Rebuilding a Life in the Social Work Center

After being robbed at the hospital, this senior turns to St. Anthony’s to make it through the month.

In June, Patricia, a senior woman living in San Francisco, cashed her monthly check and carried on with her errands. She went to the hospital for an appointment. While waiting for the nurse to call her name, she was robbed. A whole month’s rent, medicine and grocery money were gone in an instant. What could have been a catastrophe that put Patricia on the street was made manageable with the help of Patricia’s caseworker at St. Anthony’s Social Work Center. With help she got her medications and got by through the month until her next check.

The Social Work Center helps about 50 guests this way each month, covering replacement California ID cards, birth certificates for housing or employment, some rental assistance for those struggling to hold on to their housing, transportation to a new job, and special work clothes like carpenter’s pants or rubber shoes for electrical work. This assistance is a bridge from immediate need to long-term stability.

“Most people have been pushed around all their lives. But there are such good programs here, if people would just be patient. Put that with hearts around it!” Patricia exclaimed.

The Social Work Center pantry supplements food for nearly 1,000 families, seniors, and people with debilitating illness each year, helping stretch limited incomes to the end of the month.

Photos: XXXXXX
The Key to Employment Found in a Keyboard

After 8 years in a federal penitentiary, Sonny finds computer skills and employment through the Tenderloin Tech Lab.

Sonny’s Life Came to a Halt
When he was sentenced to serve eight years in a federal penitentiary, he was released the entire world, and especially the Bay Area, had changed dramatically. Technology had taken over the way groceries were purchased, the way apartments are found, the way appointments are made, and the way jobs are applied for. When looking for resources he was invariably told “go to our website”. When waiting for responses he was asked for his email address. Yet he had never used a computer, nor did he know where to gain access to one.

Sonny heard about the Tenderloin Technology Lab at the halfway house for recently released inmates where he lives. The Tech Lab, a partnership between St. Anthony Foundation and San Francisco Network Ministries, offers free computer classes and drop-in computer access where Sonny is one of the 250 students whom the Tech Lab serves each month.

He was intimidated at first, and with no previous computer experience Sonny did not know how or where to begin. It was Sonny’s hope that his 3G welding certification would be his ticket to solid employment and a smooth re-entry to society. Before he was incarcerated, the housing boom was flourishing and welders were in high demand. After his release and after calling 127 iron shops without a single call back, he knew he needed a new plan, and his success in the non-institutionalized world depended on it.

“It’s a big jump for anybody; in a small sense it’s pretty frightening because you don’t know how to use it, and everything is so computerized now it’s overwhelming. But with a few of the teachers here, step by step we’re slowly going through it, and if you have any questions, ask they are more than willing to help you.”

Developing new skills to access basics such as employment and housing are essential for the recently incarcerated to find consistent shelter and food. The chances of a successful re-entry into society are very slim, with almost no rehabilitation programs available to prepare for their release; California’s recidivism rate is 70%; the nation’s highest. Within a month of attending Tech Lab classes Sonny learned to search for employment online, built a résumé and cover letter, opened an email account to send employment inquiries, was offered two interviews, and secured employment. Without access to new computer skills and technology and the personalized attention and encouragement of Tech Lab staff, none of that would have been possible.

“I believe if you are trying hard and looking for the right thing and you put your nose to the grindstone, it’s going to come for you.” —Sonny

From the Blog

St. Anthony Foundation’s blog is a source of news and impressions from those on the front lines of poverty. Drop in and read an editorial, leave a comment, or watch a video about St. Anthony’s guests. The full text of the entries below can be found on www.stanthonysf.org/blog

A Shepherd For All

I saw in Fr. Floyd’s obituary, that he’s descended on his Father’s side, from generations of Italian shepherds. You could say that Fr. Floyd was a “shepherd” in the priestly sense. Fr. Floyd was equally at home with people—volunteers, guests, clients, staff, donors, dignitaries—you name it! His Franciscan vocation and dedication to serving the poor however, distinguished him, and guided us for nearly half a century!”

Homeless Chic?

The cover of Vogue Italia Magazine September issue highlights what is being called “Homeless Chic.” I’m not sure where to begin addressing this terrible oxymoron! Clothing worn by most homeless people is dictated by necessity; size, color, season, compatibility with other garments, and even personal taste hardly ever factor in to what is worn.

