

The Minor Prophet

The Almighty is Pretty Efficient

RJ Serra, Board Member

I became involved with Micah's Way because I think it is important to help others when you can. This is certainly one of the important messages and missions that Jesus preached about. Over my lifetime I have found that the Almighty is pretty efficient in providing each of us many opportunities to step up and make a difference. At Micah's Way I have found an organization that positions itself in a unique place to help with problems that are often not addressed in the programs offered by the larger charities. The problems that afflict and debilitate homeless and impoverished people are of many different stripes, and you might think some of them are very unusual. So, the response of Micah's Way is unusual too.

There are large organizations out there that provide food, clothing and shelter, but often a motivated family or individual need something more to be able to care of themselves. What for most of us is no big

deal can be an insurmountable obstacle for some people. For example, without a street address, how is a homeless person to receive his or her identification papers, school transcripts – or indeed, get a halfway decent job? That same person may need coaching in writing a resume (or even convincing that they could have one!) and a simple bus pass to get to an interview. Someone may need help in registering his or her children at school. Once the kids are in school they can begin to think of going to work or finding proper housing or a dozen other things that have kept them out of the mainstream.

There is an array of varied tasks that need to be done at Micah's Way. Because it is a small organization, all the volunteers wear several different hats to keep the work successful. Volunteers do not get bored by doing the same old thing over and over. And, as with all small establishments, there are plenty of opportunities for the individual to take on responsibility and to gain satisfaction in the results of his or her efforts.



Now we are Ten !

MiChristmas Program volunteers, Ashley and Megan Baldwin bring out the Micah's Way birthday cake at a celebration in St. Nicholas Parish. The cake was perfectly decorated by Sharon Corradino (with the new skinny-pad logo) and the insides was enamel-destroying red-velvet chocolate. Len Galasso's All-Virtuoso Benefit Band, Los Canyoneros, did the jazz. Lesty Hernandez did the foxtrot. Fr. Delahunty won a bottle of vintage cabernet. Nancy, Debbie, Araceli and Erinn ornamented the proceedings both literally and figuratively.

Caught you smiling!



Sue

Randy

Stacy
Phil
Massimo

Jean
Donna



Debbie

Lori

Glauce



Lesty

So... Here We Are

Dominick Corradino, Board President



As we celebrate our ten-year anniversary, there is much to think about. When we started we dreamed of a full-service resource center that would help families improve their quality of life by helping them secure what was needed for them to become financially stable and to move up the social ladder. My career as a high school teacher and coach convinced me of the value of education in achieving this. We dreamed of the resource center being used for intensive tutoring of adults and children. We also dreamed that we would be able to help impoverished people secure work, housing and health care – all the components of a civilized and vigorous society. We have done all of these things, but not nearly enough!

If you had asked me in 2004, I would have told you that in less than ten years we would have realized these dreams completely. I had much to learn. Those

problems that seemed to me so easy to solve turned out to be far more complex than I imagined. At first, people who could use our help did not flock to our doors; it takes a while to build up trust and credibility. Corporations and foundations decided we were too small an outfit, and they would get a bigger bang for their buck with the name-brand nonprofits. In the absence of a facility that could cater for children, the tutoring was sporadic. We learned that impoverished adults who were seriously trying to get out of a hole were too stressed and pressed for time to take on one more thing. And so on and on...

So, here we are, celebrating what we have accomplished. And when I think about it, I'm in wonder. Micah's Way has a cadre of loyal and talented supporters. We have taught ourselves to negotiate the red-tape and myriad games that the bureaucracies can play when dealing with those they deem unworthy. We have committed ourselves to working as diligently as our clientele, and as a group live in the same way: day-to-day and month-by-month. We joke that if we cannot make next month's rent then we will go back to working out of our cars – which is where we started, so not much of a joke.

Micah's Way has much to be thankful for. Ten years have flown by and our zest for what we do urges us on. I believe we serve a caring and loving God who guides us day-to-day, month-to-month and year-to-year. And that fills me with confidence that all things will be done. Miracles are possible.

