



# St. Mary's Center

*“I couldn’t understand for the longest time why I was here.  
I was here to feel unconditional love.”*

~ Ted (Winter Shelter Guest)

# NO LONGER INVISIBLE



~ Artist Rodney Bell

Dear Friends,

Standing with the ignored and invisible in our community means a world of difference to the 2,667 elders, children and families we impacted last year. **No Longer Invisible** is our annual report to show how your support, time and prayers helped ensure a warm welcome and more to the vulnerable.

Together, we are St. Mary's Center (SMC). We know what artist Rodney Bell was getting at when he created our cover artwork *Homelessness Has Faces*. And we would add hearts, minds and hopes.

Outside of SMC, the odds are packed against: Frail elders who do not have money or support to secure their final days; Children and families who know they are relegated to an inadequate education not because of their abilities but because of their neighborhood; and Seniors wanting housing yet unable to afford an apartment with a stove.

At St. Mary's, we know these are not headlines in the evening news - these are people. And the number of elders and children who need assistance to change their course is growing. Here, they get comprehensive services all at one location and an invitation to become part of a community committed to helping each other. Becoming part of the solution is one more way we become visible and responsible to each other. The exchange propels what we know as "best practices" to be better ones.

Known across the region, state and nation as an organization where anything seems possible, SMC models a way that calls each of us to be visible and focused on creating the world we imagine. St. Mary's gives evidence to what we can achieve when we do and the work that is waiting for our attention so that no one is invisible.

*Thank you for your support and in appreciation of your commitment to those we serve.*

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Carol Johnson".

Carol Johnson  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine Fisher".

Cathy Fisher  
Board Chair



**Older Homeless Adults: Can We Do More?**, *“Widespread homelessness has persisted for 3 decades, but the face of it has changed. If ending homelessness among older adults isn’t motivation enough, then perhaps the prospect of rapidly escalating costs will provide the necessary push.”* ~ Dr. Margot Kushel

At St. Mary’s Center, we see families breaking cycles of poverty as children go to preschool increasing their odds of graduating from high school and attending college. We know using the emergency room as healthcare for chronic illness is reduced with proper nutrition and access to fresh vegetables.

At St. Mary’s Center, we address these issues for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Social and economic policies influence our health and our pocket book. Let it not be at the expense of elders who have helped to shape our world and children just starting to imagine their mark.

We see the effects of the economy everyday. Many have used up retirement savings, families are homeless because of a foreclosure, “affordable housing” for elders on fixed incomes is non-existent, and the gap between rich and poor is the widest it has ever been. No Longer Invisible.

Some think these circumstances will go away with an uptick in the economy. **We think it’s a wake up call** to be proactive by investing in ways that promote stronger communities. Such an approach could even save us tax dollars.

We know:

- **When a child goes to preschool they reduce their chance of going to jail.**
- **95% of physicians realize addressing patients’ social needs are as important as their medical conditions**, especially in low-income, urban communities.
- **Mental illness costs our country 93 billion dollars a year** in lost productivity and emergency services.



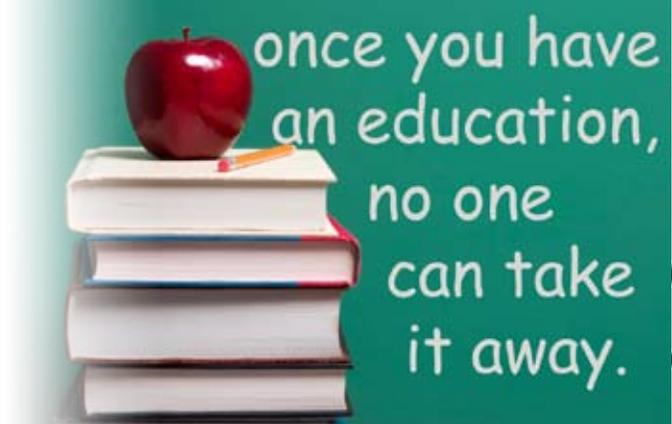
## St. Mary’s Center ~ A Catalyst for Change

This year we have initiated two new efforts to address persistent and growing issues.

