



POVERELLO NEWS

JULY 2024

PAPA MIKE'S LEGACY

1973

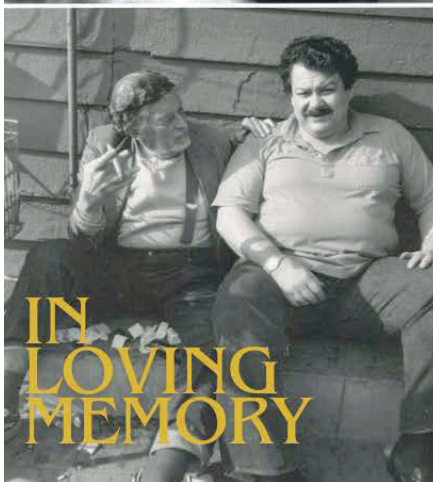
SPREADING PEANUT BUTTER — AND COMPASSION

"Papa" and "Mama" Mary made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Mike to hand out in Fresno's Chinatown. This simple act of generosity is deeply rooted in the mission of Poverello House. An organization that has grown immensely since its founding 51 years ago. This is made possible by the unwavering support of the community.

Poverello House has a rich history of aiding those in need. A legacy that lives on through Papa Mike's Café. This innovative, no-cost, full-service restaurant allows anyone in need to choose their meal. Our guests are served with kindness and respect. Papa Mike's Café aims to inspire real change by offering a sense of worth and empowerment. This latest initiative reflects the mission started over half a century ago by "Papa" Mike McGarvin.

"Papa" Mike recognized that life on the streets offers limited options. People experiencing homelessness often must accept whatever is available. This leads to feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. With Papa Mike's Café, we sought to create something transformational! We give our guests the opportunity to make choices by providing a menu of delicious options. This can foster a sense of worth and empowerment. This simple act of choice may be the first step on their journey toward change.

I LOVED GOING OUT AND SEEING THE SMILES ON THE FACES WHEN I HANDED OUT SANDWICHES. I ENJOYED THE JOKES AND THE STORIES I'D HEAR. I LIKED GETTING TO KNOW PEOPLE BY NAME, AND MANY OF THEM SEEMED TO CRAVE NOT ONLY THE FOOD BUT ALSO THE ATTENTION."-PAPA MIKE



**IN
LOVING
MEMORY**

MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER



EXCERPTS FROM PAPA MIKE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

As I got to know people, somewhere along the way I got the nickname “Papa Mike.” I don’t remember who started calling me that, and I’m not even sure why. I suppose it was because I was kind of like a father to these folks, even though I was younger than many of them. I took care of them when nobody else would, and maybe they called me that out of respect. Whatever the reason, the name stuck.

We were in the Pov (1974) for a little less than a year when it all ended. I got a call from the fire department one night, and found out that the Poverello building had burned down. Nobody knew quite how it started, but it ended by frying the whole place and everything in it. We’d collected donations of furniture and equipment, and we lost all that. I was devastated. I couldn’t understand why this had happened, since I was doing what God wanted. I hadn’t yet learned that doing the Lord’s work is no guarantee of smooth sailing.

I thought about giving it up, but I just couldn’t. I knew a lot of the people, and I had a few volunteers now. We decided to go back to the streets.

We spent about another year without a building. It was hard, but good, because it just meant that I got to know people better.

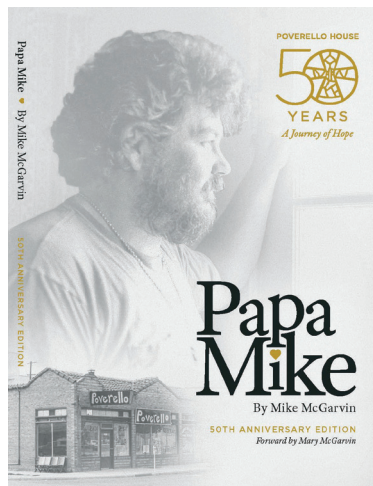
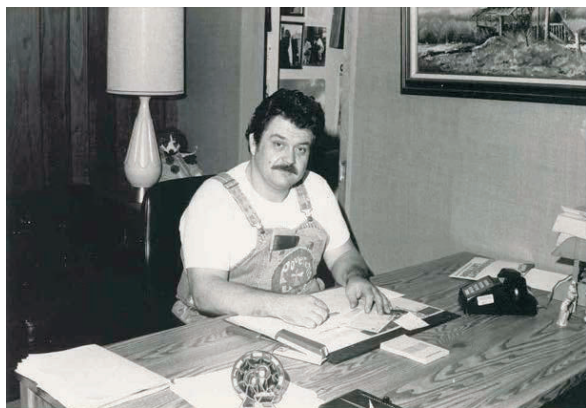
We no longer had a place for people to come, but they knew where to meet us when we brought the van. We’d set up under the freeway overpass, near a grassy area nicknamed “Tokay Park.” We’d go to Chinatown and set up near alleys. Occasionally people considered us a nuisance and harassed us, but we nevertheless got to be a familiar sight.

