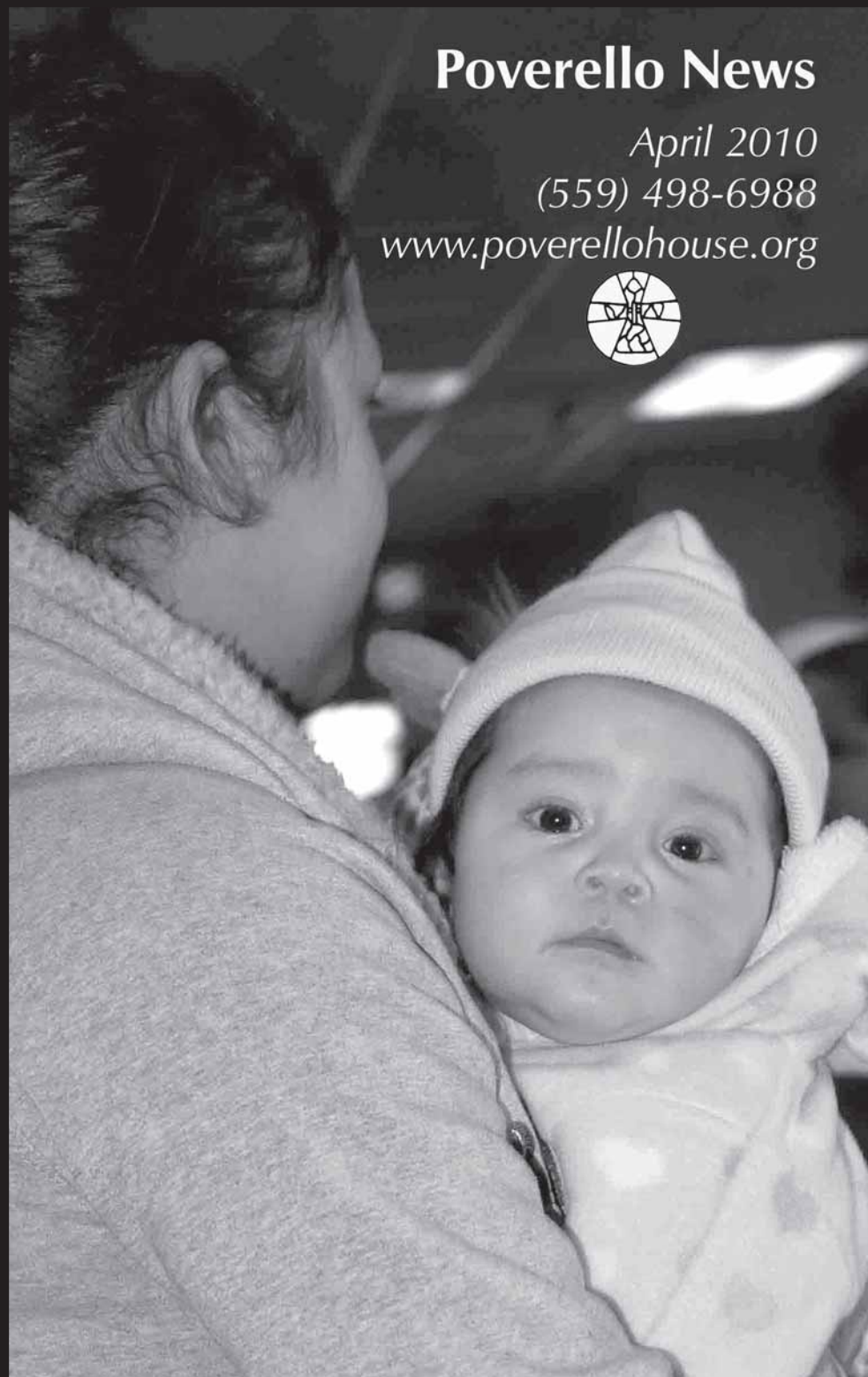


# Poverello News

*April 2010*

(559) 498-6988

[www.poverellohouse.org](http://www.poverellohouse.org)





The day following the Super Bowl, a friend of mine was driving in Fresno on Shaw Avenue. As he approached Blackstone Avenue, he saw what he thought was another homeless panhandler, holding a sign. As he got closer, he noticed that there was a large football drawn on the placard. Finally, as he drove by, he was able to read the writing on the sign, and he burst out laughing. It said, “LOSER: Lost my Super

Bowl bet.” Apparently, standing on a corner in abject humiliation was a consequence of wagering on the wrong team.

We had some winners and losers at our Poverello Super Bowl party, too. Obviously, Saints fans were happy, and Colts fans were not. However, a couple of other people ended up losers even before the game began. One guy walked in and promptly dropped the beer he was hiding under his coat. We eighty-sixed him pretty quickly. Then, a woman entered dressed in a trench coat. When she sat down, it became obvious that the trench coat was *all* she was wearing. We had to ask her to leave; with a ninety-eight-percent male audience, her attire would have definitely distracted from the game.

