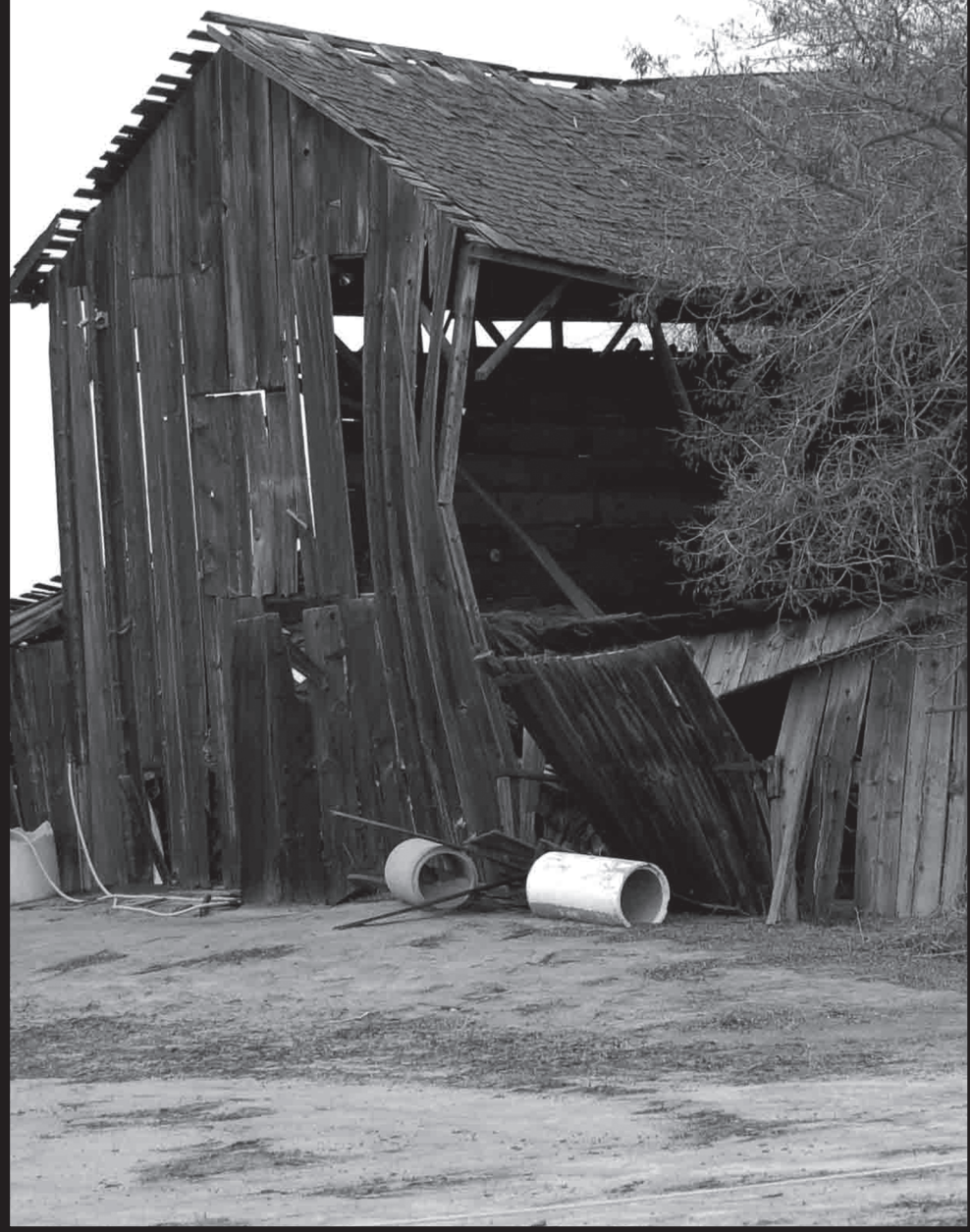


POVERELLO NEWS



April 2015 (559) 498-6988

www.poverellohouse.org





Recently I was watching a commercial for the TV show *The Walking Dead*, when I got the nagging suspicion that I was seeing something eerily familiar. It took me a while, but I realized what it was: the zombies' slow, stumbling gait, their mangled body parts practically falling off of them with each step... to my astonishment, I discovered that I was looking at myself!

