



POVERELLO NEWS

SPECIAL EDITION VOL.6

FAMILY SERVICES AT POVERELLO HOUSE

Since 1973, Poverello House has served the unhoused community in Fresno and has witnessed an increase in families experiencing homelessness. In May 2023, we were blessed to open our doors to our Family Hope Shelter and begin serving families in a new way!

Leticia “Lety” Martinez, a Poverello House employee for seventeen years, has worked with homeless families for the past decade. Lety is now the Coordinator of Family Hope Shelter! She has poured her heart and soul into her clients and has housed over seventy families in the last five or more years. Lety says what makes her a good leader is consistently being hands-on, boots on the ground, and doing the day-to-day work.

Leticia has experienced incredible hardships, traumas, and heartbreak throughout this job but has not lost hope in the ability to make a difference, one person and family at a time. Lety expressed that while housing a family is an accomplishment, she views the aftermath of that relationship as her success. Lety says building rapport with families and providing a safe space within the mentorship is how she knows

she did her job right. “Having a mom whom I have housed call me with a quick question is what I love most. Yes, I get to house families, but I know I did something good when they have been established and still come back for comfort and little assistance.”

When asked how she keeps clients hopeful during their situation, Lety shared that being open, honest, and consistent allows clients to express themselves freely and reimagine their perspectives. Staff is here to meet clients where they are, adjust them to shelter life, and give them the tools to progress. Family Hope Shelter staff wants all those experiencing hardships to know that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

The first family to be successfully housed by Family Hope Shelter was Chelsea and her two children, an eleven-year-old boy, and a sixteen-year-old girl, on Friday, June 16th! Chelsea shared with us that she experienced homelessness, staying in her car for seven years. She found resources through Marjaree Mason’s Center and Rescue the Children but could not receive shelter. Chelsea had her 11-year-old, 16-year-old, and 22-year-old children living with her in a car on the outskirts of Downtown Fresno and was found by the Poverello House HOPE

Outreach team. Chelsea shared that the Outreach team truly pulled her out of the hole she was in and allowed her to find a reprieve at the Family Hope Shelter. She admitted that if she had not met the Outreach team, she was ready to call Child Protective Services on herself to give her children a better option.



FAMILY HOPE SHELTER MAY 2023 STATS



MEALS PROVIDED:
784



NIGHTS OF SHELTER:
587



SHOWERS:
584



LOADS OF LAUNDRY:
52

Chelsea did not want to be without her kids but felt selfish about keeping them with her. She shared that this experience has been a bonding moment for her family, and to be without each other would have been devastating, and she is forever grateful to those Outreach members.

When asked what her experience in the Family Hope Shelter was like, Chelsea expressed that she and her family have been treated with respect and dignity by staff, it is a positive environment for her children, and they no longer go hungry or without a safe space. Advice that Chelsea would give to those experiencing similar situations is to never give up, “it takes time, and it may feel like nothing significant is happening at that moment, but as long as you are patient and never give up, you will see the results.” Chelsea’s next steps are to get a steady job, pay off her eviction debts, and create a loving home for her family.

LETICIA MARTINEZ & MIKE MCGARVIN, 2015



Zack Darrah
Poverello House CEO

GENERATIONAL IMPACT THROUGH SERVING FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

In this edition of the monthly newsletter, you are learning more about the work of Poverello House with families. We have served the needs of families experiencing homelessness from the earliest days. Most of these efforts centered around providing meals, short-term motel stays, gifts on Christmas, and assisting families with securing permanent housing. However, with great excitement, we share that the Family Hope Shelter has been serving families, and we received our first family on May 1st!

This work has been particularly close to my heart as a father. As I began serving at Poverello House in 2019, I was particularly shocked to see so many families on our campus. That was the beginning of this journey, and seeing this vision come to fruition is thrilling. The Bezos Day 1 Families Fund caught this vision and made this possible through a \$2.5 million contribution. That was a gift from God that answered so many prayers. These gifts and community donations are the providential and community support we identify in our mission statement. It is your support that is going to allow us to make a generational impact in our community.

