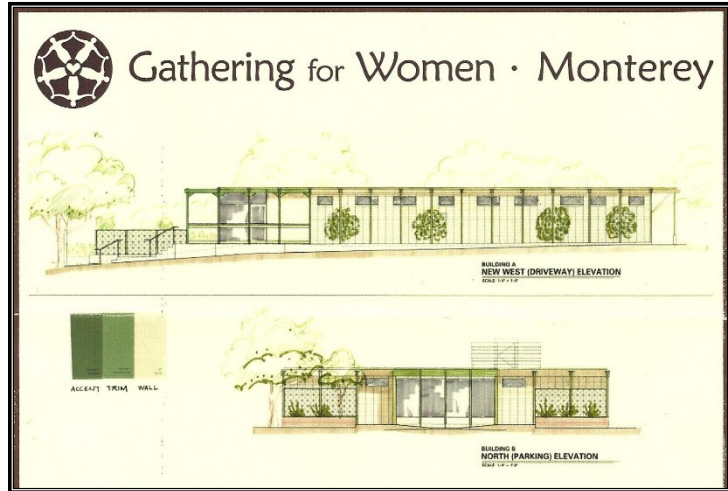


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

May 11-17, 2018

HUMPTY DUMPTY HOUSING - Part 12



HOW ONE SMALL STEP TO HELP HOMELESS WOMEN BECAME A GIANT LEAP FOR WOMANKIND!

By Wanda Sue Parrott

SETTING foot on the moon inspired astronaut Neil Armstrong's historic 1969 comment: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

If my stroll across the parking lot at 147 Eldorado St., Monterey last week was anything like Armstrong's experience, it was awesome and scary. What started as a dream, and had never been done before, actually happened within a block of the neighborhood where I lived from 1962 through 1964.

The Gathering for Women's new Day Center slated to open its doors in mid-June is a two-building former healthcare facility site that will provide to Monterey's 400-500 homeless women such services as hot meals, showers, case management, navigation services, personal care items, and clothing in a caring environment.

Its April 26 "Open Your Heart" community breakfast kicked off Gathering for Women's first capital fundraising campaign, Phase I of which is to raise \$2.7 million in order to make possible the opening of the new center's doors by mid-June.

I was checking out the site.

Allured By The Attar Of Asphalt

As I stood outside the chain link gate, the smell of freshly laid black slurry mixed with the attar of asphalt.

The gleaming flat black pavement spread out like a drying canvas awaiting brush strokes of strip-artists who would return the next day to paint parking lot markers.

Unable to resist, I squeezed through the chain link gate and took an unauthorized tour of the site midway between Jack in the Box on Munras Ave. and the Lutheran Church on Cass St., where I once lived just half a block down the hill at the corner of Davis Lane.

Back in 1963, our furnished cabin at 857 Cass St. was an uninsulated two-bedroom pine structure with a vaulted ceiling and termites. Monthly rent was \$95.

The wall-sized paned picture window overlooked a fishpond surrounded by tangled pink tea roses, golden nasturtiums and lemon grass. In its place now is a medical-row facility worth millions of dollars.

We could have bought the property in 1964 for \$42,000; instead, we chose a hilltop cottage in New Monterey for \$14,000 that raised our payments to \$100, or one-fourth my husband's monthly \$600 salary.

A year ago, our former New Monterey home sold for \$875,000. My monthly income is now \$898.

Awesome? Indeed, because \$2.4 million has already been raised for the center that will provide supportive resources in a caring environment to the homeless women of the Monterey Peninsula, many now my age and far less fortunate since my son and daughter-in-law provide me with shelter I could not otherwise afford.

Matching Funds Challenge

A generous donor has offered to match any and all contributions to the Gathering for Women's Phase I fundraiser for up to \$100,000. This means that for every \$1 pledged, \$2 will be received by the fund.

For instance, if you give \$5, the fund will receive \$10. If you give \$100, the fund will receive \$200.

