

House of Hope

HAPPENINGS



Spring 2007

Volunteers Provide Vital Services



Bobbi Tschirgi,
Executive Director

Welcome to our Spring 2007 edition of *Happenings*.

In this edition we used a photo layout to highlight the work of our volunteers, without whom there would not be a House of Hope program as it now exists. These selfless friends devote countless hours in service to our women in recovery. Thank goodness, we don't have to budget the cost of each hour of service that our volunteers give us through the kindness of their collective hearts.

Our Program Staff, and especially our clients, rely on our volunteers showing up like clockwork at their appointed hours. The years have proven the outstanding reliability of this group of individuals. Some facilitate hour-and-a-half group sessions, often once or twice a week, and many have done so for several years. Others drive women to medical appointments and court appearances, help with maintenance tasks around the House, work at Palos Verdes Resale Thrift Shop on behalf of House of Hope (see article in the Winter 2006 edition of *Happenings*), or help us stage fundraising events. Our alumnae must also be mentioned here. The gratitude our women show at graduation stays with them as they make the transition to work or school. They spend hours of their personal time and resources giving support to the new clients, just as other alumnae did for them. Several of our staff members were hired after demonstrating their gratitude, loyalty and work ethic in volunteer activities on behalf of our clients.

Another article tells the story of Las Esperanzas. Over the years these women have partnered with House of Hope, giving their time and money to help our women. This group has experienced a heartening resurgence in the past couple of years and we are continually grateful for their support and loyalty.

Volunteers do what they do, not for recognition or applause, but for the sheer pleasure of giving back to our clients what life has given to them. We see the reward at graduation, when tears of joy flow from this group as they watch "their" women accept certificates of completion as changed, clean and sober, dignified women.

With Springtime comes a spirit of rebirth and renewal. It's a spirit that encourages us to redouble our efforts on behalf of women who come to the House of Hope in desperate need to recover from the ravages of alcoholism and drug addiction.

Rejuvenated Las Esperanzas a Positive Force

From the early days of House of Hope, Las Esperanzas—"The Hopeful Ones"—have played a vital role in its history. For over 40 years, this group of women has come together with a common purpose—to ensure that House of Hope continues to thrive. Although today they remain a major donor of operating funds, their support for the women of House of Hope extends far beyond direct financial aid.

From their earliest days in Long Beach, members gathered at different homes each month to share dinner and plan events to support House of Hope. The enthusiasm of the original Hopeful Ones was contagious and new friends showed an interest in the work. As more women were invited to these monthly dinners, new members were recruited and the group grew. Members were



Executive Director Bobbi Tschirgi and Board President Phil Belleville celebrate with clients at Las Esperanzas Christmas Party.

encouraged to come to the House, meet the women, and see the recovery in process. First-hand experience at House of Hope fueled the group's work, just as it does today.

House of Hope moved several times around Long Beach in its first fifteen years. It became apparent that a permanent home was needed and Las Esperanzas sprung into action. The current house at 235 W. 9th Street in San Pedro was found in 1971, but there was no money to buy it. A member of Las Esperanzas convinced the owner to hold it in escrow for a year, while funds were raised. Virtually every kind of fundraising event imaginable ensued: parties, luncheons, casino nights and bingo, ice cream socials, teas, and auctions. At one event picnic baskets were auctioned off to men, along with the company of the women who

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The Gift of Desperation

A message from the Program Director



The facts are these. Not every woman who asks to come to House of Hope gets to come here. And not every woman who comes to House of Hope gets to stay here.

My staff and I hate to turn anyone away, but many times the demand for beds exceeds our ability to meet that demand. So we are obligated to screen potential clients and try to ascertain their motivation to get clean and sober, and their willingness to work to stay that way. Women desperate to change their lives and willing to do anything to experience that change invariably find a home at House of Hope. Those who want to “get the heat off” or escape responsibility for their actions are not ready for what we have to offer.

The women we admit to House of Hope cannot afford complacency. They are challenged to remember how it felt on their first day sober and to get into action. As a wise person once observed, “Sobriety is not a spectator sport.” Clients who fool themselves into believing that physical sobriety alone will fix the problem have a tough time completing our six-month residential program.

I feel privileged to serve as Program Director for House of Hope. The road that led me from a woman begging for admission to House of Hope to where I sit today is filled with miracles. And the House I serve today is paved with miracles—women who are not afraid to change and grow in sobriety. In the process of recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction, desperation is a precious gift.

*— Myrra Alo,
Program Director*

House of Hope

Las Esperanzas

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put the baskets together. Within a year the money was raised and the house was purchased.

