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## Interfaith Communities Join Together to Help the Homeless this Holiday Season

Submitted by Jen Boxerman



Volunteers help serve dinner to over 30 guests at the 10th annual Winter Nights Shelter at Temple Isaiah.

homeless on their campuses during the coldest months of the year through the Winter Nights Shelter program, a project of the Social Justice Alliance of the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County.

The interfaith liaison at San Ramon Valley Islamic Center, Hina Khan-Mukhtar, really appreciates the shared values among the three Abrahamic faiths. "It's important to all of us to show gratitude for our blessings and then to also share those blessings with others who may not be as fortunate we are. Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the East Bay have been able to break bread together on numerous occasions ... it's nice to now take that same generosity and try to fill the hearts and tummies of the homeless in our communities."

Terry Clark, of LOPC and coordinator of Neighbor to Neighbor among the three faiths noted, "The unfolding journey of our learning and sharing together over these past several years has served to deepen all of our own faiths while enjoying the values and beliefs common among each of us, leading our faith communities inevitably together to identify common concerns where we can collectively engage in cooperative efforts on behalf of those disadvantaged or in need. The Dec. 26 shelter dinner became an obvious opportunity to address one of those concerns in the East Bay area, and it's a joy to experience the enthusiasm of all the participants in this common effort to help others less fortunate."

For information about Mountain View Emergency Shelter in Martinez, a service of Shelter, Inc. Contra Costa, visit [www.shelterincofccc.org](http://www.shelterincofccc.org). Learn more about Winter Nights Shelter, a service of Contra Costa Interfaith Housing, at [www.ccinterfaithhousing.org](http://www.ccinterfaithhousing.org).

Almost three years ago members of three Contra Costa faith communities, Temple Isaiah of Lafayette, San Ramon Valley Islamic Center and Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church came together to create Neighbor to Neighbor, an interfaith learning and action group dedicated to deepening ties between people of faith, identifying and discarding shallow stereotypes, and doing social justice work together in our community.

Activities have included study of each other's faiths, joint sponsorship of scholar lectures, worship at each other's services and participation in workshops on civil discourse. On Dec. 26 members of Neighbor to Neighbor, along with representatives from other Contra Costa faith communities provided and served dinner for the clients at the Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter in Martinez. Rabbi Judy Shanks of Temple Isaiah said, "This [was] the first small step of what we hope will be many opportunities for Neighbor to Neighbor to really to have an impact on the quality of life for all our neighbors as we join together to combat poverty, hunger and homelessness in concert with government agencies and other non-profits."

The interfaith community, including LOPC and Temple Isaiah, also comes together to host some of our county's



Aliza Metzner interacts with Winter Nights youth during her family's stay at Temple Isaiah.



Phyllis Ceasar, Shirley Bolton and Judy Berg help serve dessert for Winter Nights guests at Temple Isaiah. Photos provided

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