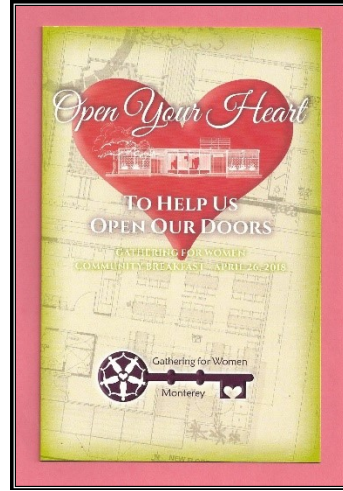


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

May 4-10, 2018

HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSING - Part 11



CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF TO HELP GATHERING FOR WOMEN OPEN NEW DAY CENTER'S DOORS

By Wanda Sue Parrott

HOUSING the Monterey Peninsula's homeless women is the only major service not provided by the Gathering for Women.

If you're intrigued by the current 400-500-person community of homeless women on the peninsula, join me in a brief tour and visit Franklin Avenue at Calle Principal, where the San Carlos Hotel once stood like a sunflower-gold surveillance tower dividing the Upper and Lower Alvarado districts of downtown Monterey.

Upper Alvarado was the business block.

Lower Alvarado ran from Franklin Avenue to Fisherman's Wharf.

It was lined with snooker shacks and pool parlors. Pan and low-ball card halls, and the fabled greasy spoon, the Café de Alvarado, where everything tasted like fried onions, filled the block. Lower Alvarado's flop stops, whore houses, and bait-and-tackle shops are gone. Only the old theater remains.

Old salts crashed on the street.

Homeless women were non-existent.

Revisiting The San Carlos Hotel

My memory of the San Carlos Hotel reopened as I entered its successor, the modern Marriott Hotel, on Thursday, April 26, at 7 a.m. as a guest at the "Open Your Heart" community breakfast.

Sponsored by Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (CHOMP), the sit-down banquet kicked off Gathering for Women's first capital campaign to raise funds with which to open the doors of its new Day Center by mid-June 2018.

As I entered the cave-like entry to the lobby, I recalled the 1964 Rotary convention that booked me on short notice after their featured after-dinner act reneged.

While a volunteer church organist plinked a jazzy rendition of “The Old Rugged Cross” on an upright piano.

I spun a pseudo Dance of the Seven Veils, then fled the beer-cheer huzzahs with my scarves and volunteer’s honorarium.

Wow! A lot has changed in 54 years!

From the 10th floor, the Alvarado District’s countless homeless persons aren’t visible at all.

The view from the Marriott’s 10th-floor Ferrante Room made me feel I was on a platform in paradise viewing the wharf, boat harbor and Alvarado Districts now rising vertically rather than horizontally as in Café de Alvarado’s \$1 blue-plate-special days.

Fresh-Cut Fruit In Fluted Glass

This elegant \$35-per-plate breakfast starred china, silverware, steaming coffee, and bacon, sausage and eggs without a hint of fried onions.

The agenda featured Karina Rusk, Master of Ceremonies; Dr. Steven Packer, President/CEO of CHOMP; Michael Reid, Co-founder of the Fund for Homeless Women; Ann Mahoney, Board Member of the Peggy and Jack Baskin Foundation; Greg Jaimison, Board Member, Monterey Peninsula Foundation.

Representing the Gathering for Women were Kimberly Gilbert, volunteer; Jennifer Dalton, Executive Director; and Carol Greenwald, President, Board of Directors, who captivated the audience by relating this almost-perfect reprise of GFW’s first four years:

“We opened at San Carlos Cathedral Hall on April 1, 2014. The first week we had 17 guests. . .”
Excerpts follow:

The Gathering’s History By Carol Greenwald

In early 2014, a small group of women learned there were as many as 350 homeless women living on the Monterey Peninsula and decided to do something about it.

With a \$12,000 grant from Fund for Homeless Women, they planned a simple weekly hot luncheon to see if there really were 350 homeless women, to learn why they were homeless, and what they needed to improve their lives.

The original 105 volunteers were trained to approach the women as equals and recognize each as a person of worth. . . to encourage their hopes, never judge them, and respect their right to self-determination. . . the volunteers keep in mind each guest’s unique culture. . . and engage with the women to learn about their needs.

Feminine Hygiene Products Needed, Especially Depends

The second week, we had 35 guests, and each week thereafter it grew.

Our programming has grown to include the opening of a small service center near downtown Monterey where we serve breakfast and lunch three days a week.

A fourth lunch continues to be served at the Unitarian Universalist Church every Tuesday.

We distribute clothing and personal care items, provide Case Management and Navigation services and offer medical care through a partnership with CHOMP’s Mobile Clinic.

We provide enrichment activities. . . and focus on health and safety of our women guests while housing is being developed . . . The wonderful, but unintended consequence of our work was the development of a community where the women feel welcomed, valued, respected, and safe.

One woman wrote: “I am lonely and feel worthless at times. . . My heart is broken just like my spirit. But I am thankful to the wonderful ladies at the Gathering who care. . .”

A Homeless Woman Is Up To Four Times More Likely To Experience Violence

I called Carol Greenwald’s reprisal “almost perfect.”

Why?

Because there weren’t 17 women who showed up at the first luncheon in 2014.

I was guest number 18.

Details at www.gatheringforwomen.org, 831-241-6154.

(To be continued next week)

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Photos: Carol Greenwald, President--Gathering for Women’s Board of Directors;
Day Center in Monterey – raising funds to open doors in June.

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Contact amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com or call 831-899-5887