The Face of Hunger Will Surprise You

When we hear or read about “the hungry” or “the homeless”, we think of somebody visibly hungry; or the traditional homeless person, with a grocery cart with all their worldly goods; or someone (usually a man) huddling in an entrance way trying to keep out of the rain.

A recent report issued by Second Harvest Food Bank found what we at Loaves and Fishes have known for some time now – the face of the hungry and homeless is changing!

It is called the “Silicon Valley Paradox” - that “while Silicon Valley is one of the richest areas in the world… **26.8% of the population – almost 720,000 people** – qualify as food insecure** based on risk factors such as missing meals, relying on food banks or food stamps, borrowing money for food, or neglecting bills and rent in order to buy groceries. Nearly a quarter are families with children. They are the non-traditional homeless: people living in their car or a garage, working people who have to choose between rent and food, people without access to a kitchen.” Who are these “hidden homeless?” They are individuals and families with children, seniors on fixed incomes, veterans and students.

They are people like Martina Rivera, a 52-year-old mental health nurse, whose troubles began when her entire building was evicted last year. She thought about moving in with family but worried about the burden. “**My brother was recovering from a stroke, and my mother is old,”** she says. “**I couldn’t put more struggle on them. So what I found was my car.**”

She told herself it was only temporary. “I work night shifts at a veterans hospital, so I would go to my mom’s house to shower, and wait until it was time to work. I waited and waited for the storm to pass.” Eventually, she found a room without a private bathroom or kitchen. She shopped for food at 99 cent stores, ate mainly canned food, and cooked in a microwave. It took a toll on her health, she says.”**I was having panic attacks. My body was like the walking dead. But I thought I need to keep strong. And I never quit my job.”**
The changing face of hunger...

Rivera says that for many working people, pride and self-esteem are barriers to admitting need. “People don’t have money to buy food, but they are shy to ask. But there is no reason to feel ashamed.”

Why is it that with an improving economy and a lowering unemployment rate, we find ourselves feeding more people than ever have before? Sadly, income inequality continues to grow, and the working poor simply cannot earn enough to cover all their costs. It is heartbreaking to hear our clients talk about the daily difficulty of having to choose between purchasing food and meeting other basic needs such as rent, electricity and medicine. Finding food has become a central worry for most low wage workers in our community, made worse by the high cost of housing.

This year, Loaves & Fishes Family Kitchen will prepare, serve and deliver over 500,000 hot nutritious meals to our hungry neighbors. It's a critical first step - because, in the end, nothing can really start until hunger is completely stopped.

Thank You For Your Service, Rob!!

A special thank you to Rob DiNapoli, owner of DiNapoli Specialty Foods who in June will be retiring from our Board of Directors.

Rob joined our Board in 2011 after serving many years on the Board of Second Harvest Food Bank of Santa Clara and San Mateo County.

While at Loaves & Fishes, Rob has served as Board Chairman, helped initiate our Organic Farm at Goodwill Industries, and, along with Second Harvest Food Bank and his parents Richard & Lynette DiNapoli, funded our first refrigerated Mobil Pantry which now delivers over 290,000 meals to 30 non-profit partner agencies throughout Santa Clara and San Mateo County.

If you’d like to thank Rob personally, you can find him at our 3rd annual Feed the Need run/walk on June 3rd at 8 am where he will be sampling his tasty Bianco DiNapoli pasta sauce before competing in the 5K run!

Thank you, Rob, for all you do at Loaves & Fishes to help feed the needy in our community!
And Now, A Few Words From Our Executive Director...

There is an old saying that “gratitude turns what you have into enough.” But what is gratitude really about? Is it a season, or a holiday? Or is gratitude, as Joanna Gaines writes, “an attitude meant to be found in our everyday lives”?

When I was growing up, I would come home from school and, after chattering away about the doings of the day, my Mom would ask me “So what one good thing did you do today?” I’d pause, and remember that I let someone cut in the bathroom line, or shared my milk at recess. As I got older, and my Mom kept asking, it got harder to come up with a response. When I expressed my frustration, she wisely responded: “it matters you see, because if we all don’t do at least one good thing, we’ll forget to remember all that we have to be thankful for in our lives.”

What we do here at Loaves and Fishes is all about remembering. That we each have an opportunity, every day, to show our compassion and share from our abundance. Of what an honor and a privilege it can be to serve our neighbors in need. That we give of our time, our talent and our treasure because we have hope for the future and the opportunity to ease the burden of those in our community who each day struggle with hunger and homelessness. To help them realize that where they are now does not have to define their future.

It is my honor and privilege to join the Loaves and Fishes family as your new Executive Director, and so very thankful for the opportunity to serve our neighbors in need. Join us! Together, we’ll remember all that we have to be thankful for in our lives.

Social Economic Impact

A survey of our partner organizations shows that for every $1.00 of food we provide at no charge, they are able to redirect $2.00 to additional program services for the populations they serve.
Meet Board Member Alex Shieu!

