Our guest had another urgent appointment within the hour to obtain possible housing. Because of the distance between programs, he was faced with a dilemma: get the clothes for his new job or miss an appointment which might allow him to leave the shelter system.

In three years, staff will be able to send a guest like this young man up one floor to the Clothing Program where he will be greeted by a staff member who can help him find the right size, the right color, and the right start to his new employment. In 2012, St. Anthony Foundation plans to begin construction on a new Dining Room at 121 Golden Gate Avenue which will bring the Dining Room, Free Clothing Program, and Social Work Center together under one roof. With our new building to help us integrate services even more, we will further close the gap between our services, diminish unnecessary obstacles, and empower our neighbors by literally meeting people where they are.

Article by Calder Lorenz, Guest Services Coordinator in St. Anthony Dining Room. Guests Services help meet any special needs our guests have and connect them with other St. Anthony Foundation and community resources.
“Now I understand why my Mom came to St. Anthony’s all those years. It was a part of her faith to give to others and I am a part of that faith by being here.”

Laura’s story: a legacy of volunteering

The doors to St. Anthony Dining Room opened on October 4, 1950 in the basement of an old auto body shop at 45 Jones Street. We expected to serve about 150 meals. Four hundred meals later we finished our first lunch service in the Dining Room.

It’s hard to know if anyone, including our founder, Fr. Alfred Boeddeker, could have imagined the legacy of this first day, some 60 years and 37 million meals later. For Fr. Alfred, St. Anthony’s Dining Room was a test of faith. He often said, “Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” As St. Anthony prepares to build a new dining for a new century, we reflect on the rich history of sharing this faith and passing it on to the friends and family who follow in our footsteps.

For Laura Mitchell’s family, the act of volunteering is an act of faith that blossoms with time. On most Thursdays, you will find Laura behind the serving line in the Dining Room, usually scooping up a hearty entree or smiling while she hands bread and butter to one of St. Anthony’s guests – a number that has recently swelled to almost 3,000 meals a day. Like many of the five hundred volunteers who faithfully make St. Anthony’s a part of their regular schedule, Laura is happy to help. “I know there are so many people out there that need help and I couldn’t imagine not doing something about it.”

What makes Laura’s story unique is that she is standing in the same serving line that her mother did for 25 years, and her husband’s grandfather did before her, and that her son continues to serve when he is home from college. “My mom would be so happy to know that I am doing this, and that my son is doing this, and continuing doing what she loved so much.”

In January 2010, Laura’s mom, Joan Dangel, passed away. Joan spent 25 years of her life serving meals and sewing clothes to support guests of St. Anthony’s. At first, Laura didn’t understand why her mom – even into her eighties – was so resolute about spending every Tuesday at St. Anthony’s.

“I used to think it was just something she liked to do.” But now as the mother of two grown children, when Laura reflects on her mother’s commitment, she appreciates the significance of this continuing legacy. “Now I understand why my Mom came to St. Anthony’s all those years. It was a part of her faith to give to others and I am a part of that faith by being here.”

Laura laughs about a gentleman who eats in the Dining Room every week. “He always comes down the line smiling and asking, ‘Where’s the ice-cream?’” It is virtually impossible for St. Anthony’s to serve ice cream and this is a running joke. “I know this spirit is why my Mom loved it here, and why I am happy to honor her by volunteering at St. Anthony’s.”

For 60 years, St. Anthony’s Dining Room has been a place where diners, donors, and volunteers come together to create what is still ‘the miracle on Jones Street’. As we at St. Anthony’s set our sights towards the future and prepare for the next generation we remember the stories of those who have started with the necessary and done what many thought impossible.
Today Dudley has a home, stable health, and the energy to do the activities that let him feel like himself. Two years ago he was in hospice care and was not expected to live.

Dudley first arrived in San Francisco from Los Angeles in 1992 and found himself in the Tenderloin without a support network or stable footing. “My family’s all scattered,” he says. It wasn’t long before he found his way to St. Anthony’s Social Work Center, where he became a regular client. Two years ago he was in hospice care.

Dudley’s health continued to decline, until he was hospitalized one day with HIV/AIDS-related pneumonia. “The hardest part was my willingness to take meds,” Dudley says. “I wanted to check out. I believe that my mental state was so bad it affected me physically.” Discharged from the hospital, he found a room “in the heartbeat of the T.L.” and was there a year and a half before he got sick again. He was discharged to Maitri, a hospice for people living with AIDS. He expected to die. “But my health improved, and it was a shock to everybody,” Dudley says. “That’s when everything turned around.”

Out of the hospital for the second time, Dudley was infused with a new commitment to thrive in life. With the help of Susan Shensa at St. Anthony’s Social Work Center, he found a secure and quiet room in San Francisco’s South Park neighborhood. “I used to go over there and sit in the park just to get away,” Dudley says about his current home. “I never thought I’d live there.”

