

Strides

Casa Esperanza Homeless Center Newsletter



casa-esperanza.org

This Issue

The Effect Today's Economy Has on Santa Barbara's Homeless Population

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Homeless In Santa Barbara



photos by lara cooper

take pride in our community. But even in our beautiful paradise, we are feeling the impact of our nation's economic problems. More and more individuals and families are finding it harder to make ends meet and no one is feeling the impact more than our low-income residents. Many of them are homeless and the number is growing.

In California the unemployment rate has jumped to 11%, almost double from what it was a year ago and more of our neighbors are feeling the effects. The impact goes well beyond that of the financial sector and the mystical stock market. It has hit home and hit hard. If we are to endure, we must do what our community has done so well in times of need – rally together.

Homelessness is not a problem only affecting social service agencies but indirectly affects the community at large. County services are greatly impacted by individuals and families who are seeking refuge and basic necessities. It was reported in 2006, that the SB County jail system spends an estimated \$4.7 million per year on the homeless and Santa Barbara County hospitals spend \$7.7 million. In contrast to what it costs Casa Esperanza to offer care and services, with an annual budget of \$2.1 million, of which only 30% comes from government assistance, makes these numbers even more shocking.

Here in Santa Barbara we are blessed to live in one of the most beautiful communities in the world. It is and has been home to some of the most influential people in history... celebrities, philanthropists, community leaders, educators, even a former U.S. President. And Santa Barbara's beauty is no accident. A good deal of thoughtful planning and community discourse aimed at preserving and enhancing our city has taken place over many decades. It is clear we

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A Message From Mike Foley



It is with great excitement that we are sending you our very first issue of "STRIDES", Casa Esperanza's newsletter. You can expect to receive this newsletter periodically throughout the year updating you on the work of the Center, our successes and challenges, and how your support is making a difference in the battle to end homelessness.

Even as homelessness is on the rise due to current economic times, Casa Esperanza Homeless Center is succeeding in its mission to end homelessness. Our day-services program provides showers and hot meals to the homeless every day of the year. Our Community Kitchen serves up to 600 meals daily which includes food that is prepared and sent to after school programs for low income children and homeless families. And, the staff at the Center work as a team to help people transition off the street and back into stable housing and employment by providing access to housing and job placement, drug and alcohol services, and assistance for the mentally ill. Results are rarely instantaneous but with your support we continue to make "STRIDES" towards these goals.

Our fiscal year has just ended and I am really happy to share with you that during the last 12 months 349 people were placed in housing, 207 people were placed in jobs, and 562 people were contacted through our Street Outreach Program providing them access to services to help them transition off the street.

Ending homelessness will not be accomplished by just a handful of people. It will only be achieved when we join together as a community in an organized effort to make a difference.

We are grateful for your support and I would like to encourage you to continue to be involved. There are opportunities to volunteer throughout the Center. You can volunteer to work in our Community Kitchen feeding the homeless and poor, or work with our members who are making the transition back into the community, or help raise the funds needed to keep our doors open. Because, without you and the continued support of our amazing community there would be no Casa Esperanza.

Warmly,

Mike Foley, Executive Director

For more
information on
volunteering - please
visit us online at:
casa-esperanza.org

Art & Soul

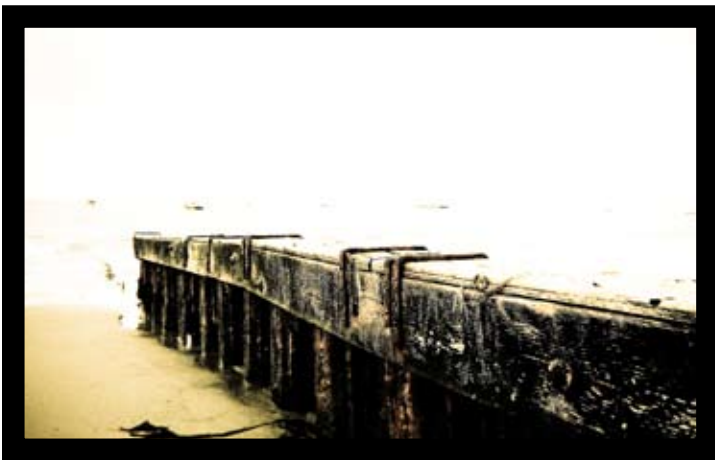
Life beats down and crushes the soul and art reminds you that you have one.

