

Fall 2010

Helping Hands

A quarterly publication of Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 1976



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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

October brings cooler temperatures to Sacramento and I can't help but think about those who struggle to provide warm clothing for their families. Clothing is such a basic necessity. However, it can be extremely expensive and families who have to choose between putting food on the table and clothing their children must often choose food. Clothing can provide warmth, be the deciding factor at a job interview, act as a status symbol or an embarrassment for a child at school and even helps boost self-esteem by creating a sense of confidence. This month, Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services (SFBFS) is featuring our Clothing program. I think you'll agree that this program's components, ranging from the volunteers who sort items to all of our community donors, are very special. One hundred percent of the clothing comes to SFBFS through the hands of supporters and is then provided at no cost to families in need.

When thinking of those we serve in the Clothing program, I recall meeting Jessica and Mike, two wonderful individuals who are making strides to improve their life, but called upon to SFBFS for a little support. Jessica and her two daughters, Elizabeth and Olivia, visited the Clothing program over the summer looking for items in preparation for the new school year. Jessica felt a little uneasy about asking for help, but commented to a volunteer the clothing is in really good condition and allows her to spend money on other family necessities like gas for the car, laundry soap and utility bills. Jessica, a single mother, worked for over ten years in the automobile industry. She feels blessed to have a job that pays above minimum wage and provides partial benefits. However, funds are rarely left at the end of the month. The clothing the girls received this summer will last most of the school year, but Jessica knows if she needed additional help during a challenging time, she would be welcome to return to

SFBFS. Being raised by a working single mom, Jessica's story resonates with me and for those who want to move towards greater self-sufficiency, SFBFS is here.

Mike is another client who makes me smile when I think of the Clothing program. This 71 year-old retired veteran visits the program several times per year. Mike lost his wife to cancer in 2001 and struggles with several health related issues. He loves making the trip to visit our Clothing program, enjoys talking with our staff and volunteers and appreciates the quality of clothing he receives. He fondly reflects upon the time when a volunteer helped him carry items to his car. The pair sat outside of the facility and talked for quite awhile. Mike often says he's very lonely since losing his wife, but loves the interaction and kindness he receives upon each visit to SFBFS.

As people continue to struggle during this economic downturn, programs like Clothing are as important as ever. Thousands of caring community members take time every year to organize and transport their donations to SFBFS. The people who receive these services very much appreciate your help. We continue to assist more individuals who have never reached out for assistance before. If you ever wonder how much your contributions are appreciated, please take time to observe the program in action or walk into our facility and read all of the thank you letters we receive from those we serve.

Thank you for your continued confidence and support.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "B. Young".

Blake Young
President/CEO

Volunteer Spotlight



BOB, ANNE & ANDY JENSEN

Now more than ever, young people, working professionals and families are looking to make an impact in their communities. Over the past year, SFBFS has seen an increase in families volunteering as a unit, looking for opportunities to spend time together and make a difference. Bob and Anne Jensen and their son Andy are one of those outstanding families actively involved as volunteers at SFBFS.

In January, the Jensen family was looking for a volunteer opportunity where they could all help simultaneously. Bob had recently retired from his job as a psychology instructor at Sacramento State University. Bob and Anne were both raised in families where volunteer work was a part of life, so as soon as Andy was old enough, it was natural for the family to find opportunities to contribute and give back. Andy, now in his junior year of high school, is homeschooled, providing the Jensens with lots of options to volunteer. While enjoying the Second Saturday art walk in January, they saw a group of SFBFS volunteers dressed as a bridal party promoting the Raffle for the Rock fundraiser. Meeting the enthusiastic volunteers “sealed the deal!” Anne laughs. The Jensens attended orientation and started right away.

Every Friday since then, Bob and Anne volunteer their time in the Clothing program, while Andy assists in the Guest Services area, receiving donations. “I want to ensure this is a comfortable place for folks that need clothes,” says Bob. “It’s really funny,” adds Anne. “Bob couldn’t care less about clothing at home, so it’s kind of ironic how much he enjoys it here!” The couple helps sort and hang donated clothing, keep the entire program tidy and assist guests in finding specific items. They have even recruited Anne’s nephew Kyle to complete his school-required volunteer hours with them at SFBFS over the summer. Anne recalls one homeless teen who had been asked to the prom, but had nothing to wear. They spent extra time finding a nice outfit for him and recall how grateful he was. “He left happy and looking great,” Anne shares.

