



The Well In The Desert News

Poverty Prevention

Intervention

Advocacy



Special Report On Adequate Housing

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

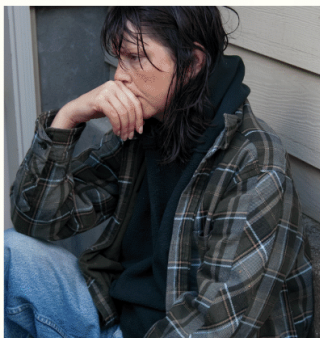
Message from the President of the Well in the Desert

I have been stuck on my April article. I have always been someone whose glass is always full, or at least half full. And I like to keep it that way, always living with hope for today and for the future.



Arlene Rosenthal

I spend day after day hearing the stories of our homeless citizens, and the stories of people who have a place to live in trying to make ends meet. The rising cost of food, electric and gas make it harder every day.



Stories About Homelessness

I have seen poverty all my life, and I have seen wealth, and I am never quite sure why the tremendous disparity must hurt really good people. Can we not find a balance so that people do not suffer?

How many homes do people need, that they stay in a few times a year, while others are living in squalid conditions on the streets, being kicked out of their meager shelters daily, sometimes in the middle of the night. How does a disabled senior handle this?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In a society as plentiful as ours one would think that this would be a key pressing issue of our political leaders and of our government, yet I have watched city councils struggle with not knowing what to do, and throwing millions upon millions of dollars at projects doomed to fail.

When the Well had a cooling/heating center, and that was for many years, we were known to have the cleanest clients anywhere, because they could access the showers, seven days a week.

Now, if you will look, our clients are not clean, hair in need of a long wash, and many who have not seen a shower in weeks. Why is that? Because there is not one public shower available anywhere in Palm Springs. There were, at the Access Center, but those where shut down a couple of months ago.

I asked a city leader to look into that for us, but never heard back from her.

It is hard to keep your glass full when you ask for a meeting with the police chief so the Well can be of help in staving off the problems coming from the criminal group of homeless, only to be never called back for the appointment, and when asked if not hearing back meant he would not see us, never heard anything.

The Well in the Desert was founded in 1996 and has been providing services to those in need for all these years. We make sure people are provided a healthy hot nutritious meal six days a week, and offer so much more as well.

Over a year ago our CUP was denied us and we had to operate daily out of the social halls of our church partners. Not only did we not get the permit renewed, but ALL ties with the Well were ceased. And this is with the only organization that provides the services we offer. Does that make sense? To treat us like criminals, rather than the organization that cares for the citizens of Palm Springs and beyond?

I am reaching out to the community, and to our current council, to turn this around. I am asking you, our supporters and friends, to write letters to the city council members, to the press, asking that they formally, once again, recognize the Well in the Desert.

And then, once that is done, we are included at the table for discussion on how to deal with homelessness. We are boots on the ground; we can make a difference.

Please help me keep my glass full, please care enough to mount a campaign that will help the less fortunate.

Thank you all so very much.

Arlene

Special Report on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination.

Rona Ghanbari outside of the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland (Photo credit: Rona Ghanbari)

When you make your daily commute to the law school, how many times have you seen someone sitting or sleeping on the sidewalk or in an ally? How many times have you averted your eyes, or maybe not even noticed them there? How many times have you perhaps even crossed the street, because maybe you felt a pang of guilt or fear? Don't worry, the point of this article isn't to make you feel guilt ridden or cause you to go empty your bank account and hand out what little remains from your student loan to people panhandling on the streets – I just want to draw your attention to a global human rights crisis demanding an urgent global response including from Canada.

To prevent genocide and Like food and water, shelter is one of the most basic human needs, yet access to adequate shelter is something that eludes millions of people worldwide. On March 3rd, I was in Geneva, Switzerland to see the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing present her report on homelessness as a pressing global issue to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR). Over the last two semesters I worked with the Special Rapporteur, Leilani Farha, and her team to research and produce her report to the UN on this topic through the International Human Rights Program (IHRP) at the law school.

My clinical partner, LL.M student David Tortell, and I researched various aspects of homelessness on a global scale. The research covered many aspects of the phenomenon such as country specific definitions and measurements of homelessness, structural causes of homelessness, which social groups are most vulnerable to homelessness, what access to justice mechanisms exist – if any – to homeless people in asserting their rights, and what stigmatization and discrimination they face as individuals and as a social group.