~Stella Adler

On April 2, 2009 – A collection of photographs taken by homeless members of Casa Esperanza were featured in an art exhibition as part of the Santa Barbara Downtown Organization’s First Thursday. The exhibition was the culmination of a photography class provided by the People’s Institute, developed to give homeless members of Casa Esperanza life skills. Over six weeks students were given disposable cameras and were able to take pictures of anything they wanted. During each class the teacher, Mr. Tom Moore, discussed issues of lighting, composition, and subject matter. Students would then take another disposable camera and practice the lessons they had learned. At the end of the six weeks the results



of their work were featured in the exhibition. The members were on-hand to talk about their art, what it meant to them to participate in such a class, and the impact it had on them personally. One member commented the biggest benefit was having people look at him as someone who had something meaningful to offer and not just as a homeless person.



Imelda Loza - Giving Us Hope!

A man named Joe had been living on the streets for over 40 years – years that had taken a toll on him. He was chronically ill and had turned to alcohol as a means to ease the pain and despair of homelessness. He was a man that was beaten down by life and believed that after having spent so much time on the streets he would know nothing else. In his words “living on the street is my destiny – it’s just they way it is.” Sure people had offered him a helping hand over the years but somehow he always seemed to end up back on the streets, until the day he met Imelda Loza.



This woman who seemed to appear to him almost out of thin air – looked into his eyes and asked him “how are you?”

The difference between this “how are you?” and others before was that Imelda really wanted to know. He told her how difficult things had been for him and she actually heard him. This was new

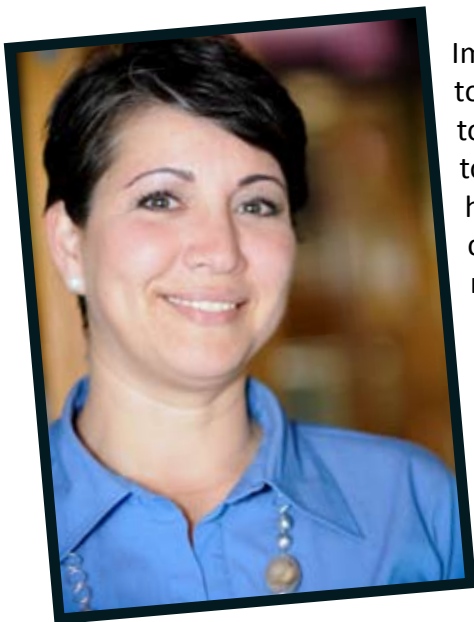
for Joe. So often people would talk at him but rarely would people talk with him. This kind stranger was not only willing to hear Joe – but she was in a position to help Joe. Imelda just so happened to be the Assistant Executive Director of Casa Esperanza.

“Having someone who saw him, heard him, and believed in him made all the difference in the world to Joe.”

Joe. Imelda helped Joe get to Project Recovery where he was able to get clean and sober. He is now working on transitioning to permanent housing and wants to find a job. When asked if he had any words of wisdom for those still on the street

he said “never give up hope. There’s little you can do without it. You need something to build on. Never lose hope!”

Imelda continues to offer hope and help through her work at Casa Esperanza. She makes it a point to know something about all the members who are staying at the Center. She hosts a meeting for members once a week so that they can give her feedback about the conditions at the shelter and on any other topic that they might be interested. Her ability to effectively communicate and connect with people, her “make it happen” attitude, and her infectious spirit and kindness are the gifts that she uses every day in her work. To ask her what makes the Center successful, she will tell you it’s all about the team – the committed staff who all have a role to play and this would be true. But every great organization finds its strength and greatness in its leaders. We are so very fortunate that Imelda is one of ours!



