



the BREAD BASKET

SPRING 2025

NEWS AND CURRENT EVENTS FOR ST. VINCENT MEALS ON WHEELS

LOVE, MIKE: A LIFETIME OF SERVICE

"BY THEIR OWN WORK, YOU SHALL KNOW THEM." – MATTHEW 7:16

As the child of a career military father, St. Vincent Meals on Wheels client Mike Averill spent much of his childhood on the move. Born in Maine and raised in North Carolina, Mike and his family lived in several states, as well as Japan, Spain, and Laos. He describes his youth as the best geography lesson anyone could hope for. One place that frequently came to mind during his well-traveled childhood was California, with its golden beaches, progressive thinking, and relaxed lifestyles – a place where surfing could become a favorite pastime.

California dreaming was put on hold when Mike, like his father and grandfather before him, enlisted in the U.S. Marines during the Vietnam War. Serving his country was always a clear objective, despite the war's unpopularity back home. Mike donned his uniform and proudly stood with his fellow enlistees, serving in combat zones. Although his tours of duty in an unpopular war took a toll on him and many of his fellow soldiers, he remained bound by the oath



of all new Marine recruits to defend and uphold the Constitution of the United States. His Marine spirit of perseverance in tough times always guided him.

During his time in Vietnam, Mike witnessed the sickness and loss of soldiers and indigenous people and fought against loneliness, enemy booby traps, and the grim realities of a war zone.

His experience in Vietnam was the most significant of his life. One thing that helped him during this time was writing, mostly poetry; some verses were about the horror of war, while others were about the joys of home:

"I thought about the things I had back home,
I thought about cold water,
and someone's round-eyed daughter—
they say it's great to fight,
but I've got some opinions of my own,
I wanna go home."

Some time after his years in the war, Mike moved to California in 1982, when the "hippie vibe," as

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St. Vincent Meals on Wheels is sponsored by the Daughters of Charity Ministry Services Corp.

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - Mike Averill

he describes with a smile, “was still in full force.” Although the scars of war would always be a part of him, he built a life for himself, got married, and had children of his own.

Today, Mike lives alone in Los Angeles, the city he’s called home after years of moving as a child and serving overseas. He’s been receiving meals from St. Vincent Meals on Wheels for nearly a decade—and he’s not alone.

There are over 18 million veterans in the U.S., with nearly half over 65 and mostly male. Many senior veterans, like Mike, are homebound and living alone—approximately 2.5 million need services like those provided by SVMOW. These programs help them connect with volunteers, drivers, and friendly callers. SVMOW staff often act as first responders, noticing changes in their welfare.

US Marine veteran Sgt. Dan Franco (USMC 2001-2009 OIF 2004-2005), a longtime Operations Specialist at SVMOW, says, “I’m proud to help fellow veterans through our service. Working with the Daughters of Charity feels like being a Marine—a global family dedicated to serving. The saying ‘God, Country, and Corps’ guides me to

honor my oath by doing what God asks of us.”

Mike likens the dedication and focus of the staff at SVMOW to the warriors he served with, moving bravely through the unhealthy air quality during recent fires, never missing a day of service and always showing up at his door with a smile. “If I could, I’d make them all honorary Marines,” he said, “Not in a war-making way, but in the spirit of carrying on and sharing the spirit of giving and service.” He likes the food, too!

“Oh boy! It’s Wednesday, and I know that Christine is going to bring me breakfast food, and I just love the yogurt; it’s my favorite!”

“They do God’s work,” Mike says of the staff and volunteers at SVMOW...

Mike reminds us how St. Matthew’s verse encourages us to examine not only words or appearances but also the actions and outcomes of people’s attitudes, whether in a religious context or any area of life. This emphasizes the importance of actions and their results as a way to identify people’s true nature or beliefs.

“They do God’s work,” Mike says of the staff and volunteers at SVMOW who serve him daily. “I can’t shop, and I just don’t have the energy to prepare my own meals. I don’t know what I would do without their care and attention.”

