



Porch Light

TORRES COMMUNITY SHELTER

WINTER

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TORRES SHELTER

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People Helping People News!

Yea Team! As of December 31, we have 103 wonderful donors giving \$2,307.50 each month! Thank you PHP team! We have a 2010 goal of having our PHP team cover \$10,000 of our monthly expenses. Please join us and help us reach our goal!

NEWS FROM TORRES SHELTER...

No longer Under Construction! Our remodel is complete and includes three new family rooms, a quiet room for studying, and a meeting and activity room. We want to give a huge thanks to the Chico State Construction Management Group, Jim O'Bannon, David Shirah, Howard Slater, and many other volunteers for taking on our project! The remodel was finished just in time, because the family rooms are already filled with new families! Come by any time to tour our new rooms and the rest of the Shelter.

More Activities! As part of our remodel, we now have a room that can be used for Guest activities and meetings. In the past, we didn't have a place for people to do activities because we just had the two large dorm rooms, but now we do. We're looking for volunteers who are interested in providing activities for our Guests—everything from hosting a Book Club, to teaching an Arts and Crafts course to providing music lessons. **If you have a skill or hobby you'd like to share, please let us know.** Call Louise at (530) 891-9048.

People Helping People—We'll be focusing on our People Helping People (PHP) campaign this year. Please see the flyer inside and consider joining our team of monthly supporters. We hope to make this the mainstay of our Shelter funding. Our goal this year is to reach \$10,000 per month in ongoing donations, which would be a third of our monthly expenses, and a great start towards financial stability of the Shelter.

Book in Common—The Soloist. Many amazing and wonderful things have happened in our community these last few months due in part to the community Book in Common events and activities that have been helping to raise awareness about homelessness. To see some of the great things that have happened, visit the Chico State Book in Common website at www.chicostate.edu/bic.

We are on Facebook! Find out all the latest Shelter news by visiting us on Facebook.com/TorresShelter. Don't forget to click on "Become a Fan" and invite your friends to become Shelter fans too. It's a wonderful way to spread the word about what we are doing here at the Shelter.

Letter from the Executive Director

Running a homeless shelter becomes a way of life very quickly. Just under 8 months ago, I became the Executive Director of the Torres Community Shelter. I had done “similar” work in the field of non-profits for 17 years previously, but really nothing is “similar” to running a homeless shelter.

I had also volunteered at homeless shelters before I worked here and that’s not quite the same either. Let me share an example. A short time ago, I watched a family check in at the Shelter and try to fit all of their belongings into the bins we provide. Each person staying at the Shelter is allotted a bin in which they can store up to 25 pounds of belongings. This was a family of four and so they could keep 100 pounds of their family belongings.

Could you take everything you need or care about and fit it into a bin that holds less than 25 pounds?

Watching that process as a volunteer is heart-breaking and quite possibly alters a person’s value system. Watching that process as the Executive Director also adds a whole other layer of accountability to the event. I feel that it is an implied part of my mission to help that family get back what they lost or had to sacrifice before they ended up staying with us. Despite logic and reason, I feel like it’s my job to make every guest “whole” again. The material things just become a metaphor for everything they’ve lost.

This is why from the moment I wake up in the morning until I go to sleep, every minute is occupied in part with all the things we’re working on here at the Shelter. The list is complex and expanding...from working to find jobs for our Guests; to setting up our new family rooms; to increasing the amount of activities we provide at the Shelter and much more. There’s a lot more to be done in addition to what we are already doing! However, we don’t devalue what we are doing already. We are proud of the fact that every night our Guests are inside; warm, dry and safe with compassionate people looking out for them. Many of our Guests have not felt this sense of security for years and unfortunately, some of them have never felt these feelings before they arrived here at our Shelter.

Our Guests’ experiences here at the Shelter are greatly enhanced because we’re fortunate to have a deeply dedicated staff that consistently values the importance of the well-being of others, rather than the size of their own paychecks. There’s so much that we can accomplish in these upcoming months with the efforts and talents of these people working together.

My first 8 months here at the Shelter have been enlightening, exhausting and filled with many inspiring victories. I’m looking forward to the challenges and accomplishments we’ll have in 2010 and I never forget that the support of our community makes what we do possible. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Brad Montgomery

Torres Shelter Executive Director

opwindows@aol.com



Keep the Laughter...

