



Porch Light

TORRES COMMUNITY SHELTER

SUMMER

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Brad Montgomery

TORRES SHELTER

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 Monday - Friday
 Phone: (530) 891-9048
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www.facebook.com/TorresShelter

People Helping People News!

We now have **152** wonderful donors giving **\$2,723** each month! Thank you People Helping People (PHP) team! Our 2010 goal is to have PHP cover \$10,000 of our monthly expenses. We are more than 1/4 of the way there. Please join us and help us reach our goal!

NEWS FROM TORRES SHELTER...

Do You Shop at FoodMaxx or SaveMart? These grocery stores give back to our community! If you shop there, please call us for a SHARES card. When you shop, just show the clerk your SHARES card before you check out, and the company will send 3% of your grocery purchases back to the Torres Community Shelter. What an easy way to support our efforts! Please call us or stop by the Shelter to obtain a SHARES card.

Great Concert! Last month *Rani Arbo & daisy mayham* entertained all of us with a fabulous concert of pop and jazz played with the fiddle, banjo, double bass, guitar and drums. Our guests had a wonderful time. Thanks to Trudy Duisenberg of Enloe for organizing the concert!

Follow us on Facebook! Of all our different methods of keeping you informed about happenings at the Shelter, Facebook is the quickest and easiest for us to update. You can find all the latest information at www.facebook.com/TorresShelter, including notices of upcoming events as well as any special needs we might be having at the time.

Homeless Families—A statistic from the 2010 Homeless Census is that 14% of people who are homeless in Butte County have children. Did you know that all five family rooms have been full most nights since we opened them? It's heartbreaking to see families here at a homeless shelter, but we're glad we can be here to help. You can read the complete 2010 Butte County Homeless Census Report in the "About Homelessness" section of our website at www.chicoshelter.org.

New Rehabilitation Services! The Skyway House will be providing some rehabilitation services for our Shelter guests at no-charge. Their Board of Directors has made a commitment to serve people who are homeless despite the inability to be reimbursed for their professional services. Their commitment will help fill a persistent need we have at the Shelter serving individuals with substance abuse issues. We would like to applaud Skyway House for their commitment to our community.

New Funding! We have recently been approved to participate in a Food Stamp Outreach program. Our participation will acknowledge and document the work we've already been doing to assist our guests and generate up to \$30,000 per year in additional funding!

Letter from the Executive Director

Last Sunday, I took some time away from work and went for a nice long drive. I've always liked small towns and I haven't had much of an opportunity to visit most of the smaller communities around Chico. It was a very enjoyable day checking out several local places but when I got up to Cohasset; I had a little epiphany.

Cohasset, CA has a posted population sign reporting that 720 people live there. When I saw this sign, my first thought was - "Wow, I personally know more people who are homeless than the entire population of this town."

That's when it hit me; we have an entire town's worth of people who are homeless in Butte County! I haven't been able to get this comparison out of my head. On May 11th, I celebrated my one year anniversary as the Executive Director of the Torres Community Shelter. In that year, we've served more people than the entire population of a nearby community. Also, our most recent count of people who are homeless in Butte County identified 1,422 people and that rivals the population of Biggs, CA at 1,793. Unfortunately, due to the economy, our "town" of homeless people is probably growing faster than the population of most of our local communities.

It's hard to find something universal to say about an entire town's worth of people except that in many ways, our "small town" of homeless people is similar to any other small town in America. The overwhelming majority of individuals in the Shelter's "small town" are decent people that want to improve their lives and are working for something better. However, we also have some people, like any community does, who take up too much of our town's resources and their actions sometimes reflect poorly on the character of our town as a whole. Our town is as diverse as any other town and the only attribute that I can ascribe to every single one of them is that they are in crisis because they don't have a permanent residence.

Please imagine for a moment what you would do if over the last year, an entire town came to stay with you because they didn't have anywhere else to stay. I'm not trying to single out Cohasset, but just because they are of a comparable size, it helps to visualize. **If everyone in the town of Cohasset came to your house last year and needed a bed, food, some clothing, a place to shower and get their laundry done; how would you even begin to address their needs?** Also keep in mind that most feel horrible that they have to impose on you (some even resent having to be helped) and want to get out of your house as soon as possible, but you know that they may need help finding a new job, a place to live, some life skills training, help with their credit rating, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, etc.

That's a pretty good description of my first year at the Shelter. Our staff has had an entire town come stay with us and we've met all of their basic needs. We've made a difference in all of their lives just by being here when they needed us. We've also helped the majority of these people in lasting ways so that hopefully they won't need us again. However we know that we'll see some of these people again and we also need to be prepared for a whole new town of people that will need to visit us next year as well. With our community's continued support, we'll continue to help people improve their lives here at our "small town"—the Torres Community Shelter.