Winning and losing are not only a big part of football, but also a part of our culture, and, really, of the human condition. When I was a football player in high school and junior college, it was my good fortune to be on winning teams. I loved winning; it gave me a high, a feeling that I was important, that I was part of something big and exciting. Back then, my dark secret was that while I was a winner on the football field,

---

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dennis Major, President  
Jim Kinter, 1st Vice President  
Jeff Negrete, 2nd Vice President  
John Frye Jr., Treasurer  
Robin Duke, Secretary  
Pat Bradley  
Tom Cleary  
Sister Mary Clennon  
James Connelly  
Mark Delton  
Jim Devaney  
Charles Farnsworth  
Brian Glover  
Jennifer Graves

Kathy Hoover  
Cathy Johnson  
Robt Levine  
Steve Lutton  
Carol Maul  
Louis McMurray  
Joel Murillo  
Ann Owen  
Frank Puglia  
Melvin Renge  
Mayo Ryan  
Jim Van De Velde

## ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Lynn Baker  
Elizabeth Fillpot  
Anthony Folcarelli  
John “Nip” Gallagher  
Linda Moradian  
Tim Nibler  
Sister Ruth Marie Nickerson, CSCD  
D. Harvey Oh  
Robert H. Scribner  
Marvin Smith  
Lucy Valla  
Jane Worsley

I felt like a loser in front of my dad. His cruel treatment and cutting remarks had withered my self-esteem to almost nothing.

I'll probably go to my grave never fully understanding the dynamics of my relationship with my father, and how it later affected my choices. In hindsight, however, I've come to see that my drug use, bar fighting and hippie promiscuity were how I was "living down" to my father's low expectations of me. I can picture my subconscious rhetorically asking dear ol' Dad, "You want to call me a loser? Fine. I'll prove you're right."

The amazing thing about God's grace is that even the most negative circumstances in life can be redeemed. My dad's abuse may have influenced my self-destructive behavior, but for whatever reason, God didn't want that to be the end of the story. Burning out on drugs, sex and violence, and ultimately losing all my self-respect, led me on a "negative path to salvation." It paved the way for me to become such an all-time loser that I finally had no recourse but turning to God.

In time, I discovered that I had a special fondness, and maybe even a modest talent, for helping losers. Losers were people with whom I had much in common, and that commonality of feeling put me at ease with them, and they with me. I also discovered that losers were not only found on the streets. I've met middle-class, successful people who secretly believed they were worthless; millionaires whose inner demons drove them to hurt themselves and others; and people who were externally successful, but whose personal lives were a mess.

Ultimately, though, we're *all* losers. No matter how much success we've enjoyed in life, all of us will die. Someone will take our place in the world, all we've accumulated will go to someone else, and eventually, all our accomplishments will be forgotten. In this great fellowship of loserhood, the rich and the homeless really are a lot alike.

Easter is for losers; in other words, for all of us. I'm never completely forlorn, because I know what a loser I was, and the Easter story tells me how much it cost Jesus to rescue me. If God loves me that much, and if he loves even the most hopeless street junkie and the spiritually destitute billionaire just as much as He loves me, then it occurs to me that no one is really a loser if he or she can just accept that love. My hope for Poverello House is that we can reflect that miracle of Easter, all year long, to all who come our way. If we just do that, I think we'll be winners.

Mike

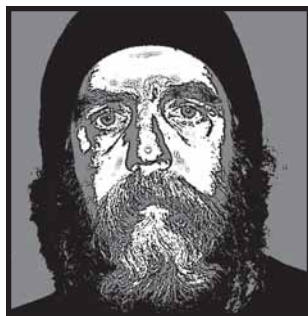
# The Limits of Expectations

A phrase we use a lot around Poverello House is, “You just never know.” What we mean when we say this is that your perception of someone may or may not be accurate, or if it’s accurate now, it may not be so in a few weeks, months, or years.

For example, we’ve had volunteers and employees who seemed to be competent and stable, only to discover later on that they had substantial emotional problems that interfered with their work. We’ve also given up on some homeless clients, who went on to defy our expectations and turn their lives around.

Recently, a homeless man got drunk one night and decided to climb our fence, because, as he explained later, he hadn’t seen a “No Trespassing” sign. Our resident program security guards caught him and expelled him.

This in itself wasn’t an unusual incident, until we discovered the climber’s identity. A few years ago, he and his family were proud Poverello House donors. He was working and supporting his wife and children, and seemed to be living a normal, middle-class life.



We don’t exactly know what happened since that time. He said something about a divorce and medical expenses, but certainly his drinking played a major role in his downfall, also. So now, he drinks his pain and regret away daily, and depends on us to feed him. It’s one of the most tragic situations we’ve encountered here.

