



CALIFORNIA CENTRAL VALLEY JOURNEY
FOR JUSTICE
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HOMELESS NEWS

A VIEW FROM THE STREET

March 2018 Issue 7

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PROFILE:

Each issue we will introduce you to an individual who has no home. We hear people in the community refer to Homeless individuals as "those people." Well "those people" have a name and a life history. They are someone's daughter or son, mother or father, grandmother or grandfather, sister or brother, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew, cousin, wife or husband or friend. Gena interviewed Monica for this issue.

Gena: Where did you grow up?

Monica: I was born and raised in Atwater. My father was stationed at Castle Air Force Base. I graduated from Atwater High School. I went to college and was going to be a nurse.

I got married to a military man. My husband got orders to Okinawa. While he was there I worked as a food server. I had two daughters. My husband went from Okinawa to Abilene, Texas. Things fell apart and I got a divorce. I married again. My second husband was also in the military. He got orders to Germany. By now I had a son. My husband didn't want me to bring my girls to Germany. He only wanted me to bring my son. Good bye to husband #2. Came back to Atwater and got a job at the Officers Club at Castle Air Force Base.

Gena: How did you become homeless?

Monica: It was my choice to become homeless. I started helping feed the homeless. My son committed suicide. I started speaking up for the homeless and I started going to City Council meetings.

Gena: How many years have you been out here?

Monica: This March will be 8 years.

Gena: I asked Monica about the Occupy? I told her I had heard a lot about it.

Monica: You need to talk to Gloria Sandoval. She knows a lot about it.

Gena: For those of you who don't know Monica, she has run for a seat on the City Council. I asked her how she got started?

Monica: It all started as a joke. Dr. Sandoval and his wife, Gloria were joking and told me that I should run, so I did.

Gena: How many times have you run?

Monica: I've ran 3 times. I plan on running for mayor.

Gena: Where do you see yourself being in 5 years?

Monica: Hopefully I will be a supervisor, not a manager. I'm going to be on top.

Gena: If you could make a wish and it would come true, what would you wish for?

Monica: I would wish for a million dollars. Put it in the bank for two years. Then I would buy out downtown and turn it into homeless housing.

Gena: Thank you Monica for taking the time to talk to me. I wish you all the best in your future.

Gena: Monica is a very bright and smart woman. I honestly think she would be a great mayor.

Thank you, Gena Mercer

POLICE USING THEIR BADGES TO BE UGLY

Well this story was told to me by me! I was there when this took place. Once again it took place in Applegate Park in the gazebo.

Some friends and I were sitting in the gazebo when into the park comes one of Merced's police. He drives real slow at first, then he comes to the gazebo, gets out of his car, comes over to us and says "everyone pack up and leave." There were four of us who didn't have anything to pack, so we all started to leave. By now the cop is walking on the outside of the gazebo. All of a sudden he tells this one guy to give him his name. The cop was very rude. Then he said "I want every ones name. One of my friends was able to go ahead and leave. The next thing we know there are 6 more police cars and one motorcycle cop. They showed up one at a time. Everyone of them went over to the first guy that the cop had ask for his name. This guy never raised his voice and never spoke out of line. They had him standing in front of the first officer's car. Each cop had to get involved with this guy. He was doing what the officer told him and the rest of us to do. They searched his backpack and person, and talked to him like he was a harden criminal.

The officers took turns coming into the gazebo. They began to tell us that we were living in the gazebo as some people had their stuff there so someone could watch it while they went to the welfare office. That is what we homeless do for each other. We help out when we can. These cops were rude. They told this one elderly lady, "get your stuff and leave the park." he told her to go stand on the sidewalk and wait for a ride. One of my friends was real sick, but that didn't matter to them. They told him, "get your stuff and get out of the park. I got a ticket for a warrant I don't even have. So that ticket I'm going to fight. I urged all the other people who received a ticket that time to file a complaint on those officer for conduct unbecoming of a police officer.

I was told the next day that the police came to the gazebo later that same day and were very rude. They took one guy to jail and released him at 8 AM in the morning. The police were talking down to them, treating them as if they were the whole reason for the homeless situation. I urged them to file a complaint as well.

I am going to say this again, we all have to stand up for our rights. The police are not going to do it. They stomp on us on a daily basis.

Thank you. Gena



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: RECORDING INJUSTICE

Under Federal Law:

1. You have the right to film and photograph police activity in public places.
2. Video recording is fully protected. Some state laws prohibit audio recordings without consent; however, in nearly all cases audio recording the police in public places is legal.
3. If you are detained, politely ask what crime you are suspected of committing, and remind the officer that recording video is your right under the First Amendment and does not constitute reasonable suspicion of criminal activity.
4. Police officers may not confiscate or view your digital photographs or videos without a warrant and may not delete your material under any circumstances.