The process of assisting the Special Rapporteur opened my eyes to the reality that homeless people face each and every day. One of the things that struck me the most was what has been termed the "criminalization of homelessness." Being homeless in and of itself is of course not a crime. However in many jurisdictions around the world, life-sustaining activities such as sleeping, eating, or going to the washroom, are illegal. This makes it virtually impossible to be homeless without punishment from the legal system.



Through my research I began to realize that some governments take the same approach to eradicating homelessness as I do with eradicating the long list of readings I have to do before exams: hiding them in a corner and hoping the problem just goes away. Experience shows that this is literally never the correct method of dealing with things. Homeless people are often viewed as lawbreakers or eyesores. Laws that criminalize the daily activities of homeless people typically seek to render them invisible: out of sight, out of mind. These laws are usually framed under the guise of public health and safety, stating that the concentration of homeless people in a given area threatens public health. In reality these types of laws are rather aimed at the visual ramifications of homelessness, and typically have the goal creating pleasing aesthetics for business and tourism. As a result, many cities have punitive measures in place meant to drive the homeless population elsewhere. Some examples of this are imposing fines, incarceration, confiscation of personal property, or forced relocation based on laws or policies prohibiting activities linked to homelessness, such as sleeping, eating, defecating/urinating or creating any kind of shelter from the elements. These discriminatory laws don't only exist in the global south, but are actually quite prominent in North America. For example in a 2014 report one homeless youth from Salt Lake City stated that he got 5 tickets in one night from trying to sleep in public, even though he had no income to pay for the tickets.

Prohibiting people to partake in these life-sustaining activities when they do not have an alternative is not only a cruel and ineffective measure for dealing with the root cause of homelessness, but is in fact extremely expensive for governments. Cycles of incarceration or fines only exacerbate the situation, and are costly for taxpayers as homeless people are kept in prison for crimes such as sleeping or eating in a public space. Furthermore, once a homeless person has a criminal record their chances of becoming employed or qualifying for housing or other social programs becomes significantly reduced, merely keeping them on the streets.

This vicious cycle is only one small element of a much larger issue. The Special Rapporteur wrapped up her speech at the UNHRC by giving a list of recommendations to states, and urging them to commit to goals to eradicate homelessness by 2030. The IHRP allowed me the wonderful and sobering opportunity of working on this incredibly important issue, and as I write to an audience of future lawyers, lawmakers, judges, and whatever else you crazy bunch get up to, I can only hope that the work your peers engaged in during our time as students resonates with you as we move forward, and we can all be part of a generation that recognizes human dignity and basic human rights.



SUE

BY ARLENE ROSENTHAL

Some in our community still look at homelessness as something people have brought onto themselves. Some think the people are homeless because they are bad. They feel before they think; they are scared of what they do not understand.

In the 21 years I have been involved with the Well I have watched attitudes change a lot. There is so much more compassion and understanding now. But there is still a lingering ignorance on the part of some, who blame people for their conditions, rather than understand the issues of economics, mental illness, and lack of opportunities. Please let me share this story, a story that even I am still amazed at.

I met Sue in College, at U.C.L.A. I was there for a degree; she was there for an MRS. She was from a family of Beverly Hills multi-millionaires. We became fast friends and I was invited to her home. It was my first experience to have a butler answer the door. It was a year later that she married her gorgeous sweetheart; another very wealthy person from a wealthy family. The years passed and their business grew, as did their fortunes; and they produced three very beautiful children. It seemed like they were the perfect family. I moved away and we kept in touch sporadically. I later received a call from her telling me they were divorcing; that the divorce was messy; that her father had died, that his wife of 30 years (her stepmother), had inherited most everything. I wished her luck and sadly thought of how her mental state had deteriorated so since our last conversation.

Three years passed and I heard nothing. I had moved to the desert. She finally called. She told me she was living on the streets – was sick, obese, without family contact, without friends. I did not know what to do. I just listened. Many more years passed without hearing from her and I could not trace her anywhere. Luckily I found her ex-husband and called him to find out what had happened to her.

It was an organization like ours, Well in the Desert, that helped her off the streets and into a “low rent apartment”. She was alive, and off the streets, but she was battling cancer; and was mentally very unstable.

