

PHOTO ALBUM

by Nagy



Viola Blythe

Community Services

Photo by Al Nagy



Ron Burda — Mercury News

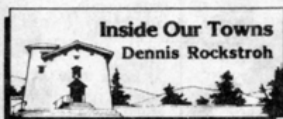
FEEDING THE HUNGRY — Volunteers Ray Rodriguez and Mary Adamson prepare boxes from sparsely stocked shelves at the Viola Blythe Community Service Center in Newark, which is asking for donations of canned food.

Age doesn't hamper women's service

Broken and busted, champions of the underdog in southern Alameda County say more — not less — help and money are needed to aid the growing number of poor and homeless.

Viola Blythe of Newark has been helping to feed the hungry for decades, but is now recovering from bones broken in a fall. And **Mary Hewitt** of Fremont hopes that her arrest Tuesday will focus attention on the plight of the homeless.

Hewitt was among 12 people busted on trespassing charges in the Alameda County Board of Supervisors chambers during a debate on the county's budget. After sitting all day through the debate, she was hauled off by Oakland police just after 5 p.m. and booked and fingerprinted in the city jail before she



and the others were released about 8:30 p.m.

Hewitt, 66, the retired director of Tri-City Volunteers, said she was protesting the supervisors' cutting of \$658,000 once budgeted to feed and shelter the county's 8,000 homeless residents.

"It's unbearable to see cuts like this come year after year," said Hewitt. "I was just disgusted. I recently retired and I thought it's time to say something."

Hewitt said police were "very, very polite," dinner in jail was "delightful" and no one leaned over and asked her, "What are you in for, lady?"

Blythe, 74, founder of the Viola Blythe Community Service Center in Newark, a food bank for the poor, fell Saturday while moving furniture and broke three vertebrae.

"This is the most painful thing that has happened to me," she said Wednesday. She has a hard time getting around but has help at home. "My husband (Stanley) is a real good nurse."

Before the accident, Blythe used to go every day to the service center named after her.

"I won't be going for a while. That's for sure," she said.

Blythe's injuries came at a bad time. The bad economy translates into a growing demand for food.

Debbie Carvalho, Blythe's daughter and director of the center, said they serve 500 hungry people a month. The number of people asking for help has risen about 10 percent over the last six months, and she is running out of canned food.

You can help. Bring as much canned food as you can to the center at 37365 Ash St., Newark. It's open from noon to 4 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The phone number is (415) 794-3437.

Write **Dennis Rockstroh** at 39355 California St., Suite 301, Fremont 94538 or call him at (415) 790-7304. The fax number is (415) 790-7332.

Community Briefs



JOHN A. RAMOS Jr. — Staff

Singing along with Santa: About 160 kids met up with Mr. and Mrs. Claus and the clown, Lolly-By-Golly, last Wednesday night for a Christmas party for needy children at the Viola

Blythe Community Service Center. The children each received a filled stocking, a wrapped gift and a stuffed animal. They were also treated to cookies and punch.

Monday, June 14, 1971



SALVATION ARMY Field Representative is presenting Hal Madson with a plaque known as the "Others Award" for his 18 years of service to the community of Newark as the Salvation Army Committee Chairman. Mrs. Vi-

ola Blythe is being presented a certificate of appreciation for her years of service as the Newark Salvation Army Committee Liaison Representative.

A WORD FROM "THE
SALVATION ARMY LADY"

We keep busy,
so many peo-
ple need help.

It is heartbreaking, but at the same time very inspiring to see how many are trying to help themselves, whenever and however they can, and to see the efforts they make to help those they believe are in greater need.

We are so thankful for the ACAP grant we received. Now, for at least another year, we can continue functioning at 7322 Thornton Ave. Without this grant, we would be hard put to maintain a "storefront" in which to conduct our work.

Again, I want to remind you that our hours here are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. But I'm always available after hours, or on weekends, at 797-3377, in case of need.

Viola Blythe

Center needs food gifts

NEWARK — The Viola Blythe Service Center needs fresh fruit, canned meats, canned juices and cereals for its needy children and adults.

Originally organized by Viola Blythe in 1954, the center formally came into being in 1991, when the city of Newark allocated a small building for office and food storage.

The center's goal is to promote individual and family health and well-being via its public and corporate adult and infant food solicitation and distribution efforts, warm clothing provision and diaper availability.

Donations can be dropped off Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays between noon and 4 p.m. at 37365 Ash St., Newark. For information call 794-3437.

Honor well-deserved

Editor: Your columnist Percy Ross really knows his business. Newark's wonderful Viola Blythe has just received a Percy Ross Humanitarian Award for "outstanding efforts in helping your fellow man."

Nominated by a Newark citizen for her continuous work aiding the poor, hungry and homeless, Viola received a medallion and note of special recognition. Columnist Ross said, "For all that you do to help make this world a better place, stand up and take a bow. I applaud you and your efforts."

If anybody well deserves applause, it's our Viola. I think everybody who knows her will rejoice in the good news.

**Pat Kite
Newark**

The Fremont Travelers, part of the Sierra Road Riders Association, is one of hundreds of groups that elect representatives for different districts, have charter member "outriders" and, in some cases, act as lobbyists on political issues affecting motorcycle riders.

Proceeds from the event go to the Viola Blythe center, which aids the poor with clothing and runs a women's center, and the Newark Second Chance counseling center for battered women and drug abusers.

WINNING HUG



JOHN A. RAMOS — Staff

Loving arms: Viola Blythe, Newark's top volunteer, receives a big hug from her grand-

daughter Desiree Carvalho, 9. She was honored for 37 years of service to the poor.

Viola Blythe — a very special Newark Volunteer of the Year

By Mary Jo Hill
STAFF WRITER

FOR 37 years Viola Blythe has fed and clothed the poor, answering their calls for help at all hours of the day and night, and listening sympathetically to their tales of hardship.

The name "Blythe" means hope to those in need, and on Friday night the city of Newark recognized her work by giving her top honors as Volunteer of the Year and naming the award after her.

Blythe's award was announced at the Newark Anniversary Ball in the Newark-Fremont Hilton, along with recognition of the volunteer work done by eight finalists.

Five community leaders judged the nominations for the award, which was established in 1985, and decided Blythe's work was worthy of permanent recognition.

"When you say Viola Blythe that's the meaning of volunteerism. To name that award for her is just that," said Don DeBolt, who was a judge representing the Fremont Jaycees.

Future winners will be honored with a plaque entitled The Viola Blythe Volunteer of the Year Award.

By now, almost everybody in the area is probably familiar with Blythe's life story — the tale of

how her mother died and Blythe was placed in an Oklahoma orphanage until being rescued by an older sister.

A 9-year-old Blythe left the orphanage, vowing to return for her friends. She couldn't keep that promise but she has helped hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other people since then.

Today Blythe is 74 years old and lives in Newark, just down the street from the community service center that bears her name and is meant to take the place of her garage as a distribution center.

Clothing, shoes, canned goods and toys fill the shelves of the center at Ash Street Park. Blythe's daughter, Debbie Carvalho, is the center's program director, but her mother is often there handing out goods and chatting with clients.

Although Blythe knows she offers badly needed material goods, she said people are also drawn to her for another reason.

"They come and just pour their heart out to me. It's a private thing," said Blythe, who said she keeps these talks honest and confidential.

And people don't forget the woman, who brought them a Thanksgiving food basket or gave their child tennis shoes to wear to school.

Meet eight others honored as top volunteers in Newark
/A-12

Please see **Blythe**, A-12

Blythe: Help is only a phone call away for needy

Continued from A-1

Blythe was astonished at the number of cards, candies and flowers that poured in when she recently injured her back.

At a more individual level, Blythe recounted a visit to a poker run sponsored by local motorcyclists to raise funds for her work. A young woman came up and told Blythe she would never forget the help both she and her children had received.

"This is what makes this woman happy, giving to other people," said Patricia Kite, who nominated Blythe for the award and who is also secretary of the board that

oversees Blythe's community service center.

Recent statistics by the board show that the numbers of people coming to the center asking for help are on the rise, probably paralleling the increase in unemployment, said Kite, who lives in Newark.

Although the center has enough clothing to share with people, there is a constant need for more donations of canned and boxed food, said Kite.

