



# ST. JOSEPH CENTER

FALL NEWSLETTER 2006

SERVING THE COMMUNITY SINCE 1976

## CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN

Did you know that last year more than 150 individual children, as well as entire school classrooms, came to St. Joseph Center to volunteer? Most children work in our Family Center and Food Pantry, Homeless Service Center, Bread and Roses Café, Early Learning Center and Infant Toddler Development Center—programs which altogether serve roughly 1,500 homeless, formerly homeless, and very low-income children each year.

During St. Paul the Apostle Catholic School's annual Read-A-Thon, children have raised funds to support such services as our teen mentoring programs. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and even Brownies have contributed their time to St. Joseph Center youth, from helping out at holiday parties to building new cubbies for our Early Learning Center. Sometimes, large groups complete projects for St. Joseph Center, such as when Wildwood School's entire third-grade class made coloring books to teach client children about nutrition.

Young people who volunteer at St. Joseph Center often take away more than just a sense of accomplishment: they also come to better understand the plight of those less fortunate than themselves. St. Joseph Center's Volunteer Service Coordinator Tiana Rideout explains, "Some of our younger volunteers have their eyes opened by the fact that homeless and very low-income children are a lot like them—just regular kids."

This September, 16-year-old Lauren Avery reached 135 hours of volunteer service, all completed at our Infant Toddler Development Center (ITDC). On top of playing with the children and helping the teachers, Lauren made a CD of kid's songs for parents to take home; baked banana bread for snack time; and donated teddy bears to the children after reading them *A Teddy Bear Picnic*. "[ITDC] didn't have many stuffed animals," said Lauren, "I was thinking of ways to introduce them to the children, and I remembered how much I loved that story when I was a child."

Lauren and her mother, Diane Jenkins, came to know St. Joseph Center through St. Paul's and the National Charity League, an organization that brings mothers and daughters together in community involvement. Lauren and her mother have worked side-by-side at St. Joseph Center before, such as when Lauren helped put on a production of "The Wizard of Oz" with our Summer Club children. Diane says having teens such as Lauren volunteer at St. Joseph Center is important because "it shows children that other children care, and it's like having a big sister or big brother close-by." Lauren, who does not need the hours for school, said she prefers volunteering to taking a job during



**Volunteer Lauren Avery worked 135 hours at Infant Toddler Development Center. She also donated teddy bears to all the children**

summer break. Adds Diane, "I know Lauren gets as many rewards from the children as they get from her."

St. Joseph Center's Executive Director Rhonda Meister explains, "We are very proud to give our youth volunteers an active role in the community, and we should never underestimate the extent to which young people can make a difference in the lives of other children." To learn more about how you and your children can get involved at St. Joseph Center, please visit [www.stjosephctr.org/volunteers.html](http://www.stjosephctr.org/volunteers.html) or call St. Joseph Center's Volunteer Coordinator at 310-396-6468 ext. 326.

### HOW TO REACH US

**Mailing Address:**

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204 Hampton Drive  
Venice, CA 90291-8633

**Telephone:**

310-396-6468 ext. 301

**Fax Number:**

310-392-8402

**Web Site:**

[www.stjosephctr.org](http://www.stjosephctr.org)



## ST. JOSEPH CENTER STARTS CONSTRUCTION



On September 25<sup>th</sup> demolition began at the 204 Hampton Drive site to make way for our new two-story building, parking lot and landscaping improvements. St. Joseph Center's new headquarters will house our Family Center and Food Pantry, Early Learning Center, Culinary Training Program, and Senior Services program, as well as St. Clement

Church offices. Plans for the building include two childcare classrooms, a playground, private case management offices, state-of-the-art culinary training facilities and the Center's administrative offices. Construction is due to be completed by the end of 2007. Naming opportunities are still available for St. Joseph Center's *Planting Hope, Growing Lives* capital campaign. For more information please visit [www.stjosephctr.org/capital\\_campaign.html](http://www.stjosephctr.org/capital_campaign.html) or call us at 310-396-6468 ext. 324.