Imelda Loza
Assistant Executive Director

Community Kitchen News



Community Kitchen - Feeding the Homeless & Hungry

Big things have been happening in the Kitchen. In February of this year Community Kitchen, which had been a fully autonomous organization for over 14 years, merged with Casa Esperanza. This merge was the result of a long relationship between the two organizations working to provide for homeless and low income individuals and families. Community Kitchen has been located inside of the Casa Esperanza building for the last 7 years and the merge seemed the natural next step. Through this process a new Kitchen Director was added – Ms. Susan Krisher. Susan came to us after a long career as a restaurateur. Since Susan has joined our team – we have seen the quality of the food improved dramatically. One

member recently remarked that the food was amazing and Susan makes him feel like a person and not just another homeless face in the food line.

Community Kitchen serves up to 600 meals a day. Meals are served at Casa Esperanza, at an off-site location in Goleta, and snacks are sent to after school programs for children of low income families. None of this would be possible were it not for all the hard working volunteers who come every day to help prepare and serve this food and the generous donations of product from the following sponsors: Trader Joe's, Albertsons, Smart & Final, Lazy Acres, Lassens, Scolari's, Costco, Crushcakes, Muddy Waters Coffee House, Fairview Gardens, Santa Barbara Foodbank, & Los Arroyos. The next time you are in one of the stores – thank the manager for all their support.

If you would like to get involved in feeding the hungry, there are lots of opportunities in the Kitchen. For more information, call Susan at: (805) 564.0093 or visit us on line at: www.feedingsantabarbara.org. And visit the Community Kitchen blog for the latest recipes and cooking tips from some of Santa Barbara's leading chefs at: communitykitchensb.blogspot.com

Offering a Hand Up!

Casa Esperanza's Street Outreach Team has been pounding the pavement since 2007, when Executive Director Mike Foley initiated the project. Mike understood the importance of getting out on the streets and building relationships with the homeless.

Mike Foley said, "It's not realistic to think that just because there are services available to help people transition off the street that those people who need help will show up on your doorstep. Many of them have failed various programs and no longer trust 'institutions' to be able to truly help them. Others are suffering from mental illness and or have drug and alcohol problems. The Outreach Team works to build trusting relationships with the most vulnerable and bring them to Casa Esperanza for assistance." The Outreach Team is made up of three



staff members who between them are on the streets eight hours a day 365 days a year. They provide a caring ear, clothing, blankets, access to food and shelter, a and helping hand.

349 people were placed in housing over the last 12 months!

Making a Difference One Person at a Time

Rob served his country in the U.S. military and did three tours in Vietnam. When he left the service he went to work for an electronics company where he was employed for 21 years before the company went under and closed its doors in 2002. Unemployed and with little savings Rob did his best to find a job but at 64 years old, finding employment was harder than anticipated. Soon his savings was gone and he could no longer afford to stay in the apartment he was renting. He ended up on the street. Weeks turned into months and months into years. And so was his life until December of 2007 when he was approached by Casa Esperanza's Outreach team. Rob was resistant at first to accept help. But after countless visits from the Outreach team, he eventually agreed to come to Casa Esperanza.

Rob was surprised to find so many caring people who truly wanted to help him. It seemed that life on the streets had changed his perception of the world and

learning to trust people again didn't come as easily. But in time this changed. Rob said "Things were a lot better than I expected. I couldn't be more grateful with all their hard work from everyone here. Every time I came out of my resource coach's office I would feel uplifted and optimistic to continue on."

After 10 months of working closely with his resource coach and scouring the landscape for affordable housing, opportunity knocked. Rob was accepted into Garden Court, which offers affordable housing for seniors. Rob was ready to transition to a home that he could call his own after so long on the streets. Before Rob left Casa Esperanza he told us "People are on the street for all kinds of reasons, but if given the chance they should accept help because there are people who really do care."

