, we found a shared living situation for Carla and her boys in Terra Linda.** And you even helped Carla with a few months' rent to assure that her boys had stability and could attend school every day. It was the best plan available, given Marin's skyrocketing rental market. While originally dependent on Society funds to pay her rent, your generosity enabled Carla to continue working with our team to budget her income to pay her rent on her own. Today, Carla is attending parenting classes and gaining confidence in her independence. Carla says, "I started to worry that we would never have a home again. It is a miracle that people helped us stay safe while waiting for my husband to get better."

**Carla is grateful for the generosity of Society benefactors and considers you "a gift from heaven."**

### The Power of a Story

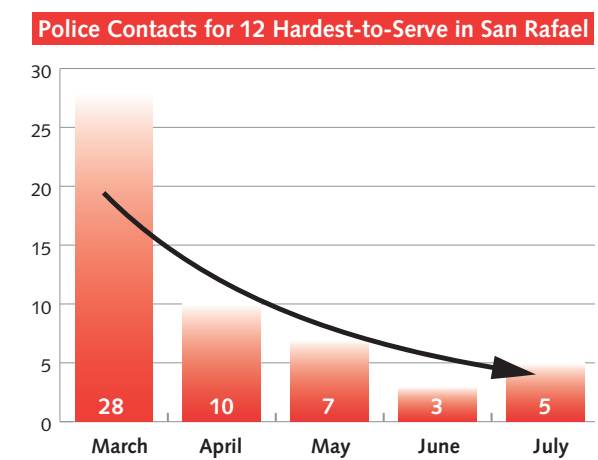


In this newsletter, we share stories of the people you help in order to shed light on their lives and highlight the tremendous impact of your generosity. When we compose a newsletter, we ask ourselves "Whose success story do we want to share and –more importantly–how can this story help others who are still suffering in our midst?" We do not merely "celebrate" the happy endings on these pages as much as we use these stories and their positive outcomes as a model for tackling the next perplexing problem for the next Marin resident who may desperately need our intervention, compassion and positive outcomes.

With much work and determination, this "one story at a time" approach became the framework for the Society's launch of the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), which aims to find permanent housing for our homeless residents living on the streets of San Rafael, like David in our cover story. HOT gathers every stakeholder involved in homelessness issues in Marin County (Health and Human Services, City of San Rafael, Marin Housing Authority, San Rafael Police and Fire Departments, Ritter Center, Homeward Bound and others) to **focus on one chronically homeless person at a time.** Clearly, our community's existing approach – expecting homeless individuals to self-navigate our complex, rigorous and contradictory systems – was not working. Now, our HOT members traverse these systems, for each person, and find permanent housing for each high-needs individual. "Giving up" is not an option.

How is this "one story at a time" approach working? HOT is finding housing and resources at a rate never seen before in this county. As of this writing, 11 of our first 12 chronically homeless participants are off of the streets and getting the treatment and housing that they need. The St. Vincent de Paul Society started HOT without any outside funding. Because of your generosity, we were able to absorb administrative costs. You helped us raise crucial funds during our 2016 Leadership Campaign to make this happen. Your faith gave us time to **prove that our concept could work.** It does work, and we are now seeking a contract with the County of Marin to officially continue this vital program. **This would not have happened without you.** We believe that HOT is a community asset.

The chart below shows that the police department arrest rates in downtown San Rafael were



drastically reduced among our 12 HOT participants once they got off the streets and received the care they needed. HOT shows that when we focus on the "stories" – one person at a time – we find lasting solutions for each person and for our community as well.

*Christine Paquette*

Christine Paquette, Executive Director