

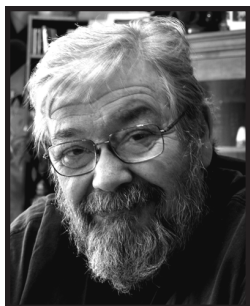
# POVERELLO NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2016 (559) 498-6988

WWW.POVERELLOHOUSE.ORG



*"Mortals, born of woman, are  
of few days and full of trouble."  
Job 14:1*



I have no problem admitting that if I had tried to run a homeless food and service center all by myself, there wouldn't be a Poverello House today. In the early years, volunteers came along fairly quickly, often just in the nick of time. Later, when we incorporated as a nonprofit organization, volunteer board members showed up. Those board members handled things for which I

was unqualified and unenthusiastic: structure, finances, fundraising, marketing, and early staffing decisions. I will always be grateful to our board.

There still are a couple of original board members from the 1970s around, but of course, the board has changed substantially in all those years. For me, one of the many great things about Poverello House is that it enabled me to get to know these board members. Most of them are from walks of life very different than mine, so had I not interacted with them here at Pov, I would probably have never met them.

I used to be bit of a radical, "rich vs. poor" kind of guy. Many of our board members are financially well-off, but it's interesting to me that the things that have happened to them over the years are not all that different than what I've seen happen to the homeless.

We've had board members who have lost close family members to accidents or disease; members who have struggled with devastating illnesses, such as cancer; who have had to deal with financial

---

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Frye Jr., President  
A. Thomas Ferdinandi, Jr., 1st V.P.  
Rob Veneski, 2nd V.P.  
Robin Duke, Secretary  
Patrick Bradley, Treasurer  
Hank Bennett  
Paula Capozzi  
Sister Mary Clennon  
James Connolly  
Mark Delton  
Jim Devaney  
Lawrence Dudley

Charles Farnsworth  
Robert Levine  
Stephanie Negin  
Jeff Negrete  
Tim O'Neil  
Ann Owen  
John Pardini  
Melvin Renge  
Victor Salazar

LIFETIME MEMBERS  
Lynn Baker  
Elizabeth Fillpot  
Anthony Folcarelli  
John "Nip" Gallagher  
Linda Moradian  
Tim Nibler  
Sister Ruth Marie Nickerson, CSCD  
D. Harvey Oh  
Mayo Ryan  
Robert H. Scribner  
Marvin Smith  
Jane Worsley

reversals and lost businesses; who have had relatives with mental health problems, addictions, or disabilities; and board members who themselves have faced substance abuse and emotional turmoil.

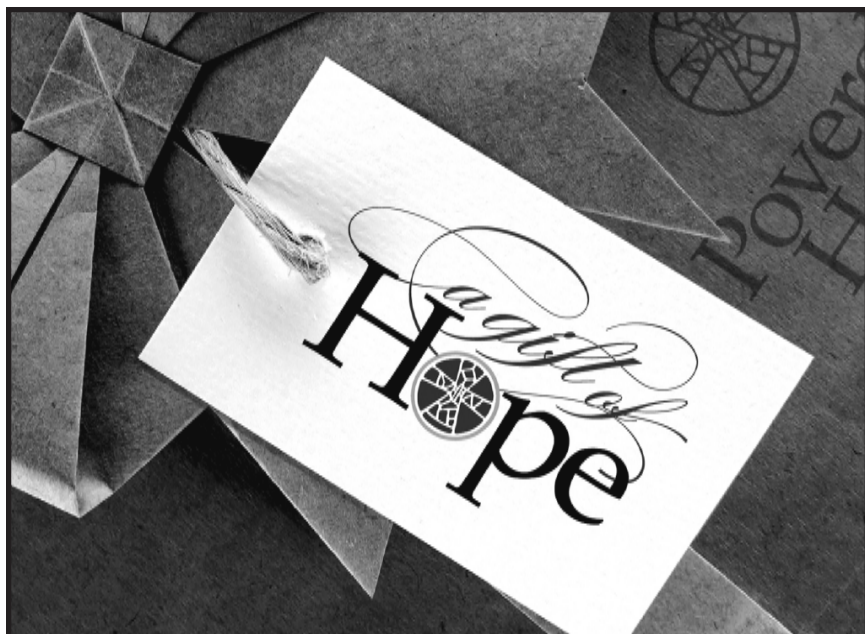
The things that happen to homeless people are not unique to them as a class; it is part of the human condition that bad things happen to both good and bad people; that is the timeless truth in the Old Testament Book of Job. Recently, I pondered the differences and similarities between our board members who have experienced hardships and homeless people who have had comparable difficulties.

