In the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, all of us have suddenly been faced with a series of incredibly difficult challenges. For the most vulnerable among us this is even more so. How do isolated, low-income elders get the immediate support they need? How do the homeless “stay at home” during shelter-in-place? For St. Mary’s Center, the goal became, in the words of our Clinical Director Sharon Hawkins Leyden, “taking St. Mary’s Center out to the community.”

On March 16, 2020 St. Mary’s Center closed our community center and day programs to meet state mandated social distancing guidelines. Our daily food program immediately pivoted to begin providing hot lunch pick-ups at a tent in our agency courtyard. Clients began to meet remotely with SMC staff via telephone appointments and Zoom check-ins. Medications and grocery bags began to be delivered by staff and a dedicated team of volunteers. For our money management clients, individualized plans to deliver monthly checks were developed.

For the 28 seniors staying in our one room winter shelter, shelter-in-place guidelines were enacted immediately. SMC moved to a 24 hour, 7 day a week program, enabling our clients to shelter-in-place at St. Mary’s without the risk of exposure in the wider community. Clients who remained in the shelter actively participated in social distancing procedures, offered help in daily cleaning, and kept their spirits up by participating in appropriately distanced onsite activities.

The next priority became locating immediate housing. Though locating housing for low-income seniors is often a challenging and time-consuming process at the best of times, with the help of SMC Senior Services staff, Seniors were reunited with family members, found temporary or permanent housing through outside agencies, or moved into one of St. Mary’s Center’s three transitional housing facilities. By April 7, 2020 all Shelter residents were able to identify and move into housing, just three weeks after the first shelter in place order was enacted.

Much of the success of these emergency measures was a result of teamwork. We saw increased client flexibility, patience, and resolve. “Shelter clients really got it, they understood and really stepped up,” Sharon Hawkins Leyden remarked. Clients worked with the SMC team, as well as with each other, to problem solve and adapt to the rapid, disorienting changes brought about by COVID-19.

To date, no St. Mary’s Center clients have tested positive for COVID-19. Even during the most difficult and unsure times for everyone the strength of St. Mary’s Center has always resided within our inspiring community members.
St. Mary’s Center is following California’s shelter-in-place order by pivoting our nutritional programs to food delivery; our social activity and supports to telephone re-assurance and videoconferencing; and our case management to focus on transitional housing. Some of our programs are busier than ever. Others are using this time to strategize for the future. Our maintenance team relishes the opportunity to paint, repair and deep clean facilities that will soon enough return to regular use.

New Food Delivery Program
We began replacing lunches with meal deliveries on March 27. Transitional Housing participants, Preschool families, and Seniors appreciate food from Mercy Brown Bag, Alameda County Community Food Bank, US Department of Agriculture, and the wonderful volunteers who typically prepare Sunday and Shelter dinners. I have heard from many volunteers who are just as eager as our Seniors to get back to the regular calendar. We are working to make sure we can do so safely.

Home Together 2020
St. Mary’s Center is playing a leadership role with Every One Home and the new Alameda County Office of Homeless Care and Coordination to increase funding for homeless prevention and services. Voters will be asked to support the Home Together 2020 measure this November to provide $150 million per year to increase prevention, homeless services, and job training.

SAHA Partnership For New Housing
Many thanks to our active Board and Housing Committee, which selected Satellite Affordable Housing Associates as our non-profit development partner for 80–100 units of permanent supportive housing at 967 32nd St., across from our headquarters, and the newly-acquired lot at 3135 San Pablo Ave. Construction is still a couple years out but we are excited to have a respected community partner leading the charge.

If you are one of the many people who have reached out, please know that your words of encouragement mean the world to our staff at this difficult time.

Thank you for your support of this community of hope, justice, and healing.

TOGETHER — Even when We’re Apart

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Best wishes to you and your loved ones during these extraordinary times

Sharon Cornu, MS HS
Executive Director
sharoncornu@stmaryscenter.org

Director Sharon Cornu and food team member Jason Russell with some of the 600 bags we have delivered.
Food is a Necessity . . . and a Right!

