



The TACO Times

Celebrating Over 40 Years of Bread Day and 20 Years of TACO

Volume 14, Issue 2

April 2017

Regional Homelessness Estimates (from the Regional Task Force on the Homeless)

The number of unsheltered homeless across San Diego County has risen this year, and the biggest rise is right here in downtown. Volunteers counted 418 tents and hand-built structures downtown—more than double the count from 2016.

City of San Diego

Unsheltered: 3,231 (up 18%)
Sheltered: 2,388 (up 2%)
Total: 5,619 (up 10%)

San Diego County

Unsheltered: 5,621 (up 16%)
Sheltered: 3,495 (down 6%)
Total: 9,116 (up 5%)

Volunteer Update

Happy Spring everyone, I hope 2017 is treating all of you well. As I settle into the role of Volunteer Coordinator (I will never learn everything), I have found myself taking a minute to stand back and watch our amazing volunteers in action. We are truly blessed to have such diverse and dedicated people of all ages, who help us make our meals a reality twice EVERY week. This year alone we have had over 160 new volunteers join us, not to mention our loyal cadre of regulars who form the backbone of TACO. Whether it's the Navy, Calvary Lutheran, Bethlehem Lutheran, the Ruth family, the Lion's Elite's (yay Elsa), The Coronado Teens, Victoria's Group, Incarnation Lutheran (you are amazing), or any number of groups who give of their time, TACO is enriched by you all.

Personally, these volunteers represent the best of what our country has to offer, and give me hope that we really can make a difference.

-Bradley Young
(byoung@tacosd.org)

Counts Show Growing Homelessness Numbers *by Jim Lovell*

Welcome to our 2017 Spring edition of TACO Times!

Earlier in April the Regional Task Force on the Homeless San Diego came out with its annual Point-in-Time count of homeless people in San Diego County. Much has been made of their documentation of a large & growing homeless population in San Diego County and specifically within the city and within the downtown area of San Diego. Estimates are currently that more than 1300 homeless individuals are on the street in the downtown area. This of course is the area in which First Lutheran Church resides and houses the offices of TACO.

The numbers continue to grow seemingly every day. As that happens many of the people we serve



find themselves in worse circumstances than they had been previous. We know some very basic things. The number of people entering homelessness grows daily. The majority of people in homelessness had previously lived in housing in San Diego County. Once people are on the street things become much more desperate. As that happens people need

greater and greater levels of assistance to change their situation. At each step in this process from apartment to friend's couch to vehicle to shelter to street; people use more and more. Whether it dignity, self-esteem, honor or its sleeping bag, blanket, vital records, medicines each step takes more

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CLP's Legal Clinic: Helping the Children of Immigrants

We've had a couple of fantastic events put on by Cal Western School of Law's Community Law Project. They held two events educating the community about their legal rights in the past two months. One evening focused on clients' rights in the current immigration atmosphere. Many of the immigrant families who receive their services from us are unaware of their legal rights in the current political atmosphere. Daily they hear that they are not wanted here, that there is not a purpose for them to be here and that our country will make every effort to force them to leave. One of the great tragedies happening for undocumented immigrants relates to their deportation. Often times the parents or grandparents may be

the undocumented individuals while their children may be United States citizens. When the adults are deported the children either are left at home alone or are brought to the Polinsky Center, Children's Services' home for abandoned children. It becomes very difficult for those children to reunite with their parents across the border. One of the things that our legal clinic partners did in their presentation was provided avenues for undocumented parents to legally designate a family or friend locally to care for their children if the parents are deported.

More than 75 people attended the Immigration Forum. We had roughly 100 individuals at their Homeless Persons "Know your

rights" events which was held on our patio during a meal. Again law school students shared information about accessing healthcare and knowing your rights if you must live on the street.

In both of these situations our clinic partners stepped into the breach where so many of us are silent. It is important for us to have these discussions and for us to share information but also to speak truth to power. That kind of advocacy will be happening over the next several months as we look to meet with elected officials and encourage them to seek the greater good not just the financially expedient.

Counts Show Growing Homelessness Numbers *continued from page one*

and more.

We have included in this TACO Times some of the recent statistics on homelessness. Everything seems to point in one direction, the direction of Affordable Housing. This is true for those on the street; this is true for seniors living in low-income apartments (many of them built 50 years ago), and for those who come to our clinics who must double up to make rent.

So far there has not been a clear plan from our mayor, from the Homeless Services Coordinator at the city, or from the Council itself. We know that within the past year the numbers of seniors living on the street has increased 50%!



Obviously, as a Health and Healing provider in downtown, TACO cannot solve the affordable housing crisis. However we are dedicated to raising awareness in our community and uplifting those who come for

services. It is so important that we continue to treat everyone who comes with the same dignity and respect that we are called to in Matthew 25:40.

Friends of TACO Going Strong!

Golden Acorn Casino Shuttle Bus

The Elite Lion's Club sponsored a Friend of TACO event, and another first for us, a shuttle bus to Golden Acorn Casino. On March 11th a bus full of TACO supporters rode to Campo, but no boring bus ride here. Elsa Siverts prepared a delicious meal as well as organized multiple opportunity drawings to pass the time.

Everyone had a good time, and even those less fortunate at the casino raved about how much fun they had with their own friends or with new ones they met on the bus. Many ordered the delicious prime rib at the restaurant as well as enjoyed the gaming fun. So many ways to enjoy the day but, most importantly, all profits (\$1,010!) were donated to TACO to support our programs.

Never been before but interested? Elsa has offered to organize another casino shuttle bus run in July. If you would like to know when the date is chosen, check in the next TACO Times, or keep checking on our website or Facebook page. If you would like to receive an email before the next trip, contact us at events@tacod.org and we will notify you when the date is chosen.