Andy, whose interests outside of volunteering include engineering and design, enjoys his post in the Guest Services area. He assists donors by helping unload donations, sort donated goods, write receipts, answer questions and assist

clients. “I like answering all their questions,” Andy says. “We’re helping people who have lost everything to find the things they need.” Chelsea Williams, Guest Services Coordinator, has worked with Andy over the past six months. “I love the way that that Anne and Bob have set such a positive example for their son Andy by teaching him how important it is to have

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compassion and service incorporated into everyday life,” she says. “In turn, Andy has set such a positive example for not only the donors, clients and volunteers of SFBFS, but for young people in general.”

The Jensen family has inspired SFBFS by illustrating the impact of family volunteering, not only on the clients and donors served, but on family itself. They plan to continue their volunteer work together while Andy is in high school. They all agree that their time at SFBFS has been a great experience. “The staff and volunteers are committed to the services and the community,” says Bob. “They’re always interested in what changes might better the community and the people served. I’m just glad SFBFS is here.”



Kyle, Andy, Anne and Bob Jensen.

Program Highlight

CLOTHING PROGRAM

SFBFS offers eight varied programs, including the greatly impactful Clothing program. For more than 20 years, the Clothing program has grown and expanded to provide a wide range of service to over 100 clients every weekday. Having recently undergone some organizational changes, the shopping area now offers distinguished sections for men, women and children's clothing, plus sizes, active wear, business attire, a small teen department and school uniforms. Additionally shoes, accessories, books and toys are often available. The best part of the Clothing program is that all items are available at no costs to individuals and families in need.

Similar to a thrift store, donated items are arranged by size, season, gender and age and clients peruse neatly organized racks and shelves for desired items. However, all items are available for free, which can greatly impact a family facing financial challenges.

Volunteers who share their time in the Clothing program aim to provide each client with a dignified and specialized shopping experience. Clients who access the program may choose from thousands of different items on any given day and if their needs are not met, special requests are always welcome. The Clothing program has been able to provide prom dresses and suits, christening gowns and even wedding dresses to extremely thankful clients. In the area where donations are sorted, volunteers can be found with a smile on their face when they find a specific item that a client is seeking. Recently clients have been happily surprised to find that

the program can satisfy their need for suitcases, backpacks, new socks and even Halloween costumes.

Many of the clients comment on the warm customer service they receive and the vast range of items available. And no matter the item, it is always free of charge. Everyone involved in the program prides themselves on that ability, but it would not be possible without generous donations from our community. Every year the Clothing program distributes more than 450,000 donated articles of clothing. Even with this incredible amount of items, the program desperately needs new socks and underwear, plus sized women's clothing and big and tall clothing for men to continue to meet our clients' needs. By providing our clients with clothing, SFBFS is able to meet one of their most immediate needs. Additionally, the program is able to go much further by providing integrity and compassion with the warm respectful shopping experience. Volunteers hope to enhance clients' self-esteem by offering business attire, school clothing and exercise gear, which can help clients move more quickly to self-sufficiency. That noble task is possible with the donations of time and items from our community. The program's volunteers are extremely grateful and thankful for all past and future contributions.

If you'd like to drop off gently used clothing at our facility, lead a donation drive or schedule a volunteer opportunity to assist in the Clothing program, please visit our Web site for more information.

Action Dates

October-December HOLIDAY SPIRIT OF GIVING

This dynamic donation drive will run through the end of 2010. Would your company, church, school or club like to host a donation barrel to collect canned food, winter clothing or toys? Please contact Tarah Frost at tfrost@sacramentofoodbank.org

October 14 EDUCATION CENTER GROUNDBREAKING

SFBFS will be adding a 22,000 square foot technology and education center to our campus to better serve families in need. Please join us for an ice cream social at the groundbreaking on October 14. More information about the new facility is available online at www.sacramentofoodbank.org

November 19 TURKEY DRIVE

Stop by SFBFS between 4:30am and 7pm to drop off a turkey to help a family this holiday season. Help us ensure no one goes hungry on Thanksgiving.