In his new residence, Dudley found the strength to become sober and to begin taking his medicine regularly. “My friend said to me, ‘You ought to be looking forward to taking pills. That’s what’s saving your life.’ It used to take me like two hours to prepare myself to take them.” Dudley continues to be a regular client at St. Anthony’s Social Work Center, where he receives help to stay healthy and maintain stability. “Hope has really shined through,” Dudley says. “With everyone else’s support, I’ve gotten stronger, I’ve gotten healthier, I talk to people more. Before that, I would have been reclusive. Things would upset me and I would be like a wildcat. I take things with a lot more ease now, more restraint.”

Always someone with myriad creative interests, Dudley has been able to pursue painting and carpentry again. One of his hobbies is finding discarded treasures and restoring them. After he moved into his room in South Park, he came across an oval medallion, decorated with a single diamond at the top. The medallion has an inscription that Dudley believes was a message meant for him: “It’s just the beginning.”

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A WORD FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SHARI ROESELER

St. Anthony’s is located at the intersection of need and hope. Over two thousand people come to St. Anthony’s every day for food, clothing, medical care and other services. These days all of us continue to feel the impact of the recession as our country ambles towards recovery. Nearly 44 million Americans are in poverty. We can attest to the pervasive struggles of the veterans, families, seniors and individuals who come to St. Anthony Foundation every day.

As I pause to reflect on my first year as Executive Director, I am inspired by the resilience of our guests, the dedication of our staff and board, and the commitment of our volunteers. On April 12th, we served our 37 millionth meal. In this newsletter you’ll read an article about our Dining Room and how it serves as a portal to other programs at St. Anthony’s. We know that our guests are often the first to feel the impact of an economic downturn and the last to feel the benefits of an improved economy. In fact, in the past year we have seen an average increase of 35% in the number of guests and clients in all of our programs.

Over the past year I’ve had the opportunity to hear first-hand from donors and volunteers about their initial connection to St. Anthony’s. Some came here with their parents to drop off donations, others volunteered with their church, school, or company, and still others came to St. Anthony’s to eat when their family was struggling. However they came to St. Anthony Foundation, each is now giving back, making sure St. Anthony’s remains a civic anchor for the next 60 years and beyond.

As we celebrate the past six decades we are also planning for the decades to come. We are focusing on providing coordinated and easily accessible services, with our Dining Room as the initial gateway. In the coming year we will plan construction on a new building at the intersection of Jones and Golden Gate. When completed, this new 10-story building will include our Dining Room, Social Work Center and Free Clothing Program, and 90 units of affordable senior housing operated by our partner, Mercy Housing. St. Anthony’s new 121 Golden Gate Avenue building will be the intersection where need and hope meet and where everyone is welcome, every day.

Peace and all good,
disaster preparedness at st. anthony’s

Recent crises across the globe have San Franciscans asking themselves the question, “Are we prepared for a disaster?” Hurricane Katrina, the Haiti Earthquake, and now the Japan Earthquake make clear the critical role community-based organizations could play in disaster response. During the time it takes for government agencies to respond to a disaster, these community organizations act as first responders and orchestrate efforts to immediately assess and address critical needs. At St. Anthony Foundation we serve almost 3,000 poor and homeless people every day through a network of programs that provide the basics for those in need and tools for those who seek to transform their lives. Following a disaster, we need to prepare to serve as a gateway program, a community center, and an information clearing house for the neighborhood and for the city at large. Through our nearly six-decade history in the Tenderloin neighborhood, St. Anthony’s has built a reputation as a civic anchor. For several years directors here have worked to create a plan to become a disaster resilient organization and collaborated with city planners to become a central relief in those critical early moments when the need is greatest. The Tenderloin is home to roughly 36,000 people. The population density is 2500% greater than San Francisco as a whole, the second most densely populated major city in the U.S. The residential buildings in these neighborhoods are among the oldest, most poorly maintained, and most susceptible to damage from seismic events, according to the San Francisco Urban Planning and Research Association. In the event of an earthquake or other disaster, St. Anthony’s will provide emergency care to these most vulnerable neighborhoods, in addition to the thousands of poor and homeless guests that make up our regular population. St. Anthony’s has been a leader in getting community-based organizations involved in San Francisco city disaster preparedness planning. We have worked with San Francisco CARD (Community Agencies Responding to Disaster), the Tenderloin Hunger Task Force, and the City and County of San Francisco to organize neighborhood and city-wide responses to a major disaster. The St. Anthony Medical Clinic is built into the city’s emergency medical response system. The city’s communication command center is directly linked to St. Anthony’s, allowing us to directly provide services when FEMA, Red Cross and other government agencies have arrived with emergency food and supplies. Working with the Tenderloin Hunger Task Force, we have developed a feeding plan for the 72-hour gap between a disaster and the city’s emergency shelters. We will assist with food, water. We have space available for storage of food, medical supplies, and equipment. The new Dining Room we plan to build at 121 Golden Gate will expand this capacity even more. St. Anthony staff assists hundreds of our guests with personal emergencies every day. In the event of a major disaster, St. Anthony’s will be a cornerstone in the city plan for emergency shelter, food, and critical communication.

celebrating 60 years of service through a series of symposiums

All year, through the fall of 2011, St. Anthony’s is celebrating the six decades we have spent in community with low-income people, fighting poverty on both the individual and social levels. One form the celebration is taking is a series of symposiums to explore current themes that affect our community and programs.

