



Poverello News

(559) 498-6988

www.poverellohouse.org

FROM THE DESK OF C.E.O. CRUZ AVILA



I mentioned before that I grew up on the 3,000-acre farm that my dad managed. As is typical with any farm manager, he was on call 24 hours a day. At any time of the day or night, he would be called to help with things that went wrong or a problem that needed solving immediately.

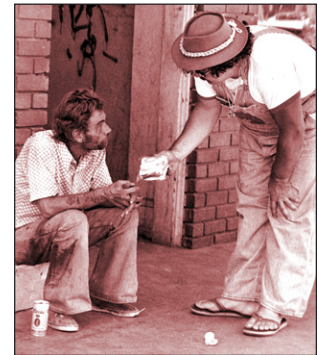
When my dad would have to get up in the middle of the night, sometimes he would bring me to help him. He'd hand me a flashlight and say, "Hold the light, son." I would fight my drowsiness and try to keep the beam of light steady. As a young boy, my task was not to do any repairs myself, but rather to illuminate the problems so that dad could fix them.

The problems Poverello Founder Mike McGarvin sought to fix had nothing to do with irrigation or fruit trees, but with troubled souls. He went about it with gentleness, humor, and unconditional acceptance. People who were not able to confess to their priest, or would never ask a therapist for help, would unburden themselves to Papa Mike. They would tell him about their sorrows, their regrets, and sometimes their guilt. He would listen, and respond with a joke or a simple encouragement. Most of the time, the client would leave feeling better. By listening and showing compassion, Papa Mike would give them a small bit of hope.

I have many diverse tasks as CEO. My duties include overseeing the personnel and the operations of Poverello House, working with the board of directors, raising funds to continue the mission, and representing Poverello House and its clients to the community. However, my most important task is similar to what I did for my father so long ago: holding the light. Here at Poverello, I'm still holding the light, but for Papa Mike rather than for my father.

When Papa Mike was alive, holding the light meant doing whatever I needed to do to help him accomplish Poverello's mission. Now that he is gone, I think holding the light means shining the light on his legacy, his mission, and his gift of hope. Perhaps the greatest legacy he left behind was the realization that one person can make a difference, but one can have an even greater

impact if he has the support of staff, volunteers and donors. Papa Mike began Poverello House by himself, but he knew that without help, it never would have made it past the first few years. Your contributions and volunteer time are vital to our mission, and we are continually grateful to you and our community partners for helping shine the light of hope on the homeless.



WAYS YOU CAN HELP THIS MONTH

Donations of:

- Men's underwear and belts
- Salt, pepper and cooking spices
- Monetary contributions toward commercial-grade sauté pans

Cruz Avila, CEO

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACHES TO HUNGER

There were many consequences of the Irish Potato Famine that lasted from 1865 to 1869. One of the consequences was a huge diaspora of Irish men, women and families to escape the utter devastation of the famine. Over a million people starved to death, and as many people emigrated from Ireland. The United States was one of the main destinations for these immigrants.

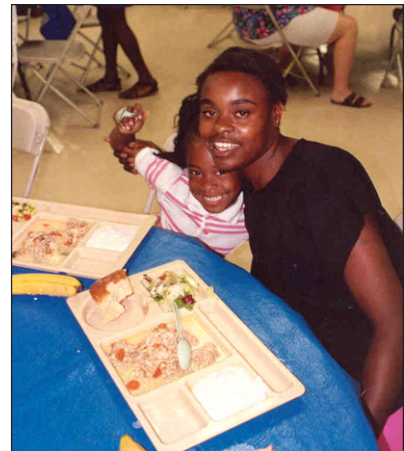
As a result of this huge influx, America and the American Catholic Church were greatly influenced by the Irish culture. It is said that the celebration of St. Patrick's Day is much more widespread and enthusiastic in the U. S. than it ever was in Ireland.

Founder Mike McGarvin, a descendent of the Irish, loved St. Patrick's Day at Poverello House. It is one of our many special days for meals. Papa Mike made sure that everyone here enjoyed being Irish for a day. He was the ultimate big, happy Irishman, and happiest when he was making others smile. He loved feeding people, and this St. Patrick's Day, we will continue the tradition of serving the corned beef, cabbage and potatoes.