Her life took a turn. This heiress; destined in childhood to have everything, became the person so many scorn. Do you know their stories? The story of the lawyer? Of the professor? Of the pilot? Of the Vietnam Vet? Of the woman whose husband threw her out? Will you know the story of the many returning from wars far away; some who will join the population of homeless.

They are us; they are you. They could be anyone. Help us to help the best of them, and the worst of them. Please donate to the Well in the Desert.

Stories About Homelessness

PAUL CURTIS, 68, WHO LIVES ON A NARROWBOAT: 'MY HOME WAS REPOSSESSED BECAUSE I COULD NOT PAY MY MORTGAGE'

I became homeless when my marriage broke up. I had taken on a big mortgage and the interest rate went up. I became overstretched when my marriage ended. I had lost an income and then I also lost my job.

I was falling further and further behind with my debt repayments. Though I didn't know it at the time, I think I was having a mental meltdown. I wasn't able to cope and began drinking too much. I quit my job because I wasn't happy with the way things were being run at the organisation. I imagined I would quickly find another job, but it didn't work out that way.

My home was repossessed because I couldn't afford my mortgage repayments. More than that, the will had gone. When you get hit by a few things at once it affects your ability to think clearly. You are firefighting all the time. Depression saps your energy: it makes it hard to get up in the morning and put together a rational plan.

As a stop-gap measure, I stayed with friends. What was supposed to be temporary ended up lasting a year. There was a long period when I was rudderless, moving from place to place.

To say I was lucky is an understatement – I never had to live on the streets. The people who put a roof over my head were unbelievably kind and generous and never once made me feel like I was an intruder. But I felt like an intruder. "We are going out, there's food in the fridge. Help yourself. You know how the remote works. Don't wait up," they would say.

I was very aware it was not my home; my stuff wasn't there and I made no decisions about anything. I was a guest. I would walk around the shopping centre and the streets for hours hoping to exhaust myself, looking at empty allotments and wondering if I could live there.

There's a feeling of powerlessness when you're homeless; you feel lost. My experience changed how I see homeless people. After a while I got over whatever it was that was going on in my head. I found a job and a flat and the friends who helped me are still, thankfully, my friends. But I have never got over the fear of homelessness, that feeling of being nowhere.

I am lucky that I now have a beautiful home in which I am very happy. I live on a narrowboat. I am warm and secure and it's a lifestyle I enjoy – also, what with being retired, it's a lifestyle I can afford. I know I couldn't afford to go back into the world and pay rent; the system is rotten. Homeless people are victims of government policy over the past 20-30 years and it's going to get worse.

Stories About Homelessness

CAROLINE RYAN, 44, FROM LEEDS: 'MENTAL ILLNESS, POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS WERE INTERLINKED'

I have been homeless twice – once when I was 23 and again at 30. Both times it was due to mental health problems.

The first time it happened I left my job because I wasn't well. I went to stay with my parents, but it didn't work out and my dad asked me to leave. Then I went to stay with friends.

I was still struggling and one night I had a panic attack. My friends said: "We love you but you're starting to drive us mad." So I left and wandered the streets

I went to a local hostel but they turned me away, saying: "Men only, try a B&B." My thoughts had gone haywire and I felt tormented. I just didn't know where to go.

I went to a male friend who turned me away – until he realised I was desperate. Then he made me a bed on his living room floor. He arranged for me to stay with some of his female friends but in my unbalanced state I felt uncomfortable doing this.

I had been going to outpatient appointments at a local mental health hospital. At my next visit with the psychiatrist, I was so desperate I asked if they could take me in. I was admitted for six weeks and although it was tough, it did lead to a turnaround. They got me on medication. When I left, I got a rented room and rebuilt my life. I got part-time jobs and later went on to study.

The second time I became homeless it followed a similar pattern. I had been working part-time in a shop but ended up leaving. So I had no job and rent to pay. I applied for benefits but the money got sent to the wrong account. Eventually it got sorted out but I then became ill. I withdrew from the benefits system because I found it too complicated to handle in my confused state. I soon couldn't afford the rent and had to leave my property.

A few friends tried to help me, and one tried to help me access benefits. I stayed at people's houses for a few nights. My relationship with my family became strained and I was taken into a local mental health hospital. Thankfully, I never slept rough or on the streets but I was close to sleeping in a park.

The whole experience was terrifying both times, not knowing where I was going to spend the night. I felt abandoned and alone. At times I had no one to turn to. I would ask friends if I could sleep on their floor. They came through for me at first but then the help ran out.