Thank you,
Brad Montgomery
Torres Shelter Executive Director
opwindows@aol.com

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You Don't Know Me But I Thank You.



It's hard even to admit you're homeless to others. As I sit here and write this I'm wondering how I should relate my thoughts and feelings to those reading this. It's extremely daunting, being in a position where you feel hopelessness—I have constant thoughts of “Hey you! Didn't you see this coming?” How the heck did this happen? Poor decisions? Financial burdens?

Many people have no insight as to the exact nature or natures that cause another human to become homeless. Some give blindly, and give money because it is the thing to do. Others turn their backs and see drunks, addicts and laziness. “Get a job Dude.” To those who have open eyes that believe firmly in social services and understand that homelessness is not a cyst easily removed, I applaud you. Giving your time, your effort does have an effect on society. It does affect outcomes in people's lives. I give my sincerest thanks to those who have helped me.

I've been at the Torres Community Shelter for 5 months. Here I'm gaining confidence and the knowledge that I can control the stuff in life. With the help of staff and services through the shelter I've come to believe that I can be healthy and fix what problems I needed to address, and, as cliché as it is to say, “Become a participating citizen.”

I'm here to tell you that this community shelter is needed. The staff is very well educated and very skilled. They have established relationships with other branches of services and have become firmly connected in our community of Chico and the surrounding areas. I am pleased to call them my friends and have the highest regard for them. They have helped in ways that many reading this will not understand. **But the bottom line is you, the reader, have changed my life without even knowing it, by your choice not to turn your backs.** You have allowed me to grow, become self sufficient. I'm fortunate to have the shelter, and now I'm working again.

But money is not everything, there are many parts to life that have to be tended to, some anonymous, some not. I also have to give many thanks to other services that have helped me. They know who they are, but if not for them, if not for the shelter, it would have been much more difficult.

Unfortunately, when you are homeless it is difficult to become aware of what is available. That's where the Torres Community Shelter comes in...without your actions, your giving, and your beliefs in helping, my life would be different.

It's hard to admit that you're homeless. Some may read this who know me but not my previous past. In a way I now have become an open book, but if it is beneficial to open hearts and minds, so be it. You don't know me but I thank you.

Sincerely, Bruce

Butte County 2010 Homeless Census Statistic:

31% of people who are homeless in Butte County are currently doubling up with family or friends; thank you to all those that have opened their homes up to loved ones that need you.

Staff Notes—articles written by or about our staff

Working at the Torres Shelter has been a broadening experience for me. I've been a monitor for six months now, and I still learn new things each day I work. While monitors handle a majority of the basic services at the shelter, we are also responsible for keeping the shelter safe, which means we sometimes have to ask our guests to leave. This is never easy, but when we do our jobs correctly the difference can be felt in the mood of our guests and the energy at the shelter. Things can be unpredictable, however, and I've learned to be thankful of each day that I see our guests return safe and sober.

One thing that helps me get through tough days at the shelter is the pride I feel for what we are doing. We provide people who have nowhere else to go with shelter, food, a shower, and any other assistance we can render. As a monitor I'm not always directly involved in assisting our guests but my work, like the work of everyone at the shelter, is essential to the shelter as a whole. We run the shelter 365 nights per year, and it doesn't stop for sickness or a power outage. We all understand this and we make it work however we can.

Working at the shelter has been rewarding in the deepest way. **The shelter was created by and for our community, so I feel the strongest sense of service and purpose in what I do.** We alone can't "fix" the problem of homelessness, but we can give people a choice. Seeing people leaving the shelter so much better-off and so much more confident than they were when they arrived has been the greatest reward of all.

—Tom

Hello,

I just wanted to say thank you for letting me stay at your facility last fall. I'm the guy who jumped a greyhound here from Minnesota (you have SO many, I'm sure it's hard to remember) & was homeless. Since staying with you, I got a job raking leaves for a guy here in Paradise & word spread quickly about my honesty & work ethic. In the last 5 months, I have gotten my driver's license, bought a nice work truck & have started my own contracting business & have a wonderful safe home to live in & a really cool dog. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me & God Bless! Sincerely, Leslie

I am very grateful that the Torres Shelter is here. If it were not I'd be living under a bridge, under a tree or anywhere in the cold harsh weather. Both my husband and I are happy that we can stay somewhere together. (It's just a bummer we aren't in our own room! Smile!) I can testify to this; the staff does their best in time of need. I'm sure just like anywhere you go you find great people. The Torres Shelter has some really great staff and volunteer personnel. If it were not for this place, I don't know what would have happened with me and my husband. Thank you Torres Shelter, for I am grateful. —Maria

"I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

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PHP Ambassadors Needed!



