



# POVERELLO NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION VOL.5

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

# VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AT POVERELLO HOUSE

In the beginning, Poverello House operated with a volunteer force of the McGarvin family, local church members, and friends who believed in Mike's vision. Fifty years later, Poverello House holds a volunteer volume of over two thousand in one year. We are a growing organization and rely heavily on our volunteer force as an organization. The volunteer opportunities have grown from warehouse organization and meal prep/meal services to courtyard activities, clothing closet support, and enrichment activities with clients. In 2020, Poverello House joined the AmeriCorps VIP program to receive a full-time volunteer infrastructure associate. The AmeriCorps Volunteer Infrastructure Project connects individuals seeking community service to a nonprofit organization that utilizes volunteers. The support of a VIP is to build the existing volunteer capacity, fundraise for the volunteer program, and provide training/development for volunteers. Mary Sosa, a Fresno State graduate, was unsure of her next chapter. With her experience working with volunteers as she wrote her thesis, "Supporting Volunteer Tutors through Ongoing Training," she felt the VIP program with Poverello House was

a great fit. Mary shared, "My degree is in English Rhetoric and Writing Studies, but my specialty is in Community Literacy with an emphasis on Adult Literacy. Once you go down the rabbit hole, it makes sense how I can work in the nonprofit world." Mary has been an asset to the volunteer program and has created many volunteer opportunities outside of the scope of meal services and warehouse organization. With the AmeriCorps program, Mary has explored a career field she may not have considered. Though she has always been passionate about teaching, Mary realized she might not be done with the nonprofit world yet. "My whole life, I thought I would be a teacher. I loved it. But, if you boil it down to your core values, it's easy to navigate different jobs," Mary reflected, "My career goals have always been to educate and empower adults and teach them how to advocate for themselves. I realized you don't necessarily have to be in a classroom to do that. I would be equally happy teaching in a city college or continuing nonprofit work and helping give adults the skills to advocate for and empower themselves." Poverello House is blessed to have adaptive minds and to use these skill sets within our community.

In 2022, Poverello House partnered with the Fresno State University Richter Center for the College Corps Fellowship program. The College Corps is a grantee of the Californians for All College Program to assist low-income students with job development and educational support. The fellows will work with local organizations in education, food insecurity, and climate action to build healthier and more equitable communities. Fresno State student, Katherine (Kat) Alley, joined Poverello House as the Community Engagement College Corps Fellow. Katherine was eager to begin working at Poverello House as she has years of experience in food bank volunteering and providing meals to the homeless through Turlock Gospel Mission. As a full-time student, Kat's time is not as flexible, and the college corps program allows her to gain work experience while giving her a living allowance. At the end of her service, a financial scholarship will be provided. During Kat's time at Poverello House, she has recruited new volunteers, provided clothing services to the unhoused community, assisted with enrichment events, and led small volunteer groups through beautification and educational opportunities. In August, Poverello House will be the host site for ten College Corps Fellows. These individuals will assist with the development and execution of the Papa Mike's Café restaurant. As the organization grows, our need for volunteers increases as well. With programs such as College and AmeriCorps, alongside the many others from our community, Poverello House can successfully serve the unhoused community in Fresno County.



**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM**  
Mary Sosa, AmeriCorps VIP Fellow, and the 2023 Cohort



**Katherine Alley**  
Katherine Alley, Fresno State College Corps Fellow

**POVERELLO HOUSE  
KITCHEN  
RENOVATIONS BEGAN  
MAY 1ST, 2023**



**NO KITCHEN?  
NO PROBLEM.  
WE ARE HERE TO SERVE.**

**OPERATIONS MAY LOOK DIFFERENT,  
BUT THE WORK MUST CONTINUE.**

**MEAL PREP IN THE  
MULTIPURPOSE ROOM!**

**TEMPORARY KITCHEN TRAILERS!**

**DISHWASHING AND  
SANITATION STATIONS OUTSIDE!**

# COMMUNITY MEMBERS AT POVERELLO HOUSE

Poverello House volunteers are a vital part of the organization's daily operations. Without our volunteer force, we could not provide meals, clothing, and essential items. We have incredible community members involved in Poverello House, and we want to highlight two Volunteer Ambassadors.

Heidi Michael began volunteering with her son, who needed community service hours for school. Heidi has always been passionate about helping others and has been involved with non-profit organizations for most of her adult life. After moving to Fresno, she heard of Poverello House and wanted to get involved! Heidi shared,

**"Once I started, I found that something about Poverello House really 'fed my soul,' and I truly connected with the work and mission there and felt like I was meant to be there."**

While Heidi started volunteering with her son as his chaperone, she loved the atmosphere and is now our Culinary Services Ambassador! Heidi is a lead volunteer for the preparatory and meal services, and she assists staff with guiding new volunteers and instructing them with volunteer tasks. When Heidi was asked to join the Board of Directors, she expressed how thrilled and honored she was, "I feel blessed to be a part of such an incredible organization, filled with such selfless, passionate, and caring people who are truly doing God's work for the most needy, every day."

