

Homeless Hotspots—Part II

Whatever happened to old-fashioned food stamps?

Correcting this error from last week's closing paragraph is paramount: "If you've never visited the MCDSS, is now the time?" Remember this? "It's a one-story building that floats like a square island in a parking lot at 1281 Broadway Ave., Seaside. . . ."

Did you spot the mistake? Probably not, if you've never been there. If you've been there, you know it's a two-story building, not just a ground floor.

So, with my mistake corrected, the next question is:

"Why was the Monterey County Department of Social Services compared metaphorically to an oasis on the sand dunes of the City of Seaside?"

My answer is: Because the traditional oasis is a resting place where hungry, thirsty and weary travelers take a break. They rest from turmoil. They quench their thirst and stave off hunger.

They do the same at the MCDSS I discovered when I spent a recent morning in the waiting room posing as an applicant for food stamp benefits.

Down on dumpster diving.

I sat by a young man in an undershirt with a day's growth of beard and pierced ears. The area reminded me of a mini-version of the Department of Motor Vehicles lined with chairs and clerks serving people in numerical order.

"Why do you come here?" I asked.

"I don't want to end up a fulltime dumpster diver."

"Are you a part-time dumpster diver now?"

He looked at me like I was an old nut, said, "I'm an unemployed student and I'm applying for EBT," and moved away.

Upping his dollar download

An elderly man with nappy white hair ambled toward me, waving as he took the young man's empty seat. He recognized me from an I-HELP dinner at his church. He flashed his toothless grin. "I gotta axe what you all doin' in a place like this?"

"Researching a column," I said. "What, I might ask, brings you here?"

"Man, I'm upping my dollar download."

"Oh," I said. "Please translate what you mean."

"I ain't homeless no more. I got me a nice bed in the Veterans Transition Center, but I still got trouble making ends meet, so I'm trying to get Uncle Sam to raise my disability."

"What exactly is your disability?"

"Old age."

How does one get food stamps?

Soon I found myself seated before a young man half my age. I said I was researching how to get old-fashioned food stamps.

"They're not called Food Stamps anymore," he said. "Ever heard of EBT?"

"Yes, but I don't know what it means."

Wanda Sue Parrott

Homeless in Paradise



A homeless hotspot is any place where unsheltered people (like this hungry food-hunting dumpster diver) hang in or hang out in order to hang on. Photo courtesy of Clip Art

"Electronic Benefit Transfer. It's like a credit card." He explained it as the federal CalFresh program that provides low-income families and individuals in California with cash to purchase healthful food. "You use it like you use a bank credit or debit card. Benefits are issued on a monthly basis. Unused benefits will carry over to the next month."

"Would someone like me be eligible?" I asked.

"Tell me about yourself."

"I'm 82 and have been trying to live on \$898 per month Social Security like many of the homeless people about whom I write are doing. I've been fortunate to get food from the Food Bank for Monterey County at Scholze Community Center, where I dance. Otherwise, I'm not sure I could afford to eat because of rising healthcare costs."

He said persons eligible for EBT may also qualify for Medi-Cal health benefits and more than 47 percent of eligible residents don't apply for CalFresh benefits. He suggested I submit an application.

"I have a small retirement fund and own my own car," I said. "I do some freelance writing and editing to supplement my income. Doesn't that disqualify me?"

He said a single person earning up to \$1,946 per month can get as much as \$194 per month in EBT benefits for groceries.

"More people qualify for, and receive, Cal Fresh than you might think," he said. "In 2014, in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties, 4,554 adults age 60 and older received CalFresh benefits. A total of 72,851

people—more than 10 percent of all residents—got CalFresh benefits."

Although EBT cards can only be used for food (no alcohol or drugs), eligibility requirements were recently changed to allow people with drug-related convictions to receive benefits.

Thirty days later I was approved to get CalFresh benefits of \$35 per month.

The young man who wanted to avoid dumpster diving approached me outside a local supermarket, slurring, "Wanna buy my EBT card?"

"How much?" I asked.

"My benefits are \$194. I'll take \$100."