"My name is Shawn and I am a guest at the Torres Shelter. I am grateful for this shelter. I needed a place to go and get myself back together so I can be a good father for my daughter. That starts with fixing my life first and the Torres Shelter is helping me do that. I would like to thank the staff for being so down to Earth, and taking the time to work with people who need help in bad times, and not judging people before they get to know them for everybody has some kind of good in them. They just need the right people to bring it out of them, and I think the staff at the TORRES SHELTER is the right people for this. So from the bottom of my heart thank you for everything. It's changed my life in a short time so keep this blessing alive and going for a long time to come. God bless, and try to keep the laughter always in this shelter for that is the most positive thing I have taken from here. Stay positive and don't ever stop fighting for what you want—this staff here is not going to give up on you if you really try. Thank you again Torres Shelter." —Shawn, Jan. 14, 2010

A Special Shelter Friend...Perry Gill

Perry Gill is the owner of Sunrise Carpet Cleaning and Restoration in Chico and provides free professional cleaning services to us at the shelter when we need the deeper cleaning done. Perry has been there for us again and again. Perry has an annual Luau at his home and collects donations from his friends during the party for the Torres Community Shelter. Perry's generosity was never solicited; he has followed the shelter in the news and in the community. Most recently Perry was planning a fundraiser for the shelter featuring his friend Norton Buffalo. When that was no longer possible, Perry contacted the Shelter and offered a free concert for our Guests on Thanksgiving and helped provide one of our meals that day. You can read all about the concert in an article on the next page called "Musical Connections".

We appreciate Perry's thoughtful nature and on-going efforts to come up with creative and fun ways to support our community shelter. Thank you to Perry and his friends that joined him on Thanksgiving. Our Guests loved it!

To Staff & Guests at the Torres Shelter:

I would like to thank all of you for your kindness, friendship and treating me with respect through a very hard time in my life! May God bless you all.

Love your friend, Johnny

A Personal Thank You to Mark Friedman from Brad Montgomery:

On Saturday, November 21st, several Guests from the Shelter, more than 100 others and I were treated to a wonderful evening at Faith Lutheran Church. A classical pianist named Mark Ryan Friedman provided a free concert as a benefit to the Shelter. He played beautifully; Rachmaninoff, Chopin and Liszt. Mark had reached out to me a few months earlier and asked if he could organize and play this concert for us. Mark basically put the whole event together by himself with some close friends and family. Donations were collected at the event and the event was a financial success for the Shelter as well. After playing, Mark surprised everyone by proposing to his sweet and lovely girlfriend Mcrae. This was a very moving and memorable night that made quite an impression on everyone who attended. I wanted to thank Mark and the good people at Faith Lutheran for making this happen.

Staff Notes—a new section with articles written by or about our staff

The following article was written by Becky Rivera, one of our service coordinators. She has worked at the Torres Community Shelter for 4 1/2 years, and is an integral part of what we do!

Musical Connections

Thanksgiving 2009, guests of the Torres Community Shelter were treated to more than just live music when local musicians performed in honor of their late friend, Norton Buffalo. Performers Perry Gill, Mike Joyce, Huntley Hornbeck, Dan Paolillo, and Lansana Kouyate, of the **Joyce Johnson Band**, played on the shelter's patio to a grateful audience. As



I watched the band play I observed a community forming between all of us. I saw smiles when a familiar song began, feet tapping and a few guests singing along; I felt like we were all given a special treat that day. The sense of community and spirit of sharing became even stronger when Perry shared with the audience that Norton Buffalo, renowned musician and a friend, had wanted to perform a concert as a fundraiser for the Shelter and to play for the shelter residents. Sadly, Norton became ill and passed away on October 30, 2009. After listening to Perry speak about Norton Buffalo's intention to play for the shelter, the audience respectfully stood up and gave a standing ovation. As I listened to Puff the Magic Dragon, I thought to myself, these guys just lost someone who was a dear friend and who shared their passion for music and community. Here they are, weeks after losing Norton, honoring him and honoring those in their community who would be spending the holiday in a shelter.

After the band was finished and beginning to pack up, a guest presented a card to me and asked that I give it to the band members to show their appreciation. I handed the card to Mike Joyce, who began to read the notes written on the card. Many shelter guests expressed appreciation to the band for taking the time to be there. Mike was very moved by the gratitude expressed on that handwritten card, and I was filled with hope considering the connection made between strangers that day. The loving energy of this group of musicians resulted in much more than entertainment. The band had left and the mood in the air was positive. It was time for me to go spend the remainder of the day with my family. I left the shelter feeling excited about sharing my experiences that day and grateful that our community includes people who are thoughtful and who will take the time to connect with their fellow citizens in need of support. —Becky Rivera

Porch Light

We've Made Room for a Play Area!