And a good time was had by all...

Thanks to the participation of our great supporters!!

Flapjacks at Applebee's

The TACO Board hosted a Dining For Donations event on Saturday, April Fool's Day, at Applebee's Grill and Bar in San Diego. TACO Board members served a full plate of scrambled eggs, sausage, potatoes and, of course, pancakes, to nearly 150 diners. Many more people, though unable to attend, bought tickets as a donation to support our mission or for our attending "patio guests" to use.

Feedback was positive and survey results were "3.9 stars out of 4." People appreciated this "nice family outing" and described the morning as "wonderful, fun, and delicious." One person even commented that it felt like an "old home week" Lutheran social, with so many families and friends from various parts San Diego county getting together for an enjoyable event.

Jim Lovell greeted our diners and our #1 TACO TEAM, the TACO Board Servers, did their best to provide tip-worthy service. It must have worked because the TIP JAR total was over \$780! The most tips were received by Jen Siverts, First Lutheran member and TACO Board president, who brought her entire family out in force. Following closely behind (VERY closely) was Tierrasanta Lutheran's own Sandra Taylor. (Hmmm...this could be a rivalry brewing...)

Bottom line, including meals purchased, tickets donated, and tips so generously given, our total profit was nearly \$2,000, money that will go directly into supporting our programs.

If you missed all the fun, don't worry...we will be planning another event at Applebee's on November 4th.

Who are the Friends of TACO?

TACO has been blessed over the years by the generosity of individuals, congregations and organizations who have supported our TACO mission with their fundraising efforts. The TACO Board appreciates this backing and would like to continue to support adventurous groups or individuals who are willing to help us raise funds to feed the homeless.

You, your youth group, your congregation, your company or organization can become a **Friend of TACO**. We will advertise your event on our website or on our Facebook page. It could be any kind of fundraiser, from a carwash to a dog wash, a recycling drive to a bake sale, any kind of event where you choose to include TACO as one of the beneficiaries.

If you have any questions or are interested in becoming a **Friend of TACO** and sponsor a fundraiser, please email us at events@tacod.org.

Our Staffing Changes

Many of you have contacted us to express concern or sadness due to the effects of our budget shortfall. Some of you have also given additional funding, as you were able to help us bridge this gap. We continue to be dedicated to our organization to providing quality services, including dignity and honor for our guests and clients who come. However it would sound very hollow for me to say that there is no change in our ability to provide services having lost two talented social workers over the past four months. We are thankful for the work of Margaret Alba, MSW as our part-time generalist worker & Nance Lovell, MSW the founder and coordinator of our Going Home End-of-Life Services/Simon's Ministers. We are dedicated to continuing their work for the most vulnerable among us. We strive to uncover new funding streams to reinstate these positions.

Our Going Home program continues with its current clients but will not be able to add any additional clients until we can secure stable funding. This program has such a tremendous influence on you all in our donor and volunteer communities. Needless to say it is vital for those who are on the street in distress. There continues to be no other place for these individuals to get the support they need at the end of life. While we pray for someone to come forward with \$20,000 of continued funding for 2017, we are also aware that small gifts take us far as well. Recently we have been blessed with a \$10,000 check towards our Social Services programs (this includes the Going Home program) for which we are overwhelmed by grace.

Clearly this support moves us forward. We do know that we have to secure all

the necessary funding in order to bring on a staff person. We are dedicated to securing a year's worth of funding before we do that. Please share with us your ideas,

How Goes the Lift?

As of this writing, we are within \$6,000 of completing our fundraising for access to the second floor. If you haven't yet contributed, please consider doing so. Hopefully we will be updating you soon with our success.

To donate, go to tacsd.org/donate

Arms Outstretched 2016/2017

Arms Outstretched members are those who have donated \$365—a dollar a day—or more to TACO over the course of a year.

John and Jean Alme
Dr. Ellen Beck
Diane Beckman
Pastor Bill and Sheri Bengtson
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John Wilbur

This Month in the TACO Times:

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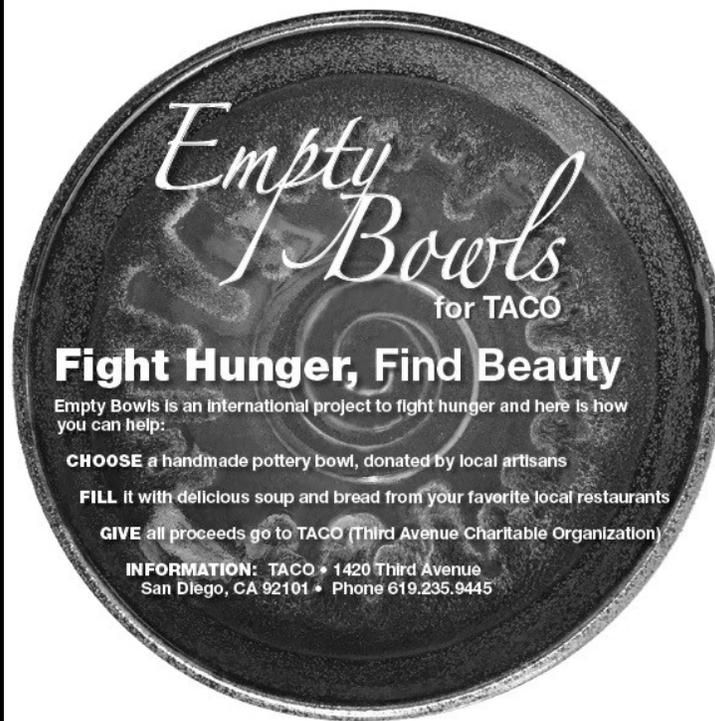
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11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

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La Jolla, CA 92037

\$20 suggested donation

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