Cindy Gygax of Newark has known Blythe for 13 years and described watching children's eyes light up at Christmas parties as they received presents, while Blythe sat by smiling.

"She's very caring and non-judgmental. She's just there for you," said Gygax, who is a board

“When you say Viola Blythe that's the meaning of volunteerism. To name that award for her is just that.”

Don DeBolt

of the Fremont Jaycees who helped judge the volunteers

member for Blythe's center.

In her nomination application for Blythe, Kite described her as "an encyclopedia of shelter advice," and later said with just a phone call Blythe is able to find the necessary help.

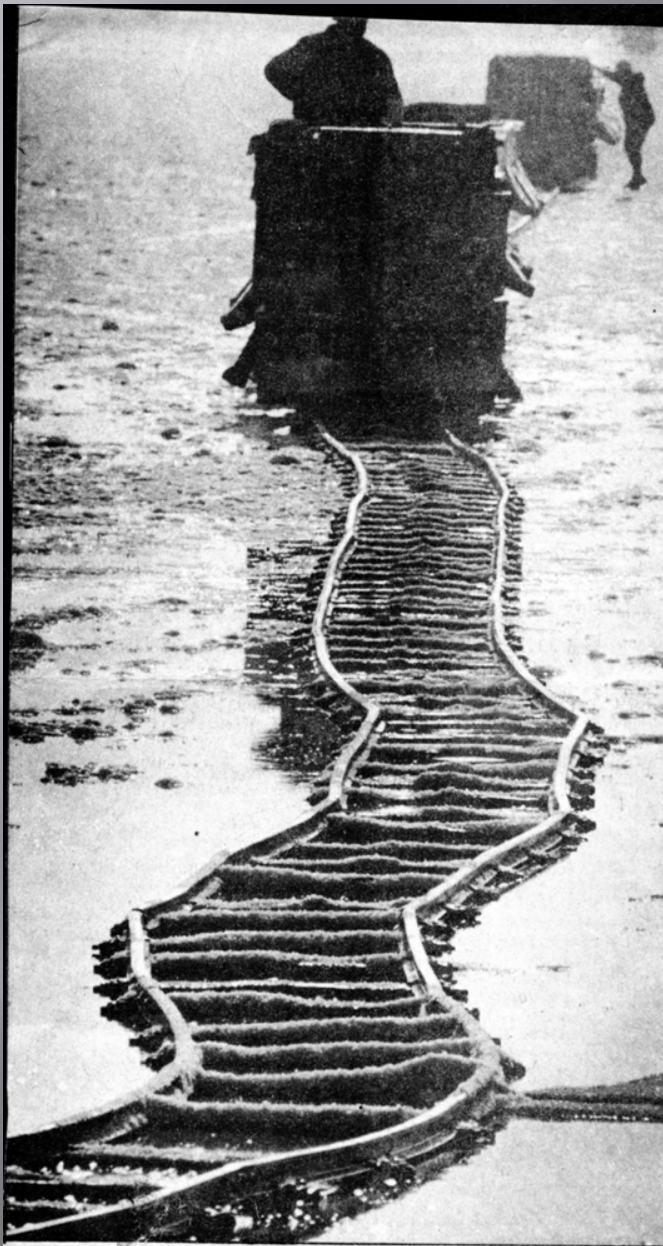
Kite told a story about a woman who had just had surgery and was sleeping in a car with her children. On the basis of only a phone call and Blythe's word, somebody

took the woman into their house, said Kite.

Blythe's husband, Stanley, often lends a helping hand, and she talks about her "three beautiful grandchildren."

Meanwhile, as Blythe faces all the fuss and bother of yet another award, she has just one small, and undoubtedly impossible, request.

"I'd just rather be way in the background," said Blythe.



A worker navigates a salt cart along the track.



John A. Ramos Jr. — staff photos

Workers build a track for the salt carts to use in traveling from the ponds.

Public getting peek at the salt business

By Dave Becker
Staff writer

NEWARK — Like any good farmer, Bob Douglass watches the skies at harvest time. Just as wine grapes can be attacked by a late fungus or corn can turn into rotting mush, too much rain at the wrong time can mean trouble for his crop.

But most farmers don't have to worry about the fruit of their fields melting.

Douglass is manager of property for the Leslie Salt Co., and this is the time of year Leslie collects the product of years of natural evaporation of San Francisco Bay water.

Leslie will show Bay Area residents how salt gets from the Bay to their table during the company's annual open house Saturday.

From 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., workers at the Leslie plant, 7200 Central Ave., will show visitors how salt is sucked out of Bay water and turned into a table-ready product. There also will be exhibits of antique harvesting equipment at the company museum.

The open house is being held in conjunction with the company's "Share the Harvest" food drive, in which employees donate canned goods to the Viola Blythe

"We're a lot like any agricultural business; we depend a lot on the weather."

— Bob Douglass,
property manager

Community Service Center in Newark. Leslie will donate \$1 for every pound of food donated by visitors and employees.

About 3,000 people took the tour last year, most of them area residents who drive by the salt beds or Leslie's plant regularly but never understood how the harvesting process works, said Aileen Fox, community affair representative for the company.

It takes four or five years to extract salt from the Bay, explained Douglass. Water is sent through a series of levees, where evaporation gradually increases the salinity through each step.

By the time the water reaches the final stage, called the crystallizer bed, it's in a highly concentrated solution called pickle



Carts of salt await processing.

where the salt naturally settles at the floor of the pond.

Harvesting machines suck the salt off the bottom of the holding ponds so it can dry in a huge pile before it is crushed and purified to the stage necessary for industrial or table use.

Douglass said the whole process is timed so the salt is ready to be harvested in fall, when the weather is most likely to cooperate with the process.

"The point is to get the crop in before it rains," he said, adding that crews work 24 hours a day during harvest. "We're a lot like any agricultural business; we depend a lot on the weather."



Viola Blythe, of the Salvation Army's Tri-City Service Center in Newark, shows

Robert Atkinson, exalted ruler for the Fremont Elks, what the group's recent

donation bought for those people the Salvation Army serves.

Elks' bingo profits go to charities

Bingo is a game that's fun for the players and profitable for its sponsors. At least that's true at the Fremont Elks' Lodge.

Members host bingo games every Thursday, beginning at 7 p.m. for the "early birds," as their major fund-raising tool. They were able to make the recent holiday season brighter for four local organizations with donations totaling \$7,435.

The Salvation Army's Tri-City Service Center, located in Newark, received \$3,000. Tri-City Volunteers received \$2,000; California

Children's Services, \$1,435; and Senior Nutritional Activities Program (SNAP), a home-delivered meals service for senior citizens directed by the Family Tutorial Program, \$1,000.

The organizations had made requests to the local Elks lodge for help funding ongoing projects. For the Salvation Army and Tri-City Volunteers, that means providing food and clothing to those who can't afford either.

"We have always worked closely with the Salvation Army," said Robert Atkinson, ex-

alted ruler of Fremont's Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, an organization that was founded in 1868 in New York.

"That association goes back to World War I when the commander of the Salvation Army, then a woman named Evangeline Booth, commended the Elks for their help," said Atkinson. A statement made by the commander noted that the Salvation Army's "success" in meeting its goals during the war were due to "the splendid, practical and tangible aid rendered by the Elks."

City helping woman feed the hungry

Newark leases building for food distribution

By Nancy L. Nelson
Staff writer

NEWARK — Viola Blythe knows children don't end up in orphanages anymore.

But she can't forget the time she spent in one, or the children she left behind when her older sister took her away to a real family.

"I wanted to take them all home with me," Blythe said. She couldn't, of course, but in the years since, she has dedicated her life to helping people who have nothing.

At 73, she is still at it with help from friends, family and local businesses who donate time, money and food.

The City of Newark is helping, too, as it prepares to lease a small building to Blythe for \$1 a year. City staff has recommended the council approve the transaction at its Thursday meeting.

Blythe can hardly wait until January, when the building is expected to be ready and she'll be able to move the boxes and barrels of canned food that fill her garage.

The building at the end of Ash Street near her home is small, "but it's better than working out of your home," Blythe said.

It will also mean she can help more people.

"Oh, there'll be lots more people. People will find out," she said.

More volunteers will want to help her, too, Blythe said.