Did you know that about 30% of the entire homeless population in the United States is made up of adults and children in families? The most recent available numbers revealed that 51,000 family households were experiencing homelessness on a single night in our country. These statistics are staggering and heartbreaking. To think that tens of thousands of children are experiencing homelessness tonight in the wealthiest nation in the world makes me emotional just typing the words. As we serve these families, we certainly serve the parent or parents. Yet, in helping families and providing them hope for a brighter future, there is a generational impact beyond our ability to measure. Assisting one family transition from the street to permanent and healthy housing will impact their children's future and children beyond. This is what makes the work matter so much!

I genuinely look forward to sharing the incredible stories of how the Family Hope Shelter is part of changing the trajectories of families experiencing homelessness in our community. We will need your help, and I am confident you will be there walking alongside us as you have for 50 years. Thank you for providing hope for families that is beyond measure!

Blessings,

Zack

IN 2021, 161,070 FAMILIES WERE IDENTIFIED AS HOMELESS.

ONE IN 30 AMERICAN CHILDREN EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS ANNUALLY; 51% ARE UNDER AGE FIVE.

FAMILY HOMELESSNESS, ONCE VIEWED AS EPISODIC AND SITUATIONAL, HAS BECOME CHRONIC. FAMILIES ACCOUNTING FOR 37% OF THE OVERALL HOMELESS POPULATION AND 50% OF THE SHELTERED POPULATION.

FROM THE POVERELLO HOUSE NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

MIKE MCGARVIN, JULY 1993

As I make my daily rounds at the POV, I sometimes carry candy in my pockets. In the old days, candy and cigarettes were good bargaining chips for drunks who were getting too feisty. Nowadays, most of the candy goes to the kids.

The streets have changed. Every day, we see more and more families. Some of the parents are addicts; others are just poor. But what about the kids? What hope do they have when mom and dad are unable to give them what they need materially or emotionally? What kind of life can it be for a child when he has to live on the mean streets each and every day? What dreams can a little heart possibly contain when there is nothing to anticipate but hunger, broken promises, abuse, or neglect? What happens to these kids? I'll tell you what happens to them. They grow up as men and women who hate themselves so much that they try to destroy themselves with alcohol, dope, and promiscuity. Then they have kids of their own and continue to alter the cycle.

A candy bar doesn't accomplish much except to bring a brief smile into a drab existence. A meal doesn't solve the hunger problem in Fresno. Listening to an addict's pain doesn't erase 40 years of misery. But day by day, little by little, Poverello House brings balm to the souls of the children and adults who call the streets their homes. We believe that love is patient, undramatic, and persevering. In the eternal scheme of things, a candy bar means a lot.

MIKE MCGARVIN, MAY 1994

With Mother's Day coming, I am very grateful that we now have a Family Dining Room. It breaks my heart to watch the yearly increase in the number of families, many single-parent families, who are forced by destitution to eat here.

Despite our society's decline in decency, motherhood is still regarded with respect, perhaps even reverence. The thought of a mother and child recalls images of innocence, wholesomeness, and gentleness. These images are shattered by the visage of a lean, frightened woman huddled on the street with a brood of ragged, sick waifs. Yet this scene meets our eyes every day at Poverello House.

Thank God for all of you who helped with our expansion project. If you could see the mothers and children coming into our Family Dining Room, relaxing in its informal atmosphere, and receiving nutritious, warm meals, you would know that every cent spent on its construction was worth it. In fact, if you haven't been down for a while or have never visited to help serve a meal, why don't you come on by? We could sure use the help, and so could all the moms and their kids.



IN 2024, POVERELLO HOUSE WILL HAVE A RENOVATED KITCHEN FOR THE PAPA MIKE'S CAFE RESTAURANT. COULD PAPA MIKE HAVE IMAGINED THAT BACK IN '94?

McGarvin photography





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*Move-in day for
Chelsea and
her children!*

FAMILY HOPE SHELTER SPONSOR A FAMILY!

One Night of Shelter is an average cost of \$87

**The Family Hope Shelter is a 9-unit emergency shelter
for families experiencing homeless.
Chelsea and her family were housed on Friday, June 16th 2023.**