

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

February 10, 2017

Column #122

Hear Our Voice - Part 2



*Cindy Storrs, Director of Operations
Gathering for Women*

HOW TO HUDDLE IN YOUR OWN HOMETOWN

By Wanda Sue Parrott

PROTESTING is becoming passé, but huddling is in.

If you're participating in "Hear Our Voice" as kicked off by the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21, huddling is the second 10-day Action during the first 100 days of the Donald J. Trump's presidency.

The first 10-day Action was writing to your elected representatives by sending opinions on postcards you buy or make. Postage is 34 cents per card.

Huddling 101

The word "huddle" conjures up visions of last Sunday's Super Bowl football teams gathered on the field, helmets touching as they quick-plotted ball-passing strategies to help their teams make touchdowns.

Merriam-Webster defines huddle as: "to come close together in a group."

"Teamwork in thought", "mental partnership" and "collaboration to reach a specific goal" are variations of the verb "to huddle."

So, how do you get your huddle started and how long does it last?

A pre-planned personal huddle can be small and short, like a 15-minute meeting of two like-minded people having coffee to plan the menu of an Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP) dinner for six homeless women.

Gathering For Women Huddle

A large huddle can be a presentation like Cindy Storrs, Director of Operations, made on behalf of the Gathering for Women last Sunday at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula. Her speech and after-service presentation time equaled about three hours.

The UUCMP designated Gathering for Women as February's recipient of half the cash donations received during the month.

Gathering for Women, a safe, caring community, has provided homeless women of the Monterey Peninsula with hot meals, clothing, and social services every Tuesday since 2014.

During her introduction, Cindy announced that Gathering for Women will be opening a women's day center in Monterey on March 1, and while it will not yet be a fulltime operation, it will provide caring refuge for homeless women three days a week.

As recipient of grants from Fund for Homeless Women and Monterey County Weekly's 2016 McGives campaign, Gathering for Women has money for a down payment on its own building.

A Navigator now helps newcomers in the search for shelter. The City of Monterey generously covers a quarter of her cost, Cindy said.

Cindy suggested the congregation "talk to your friends, colleagues and neighbors, anyone who might have a building with at least 5,000 square feet." That's huddling!

If you know of such a potential site for Gathering for Women, a member agency of the Food Bank of Monterey County, contact Gathering for Women by visiting their website at www.gatheringforwomen.org or calling 831-241-6154.

Networking Through Huddles

Another kind of huddle is the spinoff, like this one inspired by Cindy Storrs' introduction of Gathering for Women.

A congregant said, "I have a friend with a recreational vehicle that isn't being used, and wonder if he puts in two beds, might two homeless women stay in it?"

"That is exactly what is needed!" I said. "If your friend is interested, he should contact homeless advocate/journalist CeliaSue Hecht, long a proponent of that idea, by e-mailing celiasue.hecht@gmail.com." Or contact Leila Emadin, Housing Resource Center at ed@hrcmc.org.

A spontaneous huddle happened to me last Monday at Scholze Park Center in Monterey when Sunny Fawcett, homeless advocate for women's rights, suggested unsheltered women would come indoors if carriers were provided for their dogs to sleep in.

And a serendipitous huddle happened at the Monterey Post Office a few days ago when a newly evicted patron named Angela asked if I knew anyone with a room for rent. Her landlord evicted her so he can raise the rent. I took her e-address. Within 24 hours, representatives of four friendly agencies had contacted her.

Even homeless and lost animals benefit from huddles like the ones promulgated online and via e-mail through Nextdoor, a neighborhood watch program in which people help each other without having to meet in person.

For instance, a woman recently reported losing her cat and another neighbor found her.

According to Hear Our Voice, grassroots governance starts in your own neighborhood. Regardless of what happens during President Trump's highly criticized honeymoon period, you can keep America great through participation in your own backyard.

While huddling about important issues, continue sending your opinions on postcards to your elected representatives in Washington, DC. They will hear you even if the president doesn't.

See details at www.womensmarch.org.

Monterey's Washington, DC representatives are:



- **Senator Kamala Harris**
B40b Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
- **Senator Dianne Feinstein**
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
- **Congressman Jimmy Panetta**
228 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

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