By now most of you probably know about our **People Helping People** campaign. When we started **People Helping People (PHP)** about 18 months ago, we thought “What an easy concept. Just \$10 a month from 3,000 people, businesses and/or families and our operating expenses will be covered!” Well, we were wrong...it’s an easy concept but implementing it hasn’t been easy. Although over 150 people (many giving more than \$10 per month) have joined PHP as supporters (**thank you!**) we are still far from our goal. We think it’s mainly been a matter of not getting the word out. That’s why

we hope you’ll become a volunteer **PHP Ambassador** to help spread the word about the Shelter and about our **People Helping People** campaign. Your participation can be as simple or as challenging as you like; as easy as sharing our information with family, friends and neighbors or joining our more concerted efforts to reach people through religious, civic and school groups.

Why become a PHP Ambassador? The Torres Community Shelter is the only emergency shelter in the area for homeless men, women and families with children. **We help people 365 days a year!** In 2009 we provided over 20,000 nights of shelter. We are the largest homeless shelter in our area, with 120 beds. For almost a year now, we’ve been averaging 75 guests per night.

Need more convincing? It takes about \$360,000 per year to operate the Shelter, and currently about 1/3 of that comes from governmental sources. We’ve heard recently that future federal funding may move away from supporting emergency shelters for people who are homeless, giving more priority to transitional and permanent housing, such as apartments. What that could mean is less federal money to help run the Shelter each year. So, our PHP campaign is becoming even more vital and we need PHP Ambassadors to help get the word out!

Please join our efforts and become a PHP Ambassador. It’s nothing formal, just our supporters spreading the word for us. If you would like more information, please contact Brad Montgomery at 891-9048 or brad@chicosshelter.org. We will be glad to provide you with flyers, just like the one in this newsletter, which you can hand out or post on bulletin boards. You can also download them from our website at www.chicosshelter.org. Speaking of our website, there’s a lot of information there that will help you and others learn more about the Shelter.

People Helping People—It’s what we do—It’s what you can do, too! We hope to hear from you soon.

—Sheryl McWatters & Karen Betenbaugh

More Butte County 2010 Homeless Census Statistics:

11% of people who are homeless in Butte County reported prior or current military service, 25% reported having a physical disability and 21% reported having a mental illness.

28% of people who are homeless in Butte County reported living outdoors and 32% met the definition of “chronically homeless”. We started an outreach program in 2009 focusing on services for people in this population. Through our outreach efforts, we are seeing more people come into the Shelter after living outside for long periods of time.

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The Amazing Story of How We Serve Food



Many people in the community are often surprised that we serve food every night at the Shelter. Some people think that only our friends at the Jesus Center serve food and that we provide shelter. Actually, we both do both! We have our 120 bed facility that serves men, women and families with children and we serve one meal every day 365 days per year and extra meals on Christmas and Thanksgiving. We actually served more than 25,000 meals over the last 12 months. The Jesus Center serves two meals per weekday, one meal on every weekend day and they run an additional shelter called the Sabbath House that serves up to 24 women and children at a time.

One of the most amazing parts of our story is how we are able to serve food to our guests. First off, many people that have never been to the Shelter don't realize we don't really have a kitchen; we don't even have a stove! What we have is a serving area called a warming kitchen that has some sinks, microwave, etc. and yet we provide a huge variety of hot and cold meals that our guests rave about! Honestly, our nightly meal is the highlight of every day at the Shelter.

I want to talk about our food providers. There are 17 different volunteer groups that rotate to provide our nightly meal and they do a phenomenal job. These groups shop and pay for the food for around 70 guests per night and provide some extra for staff and volunteers! Then they prepare the food (often at a different location), bring it to the Shelter, warm as needed and serve to our very appreciative and enthusiastic guests. Most of the time, seconds are possible. When individuals start going for thirds, we need to cut them off.

When I first started at the Shelter last May, I thought this system sounded like a logistical nightmare that would end up taking a lot of my time, but I'm glad to testify that I was completely wrong. The groups that serve our meals represent a number of different places; most are from the faith community, some are local caterers, some are student groups or individuals. All of them take their responsibility to serve quality food at the Shelter very seriously. The way it works is that each group has signed up for different days of the month; like every 1st Monday or 3rd Wednesday or 4th Sunday and they pretty much have the same schedule month after month. Then these groups take care of it from there, many often calling us a few days before their turn to get an idea of how many people we're currently serving. We'll have maybe one cancellation per month and most of the time we get notification days in advance so that we can make other arrangements.

I want to talk a little more about the quality of the food our guests enjoy. Over the last year, several of the groups have shared with me what criterion they use to decide what to serve at the Shelter. Some groups have decided to go all-organic, some groups have decided to buy only local and/or fresh the day of preparation, some groups take up special collections or do special fundraisers to ensure they have an adequate food budget. All the groups have demonstrated again and again that they won't serve anything to our guests that they wouldn't put on their own dinner table.

