

POVERELLO NEWS



NOVEMBER 2016

(559) 498-6988

WWW.POVERELLOHOUSE.ORG



When I consider the fact that I have been through forty-three Thanksgivings here, it puts a different twist on time for me. It tells me that I've been around long enough to witness multiple generations of the poor and homeless come through the doors.

This was brought home to me recently when a woman approached me. As with many of the women here, she had an edgy, worn-down look. There was something familiar about her, but I couldn't place her face.

As she began talking to me, I remembered her. Hers was a familiar hard luck story.

She first came to Poverello House when she was four years old. Her parents were addicted to alcohol and drugs in a bad way. The family would eat here off and on, I suppose in accordance with their waxing and waning fortunes. The fate of the child of drug addicts is never happy, and her life has been full of the expected hard knocks.

I remember her as a teenager. She was very pretty, and looked as though she didn't belong here. The ones who have her look, that forlorn, lost appearance, are the ones that break my heart. Of course it's sad that anyone has to come here for basic necessities, but the ones who look out of place, as though they are wandering around in a bad nightmare from which they can't awaken, get to me. Maybe that's why I remembered her, because back then she stuck out from the crowd and seemed alien and tragic.

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As we were talking, I mentioned that it seemed like a long time since I'd last seen her. She said it was because she had been in jail for nine years. I didn't ask her why she had spent so long in jail; I figured that if she wanted me to know, she'd tell me.

I was glad to see her, but was gearing myself up for what I thought was going to be a request for something: a bus ticket, groceries, a place to stay. To my surprise, she said that she just wanted to say "hi" to me. She said that one of the few good memories she had as a child was coming to Poverello and getting to see Papa Mike, who always had a joke, a smile, and occasionally some candy for her.

As I thought about her sad life, a life that had little chance for success, given the hand that she was dealt, I found myself wishing that I, that Poverello, that *someone*,



could have helped her more than we did. I don't know what awaits her, because she has a shaky foundation and has thus far made bad decisions, so I'm not optimistic.

However, it's my forty-third Thanksgiving at Pov, and each year when this time rolls around, I try to think of things that make me grateful. So despite the fact that I didn't save her from her fate, I'm thankful that Poverello was here, and that I was here, to offer her food, a few smiles, some corny jokes, and sometimes some candy, which somehow added up to a good memory for her. I don't know how many more Thanksgivings I have left, but whenever I leave this earth, I think it will be a comfort for me to know that those little things I did helped make people like her happy, if only for a little while.

Mike

A Gift of Hope

Poverello House presents: *A Gift of Hope* Saturday, November 12, 2016 at TorNino's Banquet. A Gift of Hope is a gala benefitting Poverello House, sponsored by Saint Agnes Medical Center. Join us for a fun-filled night to honor Mike McGarvin, Founder. Enjoy dinner, live and silent auction and entertainment. Individual tickets are \$90. Social Hour starts at 5:00 p.m.

Sponsorship levels are available. Live, silent and dessert auction items are welcomed. Please contact Pedro Santana (559) 498-6988 regarding sponsorship opportunities or visit www.poverellohouse.org/gift-of-hope for more information.



Reaching Out to Areas of Rural Poverty

The great constant of life is change, and certainly many things have changed over the years at Poverello House. What began as a simple mission of feeding the homeless has expanded into a multi-purpose organization that addresses many facets of poverty besides hunger. However, the heart of Poverello's mission has always been to offer healthy, nutritious food to the neediest and most destitute people in our community.

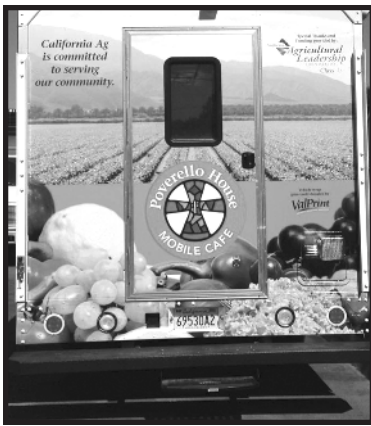
In the April 2016 *Poverello News*, we noted that a generous grant from the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation Class 45 enabled us to think beyond the boundaries of the city of Fresno. The grant was used to purchase and equip a food catering truck, a new service that was the brainchild of Founder Mike McGarvin, something that for many years he dreamed about. The truck goes to rural areas of Fresno and surrounding counties to provide hot meals for the poor in those areas.

The truck's "maiden voyage" was at the last Fresno Grizzlies Taco Truck Throwdown in Fresno. Food Service Director Tito Olazabal and the crew provided 2,000 tacos, and managed to win

fifth place (out of thirty-two taco providers) in the competition. Not bad at all for the first outing!

