

# Palo Alto students give back to the community

By Anthony Rubio  
Pulse Staff Reporter

Haven for Hope, a homeless transformation campus, is changing lives for the better in San Antonio, Texas.

This non-profit organization strives to not only serve as a refuge for the homeless, but also to serve as a resource to assist them in becoming self-sufficient members of our community.

In an effort to accomplish its goals, Haven for Hope has partnered with more than 70 governmental, non-profit and faith-based agencies. In addition, volunteers, like students in Karen Marcotte's Humanities classes, also pitch in.

"Once you become a volunteer anywhere, it becomes a part of your life," said Marcotte. For the past 10 years, students taking Humanities 2323: World Cultures have been required to do a service-learning project some time during the semester.

Marcotte said students may not see the benefit of doing the service-learning project at first, but once they have started it, they gain an appreciation for how fortunate they are, which causes many of them to continue volunteering.

"I encourage students to volunteer anywhere. The experience will change them. Most of the time they come to understand themselves far more than anyone they are helping," she said.

Stephanie Chavarria, a History major at Palo Alto College, said she was assigned several cleaning tasks at Haven for Hope to ensure that the cafeteria was properly sanitized before food was prepared. Once it was time to feed the guests, Chavarria was stationed at the door to help carry the trays of single parents, guests with special needs and the elderly.

Chavarria enjoyed her experience and

would love to volunteer again.

Bill Greehey, Haven for Hope's board chairman, said he decided to create the campus after he realized how big of a problem homelessness was in San Antonio.

Greehey said that there were a lot of charities who were feeding and clothing the homeless, but none of them were trying to get to the root causes of homelessness and resolve the issue.

Greehey said that it was important to get the facility built in the downtown area so that it could be easily accessible to

of chemical dependency or mental disorders. These services are essential to successfully addressing the root causes of homelessness. Haven for Hope is faith-inspired, and spiritual services are also offered.

The Homeless Transformation Campus is made up of 15 buildings on 37 acres, and it has almost a half a million square feet of roofed service space. This space is needed, because approximately 1,600 individuals are served on a typical day.

St. Vincent de Paul Society, a partner



Students in Karen Marcotte's (bottom row, center) HUMA 2323: World Cultures class volunteer at Haven for Hope, a 37-acre refuge for San Antonio's homeless.

Photo by Robert Chavez

those who needed it most. Making sure that Haven for Hope was a one-stop shop was not easy. A lot of research was done to see what worked in similar shelters around the nation.

When Greehey was asked what people could do to help with this project, he said that the center could always use volunteers. The day-to-day tasks of feeding and assisting guests are one area where volunteers are needed, but there are also special projects that need help.

Haven for Hope and its partners not only feed and shelter their guests, but they also provide education, job training and medically necessary services for treatment

of Haven for Hope, serves three cold meals a day for the guests on campus. The San Antonio Food Bank, also a partner, serves three hot meals daily. Since guests are grouped based on the programs they are enrolled in, it is necessary to provide two different meal plans.

As a non-profit organization, Haven for Hope is always looking for people who would like to make a difference. If you would like to help out, go to the [havenforhope.org](http://havenforhope.org) website and scroll through their volunteer opportunities.

You may also call (210) 220-2192 or e-mail [volunteer@havenforhope.org](mailto:volunteer@havenforhope.org) to offer your time and talent.