



POVERELLO NEWS

JANUARY 2023

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN—A LOOK BACK AT THE VERY FIRST 'POVERELLO NEWS'

In 1973, a man began going to Chinatown in Fresno, with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to pass out to those on the streets. This man, Mike McGarvin, was inspired by a Franciscan priest in San Francisco that provided a safe space, coffee, and snacks to the unhoused in the Tenderloin District. Mike was lost and found himself meeting the Franciscan priest and gaining a love for service of others. Mike built rapport with anyone that passed his way and heard many types of stories from these individuals.

As Poverello House grew, he wanted to share with the community the realities of experiencing homelessness. This year, as we celebrate 50 years of serving the community, we are excited to share those archived newsletter stories. We want you to see where Poverello House started and how far the organization has come. The first newsletter sent to the community in December 1978 can be seen to the right.

The First Poverello House Newsletter

Published December, 1978



Poverello House

Dear Friends,

December, 1978

This is the first of our monthly newsletters that we will be sending out to keep you informed about the work of the Poverello. We are striving, in our small way, to carry out Jesus' command to "feed the hungry....clothe the naked....comfort the sorrowful."

Four days a week we feed the street people with soup, sandwiches and chili. This is often augmented by various donations of bread, fruits and cookies. In November, we fed 805 people on the streets. Our big Thanksgiving dinner truly blessed 231 men. We want to give our heartfelt thanks to everyone who was involved in preparing and serving the meal. It really helped the men. Also, during the month, we gave out clothing (mostly coats, jackets, pants and shoes) to 104 people.

A FEW OF THE SPECIAL PEOPLE WE HELPED LAST MONTH:

- A woman with no husband and 4 sick kids. One had pneumonia and the others colds because the heat was turned off. We paid her PG&E bill.
- A man just out of prison. He had been so badly beaten on the head by a prison guard that the doctor had to put a plate in his head. We found him so badly beaten up again that we had to take him to the hospital. The doctors say that the plate had shifted and he has just two months to live.
- A man with a bad infection in his leg from a beating. We took him to the hospital for medicine and got him a cane at the Sunshine Club. We've seen several cases like this--the younger guys beat up and rob the older men while they're sleeping.
- A woman who is 50ish and lives in one of the hotels always brings her bowl down for some soup and is very appreciative for our help and caring.
- A World War II vet who lost a leg. He now has an infection in his other leg from a beating. He has to go to Veterans' Hospital for amputation.
- A man from Washington, 4 kids, car broke down and no housing. We gave him food and gas to help out temporarily and took them to Catholic Charities for further help.
- A man almost killed several times by beatings. We gave him a bus ticket to Bakersfield where he has friends and hopes of employment.
- A woman without her children due to drug abuse. We have counseled and helped her for several months. Because she's been "clean" for quite awhile, we were able to take her to pick up her kids at their foster homes for the holidays. She was very happy as she hadn't had them for 8 months.

These are just a few examples of a typical month of our street ministry. This is why our work must continue. Again we thank you for helping to make our work possible with your donations of money, food and clothing.

Mike McGarvin

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Zach Darrah
Poverello House CEO

ROOTED IN LOVE AND STILL GROWING STRONG

I am beyond excited about celebrating 50 years of Poverello House in 2023. It is hard to imagine that Mike McGarvin ever thought that giving peanut butter and jelly sandwiches out of the back of his car would become an organization serving those in need 50 years later. I do not believe it was his intention.

"PAPA MIKE" WANTED TO LIVE OUT HIS FAITH AND FRANCISCAN INFLUENCES TO SERVE THE "LEAST OF THESE" AMONG US.

That happened through sandwiches. That happened through the radical love of so many who felt forgotten. Something so small and simple advanced the power of love throughout the streets of Chinatown.



We just celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day earlier this month. The work of "Papa Mike" and the growth of his service over 50 years reminds me of something Dr. King said, "love is the greatest force in the universe. It is the heartbeat of the moral cosmos. He who loves is a participant in the being of God." Why are we here in 2023 still doing this work? Was it because Mike was a person of power, wealth, prominence, or authority? No, it was because of his love for others.

The last 50 years of Poverello House are an expression and outpouring of love for everyone. As such, we have harmoniously aligned our hearts with the "...heartbeat of the moral cosmos," and such a sound of great love is deafening, contagious, and compelling to all.

We are excited to share all that has occurred over the five decades of Poverello House and thrilled to announce our future services. It is staggering what we have in store for this year and the years to come. This year, we will open our new Family Hope Shelter for families experiencing homelessness. This year we will begin and complete the total renovation of our kitchen facility. Part of this project will be the grand opening of Papa Mike's Café, a full-service restaurant serving three made-to-order meals for anyone in need in our community daily. We will construct a memorial of "Papa Mike" on our campus. We will build a new Naomi's House facility for women in crisis. These items are just a few highlights, and more are to come. All of this is only possible through you. You have made 50 years possible, and the best way to thank you is to continue this work for 50 more. As we celebrate this year, we celebrate collectively! Here's to an amazing year of looking back and moving forward together!

Blessings,

Zach



Poverello House is thrilled to announce our 50th Anniversary! This year is a grand celebration as we look back on the accomplishments of the organization and founder, Mike McGarvin. In 1973, "Papa Mike" showed his love for service to those in need to Fresno. His work was more than giving food or drink, but it was getting to personally know those living on Chinatown's streets. In the midst of the challenges of the streets, he created an atmosphere of trust and love.

Mike and his wife, Mary, were gifted the current F Street campus by a generous donor and permanently lived on the property. Mary continues residing in the home on campus and works three days a week in the Contact Office! The McGarvins raised their children at Poverello House, and we are blessed to hear 50 years' worth of stories from Mary and Clare McGarvin.

pull off such a large Thanksgiving dinner at that time. However, we always had a lot of help to make meals happen. Poverello House was operating without a building at the time, but we had the food and made the space with community partners and donors.

From the first days of feeding folks, we had the gift of people, those more than willing to help our organization. Volunteers have come through our doors with the same divine providence that brings our clients onto our campus today, and we are thankful for the tremendous support given to us over the years. Poverello House has grown into more than just a soup kitchen because of the efforts of countless volunteers, service workers, board members, donors, and a web of social service providers throughout the Valley. We want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the countless people in our community who have made Poverello House into what it is today.

We look forward to a year of fellowshipping with everyone who has supported us over the past fifty years. We look forward to celebrating Mike this year, as he would have been 80 years young!

Even though he is not with us, his spirit is surely looking over Poverello House with joy for this special year.



MILESTONES WITH "MAMA MARY" & CLARE MCGARVIN

CELEBRATING 50-YEARS OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Clare and I are excited about celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of Poverello House. There is so much to be thankful for and many memories to share. The newsletter was sent to community members monthly in the 1980s, and Papa Mike shared a few words with everyone connected to Poverello House. I've had the pleasure of reading the archived newsletters, and I'm looking forward to sharing some of these memories with everyone this coming year. In December 1978, the first newsletter was sent out, which Mike and I composed in our living room soon after a big Thanksgiving meal fed 231 men. Mike shared, "a heartfelt thanks to everyone involved in preparing and serving the meal. It helped the men." It seemed impossible then to



FROM SPREADING PEANUT BUTTER TO

SPREADING

A Journey of Hope



YEARS

**THANKS
TO YOU.**



POVERELLOHOUSE.ORG