They will use the building to distribute food, clothing, bedding and vouchers for gasoline. Blythe will also refer people to



Ben Margot — staff photo

Viola Blythe sorts food in her garage in preparation for her move to a building being supplied by the City of Newark.

other services that can help them.

The city is helping Blythe get tax-exempt status and has asked her to set up a board of directors, Newark Human Services Officer Olga Estrada-Wallin said.

Newark will also pay for liability insur-

ance and all utilities for the building except telephone and janitor service.

Meanwhile, city workers have been repairing and remodeling the building to make it better suited as a distribution center, Estrada-Wallin said.

"The city is trying to promote human services and quality of life in Newark," she said.

"When Viola came before the City Council (in June), we thought 'What an excellent partnership,'" Estrada-Wallin said.

Leslie uses salt harvest time to benefit needy in Newark

By Neil Chethik
Mercury News Staff Writer

There are 2,000 uses for salt, from paint to paper to popcorn. This week, Leslie Salt Co. hopes to add another: raising money for needy people in Newark.

The salt company is holding its annual harvest-time open house on Saturday, and it's donating \$1 to the new Viola Blythe Community Service Cen-

ter for every pound of canned food donated by visitors.

"We can buy a lot of shoes with that money," says Blythe, a bubbly 73-year-old Newark resident who has been doing local volunteer work since 1946. "It will sure keep us in salt."

Mostly, though, the money will go toward food, clothes, bedding, and gas and shelter vouchers, which will be distributed from Blythe's garage in

Newark's Old Town section. She's still waiting for the city to fix up an abandoned building at Ash Street Park that it has promised to let her use as a new distribution center.

Leslie is offering the \$1-per-pound payoff for the first 3,000 pounds of food collected during the open house, which runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. The Blythe center also will get the canned food.

Those who take the Leslie tour will get something, too: a free peek inside one of the Bay Area's oldest industries.

The most startling vision is the gigantic seven-story pile of salt. It looks so much like a mountain of snow that a department store once used it to advertise ski wear.

See SALT, Page 2

Woman makes career of helping

BLYTHE, from Page 1B

building at Ash Street Park for a food and clothing distribution center.

Council members said they wouldn't even consider the proposal from most people. Because Blythe was asking, however, they've decided to approve it.

"What amazes me is the purity in which she does things, the goodness of her heart," says Councilman Alan Nagy, who has known Blythe for 20 years. "Somebody who is that well-intentioned — I guess that's why you don't say no."

Blythe almost never says no.

Shortly after she moved to Newark with her husband in 1946, a local builder and friend gave her \$200 and asked her to put on a Christmas party for a group of local unemployed people.

"I went shopping," Blythe remembers. "I got toys and I got food. And every one of those people got a Christmas present, even the adults."

From that point on, her mission was clear. She took homeless children into her home. She became a volunteer for the Salvation Army. The Newark Police Department sent needy people her way.

But Christmastime is always the special time. Ann Salvi, a Fremont mother of four, says Blythe came to her family's rescue last year — with elaborate Christmas baskets — when her husband was laid off after 15 years as a machine operator.

"We're middle-class people," Salvi says. "It was real hard for us. For the first time in my life, I saw the possibility of being homeless and foodless. We didn't get to the homeless point, but we did get foodless. And that's when Viola came in."

Besides the baskets of holiday food and gifts, Viola gave Salvi some good advice. "She said that things would get better, they always do. She was very positive, and that meant a lot to me," Salvi says.

And things did get better. Salvi's husband has a new job.

For her work, Blythe has been

honored by the city of Newark, the Salvation Army, the Newark Rotary Club, the Newark Jaycees and other organizations. But no honor was greater for Blythe than being asked to throw out the opening pitch last September at an Oakland A's game.

"That was the biggest thrill I ever had in my entire life," says Blythe, a baseball fan. "The players are so big — I never saw such giants. I felt like a midget. They invited me to sit in the dugout during the game, but I wanted to sit with my family."

Her family has made lots of sacrifices over the years. The phone rings at all hours. The doorbell rings all the time, too. But, rather than resenting the interruptions, Blythe's family has joined her

cause.

Her husband, Stanley, was honored by the Salvation Army in 1986 for his volunteer work. Her daughter, Debbie Carvalho, works for the Salvation Army. And even her grandson, Danny Carvalho, helps his grandmother move the boxes of food, clothing, furniture and other donations piled up in her garage.

Blythe says she doesn't remember her first impulse to help people, but she often thinks of the orphanage. The 10th of 11 children in her family, she was sent there at age 4, after her mother died during childbirth and her father deserted the family.

She says one of her sisters does the same kind of work she does. The rest, she adds, "think I'm kind of silly. I think I'm just being nice."

Viola Blythe's community service center, 37225 Ash St., Newark, 797-3377. Blythe has distributed Christmas and Thanksgiving baskets in Newark for 33 years. This year, she will distribute about 50 baskets to needy families in the Newark area. Baskets include "everything it takes to make a Thanksgiving dinner," Blythe said. She has paid in advance for Lucky's market certificates, redeemable for turkeys, hams or whatever meat products the families choose to accompany the contents of their baskets. Schools collected canned food for Blythe's project, as did the Leslie Salt Co. Blythe is now lining up families for the Christmas baskets and the holiday children's party she throws each year. Call to volunteer time or supplies.

League of Volunteers of Newark, 37400 Central Court, Newark; 793-

Got all they need



JOHN RAMOS — Staff

Newlyweds George and Nancy Pagan had all the household goods they needed from previous marriages, so they decided to help others when they got married May 4. Their 380 guests gave canned goods for the needy instead of wedding presents.

Blythe: She hadn't heard about award

Continued from A-1

years in Appalachia and a San Francisco woman who began a meals-on-wheels program for shut-in AIDS victims, Brown said.

Blythe was nominated because she's given half a century of her life feeding, clothing and caring for the poor in the East Bay, said to Patricia Kite, who nominated her.

Blythe's work began when she first moved to Newark in 1946. A friend gave her \$200 to buy and deliver gifts for the poor.

She began volunteering for the local branch of the Salvation Army. She later took over the Salvation Army office and ran it until the early '80s. During that same period, Blythe also ran a social service clearing house from her garage, collecting and distributing clothes and food to the poor, especially at Christmas and Thanksgiving. She was also a foster parent for five years.

Just 18 months ago, she and the city of Newark cooperated to establish the Viola Blythe Community Care Center, which furthers the work she started years earlier at her house on Ash Street.

Asked about being nominated for the award, Blythe said she was unaware of it.

The motivation for Blythe's apparently tireless work comes from her own sad past and a promise she never kept.

Blythe's mother died when she was four, leaving her and her nine brothers and sisters orphans. She and the youngest children were sent to an orphanage in Helen, Okla. for five years, until an older sister rescued her.

On her way out the door of the orphanage, the 9-year-old told her friends she would someday return to take them out, too.

"I shouldn't have promised something like that, something I couldn't do," Blythe said. "Ever since then, I can't stand to see people — especially children — hurt or abused.

"This is the only thing I don't like — the awards," Blythe said, who has been recovering in her home after breaking her back three weeks ago.

"My greatest reward is when people come up to me from 30 years ago and tell me they remember me and what I did for them."

The real heroes

THE HOLIDAYS are brimming with examples of kindness as people make the extra effort to help the poor, the hungry and the homeless.

We applaud those many bearers of good will throughout the East Bay.

But the real heroes are those people and programs that make the effort all year long. The list is lengthy, and we won't try to name them all. But a few recently in the news deserve special mention.

One of those is Viola Blythe, Newark's one-woman social service agency.

For years, Blythe has worked out of her home distributing donated goods to those who have nothing. At 73, she remembers her stay in an orphanage and the children she left behind, and she has dedicated her life to helping those in need.

This month, the city generously agreed to give Blythe some help by leasing her a small Ash Street building for \$1 a year. The city will provide liability insurance, pay the utilities and help her distribution program secure tax-exempt status.

The new center will be up and running after the first of the year, a reminder of one person's determination to make a difference and the city's willingness to meet the needs of all its citizens.

A similar partnership is operating in Fremont. Tri-City Homeless Coalition, with some financial help from local cities, has opened a day center for the homeless on Decoto Road.