Other fundraising activities followed. With space donated by a local businessman, Las Esperanzas members opened a Thrift Shop in San Pedro that operated successfully for a number of years. Silent movies were a popular event in years past, screened in a theatre in Redondo Beach while a volunteer musician accompanied the film on the piano. Las Esperanzas was the principal source of support for House of Hope in the years before grants and service contracts helped to stabilize the foundation’s financial position. Pressure to raise funds became so intense that the prospect of “burn-out” jeopardized the group’s existence.

Today, a rejuvenated Las Esperanzas remains a vital source of support for House of Hope. Proceeds from their bingo nights, 12-month raffles, fashion shows and teas allow them to still provide over ten percent of the operating income that House of Hope derives from private donations.



Martha and members of Las Esperanzas lead carolers at the 2006 Christmas Party.

But Las Esperanzas is about more than just fundraising. Members attend weekly meetings with the women. They stage special events, like the annual Christmas party and caroling, that mark high points in the lives of those in the program. The members of Las Esperanzas feel close to the House and get to see first-hand how their efforts improve the lives of the women. Staying involved with the House is a key. Once members come to the House they see how appreciative the women are for what is being done for them. They see how excited the women are about being at House of Hope and changing their lives.

Today, the traditional Las Esperanzas dinner meetings continue and the second Thursday of each month has become an enjoyable social occasion. Some members look on their work as a chance to give back something for the gift of sobriety. Others appreciate the need that newly recovering women have for support through the experiences of family and friends. Regardless of their reasons for joining the House of Hope family, the members of Las Esperanzas share the bond of love and service to the women.

For more information about Las Esperanzas, please call Maricela at House of Hope, (310) 521-9209.

Recovery Transforms Desperate Woman

Each edition of *Happenings*, features one or more House of Hope graduates. Kimie is just one of hundreds of women who have recovered from alcoholism and drug addiction.

Life has not been easy for Kimie—at least until now. Battling demons that often haunted her in the past, she lived with a chronic alcohol and drug problem for over 30 years. Kimie’s long, lonely bout with her addictions came to an end when she entered

Unable to deal with the family chaos, Kimie left home when she was 12 . . .

House of Hope’s Primary Program. Seventeen months later her life has been transformed.

“House of Hope loved me back together again,” Kimie says appreciatively. “The staff has helped me to become a person again. They helped get me back into the mainstream of life.” Her statements carry great weight in light of the rocky road that led her to House of Hope.

Born to a family of alcoholics and drug addicts, her mother taught Kimie how to drink and use drugs when only eleven years old. She became a child victim of her mother’s lifestyle. She and her siblings frequently moved in and out of various schools, making it difficult for them to build any friendships. “I felt less than worthless,” says Kimie, and she sought relief in marijuana, alcohol and valium. In one of many alarming incidents, two customers from her boyfriend’s mother’s bar kidnapped her and held her against her will for over 13 hours.

Unable to deal with the family chaos, Kimie left home when still only 12 to be with her 16-year-old boyfriend. Her love/hate relationship with cocaine had begun. They lived in a park for a time, until an apartment in his grandmother’s apartment building became available. By age 15, Kimie was pregnant and in a relationship with a 20-year-old drug dealer. Trying desperately to be a good mother, she stayed clean and sober during her pregnancy.

With no program of recovery, sober life for an addict or alcoholic becomes unbearable without substances to ease the pain. Incomprehensible fear and panic gripped her entire being. She heard voices and rocked herself for comfort for months at a time. At age 17, Kimie had a psychotic breakdown. She says, “Members of a nearby church healed me of my fears.” The healing did not have the desired effect. She left the church feeling well enough to pick up the cocaine habit again. Diagnosed with a bleeding ulcer, Kimie stopped using alcohol and began using drugs exclusively.

Despite her chaotic existence, Kimie found the strength to get an education. She went back to school and earned her GED, then completed a Medical Assisting Program at a local occupational school and found employment as a medical assistant. Kimie then stole pills and injectable drugs on that job, for her own use and to sell. Then she began free-basing cocaine and lost her job. For the first time, Kimie began to see the negative effects addiction was having on her life.

Kimie’s first attempt at a detoxification program ended when she left with a heroin addict and became strung out herself. With-

drawal from heroin produces harsh symptoms and a feeling that death is imminent. Willing to do anything to avoid that feeling, Kimie embarked on a crime spree that left her with nine felony warrants for her arrest and loss of custody of her son. She fled to Oregon to avoid prosecution and spent the next year sleeping in rail cars along the Columbia River. Several more attempts to stay clean and sober ended in failure.

Frustrated and hopeless, the 1990s included several attempts at suicide through overdose of heroin and pills. After three stays in hospital intensive care and admissions to lock-down institutions, Kimie pulled it together long enough to find work as a secretary. Crack cocaine, speed and a Vicodin habit soon smashed this attempt at a productive life. The new millennium found Kimie living in a car after two more attempts at suicide. “I felt that I was in a body that wouldn’t die. I felt lost and empty. The only peace I saw was to Rest in Peace.” She lived with this sense of futility for five more years.