I was warned off hostels so I didn't want to go there. You get so many knockbacks. I remember all my belongings being stuffed into a few bags I carried around with me. Eventually things got better and I clawed my way back to sanity and got a good job.

Mental illness, poverty and homelessness were interlinked in my case – I'm sure that's the situation for a lot of people. Safety nets can fall apart and I went into a downward spiral. I would like to see an end to the stigma attached to homelessness. It can be a terrifying and devastating experience that no one should go through.



Stories About Homelessness

TONY*, 57, FROM SOMERSET: 'I WAS NOT WORKING AND TAKING HEROIN DAY IN, DAY OUT'

I made a mistake when I was younger and got caught smoking dope. I ended up having to do a short prison sentence. After that I decided to leave my home town of Derby.

I ended up living in a London Fields tower block with a friend. I moved in with him but we fell out after a while and I couldn't find anywhere else to go. I started squatting and travelling.

When I was in London I started taking drugs. That stopped me sorting myself out and finding a place. It wasn't a nice time and there were not many jobs around.

I ended up being homeless on the streets on and off. I would sleep rough for a few weeks or a month. I served a few spells in prison but I would usually end up on the streets again as when I got out I had nowhere to live.

In the mid-1990s, I went into rehab and did OK for about four or five years. The recovery lasted until my son died; that sent me over the edge. After that I was not working and taking heroin day in, day out. It took me seven years to get back on track.

After another rehab stay I finally got it right and became involved with a local homelessness charity – first as a volunteer, and now as a full-time support worker.

Homeless people are just people. I will never promise a client anything because when I was homeless, some agencies said they would do X,Y or Z for me and then they'd come back with a valid reason why they couldn't. That was tough.

My boss thinks I tend to be not too soft but maybe too understanding. It's true that I empathise with the people I work with and see things more from their perspective.

* Not his real name.



Well in the Desert

CARDRINER BOWDEN

Treasurer

By Arlene Rosenthal

Cardriner Bowden has been on the Board of the Well in the Desert for many years. She is our fine Treasurer.

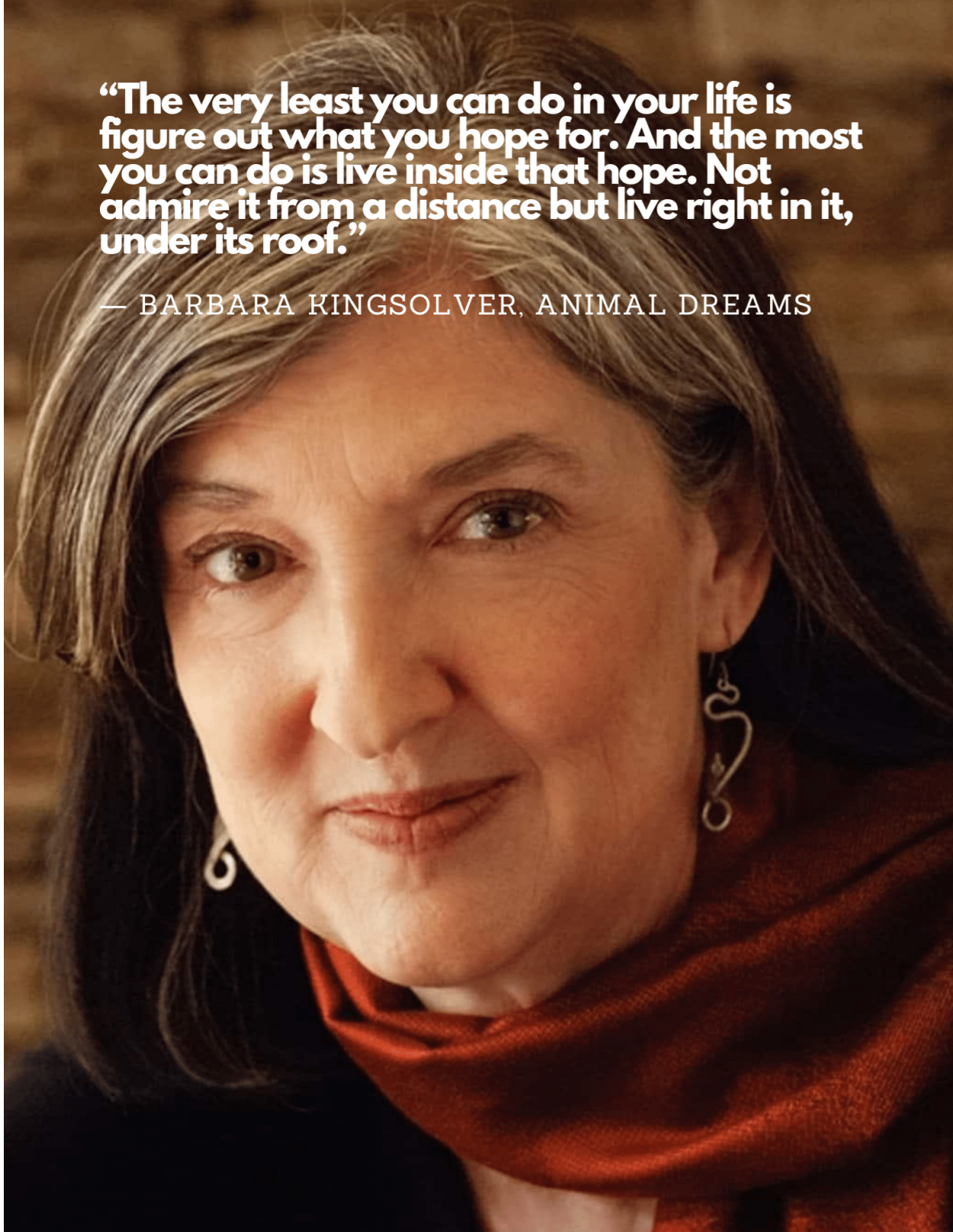
Cardriner was an Educator with the Los Angeles School District, and retired to move to the Desert.