THE CENTER provides laundry and shower facilities, meals and counseling with an emphasis on getting people back into the workforce. It will coordinate with area churches to house 60 people a night.

The volunteer organization formed last year to put on a winter relief program and has been in the forefront of the campaign to build a permanent shelter in Fremont.

We salute those people who take that spirit of selfless giving and carry it through the community all year long.

Newark party draws capacity-plus crowd

Cookie crumbs, memories all that's left

By Mary Jo Hill
Staff writer

NEWARK — A Christmas party for low-income children held at the Newark Community Center Tuesday night was so popular that people had to be turned away at the door.

Children munched cookies and sang Christmas carols during the party, and left the festivities carrying presents, said Viola Blythe, director of the community service center.

Each child took home a stocking stuffed with candy, a toy and a stuffed animal, she said.

A drawing was held for a huge stuffed elephant. The little boy who held the winning ticket came up to party organizers afterward and asked whether it would be all right if he gave the elephant to his mother for Christmas, said Blythe. "It touched all of us," she said.

Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus, alias Ellis and Gloria Baker of Newark,

Each child took home a stocking stuffed with candy, a toy and a stuffed animal.

mingled with the crowd and exchanged small talk about Christmas lists. They were back by popular demand after last year's party, said Blythe.

Organizers plan to make the Christmas party an annual event, she said.

There were 139 children who signed up for the party. About 50 children and their parents were turned away because fire regulations limited the number who could attend, said Blythe.

Gifts were donated by the Fremont Motorcycle Club, the Junior Women's Club of Newark and Fremont Ford, said Blythe.

Thanks to a good friend

Editor: Viola Blythe of Newark
has been so wonderful to me. I

would like you to print my poem to
thank her:

Viola

*When I'm in need and desper-
ate with nowhere I can go,*

*When I feel real despondent,
depression's very low.*

*When I've felt I've hit bottom,
is there anyone who'll care?*

*Shall I cry out my anguish?
Shall I even care?*

*For if I do, who'll help me?
Who'll raise my spirits high?*

*Why, none other than the car-
ing lady, the best, Viola Blythe.*

Peg Mandeville

Fremont

Center needs food gifts

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Warm heart — open hands

Viola Blythe, a warmhearted, open-handed citizen of the world who happens to live in Newark, has just been awarded a KRON, Channel 4, "For Those Who Care Award" for her years of gallant efforts to help others in need.

Explained Mrs. Blythe, "Pat Kite of Newark sent in my name. Then, last Thursday (Aug. 2), someone from KRON called me up and said 'Congratulations. You've just been chosen as one of eight Bay Area people out of over 400 names submitted for our special award. We're sending two checks for \$1,000 each . . . one for you and one for the charity of your choice, along with tickets for you and three guests to the black-tie awards program on Sunday, Sept. 30, at the Gift Center Pavilion in San Francisco.'"

According to Kite's application, Mrs. Blythe, an orphan herself, has helped somewhere between 27,000 and 33,000 people throughout the past 35 years.

"My husband, Stanley Blythe, had just gotten out of the Navy and started to work for Food Machinery at \$50 a week," she explained. "Then when our daughter was just 2 years old, we started taking in runaways and homeless kids. My husband's co-workers put up a sign on the cor-

ner that read 'Poor Farm' and had an arrow pointing towards our house."

What started out as a home operation has now grown to an operation with a board of directors headed by Newark City Councilman Al Nagy and including Leo Hinkle and Dan Archer (yes, the same Dan Archer noted above!) as members.

Blythe leased a building that now bears the identification, "Viola Blythe Community Service Center" from the City of Newark two years ago at \$1 a year. Monetary and material help come from a number of local businesses and organizations such as Fremont Ford, Leslie Salt, Fremont Travellers' Group (a motorcycle club) and even local school classes.

"People in need can get food, food vouchers, clothing and information about other help agencies and they don't have to go through a lot of red tape to get it," Blythe said. "We don't charge them a penny. My husband, now retired, helps a lot and my daughter, Debbie Carvalho, does all the paper work — the things I don't like to do. Then I can do what I like to do — to work directly with the people."

Woman lends hand to others

By Shawn Wirtz
Staff writer

NEWARK — Before joining the Salvation Army as a dedicated and often-commended volunteer, Viola Blythe was her own army.

The Newark woman celebrated her 73rd birthday Wednesday talking on the telephone to strangers who became friends after she offered them shelter in her home during the last half a century.

Since moving to Newark from Berkeley in 1945, Blythe estimates she has taken in a couple of hundred homeless teen-agers and families and offered food to several hundred more.

Her compassion earned her several awards and a chance to throw the first baseball out at the Oakland A's game against the Texas Rangers earlier this month for the team's Senior Appreciation Day. But Blythe isn't motivated by the recognition.

"I felt like crawling under something when I got out there and saw all those people," she said.

Blythe has never feared people despite her friends' concerns that she was inviting danger by opening her home to strangers.

"Everyone always thought it was so dangerous, me serving people from my home here, but I guess God takes care of you," she said.

While God may have been taking care of Blythe, she was taking care of everyone else. Orphaned at age 4 after her mother died in labor with her 11th child and her father deserted the family, Blythe has a soft spot for the homeless, she said.

"Sometimes we had wall-to-wall beds up there," she gestured south to the two-bedroom home on Ash Street just a few blocks away from her current house.

One time she took in a woman and her five kids whose father was in the veterans' hospital in San Francisco.

"She had enough money to get across the Dumbarton Bridge and she ran out of gas," Blythe said.

"She left the five kids in the car



John A. Ramos Jr. — staff photo

Viola Blythe juggles the baseball she pitched to an Oakland A's catcher when she was honored during Senior Appreciation Day.

and walked all the way to my house," she said.

"Stanley (her husband) came home and I had beds all over the place," she said.

Blythe's daughter Debbie Carvalho was an only child, but never felt like one, she said.

"It was a busy house," Carvalho said.

"There were always people coming in at all hours of the day and night."

She remembers one Christmas in

particular, when her family was just sitting down to Christmas dinner, when another family who hadn't eaten in several days arrived on their doorsteps. There wasn't enough food to go around, so the Blythes pulled up chairs for their visitors and left the house for a restaurant.

"It was one of our best Christmases," Carvalho said.

Holidays were especially busy for the family because they solicited donations from local businesses.

Harvest of salt benefits needy

■ Share the Harvest food drive and open house are scheduled

By Christine Young
STAFF WRITER

NEWARK — The century-old traditions of salt harvesting and giving to the needy will be revisited when Cargill Salt holds its fifth annual Share the Harvest food drive and open house this Saturday.

The company's goal is to collect 3,000 pounds of food, which will be distributed to the Viola Blythe Community Center in Newark and the Second Harvest Food Bank in San Mateo, said spokesperson Lori Johnson. Cargill Salt will match donations with \$1 per pound for the first 3,000 pounds collected.

Cargill recently changed its name from Leslie Salt.

"It helps us tremendously," said Debbie Carvalho, program director at the Viola Blythe center. "The food carries us through most of the holidays," she said.

Prepare food baskets

The center prepares food baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas, and the Cargill donation has enabled the center to help around 200 families during the holidays for the past three years, Carvalho said.

Eileen Fox, community affairs director at Cargill, said company employees also hold an in-house food drive for about a week.

On Saturday, visitors will be taken on 30- to 45-minute guided tours of the salt harvesting process. The company is open to the public at 9 a.m. and the last tour will leave at about 1:45 p.m. The company's open-air museum, which houses its antique salt-making equipment, will also be open to the public.

The bus tour will lead visitors out to the crystallizer beds, where the salt is harvested, Johnson said. The salt being harvested has undergone a five-year process which began in the late spring or early summer, when bay water was brought into intake ponds.

Water moved

"Over the five-year period, we just move the water from pond to pond. It's a totally natural process," Johnson explained. As the water is being moved, the sun and the wind work to evaporate the water.

At the end of four years, fully saturated brine, called pickle, results in the ponds. In April the pickle is brought into a crystallizing bed. The salt then begins to crystallize and the harvesting begins.