- Prevention and In-Home Advocacy (formerly Outreach & Advocacy) is training seniors to be health educators to inform their peers of the risks provoked by mixing medications and alcohol and other drugs. This Alcohol & Drug Prevention program is especially important now as studies indicate the risks are getting bigger as the “boomer generation” ages.
- In our second initiative, African American elders are participating in Healing Circles to help improve mental health service delivery and outcomes across Alameda County. Their wisdom, awareness and ideas are the basis for a curriculum that will be developed and provided to Mental Health Service providers across the County with the specific intent to improve mental health outcomes for African Americans.

Both of these programs are funded in part by Alameda County Behavioral Healthcare Services. We are most grateful for their confidence and support in our ability to be a catalyst for change with vulnerable populations.

In the 2011-2012 School Year, 40 children were enrolled in the St. Mary's Center Preschool for 3 - 5 year olds. The children spoke seven different languages: English, Spanish, Khmer(Cambodian), Tigrina (Eritrea, Africa), Arabic(Yemen), Japanese, and Tagalog (Philippines). Many of the mom's never graduated from high school and most of the parents have little confidence in helping with school work. These are the children who typically enter kindergarten already left behind. That is not the case at SMC Preschool where last June, thirty - two of the children entered Kindergarten with a head start on their education!



Getting acquainted with books, singing, planting their own garden, playing house, building with blocks and creating art is only part of the program. The other part helps families navigate their concerns and needs for food, information on helping their child learn, stretching their budget and community resources to reduce the stress of households where minimum wage jobs leave necessities out of reach. Parent and teacher conversations and trainings, linking families to SMC's Food For All Ages program so they get weekly groceries and making sure each child and their siblings have a gift at Christmas with their name on it also has an impact on the children.

St. Mary's Center Preschool sets off a trajectory far from the realities of violent neighborhoods, parents with little education and households without books. Here beating the odds uses a model different than the testing frenzy that grips education and the race to succeed.



Play, oddly enough, is the key and a developmental building block too important to ignore. Here at St. Mary's it is pivotal. Preschool Director Lorita Riga explains, "When we limit education to memory and tests, we limit imagination and learning too. This is a time to help children learn by doing. We have a room with books, a wonderful play yard to develop motor skills, a garden that we use to talk about nutrition ... by making salad from plants we grew! It is also a time to learn about sharing. How do you deal with a child who takes your toy? Do you grab it back or do you use words?"

However, the advantage of preschool is threatened for many families as the State has changed the requirements relative to eligibility. While all families meet the federal standard for low income, the State of California has shifted the income levels in anticipation that families will make up the shortfall. Working to hold down jobs to make ends meet, this notion that families challenged to put food on the table would pay for preschool is unrealistic.

As a state licensed school, we are obliged to collect the fees. In addition, the Preschool itself is faced with shortfalls in funding from the State. We are grateful to St. Mary's Center donors who help supplement this most important program.

*“Thank you to each staff member for saving someone’s life and putting it all back together again.”*  
~ Lillian



The people who come to St. Mary’s Center are often at the end of their rope. They are tired and hungry and wondering why their life even matters. You can see it - in how they walk, look, dress, talk or remain silent.

They are not alone. While we live in the world’s wealthiest nation, 14.5 percent of U.S. households—nearly 49 million Americans, including 16.2 million children—struggle to put food on the table.

Poverty is the primary reason and in poor neighborhoods access to fresh produce is also an issue. The price we pay for this epidemic is visible in growing rates of obesity and diabetes. In addition, poor nutrition impacts brain development in children and is the leading cause of chronic illness.

Working literally to put food on the table for low income families and seniors struggling to make ends meet is part of our work. The other part is helping families and seniors see how they can improve their health by learning about the role proper nutrition and physical activity makes in our lives.