The above information was provided by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

FOR MORE ON DEFENDING YOUR RIGHTS, VISIT
ACLU.ORG/KYR

Liz Freitas

CoC CHAOS

The Merced City and County Continuum of Care (CoC) "serves as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) primary decision making group, whose primary purpose and scope is to implement the Continuum of Care programs which are authorized by subtitle C of Title IV of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act." "The program is designed to promote community wide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness." There are several other designations, but primarily the CoC is task with ending homelessness in our county, and oversees those homeless programs they've funded.

The organization responsible for the CoC is the Collaborative Applicant. The United Way is the current Collaborative Applicant; however, the United Way has opted out. The CoC is looking for a new Collaborative Applicant. They need to have a new Collaborative Applicant by June 30, 2018 when the United Way ends their involvement.

There have been many changes and issues with the CoC during the past year. Some of us had issue with the Chair, Steve Carrigan, and what we perceived as a conflict of interest with his comments at a City Council meeting regarding the Esperanza project. His actions as the City Manager of Merced have not been helpful or humane to the homeless in our community. While it maybe his duty as the City Manager to take away the tables and benches in Applegate Park, it is perceived by the homeless and homeless advocates as mean spirited and, one would think, not in the spirit of one chairing a homeless CoC.

The latest CoC chaos deals with several issues that came up at the last CoC Board meeting in January. The CoC needed to fill one vacancy. Notices went out to a list of individuals asking for those who were interested in filling the vacancy to submit an application. Lo and behold there were ten applicants that applied for the one vacancy. However, this one seemingly benign agenda item turned into an extremely interesting episode. Apparently before the Board meeting to vote for a replacement, some Board members were called by Assemblyman Adam Gray to meet with him. These would be individual meetings with him. I'm not sure how many ended up meeting with him, but he was "requesting" that they vote for all ten applicants to become Board members thus increasing the number on

the size of the Board isn't a good or bad idea, however, you want the Board. So filling one vacancy became a push to add an additional ten people to the Board. One wonders if the Board members felt intimidated by Assemblyman Gray's actions.

My question is why is Assemblyman Gray inserting himself into the CoCs operation? There is no State money involved in the CoC, so one has to ask, "what dog does he have in this fight?" It seems inappropriate that he would use his office and position to initiate individual meetings with Board members to push his agenda to have all 10 applicants accepted as Board members, thus increasing the Board. It is well known that Assemblyman Gray has no confidence in the Board and gave the 2.5 million State dollars for a navigation center to the County to administer. Again, one has to ask, who gave him the task to intervene and "fix" the CoC? You'd think that he would have his hands full working on State issues and problems. The current CoC Board was not comfortable with just voting all applicants onto the Board. They felt they didn't really know all of the applicants and wanted to meet with them all and to ascertain whether or not they were invested in the goal of the CoC to end homelessness in our county. The Chair had the action on increasing the Board and voting them all onto the Board tabled for another meeting. Assemblyman Gray and his staff were at the Board meeting and it appeared by some who attended the meeting he was not happy with the action by the Chair. There was something said about or to the Chair by Assemblyman Gray that may have been intimidating. I don't have any concrete information about what was or not said about or to Carrigan, however, one has to ask whether or not there was something said as all of a sudden Carrigan resigned from the CoC Board.

There are several things that a Board member would like to see changed in the CoC Governance Charter. Apparently a Task Force has been formed to take up these issues. I am told that some of the issues are, increasing the size of the Board, allowing proxy votes, and allowing members sitting on the CoC Board to submit RFPs for funding from the CoC. I think proxy votes for a local board is not a good idea, it sets up power plays and lots of political maneuvering. There is enough of that already without allowing proxy votes. People on local boards need to have enough invested in the mandates of the board to be at meetings.

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Increasing the size of the Board isn't a good or bad idea, however, you want to have members of the board meet with applicants to ascertain why they want to be on the board and are they committed to deal with the issues of homelessness and housing the homeless.

I think that allowing members of the COC Board to submit RFPs for funding is a bad idea. It gives anyone on the board a leg up because of their relationships on the board, knowing the requirements probably a little better than a non-board member, and being able to read the other RFPs and being privy to their information. There is no way for a decision to fund a board member RFP without it being perceived by the community as being a conflict of interest. It's better to have any board member who wants to be funded by the COC, to be a member of the general COC committee, but not a member of the CoC Board.

It appears that the COC is facing multiple challenges along with petty power and political stressors. However, I am hopeful that with the present Chair and Board members that the challenges will be met and handled ethically and honestly and decisions will be made that provide housing for the homeless and not egos.

By Liz Freitas 3-3-18



MERCED COUNTY RESCUE MISSION
HOPE MEDICAL RESPITE CARE

I recently sat down with Jason West who oversees the medical respite care program within the Merced County Rescue Mission. Jason recently completed his Master's in Public Health.

The Respite Care Program has been operating for three years. The Mercy Hospital Foundation provides the funding for the program.

The program is designed to provide respite care to individuals who are homeless and are in need for additional medical care. The participants no longer

need acute medical care but need additional care in order to learn how to care for themselves.