Poverello House is best known for its meals. Although we want people aware of our many other services, free meals for *anyone* in need continues to be a big part of who we are. However, in addition to our onsite hot meal program are several other important food services that we provide to the community.

Our rural food program, which is an outreach using the Poverello House Mobile Café, is on the road two to three times a week, providing meals in underserved areas such as Reedley and Parlier. We also regularly share food donations with Comprehensive Addictions Program, Marjoree Mason Center, Spirit of Women, and other nonprofit organizations, supporting those programs as they reach hurting people beyond the borders of Poverello House. We provide anywhere from 300 to 2,000 lunches a week to needy children in the Patty Project, in Every Neighborhood Partnership's Saturday Sports Program. We also have a fail-safe option for clients who miss a hot meal: they receive a sack lunch, and about 4,000 to 5,000 per year are given out. We distribute emergency food bags to families, and we support the Poverello House Rehabilitation Program, Naomi's House, and the Village of Hope with meals.

Hunger is a reality, whether in 19th century Ireland, or 21st century California. It is a result of labyrinthine social, economic and personal complexities, but it is a pressing problem for far too many people. Poverello House takes a comprehensive approach to poverty, and a major part of that approach will always be the provision of nutritious food for the hungry.



THANK YOU!

We would like to acknowledge Fresno County District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp, who has committed herself to sponsoring every holiday meal for 2018. We are so grateful for this incredibly generous contribution. If you are interested in sponsoring a meal, we would love to discuss it with you. Please call us at (559) 498-6988.

THE FOUNDATION OF LIFE'S JOURNEY

“Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.”

—St. Augustine of Hippo

Back when Founder Mike McGarvin saw the homeless on the streets of Fresno, he was angry that they seemed to have been forgotten by family, friends and society; but he had the courage to reach out and change the situation. As St. Augustine wrote, that is the essence of hope. Since Papa Mike's passing, we have given serious thought to what Poverello House has been, what it is now, and what it will become in the future. The unifying concept that ties past, present and future together is a little four-letter word: *hope*.

Society tends to define a homeless person as mentally ill, an addict, an alcoholic, a victim of abuse, or casualty of economic determinism, all depending on the observer's point of view. In fact, those descriptions are merely the outward manifestation of something all homeless people share, which is a profound lack of hope. On the streets, despair is the common denominator and the great equalizer.

If you have ever known someone who has struggled upon the cross of addiction, faced the terrifying prospect that his brain is not functioning normally, or has lost everything dear to him, then you know that such a man (or woman) has probably abandoned hope. Ultimately, Poverello House is in the business of offering new hope. It may be the hope that comes through the assurance of a hot meal, a shower, a change of clothes, shelter, desperately-needed medical or dental care, or simply a friendly smile that implies, “You are welcome here; all is not lost.” Time and time again, men who graduate from our drug program have stated that Poverello House, and often Papa Mike himself, gave them their first glimpse of a hope that things could be better, that they didn't have to live their lives enslaved to drug dealers, jail, and their own ravenous cravings for drugs or alcohol. Others, years after encountering our mission, have come back to say that in their darkest hours, they stumbled across Poverello House, and the services here gave them the hope and strength to keep going until they could make positive changes in their situations.

Thus, our theme this year is hope. We want you to know that when you give a check, clothing, food, or anything else to Poverello House, you are not just donating money or in-kind items; you are giving a gift that will impart hope to someone who is on the verge of giving up. That is what we do 365 days a year at Poverello House; we are all about hope.

Are you following Poverello House on Instagram and Facebook? If not, you're missing out! Get daily updates, photos and videos of all the big and small activities that make up life at Poverello House! Friend us on Facebook, and follow us on Instagram (@PoverelloHouse) to keep abreast of everything Poverello!





Poverello House

The epicenter of hope for the poor
P.O. Box 12225 · Fresno, CA 93777-2225
www.PoverelloHouse.org

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



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

You can help us save postage by requesting an e-newsletter. Please email Jeff Negrete at negrete@poverellohouse.org to receive an e-newsletter.



Hope comes to different people in different ways: a meal, some clothing, a place to sleep, medical or dental care, a shower, or just knowing that there is at least one place where you are always welcome. Thank you for your gifts of time and donations, which enable us to offer gifts of hope to the homeless and poor of Fresno County.