Together, with the Alameda County Community Food Bank, Mercy Brown Bag Program, Muffin People, Bay Area Community Services, U.S.D.A Food Program, People’s Grocery, local community gardens and a host of others, St. Mary’s provided:

- Morning coffee & pastry to low income elders six days a week
- 20,577 meals to seniors
- 6,400 meals to Preschool children
- 4,470 grocery bags to families and seniors and supplemental foods from Whole Foods, Trader Joes and Lunardi’s delivered four days a week from the “Muffin People”.
- Educational forums and consultation on nutrition and chronic illness, cooking demonstrations on healthy foods, and how to nurture a garden.



dignity+respect  
=Inclusion



PREVENTION & IN HOME ADVOCACY

*446 elders live in their own home with support from Prevention and In Home Advocacy. 228 of the elders are over the age of 75.*

The motto, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," aptly describes the work of Prevention & In Home Advocacy (formerly Outreach & Advocacy), as it helps ensure elders can age in place and have assurances of someone to call on. For elders without such a program the inevitable is premature placement in a nursing home, a broken hip, lethargy, Mother Hubbard's cupboards and wondering if life is worth living.

This year the program expanded as Alameda County saw the on-going relationship with frail elders as the perfect advantage for an education program to reduce complications between medications and alcohol use. Training community health educators, St. Mary's reputation in senior housing complexes makes for a ready made audience to benefit from this Alcohol and Drug Prevention program.

At SMC, elders are part of a vibrant community and a phone call away from avoiding a crisis or getting a visit. Advocates and case managers assist elders at doctor appointments, link them to our grocery program to stretch their budget, provide safety checks in their homes and help them navigate Social Security, Medicare, and CAPI (Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants) and lots more - like cultural celebrations, educational forums and daily meals.

Last year, Prevention and In Home Advocacy helped:

- 446 elders live in their own home
- 373 elders receive telephone reassurance.
- 541 participated in the exercise program which is offered at SMC and Senior Housing buildings in downtown and west Oakland.
- 216 elders benefit from the Community Nurses Program at the Center with in-home visits. (Community Nurses are from Cal State East Bay's School of Nursing)

Rodolfo is an avid participant in SMC activities and loves coming to the center. Each morning he gets up and states, "Let's go to SMC!" Rodolfo suffers from dementia and a number of chronic diseases, so his wife Emilia must accompany him outside the house. They come to SMC four times a week to "stay strong, healthy and happy," says Emilia.

At SMC they socialize with friends, share stories and laugh. And they stay informed on resources, participate in the exercise program three times a week and attend medication education classes. Emilia is especially grateful for the helpful and kind staff to assist with big and small problems, particularly Rebecca who is sincere and understands them. Emilia is quick to acknowledge "We feel blessed."

For Ms. Hong, the Friday exercise class at St. Mary's Gardens, sponsored by SMC, is a ritual that is nearly three years old because she feels happier and more energized after the class.

Two years ago her husband suffered a stroke. She feels the stress as primary caregiver and has leg pain and her own health issues. In spite of her pain, Ms. Hong continues coming to group exercise, and recently started with SMC line dancers. as she knows, "exercise and dance are good for her blood circulation and reduces her leg pain."



Finding a place for people to live with little or no income is virtually impossible and getting harder. This herculean effort takes building relationships with low income housing providers and managers and working with seniors to secure benefits, find housing, access services, clear up debt issues and lots more.

Last year, 58 people got keys to their own place! Many of the seniors stayed in our Winter Shelter - the only one in Northern California for homeless elders.

Professional staff work with the elder to figure out what they need to improve their life. They first attend to the crisis but quickly move to a care plan to help ensure each step builds on the last. For some money management is pivotal, for others the Recovery Group or counseling. Many access multiple services and note that their case manager is the reason they are able to move out of crisis and improve their lives.

*"Before I was here I was sleeping in bushes at St. Marks in Berkeley and hiding out from police. A friend recommended I come here. Reese is my case manager. I am working out the possibility of a place to stay. I couldn't have done it without you."* ~ Andrew

Last year:

- 549 homeless and at risk elders came to St. Mary's Center for assistance
- 279 received help for a crisis or were referred to another program
- 270 at risk seniors had a case manager and care plan to help them find housing, get counseling, manage their money, and receive benefits to improve their health and well-being.
- 114 seniors received mental health services
- 101 received substance abuse counseling and participated in Recovery Groups
- 130 seniors participated in Representative Payee Services (Money Management)
- 87 seniors stayed in our Winter Shelter, attended Wellness Meetings and met with case managers to piece their lives back together
- 48% of Shelter guests presented co-occurring conditions (mental illness & substance abuse)
- 12 elders lived in our transitional housing program, Closer to Home, over the course of the year.

