

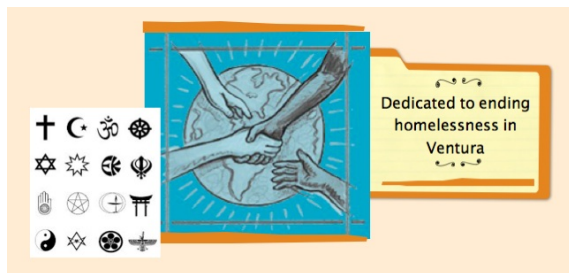
NEWSLETTER

Faith Subcommittee

Ventura Social Services Task Force

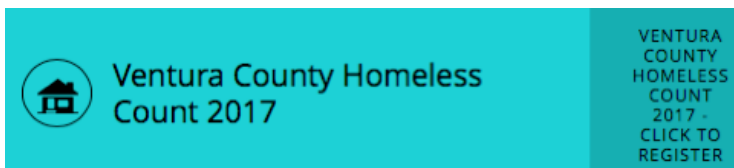
Pam Marshall, Chair, Faith Subcommittee

Judy Alexandre, Chair, Ventura Social Service Task Force



Important updates:

1. We are in need of volunteers to participate in the **annual homeless count** on Jan. 24, 2017. The first youth homeless count will be on Jan 27, 2017. Training is available. To sign up and to receive information please go to www.volunteerventuracounty.org or



2. The **winter warming shelter** that is open at the Oxnard armory serving the west county is in need of volunteers and funds. The shelter hopes to be open through March 2017. How long the shelter remains open will depend on the funds received.

Dear Faith Community,

This is the second issue of the quarterly newsletter from Ventura Social Services Task Force and its Faith Subcommittee. One goal for the newsletter is to keep the faith communities informed about the progress being made in the city of Ventura to address the issue of homelessness. We also desire to share specific needs, events and actions being taken by local congregations.

In this issue we feature the needs of the winter warming shelter, a faith community Sabbath weekend to highlight homelessness, the progress of a new outreach to address homeless families, Family Promise, the development of a homeless person's jobs program, and information regarding the annual homeless count.

----- Judy Alexandre

- To volunteer and to receive the necessary training please contact Steven Karnazes at atti@roadunner.com.
 - To make a donation please send to the non-profit fiscal agent, Downtown Ventura Organization at www.downtownventura.org, or mail to PO Box 141, Ventura, Ca., 93002.
3. On a date yet to be set in March, the Ventura City Council will be taking action regarding zoning and guidelines for a site with sheltering, housing and services in Ventura. This is a huge step! Your presence is essential. It will be a Monday at 6 pm in March. We will let you know the date when it is finalized.

Bicycles Can Lead to Employment

At a faith subcommittee meeting Lynn Geller, a member of Temple Beth Torah, asked about giving bicycles to those who are homeless. Searching for a way to use the idea as part of a route out of homelessness, Judy Alexandre took the issue to the income sustainability subcommittee of the county Continuum of Care. The results: VCCOOL of Ventura will be starting a pilot VCBikes program for our homeless neighbors. The program will allow those who participate in the program to earn a bike and learn both bike safety and beginning bike repair. This new social economy, cottage business, will also provide training in bike repair leading some to become certified bike mechanics. Opportunities will also allow for inventory, sales, artistic expression, customer service and other job training opportunities. VCCOOL will be working with the case managers of our local social service agencies. This training will also provide the soft transferable skills, opportunities to obtain letters of reference and resume building. After a successful pilot program and sufficient funding, the program will expand to other parts of the county. The dream is that this concept will expand to wheelchair repair, small appliance repair and other jobs.

You can help this all get started!

- Bikes are needed. Please take bikes you no longer use to The Hub at 1150 N. Ventura Ave, 93001. Perhaps your faith community can host a bike collection. You can contact VC COOL at 805-641-2665 or action@vccool.org.
- Financial donations to the program to cover the costs of small tool repair kits, good bike locks and some program costs are welcome.
- If a member of your faith community would like to learn bike repair or to volunteer, please contact VC COOL.

The Well-being of the City

**A letter from Dave Schulze, minister,
Ventura Church of Christ, 5403 N. Bryn Mawr**

When I encounter the attacks of our society on the faith tenants of religious groups, I remember God's commands to Israel in Jeremiah 29:5-7, and especially verse 7:

"Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." It reminds me that wherever we are, however defeated we may feel, however hopeless we think the situation is, we have a responsibility to be light in the darkness, and to think beyond ourselves, to the city in which we live. We must contribute to the well-being of our city. We must bless it.

