

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

April 17, 2015

Column #25



### A REFUGE FOR UNSHELTERED WOMEN

By Wanda Sue Parrott

*The Rising of the Women means the Rising of Us All. . .*  
--James Oppenheim

**THE GATHERING PLACE** (aka TGP) celebrated its first year as a robust weekly day center for homeless women at two luncheons at the Moose Lodge, 555 Canyon Del Rey Blvd., Del Rey Oaks.

Tues., March 31 featured Easter pails with colorful eggs for children and personal gift items for women, thus ending an experimental year that began April 1, 2014, at San Carlos Cathedral in Monterey where a lasagna lunch was served by a few volunteers to 17 homeless women.

TGP moved on Dec. 2, 2014, to the Moose Lodge, where weekly gatherings continued growing between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. every Tuesday.

Tues., April 7, kicked off the second year of The Gathering Place with a rose-bedecked cake, gift drawing and announcement by Carol Greenwald, Program Coordinator, that a recent organizational grant from the Fund for Homeless Women will enable TGP to continue in its development as a secular non-profit, separate from its current 501(C)(3) sponsor, San Carlos Cathedral.

More big news was announced on Tues., April 14. The Gathering Place will have its first paid staff member as of Mon., April 20, when Ann Evanilla Wasson, Carmel, becomes Executive Director of TGP and the Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry at San Carlos Cathedral.

TGP's second year starts with approximately 120 committed volunteers who do everything from preparing and serving meals to stocking the "shop for free" tables with donated clothing, shoes, personal toiletries and feminine products. Others arranged for gasoline, laundry, and shower cards as well as bus passes for guests, who now average about 55 per week.



*Ann Evanilla Wasson*



An estimated 400 individual women were served last year, about 60 being one-time-only guests. Statistics revealed: average time homeless if under 50, 12 months; if over 50, 18 months; older women are less likely to have vehicles for shelter. One-fourth have companion pets like the puppy in this ClipArt illustration (source unknown, from Google Images).

The Gathering Place, initially funded by a \$12,000 start-up grant from the Community Foundation's field fund "Fund for Homeless Women", currently has 501(C)(3) status through the Roman Catholic Diocese of Monterey, so all donations are tax deductible.

Carol Greenwald explains. "Right now, we are awaiting clearance from the Secretary of State for our official name. Once our Board of Directors is fully in place, and our incorporation is complete, we will approve our bylaws and appoint officers. As a secular non-profit, we will have more flexibility in seeking grant funding."

Besides Carol Greenwald, other original executive team members are:

Catherine Metz, Pacific Grove, Assistant Program Coordinator is money manager. She says, "We use Quickbooks and adhere to accepted industry standards of fiduciary responsibility."

Mary Eileen Kiniry, Corral de Tierra, Resource Coordinator. A nurse and nurse practitioner, she says, "A line from the song/poem by James Oppenheim from 1911 will be on our new brochure: The Rising of the Women means the Rising of Us All."

Kathleen Baker, Monterey, Resource Coordinator. A feminist educated in women's studies, says she is concerned about TGP's pet-owning population. "This is a problem for qualifying for shelters and some assistance programs."

Flo Miller, Volunteer Coordinator, Carmel Valley, newest member of the executive team, says, "I feel a deep sense of duty, of stewardship, for all we've been blessed with."

Carol Greenwald, overall manager, lives in Monterey with her husband, two dogs and a cat. She holds a Master's Degree in Social Work and spent 35 years with a public social services agency. She says of the homeless, "They are my sisters and brothers, and only through the grace of God have I not been made to walk in their shoes."

As a member of San Carlos Cathedral, Carol coordinates the Loaves and Fishes food pantry, which served food to 3,000 hungry people in 2014. San Carlos also has a hot meal program, serving the homeless and hungry every Fri., Sun. and national holiday last year.

### ***Women Need More Than Just Hot Meals. . .***

Much of the food for The Gathering Place is donated by local restaurateurs. Carol says, "Chris Shake owns Old Fisherman's Grotto on the Wharf, and he donates the meal every first Tues. His brother, Sabu Shake, Jr., owns The Fish Hopper on Cannery Row, and Sabu donates the meal every third Tues. They provide the main course, side dishes and dessert, and the food is superb."

Other donors include: Room for Dessert, Rosine's, Whole Foods Market, Palermo Bakery. Food is purchased at low cost from the Food Bank for Monterey County. Various cooks at TGP luncheons contribute food. Flowers are donated by Trader Joe's.

Carol says, "The ball got rolling one day when I had coffee with Kathy Whilden, one of the principals of the Fund for Homeless Women. Kathy suggested that San Carlos consider developing a meal program for homeless women because we had the experience in working with this population and we knew how to feed people."

Carol realized women need more than just hot meals. “They need hope and a sense of community,” she says. “Those concepts have continued to grow as we moved from a hot lunch program to a day center for women.

...

“We are not yet incorporated--that should happen in a few months. But we still have an executive director who currently works for the Diocese of Monterey until we complete incorporation. Then she (Ann) will be employed by the new nonprofit.

“TGP will now be able to grow and better serve our population with a dedicated executive director on board.

“We founders are volunteers and some of us have other jobs and commitments. The organization needs someone dedicated to leading it into the future. This is a great day for TGP and for our ability to serve homeless women.

“As Ann becomes more familiar with operations, the founders will step back and let her manage the onsite operation. Some of us will find our way onto the organization's board of directors and continue leading TGP in terms of its mission, vision and governance.”

For complete details, read the announcement at:

<http://www.thegatheringplacemonterey.org/news/announcement-executive-director/>

Meanwhile, back to the birthday party. Index cards and pens were placed on tables. Many great comments were received, including thanks, good wishes and requests for Jello, socks, and underpants.

###

Photo of Ann Evanilla Wasson from her Facebook profile; photo of girl on tracks with dog, source unknown;  
Gathering Place cake photo from Wanda Sue Parrott’s Facebook post;  
all artwork used for illustrative purposes only; no copyright infringement intended.

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott at *Books for Beds* by leaving a message with The Yodel Poet at 831-899-5887 or  
e-mail [amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com](mailto:amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com).