## DINNER DANCE HONOREES CHOSEN

St. Joseph Center will honor Steven M. Hilton and UCLA's Anderson School of Management at our 2007 Dinner Dance and Auctions event. Hilton, President and Program Director for the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, will receive the Center's Hope Through Empowerment Award. He is currently a member of the Center's Board of Directors, and his strong leadership role as co-chair of the Center's ongoing capital campaign has been instrumental in raising millions for the construction of our new main service site (see story above).

UCLA's Anderson School of Management will receive the Center's Community Service Award for its dedication to using academic research to improve the non-profit sector. Led by professors Steven Lippman and Kevin McCardle (who sits on the Center's Board of Directors), faculty and staff of the Anderson School have supported the Center with professional guidance, donations, and direct service.

Last year's Dinner Dance was an unprecedented success, raising over half a million dollars to help the Center serve our community's homeless and low-income population. This year's exciting program, chaired by Board member Robyn Ross, will include silent and live auctions, a gourmet dinner and, of course, dancing.

To add your name to our invitation list or to find out more, please call 310-396-6468 ext. 328.

## PARTY CELEBRATES VETERANS

On September 22, St. Joseph Center's Veterans Representative Payee Program (VRPP), held a "Veteran's Appreciation" party. The event was held in the not-so-well-known Japanese Gardens on the VA grounds amidst fresh air, several koi ponds, and waterfalls. VRPP staff hung paper lanterns and dragon streamers along trellises, and adorned each table with potted bamboo and Siamese fighting fish centerpieces—which they later raffled off to excited guests. The event was catered at a very generous discount by Todd Barrie, chef of Upstairs 2 Restaurant located in West Los Angeles, with the hit of the gourmet buffet being Barrie's Hoisin BBQ Chicken.

Over 150 people attended the party, including veterans and both VA and St. Joseph Center staff members. As the first event of its kind held in the VA's Japanese Gardens, this was a unique opportunity for relaxing, mingling, and celebrating the hard work and accomplishments of VRPP's veterans.

Through a contract with the Department of Veteran Affairs, VRPP serves homeless and at-risk veterans, many of whom are impacted by mental illness and/or substance abuse. The program offers money management and life skills classes, as well as representative payee services (management of their Social Security and veterans benefits). The program's goal is for veterans to move toward increased stability and self-sufficiency, and eventually be able to independently manage their own benefits. Last year, VRPP provided services to over 190 individuals, helping 40 to obtain permanent housing and graduating seven who became their own payees.

**From left to right: VRPP Program Manager Colin Bucell with chef Todd Barrie and case managers Catherine Aragon-Rice, Dyniesha Dailey, and Amelia McConnell.**





## ST. ANASTASIA: SPREADING LOVE

Steven Mocsny might joke that it's habit that has kept parishioners at St. Anastasia Parish donating to St. Joseph Center for the past 29 years, but it's easy to see that it's just plain love—a love of giving, and a love of community. Founded in Westchester in 1953, St. Anastasia Parish is committed to “encouraging parishioners to share of their time, talent and treasure in service to others.” Father Thomas King calls stewardship “an opportunity to answer people’s needs,” and notes that it is this spirit of giving that helped to build the parish when it was founded in 1953, and that today continues to unite its 1200 families.

Steven and Agnes Mocsny have been members of St. Anastasia since 1955, and since 1976 have been instrumental in organizing the parish’s monthly collection of food and donations for St. Joseph Center. “We wanted to do some charitable work and decided this was it,” says Agnes. Over the years, a family of fellow parishioners has gathered to help them including Doreen Watts and her late husband Leonard, Martha Kelley, Lorraine and Jim Crothers, George and Fran Wilkerson, Ron and Louise Wasilewski, Linda Phillippe, Jayne Cram, Celeste Bristol, and Loraine Swagman; some have worked with the Mocsnys since the beginning, “People who are involved want to stay involved,” says Agnes. Altogether, St. Anastasia has contributed more than \$93,000 and thousands of pounds of food to St. Joseph Center, which has provided aid and succor to our community’s homeless and working poor members.