*"I came here in trepidation. This is a most wonderful place. Sister Mary talks me out of things and talks me into believing about myself. I can't believe I can take a bad experience and find the good."*  
~ Gaby

## Never

Like have I felt like this before and will not feel like this again

Being eight months from making sixty two, melancholy and blue without my own apartment. It's been a constant battle to remained housed.

Keep hope alive

It is a joy when good things happen  
When your emotions are upbeat and comfortable shoes on your feet

And good food to eat

A roof over your head

And a comfortable bed

Life can be sweet

"Life is fine, fine as wine, life is fine" (this is a quote from Langston Hughes' poem "Life is Fine")

**-Ron Clark/Azzan**  
"Sheltered Memories"  
- 2012 Writing Group



**Then:**

My name is Sharon, I am a 57 year old homeless woman living in poverty and I am considered by most destitute. I have been homeless for approximately seven years. There was violence almost every night. From shootings, to robberies and rape, this caused me extreme fear, every little noise you wake up. I remember the first time I was in the shelter, every hour I would wake up on the hour, that's one of the ways I knew how to survive. You need a safe place in order to get a good nights rest and when you are an older woman on the streets, a good night's rest is impossible to do. First you got to keep moving, walk around until you are absolutely worn out and you still try not to sleep. Feet and legs swollen, you still have to go.

**Now:**

"Lord I am so glad my life on the streets is over, I never want that life again. I am going to fight my hardest to remain housed. Nobody deserves to be homeless. But never say never because you never know." Sharon is a leader with Hope & Justice and spoke at the World Court of Women.

Calli's life had unraveled yet her spirit is stronger today as her self portrait and mask portray. "I appreciate St. Mary's Center a whole lot. When I came I was a baby. I couldn't change my own diaper. But I am a full grown person walking out. It was hard to put up a cot every night yet someone was always there to help. Tomorrow I will meditate and remember all of you. I don't remember names but I will never forget faces."



**Paul Hopkins, August 5, 1948 - Oakland, CA**

I see myself as healthy. My face has filled out as I've cared for myself. I look like I'm at peace. I'm alright with how the artist saw me and what she drew. I wonder...will someone else see me...see the same thing?

My house burned up in a fire in 2009. I lost everything. I took a serious look at my choices and lifestyle. I was easy going and used to following the crowd. When I had a home, I could not get away from people crashing my pad, threatening me, or using drugs.

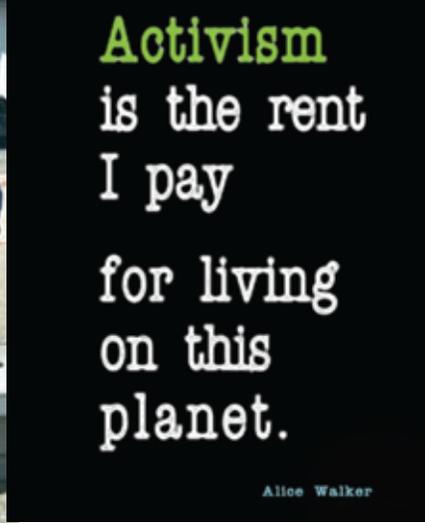
I knew I needed help and didn't know how to get out of my situation. I didn't know where to start; it was all so familiar. After the fire I came to St. Mary's Center. I wanted to be worthy of being right within myself. I had to have the right mind set – such as not going to the liquor store. I began decreasing the amount of alcohol that I drank. Eventually, I stopped going to the store and drinking altogether. I began to attend meetings again at a Baptist Church. I was raised going to church and am glad that I'm back.

People were proud of me. My mother felt proud; she had never given up on me. I had been on the prayer list at church when I was in my addiction. I never gave up on myself.

Now I'm doing me. It's new to express myself—as myself. I know myself. I was brought up to be kind-hearted and conscious of things that I do. I can't get away from myself. If I do something that hurts someone else, that bothers me.

Working the Recovery 55 program works for me. I live by the 12 Steps: admitting powerlessness, realizing a power greater than myself will restore me to sanity, and admitting the nature of my wrongs. I especially feel good when I help other people and show patience: I feel more complete as a person.