Kimie’s “moment of clarity” came in October, 2005. While living in a rat-infested trailer, Kimie heard her voice say, “I can’t live like this anymore.” She called her sister, who had years in a twelve-step program, and asked for help. The surrender marked the start of her journey in recovery.

Kimie entered House of Hope on November 2, 2005. She felt an immediate sense of relief and comfort. One early program requirement is to complete the first step: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and drugs; that our lives had become unmanageable.” Kimie completed her first step in front of her peers and members of the staff. She picks up the story from here. “In doing my First Step at House of Hope, I realized that I had internalized all the pain from my past experiences and, instead of lashing out at those who had harmed me, I was killing myself. I knew I was killing the wrong person. From that point on, I began learning how to love myself and take care of myself. My recovery started then.”

Kimie graduated from the six-month residential program and now has a year and five months clean and sober. She resides in one of The House’s transitional living apartments. With help from our staff and her friends and family, Kimie successfully eased her way back into the mainstream of life. An active member of a 12-step program, she works with her sponsor and is currently making amends to people she has harmed. She is a student at Harbor College, an intern in the offices of House of Hope, and a source of help and service to those around her. Kimie has rebuilt loving relationships with her son, her sister and her three young grandchildren.

Kimie’s amazing transformation demonstrates that there are miracles here. Kimie’s own words testify to the recovery that can be found at House of Hope, if a woman is desperate enough to embrace it.

“House of Hope has put me back together spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally. Financially, they have helped me out by giving me a place to practice working. If it wasn’t for House of Hope, I wouldn’t be where I am at today. Of course, I also have to stay willing to follow the rules of the House and take the steps with my sponsor.”

Master Teacher—Ultimate Volunteer

At the urging of a friend, Marjory Jensen joined House of Hope's Board of Directors over 14 years ago. Her contributions of time, wisdom and personal resources since then are beyond calculation.

When she first took her seat on the Board, House of Hope was small and multi-tasking was required. In those days, everybody was expected to perform a job at the House, in addition to their service on the Board of Directors. Everyone soon realized that Marjory, a master teacher in mathematics, was equipped to make a unique contribution to the women. Soon the Wednesday morning Life Skills class was launched and she has been at the helm for nearly a decade and a half. Marjory Jensen personifies the ultimate volunteer. Executive Director Bobbi Tschirgi says of her friend: "Marjory is an impeccable example for our clients. Words can't convey the gratitude of the Board members, Regents, staff, clients and alumnae who are the privileged recipients of Marjory's generosity to House of Hope."



Marjory Jensen fields questions in her Life Skill class.

Now retired, Marjory taught ninth-grade mathematics for over twenty years at Dodson Middle School in Rancho Palos Verdes. Her professional experience fit perfectly with one of House of Hope's principal goals: to prepare women to lead useful, independent lives. In her classes Marjory tries to give the women a full complement of math-related tools for successful living: budgeting, comparison shopping in stores and on the internet, computing interest rates and compound interest on credit cards and loans, retirement programs like IRAs and 401-K plans, taxes and more. She also encourages the women to return to school, obtain job training, and set and pursue career goals. A long-time woman in recovery herself, Marjory says, "Participating in the recovery of these women at House of Hope is the greatest joy of my life."

Marjory served on the Board of Directors for nine years, including a term as President. She even stepped in for a short time to help run House of Hope, while a new program director and executive director were being recruited. Invited to join the Board of Regents, the advisory body that protects the integrity of House of Hope's mission, she currently serves as President of that august group.

Marjory is no passive observer. She continues to take an active role in the growth and success of House of Hope. Along with teaching and serving as a Regent, Marjory agreed to become

Volunteer Coordinator for House of Hope and help prepare a Volunteer Handbook. She interviews prospective volunteers and orients them to the rules governing service at the House. Volunteers are the backbone of House of Hope's program, and no better example can be found than Marjory Jensen and her ongoing contributions.

Marjory observes, "Everyone I know who has ever worked with the women at House of Hope finds the experience to be a wonderful gift. They all fall in love with the women." And over the years the women have all fallen in love with Marjory.

House of Hope Benefits from Campaign to Elect Lily Valdez

The Honorary Mayor of San Pedro campaign, sponsored by the San Pedro Peninsula Chamber of Commerce, raises funds for local charities. Candidates choose the charities that they will support and Lily Valdez has chosen House of Hope and Beacon House. The candidate who raises the most money for their chosen charities becomes Honorary Mayor. The Chamber will receive thirty percent of the money raised by Lily Valdez's campaign and the other seventy percent will be divided equally between House of Hope Foundation and the Beacon House Association of San Pedro.

