

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #78



SO, WHAT'S NEWS? *Guess who's predicted to be coming to town?* By Wanda Sue Parrott

GATHERING for Women, take note! If the number of homeless women arriving for lunch on Tuesdays has suddenly risen, Jill Allen's prediction is proving true. She is Executive Director of Dorothy's Place in Salinas.

Jill spoke at the March 30 meeting of Friends of Homeless Women about the sweep that's permanently vacating encampments of around 200 homeless people in Chinatown.

"Where are they going?" I asked.

Jill said, "They're coming to the peninsula, looking for a discreet place to camp."

Here At Dusk But Gone At Dawn

Different from prior clean-up sweeps, following which the homeless recamped, this is it! No more camping will be allowed on the streets of Chinatown. While sleeping on the streets is still allowed between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m., tents pitched at dusk must be gone around dawn.

I may have spotted a new Monterey arrival this week. I watched the tall stranger with a parrot on his shoulder jaywalk and disappear into the brush at Munras Ave. and Soledad Dr.

He was as unfamiliar as some homeless people are familiar. Have you experienced a sense of loss when they vanished? I have.

There was an energetic white-bearded bike rider who camped near McDonald's in Seaside. He posted Old Glory wherever he bedded down. We never spoke, but in his place I feel a void where seagulls now strut, begging for crumbs. Locals called him Santa.

The (former) Gathering Place turns two

Homeless women are less approachable and visible than men, which is why Gathering for Women is a major refuge for unsheltered women. Its second anniversary was celebrated on Tuesday at its 2016 meeting place, the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula, 490 Aguajito Rd., Carmel.



Future plans call for acquiring a permanent dedicated site, but for now Gathering for Women's immediate needs are for a new executive director and kitchen manager. See posting at MontereyBayJobs.com.

For details visit <http://www.gatheringforwomen.org/news/two-years-and-counting/>.

The former Gathering Place incorporated as a public charity 501(c)(3) corporation on May 28, 2015 under the new name Gathering for Women - Monterey. It is run by a Board of Directors, instead of the five founders. Day-to-day administrative duties are performed by Carol Greenwald, President & CEO and Directors Flo Miller and Kelly Kerr.

According to Carol, "We have served 655 individual homeless and at-risk women since opening our doors on April 1, 2014. In 2015, we served 496 individual women." About half the women assessed in their case management program are over 50; a quarter are past 60.

Carol says, "We currently have 168 volunteers who work at our Tuesday gathering and at our food pantry that is open 3 days a week. The pantry serves not just homeless women, but men, families, and anyone who is hungry."

Over 80 percent of the women assessed have incomes of less than \$900 a month, making it difficult to afford housing anywhere in northern Monterey County. Affordable Housing is a number one issue affecting Monterey County today.

What Is Affordable Housing?

The League of Women Voters is sponsoring a luncheon program open to the public entitled "The Challenges of Affordable Housing" featuring Paul Tran, Program Manager for Community Housing Improvement Systems and Planning Assn. (CHISPA) and Carolina Sahagun, Senior Community Development Planner for the Monterey County Housing Authority Development Corp.

Date is Wed., April 13, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 490 Aguajito Rd., Carmel.

Lunch is at noon and is \$17, payable at the door, with reservations required by 4/9/16. Contact Lisa Hoivik at 831-375-5565 or lhoivik@comcast.net.

The program, from 12:30–1:30 p.m., is free and no reservations are required.

Introducing The Strawberry Wine Club

Pacific Grove's own Strawberry Wine Club ladies led by mystery novelist Jeanne Olin will launch its 44-page cookbook to benefit the Fund for Homeless Women at the Central Coast Writers booth during Good Old Days, Sat., April 9, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. Title is "The Strawberry Wine Club's 2016 Dessert & Cookie Recipes." Suggested donation is \$7.

I'll also be there with my booklet "Guruji's Secret Love Sound" from which proceeds will benefit the Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP). Suggested donation is \$5.

Stop by, say hi, and we'll sign your copies!.

With the community pulling together, we can help curb the rising tide of homelessness because, as Jill Allen reminds us, this is an election year and politicians pay heed to voters. She says:

"Nobody was listening. . . but we are now at a point in time people are starting to listen to us."

So, what do you say?

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