The process is a pretty unusual, Johnson said. The harvester, which looks like a tomato picker, breaks up the salt and transfers it

Please see **Salt**, B-2

Salt: Tradition continues

Continued from B-1

to conveyer belts, which spits the salt into miniature railcars. The cars then transport the salt into the wash plants.

Once the salt is washed, it is placed inside salt stacks for storage. These stacks are 90 feet high and about the size of two football fields.

The Newark company produces 700,000 tons of salt per year. Three percent of this is used for table salt, 35 percent for food pro-

cessing, 42 percent for industrial purposes, 10 percent for water conditioning and 10 percent for agriculture.

The event, which drew about 2,000 people last year, is free to the public. Visitors should wear comfortable clothes and shoes, such as jeans, jogging suits and tennis shoes.

Cargill is located on 7200 Central Ave. in Newark. Free parking is available on the premises. For more information, please call (510) 790-8192.



Photo by Al Nagy



Photo by Al Nagy

VIOLA BLYTHE CENTER



OCIONES
ADAS
SOMENTE

NO CAMPING
ALLOWED!!
DONATION
ACCEPTED
ONLY

Blythe
CITY SERVICE
CENTER

VIOLA
BLYTHE
OPEN



VIOLA BLYTHE CENTER

Photo by Al Nagy

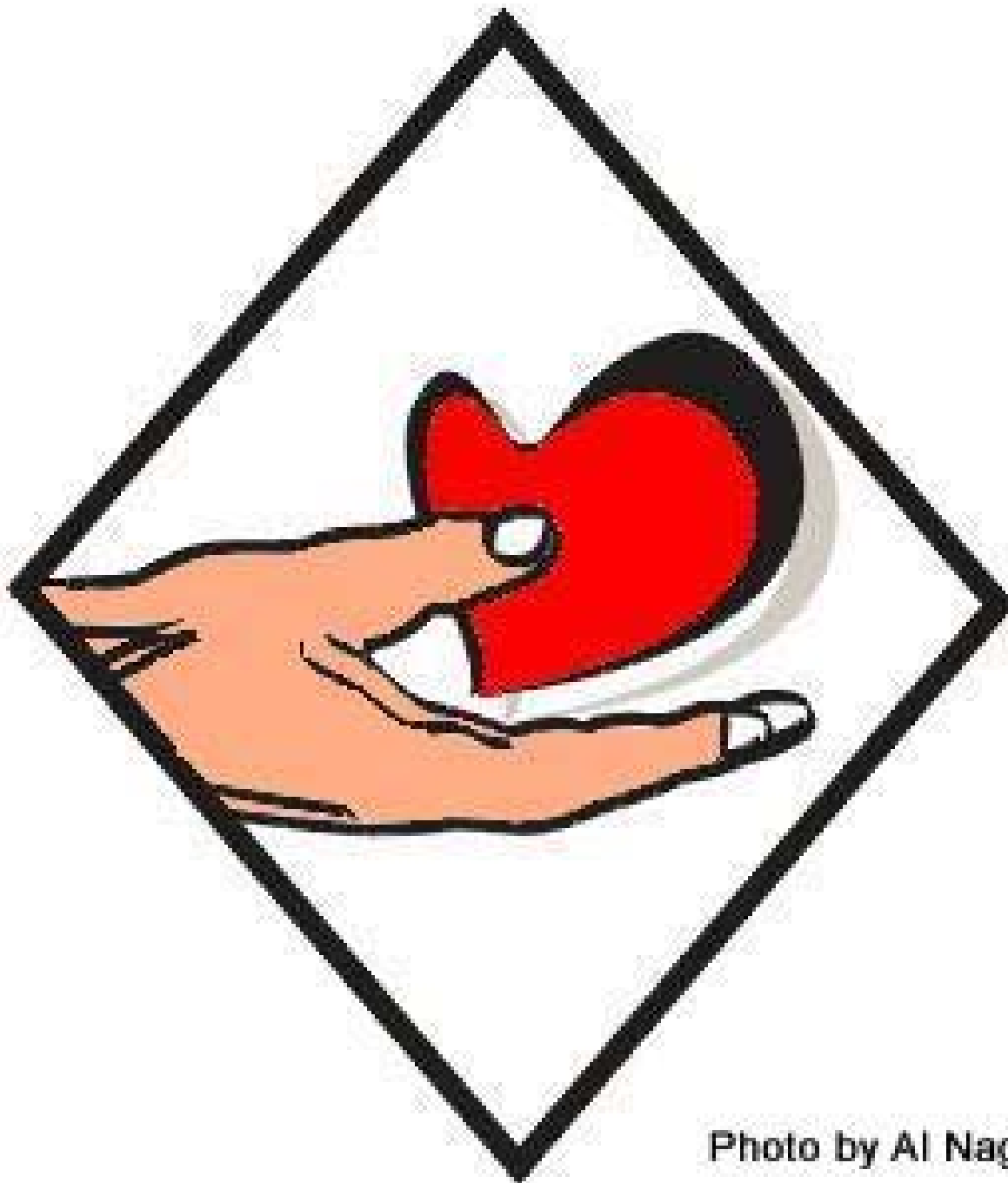


Photo by Al Nagy



JOHN A. RAMOS Jr. — Staff

Singing along with Santa: About 160 kids met up with Mr. and Mrs. Claus and the clown, Lolly-By-Golly, last Wednesday night for a Christmas party for needy children at the Viola

Blythe Community Service Center. The children each received a filled stocking, a wrapped gift and a stuffed animal. They were also treated to cookies and punch.

Newark Days Celebration, Inc.

Certificate of Participation

"All Aboard to Newark"



This Certificate Issued in Recognition of

Viola Blythe Community Service Center

as a Participant in the 42nd Annual

Newark Days Parade

on this 20th day of September, 1997

David L. Danielson

David L. Danielson
Newark Days Parade Chairman

Open heart surgery for altruist Viola Blythe

By Kristin Butler
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — Viola Blythe, who has spent more than half a century feeding, clothing and caring for the East Bay's poor, underwent open heart surgery Friday at Washington Hospital in Fremont.

Doctors replaced a heart valve and did bypass surgery on the 79-year-old altruist, the founder and guiding force behind the Viola Blythe Center in Newark. She was resting comfortably Wednesday afternoon, said her daughter, Debbie Carvalho.

"She's had a few ups and downs, but she seems to be doing really well for her



Blythe

age, exceptionally well," Carvalho said.

Blythe had been experiencing heart problems for some time, but didn't want to have surgery while her husband, Stanley, was terminally ill. He died March 31, 1995. Viola Blythe suffered a heart attack several

weeks ago, so the family decided to go ahead with surgery.

"It was a scary thing, a hard decision," Carvalho said.

Although Viola Blythe was slightly dis-

oriented after surgery because of her medication, she is in high spirits and may be sent home in a couple of days, her daughter said.

"She is sitting up in a chair and is doing a little bit of walking," Carvalho said. "She is looking forward to getting back to work."

Blythe's work began when she first moved to Newark in 1946. A friend gave her \$200 to buy and deliver gifts for the poor.

She began volunteering for the local branch of the Salvation Army. She later took over the Salvation Army office and ran it until the early 1980s. During that

same period, Blythe ran a social service clearing house from her garage, collecting and distributing clothes and food to the poor, especially at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Six years ago, Blythe and the city of Newark cooperated to establish the Viola Blythe Community Care Center, which furthers the work she started years earlier at her house on Ash Street.

Well-wishers can send cards and gifts to Blythe's Newark home or the center at 37365 Ash St., Newark. It is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 4 p.m. and accepts donations of food, clothing or money. For more information, call 794-3437.

CONGRATULATIONS TO:

Nancy and George Pagan on their recent wedding where they generously shared their special day by asking their wedding guests to donate food in lieu of wedding gifts. With the Newark Hilton Grand Ballroom packed with 380 friends, several truckloads of food and cash gifts were donated which LOV distributed to Second Chance, the Salvation Army and the Viola Blythe Community Service Center. What a wonderful way to start a life together — by sharing your happiness with others. Best wishes Nancy and George — and thank you.

Viola Blythe Center marks anniversary

The Viola Blythe Community Service Center, 37365 Ash St. in Newark, will celebrate its first anniversary with an open house from 2 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 20. Special volunteer awards will be given.