2017 was the best year of my life. I lost 150 pounds, started a new career in biotechnology, connected more deeply with my social network and re-found my spiritual center. I received so much in 2017 that I wanted to give back.

I wanted to be part of a team where I could bring something to the table and learn. I also wanted to see tangible results for my efforts. Joining the board of a local organization with a mission that resonated with me was the logical choice.

I grew up on the poverty line. My family made ends meet paycheck to paycheck, but food security was a frequent concern. It was a burden we bore. Having lived that experience I know its impact and wanted to alleviate it. I had volunteered at the Eastside Neighborhood Center of Loaves and Fishes since 2014. I always had a great experience with the work performed and the community served. It was a natural fit for me to select Loaves and Fishes as the organization where I could choose to be more involved.

Bay Area non-profits look to Second Harvest Food Bank as their pantry. I would like Bay Area non-profits to look at Loaves and Fishes as their kitchen. Food preparation and handling is resource intensive. Centralizing it and gaining economies of scale reduce the load. Loaves and Fishes have the experience, infrastructure, and team to grow and take on that load. This will allow Bay Area non-profits to take the resources saved from not having to handle food and use them to better serve their mission. This not only results in a physically well-fed community but one that is socially, mentally and spiritually full as well.

Loaves & Fishes serves 80,000 children annually

Guests at our meal services will have their nutritional needs met for the day

Together we will serve over half a million meals across the Bay Area

Thank you to our donors, board members, and volunteers! You are truly making a difference in the lives of the many guests we serve together.
Thank You, Prometheus Real Estate!

For the past several years, our volunteer program, known as Our Front POrCH, selects a nonprofit to partner within each of the regions where we operate (Oregon, Washington, Bay Area). Then, for 11 weeks, Prometheus engages “Neighbors” (AKA our residents), vendors, family and friends to participate in our giving campaign for the chosen partners. The goal is to raise $5,000 for each nonprofit, and Prometheus matches contributions dollar for dollar — even if the goal isn’t reached!

POrCH is unique in that it is driven from within. There’s not a board of shareholders that deems what areas our organization will focus on, or how our giving will impact the bottom dollar. Our Front POrCH grew from a grassroots idea and has remained as such; led by the Prometheans and the causes they champion.

Our Home Office located in San Mateo rallied around Loaves and Fishes in San Jose during the 2016 and 2017 POrCH Challenge. These nonprofit partners were nominated by our employees. We welcome everyone to have a voice in who we support as an organization. Our passion projects come from all directions, not just top down.

Our Front POrCH has become one of our core distinct elements as a company and a brand. It’s possibly our greatest Promethean story and one that Prometheans take the most pride in. Leaving emails and reports at the office for a day and working together to make our community a better place builds bonds that last a lifetime. It is part of our effort to be the best possible neighbor we can be.

After the 2016 POrCH Challenge wrapped up, I called my fellow Promethean that nominated Loaves and Fishes. When I shared with her the final donation amount, $34,110, she burst into tears. She was overwhelmed with joy and pride. She is a numbers gal and knew full well the impact a donation of that size would have on the nonprofit. To make her day once again, in 2017 we were honored to surprise Loaves and Fishes with a $40,274 donation.

Thank you to Savannah VanVooris for contributing to this article.

Thanks to the support of Prometheus Real Estate Group, together we've provided 30,000 nutritious hot meals to children, families, seniors, veterans and the homeless.
Meet Freddie

My sister Diane had been coming to Loaves and Fishes until about a year ago as her health had been declining. To help, I've been picking up a meal for her, and eat here myself every day.

Due to financial, physical and mental difficulties, we can’t cook at home anymore. Eating here helps us; otherwise, we’d not have anything to eat.

Loaves & Fishes has shown me that people I’ve never met before are helping us and are showing great generosity by spending their time and energy serving us meals. It has made me thankful and grateful for the help & assistance that donors and volunteers give.

Loaves & Fishes is a place to meet other people in the community and to discover how we can help each other. People who know the bus routes, places to get help with clothing, food, and shelter. And the best part is to be able to get out of the house every day. My sister and I are fortunate to have programs like this one available to us!
Our Director's Circle is a newly formed special group of donors who give $1,000 or more annually and receive special acknowledgment and opportunities to come together to learn how Loaves & Fishes is putting their generous donations to work. Benefits include an invitation to the annual Director's Circle reception, personal volunteer experiences, and recognition in our newsletter and website. Please contact gisela@loavesfishes.org to join or learn more about membership. Please welcome our new members in bold.

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- Rob DiNapoli
- Private Donor
- Private Donor
- Full Circle Foundation

**Providers Circle - $10,000 - $24,999**
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FEED THE NEED - JUNE 3, 2018

Register: bit.ly/feedtheneed2018

Feed the Need will be held at Guadalupe Park River Trail, San Jose, CA