Reflections On A Summer With St. Anthony’s

This summer I had the privilege of working at St. Anthony’s. St. Anthony’s is a non-profit organization that helps the underserved people in the community. During my internship at St. Anthony’s, I was able to work in the many different areas of service. My first experience was in the Dining Room, I was terrified because I had never been in the Tenderloin area, so I didn’t know what to expect.

On The Menu: November 9 – November 15th

Monday, November 9th: Beef Lasagna

The word lasagna, which originally applied to a cooking pot, now simply describes the delicious baked strips of pasta layered with meat sauce, ricotta cheese and topped with cheese. A house favorite.
Gateway to the Common Good

Historians are always on the lookout for those moments in our shared experience that reveal the true character of a people. They find in the crucible of war or in the trials of a natural disaster the tests by which to assess a society’s self-understanding. Biographers do the same when sorting through the victories and challenges of an individual’s life.

The way decisions get made, how benefits are weighted, whose welfare matters—underlying all these is a fundamental presumption about who we are in relation to one another. Is human life fundamentally a shared life or is it a war of all against all? Through the ages philosophers have given their views, and social policies have reflected varying perceptions.

There is nothing like an economic recession, a crisis in healthcare, or budget battles at the state and local level to show the practical import of these theoretical concerns. Heated discussions about these issues hold up a mirror to us and force us to take a look at who we are and what is important to us.

Viewing ourselves against the “other” a brother or sister we care of one another. Our responsibility for the basic welfare of others. Can we meet the challenges to educate poor children and provide for the disabled when meeting those responsibilities requires a redistribution of income through taxation? The homeless family and the mentally ill senior are caricatured as pickpockets slyly making off with our hard earned money.

Last month, on October 4, St. Anthony Foundation began our 60th year of service to the poor of San Francisco. Over these many decades we’ve learned that to move beyond the fears conjured up by these contrived threats we must be willing to meet those in need face to face—to discover in the “other” a brother or sister deserving of the same dignity and respect that we ourselves expect to receive.

By welcoming the hungry to our table, by walking with those struggling to overcome their addictions, by responding to those who ask only for an opportunity to work hard and give something back, we’ve learned that lesson again and again. Recently, as part of a regular strategic planning process, we have reaffirmed this insight as an essential component of our work.

We see the various programs we offer as gateways for the poor as they seek to meet basic needs in their lives. These gateways can provide access to progressive steps toward stability only as we engage our guests and guide them to one or more of our other programs.

This engagement presumes a willingness to see our Dining Room guest as one who is more than the unemployed worker without health insurance and more than another frightening statistic in the skewed rhetoric of a debate. We reach out because we see someone also hungry for new skills to be learned in our Tech Lab. We approach one of our guests whom others have dismissed as “chronically homeless”—we look past the stereotype and see that for the past three weeks he’s been more sober than not and may be ready to enter our recovery program.

Thousands of volunteers each year come to St. Anthony’s and engage the poor face to face. They become ambassadors in their communities who can share an image of those they serve that contradicts the narrow and dismissive portrayals. Tens of thousands of donors each year warm a vision of society where as brothers and sisters we care of one another. Our guests who are told in countless ways on the streets that they don’t count in this world, find in the smile or the kind word they receive along with a tray of food a reminder of who they really are. These are times that define our character as a community.

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IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD:
What are your special holiday traditions?

Steven, St. Anthony Dining Room Guest

Decorating the Christmas tree was my tradition as a child. My current holiday tradition is gratitude. As someone who’s HIV positive having good health of mind and body is incredibly important. Just being grateful to be alive.

Carolina, St. Anthony Clinic Staff

As a kid in Latin America, we celebrated for ten days starting on the 24th of December. Now my family’s Christmas is more Americanized. We still eat on the 24th but we wait to open presents on the 25th.

Melanie, St. Anthony Dining Room Volunteer

I have hundreds of holiday earrings. I start wearing them in mid-November and then I keep going until the New Year!

