

TLCS, Inc. April 28, 2014

“Transforming Lives By Promoting Successful Community Living For People with Psychiatric and Other Disabilities”



**BIG**  
DAY OF  
GIVING  
MAY 6

24 HOURS  
TO GIVE  
WHERE YOUR  
HEART IS



## Community Collaboration Finds Billie a Home

For the past 3 ½ years Billie has been lived on the streets and in doorways in Old Sacramento. She experiences serious psychotic symptoms which sometimes make her scary to be around. But, nonetheless, the business owners in Old Sac were concerned about her, an older woman alone on the streets, frightened, unable to access resources. They did what they could. The 24 artists at the **Artists Collaborative Gallery** on K Street gave what they had. “On Second Saturday we started giving Billie and the other homeless residents of the street our leftover food,” said artist Robin Wenrick.

“Sometimes we would buy them pizza or Subway” Betty Thompson told us. Once Robin brought her a big bag of grapes and told her she had to share them with the others. Robin and the others were

always worried about Billie. “She seemed so alone, she really just didn’t believe anyone cared about her. I tried to find some social services for her but there just aren’t any shelters for single women. Some of the services are faith based but that is not for everyone and can be intimidating. I came up with nothing when I tried. Sometimes she would be delusional. She scared people but I noticed when I just listened to her she would come back to reality. Sometimes I would just tell her to tone it down and she would.” Robin told us that “by being kind to the homeless folks in the business area, they would actually keep an eye on our business. They were grateful for the help. They would police each other and follow the rules we gave them about loitering and trash.”



In January, **Dignity Health** funded a collaborative grant to create a specific team to outreach to people who are homeless with psychiatric symptoms and try to get them into services. The team consists of the **DSP Navigators**,

**TLCS Mental Health Outreach Services**, **Genesis Loaves & Fishes** and **2-1-1 Community Link**. DSP Navigator Shirl Johnson asked Robin who she thought needed the most help of all those on the streets. “Billie was the first person to come to mind,” said Robin. Billie was known to the community that serves this population. She had been arrested for illegal camping; the police had been involved on numerous occasions. But this time was different. Sean McGlynn, TLCS Mental Health Outreach Navigator, got involved and made a concerted effort to engage with Billie. On several occasions he just sat and listened to her.

One of the places she had previously felt safe and welcome was the TLCS SRO service center on J Street, a place where residents of the single room occupancy hotels, seniors living in the downtown core and homeless individuals can go for a

cup of coffee, access to the food pantry, a public health nurse and other social services. The TLCS staff and volunteers had also noted that Billie needed some health services and alerted Sean to those issues. He got to work on getting Billie’s health care needs met. Through that process they formed a relationship. Billie began to trust Sean and truly believe he cared about her enough to help her get what she needed—a safe home. Sean is uniquely qualified to do this work. He has been homeless himself, lived on the river in Sacramento for a number of years. He firmly believes “some of these folks are not capable of accessing services on their own, but we can give them the tools to recover.” Today, Billie is living at Sister Nora’s, a home for women with mental health issues on the property of Loaves & Fishes. She looks like a completely different person. The day we spoke to her she was clean, had on a bit of make-up and a new pair of glasses. Missing from the streets, Robin had asked around, afraid that something terrible had happened to Billie. She was very relieved to find out that, finally, Billie had a safe home.

She told us, “I’m not hiding anymore, I’m comfortable. I refuse to be a victim.” For the last 3 ½ years Billie wore a blue parka with a hood zipped up to her chin even in the heat of summer. She was hiding in plain sight on the streets of Sacramento. One of her only points of constant connection was the TLCS SRO center. She told us “the coffee was really important, I felt safe and warm there.” Sean helped her access the SMART program which is a Sacramento County program to expedite SSI benefits. Soon Billie will have some income so she can pay for her housing. She is earning some money washing windows at Fun and Games in Old Sac. She is currently assisting some Sacramento State Nursing Interns complete their hours. She receives psychiatric services at Sierra Elder Wellness, mental health program of El Hogar funded by Sacramento County through Mental Health Services Act funding.

At 60 ½ Billie has had a difficult life. As a child, her mother also suffered from mental and physical illness. She spent time in and out of psychiatric hospitals and has been disconnected from her family for many years. She told us “I wasn’t depressed, I was just so ANGRY! I tried to kill myself a couple of times.” She calls Sean a “mindsaver.” Billie admitted to being “addicted to marijuana for 49 ½ years” but when Sean told her that a condition of living at Sister Nora’s was that she needed to be drug free, she gave up her pipe immediately. She was ready.

Her age and physical health needs were the catalyst to accepting help but the kindness and time Sean took to engage with her made all the difference. She always hated being touched, she stayed away from people but on this day, she introduced herself, smiled broadly and shook our hands. Throughout our conversation, she continued to experience psychotic symptoms but was still very in touch with her current reality. When we left, TLCS Social Media Intern, Clarissa (a high school freshman from The Met) was the beneficiary of some great advice. Billie told her “Stay away from gang affiliation, finish school, listen to your mom and teachers.” The same advice Clarissa probably gets from her own grandmother.

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