I've also recently been drawn to taking photos of things such as the old barn on this month's cover. Dilapidated buildings, dented and forlorn mailboxes on country roads... do you sense a theme here? I wasn't sure why I was suddenly attracted to these images of ancient ruin. Giving it some thought, however, I realized that I felt a certain kinship with these antique wrecks.

Yes, senior citizenry has not been kind to me. My most recent indignity was developing a couple of diabetic ulcers on my legs. These were pretty awful, and dangerous because of the possibility of widespread infection.

What was truly humbling was that I did this to myself. Ultimately, the diabetes occurred as a result of a lifetime of eating and exercise habits, but the ulcers developed because I quit using a diuretic medication that I was supposed to be taking regularly. I didn't like the side effects, and thought I knew better than my doctor, I guess. After this ordeal, I'm now being a good boy and taking my medicine as prescribed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeff Negrete, President
John Frye Jr., 1st V.P.
A. Thomas Ferdinand, Jr., 2nd V.P.
Robin Duke, Secretary
Patrick Bradley, Treasurer
Hank Bennett
Tom Cleary
Sister Mary Clennon
James Connolly
Mark Delton
Jim Devaney
Charles Farnsworth
Jim Kinter

Robert Levine
Dennis Major
Carol Maul
Joel Murillo
Tim O'Neill
Ann Owen
John Pardini
Melvin Renge
Mayo Ryan
Mayo P. Ryan
Victor Salazar
Rob Venenski

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

I happened to mention this to Sister Mary, the director of the Holy Cross Clinic at Poverello. She looked at me in disbelief for a few seconds and then said, “Mike, that’s the kind of behavior I’d expect of our clients.” Ouch.

Since becoming an old man, I do seem to have more and more in common with the homeless I work with. For decades, I’ve seen the results of street people ignoring the dictates of physicians or psychiatrists. Like me, they delude themselves that they can afford to disregard what the doc told them. The results are predictable.

Many mentally ill people could be stabilized if they would take their psychiatric medications regularly. The catch-22 is that because they are mentally ill, they are almost by definition not able to do the rational thing without supervision. Some might feel a paranoia about the medicines, thinking that they are being given poison or worse; others, like me, might not like the side effects and just give up the daily dose. Still others simply are unable to establish the routine discipline of taking the meds regularly, because their minds are chaotic.

Similarly, physical problems proliferate on the street from poor decisions about following doctors’ orders. A man with diabetes might continue to eat sweets and not measure his blood sugar or take his insulin regularly. I’ve seen infections turned gangrenous because someone didn’t bother to take the antibiotics our clinic gave him. Of course, the classic homeless dilemma is the person who keeps drinking or sticking himself with needles when a medical professional has told him he has to quit because of cirrhosis, heart disease, hepatitis, or even AIDS.

Even though I hope I’ve learned my lesson, I can’t say for sure that I won’t do something medically stupid in the future. Just like everyone else, I’m cursed with human nature, which is frustratingly fickle and often impetuous. Not to mention that I’m just plain forgetful these days.

Sometimes that whole human nature thing is good to remember when the planners of the world try to fix complicated issues such as homelessness. In their rational, sometimes utopian approach to

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from previous page)

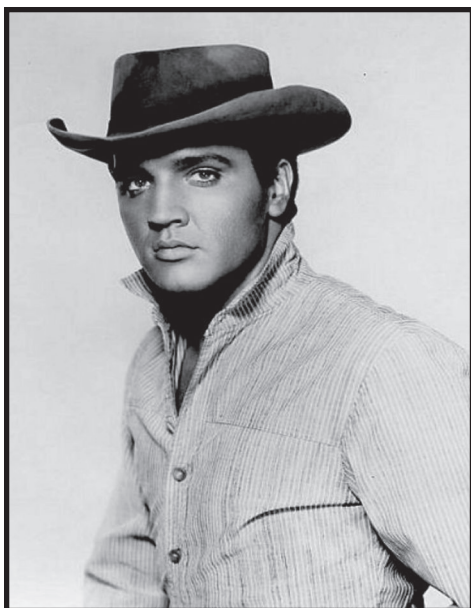
solving social problems, they fail to take into account the illogical, mercurial, stubborn and crazy-making character of human beings.