A decade ago, God moved me to engage in this effort, and I was led to first volunteer at, and then serve on the Board of, Project Understanding. This led me into related groups and concerns, and I learned that there's much to do in our city, and many who would welcome my participation. In time, some members of my congregation became involved as tutors, intake counselors, and mentors at Tender Life and Lighthouse. Some of our group provided a much-needed service at River Haven. Others became on-call workers with Action. Each Fall, our congregation provides many Thanksgiving meals through Project Understanding. This year, we teamed with City Impact to provide Christmas toys for children. Both of these latter programs are for families vetted to have legitimate needs. Project Understanding and The Homeless Prevention Fund are part of our monthly church budget. And we have hosted the City Council Forum on Social Concerns for the past six years. None of this is to glorify us, but to show that there are many ways each of us can, and should, bless our cities. We're blessed as we do.

So I encourage you to work toward the well-being of the city in which you live, and to encourage your friends to do the same.

Yours, Dave

Sabbath Weekend, February 24=26, 2017

FOR VCSSTF Newsletter

Each of our houses of worship has a personal commitment to respond to homeless people. Whether it is bringing meals to River Haven, serving meals to those in the park, or at Catholic Charities, sponsoring a room at City Centre, or organizing a Memorial Service for those who have died homeless, we each create and give from our faith tradition, and from our hearts.

There are times that, beyond what we do in our own congregations, we come together as one, lifting our voices to lift the conscience of our community. Those are indeed special moments, when our interfaith work lifts all of us higher.

I have been serving as the “clergy rep” on the Stakeholder’s Group, which is convened under Jeffrey Lambert and Peter Brown, from the City of Ventura’s Community Services. The Stakeholder’s group brings together business, city, county, social services, non-profits and faith leaders to work collaboratively to move forward on the City council’s mandate to create a feasible transitional housing plan with support services, to be located within our city. The City council has asked for a report in March 2017.

As the faith community, we have the opportunity to share with Ventura residents the progress and the dream of creating a continuum of care, with a spectrum of housing options, and the support services so vital to the success of any housing endeavor.

Pastors Kris Bergstrom, Jim Duran and Larry Reichardt, and I have reached out to area congregations and pastors to ask them to designate February 24-26, 2017 as “Pathways to Home” Sabbath. In late January we will be creating a brief, 7-minute video to distribute to congregations and for youtube. The video will include faces from each of the stakeholding sectors- business, faith, social services, government- affirming why creating transitional housing in our city is in everyone’s best interest. We are excited about this video, and excited to imagine it being shown in your house of worship over that very special Sabbath. We look forward to inviting City Council members to join us in prayer that weekend!

I am always humbled by the hard work of VCSSTF members- our goal as clergy is always to help give voice and platform to the dedicated and selfless work you all do, on behalf of others.

B’shalom,

Rabbi Lisa Hochberg-Miller

Temple Beth Torah

The Latest from Family Promise of West Ventura County

We are moving closer to providing temporary housing for homeless children and families. It has been about a year since we first met. We now have two faith based organizations signed up North Oxnard Methodist and Temple Beth Torah. Working with several others on host agreements. We also have identified 3 possible day care centers. However a donated space would be welcomed. An ideal day center would be 700 square feet with access to restrooms, phones and showers. Families stay at day care center all day and school age children go to schools. We will have a van to transport participants. In the evenings they stay at host churches. There are only 14 people in program at a time. Participants are screened by professionals and staff is available 24 hours via phone. We welcome tax deductible donations. Mailing address is FPWVC P.O. BOX 5721 Oxnard, California 93034. Want to learn more about us contact Robin Lerner at 805-794-2416 or MSRSL1000@gmail.com. Mailing address is FPWVC P.O. BOX 5721 Oxnard, California 93034. We look forward to any suggestions you may have for us. Please feel free to attend our meetings which are held the first Thursdays of the month at 7pm. Location is Orchard Church 8180 Telephone Rd. Ventura 93004. Thanks to all who have helped us get here and to all who will help us move forward to help kids and families.



Learn more about how Family Promise has been operating in the Santa Clarita Valley since 2015. at <http://www.familypromisescv.org>

SPREAD THE WORD

This is the first of what is planned to be a bi-monthly newsletter. We will be providing information from the special committee on homelessness, information on low income housing developments, and highlighting different agencies and faith communities.

Please ask your friends to let us know if they would like to be added to our email list and, of course, please spread the word and the information.

Learn more about the Ventura Social Service Task Force at <http://vsstf.org>