Thank you, to all who make our work prosper through your prayers and donations. Micah's Way is in your debt!

At the December 2014 Board Meeting, the directors added to their number. The roster now reads:

Dominick Corradino	President
Mike Baldwin	Vice President
Nancy Bigda	Secretary
Randy McMahon	Treasurer
Araceli Garcia	Member
George Bassett	Member
RJ Serra	Member
Brad Karelius	Member

A Hole in the Wall

Denis Clarke, Director Micah Center



People often tell me that I talk funny. While this is certainly not the case, I do admit to a long-standing fear of drive-through eating establishments. Since 1982, when I arrived at these shores, I have never been able to make myself understood at the intercom and I end up with an enchilada instead of a coffee. My children used to laugh themselves silly.

Quite apart from our street and jail outreach, at the Resource Center in Santa Ana we are now working with fourteen people a day. This means we get well over three thousand visits a year. A hundred people use our mailing address, another hundred get temporary help with food, another hundred are served in the MiChristmas Program. People come looking for shoes, computer time, housing help, veterans' services, ID vouchers (240 so far this year), prescription vouchers, legal help, a bicycle pump, advice on schools, greyhound routes, theological issues, mental health problems, immigration difficulties, workers' compensation, birth certificates, resumes, letters to judges, letters to the gas company, letters to loved ones. We make sure people get to the psychiatrist or the Hall of Records or the sober-living house or the place that styles hair for the big interview; and we take referrals from the Rescue Mission, the Probation Department, the Health Department, the Methodists around the corner. At the Resource Center you can get all sorts of useful help with a certain measure of kindness and justice and humor, and your self-respect is not stripped from you.

All of which is marvelous, of course, and thank you for what you have done to make it happen.

We have 800 square feet in which to do the work. I'm not complaining, but it is getting a bit ridiculous. Efficiency is the key. Then again, it's not. The food donations go quickly to the right people (thank you Richard and Luz and Tacho!) The clothing donations go quickly to the right people (thank you Mary B. and Araceli!) Grants are written on half of a thirty-inch desk (thank you Sina, thank you George!) Pete has an infinite, if unheralded, capacity for finding spots for tube socks, copier paper, incoming Obama-phones, extra cases of refried beans (he sits and thinks it through during down-time). We encourage people to make and keep appointments to mitigate sofa-jams. Often they do. We're maxed-out on efficiency.

Take Monday morning. The outreach is done, the mail picked up, the donations from Starbucks and Chipotle sorted. The phone is ringing merrily. Two people come for ID vouchers; they've been referred by Saddleback Church – no appointment, but no matter. The lady who has the appointment at 10:15 apologizes because she's early. She has her children with her who dodge the woman wheeling-in the bike who is just picking up boyfriend's mail and can she have a look in the clothing-room? Yes and yes, all's well. The health-worker appears for his coffee and says that there are a couple of church people out back with a truckful of jackets to donate. At this point one of the men waiting for his ID moves to the right four inches and his backpack catches the health-worker's coffee which cascades over the kid's carefully-colored picture of Spiderman and all down the new sofa (easily-cleaned, thanks RJ!) We just thank the Lord that the man who wants to talk about truck-driving certification has the good sense to be a bit late for his appointment. Any screenwriter out there short of an idea for a sitcom-reality-show? Hill Street Blues meets Happy Days?

What both astonishes and annoys me is that the poorer you are, the less likely you are to complain about this kind of nonsense. It is standard procedure where you live. You have never had adequate space and peace. You never get a vacation from the jostling: on the bus, in school, in a line for this or that. If you are living in zip code 92701 it is quite

possible that you share your two-bed apartment with ten people or your garage-home with another family. If you are poorer yet, the Santa Ana PD allows a generous cubic yard for all your belongings (you have to be able to carry them). Now, whether or not a certain amount of space and peace is deserved, or a right, or a luxury, you will agree that you do better with them. And space and peace won't harm your self-respect either.