Life On The Streets

A Hollywood's Who's Who!

What do Star Trek's William Shatner, Academy Award winning actresses Halle Berry and Hillary Swank, magician Harry Houdini, pop star Kelly Clarkson, comedian Joan Rivers, jazz great Ella Fitzgerald and TV host David Letterman have in common? Yes, they are all incredibly well known celebrities who have been quite successful. But **all of them have been homeless at some point in their lives.**



In fact, American Idol winner Kelly Clarkson recently talked about how she lived in a homeless shelter after her apartment burned to the ground and she lost everything. When Hillary Swank first moved to L.A. to try making it in the movies she lived in her car with her mother for over six months while they scrimped and saved. And David Letterman spent some time living in his red 1973 Chevy pickup truck. So for us at Casa Esperanza, these examples of success reinforce the need for what we do and they remind us that any of us, at one time or another, could need a helping hand.



Here is a list of some celebrities that have stated they were homeless at one point in their lives: Danny Bonaduce, Matt Borlenghi, Drew Carey, Jim Carrey, Charlie Chaplin, Kelly Clarkson, Kurt Cobain, Daniel Craig, John Paul DeJoria, Troy Donahue, George Eads, Ella Fitzgerald, Kelsey Grammer, Cary Grant, Woody Guthrie,

Janet Harvick, Harry Houdini, Don Imus, Burl Ives, Jewel, Chris Thomas King, Eartha Kitt, David Letterman, Lil' Kim, Adam Makowicz, Rose McGowan, Heather Mills, Jim Morrison, George Orwell, Robert Pastorelli, Tyler Perry, Sally Jessy Raphael, Debbie Reynolds, Joan Rivers, "Colonel" Harland Sanders, William Shatner, Martin Sheen, Patti Smith, Hilary Swank, Rob Thomas, Shania Twain, Jean-Claude Van Damme.



Did You Know?

In the last 12 months 1735 people came to Casa Esperanza for services. Here are some other interesting facts about the people being served at Casa Esperanza this year.

60% increase in Seniors & Disabled seeking services from 2008 - 2009

Members who are Santa Barbara County Residents 55%

The cost of housing a person at Casa Esperanza is \$44/day.

Women seeking help at Casa Esperanza 22%

Lived in own residence before coming to Casa Esperanza 30%

The cost to incarcerate a homeless person is \$189/day.

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Homeless In Santa Barbara, continued from cover

Seventeen percent of our county residents live under the federal poverty level. Another 17% have less than a high school diploma. These statistics show there is a delicate threshold that many fail to stay above. Include the disabled, mentally ill, and the elderly and economic times such as these become bleak for those most vulnerable and those who are working just to get by.

At Casa Esperanza we offer food, shelter and Hope! The homeless are given an opportunity to get back on their feet. At a time when other services and businesses are closing their doors, we are expanding our services. And by doing so we also have the potential of saving our city hundreds of thousands of dollars.

To house someone for a day in a shelter or some other form of supportive housing and provide them all the necessary services, it costs approximately \$44 a day. To put someone in jail for minor infractions is \$170.74 a day. For those who end up in our hospitals, that number is a whopping \$1,600 a day. The difference between providing proactive services

versus reactive services is huge. And the latter does little if anything to end the cycle of homeless.

The truth is – homelessness is a big problem that requires big solutions. It requires that we as a community rally together in support. That local nonprofits, county and city agencies, and community leaders work together towards long term solutions. At Casa Esperanza we are conscious of the needs of the homeless population and are willing to evolve in order to suit the needs of the times for both the homeless and the community.

So what can each of us do to make a genuine impact? Well there are a lot of things: from volunteering to serve food, to raising money, collecting clothing and blankets, being an advocate for support and understanding, or simply offering a helping hand to your neighbor in need.

Find out how you can get involved. Come to the Center for a tour, visit us on the web at: www.casa-esperanza.org, or call us at: (805) 884.0123.