Thanks to very special people

Editor: Viola Blythe Community Service Center gives a million thanks to Nancy and George Pagan of Newark for having their wedding guests bring charitable donations in lieu of wedding gifts.

For our hungry, frightened, homeless and helpless, we received 560 cans and food packages from the Pagan's friends and family. It takes special people to think of others on a joyous wedding day. The Pagans are special people. We are grateful, as are our clientele who eat today because of you.

Pat Kite

Leslie uses salt harvest time to benefit needy in Newark

By Neil Chethik
Mercury News Staff Writer

There are 2,000 uses for salt, from paint to paper to popcorn. This week, Leslie Salt Co. hopes to add another: raising money for needy people in Newark.

The salt company is holding its annual harvest-time open house on Saturday, and it's donating \$1 to the new Viola Blythe Community Service Cen-

ter for every pound of canned food donated by visitors.

"We can buy a lot of shoes with that money," says Blythe, a bubbly 73-year-old Newark resident who has been doing local volunteer work since 1946. "It will sure keep us in salt."

Mostly, though, the money will go toward food, clothes, bedding, and gas and shelter vouchers, which will be distributed from Blythe's garage in

Newark's Old Town section. She's still waiting for the city to fix up an abandoned building at Ash Street Park that it has promised to let her use as a new distribution center.

Leslie is offering the \$1-per-pound payoff for the first 3,000 pounds of food collected during the open house, which runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday. The Blythe center also will get the canned food.

Those who take the Leslie tour will get something, too: a free peek inside one of the Bay Area's oldest industries.

The most startling vision is the gigantic seven-story pile of salt. It looks so much like a mountain of snow that a department store once used it to advertise ski wear.

See SALT, Page 2

Agencies offer an outpouring of love

By Chris Lewis
and Roya Camp
Staff writers

*Gonna lay up my treasures in heaven
Nothing down here is worth putting
away
Hold tight to the hope in my children
God bless the giving on this homeless
holiday*

— **Mindy Mercer,**
shelter resident

Angelice Mayweather wants for Christmas what most people have — a house, a tree and a warm fire. But for now, a homeless shelter will have to do.

The 21-year-old woman and her 5-day-old daughter, Moenique, are spending their first Christmas together with 16 other women and children seeking temporary refuge at the Shepherd's Gate shelter in Livermore.

Mayweather was pregnant when she fled Chicago with her three other children two months ago to escape an overly jealous husband and a drug-infested environment.

With her mother dead and her father "locked up," Mayweather took eight Greyhound buses to get to San Leandro to be with relatives.

But the young family was too much of a burden on her grandmother and aunts and uncles. She has been in the shelter for two weeks, looking for a place to rent.

The old woodframe house has all the appearances of a home, flavored with the Christmas touch.

"There's a Christmas spirit flowing through this house like a rushing wind," says Mindy Mercer, a shelter resident.

The Christmas trimmings are particularly important at many of the homeless shelters in the East Bay. Gift-wrapping parties, Santa Claus visits and turkey dinners add a festive flair to help stem the depression of people forced from their homes because of poverty or violence.

The need for an understanding ear can be particularly acute at Christmas, said DiAnn Anderson, director of Second Chance in Newark.

"If people are alone and trying to stay off drugs and alcohol, they need some support, particularly on that day because it's a sentimental holiday," she said.

Anderson expects her workers to be available to sit and talk with those who wander in for support.

"It's just a social day," she said. "We're sort of a surrogate family."

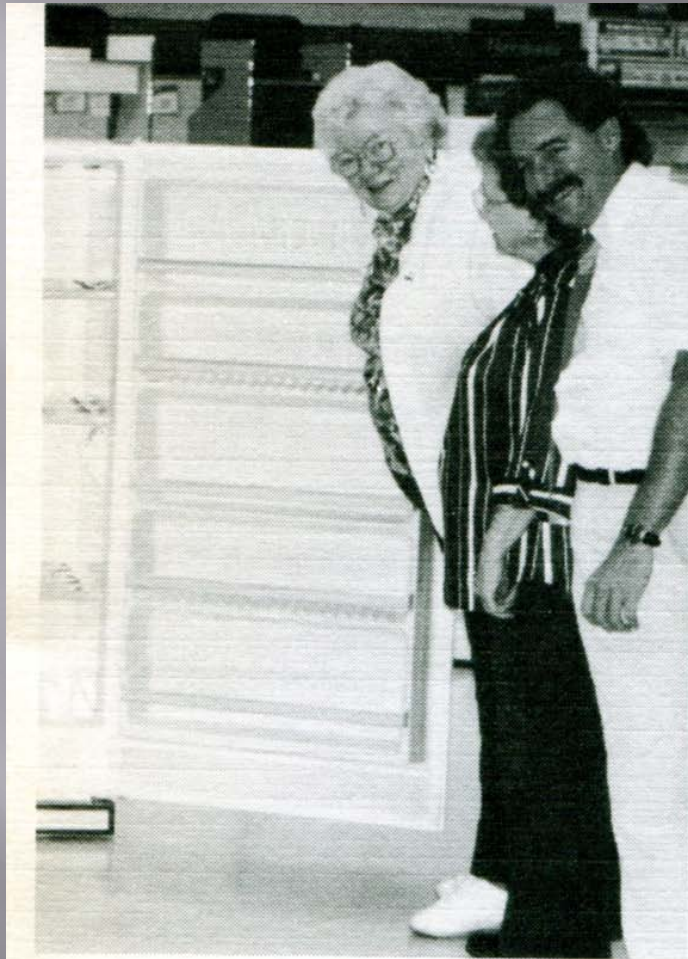
Second Chance will serve a Christmas dinner at its shelter for about 20 residents, who will also share gifts. The shelter is also in need of donations of holiday foods and gifts for youngsters.

Here is what some other shelters are doing this Christmas:

Viola Blythe Community Service Center, 37225 Ash St., Newark. 797-3377.

Working out of her home, Newark volunteer Viola Blythe continued her tradition of holiday giving by throwing a Christmas party last week for 140 needy children and gathering the goodies for holiday baskets for 50 Tri-City families.

See Agencies, next page



No Senior Center is complete without a freezer, and Newark's Police Officers Association came to rescue with this one. Western Appliance store manager Doug Johnson (who helped make the donation possible) is joined here by Senior Citizen Advisory Committee members Viola Blythe and Vivian Nelson.

As you know, we are supposed to have 1000 points of lights burning all over the United States. But I wouldn't be surprised if we found a good portion of them right here in the Tri City area. One of the things that has truly warmed my heart during almost daily meanderings through the community is the evidence of deep caring and generous (of time and money) involvement. And we are not talking about the flashy, jump-on-the-bandwagon excitement about what appears to be the cause of the day. No, this area seems to foster deep, long term commitment to causes, paired with dogged toil. Thus, in this issue I want to nominate some Tri City Points of Light. And I invite you to submit your own suggestions so we can make this an ongoing feature. Just give me a call or drop me a line.

My first choice is **VIOLA BLYTHE**, the dynamo behind the newly inaugurated Viola Blythe Community Service Center of Newark. For years and years she has worked to see to it that needy Newark neighbors receive food, clothing and other life's necessities. Now she finally has a "home" for all the activities and that thanks to donations from local residents, community service organizations and businesses. I was honored by an invitation to the Grand Opening this past April and was thoroughly moved by the genuine feeling of true caring. Chairman of the Center's Board, Councilman **AL NAGY** honored local businesses who have "adopted" the center, among them **LESLIE SALT** and **FREMONT FORD**, before he proudly gave the invitees a first tour of the new facilities. Impressive! Yes, you can help too. Volunteers are always needed, as are donations. Become another Tri City Point of Light by calling 794-3437

Monday, June 14, 1971



SALVATION ARMY Field Representative is presenting Hal Madson with a plaque known as the "Others Award" for his 18 years of service to the community of Newark as the Salvation Army Committee Chairman. Mrs. Vi-

ola Blythe is being presented a certificate of appreciation for her years of service as the Newark Salvation Army Committee Liaison Representative.



Ruben Bustillos, 7, at left, h Mike, of San Lorenzo, and his uncle and cousin, "Biçlo and 9-year-old "Little"

Chilo Bustillo of Oakland, ready to join the Father's Day motorcycle rally Sunday.

