



Poverello News

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THE ENRICHMENT CENTER AT POVERELLO HOUSE: A PLACE FOR ENCOURAGING HEALING AND WELLNESS

As a society, we are beginning to understand the importance of mental health. We encourage people to seek treatment for mental health disorders and work with a therapist to learn strategies to overcome their struggles. Friends and families become crucial for additional support during mental health struggles. However, for those experiencing homelessness or suffering from Substance Use Disorder (SUD), mental health interventions are difficult to obtain. The repeated sexual and physical trauma of living on the streets amplifies poor mental health for people experiencing homelessness. Veterans who suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) struggle to make meaningful connections for treatment. Drugs and alcohol are used to dull the pain of traumatic events and mental health challenges. Family and friends are at a loss on how to help the person. Poverello House needed to do more.

The Enrichment Center at Poverello House was created to provide an opportunity for mental health interventions

for those who are experiencing homelessness and SUD. “We want to create a therapeutic space where people who are suffering from depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health disorders can get help,” stated Lucky Siphongsay, Director of Mental Health Services. The Enrichment Center will provide individual and group therapy services. Included with these services is providing linkages to psychiatry services for those experiencing homelessness and SUD. The Enrichment Center will also focus on specific mental health issues for women and veterans. Mr. Siphongsay states that, “it is essential to explore the issues that contributed to substance use disorders and learn healthy ways to cope with feelings of anxiety, depression, grief, and trauma.” Poverello House serves more than 250 people daily. The Enrichment Center provides a unique opportunity for people who are historically underserved to engage in mental health services. We look forward to seeing so many that we serve begin their road to recovery at The Enrichment Center!



MEET LUCKY SIPHONGSAY, DIRECTOR OF MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Lucky Siphongsay is a first-generation Laotian-American Refugee. He and his family fled from communist persecution in 1985 to a refugee camp in Thailand. In 1987, Lucky and his family relocated to Fresno. Being the eldest and growing up in the 1990s, Lucky had many barriers and challenges to overcome. He had to be a translator, educator, and significant supporter for his family. Through faith and perseverance, Lucky graduated from Duncan Polytechnical High School. After enrolling at Fresno State for one year, he joined the US Navy and deployed to Sasebo, Japan. Honorably Discharged from the Navy in 2008, Lucky decided to return to school and graduated with his Bachelor's in psychology. He was the first person from his family to attend college. In 2011, Lucky enrolled in the Marriage and Family Therapy Program at National University (Fresno Campus). Through hard work and dedication, he graduated with honors. Lucky's value for education was motivated by his father, who told him, "Dream big because this opportunity was never supposed to be given to you, so take advantage because others would love to take your seat." Lucky did not know that his first experience in mental health was caring for his father, who has Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to the communist war in Laos. Today, Lucky is one of the few Laotian-American male therapists in Fresno County and Poverello House's first Director of Mental Health Services. Lucky mentors Southeast Asian youth and advocates for the Southeast Asian community. Lucky enjoys fishing, traveling, and trying different ethnic cuisines with his wife.

TOMAHAWK'S STORY: A SOLDIER, PRISONER OF WAR, REFUGEE AND PTSD SURVIVOR

Tomahawk's life is a story of war, hardships, trauma, and survival. Tomahawk, a Laotian soldier, fought along with American troops during the Vietnam War. During the war, he was wounded by missile fire that burned about 90% of his body. After he recovered, he was captured by communist forces and sent to a "re-education" center. This is where Tomahawk experienced incredible trauma. His captors used manipulation and paranoia to isolate him from his family and country. After months of torture, Tomahawk escaped the prison and, with his family, fled to Thailand. There, he and his family, spent over a year waiting to immigrate to the United States. Once in the United States, Tomahawk enrolled in English and GED classes. The trauma of what



Lucky and Tomahawk

happened at the "re-education" center haunted him. Extreme bouts of depression, PTSD, and paranoia damaged his relationships with his family. He had trouble maintaining stable employment. Due to the cultural stigma of seeking help, Tomahawk did not seek mental health services. He had already experienced extreme mental manipulation and had trouble trusting others. Despite these challenges, Tomahawk did become a US Citizen and raised five kids who graduated from college. Tomahawk's story is not unusual. There are thousands of veterans living in our community who experience PTSD from the trauma they experienced during combat. We are here for Veterans just like Tomahawk and so many others every day.



JULY WISH LIST

Socks, Shorts, Lip Balm, Toothbrushes, Men's T-Shirts, Reading Glasses, Dog Collars and Leashes, Women's Sundresses and Summer Tops, Men and Women's Sandals and Tennis Shoes all sizes

Donations are Accepted

Monday - Friday
8 am - 5 pm
Saturday - Sunday
8 am - 1 pm

412 F. Street, Fresno

Donation lane located on
G Street between
Ventura and San Benito

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Our Mission Includes Mental Health



Zack Darrah,
Chief Executive Officer

I am excited to be part of the establishment of The Enrichment Center at Poverello House! We provide many services daily on our campus and beyond. These services include providing meals, emergency shelter, case management, outreach, drug rehabilitation, and many other support services. It includes showers, laundry services, mail services, and providing a place to be loved.

I have found that we meet many of the physical needs of those who come to Poverello House. Some of the services we provide have the intention to meet a more profound need, but we have not had the context to do so until we launched The Enrichment Center. Most of our clients have experienced trauma beyond our understanding on the streets. People staying in our shelters, enjoying meals in our dining room, or

staying in the Village of Hope require additional support to recover from homelessness. I believe strongly that our mission includes providing a resource to help address those deeper needs and help our clients along the pathway towards improved mental health.

Those we serve will now be able to access resources to address their physical needs and mental well-being. It should be noted that mental health is a need that we all share together! I look forward to seeing The Enrichment Center in action and to this new resource furthering our mission deeper than ever before for "...all who pass our way."

Humbly,

Zack

IVORY CARTER: OUTREACH SPECIALIST AND ARMY VETERAN

Ivory is an Army Veteran of six years who served three tours in Afghanistan. Due to his experiences in combat, Ivory struggles with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As with many Veterans and those experiencing homelessness, PTSD is often an untreated diagnosis. Ivory's experience and journey dealing with trauma allow him to share those experiences with those he encounters on the streets as a member of the HOPE Outreach Team. His work in the field as an Outreach Specialist acts as a coping skill that aids in his therapeutic healing. The Enrichment Center at Poverello House will serve Veterans like Ivory and anyone suffering from trauma of all kinds.



Ivory and Lucky in therapy

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS BECAUSE...

