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

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How many homeless people live in San Diego?

That's the question that the Regional Task Force for the Homeless in San Diego tries to answer each year with their Point-In-Time counts (PITC).

According to this year's count, 8,742 homeless persons live in San Diego County, and 63% of those live in the City of San Diego (downtown and surrounding areas). The PITC further divides these into "sheltered" and "unsheltered" categories—4,156 of the County's homeless are unsheltered, a 4.3% increase over last year.

Help TACO Go Green!

TACO wants to go green! Over the years, we have used styrofoam, plastic-ware and paper products to serve our guests, much of which is non-renewable. We want to replace these disposable items with reusable, recyclable containers and utensils so that not only are we helping our community, but our environment as well. We believe that we will save more than \$2,000 a year in this process.

In addition to new plates and utensils, we will be replacing our 97 gallon water heater with on-demand water heating and our 18-year-old commercial dishwasher with a watersaving model thus furthering to minimize our environmental impact.

But this stuff isn't free—overall, it'll cost \$14,000 to make all of these changes. So we've launched a crowdfunding campaign through WeRaise. To contribute, click on the "Help TACO Go Green" link on our website at tacosd.org.

The TACO Times

Celebrating 40 Years of Bread Day
and 20 Years of TACO

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August 2015

Clinics, Going Green, 40/20, and More by Jim Lovell

Recently the TACO Board of Directors & First Lutheran's Church Council came to serve the meal on a Monday night and stayed to tour our clinics. There, they were fortunate to be able to meet with the founder of the UCSD Free Clinic Project, Dr. Ellen Beck. What a great night that was. As they came

away from the experience, there was a plethora of comments. While our board had quite a bit of experience with serving our meal, for many of the Church Council this was a first time. And even for those who have served a meal, few have been able to visit our clinics. For those of us who are involved with our clinics throughout the week it's hard to imagine what we do without them. It's typical for our clinics to serve an additional 375 people per week. It's hard to imagine providing services to just half of all those people. Our clinic part-

nerships have been going strong for 17 years, starting with the medical clinic and the acupuncture clinic. But it is also hard to imagine that our newest clinic partner, Cal Western school of Law Community Law Project, has been going for 11 years.

Thank you to everyone who wrote or called with prayers for Glenn's speedy recovery.

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A Volunteer's View by Jean-Claude Chamaa

It seemed like a typical early morning Friday meal service. Everyone was on automatic pilot doing their duties before meal time at 9 am. Much later I realized that this was not a typical day. There was the decorative bell over the chapel door, the cake, the flowers and the buzz of conversation around the kitchen and patio WHICH should have given it away.

"There will be a wedding today."

By meal time, the patio had more than 150 of TACO's guests. Pastor Miller in his white service robe with long green ruff around his neck gathered everyone in prayer for a wedding ceremony. I didn't know that I was going to be a guest at a wedding that day. Two regular guests had asked to be married. The bride was in a knee length black dress with white polka dots with a bouquet of pink flowers in her hand. The groom was in a black shirt with a dark grey suit, and a black and white tie that complemented her dress.



They looked handsome. They looked happy. They looked like a couple preparing to exchange their vows and continue their life together.

Sacraments are sacred and being a witness to them is a gift. It is an honor to be present at a ceremony honoring a lifelong commitment to love.

The joy in the couple's faces brought me joy, but it was the other guest's smiles and tears that brought me to tears. These are the faces of those who everyday face hardship, hunger, and loneliness. This was not a typi-

cal meal service, it was a wedding feast and everyone was invited.

I have asked myself many a times, "Who gets more, me or the people I serve?" That day, I knew it was me who was on the receiving end of my service, and this event that First Lutheran and TACO arranged made me know that I am part of something much larger than myself or my service, which is created for "even the least of these" here at a church on Third Avenue.



TACO's Annual Fall Fundraiser is coming this September 19, 2015— save the date! Please RSVP by August 31 to save on tickets, or by September 14 to secure your reservation. To purchase tickets, visit www.tacosd.org

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

Clinics, Going Green, 40/20, and More by *Jim Lovell*

Our food coordinator and facilities staffer had a horrible bicycle accident within the past month ending up in the hospital for two days and continuing to recover and recuperate. Thank you also to our great volunteer team who filled in readily both meals Mondays and Fridays, it is a testament to your skills & dedication as well as being a testament to Glenn himself and his work to make sure that those who are in our kitchen have the training and support they need. I certainly know that I could not make soup for 100 people much less a main dish, a fruit salad, a green salad etc. to be able to pull that off, as a team is truly a blessed thing. But it certainly also tells us how much we rely on Glenn and his work for "any and all who come" each and every week, 400 people strong.

We should also take the time here to thank Tori Rigg for her dedication to us over the past year as our Volunteer Coordinator. She has gone on to take care of other business but we are appreciative of her support of all that happens here.

In the middle of September we will be

wrapping up our first Crowd-funding Campaign! "Help TACO Go Green" has been an amazing success story so far. As of my writing of this we are 68% towards our goal of raising \$14,500 to stop using disposable items like Styrofoam for the first time in 40 years. I cannot imagine how much polystyrene we have used in one year let alone 40. I am proud to know that we are about to change that forever thanks to your support and the support of so many so that we may modify First Lutheran's kitchen to be better stewards of all that we use.