She is still involved with children and heads up the Muses Education Program at the McCallum Theater.

And, typical of Cardriner, she does amazing work with both organizations.

For the Well she is always bringing clothes, shoes, blankets, etc. gathered together by all her friends and neighbors. She always has her friends attend our two fundraisers each year, and do they ever have fun times.

We all love and appreciate this fabulous woman and feel very fortunate that she chose us and the people we serve.

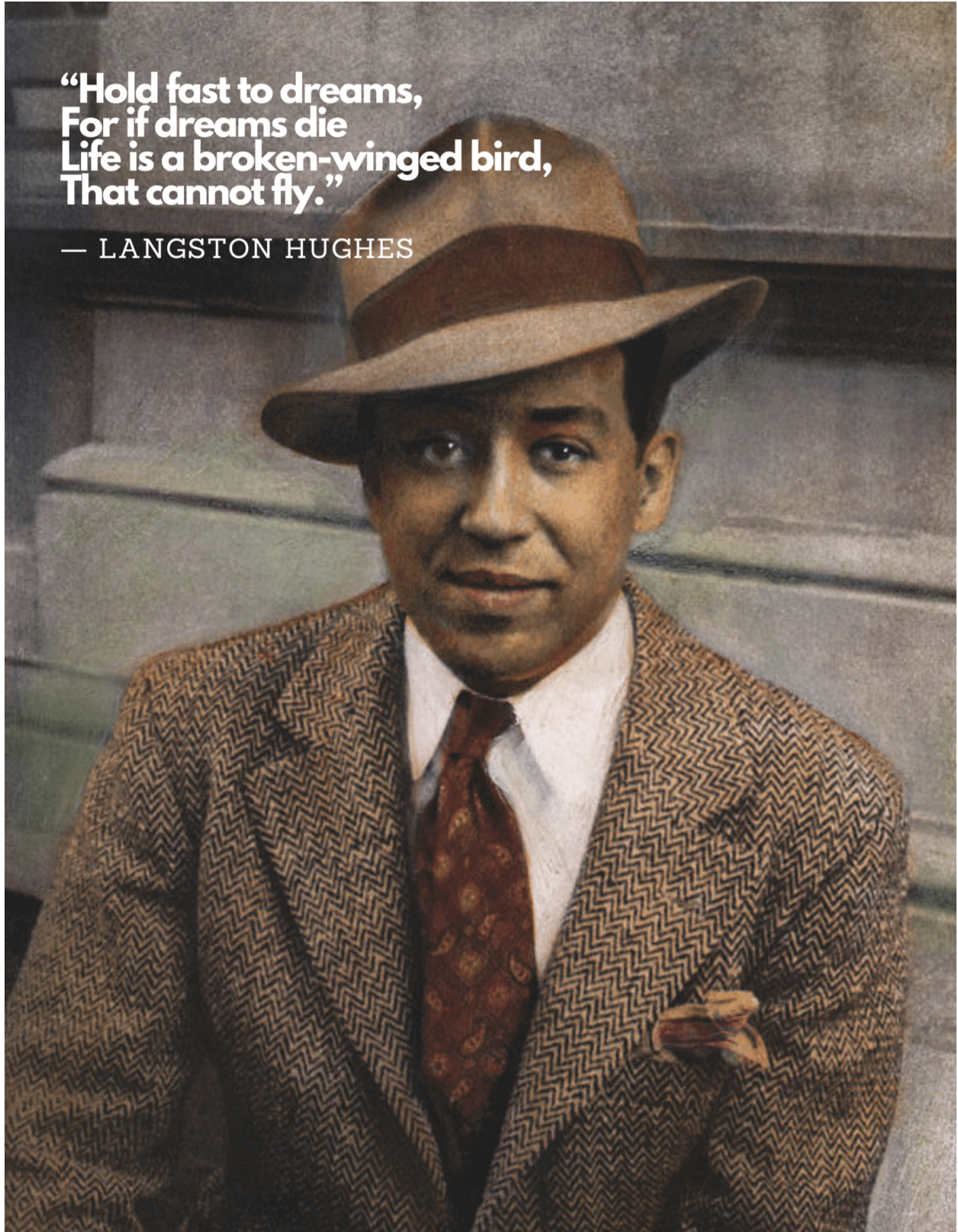
A close-up portrait of Barbara Kingsolver, an older woman with grey hair, wearing a red scarf and silver earrings. The background is a warm, textured brown. Overlaid on the top left of the image is a quote in white text.