Mary F. Calvert — staff photo



Viola Blythe, of the Salvation Army's Tri-City Service Center in Newark, shows

Robert Atkinson, exalted ruler for the Fremont Elks, what the group's recent

donation bought for those people the Salvation Army serves.

Elks' bingo profits go to charities

Bingo is a game that's fun for the players and profitable for its sponsors. At least that's true at the Fremont Elks' Lodge.

Members host bingo games every Thursday, beginning at 7 p.m. for the "early birds," as their major fund-raising tool. They were able to make the recent holiday season brighter for four local organizations with donations totaling \$7,435.

The Salvation Army's Tri-City Service Center, located in Newark, received \$3,000. Tri-City Volunteers received \$2,000; California

Children's Services, \$1,435; and Senior Nutritional Activities Program (SNAP), a home-delivered meals service for senior citizens directed by the Family Tutorial Program, \$1,000.

The organizations had made requests to the local Elks lodge for help funding ongoing projects. For the Salvation Army and Tri-City Volunteers, that means providing food and clothing to those who can't afford either.

"We have always worked closely with the Salvation Army," said Robert Atkinson, ex-

alted ruler of Fremont's Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, an organization that was founded in 1868 in New York.

"That association goes back to World War I when the commander of the Salvation Army, then a woman named Evangeline Booth, commended the Elks for their help," said Atkinson. A statement made by the commander noted that the Salvation Army's "success" in meeting its goals during the war were due to "the splendid, practical and tangible aid rendered by the Elks."

MAKE A DEPOSIT IN SOMEONE ELSE'S FUTURE



LOOKING OVER THE MERCHANDISE for Newark's youngsters are (left to right) Viola Blythe, Sharon Stephenson, Ken Mello and Barbara Yost.

Newark—It's September, and the wage-earner of the family has recently become unemployed due to a plant shutdown. The three children of the family need shoes to begin school but there is no provision for either clothes or shoes in the family's tight budget.

Where would you go? The Salvation Army, of course!

In 1975, the Newark Junior Woman's Club turned over to The Salvation Army a fund started in 1970, aimed at raising money to purchase shoes for needy children.

Mrs. Viola Blythe, Director of The Salvation Army's South County Service Center, says that today, contributions to the shoe fund come from The Salvation Army's general welfare fund and the **Involvement Corps** of the Leslie Salt Company.

In the program, The Salvation Army picks up the cost of shoes apart from 10% which is paid for by the donor group. If those in need cannot be fitted in The Salvation Army's thrift store, children from kindergarten through high school are eligible to receive new shoes in local stores.

Mrs. Blythe comments that local mer-

chants have been tremendously cooperative when they receive a Salvation Army purchase order that indicates a "pair of good, heavy school shoes—no sandals!" Viola continues, "The shoe bank is a unique system. It covers the tri-city area of Union City, Fremont and Newark and is the only one I've ever heard about."

For further information on this creative and helpful program for needy youngsters, Mrs. Blythe can be reached in Newark at 796-4766.



HAPPY with his snappy choice of footwear, Danny Caravacho (seated) is served by Mrs. Viola Blythe at Newark's Shoe Bank, while Derrell Edwards approves.

3 Boom times for Newark charity

Viola Blythe, Newark's grande dame of goodwill, is running out space for her operation, thanks to a generous community.

Honor well-deserved

Editor: Your columnist Percy Ross really knows his business. Newark's wonderful Viola Blythe has just received a Percy Ross Humanitarian Award for "out-standing efforts in helping your fellow man."

Nominated by a Newark citizen for her continuous work aiding the poor, hungry and homeless, Viola received a medallion and note of special recognition. Columnist Ross said, "For all that you do to help make this world a better place, stand up and take a bow. I applaud you and your efforts."

If anybody well deserves applause, it's our Viola. I think everybody who knows her will rejoice in the good news.

**Pat Kite
Newark**

One year later and the garage is still full

By Mary Jo Hill
STAFF WRITER

NEWARK — After one year in operation, the Viola Blythe Community Service Center has expanded to help the needy as far north as Oakland. Through all the change one factor, however, is untouched — Viola Blythe's garage.

For years Blythe, 74, had run an informal community service center out of her home, keeping food and clothing in her garage to give to the needy. But one year ago a city lease for an unused building at Ash Street Park gave her program official status and more room.

Despite the extra space, her garage is still filled, said Debbie Carvalho, program director and Blythe's daughter. "We just got approval to rent her a storage room."

The new building has allowed Blythe, Carvalho and their volunteers to help about 2,500 clients and on Saturday they took time out to celebrate the center's one-year anniversary.

During the past year word has spread about the center's food and clothing services, and people from as far away as Oakland and Hayward have called, said Carvalho. While the center targets the needy, its restrictions make room for some people who couldn't get help elsewhere, she said.

Upper- and middle-class people who are laid off don't have any

assistance coming in and sometimes struggle more than those on welfare, said Carvalho.

Although pride can sometimes stand in the way of those new to asking for help, Carvalho said the center "tries to make everyone feel real comfortable."

Those in need who come to the center for help span age groups as well.

With only a limited income to support herself and the children, the grandmother was having problems providing food and clothing, said Carvalho. The center stepped in and helped the family, including one of the children who is handicapped, she said.

The center is a grass-roots organization, which relies on donations from individuals, community groups and businesses, said board member Al Nagy, who is also on the City Council.

The Viola Blythe Community Service Center is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 4 p.m. at Ash Street Park in Newark. To make a donation, please call 794-3437 when the center is open.



MARY F. CALVERT — Staff

Viola Blythe, right, comforts Marsha Stockton, who accepted an award for her mother, Ruth Hopper, who died last year.

City helping woman feed the hungry

Newark leases building for food distribution

By Nancy L. Nelson
Staff writer

NEWARK — Viola Blythe knows children don't end up in orphanages anymore.

But she can't forget the time she spent in one, or the children she left behind when her older sister took her away to a real family.

"I wanted to take them all home with me," Blythe said. She couldn't, of course, but in the years since, she has dedicated her life to helping people who have nothing.

At 73, she is still at it with help from friends, family and local businesses who donate time, money and food.

The City of Newark is helping, too, as it prepares to lease a small building to Blythe for \$1 a year. City staff has recommended the council approve the transaction at its Thursday meeting.

Blythe can hardly wait until January, when the building is expected to be ready and she'll be able to move the boxes and barrels of canned food that fill her garage.

The building at the end of Ash Street near her home is small, "but it's better than working out of your home," Blythe said.

It will also mean she can help more people.

"Oh, there'll be lots more people. People will find out," she said.

More volunteers will want to help her, too, Blythe said.

They will use the building to distribute food, clothing, bedding and vouchers for gasoline. Blythe will also refer people to



Ben Margot — staff photo

Viola Blythe sorts food in her garage in preparation for her move to a building being supplied by the City of Newark.

other services that can help them.

The city is helping Blythe get tax-exempt status and has asked her to set up a board of directors, Newark Human Services Officer Olga Estrada-Wallin said.

Newark will also pay for liability insur-

ance and all utilities for the building except telephone and janitor service.

Meanwhile, city workers have been repairing and remodeling the building to make it better suited as a distribution center, Estrada-Wallin said.

"The city is trying to promote human services and quality of life in Newark," she said.

"When Viola came before the City Council (in June), we thought 'What an excellent partnership,'" Estrada-Wallin said.

Father's Day Poker Run draws over 2,000

NEWARK — The 20th annual Father's Day Poker Run drew 2,073 motorcycle riders and raised nearly \$1,000 for local charities, according to event organizers.

In all, 63 trophies were handed out for the bike judging as well as other contests, according to Gerry Signett, president of the Fremont Travelers, which sponsored the run.

George Silva, 85, from Richmond, won the trophy for being

the oldest father riding in the 99 mile run. Louis Ettlin won the Poker Run with a royal flush. The event is called a Poker Run because riders collect playing cards at checkpoints along the route.

The best poker hand wins.

Two raffles raising nearly \$1,000 were held to collect money for the Blythe Foundation and the Second Chance drug treatment center, Signett said.

Thankful bikers join to help others

By Shawn Wirtz
Staff writer

NEWARK — Like in a scene from a Mad Max movie, leather-clad motorcycle riders with slicked-back hair on helmetless heads cruised in one by one Saturday, parking their classic Harleys and big road bikes in choreographed formation.

