

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #84



MOVE OVER, BROADWAY!!

Memorial weekend vaudeville gala benefits homeless women

By Wanda Sue Parrott

STAGING a benefit to raise funds for Gathering for Women was on Bobbie Hall's mind after the February meeting of Friends of Homeless Women. "If we give a musical variety show, do you think anyone would come?" she asked.

"If the public loves vaudeville-style shows as much as I do, the answer is a big YES," I said.

"Would the Tap Bananas perform?"

"I'll ask."

I took the question back to the troupe of tap dancers ranging in age from 57 through 91, with whom I perform as part of the City of Monterey's Senior Recreation Program at Scholze Park. We rehearse on Mondays and Fridays, and dance in parades, fairs, nursing homes, private and public parties, school performances and other events, including fundraisers as far away as Salinas and Prunedale, and usually only during daylight hours. For details visit www.monterey.org/rec.

Yes, the Tap Bananas would participate in such a variety show. A quartet of women agreed to perform a three-number set, including our new dance that depicts homeless women traveling a railroad track to the song "Side by Side" made famous by Kay Starr in 1953. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRgLfEpyd8U>

Bobbie listed us as her first booking. What happened next was phenomenal. Local talent appeared like a meteor shower that helped her shoot for the star.

Shooting For The Star

The "star" in this case is the one for which Gathering for Women is aiming: a place of its own.

The astronomical story began April 1, 2014, when The Gathering Place hosted less than 20 homeless women for its first experimental luncheon in the San Carlos parish hall in Monterey. Lasagna and salad were served by a few volunteers.

Free clothing was given along with feminine amenities like toiletries, hygiene items, underwear, socks, shoes, bus passes and laundry checks.

The ranks of guests soon swelled, and location was changed to the Moose Lodge in Del Rey Oaks, where it remained through December 2015. During its second year, The Gathering Place changed its name to Gathering for Women when it incorporated as a non-profit legal entity.

Gathering for Women started meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Monterey Peninsula, Carmel, in January 2016, and is rapidly outgrowing that space.

Average number of women guests each week now stands around 80 and is expected to rise as more women relocate to the Monterey Peninsula following the closure of Chinatown in Salinas. More than 140 women are now volunteers.

The Point in Time Census revealed 350 homeless women lived on the Monterey Peninsula in May 2015; a year later an estimated 450 houseless women live here, ranging from young mothers to seniors in their 80s.

Mark Your Calendar

Variety Show, Sat., May 28, 1 p.m., Center for Spiritual Living, 400 W. Franklin St., Monterey. For information contact admin@montereycsl.org.

If you'd like to see the local star-studded cast perform this musical gala extravaganza to help Gathering for Women shoot for its own star on the Homeless Walk of Fame, order your ticket early to reserve a seat (admission/donation \$20) from www.montereycsl.org.

Neither Hollywood nor Broadway—well, Off Broadway--can get any better than this!

Plan to arrive half an hour early, and be prepared to walk, as you must park on the street or in a public lot and, since it is a holiday weekend, you might have to walk a few blocks.

Like An Old-Fashioned Olio

Musical stars includes emcee Kiki Wow, singer/songwriter; Monterey Bay Belles, Barbershop Chorus; J.W. Winslow, artist/poet/TV host; Ukulele Singalong Group led by Jane Foley; Karie Hillery, singer/songwriter; Delaney, singer/songwriter and Jackie Pierce, Violinist.

As an added bonus, Harold E. Grice is producing a short readers theater excerpt of his new play "The Houseless Hussies." In it, cigar-smoking Granny Annie meets guitar-playing traveler Just Robinhawk in the homeless encampment she shares with other homeless women. He pops out of a dumpster as Miss Kim, a social worker, arrives to offer the women temporary shelter. What happens? Astonishment guaranteed!

A Memorial Weekend Fundraiser Hop

After the vaudeville-style Variety Show on Sat., May 28, consider hopping over to another Memorial Weekend event that benefits the Monterey Peace and Justice Center.

There will be a Concert and Dinner with no set admission fee, but donations are requested. The program will feature musical performances by Rhythm & Rouge, and a keynote address on "Compassion and Justice" by CSUMB Professor John Berteaux.

Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served at 4:30 p.m. Buffet dinner will follow at 5 p.m.: (chicken, vegetarian and vegan options).

Location: Unitarian Universalist Church, 490 Aguajito Rd., Carmel.

To make reservations or for more information contact Sylvia Shih 737-5083 or 58eugenia58@gmail.com or leave a message at MPJC 899 7322.

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