I know where they're coming from; I used to be the same way. Over forty years and thousands of surprises and disappointments later, I've become somewhat philosophical about helping homeless people. We feed, clothe, counsel them, and provide shelter and medical care. In other words, we do all we can—but we don't expect miracles. Homeless people are, after all, *people*, and as such they are sometimes wonderful, sometimes maddening, and often unpredictable. We just keep doing our part, and continue to hope for the best.

Mike

Elvis, Stetsons & Spurs

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! Join the Amici del Poverello Guild's *Dinner with Elvis* on Friday, May 1, 2015 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at Pardini's, on Shaw west of West Avenue. Enjoy a Western-themed evening based on Elvis' movie hit *Flaming Star*. Jeremy "Elvis" Pearce will entertain and you will enjoy a great evening. Ticket price is \$40 which includes dinner and dessert. Contact Mary Lou Cancio at (559) 291-8375 for more information. Tickets are now available for purchase. This is always a sold-out event, so make sure that you don't miss out on the fun!





Granville Homes introduced the Home of Hope fundraiser in 2006 as a way of raising money to provide food, shelter, health care and education to those in need.

Granville Homes along with the help of many trade partners donates a beautiful new home as the grand prize. 100% of the proceeds are donated to local non-profit organizations.

“The Granville Home of Hope fundraiser has helped over 1 million Valley families by raising more than \$3 million for charities.”

Your support continues for:

Poverello House

Hinds Hospice

Assistance League

Community Food Bank

Renaissance Scholars (Fresno State)

Foundation for Central Schools

Foundation for Clovis Schools

Foundation for Sanger Schools

EPU Children's Center

Fresno Police Chaplaincy

when you purchase a \$100 raffle ticket

for the Granville Home of Hope.

“Since 2007, Poverello House has received over \$445,945 from this wonderful and charitable fundraiser.”

gvhomeofhope.com



Poverello
House

By the Numbers

42 years ago, Poverello House was built to serve the hungry and homeless of our community.

48,460

nights of shelter were provided through the Community & Village of Hope.

21,613

shower and laundry services were provided for those in need.

24% of the population in Fresno lives below the poverty line.

Poverello House serves anywhere from

1,200

to

1,400

meals a day.

\$445,945

The amount received by the **Granville Home of Hope** fundraiser since 2007.

426,121

meals were served at Poverello House during 2013-2014.

Poverello House provides a

28-bed

men's residential alcohol and drug rehabilitation program.

19,505

social support services were provided including clothing distribution, blankets, sleeping bags and much more.

gvhomeofhope.com

A Fundraiser to Help Support Local Organizations.

Don't Delay!

✂ CUT HERE ✂

**Drawing
June 2015**

**GRANVILLE
HOME of HOPE
2015**

HOH Entry Form**\$100**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: () _____

Email*: _____

Quantity of tickets _____

No limit on the number of tickets purchased per person.

A maximum of 5,000 total tickets will be sold.

Credit Card: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard

☐ American Express

Credit Card # _____

Exp. Date: _____ CVC Code: _____
(security code on credit card)

Billing address if different than mailing address:

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Make checks payable to **The Granville Foundation**

Checks must be postmarked by June 5, 2015

Mail to: Poverello House

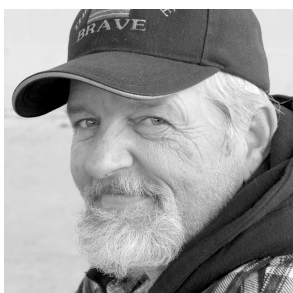
PO Box 12225 Fresno, CA 93777-2225

For more information and to view rules and regulations
visit: **www.gvhomeofhope.com** or call **559.440.8388**





*“Thank you . . .
for all your support.”*



Poverello
House

Saved by Kindness

A few years ago, there was a story in the media about a unique reunion. In 2005, a man named Kevin Berthia was precariously standing outside of the protective railings on the Golden Gate Bridge, ready to jump to his death. Fortunately for Mr. Berthia, a Highway Patrolman named Kevin Briggs was called to the scene. Patrolman Briggs spent an hour talking to Berthia, and finally convinced him to give his life one more try.

Eight years later, Kevin Berthia was happily married, with two children. The two men were reunited at an event honoring officers who have prevented suicides on the bridge.