Recently, Mike wrote a beautiful letter to the leadership at SVMOW, listing several people by name, including our dedicated social work team members Vanessa and Fiona; Maria, who always takes his calls; Paula, who never fails to ask how he is feeling and whether there is anything he needs; and Veronica, who oversees the program that serves so many military vets like himself and other vulnerable seniors across Los Angeles County. “I have always been a lukewarm Christian at best,” he wrote. “But witnessing your service to the community as a loving organization has given me a deeper connection to what is holy - Love, Mike.”

We are honored to serve Mike and many others like him who sacrificed to serve us.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TIES: The Crucial Role of Corporate Support for St. Vincent Meals on Wheels

In the heart of Southern California, where industrial innovation meets environmental stewardship, the Pacific Environmental Management Association (PEMA) exemplifies what can be achieved when businesses commit to their communities. Since its inception in 1991, PEMA has become the region's largest and most active environmental trade association, distinguishing itself by driving a substantial philanthropic agenda, particularly through its support of St. Vincent Meals on Wheels (SVMOW).

PEMA's engagement with SVMOW is deeply embedded in its organizational framework. This partnership began when PEMA Board Member Jose De Loera personally delivered meals for SVMOW and championed the cause. Motivated by the charitable interests of its Board Members, PEMA quickly recognized SVMOW as a central charitable focus, incorporating it into its annual charity initiatives, especially their highly anticipated charity golf tournament. These events not only showcase PEMA's commitment to environmental and industry issues, they also raise essential funds to support local charities like SVMOW.

Corporate donors such as PEMA play an essential role in the mission of St. Vincent Meals on Wheels. SVMOW is committed to preparing and delivering hot meals and daily contact to hungry, homebound Angelenos. However, this mission demands substantial financial support. Contributions from organizations like PEMA offer SVMOW the stability and resources necessary to keep providing food and compassion to clients throughout L.A. County.

"It's about nourishing the mind, body, and soul."

Personal testimonials from PEMA members illustrate the impact of this partnership. One



member, who has actively volunteered with SVMOW, describes the experience as "humbling." The commitment and compassion observed among SVMOW's staff—from the kitchen to the delivery teams—strengthened this member's determination to enhance support, reinforcing the importance of their collaboration. "It's about nourishing the mind, body, and soul," they noted, emphasizing that the connection made through delivering these meals fosters genuine human connection.

PEMA's commitment to SVMOW not only inspires financial contributions from its corporate partners but also encourages volunteerism. Engaging directly with SVMOW offers a unique opportunity to witness firsthand the profound impact these initiatives have on the community. "My hope is to motivate renewed energy among our members to provide not just essential financial support but also their time," the member shared.

The message is clear: Corporate partners play a pivotal role in sustaining the mission of St. Vincent Meals on Wheels, demonstrating the transformative potential of corporate philanthropy. By prioritizing giving alongside business objectives, PEMA enriches lives and reaffirms its commitment to supporting strong, resilient communities.



Donor Advised Funds Feed Lots of Seniors!

With a Donor Advised Fund (DAF), you can make a charitable gift without specifying a particular charity. Over time, you can then direct your gifts to charities you want to support, like St. Vincent Meals on Wheels (SVMOW). Every year, we receive many wonderful gifts this way and we always thank our DAF donors.

If you have a DAF, consider sharing a portion of it with SVMOW today. Also, think about your legacy. You can name SVMOW as the beneficiary of your DAF when you pass on, creating a fund that will feed many older persons long into the future.

Make your giving journey purposeful today!

To learn more, contact Julie Delgadillo, Director of Development at
213-484-7112 or jdelgadillo@svmow.org

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Tyan Loh

"What can I do to serve?"

