



# Poverello News

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## HOPE STARTS WITH A COOKIE AND A SMILE

Michael “Mikey” Martinez began his journey at Poverello House by self-admitting into our Men’s Residential Rehabilitation Program in March 2018. Michael was five years into his addiction and experiencing homelessness. After a traumatic incident, he knew it was time to get help and found his way to Poverello House. Michael realized that he needed structure to get his life back on track. The most important thing he learned while participating in the program was how to be the man he is when no one is watching. After completing his six months in rehabilitation, he was gifted a donated car from Poverello House, enrolled himself into a sober living house, and was ready to begin his lifelong journey of sobriety. Michael knew he wanted to be employed at Poverello House and was offered an internship for the HOPE Outreach Team. He spent three months advocating for clients, making contact on the streets of Fresno, and processing client intakes at MAP Point. Then, when an opportunity arrived to intern in the Contact Office, Michael completed three months of training. His performance was outstanding, and he was hired as the Contact Office Coordinator in 2019. Over the last three years, Michael has upgraded his program to be more than an information booth that stores our client’s mail.



*Michael Martinez*

The Contact Office is now a space for clients to meet immediate needs and get enrichment items while still using our address to receive their mail. The Contact Office processes thousands of pieces of mail weekly and serves as the address for over 800 clients. The mail is filed and stored in the Contact Office for twenty days, and clients with valid identification can pick up their mail. If a client does not have proper identification, Mikey connects that individual with a Navigator at Map Point! Mikey also keeps the following items readily available for clients; coloring books and crayons, reading glasses, first aid, hygiene items, feminine products, PPE items, allergy/pain medication, hair ties, combs, candy, snacks, and more.

Ironically, Mikey’s dad worked at the Post Office for 26 years. Michael never imagined following in the footsteps of his father. However, he now appreciates that he has a connection with him. Michael has transformed his life during his time here and has found a space where he can prosper. Before Poverello House, he shared that he was in survival mode and did not look past one day ahead of him. Now, Michael is back in contact with his son, married to a wonderful woman, bought his dream car, and will be moving into his newly built home this October. Michael’s lived experience allows him to serve with compassion and provide dignity to all who pass his way. He does his best to ensure he serves the clients with relentless hospitality!

If you would like to contribute to the Contact Office, donations are accepted at our Donation Lane on G Street, Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 5 pm, and on the weekends from 8 am to 1 pm. We always accept items such as coloring books and crayons, reading glasses, first aid, hygiene items, feminine products, PPE items, allergy/pain medication, hair ties, combs, candy, snacks, and more. These items go directly to clients each day!

# NATHANIEL SCHENCK: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR

We are excited to introduce Nathaniel Schenck, who is the new Community Engagement Coordinator. Nate moved to Fresno in the summer of 2020 to complete his master's program at Fresno Pacific University. Not long after settling in, he fell into servitude throughout the community by joining AmeriCorps. Nate said he is grateful for his previous experience in AmeriCorps, as it allowed him to create connections throughout Fresno. Being a Volunteer Infrastructure Project Fellow, Nathaniel mobilized community partners to address urgent issues like the racial wealth gap and disaster readiness through workplace giving. While serving as an AmeriCorps VIP Fellow, he received his Master of Arts in Strategic and Organizational Leadership! Nate hopes to inspire future servant leaders to innovate Poverello House programs like the Naomi's House, the Men's Residential Rehabilitation Program, and Multi-Agency Access Program (MAP), to name a few. He wants to provide an environment where we celebrate all our backgrounds and expertise to best utilize the talent at Poverello House.

In fact, Nate himself started at Poverello House several years ago as a volunteer. He realized that Poverello House has a robust operation. He was inspired by his time on the campus and hoped to one day reengage with our work. Our volunteers include our neighbors interested in getting involved with meal services, beautification, warehouse support, job training, client services, and other professional services. As the Community Engagement Coordinator, Nate shared that he is excited to begin a new chapter that continues to uplift the volunteer program and strengthen relationships with community partners.

We could not do the work at Poverello House without volunteers! Together, we achieve more through the transformational act of volunteerism. At Poverello House, we welcome our community to join us as we install dignity and respect amongst those that pass our way. We might remember the story of how Papa Mike and Mama Mary



*Nathaniel Schenck*

started passing out peanut butter jelly sandwiches from the back of their car almost fifty years ago. Papa Mike and Mama Mary paved the path for us to continue acts of love, kindness, and compassion through volunteerism. Let us continue their legacy by dedicating an afternoon, morning, weekend, or weekday toward enriching the lives and spirits of those we serve.

# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



**Zack Darrah,**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Designed to Thrive with Volunteers

Poverello House begins with the heart of service. “Papa” Mike and “Mama” Mary McGarvin wanted to serve others through the gifts of love and peanut butter and jelly sandwich. It sounds simple, but it was the beginning of something greater than they could have imagined.

They did not have the resources or ability to solve homelessness in downtown Fresno. They just started with whoever passed their way. It reminds me of when Ronald Reagan said, “We can’t help everyone, but everyone can help someone.” The story of Poverello House is built on this very philosophy!

As the organization grew, the organization had more people to serve than ever before and not enough resources to do so. However, the work of Poverello House was able to advance through the hands and feet of incredible volunteers who came in droves to walk alongside the McGarvins. Whether cooking chili beans, making more sandwiches, or serving coffee on the streets during cold days, people were willing to volunteer whatever time they had to help. The organization designed itself to thrive with volunteers supporting the core of the work.

As COVID impacted the community, during 2020-2021, we saw a reduction of 55,000 volunteer service hours at Poverello House. This had a substantial impact on our

operations. I certainly understand that it was not safe for everyone to come to our campus to volunteer. It clearly showed us that Poverello House is designed to thrive with volunteers. Without you, there is no possible way we can continue to accomplish all that happens in a day here. As the impacts of COVID reduced, we see many of you returning to serve in the warehouse, food services, and across the campus in general. However, we are far from where we were at pre-COVID levels. We miss you, and we need you!

We are investing in volunteerism through our new Community Engagement Coordinator, AmeriCorps VIP Fellows, new volunteer opportunities, and much more! We believe that volunteers keep Poverello House thriving for those we serve daily. Thank you for serving alongside us from the very beginning of our work! If you were volunteering before COVID and have not returned, we hope you will consider returning to serve again. No matter what, we will be here when you are ready. May we all freely give of our most important resource, our time, for the service of others in need, and may we be transformed through the act of serving others.

Humbly,

Zack

## A free tool for Make-A-Will Month!

August is Make-A-Will Month! Join the movement and use this free will-writing tool to complete this important process this month. By creating your plan, you can protect your loved ones, dictate important healthcare and financial decisions, and create a legacy alongside Poverello House to enrich the lives and spirits of all. This online tool makes the process easy and 100% free for our community.

Visit [FreeWill.com/PoverelloHouse](https://FreeWill.com/PoverelloHouse) to get started, or scan this QR code!



## August \*Wish List\*

- Bottled Water • Copy Paper
- Reading Glasses • Coloring Books
- Travel Sized Toiletries



Donations are accepted Monday - Friday 8 am-5 pm and Saturday - Sunday 8 am - 1 pm at 412 F St Fresno. Donation lane is located on G Street between Ventura and San Benito.