Be warned: a class of humans you'll find in oases are con artists.

For details about the CalFresh (EBT) program call, 866-323-1953.

Next week: Homeless hotspots as they appear.

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Medicare Annual Wellness visit

The 2017 Health and Vitality Speaker Series is a community education event held at The Park Lane's Vista Lounge located at 200 Glenwood Circle in Monterey monthly. The event begins at 2:00 p.m. followed by questions and answers from 3:00 to 3:30 p.m. This series is open to the public and refreshments are provided.

The September presentation "Medicare's Annual Wellness Visit: Develop Your Personal Care Plan to Stay Healthy" will be held Tuesday, September 26 from 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Michael Hendrickson, PhD, will be the guest speaker. His presentation will include information on what a wellness visit should cover, health care plans, and utilizing Medicare.

Monterey Bay Center for Integrated Health will host an information table about their programs. Refreshments will be offered, and as always, this event is free to the public. Seating is limited.

Speaker Background:

Michael Hendrickson, PhD, President/CEO, has 35 years experience in academic medicine. As a senior research scientist and professor at USC, UCLA and UCSF, he taught physicians, nurses, allied and behavioral health professional particularly about care management of seniors with multiple chronic conditions. Additionally, he has served as CEO for several health care organizations including one of the largest geriatric health systems in the country. He shares a passion with Dr. Issvorian to help people gain the necessary tools to improve their self care management capacities especially with prevention, health promotion and wellness programs that address underlying physiological issues that put people at risk for chronic conditions.

Holiday Open House

Join the Cremlins & the Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce for a Holiday Open House with festive holiday hors d'oeuvres, cranberry sparklers, pumpkin spice lattes and warm cookies & milk. Santa, Mrs. Claus and the elves will be making an appearance as we celebrate: Kick-off dates for our holiday \$300 gift card for \$250 promo Ways to save BIG by booking now for holiday parties (we now offer full bars!!) Holiday menus for special gatherings Tuesday, September 12 5 p.m.-6:30 p.m. Crema 481 Lighthouse Ave., Pacific Grove

GreenWaste Recovery, Inc. Wins National Award For Recycling Excellence

Waste Hauler for Monterey, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties Takes Gold in the Solid Waste Association of North America's Annual Awards Competition

GreenWaste Recovery, Inc. is pleased to announce its new single-stream recyclable materials processing line at its San Jose material recovery facility has received the highly acclaimed Gold Excellence Award in the Recycling System category from the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). The award will be presented at SWANA's annual conference, WASTECON®, on Tuesday, September 26. GreenWaste previously received the Gold Recycling Excellence award from SWANA in 2009 for its multi-family municipal solid waste processing system.

"GreenWaste Recovery, Inc.'s 35-ton-per-hour single-stream materials recovery facility is our newest and highest performing system," said the Co-Chief Executive Officer. "It features state-of-the-art technology and is recovering 98 percent of recyclables processed, while operating at 143 percent of its designed capacity."

SWANA's Excellence Awards Program recognizes outstanding solid waste programs and facilities that advance the practice of environmentally and economically sound solid waste management through their commitment to utilizing effective technologies and processes in system design and operations, advancing worker and community health and safety, and implementing successful public education and outreach programs. Programs also must demonstrate that they are fiscally and environmentally responsible through their compliance with all applicable federal, state and local regulations.

Processing more than 160 tons of material per hour, GreenWaste's processing facility is one of the most innovative material recovery facilities in the world, capable of sorting and recovering 98 percent of recyclable materials, 99 percent of yard trimmings, and 75 percent of trash for a total facility diversion rate of 88 percent for household and commercial waste. GreenWaste currently provides collection and processing services to approximately 296,000 residential customers and 7,500 commercial customers spanning 19 jurisdictions and counties.

For more information about the material recovery facility in visit <https://tinyurl.com/d4tmer9> and a copy of GreenWaste's award application can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/ycvwhxpq>. A complete list of 2017 Excellence Award winners is on SWANA's website <https://tinyurl.com/y84yprth>.