By Janny Castillo | St. Mary’s Center Hope & Justice Coordinator

In March, 2020, as seniors retreated to their homes to shelter in place, St. Mary’s Center intuitively knew that access to food was going to be a problem. Over 150 seniors depended on the Center to supplement their meals. In response, SMC’s Food Program transformed into a delivery service, bringing bags of groceries to the doors of seniors and families. “Getting fabulously fresh and wonderful canned food from St. Mary’s Center delivered by a kind person with a friendly face helped lift my spirits. I eagerly read the colorful and cheerfully written newsletter which I appreciate greatly as I miss my contact with my St. Mary’s Center family,” said newly housed SMC Community member Esther Chambers.

As of June 1, SMC has delivered 2,100 meals and 600 bags to families and seniors across Oakland and neighboring cities. Thanks to generous individual donations, the center has become a makeshift pantry from which up to 125 bags a week are delivered. “It feels like hundreds of acts of kindness and neighbors helping neighbors,” said SMC Food Program Coordinator Janny Castillo. Much needed donations of masks, cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer were also distributed to essential workers as well as to seniors and families. We are currently looking for donations of packaged proteins—tuna, peanut butter, etc—as well as grains, fruit and vegetables.

SMC also partnered with the Computer Technology Resource Center to deliver free desktop computers to school age children for online classwork and to seniors who want to connect to SMC and the world. One SMC grandfather requested a computer for his granddaughter, because “she can’t do her school work without it.”

St. Mary’s Center is grateful for the support of Alameda County Area Agency on Aging and Behavioral Health Care Services, Mercy Brown Bag and USDA who supply the majority of the food the center donates.

SMC Food Manager Ja’meisha Hood with food donations.

“[It feels like hundreds of acts of kindness and neighbors helping neighbors.]”

SINCE THE PANDEMIC, FOOD INSECURITY HAS INCREASED ACROSS CALIFORNIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cal Fresh applications are up...</th>
<th>Food Banks’ demand for food has increased...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>243%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SHELTER-IN-PLACE ALL STARS

St. Mary’s Center clients are grateful to everyone for stepping up and finding new ways to help

Sudhir Aggarwal
John Behrens
Mary Clemency
Madeline Connolly
Community Foods Market
Corpus Christi Catholic Church
Terry Curley
Gina DeMarco
Fred Dodson
Kent and Pamela Donahue
Dianne Jacob and Owen Rubin
Nadine Durant
Kathleen Ferris
Linda Franklin
Gail Greenberg
Helene Gryfakis
Danielle Hayes
Dianne Jacob
Grace Lee
Becky LoDoice
Adam Maxwell
Michael McGowan
The Montclair Women’s Club
Oakland Community Nurses
William Pettus
Piedmont Community Service Crew
Maryani Rasidjian
Michelle Shaluata
Darya Shytakalo
St. Paul’s Episcopal Church
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church
Susan Steinberg
UC Berkeley Coates Lab
Melinda Vahedi
West Oakland Neighbors
Karen Zulpr

*partial list

Food delivery volunteer John Behrens

For information about volunteering now, please contact jmerrill@stmaryscenter.org
As schools across the country began to close in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, St. Mary’s Center needed to make sure that our 37 Preschool students weren’t left behind academically and that struggling parents continued to be supported. In response to state issued shelter-in-place orders, St. Mary’s Center Preschool ceased onsite operations for the spring semester on March 17. Staff responded quickly with a plan to ensure preschoolers were able to continue their path toward kindergarten.

In partnership with the Computer & Technology Resource Center, St. Mary’s was able to donate computers to a number of preschool families to ensure students could continue their studies at home. Teachers and parents began connecting via remote learning programs and weekly check-ins. Preschool Director Quinetta Lewis and her staff began hosting weekly “Zoom readings,” allowing students and parents to meet with Preschool teachers for online reading and listening skill development. Families also began receiving food bags delivered several times a month by SMC volunteers to help support healthy sheltering-in-place.

An appointment based, socially distanced graduation ceremony and presentation of certificates will be conducted for graduating students later this year. Preschool staff are continuing to develop appropriately distanced learning programs for our upcoming summer semester.

When onsite preschool can safely recommence, students will return to a “new normal.” There will be modifications to the classroom and play yard, as well as health checks when entering the classroom. St. Mary’s Center Preschool is also developing a model for a year-long, full-day school and childcare program. We are currently fundraising in anticipation of this expanded programming for preschool families in need.