If you give \$50,000, the fund will receive \$100,000.

The matching funds offer is good until May 31, 2018 and no donation is too small to make a difference.

Checks may be mailed to Gathering for Women, P. O. Box 601, Monterey, CA 93942, or see details at www.gatheringforwomen.org.

Invocation By Father Michael Reid

Back in 2010, now-Monterey councilmember Timothy Barrett produced a symposium on rising homelessness on the Monterey Peninsula.

It inspired Father Michael Reid of St. Mary's by the Sea Episcopal Church, Pacific Grove, Marian Penn and Kathy Whilden to found Friends of Homeless Women, the outreach arm of the Community Foundation for Monterey County's Fund for Homeless Women.

"Friends" inspired formation of Gathering for Women, which received its first \$12,000 grant with which to kick off the program that has risen meteorically since it started April 1, 2014.

Michael Reid's invocation at the Open Your Heart breakfast fills in details:

"As I said to the volunteers at their luncheon a few weeks ago, when Kathy Whilden, Marian Penn and I first mused about what (besides housing) was most needed and possible for women who were homeless on the Monterey Peninsula, we imagined a sort of club house; a place where women could be fed in body, mind and spirit; a place where they would find safety and rest, community and support, resources for housing, hygiene, clothing and healthcare.

We imagined a place like Gathering for Women.

We just didn't know its name.

The Fund for Homeless Women and our partners at Community Foundation have been immensely proud to be companions on this incredible journey, honored to provide financial support and encouragement from those early days of imagining to the very tangible days of now.

In those early days of wondering, we knew that there would be people on the Peninsula, people like you, who would participate in the journey.

. . . The work that has been done by Gathering over the past four years has been incredible. The success of the board members, staff and volunteers is beyond commendable.

This is an important moment in the life of Gathering for Women, in the ongoing evolution of a healthy vibrant community and (most importantly) in service to women who live without adequate shelter in a place that so many of us call 'paradise.'

But as I stand here with you this morning, I am also moved to invoke the woman . . . whose courage might just be responsible for bringing us all to this moment, a woman named Joyce.

Her courage and wisdom led her to speak her truth and call out for help. . . in a letter she sent me just seven years ago. It. . . takes courage to ask for help. . . But Joyce took the risk and told me about her life and the life of countless others. . . unsheltered, outside, on the beach, under freeways and in their cars, with too few places to go to for help. She spoke her truth, made herself visible, and. . . here we all are. . . making her dream a reality as well.

In your showing up here this morning, you join Joyce and me, and. . . thousands of others called to muster our courage, to speak our truth and to live boldly for a good beyond ourselves. This breakfast. . . recalled for me a short passage from the Book of Proverbs that I would like to offer for reflection as I run out of time and end my remarks:

Does not wisdom call out?

Does not understanding raise her voice?

At the highest point along the way,

Where the paths meet, she takes her stand;

Beside the gate leading to the city, wisdom cries aloud:

'O people, I raise my voice.

Those who are simple, gain prudence;

Those who are foolish, set your hearts on love.

Listen, for I have things to say;

I open my lips to speak what is right.

My mouth speaks what is true.

Choose courage instead of silver,

Knowledge rather than gold,

Wisdom, truth and compassion are more precious than rubies,

And nothing you desire can compare with her.'

May we all have wisdom, courage and compassion to speak on behalf of others, to ask others to join us, to give boldly of ourselves and our possessions, and to participate as co-creators of making this dream come true.

And may the spirit of God continue to bless us all in our collective work for women like Joyce – whose voices call to us for help."

Michael Reid also said of the huge step taken by the women of Gathering for Women for womankind:

"It's history in the making, and there's no turning back."

Neil Armstrong couldn't have said it more profoundly!

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Photos: Architectural rendering of Gathering for Women's new Day Center slated to open in mid-June;
Father Michael Reid, co-founder of Friends of Homeless Women.

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