So, what's to be done? More efficiency, naturally. We could knock a hole in the east wall by the reception desk and install a drive-up window. Imagine the numbers of ID vouchers and adult diapers we could distribute! It could be fun. Roll over Taco Bell. Think of all the time we'd save by not having to hold conversations with people. (I wouldn't have to say a thing myself because who would understand me?) It wouldn't be but a step

from there to installing a New York-style Automat for dispensing skin lotion and T-shirts and birth-certificate checks. The advantages! No children to deal with. No people wandering in for kindness and coffee. None of your halt and lame.

On the other hand, perhaps not. But we do need more space.

There are several criteria for someplace suitable: on a main bus route, tractable neighbors, reasonable rent, access to other agencies, and so on. Earlier this year the Board looked around and found some promising sites. We figured we would need \$18000 in addition to our regular annual budget to make the move without falling apart. Of this, we have \$6000 already, so I think it can be done in 2015. We're doing something wrong if it can't.

**Help the Resource Center get into
a bigger space in 2015.
We need an extra \$12000.
Designate your prayers and ideas
and funds.
And, as ever, thank you!**

Why I Do What I Do

Araceli Garcia, Board Member and Wardrobe Mistress at the Resource Center

Well, my answer is very simple: What reason do I have not to do what I do? Due to my financial situation I am unable to write a check to organizations that contribute special meaning to my life. I therefore share my time. As a result I am rewarded with joy.

For the last few months I have volunteered at Micah's Way. It has confirmed for me that the resources and help are available for all in need.

History! Here are some paragraphs from the archives of *The Minor Prophet*.

Why is Micah's Way called 'Micah's Way?'
Dominick Corradino , 2006

Micah spoke against both Jerusalem and Samaria. He prayed that the nation of Israel would be restored and called the people to simply trust God's pardoning mercy. But he wasn't only a prophet of condemnation. His instructions to the people were simple, "You have been told... what is good and what God requires of you: only to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your Lord." (Micah 6:8).

Listening to this teaching in a world as disjointed and chaotic as the People of God found on their return from Babylon we can assist in the creation of the Kingdom for which Jesus taught us to pray. We inspire each other to do this work. Our combined efforts amount to far more than our individual efforts. As it says in the Koran, "There are important cases in which the difference between half a heart and a whole heart makes just the difference between signal defeat and a splendid victory,"

House Notes

Sarah Seidel, 2007

February marked the one-year anniversary of Micah House. It passed quietly, a few moments over the week, as we were sitting in the pause of a conversation and someone said. "Can you believe it's been a *year*?" The house community members are still gathering to cook and share dinner at least two nights a week, though with differing job hours and more work with the resource center, we find ourselves eating on the run. Denis is known to cut a slice of apple pie for his dinner.

A garden revamp occurred in November with soil reclamation, weeding and organic bug-killing. We have too many radishes, Indian mustard, turnips and bib lettuce. There is a fully-stocked herb garden, and in the summer there'll be tomatoes, carrots, beets and peas. We have been able to share the spring harvest with our neighbors.

Dumpster to Desktop

Sarah Seidel and John Thompson, Easter, 2008

Sarah: What's the current status of the program?

John: We've got one system hooked up to the internet and ready to go. With the money from the recycling of the cans and stuff, I bought Encyclopedia Britannica software, a kindergarten-readiness program, a Spanish-language CD set, and a wireless adapter to hook up with the Micah House system. And we've given two computers to families moving in to their apartments.

Sarah: So when is the best time to dive?

John: After an eviction. The dumpsters are full of stuff: small appliances, knick-knacks, complete computer systems. Just tossed when the people leave.

Sarah: All those resources gone to waste.

John: Yeah. The program is about trying to use what other people have discarded.

Sarah: I really like this idea because recycling is not only a way to recover resources or to make money, but we're doing something good for the environment too.