“The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.”

— BARBARA KINGSOLVER, ANIMAL DREAMS

**“Hold fast to dreams,
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird,
That cannot fly.”**

— LANGSTON HUGHES



National Find A Rainbow Day

IN APRIL, WE CELEBRATE THE NATIONAL FIND A RAINBOW DAY. THIS HOLIDAY OBSERVED IN APRIL IS AS BEAUTIFUL AS ITS NAME. THIS IS A DAY WHERE WE ARE CHALLENGED TO LOOK FOR A RAY OF HOPE IN A VIVID HUE, UP IN THE SKY, JUST LIKE A RAINBOW PAINTING THE SKY.

We all know how the rainbow appears in the sky and all the 7 colors that make it so colorful. This colorful holiday deserves all the attention because it is made to bring cheer and happiness into everyone's lives. You can observe it with your friends and families as you take out crayons and color hearts in all kinds of bright colors on the printable. Get creative and stick them on windows or doors to draw people's attention and fill their lives with color too.

The ray of hope is that one day soon they will lay their heads down on a pillow in a comfortable bed, without the fear of being physically harmed. It is the dream of 90% of all who are homeless.

Having hope propels us to achieve our dreams and drives us forward toward our pursuits. It also keeps us afloat when everything seems to go wrong, when we feel that we're drowning. Hope is the light at the end of the tunnel, the northern star by which we navigate our lives through trials and difficulties towards our dreams of a better day. When we lose hope, we are like a rudderless ship being tossed about without direction. Having and finding hope, then, is essential for keeping our dreams upright and continuing to sail in the direction of our futures.



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ARTS presents

Broadway

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SUNDAY, APRIL 23, 2023 • 6:00 - 9:00 P.M.

Renaissance Esmeralda Resort • 44400 Indian Wells Lane • Indian Wells

Reception followed by a wonderful sit-down dinner.

**Music Presentation
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Honoree:
JEANIE CUNNINGHAM

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JOIN US FOR ANOTHER "MAGICAL" EVENING UNDER THE STARS, WITH INCREDIBLE FOOD AND MUSIC. HONORING JEANNIE CUNNINGHAM, WHO PRODUCES MAGIC WHEREVER SHE GOES.



