

Memorandum from



The newsletter of Friends of Prado Day Center
P.O. Box 12444
San Luis Obispo, CA 93406
www.pradodaycenter.org/donate.html

Volume VI, Number 2, Spring 2015

A Successful 2015 Culinary Carnival!

The 7th Annual Culinary Carnival on February 12 was a huge success, thanks in great part to all the wonderful volunteers who helped organize the event. Over 400 guests ate, drank, and made merry, helping us raise funds for the operation of Prado Day Center in this, our one big fundraiser of the year (see photos below). Many thanks to all who contributed to this great event, especially our generous sponsors:

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Cary Geihs & Alan Raul	Carol & Jay Devore
Roy & Linda Rawlings	Joan Gellert Sargen
Lois & Chuck Crotser	Central Coast Printing
Mary Matakovich & Pete Kelley	

Who Are the Homeless?

Friends of Prado board members are often asked about the homeless people we serve at Prado Day Center. Are they the same transients they see on the street corners downtown? Are they the troublemakers they read about in the Tribune? The easy answer is “No”. Money we receive from our donors goes to the operation of Prado Day Center, and for the most part, the people who panhandle downtown and cause problems with violent outbursts are not interested in getting help with their addictions or mental health problems. We would like to be able to help them, but you can’t help people who don’t want to be helped.

The more complete answer is more difficult. People who have fallen on hard times – whether through financial distress, mental illness, substance abuse, or a combination – are always welcome at Prado Day Center. Prado is a “safe and sober” environment, and if people show up under the influence, or become disruptive, they are asked to leave. However, in all but the worst cases, they are welcome to come back, as long as they are willing to keep trying to overcome their obstacles and work on a path toward sobriety and self-sufficiency. (See “Success Story” #2 below.)

The People’s Kitchen serves lunch at Prado to all who are hungry – no questions asked. People who

have been disruptive may be given their meal outside the gates of Prado, but no one is turned away hungry. This is important to keep in mind when you see panhandlers downtown with signs that say they are hungry. No one needs to go hungry in San Luis Obispo!

So why don’t the panhandlers come to Prado for a meal and some help with social services and housing? Some are just too mentally ill to follow up with any course of action. Some would prefer to beg for money and stay addicted to drugs. (A heroin addiction can cost as little as \$50 a day.) Well-meaning citizens who give money to this latter group just further enable their addictions. The SLO Police Department works tirelessly to engage the trouble makers, and has had success redirecting some of them into appropriate social services. But this is a complicated problem that will require ongoing attention and effort.

Thank You’s!

Thanks to the Cal Poly students and instructors who hosted “Doggy Days at Prado” in February. They provided vaccinations, grooming, and goodies to our Prado pets. This annual program continues to be a very popular and valuable service to our clients with pets and service animals.

Thanks also to St. Vincent de Paul, who for 17 years have helped our clients obtain and pay for State Identification cards. Having a valid photo ID is crucial in securing employment, social services, education, and housing. Due to the transient lifestyle of our clients, IDs are often lost or stolen, hindering progress toward self-sufficiency. In the past year, St. Vincent has been coming to Prado on a weekly basis, making it easy for clients to get the help they need.

Success Stories

#1: In an earlier newsletter, we told you about a young man who was working hard to improve himself, both personally and professionally. We are happy to report that he has completed over 100 units at Cuesta College and will soon receive an Associates degree in General Contracting. He has been hired as a

maintenance man for an apartment complex and is delighted to apply what he has learned at Cuesta to his job.

#2: A woman who had been battling addiction all her adult life came into homeless services. She attends AA and NA meetings to try to stay sober, though she has slipped a few times. She recently received help from family out of state. She has a home and a job waiting for her as long as she strives to live a clean and sober life. Before leaving she gave us this letter:

I was one of many who came to the doors of the Day Center. I was a step away from death – scared, alone, dirty and lost. Most of all my soul was abused and broken. Today I leave the Center smiling and I love myself. I can say I am pretty inside and out, thanks to Prado’s workers. I got a job, a home, and to

anyone who reads this -- let these people help you-- you won't regret their love. I am an addict. I now am Clean! Prado, you saved me from death. Thank you, I am forever grateful. UR client and friend.

Donations / Volunteer Opportunities

For more information about Prado Day Center, visit www.pradodaycenter.org. To make donations, go to www.pradodaycenter.org/donate.html. If you would like to volunteer, either at the Center or on a committee with the Friends of Prado Day Center, please call (805) 786-0617.

Since 1997, **Prado Day Center** has provided essential day-to-day services for homeless and working poor members of our community. The Center provides food, showers, phone message service, and many other services. **Friends of Prado Day Center** provides support funding for Prado Day Center. **CAPSLO** (formerly EOC) manages the day-to-day operation of Prado Day Center. **The People's Kitchen** coordinates hot lunches served daily at the Center by organizations throughout the county.



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The Crustacea Jazz Band leads the line dance.



The Embassy Suites Ballroom was aglow with Mardi Gras decorations.



The wine table was a very popular attraction.