



Photo: Kelli Ugdal

Gathering for Women Serves a Hidden Population of Homeless

BY BRETT WILBUR

Mary Eileen Kiniry, board member and founder; Carol Greenwald, president and founder; Jennifer Dalton, executive director, at the site of the new service center for Gathering for Women in Monterey, opening in early summer.

They sleep in their cars, small tents in the woods and behind buildings. For the approximately 1,200 homeless women in Monterey County (500 of whom are located on the Peninsula), tasks such as getting food, a shower, adequate clothing and safe shelter are daunting. Some have been widowed, others lost a job, some have escaped domestic violence.

Five years ago, the need to do more became apparent at San Carlos Church in Monterey, where weekly luncheons for homeless women revealed an unmet need.

"Five amazing women pulled together and started Gathering for Women Monterey," says Jennifer Dalton, executive director.

One of the founders, Mary Eileen Kiniry, is a former mental health nurse.

"We had the professional experience and the passion for the cause to create this magical non-

profit; it's basically women helping women."

A newly remodeled service center on El Dorado Street in Monterey opens in early summer with a professional kitchen, showers, a clothing closet, personal care items, training, and above all, a place to be welcomed.

"We refer to them as our guests," Dalton explains. "It's a hospitable approach with inclusion. We are all women and we want to help them with the next step on their journey of life...Some of these women are employed but can't sustain housing. There are women in their 80s sleeping on the streets."

"I hope this really gains traction," adds Kiniry. "We can't let this problem get worse, and we can only do it with the help of the community."

For more information, call 831/241-6154, visit 187 El Dorado St. in Monterey, or go to www.gatheringforwomen.org.