**Father Thomas King, pastor at St. Anastasia Parish, (left) along with parish members Agnes and Steven Mocsny**

## A FAMILY MAN

Richard Lewis and Rhonda Meister have known each other for so long, neither one can remember the exact details of how they first met, but both agree it was thanks to United Way, and that it was at least 15 years ago. Now, once or twice a year, they meet to have lunch and discuss, plain and simple, what St. Joseph Center needs. “I like to give to what’s most immediate: education, food, clothing,” says Richard, “all you have to do is watch the line at the food pantry as people come for groceries, and you will want to give.” Since the beginning, Richard has given to our Family Center and Food Pantry program, and has helped us to provide clients with essentials from canned goods to sleeping bags.



**Richard Lewis has been part of the St. Joseph Center family for more than 15 years.**

Richard, who grew up with little, and whose first enterprise was selling shoes, later created a temporary placement service for accounting professionals. Since then, among other things, he was appointed president of the Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of California. Myasthenia Gravis is an autoimmune neurological disease that affects thousands of individuals, including children and pets. He is co-founder of the Clothing Closet at Long Beach Hospital, a service which provides low-income new mothers with fresh baby clothes; and he also provides scholarships to over 20 students, here and abroad. Richard describes philanthropy as fun, “there is a joy you get in helping someone.” Not only is he always giving, he is always asking for contributions. “I’m not afraid to ask,” he says. Rhonda Meister, St. Joseph Center’s Executive Director, calls Richard a “friend” and explains “St. Joseph Center isn’t just an agency or a place, it’s a family of people who need help and people who want to help—and Richard is part of our family.”

**Thank you for supporting St. Joseph Center. If you would like to make a tax-deductible gift please fill out this form and mail it to 204 Hampton Dr., Venice, CA 90291.**

I would like to make a gift of:  \$500  \$250  \$150  \$100  \$50  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Work \_\_\_\_\_ Home \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_

Please bill my credit card (circle one) VISA MC AMEX Card No. \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card (print) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Payment in full  Please bill me monthly (minimum \$25) If your company has a Matching Gift Program, please enclose the form

I would like more information regarding making a bequest and/or planned giving opportunities.



# GETTING INVOLVED

## YOU CAN MAKE THE HOLIDAYS BRIGHT

The holidays are a very special but also very challenging time for St. Joseph Center clients who cannot afford to buy gifts and food. Please consider participating in or donating to the following:

### Adopt-A-Family or Individual

Sign up to adopt a family or individual and we will match you (anonymously) to a client or client family—from a low-income senior who lives alone to a homeless family with young children. You buy the gift and we'll take care of the rest. *Adoptions available throughout November and the first half of December.*

### Get Out the Gifts

Help us process donated gifts, or come lend a hand giving them out during our one-day gift distribution event.

### Donate a Meal

Make someone's holiday meal truly special by donating a frozen whole turkey, a holiday food basket, or a grocery store gift card.

### Throw a Party

Help us throw parties for our ten programs, from cookies and warm cider at Homeless Service Center to the biggest blowout of the year: our Family Center party, which includes food and games for over 300 people. Donate party supplies and decorations, or come to volunteer.

You can make a difference this holiday season. Please call 310-396-6468 ext. 326 for more information.

## ST. JOSEPH CENTER'S YEAR-ROUND WISHLIST

- ★ Diapers (sizes 3-5) and baby wipes
- ★ Shampoo and laundry detergent
- ★ Fast food and restaurant gift certificates
- ★ Non-perishable foods
- ★ Socks and underwear (all sizes)
- ★ High chairs, strollers and car seats
- ★ Toiletries and hygiene kits



**RECEIVE SJC'S NEW E-NEWSLETTER**

Sign up at [www.stjosephctr.org/contact.html](http://www.stjosephctr.org/contact.html) or call 310-396-6468 ext. 327 to receive our e-newsletter. Delivered straight to your online mailbox, the e-newsletter keeps you up-to-date on SJC events and success stories. Even more—it helps us save on printing costs.

**Our Thrift Store has moved.  
Come shop at our new location:**  
2545 Lincoln Boulevard  
Just north of Washington Blvd., in Venice.



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204 Hampton Drive  
Venice, CA 90291-8633  
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[www.stjosephctr.org](http://www.stjosephctr.org)

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