Things began to look up in 1979. I was hired back by the Bee, and I worked nights. That left the daytime free to keep the Pov going. Actually, we had enough regular volunteers by this time that it could almost function without me, but I still needed to be there. I enjoyed the contact with the streets, developing relationships with people, and seeing hungry eyes light up when I handed out a sandwich or a cup of chili.

The year I turn sixty, which is right around the corner, is the same year Poverello House will turn thirty. Here I am, almost sixty, and half of my life, the better half, has been spent immersed in Poverello House.

Sometimes, if I stop to think about it long enough, I’m amazed that I’m still alive. I survived my childhood, my hell-raising adolescence, the ’60s, cancer, and the streets of Fresno. I grew up immersed in cruelty, but by God’s grace learned the virtues of kindness.

Someone once asked me if I was ever going to retire from the Pov. “When I’m six feet under,” I replied. This is my life, and I’m grateful for it. I once was as lost as the people I meet on the street. Today, my life has meaning, thanks to the little Poverello in San Francisco and the Poverello here in Fresno. God gave me a purpose, and I know why I’m on this earth.



POVERELLO IS A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN GET HELP, REAL, CONCRETE HELP, AND I’M SURE THAT AFTER I’M GONE, POV WILL STILL BE THERE, REDEEMING LIVES AND HELPING HOMELESS, POOR PEOPLE FEEL HUMAN. I’M THANKFUL FOR THAT, AND I THINK THAT IF I COULD POINT OUT THE ONE ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR WHICH I’M PROUDEST, IT WOULD BE POVERELLO HOUSE.

*God Bless
Mike*

**PAPA MIKE BY MIKE MCGARVIN BOOK IS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE.
CONTACT KRISTINA AT 559-498-6988**

MORE THAN FOOD. MORE THAN SHELTER. MORE THAN A PLAN.

Poverello House is more than just a place for food and essential services. It is a community where individuals and families can find support, hope, and opportunities for personal growth. This summer has been especially vibrant with a variety of enrichment activities. These activities are designed to bring joy, education, and a sense of normalcy to our guests' lives.

Exciting Trips

We've organized several outings that have allowed our guests and residents to explore. These outings provide a much-needed change of scenery. Offering the opportunity to break away from daily routines and immerse in new environments. Additionally, these outings allow them to build lasting memories with others and staff members. Outings like these create memories they can all cherish and look back on fondly for years to come.

Sweet Treats

Everyone deserves a treat now and then! We've included plenty of delicious surprises for our guests. From ice cream socials to Ohana Dole Whip. Our guests have enjoyed a range of sweet delights. These treats are not just about enjoying food but about creating moments of happiness and community bonding.

Fun with Water Play

What's summer without some fun in the sun? Our water balloon activities have been a big hit! Water activities offer a playful way to cool off during hot days. These activities encourage teamwork, laughter, and a break from the everyday challenges our guests face. It is heartwarming to see adults joining in the fun and building stronger connections within our shelter community.

At Poverello House, providing enrichment activities is just as important as offering basic necessities. These programs help build a supportive community where guests can heal, grow, and regain their sense of dignity and purpose. We are committed to continuing these efforts and expanding our activities to ensure that everyone who comes seeking help leaves with more than just their basic needs met. We are deeply grateful to everyone who makes these enrichment activities possible. Your support is invaluable! Together, we are making a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

If you are interested in being a part of our community and helping us create a summer filled with joy and enrichment, contact Kristina at 559-498-6988



SUMMER



SERVERS

NEEDED

MONDAY - FRIDAY
6:45 AM - 5:30 PM
SATURDAY-SUNDAY
7:15 AM - 5:30 PM



Papa Mike's *Café*
at Poverello House

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