

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

August 18, 2017

Column #149

### Dining without Dollars—Part 10



*“The Edge of Destiny—A view of Marina with my destiny dream city...within sight of my dreams of love and life in the city of Monterey someday.”*

*Photo and text by Regina P.*

*From “What We See--Photographs by Women without Shelter”*

*On exhibit through Sept. 4, 2017*

*Monterey Museum of Art—Pacific St.*

*559 Pacific St.*

*Monterey, CA 93940*

### LIKE OLD BALL PLAYERS WAITING THEIR LAST TURNS AT BAT

By Wanda Sue Parrott

TRACKING RVs, motorhomes, and other wheels that migrate between Marina and Seaside is like watching spectator sports. If I were a broadcaster, I'd call them “no-winner” games.

You ask, “For example?”

I reply, “The local camper stenciled in moldy brown/liver grey/grungy green camouflage was spotted near Seaside Beach at noon. Later, it sat on Elm Ave. among four rust-streaked vehicles like worn out ball players waiting their last turns at bat.”

“Who are they?”

“I call them Houseless on Wheels, or simply Wheelers.”

“Do they include bikers?”

“Sure, if they're homeless, migrating, and without a dream destination.”

“Are Wheelers male, female, single?”

“Singles, working mothers with kids, unemployed married guys. Wheelers are everyone! A crippled Vietnam veteran and his feisty young novia shared a decrepit camper until she ripped his wheelchair off its rack, called him an F word, and left a pile of trash in the street.”

“Oh? You witnessed that play?”

“I had a front row seat. This year, Wheelers are mostly playing road games.”

“How so?”

“This season’s game is Tag. The Sheriff pushes Wheelers off county land, and they end up back inside city limits until the police send them back onto unincorporated land. Vehicles now on Lapis Road are being tagged with notices to vacate by the end of August. In a few weeks, Seaside will give them similar tags and they’ll return to Lapis Road.”

“Why isn’t there a campsite for them?”

“The 2016 Civil Grand Jury of Monterey County recommended a tent city be erected on old Fort Ord to provide temporary shelter for homeless people like the Wheelers. Boondoggling bogged it down.”

“Why not refit the old barracks for homeless housing?”

“The Ford Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) says it would cost a developer \$70,000 per unit to demolish the barracks before rehab can even begin.”

“Name another sporting event involving Wheelers.”

“Dining without Dollars. It’s the survival game.”

“Like a runner trapped between two bases before he’s called ‘Out’? Or a penniless person dreaming of affordable housing?”

“Yes!”

“So, what’s being done about it? Cite some good stats.”

### **The Food Bank For Monterey County**

According to Melissa Kendrick, executive director of the Food Bank for Monterey County, a major feature is their Family Market Program, which takes place at 10 sites from April through October.

“Family Market provides free fresh produce to residents in need in a setting reminiscent of a traditional farmers market, allowing them to choose from an array of available offerings,” Kendrick says.

“This popular program has been expanded to include Senior Produce Market, which provides weekly produce bags to seniors in need at 16 sites, and Youth Produce Market, which serves children in schools and after-school programs.”

Nearby in the Salinas area, Kendrick adds, “Farmworker Mobile Produce Pantry, another expansion, delivers produce to locations convenient to farmworkers at the ends of their shifts. These program expansions operate year-round.”

### **Homeless Census And Survey Statistics**

A few of my statistics are culled from the 2017 Point in Time Homeless Census & Survey that reports Monterey County has 2,837 homeless people: 2,099 are unsheltered and 738 are sheltered—roughly.

Living outdoors can mean migrating between vehicles and uninhabitable makeshift shelters like sheds, mobile boxes and drainpipes, thus making the stat 2,213 persons living outdoors, with 14 percent, or 397, reported living in vehicles (Wheelers).

The exact percentage of Wheelers on the Monterey Peninsula is unknown, since players in the survival game migrate.

Wheelers in or near Marina may visit the Food Bank at Marina Library, 188 Seaside Ave., Marina, 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m., the first Monday of the month from Feb.-Dec., and in Jan. at Marina Civic Center, 211 Hillcrest Ave., Marina.

For further information, contact the Food Bank for Monterey County, Melissa Kendrick, executive director, at 831-758-1523, [mkendrick@food4hungry.org](mailto:mkendrick@food4hungry.org).

### **Pasta With The Pastors Is Next Week**

Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP) for Men and Women's annual fundraising Italian feast and silent auction. "Pasta with the Pastors" is Thurs., Aug. 24, 4:30 p.m.– 6 p.m., San Carlos Parish Hall, 500 Church St., Monterey.

Suggested donations are \$20 per adult and \$10 per child aged 4-11 accompanied by an adult.

Contact [wehelpihelp@gmail.com](mailto:wehelpihelp@gmail.com) or call Karen Araujo at 831-601-6866.

Final score? If Seaside donates part of its \$30,000 budget for homeless issues to the county for installment of portable toilets and trash facilities along Lapis Rd., would back and forth migration stop, resulting in a temporary win-win tie? It's worth a try.

See more food bank information next week.

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Photo and text by Regina P.

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