*Senior Leaders Ask: Imagine living on the streets, receiving general assistance for three months and then having to wait another year to re-apply for benefits? What happens for the other nine months?*



Seniors at St. Mary's Center would ask Alice Walker if they could change her quote to read, "Activism is the rent I pay for being at St. Mary's Center!"

Unlike many social service centers, St. Mary's sees this role as pivotal - not only to our democracy but also to ensure that social policy is connected to the human condition.

Hope & Justice Coordinator Elena Berman explains, "If we do not speak ~ someone will fill the void. Is it someone who knows about homelessness, the cost of a bus pass? In our view, the elders here have the best credentials to speak on social policy."

This idea is central at SMC. Elders living close to the edge may have "survived" the streets and extreme poverty but their new challenge is to change the paradigm of influence from lobbyists to people with experience on issues of "public" transportation, food insecurity, and "affordable housing". After all, these elders are the real experts.

Working in concert with Oakland Rising, Urban Habitat, Alameda County Community Food Bank, BOSS, WEAP, East Bay Asian Local Development, Center for Sustainable Neighborhoods, WRAP, California Partnership, East Bay Housing Organizations, and a host of others, St. Mary's participated in over 32 meetings with legislators, rallies, events and presentations last year.

When regional and statewide organizations want a strong voice of reason they ask SMC elders. Mixing their personal story, common sense and wisdom helps people see why housing, transportation, food, education and healthcare are issues of import to all of us.

*"As a pastor in Oakland, California for more than two decades, I am very well aware of the needs of certain populations who are under-served. I am also aware of how programs that do exist often simply provide services but neglect the equally important aspect of educating and empowering people to advocate for their own needs in informed and effective ways.*

*I appreciate that St. Mary's does not work alone but intentionally challenges other community partners to join with Senior Advocates in speaking to lawmakers and other decision-makers, to tell the truth about how policies and laws -- are impacting the health and well-being of seniors."*

*~ Rev. Lucy Kolin,  
Resurrection Lutheran*

## Your Voice Will Help!

- View the short videos where SMC elders share their ideas about human dignity and what we need to do. [www.youtube.com/user/StMarysCenterOakland](http://www.youtube.com/user/StMarysCenterOakland).
- Children have suffered more than any other age group during this recession and slow recovery. Children need a voice. YOURS.
- Like us on facebook and spread the word to your friends.
- Come to an event or action. Each year we go to Sacramento in May to meet with legislators for Hunger Action Day, celebrate in solidarity with countries all over the world in October to Eradicate Poverty, and honor those who have died on the streets at our Homeless Memorial in December. Visit our website to get details: [www.stmaryscenter.org](http://www.stmaryscenter.org).





Health is not only about having access to a doctor. At SMC it is obvious that engagement rules high in priorities. And while many seniors are initially reluctant to try their hand at art, soon they realize it is a favorite activity. Building their mind, spirit and body by creating a mask, being in a drama group, writing a poem, or moving their body through Interplay are part of the prescription for improved health.

Art is visible everywhere. Many painted, acted in a play or wrote their first poem when their lives were literally hanging by a thread. Thank goodness they took the initiative to participate that we might see their wisdom in new ways.

This year 90 people participated in Creative Arts at SMC. Most felt the experience helped them relate to themselves, renewed a spiritual connection and bonded them to each other. The long term benefit shows itself as well. As seniors formerly addicted attest, "It gives me something to do that I love." The results of these artistic passions are visible throughout this Annual Report.

Local artists and organizations are drawn to SMC and work with elders in their artistic endeavors. We are most grateful to: Judith Mortenson who sketches pastel portraits of the seniors, and Mica Miro who co-led the Shelter Creative art group.



### Violence in the world

The feeling of not understanding the world today

People killing people, innocent people

Individuals who are unable to communicate with others

You work hard all your life, then out of the blue you lose everything.

I would think people would feel ill ... things to the next level.

The feeling of losing your independence and the knowledge of responsibility is what it is about.

Patricia A. Lewis

Winter Shelter Writing Group

## What I Think

I painted out side of my head because I believe that 99.9% of what I see is an aberration, a distortion, maya. My mind fools me into thinking what I see in interpersonal relationships is a "consensus reality" – it's not!