With the same relish as traditional holiday revelers, more than 100 bikers feasted on cranberry dressing and early Thanksgiving turkey Saturday, occasionally becoming teary-eyed as they recounted their blessings.

"I'm just thankful to be breathing, because if you don't breathe you don't ride your bike," said Tattoo Joe Gonsalves, a member of the Crazy Dragons.

Earlier this year a fellow Crazy Dragon, Jim Sandiforth, was injured in a motorcycle accident and is now hospitalized in a coma. The Dragons donated several pints of blood and \$2,800 to help pay for Sandiforth's medical bills.

"We're just happy we're not where he is," said Crazy Dragon Darrell Teague.

Their first big round-up since his accident prompted several riders to express thanks for Sandiforth's life as well as their own.

"This is one of the first things we've done since our brother went down," said Greg Lagera.

"If he were here he'd be running around with these kids," Lagera said.

Even the most formidable-looking bikers showed a soft spot. Memo Llanos, a hefty guy with one braid

sprouting from a shaved bald head, led a passel of kids in a game of pin-the-tail-on-the-turkey.

Llanos' 1976 Harley may be his most treasured and defended possession, but his three young daughters took up most of his time Saturday.

Along with the Crazy Dragons, the Fremont Travelers, the Outriders and other clubs in the Sierra Road Racers Association got into the holiday spirit by bringing hundreds of cans of food to be donated to needy families in Newark, Fremont and Union City.

They invited longtime Newark volunteer Viola Blythe, 73, to accept and distribute the cans. Blythe admitted she was a little intimidated by the gruff appearance of some of her hosts, but had nothing but praise for their hospitality.

"I've never been so nervous in my life," Blythe said as she fingered her long gold chain necklace. "This is a little different for me."

Her 67-year-old niece, Mary Adamson, who accompanied Blythe to the festivities at the Swiss Park bar and restaurant, was already making plans to return, however.

"I roam around with this bunch a lot," Adamson said with a playful gleam in her eye.

Despite their long hair and black leather garments, Outriders leader Gregg Williams said many bikers have kids now and he is grateful the organized clubs are slowly convincing the public that bikers are not criminals.

"The only people we don't get along with is people who don't like motorcycles and categorize everyone as bums," Williams said.

Woman makes career of helping

BLYTHE, from Page 1B

building at Ash Street Park for a food and clothing distribution center.

Council members said they wouldn't even consider the proposal from most people. Because Blythe was asking, however, they've decided to approve it.

"What amazes me is the purity in which she does things, the goodness of her heart," says Councilman Alan Nagy, who has known Blythe for 20 years. "Somebody who is that well-intentioned — I guess that's why you don't say no."

Blythe almost never says no.

Shortly after she moved to Newark with her husband in 1946, a local builder and friend gave her \$200 and asked her to put on a Christmas party for a group of local unemployed people.

"I went shopping," Blythe remembers. "I got toys and I got food. And every one of those people got a Christmas present, even the adults."

From that point on, her mission was clear. She took homeless children into her home. She became a volunteer for the Salvation Army. The Newark Police Department sent needy people her way.

But Christmastime is always the special time. Ann Salvi, a Fremont mother of four, says Blythe came to her family's rescue last year — with elaborate Christmas baskets — when her husband was laid off after 15 years as a machine operator.

"We're middle-class people," Salvi says. "It was real hard for us. For the first time in my life, I saw the possibility of being homeless and foodless. We didn't get to the homeless point, but we did get foodless. And that's when Viola came in."

Besides the baskets of holiday food and gifts, Viola gave Salvi some good advice. "She said that things would get better, they always do. She was very positive, and that meant a lot to me," Salvi says.

And things did get better. Salvi's husband has a new job.

For her work, Blythe has been

honored by the city of Newark, the Salvation Army, the Newark Rotary Club, the Newark Jaycees and other organizations. But no honor was greater for Blythe than being asked to throw out the opening pitch last September at an Oakland A's game.

"That was the biggest thrill I ever had in my entire life," says Blythe, a baseball fan. "The players are so big — I never saw such giants. I felt like a midget. They invited me to sit in the dugout during the game, but I wanted to sit with my family."

Her family has made lots of sacrifices over the years. The phone rings at all hours. The doorbell rings all the time, too. But, rather than resenting the interruptions, Blythe's family has joined her

cause.

Her husband, Stanley, was honored by the Salvation Army in 1986 for his volunteer work. Her daughter, Debbie Carvalho, works for the Salvation Army. And even her grandson, Danny Carvalho, helps his grandmother move the boxes of food, clothing, furniture and other donations piled up in her garage.

Blythe says she doesn't remember her first impulse to help people, but she often thinks of the orphanage. The 10th of 11 children in her family, she was sent there at age 4, after her mother died during childbirth and her father deserted the family.

She says one of her sisters does the same kind of work she does. The rest, she adds, "think I'm kind of silly. I think I'm just being nice."

Viola Blythe's community service center, 37225 Ash St., Newark, 797-3377. Blythe has distributed Christmas and Thanksgiving baskets in Newark for 33 years. This year, she will distribute about 50 baskets to needy families in the Newark area. Baskets include "everything it takes to make a Thanksgiving dinner," Blythe said. She has paid in advance for Lucky's market certificates, redeemable for turkeys, hams or whatever meat products the families choose to accompany the contents of their baskets. Schools collected canned food for Blythe's project, as did the Leslie Salt Co. Blythe is now lining up families for the Christmas baskets and the holiday children's party she throws each year. Call to volunteer time or supplies.

League of Volunteers of Newark, 37400 Central Court, Newark; 793-

Judges make every nominee a winner

■ Volunteers all worked hard enough to deserve an award, committee decides

All nine nominees for the Newark Volunteer of the Year Award seemed deserving of the honor in 1991, so the selection committee made them all winners, said Don DeBolt, who represented the Fremont Jaycees as a judge.

Eight nominees were named finalists, and a ninth, Viola Blythe, was given a special honor.

Blythe took top honors from the committee, which not only gave her the award but named it after her, in permanent recognition of her work providing food and clothing to the poor.

The eight finalists are young and old, ranging in age from 14 to 70 years old. Education wasn't a prerequisite for some of their successes — just enthusiasm, creativity and hard work.

They volunteer in schools and in stables, in literacy programs and on playgrounds.

In one case, the volunteer work filled the days of a newly widowed Fremont woman. In another, an older Newark man is helping a young Taiwanese woman learn English.

Each nominee, however, deserved special recognition, according to the selection committee, and their accomplishments are described in the articles below.

Finalists received a certificate of appreciation, an invitation to the Newark Anniversary Ball and the opportunity to ride in the Newark Days' parade.

The five judges serving on the Newark Volunteer of the Year Selection Committee were DeBolt, Gail Green of the Volunteer Centers of Alameda County, Jack Lyness of The Argus, Phil Ockerman of the city of Fremont, and Clifford Pagan of the city of Union City.

Life of service is its own reward

By Brian Dines
STAFF WRITER

NEWARK

THERE are thousands of stories about the sacrifices Viola Blythe and her family have made for the needy. Here's a famous one:

After food, clothing and gifts amassed by Blythe had been handed out to dozens of needy families at Christmas time, Newark police arrived at her doorstep on Christmas Day with information about a hungry family living in a van.

Blythe packed up her family's Christmas dinner and took it to the family. It's a true story, Blythe admits, and one that could be told on a national level this year.

Blythe, 74, who has been helping the local poor and needy since 1946, is among 40 nominees for a prestigious national award to be presented in Washington, D.C., in December. In all, 10 National Caring Awards will be given out, and Blythe should know by September if she will receive one.

The award comes from the Caring Institute, a national non-profit group that searches for outstanding individuals in community services, according to institute Associate Director Marion Brown, who described the award as the hall of fame for the nation's top givers.

Previous winners include a former national secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, a Catholic priest who worked for 30

Please see **Blythe**, A-10

A GIVING SPIRIT



JOHN A. RAMOS JR. — Staff
Viola Blythe, recently nominated for a National Caring Award for her half a century of caring for the poor, with her daughter Debbie Carvalho.