In this issue of the TACO Times you will also see an update on other aspects of our 40/20 Visions of Caring Anniversary. We have had an amazing year so far and our anniversary is just getting started. Thank you to all of you who have taken the opportunity of this year to become Anniversary Angels, choosing to send additional monies towards one or more of our Anniversary Funds. Our most ambitious goal is to raise funds for an elevator. We estimate a need of \$170,000 in order to be successful. Now that is a daunting number

but I know that we have raised over 20% on our way to this goal. Thank you to those of you, who have uplifted this goal in their communities, encouraged others to talk about it, text about it, tweet about it. When you consider that the majority of our clinics take place on the second floor and that our clinics are very much like medical and dental clinics throughout the country in that they serve in a ever-aging population, and you have the picture of what it must be like for people in their 70s or who are disabled to need to climb the stairs every time they come for care.

Thank you to everyone who supports us and has done so for as many as 40 years. The hands that serve, the feet that carry, those who donate as well as those who are present, bless us.

Thank you
Jim Lovell, MSW

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. All of our donors have our special thanks for helping both us and the community of downtown San Diego. Please consider becoming a member of Arms Outstretched.

Jean Alme
Ed Anderson
Roger Anderson
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
Charles Costa
Betty and Joe Corsi
Joseph and Toni D'Alessandris
Jeff Diers
Beatrice Doblado
Randy Engel
Paul Engel
Gloria Espeseth
George and Ethel Falk
Ronn and Dorothy Garton

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Steven and Carol Hassett
Bruce Henschel
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Pastor Wilbert and Dagmar Miller

Darlene Morrow-Truver
Elizabeth Moss
Laverne Neuman
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John and Suzanne Pew
Ladonna Piper
Rev. Bill and Martha Radatz
Robert and Gretchen Ravenscroft
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

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.

Anniversaries are meant to look forward, not just back. 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) TACO's "Going Green" project, replacing all our disposable meal serving items with recyclable and reusable items, which also requires a new energy-efficient dish washer and on-demand water heater, and storage racks. There is a special online fundraising mechanism you can use for this project, called "We Raise". Visit the website at weraise.wheatridge.org/en/projects/22544-TACO-IS-GOING-GREEN-in-SAN-DIEGO. (If that URL is too long for you, you can also go to our website at tacosd.org and look for the "help TACO go green" link) Also, please send this link onto all your friends so they can also discover and support TACO, even if it is only a \$5 or \$10 gift.
- 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.

Can you help us reach these new challenges? You can specify a particular project with your gift, or designated it simply for the "40/20 Anniversary Appeal" (preferred, so that the TACO board can decide how the funds will be applied). Thanks for being such a generous and faithful member of then TACO team. We are calling you "Anniversary Angels" this year.

For Crying Out Loud by *Nance Lovell*

My Mom used to say this when she was upset, but it didn't really hold any meaning for me. It simply meant that Mom wasn't happy. Yesterday, I was sitting with a client, "Angel," after he died and this phrase resonated in my mind for the experience I was having. Typically, when someone dies, the body is removed within a short period of time. However, this day was different. My client was "back-timed" for time of death at 9:30am, which is the time I arrived and could confirm with his wife, that he had passed. She was uncertain or in denial that he really did stop breathing. Either way, his body remained in the home for the following 3-1/2 hours.

Angel was TACO's longest Going Home client. I have known and served him for 8 years. Medical doctors who believed he was terminally ill and could not endure any more hospitalizations referred him to TACO. Most years, he was hospitalized at least once and often multiple times, with the thought he might not survive much longer. Each time he pulled through. His tenacity was proven by surviving 7 heart attacks, along with lung cancer and other chronic conditions. Over the years, 5 different Simon's Walk volunteers, TACO

interns, Jim and myself served him. Each of us marveled at his ability to pull through when medical science would have us believe otherwise. All this points to the relevance and importance of supportive care combined with medical miracles. Going Home is based on building a caring relationship with the clients we serve. My experience over the past decade confirms that these relationships bring hope and health to our most vulnerable clients.

Angel's life extensions made it understandable why his wife and family were in disbelief he had truly died. The 3-1/2 hours that ensued after his passing attest to the miraculous life he lived. The tiny apartment was filled with at least a dozen people coming in and out. Many tears, conversations, and sorrowful energy were poured out. Although I had no understanding of most of the words spoken in a language I did not speak, it was as though we all understood one another perfectly. This, with the exception of his mother...

His mother entered in after about an hour and a half had gone by. Her relationship with Angel was tumultuous and volatile for most of the years I had known him. It was

quite a change to witness her care for him in his final days. She entered in with her grandson holding her, when she saw Angel's body she began to wail. If you have ever experienced someone who is wailing, you know what I mean when I say it shakes you to the core. The room responded with sobbing and attention to this tiny woman. She poured herself over his lifeless body and wailed and cried out his name. This ensued for the next couple of hours, and renewed itself with a vengeance when his body was removed from the premises. While it may seem quite dramatic, even hysterical, I am coming to believe this is one of the most honest expressions of grief. Why do we hesitate to show our upset over great loss? Too often, people try to comfort others by quickly shrugging off the difficult emotions as if shutting off the power button will bring some peace.

Although it might not feel natural for me to wail, even at death's presence; I find great value in Crying Out Loud. It speaks truth and makes no mistake for the great loss.