John: Yeah, that's a good side-effect of the whole thing.

What's Happening

Dominick Corradino, Fall, 2008

... Things grow and change. So it is with Micah's Way. In October the house on 15th Street was closed and we have moved to a new, temporary location in an office suite. This will change the way we do business in some ways. We will no longer offer showers or laundry, but we will continue to do limited clothing and food distribution. The new location will mean that we begin to focus more on resource development. Our hope is that we can finally begin to tutor students and to network facilities with other organizations and begin to direct people to those services that will serve them best. Micafé, will continue and so will the street meal. We continue to explore new locations for a permanent resource center...

Practical and Intricate Problems

Saarah Kuzay, Fall, 2009

How could I be of any help if I had never met those in need? It was this thought that led me to the shelters in Santa Ana, Orange County's homeless capital.

Life on the streets is not just survival – it is a lifestyle in itself that can hinder people from trying to escape it. It is not about 'laziness' nor is it a simple sum of 'bad choices,' as it is often dismissively characterized. I could no longer look away: the impressions were carved too deep to be removed.

For the next three years I worked with Santa Ana's homeless people every week. From cooking the large meals for three-hundred, signing up people for healthcare, collecting and distributing the hygiene products and mail, I came to know the many practical and intricate problems that the homeless face every day. I also made a point of talking with people on a social level and remembering their names and histories. It's a straightforward gesture that isn't very difficult, but most volunteers are initially afraid. Yet, if everyone surrenders to this fear, we will continue treating the homeless as if they were invisible.

Food

Denis Clarke, Easter, 2011

I am talking with our local ex-heroin dealer who came to pick up his mail. He has completed a long prison term and he is waiting for his girlfriend to get out too so that they can settle down, maybe start a family. Though he is educated and healthy there is not much that he can do to get ahead at present. Parole keeps him from taking up a job in

Idaho (great hiring letter) and work here is not happening. He can't even feed himself. Dodgy situation –enough to make you start up in the heroin trade again, especially when a former associate keeps calling from Coto de Caza.

The ex-dealer had been an industrial chemist in the San Joaquin Valley: celery, kale, nasturtiums, you name it. He is musing about the absurdity of the empty lots all over town and the adjacent apartment buildings packed with farming families from Mexico and Central America. He talks about the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent by landowners on weed-abatement and chain link fencing. He knows all about the urban farms in New York, the allotment system in the UK, and how overpopulated Holland is a major food exporter. What we need is a plan.

We pause to help a lady who has come for her food box. You may know that Micah Center has become a distribution point for a great deal of food donated by the Sai Baba Foundation, two food banks, Mimi's Café, Starbucks, and many kind individuals. The free food is a way for dozens of families to stretch their incomes and it works: as many families drop out of the program (because they have stabilized) as are added.

We may not have a plan, but we do have a miracle. Despite the injustice of a rich society that does not allow people enough to eat, despite the waste that is fundamental to our economy, one way or another there are a great many people getting fed who would otherwise go hungry, *because there are plenty of kind people around.* What Micah's Way does to feed people is a drop in the bucket and of course we will do more and better, but the big point is that we are able, through the kindness of many, to live in the middle of a miracle.

Micah's Way
P.O. Box 1631
Santa Ana CA 92702

At the Resource Center we can always use:

- men's clothing
- clean blankets
- store gift cards
- #5 & #6 diapers
- forever postage stamps
- deodorant
- toothpaste
- socks
- backpacks
- day bus-passes
- compassion

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www.micahsway.org

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ACT JUSTLY, LOVE KINDLY, WALK HUMBLY WITH YOUR GOD

ANOTHER SPECIAL THANK YOU TO
MICHELLE GUARJADO AND CHAD DONATH OF WAL-MART CORPORATION
AND MARK LOWRY OF O.C. FOODBANK
FOR AGAIN MAKING CHRISTMAS HAPPEN FOR 35 FAMILIES THIS YEAR!