As we continue to work with clients to shape services in response to challenges created by the pandemic, the dedication of staff and parents show a commitment to the Preschool’s mission toward, as one Preschool parent noted of the program, “meeting every child’s need and recognizing every child learns differently.”
For decades, Friendly Manor has helped homeless women of all ages find respite, community, and housing. With the onset of shelter-in-place orders this spring, the staff at Friendly Manor quickly developed a plan to continue providing services while keeping residents and visitors safe during the pandemic. 

By order of the Alameda County Health Officer, the drop-in center at Friendly Manor closed in mid-March. Staff’s immediate focus shifted to providing updated remote services, food, and support for Friendly Manor participants while they safely sheltered-in-place. Friendly Manor Director LaRue Williams coordinated daily lunches with a dedicated collection of new and long-term volunteers, St. Mary's Center case managers began weekly remote check-ins with clients, and Friendly Manor staff held regular, socially distanced house meetings discussing the challenges and dangers of COVID-19.

Meeting basic needs hasn’t been the only challenge for Friendly Manor clients during this unprecedented time. Like many seniors, participants are struggling with anxiety over extended shelter-in-place orders. Though these changes have been difficult, Friendly Manor staff and clients have begun to adjust. To help alleviate stress and provide daily structure for clients stuck inside, Friendly Manor staff organized an “activity club” where recreation is encouraged and clients are able to win raffle prize drawings. Activities including art, puzzles, word searches, Sudoku, and a reading club have been quite popular with clients. “We are turning a corner when it comes to addressing the seriousness of COVID-19,” remarked LaRue Williams.

In addition to daily lunch deliveries, donors have also generously provided masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and a host of other necessary, high demand items. On Sunday, May 10, SMC volunteers dropped off Mother’s Day gift bags and blankets.

This challenging time has also highlighted the dedication of our extended Friendly Manor community. The volunteers who have kept Friendly Manor going for so many years had a very successful daffodil sale this spring, providing much needed funds that helped replace heating and ventilation equipment. A special thank you to Karen Kalvass for organizing the annual sale.

We are excited to pick up programming again as soon as it is safe to do so. We know that the need for drop-in services is pressing but the health and safety of Friendly Manor clients and guests is our number one priority.
Thank you to our Emergency Grant Funders, who have provided relief funding during COVID-19

Berkeley Pilgrimage
Oakland Relief Fund
Crankstart

East Bay Community Foundation
United Way Bay Area
San Francisco Foundation

Just East Bay Response Fund
East Bay Community Energy
West Davis & Bergard Foundation

These grants have allowed St. Mary's to provide expanded services and support to our seniors and families in need during the pandemic.

We look forward to celebrating our 2020 Inspirational Award Honorees:

Esther Chambers
Stephen and Margaret Wilcox

St. Patrick’s Day Gala

Thank you to the generous Sponsors and Donors to our March 2020 St. Patrick’s Day Gala that was postponed due to COVID-19 and rescheduled for September 5, 2020 at the Ascension Greek Cathedral
St. Mary’s Center

Everybody needs a place

P.O. Box 23403
Oakland CA 94623
www.StMarysCenter.org

Return Service Requested

FOLLOW US
ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@StMarysCenter.SMC
@StMarysOak

To learn more or to make a donation
visit www.StMarysCenter.org
or call (510) 923-9600

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Dianne Jacob, Chair
Romi Hall, Vice Chair
Mallory Trevigne, Secretary
Sonia Peña, Treasurer
Princessa Bourelly
Terry Curley
Cynthia LeBlanc
Sr. Marilyn Medau
William Pettus
Sonya Simril
Drew Tillman

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Sharon Cornu, MSHS

EDITOR
Jamie Townsend

PRESCCHOOL WISHLIST

- Pre-K Books
- Construction Paper
- Pencil Pouches
- Markers
- Colored Pencils
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue

To make a donation please visit our website

To contribute an item from our wishlist, please contact
St. Mary’s Center at development@stmaryscenter.org.

PROTECT YOUR IDENTITY
Be sure to use our secure
Post Office Box for your contributions:
St. Mary’s Center
PO Box 23403
Oakland, CA 94623