We are still finalizing dates, speakers, and locations for the second and third symposiums. Please stay tuned to our website (www.stanthonysf.org) to learn about the details as they develop.

SLOW FOOD FOR THE PEOPLE: 6pm Tuesday, May 17, San Francisco Main Library, Latino Room. The Slow Food movement was founded to counter fast food and fast eating as a way to promote food that is Good, Clean, and Fair. Slow Food proponents encourage people to savor and enjoy the experience of a meal that tastes good, uses clean ingredients, and is fair and accessible. This panel will explore how good, clean and slow foods have been made available among free food programs in San Francisco from the perspective of government, food banks, the slow food movement, and nonprofits that feed people.

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: June, 2011, location and date TBD. Technological literacy is growing ever more vital in the job market today. How are people who don’t have computers, or even homes, learning essential technology skills to gain employment? Even nonprofits are becoming more reliant on technology to track their data and program outcomes. This panel will explore ways in which nonprofit computer labs and for-profit technology companies can work together to bridge the digital divide.

TRADITIONS OF FAITH, JUSTICE, AND CARE: September 2011, location and date TBD. Catholic, Muslim, and Jewish faiths practice and worship differently and observe very different holy days. But they share a common obligation to service and justice to people in need. Together, we’ll explore practices of balancing and comforting those who suffer. Religious leaders and activists will talk about traditions of healing and service to the poor: the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam, or “repairing the world,” the Muslim principal of sadakah, voluntary giving for the social good, and a range of Christian religions, which recognize a preferential treatment for the poor.

For more information, contact Mei-Hua Hu, Events Manager, mhu@stanthonysf.org; (415) 592-2788.

giving is contagious

Giving is contagious. This is especially true in the internet age, when an audience can multiply at the click of a button and social media like Facebook and Twitter make it fun to spread the word.

St. Anthony’s put out a few requests this year that “went viral,” sometimes without the help of the internet. If you ever think your gift is too small or your project too limited to make a difference, think again. It just might catch on.

BLOGGING FOR SOCKS
St. Anthony programs are always asking for socks. Every program at St. Anthony’s gives out socks, an urgent need of most of our guests. One such request was picked up by Craig Newmark (founder of Craigslist) and broadcast on his blog. The result was a nationwide response and enough socks to make up the gift for our Christmas gift bags. Children’s socks are especially buying in regularly from Planet Sox in New York. Long after Christmas, but well into winter, our Free Medical Clinic and Free Clothing Program still give away children’s socks in bright colors and cartoon patterns, as well as flip flops, slippers, and sunglasses, to the families we serve.

SCARVING ARTISTS
It started out with a blog post and a half-page flier. St. Anthony’s asked our friends in churches and service groups, and in posting stores to “Knit 2500 scarves by Hand By Christmas” for a Holiday Scarf give away. We wanted to give every guest who came to St. Anthony’s for a meal on December 20th a brand new, hand knitted scarf to keep them warm for the winter months.

We kicked off a city-wide scarf drive in July. It shortly became a worldwide drive, as our friends put out the word, cumulating in 7000 scarves for our guests from knitters in places as far-flung as Brazil, Japan, and Australia. The scarf giveaway was an opportunity to present guests with Christmas gifts that would more than help keep them warm during cold Bay Area winters. Each scarf was the result of time, effort, and careful handiwork, and no one scarf was identical to another.

FROM PERSON POWER TO COMPUTERS
Both St. Anthony’s and San Francisco Network Ministries have long-term relationships with the University of San Francisco Service Learning program. When the two non-profits pooled their resources to open the Tenderloin Tech Lab, more USF students got involved.

This March for the second time, these relationships brought us over 40 almost new computers for the Tech Lab, donated by USF and installed by the Computer Science Department.

ELECTRONIC ADVOCACY
St. Anthony’s covers city-wide issues like the proposed “Sit/Lie” ordinance or state issues like balancing a fair budget on our website. We post links to these stories and action alerts on Facebook and Twitter. Our friends and their friends and family click through to our website to sign up for emails, and sign up for our advocacy e-newsletter. You can advocate for change, too, by visiting www.stanthonysf.org and clicking the “Advocate” button on the top right corner of the page.

ST. ANTHONY FOUNDATION PROGRAMS

Basic Services and Community Outreach

- Dining Room
- Free Clothing Program
- Justice Education, Volunteer/Intern and Advocacy Program

Health and Rehabilitation Services

- Free Medical Clinic
- Tenderloin Tech Lab
- Fr. Alfred Center Residential Drug and Alcohol Rehab Program

Social Services

- Social Work Center
- Madonna Senior Center and Residence