



## **How can we help homeless people in Riverside? St. Catherine has some answers.**

Members of St. Catherine of Alexandria parish are working on several fronts to serve people who are homeless and to help families in need avoid the loss of their homes.

These efforts were outlined by volunteers and Deacon John De Gano at a forum that was held at the Ministry Center on Jan. 27, 2020. The message from Deacon John was this: If you want to help, there are opportunities to volunteer throughout the day and evening and on weekends, too. Some tasks can even be handled at your convenience. And donations of cash, food, clothing and personal hygiene items are needed, and greatly appreciated.

The 2019 Point in Time Count identified 2,811 unsheltered homeless adults and children in Riverside County living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings and the like, including 439 in Riverside.

Some efforts to help the homeless in the Riverside area have been around for years, such as a food ministry that provides up to 120 dinners at the city's homeless shelter twice each month. Others, such as an effort to provide portable shower facilities each week, are in their early stages. St. Catherine, the deacon said, has been called upon to help ensure that personal hygiene kits are available for each man, woman and child who uses the shower facility, now operating at St. John the Evangelist Church in Jurupa Valley every Thursday morning. The ministry at St. John uses 30 hygiene kits on each service day.

About two dozen parishioners attended the forum. They discussed the physical and spiritual needs of Riverside's homeless community, learned about efforts by the parish and organizations such as the Society of St. Vincent De Paul and Catholic Charities San Bernardino and Riverside Counties to combat and prevent homelessness, and signed up for programs to which they can donate time and resources.

Deacon John said that anyone who is interested in becoming involved in one of the programs or getting more information can contact him by email at [jdegano@stcofa.org](mailto:jdegano@stcofa.org).

Here's a rundown of the programs that parishioners were called upon to support:

**Civic engagement.** St. Catherine volunteers can monitor City Council agendas, attend meetings as needed and contact public officials to address concerns about the homeless issue and policy matters. Comments on agenda items can be submitted electronically. The time commitment can vary.

**Feed the Hungry.** St. Catherine volunteers prepare, serve and clean up at dinners on the first and third Friday's of the month at the Hulen Place emergency homeless shelter operated by Path of Life Ministries. Donations can be placed in an envelope labeled "Feed the Hungry" and

placed in the collection basket. For more details on Feed the Hungry, contact Steffi Chen at 310-266-9796. Learn about Path of Life at [www.thepathoflife.com](http://www.thepathoflife.com).

**Lestonnac mobile health clinics.** The free health-care program operated by Lestonnac Free Clinics is held at St. Catherine of Alexandria on the first, third and fifth Saturday of the month to serve low-income people and those who lack insurance. Volunteers are needed, along with licensed nurses and physicians who can donate time. Learn more about Lestonnac at <https://lestonnacfreeclinic.org>.

**Neighbor to Neighbor breakfasts.** Volunteers provide breakfast each Saturday morning at the Catholic Charities Riverside Center of Hope, 3020 Madison St. Learn about Catholic Charities at <https://ccsbriv.org>.

**Shamel Park.** Parish volunteers distribute food and clothing each week to the dozen or so homeless people who stay in Shamel Park adjacent to the church. Time commitments can vary.

**St. John the Evangelist/portable showers.** Volunteers on Thursday mornings hand out shower supplies and hygiene kits to people who use the facilities. Donations of gently used clothing items and new underwear are welcome at St. John's church so that people can get fresh clothes. A team from St. Catherine would be a welcome addition. The church is at 3980 Opal St., Jurupa Valley. Call 951-684-6864.

**Hygiene kits.** St. Catherine parishioners are asked to provide personal hygiene items for men and women and to drop them off at our ministry center. They will be used at St. John the Evangelist for the shower program and by other ministries. Discount stores can be a good source for these supplies. Cash donations for hygiene kits can be placed in the Sunday collection in envelopes labeled "hygiene kits" or "toiletries." (See the list below of needed items.)

**Society of St. Vincent de Paul.** Parishioners can donate food items in bins in the church and help make food deliveries. Volunteers also make snack bags that are distributed at the ministry center each day. Cash donations, made via the yellow envelopes in the pews, help families pay utility bills and rent. The program also adopts families each Christmas. Time commitments can vary.

**Socks and blankets.** Parishioners during cold-weather months can leave new white socks and gently used blankets in bins in the rear of the church. At varying times, volunteers stop at homeless camps to distribute the items.

**Underwear and socks.** Various ministries distribute these new, unused items and contributions can be left at the Ministry Center.

**For shower ministry, these requested hygiene items can be taken to St. Catherine Ministry Center:**

Travel-size wet wipes

Toothbrushes and toothbrush covers

Travel-size toothpaste

Travel-size packs of tissues

Small-size hand sanitizers

Travel-size deodorant or deodorant gel packets

Plastic combs

Gallon-size zip-lock plastic bags

Medium-size feminine pads

T-shirts – new

Heavy socks – new

Male and female underwear – new