Tyan Loh, a Vancouver native, often ponders, "What can I do to serve?" Her experience in regional management at Starbucks inspired her to engage with communities in Canada and the U.S. When she moved to L.A., she found various volunteer opportunities, including the AIDS Walk and A Place Called Home. Living in Los Angeles exposed her to both vibrant and challenging aspects of the city.

We recently sat down with "T," as she is fondly known here at St. Vincent Meals on Wheels, for a Q&A about volunteering and giving back.

How did you come to volunteer for St. Vincent Meals on Wheels?

Well, I asked myself, as I often do, "What can I do to help?" I learned about volunteer opportunities at St. Vincent Meals on Wheels and decided to give it a try. Initially, I thought the tasks involved mostly delivering meals to homebound clients, primarily seniors who couldn't prepare food for

themselves. However, after going on a route, I discovered that bringing a meal to someone who is alone and vulnerable means so much more than just food.

On my first day going out on a route, I approached the door of a longtime client who seemed to be anticipating my arrival. When I looked at her face, I noticed she had been crying. I asked what was wrong, and she told me her daughter had recently passed away, leaving her unable to shake the sadness. In that moment, I realized she had been waiting to share this with me because she had no one else to talk to about her profound loss.

I handed her the meal and gave her a hug, feeling a connection with her. Our interaction was simple yet profound. I believe that much of what St. Vincent Meals on Wheels does captures the essence of the simplicity and profundity of being human. It involves so much more than just delivering food. Although I had never met her before, our encounter felt familiar. I experienced an immediate sense of empathy and a desire to show her that I understood and cared about her.

Have you encountered any unexpected benefits as a result of volunteering?

Yes, the eagerness from clients surprised me. Many, like the client I met on my first day, are "waiting for us," revealing the various forms of loneliness. I now understand that uplifting someone is an unexpected benefit for both the client and myself.

Volunteering regularly for St. Vincent Meals on Wheels seems like a big commitment.

I'm more than willing to commit. It gives my life purpose, and I feel grateful for that. Volunteering is transformative. It allows us to connect on a human level—providing compassion and understanding is a gift.

Is there anything else you'd like to share to inspire others to volunteer?

I am impressed by the dedication of the staff and leadership at SVMOW, especially volunteer coordinator Sonia Sanchez. She creates a welcoming atmosphere. My interactions with Sonia, the staff, and the clients are exceptional. They motivate me to uplift others.



ST. VINCENT MEALS ON WHEELS AND CEDARS-SINAI:

A Transformative "Food is Medicine" Partnership



The "Food is Medicine" pilot partnership between Cedars-Sinai Hospital and St. Vincent Meals on Wheels (SVMOW) has been pivotal in supporting orthopedic trauma patients during recovery. This program highlights how integrated healthcare and community partnerships can transform patient outcomes.

Clinical social worker Caryn Lindsey, from the Department of Orthopedic Surgery, led the preparation for Cedars-Sinai's search for a partner that shared its holistic vision for patient care. St. Vincent Meals on Wheels emerged as an ideal collaborator due to its person-centered and compassionate approach to client care. "In our search, we discovered that SVMOW's focus on comprehensive support, where every meal serves as a conduit for connection, encouragement, and healing, made them an ideal partner for this pilot," Caryn notes.

Launched in early 2024, this pilot program catered to over 50 low-income orthopedic trauma patients, providing them with 12 days of medically-tailored meals during the critical early days of recovery. Meals included Ensure Surgery shakes, selected to bolster recovery and enhance nutritional intake. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with the vast majority of patients completing a survey indicating that the service had a positive impact on their recovery. Fiona George, a member of the SVMOW social work team, and Veronica Dover, SVMOW's

Executive Director, have been leading this initiative. The pilot program was organized and directed by Caryn Lindsey, with strong support from Katie Hren, Associate Director, and Krystal Green, Program Manager, both part of the Community Connect Program, which is under the Office of Health Equity. The project was guided by Dr. Christina Harris, Vice President and Chief Health Equity Officer at Cedars-Sinai. This reflects both organizations' commitment to addressing the social determinants of health that impact patient well-being.