I try not to be judgmental, because the partial view I have is misleading enough. I can view this picture in various aspects depending upon a loci. I hope to uncover things as I view the painting from different angles.

I am living in a shelter and at times I'm not exactly sure why I got here other than I was put here to learn. I am learning more compassion and to take action in the face of adversity that is helpful to all.



### Fear, Loss and Hope ~ Gaby Martin

The black represents the darkness in my head, the depression that engulfs me daily. The solid **red** is the anger I feel at my situation in general and at certain people. The wavy **red** is the anger again and the wavy **gold** represents the physical pain I experience every day which causes further anger within. I long to have relief from the pain and want my pain to be manageable. **Red** also represents standing up for myself and the anger I feel for not being able to.

The **yellow** is my vision of hope. The **gold** and **yellow** stars amid the **blue** represent hope and dreams that I hope will materialize within an ocean of peace and tranquility.

Being in the shelter is difficult for me. I would like to feel calmness, peace, and acceptance about the things over which I have no control. I imagine that my irritability can be transformed and that I can rebuild my life in a more fulfilling way.



### The Broken Clock

by Guitar

The broken clock is correct at least two times a day.

I remember a broken friend – had a stroke, became addicted.

It's important to me to also see his greatness as a person and to love him.



### Ms. E.

Emily Robertson Etienne

Yellow = Sunshine

Purple = Loyalty of my Life

Pearl White = I am the Pearl of my Daddy's eyes

Silver = Friendship status of Silver and Gold!!!

From the Pearl color of my eyes...

to the sunshine heart in

my mind and around my "special space,"

No One or Nothing will steal my JOY!!!



### My Cup

Delaine Jones

A cool drink of water, represents my experience here at the shelter. It represents the part of my life that is all about me. The water represents cleansing, renewal, reinventing my self, and making me aware and caring of others.

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### Government

Alameda County - Area Agency on Aging  
 Alameda County - AAA Measure A Fall Prevention  
 Alameda County - Behavioral Health Care Services  
 Alcohol & Drug  
 Alameda County - BHCS Innovative/Interplay  
 Alameda County - BHCS Mental Health Services  
 Alameda County - MediCal  
 Alameda County Measure A (Med Safety)  
 Alameda County Social Services  
 Alameda County/Tobacco Cessation  
 California Department of Education  
 California EHAP  
 Child and Adult Care Food Program  
 City of Oakland - PATH  
 FEMA  
 McKinney Funds

### Parish & Religious

Cathedral Parish of Christ the Light  
 Catholic Community of Pleasanton  
 Dominican Sisters of Mission San Jose  
 Dominican Sisters of Oakford  
 Italian Catholic Federation Branch 352  
 Knights of Columbus  
 Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, Inc.  
 Lakeside Temple of Practical Christianity  
 Mazon: A Jewish Response to Hunger  
 Oakland Diocesan Council of Catholic Women  
 Our Lady of Grace Church  
 Our Lady of Grace Women's Guild  
 Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet  
 Sisters of the Holy Names  
 Sisters of the Presentation  
 Santa Maria Church  
 St. Columba Church  
 St. Dominic Congregation of Most Holy Name  
 St. Felicitas Catholic Church  
 St. Isidore Parish  
 St. Joan of Arc Parish  
 St. Joseph the Worker Parish  
 St. La Salle Community  
 St. Mary Magdalen Church  
 St. Michael Church  
 St. Monica Mens Club  
 St. Monica's Church  
 St. Paschal Baylon Church  
 St. Paul Lutheran Church  
 St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus  
 Sovereign Military Order of Malta  
 The Roman Catholic Diocese of Oakland

### Organizations

Association of Marine Underwriters  
 Berkeley Lodge No. 270  
 Kappa Gamma Pi  
 Oakland Rotary Endowment  
 United Way Capital Region  
 Vietnam Veterans of America



We have received a FOUR STAR RATING from Charity Navigator ~ America's premier independent charity evaluator. This distinction recognizes the effectiveness of St. Mary's Center.