All of their participants come from either Mercy's emergency room or the hospital's inpatient departments. Most of the homeless individual's in the program have complex medical and social issues. The program's underlying philosophical premise is that of harm reduction, non-judgmental and participant centered, very much like the Housing First philosophy.

The program is staffed by two (2) resident assistance, who staff the house 24/7. There is a development coordinator and a peer navigator. The development coordinator is the initial contact person with the hospital and the discharge social workers. They work with the participant to develop goals that get written up in a health action plan.

The peer coordinator works with the participant to provide the needed social and physical support, such as providing transportation to various appointments and working with them to get what they need to become self sufficient. All staff are trained in first aid. Three of the staff member have gone through a program provided by Texas A&M University and have obtained certification as Community Health Workers (CHW).

Dinners for the most part is provided by the woman's or men's Rescue Mission's programs. Participants are responsible for their own medications.

For the most part, a nurse visits the participants once a week. The professional staff includes RNs, LCSWs and BSN students. The program utilizes students from California State University, Stanislaus, nursing program. These students work under supervision and provide additional care to participants.

The nursing staff works to teach participants how to care for themselves. It may be showing them how to clean their wound and then monitoring the participants ability to do the work on their own or teaching them how to use pill boxes and other self care techniques. The program also utilizes Golden Valley Health Centers and the Family Practice Center and other outpatient resources.

Liz Freitas 2-28-18

MERCED COUNTY
2018 HOMELESS COUNT

The Merced County 2018 Homeless Count was completed on January 25, 2018. There was an increase in homelessness from 454 in 2017 to 514 in 2018. According to this count the number of homeless individuals in Merced County increased by 60 individuals.

The number of **unsheltered individuals** increased from 298 in 2017 to **312 this year**. The **sheltered individuals** increased from 156 in 2017 to **202 this year**.

The numbers throughout the county are as follows:

Town	2018	Number of Homeless
Atwater		108
Cressey		0
Delhi		1
Dos Palos		11
El Nido		0
Gustine		0
Hilmar		0
LeGrande		0
Livingston		4
Los Banos		57
Merced		310
Planada		0
Santa Nella		3
Snelling		0
So. Dos Palos		0
Winton		21
Total:		514

Of the 312 persons counted as unsheltered, 306 Adults and 6 children were unsheltered.

The gender of the 306 unsheltered adults was:

Male	231
Female	68
No Answer Recorded	7
Total	306

Unsheltered Adult by Race:

African American or Black	25
American Indian or Alaska Native	2
Asian	2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0
White	171
Multiple Races or Other	26
Did not Know or No Response Recorded	80
Total	306

Total Unsheltered Adults 306

Chronically Homeless Families	0
Chronically Homeless Persons	130
Persons with Chronic Health Conditions	115
Persons with Developmental Disabilities	43
Persons with HIV/AIDS	14
Persons with Serious Mental Health Problems	76
Persons with Physical Disabilities	94
Substance Users (on-going problem)	47
Victims of Domestic Violence	90

Some individuals had one or more of the above listed issues.

There were 21 youth between the ages of 18 to 24 reported and 10 veterans. In addition, there were 11 individuals that were 62 years of age and older.

The report contains lots of information and prioritized recommendations were made.

We will continue to provide the information in this report in our next newsletter.

CURRENT PLACES THAT ARE SERVING FOOD

SUNDAYS:

Breakfast: 8 AM at Bethel Church 810 "T" Street Merced, Ca.

Lunch: 1 PM Applegate Park - Servants Heart Every other Sunday. Another group, Freedom in Christ serves the other two Sundays

2 PM Stephen Leonard Park 640 "T" Street Burritos or Hot Dogs

WEDNESDAY: Dinner: Between 4-6 PM Applegate Park Merced Free Hot Soup You can find them on Facebook

FRIDAY: Dinner: Between 5 - 7 PM Applegate Park House of Prayer

TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY: Breakfast 7-8:30 AM Salvation Army 1440 W. 12th St. Merced

If anyone knows of other places serving meals, please let us know. Thank You.

CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS, CITY OF MERCED

The Merced City Council meets every first and third Monday of each month. The meeting starts at 6 PM.

Journey for Justice Newsletter Committee
Gloria Sandoval - 209-631-9696
Gena Mercer - Contact at Applegate Park
Liz Freitas - 209-769-6413

**WE WELCOME ARTICLES FROM THE HOMELESS COMMUNITY
CONTACT GLORIA, GENA OR LIZ (as above)
OR RENEE AT THE "D' STREET SHELTER
TO SUBMIT AN ARTICLE**

Organizations that work with the homeless and would like to submit information that benefits the homeless,
Please contact, Gena, Gloria or Liz for consideration.

**IF YOU FIND ANY INFORMATION IN THIS NEWSLETTER THAT YOU
FEEL IS IN ERROR - PLEASE CONTACT US SO CORRECTIONS CAN BE MADE
Please read and pass it on! Thank You.**