The partnership addresses challenges like malnutrition and food insecurity by delivering hot meals to patients' homes, aiding their recovery and easing the burden on caregivers. The success of the program has led to a grant from the Cedars-Sinai Office of Health Equity, with Katie and Krystal's departments providing ongoing support through additional grant funding directly to SVMOW.

This initiative goes beyond meal delivery, serving as a model for effective community and hospital collaboration to enhance health outcomes. It embodies the "Food is Medicine" philosophy, empowering patients to recover in their homes.

SVMOW aims to inspire similar partnerships across communities in need, demonstrating that we can go #BeyondtheMeal to promote health and resilience.



ST. VINCENT MEALS ON WHEELS

Presents
**THE FOURTH ANNUAL
 "HOLLYWOOD UNDER
 THE STARS"
 GALA FUNDRAISER**

Get ready for an unforgettable evening as St. Vincent Meals on Wheels presents the fourth annual "Hollywood Under the Stars" fundraiser at the legendary Paramount Studios lot.

Join us for a culinary adventure featuring an array of dishes crafted by nearly a dozen of the most renowned chefs and pâtissiers from Los Angeles. Savor exquisite tastings and delight in expertly mixed signature cocktails while dancing under the starlit sky to the rhythms of a live 10-piece band, presented by the de Bois All Stars!

This amazing outdoor event will be supported by both new and returning corporate and community

sponsors. Join us for an evening full of fun as we celebrate compassion and community.

For more information about sponsorship opportunities, please email Julie Delgadillo, Director of Development, at jdelgadillo@svmow.org. To purchase tickets for "Hollywood Under the Stars," visit www.svmow.org or scan the QR code.



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 TO PURCHASE
 YOUR TICKETS
 TODAY!



VOLUNTEER



You can make a difference! Grow your skills and advocate for the poor. The mission of St. Vincent Meals on Wheels is to prepare and deliver nutritious meals to homebound seniors and other vulnerable residents across Los Angeles regardless of age, illness, disability, race, religion or ability to pay. www.svmow.org

DONATE NOW
**to Send Food and
 Love to L.A.'s Hungry**



Over 2,000 homebound seniors across L.A. depend on St. Vincent Meals on Wheels—and you—for a lifeline of nourishing hot meals and wellness checks. Send food and love to L.A.'s hungry seniors—please make a tax-deductible gift today.

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NEWS AND CURRENT EVENTS FOR ST. VINCENT MEALS ON WHEELS



A Message From **Veronica Dover**

Dear Friends,

As spring blooms, we celebrate the season and the vibrant stories that fuel our mission at St. Vincent Meals on Wheels.

In this edition of the Bread Basket, discover Mike, a veteran whose life is enriched by our services thanks to your support. His journey reflects the impact of your generosity.

Despite disruptions from recent L.A. Fires, we continued delivering meals to displaced, vulnerable clients. Our team's resilience ensured that no senior was left behind.

Our partnership with the Pacific Environmental Management Association (PEMA) is essential. Their annual charity golf tournament helps us deliver food and love throughout L.A. county.

In our "Volunteer Spotlight," discover Tyan Loh, whose dedication embodies the spirit of our volunteer team. Each delivery is transformed into a meaningful connection thanks to volunteers like Tyan.

Directing Donor Advised Funds (DAF) to us is impactful, enabling continued support for homebound seniors. Learn how to direct funds to SVMOW in this edition.

We're partnering with Cedars-Sinai on a "Food is Medicine" pilot program to advance health equity for low-income orthopedic trauma patients.

Join us on our journey—visit our kitchen or help with meal deliveries to experience the joy our program brings. We deeply appreciate your commitment, which makes our service possible.

May this spring bring you warmth and joy, just as you bring to many with your generosity.

Warmly,

Veronica