Equally sad was a day when some school children came to serve. As it turns out, the mom of one of the students was on the streets and eating at Poverello. Apparently, the girl hadn’t seen her mother in quite some time; perhaps she was living with a relative, or in foster care. Whatever the situation, the two spotted each other, and it was a heart-rending reunion.

This wasn’t the first time such a happenstance meeting took place; other volunteers have been surprised by seeing family members eating at Pov before. However, this was perhaps the most emotionally traumatic

encounter that we've witnessed. Both the girl and her mother were almost hysterical, and it certainly ruined the service day for her school. Other students nervously looked around, unsure what to do. The mother would go back to the streets, her soul crushed with grief and guilt; the girl would go back to school and her alternative living situation without her mom, and would probably be tortured by the memory of this meeting for the rest of her life.

Not all the "You just never know" stories are sad. Occasionally, someone surprises us with a story of redemption.

Big T is someone we all knew from his years of living on the streets. He is handsome, friendly, intelligent, funny, and seemingly capable of being a success. Yet, he perpetually languished in a state of homelessness.

Big T wasn't a "joiner." He never seemed interested in our Resident Program, or in any other program. When we opened the Village of Hope, we asked him to try it out; he refused. He usually camped by himself, apparently not trusting others.

The years went by. Big T was arrested for some outstanding warrants. He spent time in jail, which seemed like it might be a wake-up call for him. Now in his fifties, he wasn't prepared for the menacing young gang-bangers he encountered, and swore he'd change his ways when he got out.

However, his ways didn't change. Still good with a hustle, still not committing to anyone or anything, he stayed homeless. It seemed such a waste.

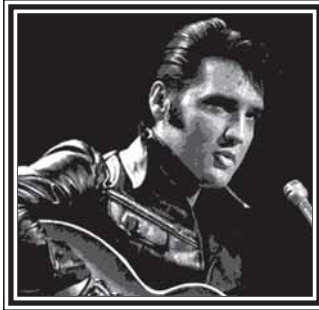
Then, one day, someone asked, "Has anyone seen Big T recently?" No one had.

We hadn't seen him because Big T had been going through some changes. Maybe he was just weary of street life; maybe the fear he felt in jail made him rethink where he was headed. Whatever the reason, Big T found a small church, and for the first time in a many years, made some commitments. He committed himself to God and to his little church family; he found a job and a place to stay; finally, he got in touch with a long-estranged daughter and started his relationship over with her.

He dropped by Poverello House one day with all of this news. He looked great, and sounded wonderful. You just never know.

*Amici Del Poverello Guild presents:*

## **G. I. BLUES Brunch with Elvis!**



**Grand Occasions, 4584 W. Jacquelyn, Fresno**  
**\$25 per person for brunch ticket**

**Call: Mary Lou Cancio at 291-8375 or**  
**Carol Maul at 229-7709 for**  
**Brunch and Raffle tickets**

**Raffle tickets are \$2.00 per ticket or \$10.00**  
**per book of 5 tickets.**

**First prize: \$500**  
**Second prize: \$250**  
**Third Prize \$100**

**All proceeds benefit Poverello House.**

***Featuring THE FABULOUS***  
***Jeremy Pearce!***

*This is a great way to help Poverello House while enjoying a fantastic show! Tickets will go fast, so call early to secure your seat to see the Central Valley's premier Elvis impersonator!*

# Burlington Coat Factory Warms Up the Poor

Last February, Burlington Coat Factory donated over 400 beautiful new coats for Poverello House to give to the homeless. We held two big distributions, and hundreds of men, women and children were given sorely-needed winter wear. We at Poverello are very thankful for this generous donation, as are the happy recipients of the coats.



*Above: Hundreds of jackets were given out to homeless men and women*

*Below: Families line up for the children's coat distribution*



## *Wish List*

Hams \* Canned Yams  
Olive oil \* Coffee \* Sugar  
T-shirts \* Socks \* Men's underwear  
Children's books & magazines

*Remember, we now take credit card donations. Please see the enclosed envelope for instructions.*

*To donate online, visit our website at [www.poverellohouse.org](http://www.poverellohouse.org)*

# Poverello House

412 F Street  
P.O. Box 12225  
Fresno, CA 93777-2225  
(559) 498-6988

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
FRESNO, CA 93706  
PERMIT #2440

## RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**Who Are We?** A nonprofit, nondenominational organization that believes in the dignity of every human being. Our mission is to enrich the lives and spirits of all who pass our way, to feed the hungry, offer focused rehabilitation programs, temporary shelter, medical, dental and other basic services to the poor, the homeless, and the disadvantaged unconditionally, without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex or disability, through Providential and community support. We have been operating since 1973 and are governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of local volunteer business men and women.

**Future Goals?** To provide additional facilities for increased services.

**How Are We Funded?** Primarily through private donations from individuals, churches, businesses, and community organizations; and through United Way. Rules for acceptance and participation in the programs of Poverello House are the same for everyone, without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.



United Way of Fresno County  
Member Organization