The first rural outreaches began this fall. We hope to soon have the truck going out regularly at least four times a week to various locations.

The food truck program has three main goals: (1) to provide hot, nutritious meals to poverty-impacted areas of rural Fresno County and surrounding counties; (2) to create opportunities for Poverello House, through MAP Point, to provide linkages to people in those communities, where basic services are scarce; and (3) to offer workforce development training to men in the Poverello House residential rehabilitation program. At some point, the goal is to not only provide meals to rural areas, but also to launch a commercial venture, wherein the truck would sell food at events and become self-sustaining financially.



Poverello House is not doing this alone. Partnerships are critical to identifying communities in need

and setting up locations to deliver the food, which will be done primarily at school sites and community centers. Centro La Familia, CSU Fresno, Fresno County Office of Education Migrant Education Division and Univision are all a part of this effort.

The men in our program who help run the food truck are graduates who are currently living at our transition facility. By working in the food truck, they receive both real-world skills training, and experience an essential element of recovery: helping others in need.

The food truck program is an exhilarating change for us, but it is certainly not a change in the direction of Poverello's efforts. Rather, it is an extension of what we do best. Food for the poor has always been central here, and we are grateful to the partners and sponsors who have helped us reach out to underserved rural areas that are in desperate need.

Mythical Truth

There are only a couple of people left who were around in the very earliest days when Mike started on the streets, so most people associated with Poverello House know the wild stories only through oral tradition. There is a mythical quality to those stories, in part because Mike is such a good storyteller, but also because the stories are both poignant and feral. Mike is still rough-hewn, and things that might shock others only elicit a chuckle from him. He clearly sees the tragedy of everyday life among the homeless, but he also seldom fails to see rough humor when it shows itself.

Every charity has a story about its beginnings, but few are as mesmerizing as Poverello's. One way you can discover it for yourself is to read Mike's two books. Every year between November and December, we offer *On the Level*, a collection of Mike's street photos, and *Papa Mike*, his autobiographical history of Poverello House. If you would like either book, give us a call at (559) 498-6988, or fill out the form below and send it with a check, money order, or credit card information. The books are available for \$20 each. Send to:

Poverello House
P.O. Box 12225
Fresno, CA 93777-2225

Please send me ____ copy(ies) of Mike McGarvin's book, *On the Level* (\$20 per copy).

Please send me ____ copy(ies) of Mike McGarvin's book, *Papa Mike* (\$20 per copy).

METHOD OF PAYMENT:

- Check/Money Order enclosed (Make checks payable to Poverello House)
- Credit Card

TYPE OF CARD (VISA, MASTERCARD)

ACCOUNT NUMBER / EXPIRATION DATE

CARDHOLDER SIGNATURE

CARDHOLDER TELEPHONE #

Holiday Needs

If you've ever been down here for Thanksgiving or Christmas, you know that the holidays are very special at Poverello House. It's wonderful to see the faces of homeless people light up as they tuck into a holiday meal, and it's a joy to watch the impoverished children receive gifts on Christmas. It's no wonder that the holidays are the most popular times for people to volunteer their time.

The volunteer jobs go fast, so call us at (559) 498-6988 to get on the list before it is filled up. Even if the Thanksgiving or Christmas Day volunteer positions are taken, we have many other tasks during the holidays, such as wrapping presents and sorting food.

We do have some specific donation needs during this time. The number one need is for turkeys. Our goal is to get in 2,500 or more turkeys between now and Christmas. Not only do the turkeys help us during the holidays, but we freeze the majority of them to use throughout the year. Every year is feast and famine. Thanksgiving and Christmas are the "feast" times when we receive the vast majority of our yearly donations; the summers tend to be lean, "famine" times, when we start to stretch our resources. A turkey donation between November and December will go a long way toward ensuring that we have enough food to provide meals throughout the upcoming year.

In addition to turkeys, we need warm clothing, knit caps, gloves, scarves and new children's toys. You can drop off donations at our receiving area behind the main building seven days a week. Call us for more information or if you have questions. Thank you for helping us help the hungry and homeless this holiday season.

November Wish List

TURKEYS!!! * Coffee * Dinner rolls * Pumpkin, apple & pecan pies * #10 cans of green beans * New toys

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

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

Poverello House

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

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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

Who Are We? A nonprofit, nondenominational organization.

Our Mission: Believing in the dignity of every person, at Poverello House we work to enrich the lives and spirits of all who pass our way by stewarding the resources made available to us through Providential and community support.

Governance: We have been operating since 1973 and are governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of local volunteer 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. 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.