Who Is Lily?

Everybody loves Lily! A resident of San Pedro for over 50 years,



Lily has always been actively involved in her community. After raising a family of six children, this grandmother of 24 and great-grandmother of 6 became a member of the San Pedro Peninsula Chamber of Commerce. For the past nine years she has served in leadership positions on the Chamber's Auxiliary Board, including three years as President. A long-time volunteer for countless community

events, Lily also works as the Branch Manager for the Los Angeles Refinery Credit Union at ConocoPhillips.

How Can You Help Elect Lily?

Vote with your dollars between now and June 24. When you donate money to elect Lily Valdez, you give money to House of Hope. Here are ways you can help elect Lily the next Honorary Mayor of San Pedro.

- Send a check, made payable to Lily Valdez for Honorary Mayor, to Lily T. Valdez, 220 S. Alma Street, San Pedro, CA 90731
- Buy Vote Raffle Tickets from House of Hope for \$1 each.
- Participate in fundraising events that support Lily. Go to www.houseofhopesp.org and select the Honorary Mayor tab.

Call or visit House of Hope at 205 W. 9th Street, San Pedro, (310) 521-9209 to buy Vote tickets, make a donation using Visa or MasterCard, and for information on upcoming events.



An anonymous volunteer recently transformed the front yard by donating plants, paving stones and labor.

Volunteers in Service to House of Hope



Clients learn anger management from Maggie Griffin.



Bonnie Gail (far right) and Helen Gilbert (right) teach life skills every Friday morning.



Women from House of Hope wrapped gifts for the LAPD Harbor Division Holiday Gift Drive.



Jim Morrow helps clients deal with Grief and Loss and Domestic Violence.



Meg Morrow conducts Computer Lab.



Board Member Carole Mason (fifth from right), and Volunteer Jan Kern (second from right) lead the women in a weekly step study.

DATES TO REMEMBER



Saturday, March 8, 2008

Paul Williams in Concert

to benefit House of Hope

Warner Grand Theatre, San Pedro

Showtime and ticket information coming soon!

Everyone Loves a Parade!

Saturday, November 3, 2007



Susie McNary Johnson, a long-time House of Hope supporter and volunteer, has decided to use the occasion of her 60th Birthday to stage a Charity Parade. Many events are planned over the coming months, culminating in a parade and celebration at Rolling Hills Prep/Renaissance School on Saturday, November 3, 2007.

Susie has designated House of Hope as one of four nonprofit groups to receive the proceeds of Susie's Parade. Please go to www.susiesparade.com for event details and silent auction previews.

House of Hope Thanks Our Recent Donors

House of Hope's mission is to provide a clean and sober, nurturing environment for women seeking to recover from the ravages of alcoholism and drug addiction. We appreciate your year-round support.

Robert Adams, Jr.	Merle & Kathleen Countryman	Robert & Vera Kaemmerer	Robert & Celia Rothman
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Doyle Charboneau	House of Hope Alumnae	Frank & Melanie Poturica	Velma Winey
Cynthia Chew	Susan & Steven Hutchins	Red Hat Cranberry Tarts	Marilyn Wyman
Maxine Christiansen	Mary Jo Irwin	Ruth Rink	Joy Zimnavoda
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Special Thanks to These Major Donors

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Marco Geich	Koala Group	Palos Verdes Resale Thrift Shop	

**We also wish to thank the many
businesses and individuals who contributed gifts in kind.**

Listed above are donations received between November 20, 2006 and April 12, 2007.
Please call 310-521-9209 and let us know if we inadvertently omitted or misspelled your name.

Thanks to These Volunteers Who Help in Our Women's Recovery

Alumnae Group, House of Hope	Bonnie Gail	Father Jack Kearney	Jim Morrow
Carole Argo	Helen Gilbert	Jan Kern	Valerie Myers
Beacon House Association	Maggie Griffin	Las Esperanzas	Joe Ollivier & Friends
Doyle Charboneau	Lindsay Hardgraves	Dori Lee	Marlene Peintevia
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Kelly Friday	Marilyn Kay	Meg Morrow	



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Mission Statement

House of Hope provides a safe, clean and sober, nurturing environment for substance abusing women. Our mission is to help them regain their dignity and learn how to live life without alcohol or drugs.

We at House of Hope know that substance abuse, the interactive disease of alcoholism and drug addiction, can never be cured. We know that the disease can be arrested—given time—with an encouraging environment, educational tools, knowledgeable support groups and, most importantly, the woman’s sincere desire to change her life.

Therefore, we continually seek to expand and improve our abilities to help women achieve self awareness, spirituality, dignity and integrity, become financially responsible, reestablish family ties and be reunited with their children when possible. We help restore to health women who are wounded, lost and broken and return them to society with the tools they need to continue their lives of recovery.



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