Tom, member of neighboring Alsabeeb Masjid Noor Al-Islam mosque and St. Anthony’s supporter

Our tradition during Ramadan is to fast, so that we can feel hungry for the same people who are hungry. That is our tradition. (ed. note: Another holiday tradition of Tom’s is to host St. Anthony’s annual holiday staff meal)

Gil, KGO radio host and St. Anthony’s supporter

Being truly, truly thankful for the series of happy accidents that have informed my life and realizing luck is not a hula. (ed. note: a recent holiday tradition of Gil’s is to host the live KGO AM 810 fundraising broadcast at St. Anthony’s on Thanksgiving Day)

To subscribe, visit www.stanthonyfoundation.org. For more information about our Dining Room, clinic, and other programs, and to see inside photos and stories, visit our website. To find a dining program near you, visit www.dineoutforstjohns.org. Join us for one of our many volunteer opportunities. To learn more, visit www.stanthonyfoundation.org/volunteer.

In partnership with the San Francisco Chronicle.

[Image of a holiday tradition]

[Image of a holiday tradition]

[Image of a holiday tradition]
Giving Outside the Box

We give to good causes for many reasons. One of them is to connect with people outside of our experience. Writing a check or donating a hand-me-down, even to a good cause like St. Anthony Foundation, may not always feel like a connection. It gets more interesting, and often more fruitful for our cause, when we involve other people in the giving.

One Warm Coat

It all started when Lois Pavlow took a coat out of her closet and thought of giving it to a friend. Suddenly it occurred to her: a poor or homeless person could use it more. She had a sudden picture of Operation One Warm Coat. Since 1992, more than 1 million coats have been donated through One Warm Coat in thousands of local communities across North America. St. Anthony’s was one of the first organizations to benefit.

Holiday Luncheon Group

In a world where so many people are cautious about mixing business with personal concerns, the Halligans and the McGraths are among supporters of St. Anthony Foundation who don’t hesitate to bring their personal commitment to the poor into their professional lives. Gerard McGrath, Jim Halligan, Bob Greenman, John Coleman and others have been giving an annual holiday luncheon for fellow stockbrokers since the late 1970’s to raise money for St. Anthony’s. Gerard’s son, Matt, and Jim’s daughter, Kelly, now organize the Holiday Luncheon. Al Falchi, a former stockbroker and luncheon participant, hosts the event at his Waterfront Restaurant and Southern Wine and Spirits donates wine.

Warped Tour

The Warped Tour is an annual festival held in parking lots or fields where stages, ramps, and half-pipes are erected for touring music and extreme sports. This year, Punk Junk, a non profit organization that connects fans and bands in local music scenes with local homeless organizations, chose St. Anthony’s as its partner. Fans who brought food, clothing or house wares for St. Anthony’s received a “cut pass” that let them enter the show 15 minutes before everyone else, and received other perks all day long.

The Penny Pitch

Several decades ago, North Beach proprietors around Washington Square talked about starting a penny pitch for a little friendly competition among staff of the neighboring bars and restaurants. Ed Moose was one of the organizers to steer the event toward becoming a fundraiser for St. Anthony’s, inviting not only bar and restaurant staff, but also athletic teams and public figures. Teams play in the competition and attendees vie for raffle and auction prizes to raise money for St. Anthony Foundation. Last May, the Hotel Council, KGO, and the Washington Square Bar & Grill hosted the 33rd Annual Penny Pitch for St. Anthony’s.

Drive Up, Drop Off, and Donate

St. Anthony Foundation’s Annual Curbside Holiday Donation Drive

DATES

- Saturday, November 21 – Thanksgiving, November 26
- Saturday, December 19 – Christmas, December 25

HOURS

- Weekdays 8AM – 6PM
- Weekends 9AM – 3PM

DONATE

- Bulk food, canned goods, clean clothing and linens
- To unload donations from arriving cars
- To organize a donation drive at your school or worksite

Call [Holiday Hot Line] or write atrowbridge@stanthonysf.org.

Our good friends at KGO are again helping us with a Holiday fundraiser that runs through December 31st. Tune into the live broadcast on KGO AM 1810 on Thanksgiving Day and hear St. Anthony’s stories directly from our guests and volunteers.

ST. ANTHONY FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

Basic Services and Community Outreach
- Dining Room
- Clothing and Housewares Program
- Justice Education, Volunteer/Intern and Advocacy Program

Health and Rehabilitation Services
- Free Medical Clinic
- Employment Program and Tech Lab
- Fr. Alfred Center Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehab Program

Social Services
- Social Work Center
- Madonna Senior Center and Residence

To donate monetary gifts or in-kind goods, volunteer in one of our programs, or find out more information about St. Anthony Foundation, please visit www.stanthonysf.org, call (415) 241-2600, or email info@stanthonysf.org.