The end result of this? Our guests are treated to a wide array of delicious and nutritious meals, and more than 25,000 meals have been served in just the last year at a cost of virtually nothing to the Shelter! For our annual budget reports we calculated the true cost of our meal program and came up with a figure of more than \$50,000 per year if we didn't have these volunteer groups and the organizations they represent pitching in to meet this need for us. Our guests are with us about 15 hours per day and so of course we have to feed them. We couldn't operate without the support of these 17 groups that have taken on this responsibility and have done it so well throughout the history of the Shelter! If you know anyone that is part of these groups that serve meals at the Torres Community Shelter, please hug them and tell them that what they do for us is amazing!! —Brad Montgomery

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VOLUNTEER AND EVENT NEWS!

A HUGE THANK YOU!

These organizations, groups, and people provide wonderful evening meals at the Shelter each and every month:

- Bidwell Presbyterian
- Catholic Communities (ODS)—five times per month!
- Chico Hauvrah
- Church of Religious Science
- Congregational Church (UCC) —twice per month!
- CSUC Dept. of Education
- Debbie Brown—three times per month!
- EVF (Evangelical Free)
- Faith Lutheran—twice per month!
- First Baptist Church
- First Christian Church
- Mona Roach—twice per month!
- Newman Center—twice per month!
- Quakers
- St. John's Episcopal
- Trinity Methodist Church
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Chico—twice per month!

HELP NEEDED FOR OUR 8th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE AUCTION!

We are looking for volunteers to help coordinate our Christmas Tree Auction to be held on Nov. 20th. It's one of our main fundraisers and we are putting together a committee to pull it all together. If you would like to help coordinate this very fun and important event, please e-mail Brad at brad@chicoshelter.org or call 891-9048.

A big Thank You to **Magoon Signs** for the new WELCOME sign! Besides being friendly and welcoming, it directs people to the more convenient parking lot entrance. We are always grateful to our friends in the business community - especially now in these challenging economic times.

A BELATED THANK YOU

To Cindy Robinson and Ed Hightower—Thank you so much for donating a new freezer to the Shelter. To Shirley Huneven—Thank you so much for donating an extra refrigerator. Both of these appliances have made a big difference!

ARABIC DINNER THANK YOU

Our Arabic Dinner fundraiser turned out wonderful! Thank you so much Ali Sarsour and crew for cooking such a delicious meal for us. We had a full house, and received lots of compliments on the wonderful meal and fun evening. We also want to thank the musicians who made our evening so enjoyable: The Rail Flowers: Beth, Ellen and Hannah Knight, along with Holly Taylor, Dan Quinn, Henry Pratt and Kathleen Kirby. Thanks too to all of the many other volunteers that made this event possible including National Charity League for serving. Finally, thanks Diane Slater for all your work in organizing this and all our great events!

MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH THANK YOU

Thank you to all who attended the Mother's Day Brunch. It was a marvelous breakfast that benefited the Torres Community Shelter and the Newman Center. Thank you Newman Center students for allowing us to be part of your benefit brunch. An especially big thank you to all the volunteers, including National Charity League, that donated their time to arrange the event, cook the food and serve all the people and families that came to support our two organizations!!

AA & NA MEETINGS

We are proud to announce that we are now hosting AA meetings at the Shelter. We would also like to host NA meetings so please connect with us if you'd be interested in helping those meetings get started. Our AA meetings are open to the general public, as well as our guests. We host them every Tuesday at 3:00 pm.

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Chico Community Shelter Partnership
Torres Community Shelter
101 Silver Dollar Way, Chico, CA 95928

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GREETINGS FROM THE TORRES COMMUNITY SHELTER

With your support, we've helped a lot of people since January 1, 2010!

- > So far this year in just 5 months we've served 346 people. We served a total of 527 people for all of 2009.
- > On average, there have been 73 people staying at the shelter each night. Our average for all of 2009 was 61.
- > We've provided 11,434 nights of stay this year. Unfortunately, we're on pace to surpass our record of 22,123 nights of stay last year.
- > Since January 1st our guests have included 30 children in 20 families. Yes, that's right...30 children.

Our Wish List: At the Torres Community Shelter we strive to provide a clean, healthy and safe place for people to stay, and we do not charge our guests for anything. Our guests can really use the following items!

- > Flip Flops to use for shower shoes
- > Socks (we really need men's socks right now!)
- > T shirts (medium to XXlarge)
- > Pajamas (women's M-XL and men's M-XXL)
- > Sunscreen, Chapstick, Bug Spray, Body Lotion, Deodorant, Shampoo, Conditioner
- > Tables & chairs for the patio area

Design donated by: www.helendualdesign.com