Doris Van has been a Poverello House volunteer since 2005 and has seen the ever-changing organization undergo incredible developments. Doris began volunteering after her daughter graduated from high school and moved away. There was an article in the Fresno Bee about places that needed volunteers, and Poverello House stood out to Doris. She had no idea where Poverello House was or what the organization did, but she went to an orientation, signed up to help prep in the kitchen, and served the evening meal. Right away, she met some great volunteers who came regularly and enjoyed the work, which brought her back again. Doris volunteered twice a month in the kitchen in addition to Papa Mike's Café and the 5K Run for Meals becoming regular events. During Covid, there was a need for more assistance in the food and storage warehouse, and Doris began volunteering twice a week. Doris quickly became the Warehouse Ambassador and has overseen tasking large groups that volunteer. Doris shared that she appreciates volunteering more as she learns what Poverello House does and how the staff and residents treat those who come through the doors. Doris expressed, "I am grateful for what I have in my life, and I think we all benefit by giving back to our community. I encourage everyone to volunteer someplace with whatever time they have."

The Ambassador Program at Poverello House creates long-term volunteer opportunities for those looking to get more involved in the community. If you are interested in becoming part of the Ambassador Program, please contact **Nathaniel Schenck** at [nschenck@poverellohouse.org](mailto:nschenck@poverellohouse.org).

## CALL TO ACTION! KITCHEN VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**FIRST STEP:**

**Register for Orientation!**

Learn what it means to be a Poverello House Volunteer and receive a tour of the campus.



**Sign-up for Kitchen and Meal Preparation!** Back of House opportunities to provide kitchen relief with necessary preparatory work such as chopping, slicing, sack lunch assembly, etc.

**Sign-up for Meal Services!**

Directly assist clients by distributing meals, drinks, silverware, napkins, and other appropriate items.





**MARY MCGARVIN**  
*Poverello House First Volunteer*

**I AM  
PRIVILEGED  
TO SAY I'M  
THE ORIGINAL  
POVERELLO  
HOUSE  
VOLUNTEER.**

# MARY MCGARVIN: WIFE, VOLUNTEER, CO-FOUNDER

I am privileged to say I'm the original Poverello House volunteer. My first volunteer experience was as an eighteen-year-old newlywed in Father Simon's Poverello Coffeehouse in the Tenderloin of San Francisco. I still remember how unsure I felt about the different types of people I encountered during my visit. I had never been to a place with so many destitute people, and I remember being hesitant about interacting with anyone there. I tagged along with Mike as he visited with people and saw his great rapport with the locals who came through the coffeehouse. The frightening aspect of the place quickly dwindled as I got more familiar with the people and my surroundings. Soon after I started volunteering, I was able to see the coffeehouse and the people in it as an extension of Mike's family.

Over time, volunteering gave me a type of joy I hadn't known before. I looked forward to seeing some regulars and enjoyed helping whenever possible. I've been volunteering ever since! I can't explain why everyone comes back to Poverello House to volunteer; each may have their own motivations. Many come here to get the same joy of connecting with others, just as I did at the coffeehouse in San Francisco. Mike got to the heart of what I'm trying to say in his autobiography, Papa Mike, "I began seeing people through Father Simon's eyes. He, in turn, saw people through Christ's eyes, and he deeply believed that Jesus walked among the poor and the outcast. It was a revelation to me. The more I got to know the people who came to Poverello, the more compassion I felt for them." Volunteering here at Poverello House allows us to interact with people and work for a meaningful, fulfilling cause.

For whatever personal reasons people have for coming to volunteer at Poverello House, we wouldn't be here today if it weren't for the volunteers who have helped us over the past fifty years. Countless people have selflessly given their time and talents to our organization, from the beginning of distributing food on the streets, to today, with the many unseen duties



**CLARE & "MAMA MARY" MCGARVIN**  
*Papa Mike's Birthday Celebration*

of food prep, cleaning, and general caring for this establishment. Hours upon hours of donated time are given for the success of our operations. We continue to serve and keep our doors open through the hard work of many who volunteer their time with us.

In our earliest days before a building, I remember how reliant we were on our volunteers for anything to happen. I remember the many ladies from various churches who made huge pots of chili on their kitchen stoves. Many helped prepare the now-famous peanut butter and jelly sandwiches in bulk for Mike to hand out on the streets. There were people from the beginning who provided much-needed secretarial tasks and those who were willing to help with maintenance work. There are so many ongoing needs of the organization, and these wouldn't be met without the selfless help of so many. This quote from the October 2013 newsletter says more than I could express myself:

"Father Simon wrote that the volunteers in San Francisco, with their gifts and imperfections, gave themselves to the vision of St. Francis. That is also true of our volunteers, whether they know it or not. Sometimes we are reminded of how indebted we are to them for their service. The problems we face at Poverello House are often depressing and overpowering. It would be easy to despair about our mission were it not for the inspiration of people who, by their generosity, keep the meals on the tables and the services accessible every day of the year. Each volunteer is a precious gift to Poverello House, whether they come every day of the week or come only once in a lifetime."

We want to acknowledge and thank every person who has found their way to Poverello House and helped us keep the lights on. Without all of you, we would not be here fifty years later.



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**RUN FOR MEALS  
IS BACK!**



**SAME RUN,  
NEW LOGO!**



POVERELLO  
HOUSE  
*A Journey of Hope*

**SATURDAY, JUNE 10, 2023**

**5K RUN | 2-MILE RUN/WALK | WOODWARD PARK - 8:00 AM START TIME**

REGISTRATION OPEN! VISIT [RUNSIGNUP.COM](https://runsignup.com).

FIND RACE: POVERELLO HOUSE PAPA MIKE'S CAFÉ RUN FOR MEALS OR VISIT [POVERELLOHOUSE.ORG](https://poverellohouse.org)