We are very excited to be adding a small children's play area in the women's dorm! We haven't had a play area before, and could use your help furnishing it. We are looking for the following: a small children's table and small chairs, bins for storage, several toy boxes (we can also use them in our new family rooms), new or gently used children's books, a small bookcase, a play rug or mat, colorful wall art, coloring books and crayons, whiteboard markers and an eraser.

The new play area will be a great addition to our facility. Children at the Shelter are going to love it!

Please Join Us on March 4th for Empty Bowls!

What is Empty Bowls?

Empty Bowls is an International project to raise awareness and to raise funds for the hungry and the homeless. This will be the eighth annual Empty Bowls dinner in Chico. With community support, previous Chico events have raised around \$6,000 each year. Students volunteer to help organize and run the event. Proceeds from this great service project go directly to organizations to help feed the hungry. This year the Torres Community Shelter has been identified as the local recipient.

How Does Empty Bowls Works?

Students from Pleasant Valley High School, Chico High School, Chico Junior High and Marsh Junior High, as well as other community members, **hand crafted ceramic soup bowls** to be used to serve the soup at the dinner. Local restaurants, businesses and individuals donate soup, bread, raffle items and other necessary supplies. Community members purchase tickets for \$10 and receive a meal of soup and bread on the night of the event. At the end of the dinner, they keep their handmade bowl as a remembrance of those less fortunate.

When & Where?

Empty Bowls will be held this year on March 4. There are two seating times, one at 5:00 and the other at 6:15. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at The Torres Shelter, Zucchini and Vine, Christian and Johnson and from Chico High and Pleasant Valley High School students. The event will be held at Valhalla Hall at Pleasant Valley High School.

Want to Help?

Empty Bowls allows the whole community to come together to fight hunger and homelessness. In the past our community has generously donated food and raffle items to this successful event. If you have any questions or would like to help with the event please contact Diane Slater at 343-4044.

Torres Shelter: You Rock!

“The Torres Shelter has been extremely helpful with supporting those who have come in from the cold harsh streets of Chico, California. I have not yet found anything disruptive or discouraging to my wife or myself. All of the staff and volunteers thus far have gone far above and far beyond their duties to help us all. Both my wife and myself are truthfully grateful and blessed to be allowed to be a part of the Torres family and feel extremely thankful to be seen as an actual person in the eye’s of the Torres Shelter, where other people might see us all as bums, hobo’s or vagrant garbage. So: Torres Shelter you rock!” —A.J.

It’s P.I.T. Time

In order to work on solutions to a problem, any problem, we have to have a grasp of the size and scope of that problem...

The Problem—Homelessness in our community.

Part of the Solution—Determining just how many people are homeless.

How We Do This—A one-day Point in Time Survey, also known as P.I.T. held on 1/27/10

Every year, we join communities throughout the U.S. in conducting a one-day survey to help present a clearer picture of homelessness in our county and in our country. The survey counts individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, and the information helps us evaluate local services to ensure that they are appropriate, adequate, and effective in helping those that need them. The survey is also important because we can get more federal funding into our community if we have an accurate and comprehensive assessment of homelessness in our area.

This is not an easy survey to conduct because there are inherent difficulties in getting an accurate count of everyone who is homeless. Besides the fact that our geographic area is quite large, many people who are homeless are trying not to be noticed, and some people will be quite hesitant to be surveyed even after you find them. Also, we need to ensure that people who are surveyed at the Jesus Center aren’t also surveyed at the Torres Community Shelter, etc. Finally, how do you count the growing population of people that are homeless but staying with friends or family members? These challenges lead us to believe the reported number of people who are homeless in our community is even higher than what we can count and report. Last January, we learned that at least 1,380 people were homeless in Butte County. We believe this year’s numbers will be higher.