Here at Poverello, one never knows when an unfolding drama will present itself. Like Kevin Berthia's tale, the following story ended fairly well, but it could have been very tragic were it not for Poverello staff.

Leticia Martinez, Poverello's Client Service Coordinator, was pregnant last fall when she inadvertently walked into a volatile situation. As she went outside in response to a call on the radio, she was caught off guard to see a young man sitting on the curb with a knife in his hand, "blankly staring off into nowhere." He was threatening to use the knife on himself.



Leticia didn't know much about the man, other than his name and a few things about his past. What she did know was that he looked desperate, and being a mother, that desperation brought tears to her eyes. She later wrote, "You wonder what brought him to this point, what broke him and what were the reasons for his actions." She wondered if his mother was still alive and worrying about him.

Of course, this isn't the first Poverello client who has been suicidal. Over the years, many have reached that point of bleak despair and threatened to kill themselves. Some have succeeded.

(Continued on next page)

(Continued from previous page)

Perhaps because this man was young, and because Leticia was a mother with another baby on the way, her maternal instincts were triggered by this sad, frightening scenario. It deeply affected her and haunted her long after it was over.

Poverello staff talked with him until the police arrived, and then the officers, using amazing restraint and patience, gently spoke to him at length, convinced him to put down the knife and come with them. He was placed in an ambulance and taken for a psychological evaluation.

Whether or not he gets the help he needs, or avails himself of that help, is a separate question, and we may never know the answer to it. However, on the day of the young man's crisis, we are grateful that Leticia and other staff were around to help, and that the Fresno Police Department officers who came were full of compassion and skill. Thanks to all of them, this young man has another shot at life.

The Significance of Easter

Flannery O'Connor once wrote that "If you live today you breathe in nihilism." We might add, that if you live every day among the homeless, you breathe in despair. Violence, addiction, madness, and disease are the constant companions of the homeless, and often their desolation is infectious.

That is why Easter is so important to us at Poverello House. It's vital to remember that the story of the Christian faith is one of hope amid despair, love in spite of being hated, and remaining faithful, despite dark circumstances.

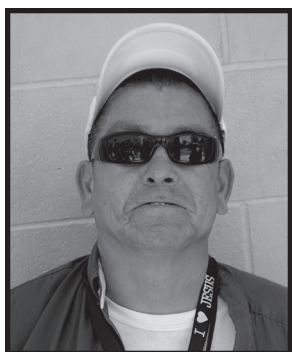
As our culture becomes more secular, the religious significance of Easter becomes less prominent. Thus, Easter is often seen simply as a holiday from school, punctuated by rabbits and chocolate.

Poverello House, in contrast, remains rooted in certain traditions and beliefs that we deem to be immutable, which inform our thoughts and actions. Our Franciscan heritage ensures that we take Easter, and the themes surrounding it, very seriously.

The Easter themes are, of course, death and resurrection. The great hope that Christ represented was cruelly dashed with his death

on a cross. Three days later, an empty tomb changed the despair of his followers to astonishment and joy.

Death and resurrection are also significant themes with the homeless people we know. For most, becoming homeless is a symbolic death. They have lost everything that made them feel human, such as employment, family, and self-respect. Homelessness represents a disconnection with the past and a death of dreams. For many, that symbolic death leads to a real, physical death from



suicide, street violence, or health problems related to drugs and drinking. This grim existence is the harsh reality faced by the homeless, and if the Easter story ended only in death, there wouldn't be much hope for the homeless or anyone else.

However, resurrection is also a constant reality here. So many times, we've seen people who seemed hell-bent on their own destruction turn their lives over to God, reverse direction, and be completely changed. We've been witnesses to the restoration of families and purpose in life. To us, Easter is no myth; we've seen too many miracles.

April Wish List

Hams * Canned green beans * Breakfast cereal
Letter-sized copy paper

*To donate online, visit our website at 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 that believes in the dignity of every human being. Our mission is to enrich the lives and spirits of all who pass our way, to feed the hungry, offer focused rehabilitation programs, temporary shelter, medical, dental and other basic services to the poor, the homeless, and the disadvantaged unconditionally, without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex or disability, through Providential and community support. We have been operating since 1973 and are governed by a Board of Directors, consisting of local volunteer business 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; and through United Way. 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.



Scan to make a donation