### Remember St. Mary's Center

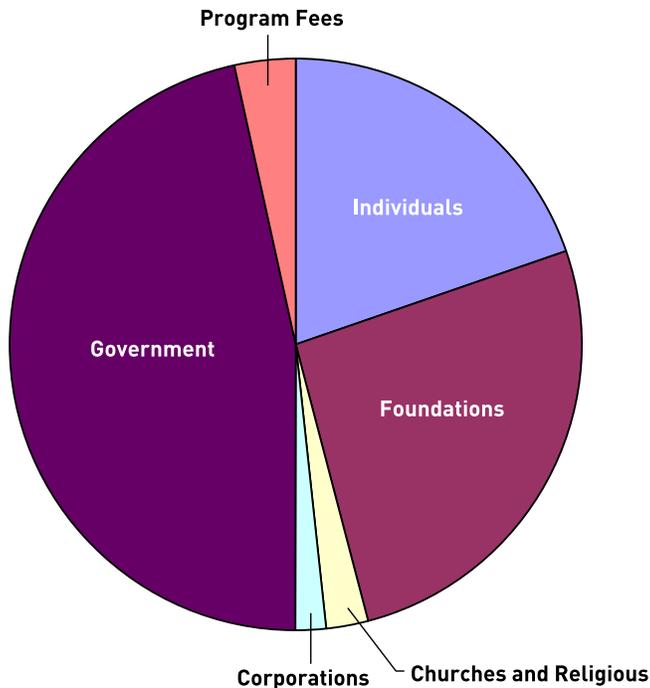
- like us on facebook 
- find us on Youtube 
- get event information [www.stmaryscenter.org](http://www.stmaryscenter.org)
- continue your financial support
- consider St. Mary's Center in your will or bequest.

To get more information, contact Executive Director Carol Johnson (510) 923-9600 x 223.

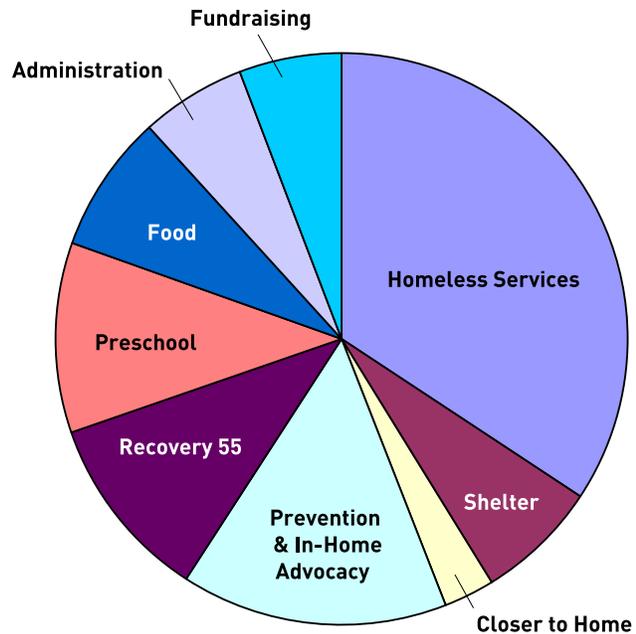
# Summary of 2011-2012 Financial Statement

(Based on final audited figures)

Source of Revenue Fiscal Year 2011 - 2012



Expense by Program Fiscal Year 2011 - 2012



## OPERATING SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions for Operating Needs	825,651
Government Grants	767,924
Program Fees	56,934
Interest	4,676
Other	3,195

**TOTAL OPERATING SUPPORT AND REVENUE**      1,658,380

## OPERATING EXPENSES

Salaries and Employee Benefits	1,351,610
Other Direct Program Expenses	531,151
Indirect Expenses	64,263

**TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES**      1,947,024

**EXCESS OF OPERATING EXPENSES  
OVER OPERATING REVENUE AND SUPPORT**      -288,644\*

\* Includes depreciation expense of \$205,943

Audit available on our website:  
[www.stmaryscenter.org](http://www.stmaryscenter.org)  
 Federal Tax I.D. # 68-017-2229



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**Transforming Lives | Building Community | Creating Change**

**Photos:** *Sister Mina Gaskell, Kim Marsh, Lorita Riga, Susan Werner* | **Sketches:** *Judith Mortenson*  
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