

## HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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### Column #4



### HOMELESS SPEAKER RAISES PRAISES AT SUNDAY BRUNCH FOR WOMEN

by Wanda Sue Parrott

Highlights at last Sunday's Second Annual Pancake Brunch and Silent Auction sponsored by Friends of Homeless Women at the Elks Club in Monterey were improvisational comedy by the Mirth-O-Matics, music by the Heartstrings Monterey quintet, and the praise-raising wit of 81-year-old Kelli.

The perky little redhead who lives in her van, but does not call herself homeless, prefers the title "Senior Advocate for Women Without Adequate Housing." Helping others is her life's work, although social security provides income. Kelli says:

"When I became homeless three years ago, I didn't know what to do, where to go. I was chased out of places. . . I had just had too much, so I started going to all kinds of meetings and joined in each one that had a fund to provide help . . .

"I want you to know that in the last two years a wonderful thing happened. The Gathering Place was created. We eat, get clothes, sleeping bags and blankets, cards for gasoline, tickets for the bus, and we take showers and wash our clothes. . . all run by volunteers who make the world a better place."

The Gathering Place and One Starfish programs were each sponsored by a start-up grant from The Fund for Homeless Women, a field-of-interest fund administered by The Community Foundation.

The Gathering Place opened April 1 at San Carlos Cathedral in Monterey and is moving Dec. 1 to the Moose Lodge, 218 Canyon Del Rey, Del Rey Oaks. Free lunch and services for homeless women will be offered every Tuesday; also, bus transportation will be available. Details are available from [thegatheringplacemonterey@gmail.com](mailto:thegatheringplacemonterey@gmail.com) or 831-238-7794.

Kelli was nominated for a 2014 United Way Community Service Volunteer Award for her outstanding volunteerism by Community Partnership for Youth (CPY) in Seaside.

She was one of the first homeless women accepted in the One Starfish Safe Parking and Supportive Services pilot program, under the direction of Dr. Tia Sukin, founder, and Rosemarie Axton, associate director.

One Starfish was a principal beneficiary (\$21,500) of the funds distributed in February from proceeds raised at the 2013 brunch for homeless women. It is now open and offering overnight parking and support with

access to housing, income, and health care at one host church site; at least five other houses of worship have also expressed interest in participating.

One Starfish also benefitted from proceeds raised at “Round the Wagons Chili Contest” through Pass the Word Ministry at Community Church of Carmel Valley on Oct. 23.

As advocate for the peninsula’s 300 to 350 homeless women, Kelli affirms:

“I’m not going to stop. I’m going to keep going, to do this job, whatever it takes. As long as I’ve got my last breath, I’m going to help.”

Father Michal Reid, who introduced Kelli, is the former associate rector of St. Mary’s by the Sea Episcopal Church in Pacific Grove. He is co-founder and organizer with Kathy Whilden and Marian Penn of the Fund for Homeless Women which started three years at about the same time Kelli became homeless.

He said, “Since we started raising public awareness of the homeless women, we’ve raised almost a quarter-million dollars, partly in an endowment that will be invested, so we are leaving a legacy for women who are homeless and who might be homeless later.

“We have also a spendable fund. We gave out \$50,000 to One Starfish, The Gathering Place, Shelter Outreach Plus, and other community services. This (coming) year we are going to be giving out \$100,000. Talk about awesome!”

According to Linda Henderson, chairperson, between 225 and 250 attended the 2014 brunch, down from the number of attendees at the 2013 Friends of Homeless Women event which raised the initial \$34,000 for the Fund for Homeless Women; however, 2014 door -prize ticket sales and silent auction income were up.

Actual proceeds from this year’s fundraising brunch were not yet available at press time.

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Proceeds from book sales benefit homeless women of Monterey Peninsula. Details from [amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com](mailto:amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com).