The survey project is led by our Continuum of Care (CoC) on homelessness which represents a number of organizations and entities that are involved in one way or another with serving the needs of people who are homeless. Meagan Meloy is the CoC Coordinator, and she’s doing an impressive job organizing the survey this year. The survey is conducted by volunteers, and our volunteers from the Torres Community Shelter are a crucial part of the success of the P.I.T. survey each year for a couple of reasons: 1) We know where people stay. We’re one of a small group of organizations that goes to the various encampments in our community on a regular basis. We have staff that does weekly outreach at the encampments in order to encourage people to stop staying outside and come into our Shelter or at least stay connected with us for other services. 2) We know how to connect with the people we’re trying to survey. We are very experienced at working with and connecting with people who are homeless—we do it on a daily basis!

We’ll report the results of this year’s P.I.T. survey in an upcoming newsletter.

VOLUNTEER AND EVENT NEWS!

THANKS CHICO JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS!

During December, Chico Junior high held a fundraiser for the Torres Community Shelter. The event was organized by the Leadership class and many classes across campus participated by bringing in items from our wish list. One of the students, Chase Thompson, just happened to go to the dentist that week and took it upon himself to ask his dentist if he had any toothbrushes for the event. Dr. Hood generously donated 400 toothbrushes to the Torres Shelter!

7th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE AUCTION

We'd like to thank the many sponsors and donors of the event, which was a huge success! Our event sponsors included Slater and Son, CB Properties, Deems and Keller Law Office, NAMI Butte County, Therapeutic Solutions, Inc., The Hignell Company, Stairways Recovery, Club Stairways and Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in Chico. We also appreciate the in-kind donations given by many local businesses, restaurants and artists, frankly too many to mention individually. In addition, we'd like to thank the over 250 people who attended and purchased many fine auction items. The event was very successful in raising funds for the Torres Community Shelter, which only goes to prove that the poor economy doesn't stop our community's compassion or commitment to the Shelter!

HELP NEEDED!

8th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE AUCTION

We are looking for volunteers to help coordinate our Christmas Tree Auction to be held in November or December. 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 CHRISTMAS THANK YOU TO THESE ORGANIZATIONS & PEOPLE:

- Boy Scouts - Baked cookies and sang carols
- Capay School - Amy, a 5th grader at Capay, organized a toy and clothing drive for us
- Concow 4H Club - Donated pumpkin pies
- Enloe BH Nurses - Served Christmas dinner
- Kermit Berge - Santa came to the shelter for our kids at Christmas
- Marie Filkert - Fireperson from Chico Fire Department assisted Santa and donated gifts to the children
- Our Divine Savior - Provided Christmas dinner and gave gift cards for each adult and family, and also donated new clothing
- Many, many others in the community who contributed to a fun, happy and generous Christmas for the guests of the Torres Shelter!

EMPTY BOWLS

Thurs., Mar. 4

PV High School, Valhalla Hall

Seatings are at 5:00 p.m. and 6:15 p.m. Please join us for this fun fundraiser and take home a beautiful handmade ceramic bowl!

UPCOMING BOOK IN COMMON EVENTS:

Sat. Feb. 13 at 2:00 p.m.

Barnes & Noble, Chico

Our very own Brad Montgomery will discuss *The Soloist* and talk about how the Torres Shelter helps people in our community. Holly Nevarez, CSU, Chico and volunteer at the Jesus Center, will also speak.

Tues. Mar. 23 at 7:30 p.m.

Laxson Auditorium, CSU Chico

Author Steve Lopez comes to Chico to talk about *The Soloist*, and what he learned about friendship, second chances, and music. Tickets at the University Box Office: 530-898-6333

TORRES COMMUNITY SHELTER

Porch Light



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

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GREETINGS FROM THE TORRES COMMUNITY SHELTER!

People We Helped in 2009:

- > In 2009 we served 527 people with an average stay of 42 nights.
- > On average, there were 61 people staying at the shelter each night in 2009.
- > We provided 22,123 nights of stay in 2009 compared with 14,774 in 2008.
- > We welcomed 236 guests during October, November and December.
- > During the last quarter of 2009, our Guests included 15 children in 10 families, and we provided overnight shelter 6,987 times to people who had nowhere else to stay.

Our Wish List: At the Torres Shelter we strive to provide a clean, healthy and safe place for people to stay, and we do not charge our guests for anything. It's a cold, wet winter and we really need the following items!

- > Flip Flops to use for shower shoes
- > Socks
- > Pajamas (Women's' M-XL and Men's' M-XXL)
- > Heavy Duty Rain Ponchos, Water Resistant Jackets, Sturdy Umbrellas & Gloves
- > Large Sized Canned Goods...soups, chili, beans & stews are especially appreciated during the winter

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