

Father Joe's Villages Continued.

As time progressed, we learned more about the full menu of services that are provided from housing to education, job training, including a culinary school, attorneys, parenting, day care, a thrift shop, mental health, drug and alcohol rehab programs, general health and dental care. Current or former residents provide some of the services such as security and cooking. For example, Edward, the chef in whose kitchen we served, was a resident who had attended a class to become a line cook. He now runs the kitchen and is no longer experiencing homelessness.

First and foremost, dignity is restored to these men, women and children. Residents are offered three nutritious, hot meals daily with a smiling face and clean, well-kept facilities in which to live and to raise children. They are helped through difficult situations. It seems as though everyone in San Diego knows about Fr. Joe's Villages as they are the largest service provider in southern California.

Sunday we attended Mass at *The Immaculata* on the University of San Diego campus which serves as a parish church with a vibrant community. The beauty of the campus and juxtaposition to the downtown area are notable.

Our service continued on Monday for breakfast and dinner. Nancy, Sr. Celeste, Maureen and I served dinner on the PMC side, while Rosalie and Laura served in the JKC kitchen. The PMC residence houses single males (third floor) and single females (second floor). Small apartments are provided for families. There are rooms for a medical clinic, computer lab, workshops and a pharmacy. Dinner was served with efficiency and well managed by mostly resident volunteers. Security guards stood at the entrance of the dining room at every meal. Residents stood in line waiting for Nancy and Sr. Celeste to scan their badge. A resident volunteer handed each a plate of food – noodles, beef stroganoff and veggies. We served approximately 375 meals that evening. All were allowed to come back through the line as many times as they wished. Dinner was a hit – as one man came through six times!

Tuesday we served lunch in the family kitchen JKC. There was a steadier flow of residents that day and included the staff of Fr. Joe's Village. There were doctors and medical professionals, intake counselors and security people. By then many of the residents were used to seeing us and were more friendly and outgoing. Lunch was fish tacos/fish sticks, tortillas, coleslaw and black beans. A chicken vegetable soup and a beautiful salad bar with all the trimmings were offered.

Some noticeable things – one man asked for strawberries at each meal, another woman carried a Wonder Woman mug and was incredibly joyful, kids were learning to articulate their needs. "Can I have two pink milks, please?" and staff and resident volunteers were happy to have us partner with them.

The work that is accomplished by Fr. Joe's Villages is truly an inspiration. It was obvious that people are cared for, as basic needs are met. When Julie said, "Ah, how

good the Good God is,” she could have been speaking about the hope that Fr. Joe’s Villages provides to those experiencing homelessness in San Diego.

-Submitted by Sabrina Harper, Associate of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

For more information:

General inquiry for Fr. Joe’s Villages (<https://my.neighbor.org/>)