So what is the difference between a Poverello board member and a Poverello client? The main difference, I think, is emotional, family, community and financial resources. Something I used to say is that we're all just one or two paychecks away from homelessness. Upon reflection, that's not entirely true. For people already living on the precipice, this may be the case. However, for those whose finances are sound, who have intact families and strong community ties, suffering doesn't often lead to the streets.

So the reality of this world is that there is an unequal distribution of resources, but a fairly equal distribution of human affliction. The reason so many of us identify with the travails of Job is because suffering is one of the most common of human experiences. The wonderful thing about Poverello House is that through the years, those with substantial resources have generously and often sacrificially shared their wealth and talent with the homeless. With the horrors we witness daily in the news, it may be hard for anyone to believe in the brotherhood of man; yet, I have seen that brotherhood at its best here at Pov, for over four decades.

When I worked at the Poverello in San Francisco, pretty much all the volunteers were troubled souls in one way or another. For me, that was the beauty of the place; flawed humans transcending their grief and pain to help others who were suffering even more pain. When I talk with our Fresno volunteers and board members, I see similarities to the San Francisco Poverello workers. The grace of God flows, not through perfect people who have all the answers, but through broken people whose brokenness is the source of their generosity and empathy.





*A gala benefiting **Poverello House***

*Sponsored by Saint Agnes Medical Center*

***Saturday, November 12, 2016***

*at Tornino's*

*Sponsorship opportunities available.*

*For information, please contact*

*Director of Fund Development Pedro Santana,  
(559) 498-6988.*



**Poverello  
House**



**Saint Agnes  
Medical Center**

***Save the date***

# From Desperation to Gratitude

C.H. is a graduate of the Poverello House Drug Rehabilitation Program. He recently sat down with us and told the story of his tumultuous life.

C. H.'s father and mother both had problems with drugs and alcohol. At age fourteen, he started using methamphetamines, supplied by his parents.

Concomitant with his growing addiction was involvement with gangs. This, of course, led to many encounters with law enforcement, resulting in prison time. His wife became fed up and left him in 1992. He was arrested on a first strike offense, was incarcerated for four years, and then was arrested two days after getting out. This time he did another four years, being released in the year 2000.

Not long after his release, he married a woman with whom he had corresponded while in prison, and started a family with her. His drug use continued, and his wife urged him to seek treatment. A couple more stints of incarceration, interspersed with more drug use, brought him to 2014 with yet another arrest, this time for drug possession and receiving stolen property. While in Fresno County Jail, his second wife gave up on him. Little did she, or he, know that this time his imprisonment was the beginning of a new life. As he put it, "I didn't get arrested—I was saved, but I didn't realize it then."

C. H. met an inmate who had gone through the Poverello rehabilitation program. This former rehab resident had fallen off the wagon, which led to his arrest. However, he told C. H. about the program, talking in glowing terms about Poverello and wishing that he had listened better while he was here. The timing could not have been more fortuitous—C. H. had finally hit bottom. He asked his lawyer if he might be able to be released into a program. His lawyer told him that with his record, it was impossible. Determined, he replied that if he ended up being sent to prison, he was going to enter the rehab program in prison.

