

Poverello News

August 2009 (559) 498-6988

www.poverellohouse.org



Lost & Found



Hope is a little word that is vitally important to human beings. It keeps us going when facing overwhelming odds; it props us up in times of sadness or tragedy; and it motivates us to persevere when nothing else will.

The ability to hope is sometimes dependent on a person's personality and experiences. People who tend to be depressive, or who are beaten down to the breaking point, seldom exhibit much hope in themselves or the future. That's the condition of many homeless people I meet here at Poverello House.

Longtime Poverello supporters and older volunteers might remember my mother-in-law, Jane Malsbury, affectionately known around here as "Miss Jane." For many years, Jane was in charge of our kitchen. She not only cooked great meals, but she was kind of an adopted mom to many homeless people who came here to eat.

Life has been rough for her lately, and because of that, life has been rough for my wife, Mary. Jane lost her husband, Cal, a few years ago, and since then has developed that fearful disease, Alzheimer's. Recently, she fell on two separate occasions, resulting in many weeks of care in the hospital and a rehabilitation nursing facility.

Jane is a vestige of that great migration of Oklahoma natives that John Steinbeck wrote about in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Those folks were toughened by poverty, hard work, and the necessity of leaving everything they knew in order to find better lives. She has always had a lot of spunk and perseverance, and you can still see it in her.

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Cal and Jane never had much in the way of wealth, but they raised kids who grew up to be responsible and compassionate. Mary and her siblings have been caring for Jane for several years now, and it's an exhausting job.



Even though Jane has had more than her share of hardships, she was blessed with a durable constitution and a close-knit family. I think that's what separates her from so many of the fragile homeless people I know. At first glance, her situation seems kind of hopeless. However, she has loving children who sacrifice much to take care of her, and in spite of all the difficulties she's faced in her life, she remains cheerful. She always seems to have a twinkle in her eyes and a ready smile. Even now, after Alzheimer's has robbed her of so much, she remains gentle and pleasant. Jane's disposition is the blessing in a rough situation.

When Jane is sitting at our dining table, eating a good meal with a caring family, it's ironic that just outside our walls on F Street, things are very different. Homeless people wander the alleys in solitude, having been cut off from family and friends by drug-induced behavior or mental illness. Many of these people daily walk around without hope, imprisoned by their cravings or brain disorders, and often without a friend to console them.

When I hear some people talk about how the homeless should just "get off their duffs and go to work," I figure that they haven't known many homeless people. They don't realize that many of the homeless are physically or psychologically incapable of fending for themselves. Like my mother-in-law, they've reached the point where they can't function without help.

I guess what Mary, her sisters and her brothers do for Jane, Poverello tries to likewise do for the hurting people who use our services. We can never replace a loving family; but we can try to provide a place where hurting people can come for respite from a very cruel existence on the streets. Sometimes a hot meal and some kind words give someone just enough hope to get through the day; and sometimes, that little bit of hope is enough to start a chain reaction, ultimately leading a formerly hopeless person to a new and infinitely better life.

Mike

Lost and Found

For several years, we periodically heard from a woman in Arizona named Rita. She was looking for her brother, who was homeless due to mental illness. She had heard that he had been seen in the Fresno area.

Very dutifully, we would take down the information, and then post a note on our bulletin board advising the brother, whose name was Robert, to call his sister. We would then search our mail list that we keep for our homeless clients, in hopes of running across his name, but were never able to find the elusive Robert.

After several of these calls, we had given up on Rita ever finding the brother. From the description of his condition, we were, quite frankly, afraid that he might never be found or would end up dead. We get many calls from desperate relatives who want to locate a missing father, brother, son or sister who has been lost to the streets; there is seldom a happy ending to the story.

We hadn't heard from Rita in a long time. Then, last April, we received a check and a letter from her. The letter contained something unexpected:

Dear Poverello Staff,

My wholehearted thanks for keeping "an eye out" for my lost brother, Robert _____, who was last seen some seven years ago in the Fresno area. I had asked a few times over the years if you had seen him. Well, it happened in February. He contacted me and was surprised and glad that someone was even looking for him.

Another thing that Mike (McGarvin) might like to know is that Robert's attitude mirrored the feelings Mike mentioned in April's Poverello News. It was "as if you are surprising him by showing a tiny little kindness..."

...Thank you for all you do.

Although we had thought this poor woman would never talk to her brother again, she didn't give up hope. Faith and perseverance are sustaining virtues, and Rita possesses both in abundance.

This was a great example of someone hoping against hope, and being rewarded in the end. Family members with loved ones on the streets often surrender the idea of things ever being “normal” again. However, the agony of doubt and the unknown is nevertheless hard to endure. Simply being able to communicate with that cherished person, to know that he is still alive in spite of being homeless, is something these relatives treasure. It’s one reason we do all that we can to reunite homeless people with loved ones who are searching for them.



Once again, we are grateful that Granville Homes is sponsoring its fabulous fundraiser, *Home of Hope*. Buy a ticket for \$100, and you will be entered in a drawing to win a grand prize of a 2,016 square foot Encore Home, built by Granville Homes! In addition, there are many other incredible prizes, such as a two-passenger ride aboard Eagle One (the Sheriff’s Department helicopter), a Shaver Lake get-away, a Whirlpool Energy Star Side-by-Side refrigerator, and two eye Lasik surgery from Eye-Q Vision Care, just to name a few! All the proceeds will benefit Central Valley charities, including Poverello House.

For the past two years, this fundraiser has raised significant amounts of money for Poverello House and other organizations. By supporting *Home of Hope*, you’ll be helping out the people we serve, and you’ll have a chance to win a brand new home! To purchase a ticket, or for more information, call Poverello House at (559) 498-6988, or go to our website at www.poverellohouse.org.

Thanks, Amici

The Amici Del Poverello Guild is active from September through May of each year. We are blessed to have this wonderful group of people who contribute endless hours to support Poverello House. Every year, they raise thousands of dollars for our mission through unique and creative fundraisers, and they provide special events for poor children, families, and the men in our Resident Program.

From Christmas and Easter parties, to the Second Space Theater fundraiser to the annual Elvis event, the Guild is constantly keeping busy providing for Poverello in some way. Summer is a time when they take a break and rest up for the next year's activities. If you are interested in joining the Guild, this is a great time to do so, because they begin their 2009-2010 activities in September. Give us a call at 498-6988 for more information.



Top to bottom: Amici Family Christmas Party crafts, the Easter Bunny drops in for the Easter party, and Elvis sends Amici into the summer with hip-swiveling panache!

Summer of Giving

Usually, summer is a tough time for Poverello House. Donations tend to go down, and it's a long haul until Thanksgiving, when the contributions start to pick up again. Because of this, we are excited that the Fresno County Federal Credit Union (FCFCU) has offered an innovative fundraiser for Poverello. FCFCU invites you to join their *Summer of Giving*. The "Summer of Giving" program has been developed by Fresno County Credit Union as a way to give back to the community during the sizzling season. Throughout the month of August, for every member that converts to e.Statements, FCFCU will donate \$1 to Poverello House of Fresno. If you know someone who is a member of Fresno County Federal Credit Union, encourage them to convert to e.Statements in August by going online at www.FresnoCU.com.

Poverello Ponderings...

What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?

—Luke 15:4

But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead, and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.

—Luke 15:32

Wish List

Ground beef * Eggs * Corn flakes * Bacon
Men's clothing * Disposable razors * Deodorant

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

To donate online, visit our website at www.poverellohouse.org

Poverello House

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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
United Way Organization