WHAT WE DO

Well in the Desert

501c3 #33-0694580

- Daily hot nutritious meal to over 200 people a day, 6 days a week.
- Phone and mail service.
- Free ID vouchers and DMV forms.
- Morning coffee, rolls and fruit.
- Furniture for people in need.
- Clothing for job interviews and those who need them.
- Assistance with food stamps, MISP, ID's and more.
- Utility assistance.
- Resume writing assistance.
- One way tickets home.
- Saturday food distribution of healthy foods to working families, seniors, veterans, the disabled, families with children.
- Emergency food boxes.
- Some transportation to medical and social service appointments.
- Van transportation to hot lunch sites.
- Home deliveries to seniors who are homebound or frail.
- "Well Assist" program to downtown merchants and other business owners.
- Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations for all in need. Christmas presents for all the children.
- Mental health counseling.
- Children's better eating program.
- Outreach 5 days a week with snacks, coffee, sweet rolls, clothing, toiletries.

For more information: (760) 656-8905

HOT MEAL WEEKLY PROGRAM

*Please arrive no more than 15 minutes before service.
All lunch service is from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.*



Monday

**United Methodist Church
1555 E. Alejo Rd. — Palm Springs**

Bus line 24 takes you right in front of the Church. Lunch is served in the building in back.

Tuesday

**United Methodist Church
1555 E. Alejo Rd. — Palm Springs**

Bus line 24 takes you right in front of the Church. Lunch is served in the building in back.

Wednesday

**Church of St. Paul in the Desert--just up El Alameda from Palm Canyon
125 W. El Alameda — Palm Springs**

Bus line 111

Thursday

Our Lady of Solitude--corner of Alejo and Belardo 474 N. Belardo Rd. — Palm Springs

Bus line 111

Friday

**Our Lady of Guadalupe
204 S. Calle El Segundo at Arenas — Palm Springs**

Bus lines 111 & 14, Indian & Baristo

Saturday

**Food Distribution Center--181 N. Indian Canyon Dr. — Palm Springs
6 a.m. to 7 a.m., 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.**



Thank You



Well in the Desert Staff

Our staff are all dedicated, caring people. They keep the Well in the strong and positive place it is today. What they do they do well, and each one goes beyond to make sure everything gets done and ensures we are always able to provide all of our services.

We would like to name them here and let them know just how much they are appreciated by all.

Jerry---In charge of all operations, including our food distribution site, has been with the Well for 12 years. He is an incredible force, gets it all done, makes the best decisions, knows how to help budget our money, and an amazing person with an amazing life story.

Marianne---In charge of our daily hot meal operations, been with the Well for four years. Motivated, competent, makes good decisions, and provides tough love, she is a force of nature who never tires of her job. She too has an amazing life story.

Dino---head cook, been with the Well 5 years. His meals are delicious on a daily basis and people love it. Sometimes he throws in some tastes of Puerto Rico, and his late mothers inspiration. He is so good-hearted, and would do anything for the Well and our clients. We are lucky to have him with us.

Darren---assistant cook, been with the Well 3 years, also a very good cook with some delicious recipes. He and Dino work well together to churn out some delicious meals. We thank Darren for working hard to overcome his demons and to be on such a positive path.

Shannon---Gal Friday, who has also been with the Well for 5 years, just like her husband Dino. She helps shop, drive, pick up, work the lunch sites, and anything she is asked to do. She is a great team player, very responsible, and fun to be around.

Van Allen---lunch site worker, with the Well for about 2 years. Handles responsibility well and helps keep everything together. He is dedicated and a person one can depend and rely on.

Girard---with the Well for 5 years. Social Worker. Amazing service to our clients, compassionate, the help he provides has changed lives. We are so lucky he chose the Well to be part of.

Batiya---with the Well for 8 years, Social Worker. Another amazing person, filled with compassion and understanding. Not only does she offer social services, but is always available for whatever need we have.



The Well In The Desert News

Mission Statement

The Well in the Desert provides daily nutritious hot meals, emergency food assistance, weekly supplemental food distribution, and access to community services to those affected by poverty, including the working poor, the homeless, seniors, the handicapped and others in need throughout the west end of the Coachella Valley. Our mission fuels programs for poverty prevention, direct services for poverty intervention, and organized efforts to advocate for the poor.

Well in the Desert News

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We appreciate all donations, and they can be made online at wellinthedesert.org, by check to Well in the Desert, P.O. Box 5312, Palm Springs, CA 92263, or by calling (760) 285-7297, Arlene's phone.

The Well in the Desert

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(760) 656-8905

www.wellinthedesert.org