November 25 RUN TO FEED THE HUNGRY

Be part of the largest Thanksgiving day fun run and walk in the USA! Registration and volunteer information available online at www.runtofeedthehungry.com

November-December ADOPT-A-FAMILY

Over 500 families with young children have submitted wish lists of toys, clothing and food for this holiday season. Please contact Genevieve Deignan at gdeignan@sacramentofoodbank.org to select a family in need by December 15.

Client Successes

PLAYCARE

All members of the Rios family utilize various programs at SFBFS' Saca Community Learning Center. Through classes in Adult Education, the mother, Eloina, improved her English so dramatically from just being able to say "Hi" only one year ago. She now can translate from English to Spanish and vice-versa for others. The PlayCare program provided free childcare for her two children, allowing her to excel in English. Without this free program, she would not have been able to focus on



her studies and advance so rapidly. The Rios children also benefited greatly from our PlayCare program. Mariana is starting kindergarten and knows words by sight, can write her name, count to 20 and recite the alphabet. Her 3 year-old sister Yarah plays, loves to sing and is very interested in learning. Thanks to the support PlayCare provides to this family, we are hopeful she will continue to excel in preschool and further her education. This program has given her the foundation she needs to be successful in school and later on in life.

MOTHER-BABY

Nearly one year ago, Angelang walked into the Mother-Baby program a bit unsure of herself, timid and a little rough around the edges. She completed the necessary paper work and walked back to a mentoring room with a volunteer to learn about the program's requirements and benefits.

Through the mentoring process Mother-Baby staff and volunteers learn about the parent and child and connect them to additional resources if necessary. This provides parents a safe and private opportunity to ask questions, share concerns and ask for help. Angelang's mentoring interview, however, was a bit more challenging. She did not offer any additional information regarding her home life. She graciously accepted her maternity supplies, nodded in agreement to the rules of the program and said good-bye.

Six months later Angelang showed up with a beautiful newborn baby girl named Zelaquin. She quietly signed in for class, picked up her baby supplies and left. The Mother-Baby Program Manager would always try to engage her by asking about the baby or how she was doing, but Angelang's answers were always short without any details.

Recently, Angelang began attending our *Eat Smart, Be Active* nutrition classes, a six week series focusing on reducing the risk of chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity by improving eating habits and increasing physical activity. Although Mother-Baby clients are only required to attend one Family-Life Workshop each month, we have seen Angleang 2 -3 times per month since the nutrition classes begun. There are about 8 moms that have consistently attended the nutrition series and this has allowed Angleang to form relationships. Angleang now actively participates in class, ask questions, interacts with the other moms and is smiling a lot more.

Like a lot of mothers, Angleang was isolated, didn't have a support network and felt overwhelmed with the demanding tasks of caring for a newborn. By making a conscientious decision to attend classes, Angleang slowly came out of her shell and realized she is not alone.

HAVENS TRANSITIONAL LIVING

SFBFS welcomed the Bradley family into the Havens Transitional Living program in 2008 because of their sincerity, warmth and ambition to improve their own lives. Mr. Bradley worked two jobs while Mrs. Bradley stayed at home to raise and care for their three young children. The family spoke little English upon entering the program, but showed dedication to integrating their family into the community and improving their lives. Over their two year stay in the program, the Bradleys fulfilled their personal and family development plans including the parents learning English and becoming involved in their children's schools while each child improved their grades.

Over time, the Bradley family saved enough money to move into a beautiful three bedroom home with a big backyard and are very happy. In August, they turned over their last key to SFBFS marking a happy ending for the Havens Transitional Living program.

After 20 years of providing life skills training and family support for approximately 75 families, SFBFS is realigning programs to better serve our community. Beginning in early 2011, a new program serving homebound seniors will be introduced at SFBFS. The space previously occupied by the Havens Transitional Living program will be the site of a new education center to house computer training and education for adults and children. Please join us for the groundbreaking ceremony on October 14.