He had two bunkmates, and was told that someone else was going to join them. Because the law dictated a maximum number of

*(Continued on next page)*

*(Continued from previous page)*

prisoners in the county jail cell, the jail had to release one of the cellmates to make room for the new prisoner. Usually, this meant that the person with the least serious charges would be released. One bunkmate was in for capital murder, so it was a sure bet that he wouldn't be going anywhere. C. H. had a long criminal record, so he discounted any hope that he would be freed. The third prisoner had been arrested for probation violation, so it was assumed that he was the one who would be released. Thus, C. H. was shocked when the guard came and told him to "roll up"; to this day, he still doesn't understand why he was the one they let go, but he attributes it to God working in his life.

He went to intake at the Poverello program the following Wednesday. There was a waiting list, but David Knoy, our Director of Rehabilitation, took a chance on C. H. and let him volunteer at Poverello until the courts sentenced him to the program. He so badly wanted what the program had that he gave it his "heart and soul one hundred percent." Once he started working toward sobriety, his wife decided to give him another chance.

Fast forward to today. C. H. graduated from the Poverello program, and is going on twenty months drug- and alcohol-free. He has his family back, lives at home with his wife and daughters and works full-time. His job? He now is a Poverello employee, driving our donation pick-up trucks, and willingly doing whatever else is asked of him.

Trying to hold back tears, he told us that his teenage daughter recently had an issue with drugs, and was expelled from her school. He is terrified for her, and pledged to himself that he would help her through this difficulty. She is now attending an alternative school that has group support for students with problems, and slowly working out her problems with the help of her clean and sober dad.

C. H. has a whole new life, one so good he never could have imagined it back in the dark years. He is infinitely grateful that his wife has stood by him, and knows in his heart that God intervened when he had reached his nadir. He continues to attend N. A. regularly, has a sponsor, and has his Poverello family to give him insight, support, and structure.



His journey took him on a circuitous route to Poverello House, and that's where he found the answers he was seeking. To sum up his feelings about the Pov, C. H. said simply, "I love this place, bro."

---

## Heroes for the Homeless

The Homeless Engagement Resource Outreach (HERO) program is a project funded by the City of Fresno, and participating agencies include Poverello House, EOC, Turning Point, and Westcare. In the past few years, homeless camps have sprung up throughout the city instead of remaining geographically confined to specific areas, as was the case in the past. The HERO program is a mobile team that seeks out homeless encampments and provides those staying in them with access to resources to move them out of homelessness.

The HERO team works with the Fresno Police Department's Homeless Task Force to locate homeless people throughout the city of Fresno. The police accompany the teams to all encampments.

The HERO program requires dedication and hard work. To take a homeless person from the streets to a viable shelter permanently, a multitude of issues have to be addressed: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. This program, like MAP Point at Pov (discussed in our last two newsletters) is an expansion of what we have done for decades, and an actualization of what we have long hoped to do. In the 1970s, Papa Mike McGarvin reached out to people where they were: on the streets and in the alleys. However, whereas Mike fed, accepted and loved people, he often didn't have the multiple resources necessary to take them to the next level. MAP Point and the HERO program are that next level.

### *September Wish List*

Coffee \* Toilet paper \* Breakfast cereal

*To donate online, visit our website at [www.poverellohouse.org](http://www.poverellohouse.org)*

*Remember, we now take credit card donations. Please see the enclosed envelope for instructions.*

# Poverello House

412 F Street  
P.O. Box 12225  
Fresno, CA 93777-2225  
(559) 498-6988

NON PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
FRESNO, CA 93706  
PERMIT #2440

## FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

**Who Are We?** A nonprofit, nondenominational organization.

**Our Mission:** Believing in the dignity of every person, at Poverello House we work to enrich the lives and spirits of all who pass our way by stewarding the resources made available to us through Providential and community support.

**Governance:** We have been operating since 1973 and are governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of local volunteer men and women.

**Future Goals?** To provide additional facilities for increased services.

**How Are We Funded?** Primarily through private donations from individuals, churches, businesses, and community organizations. Rules for acceptance and participation in the programs of Poverello House are the same for everyone, without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.