

Editorial: Generous gifts to shelter are an inspiration

Mercury News Editorial
October 14, 2009

As wind and pounding rain swept into San Jose this week, 125 people who otherwise would have been huddled in doorways or under bridges found warm beds at the EHC LifeBuilders shelter — thanks solely to the generosity of two Silicon Valley families.

What a marvelous feeling it must have been for Joe and Michele Costello and for Ajay Shah and Lata Krishnan as they watched that rain, knowing that the \$100,000 checks each couple had written prevented so much misery.

The donors had not been courted with cocktails or even solicited by mail. They'd both just picked up their morning Mercury News two weeks ago, with a front-page story on EHC's \$400,000 budget shortfall that would cause it to cut its number of homeless beds in half. And they decided to help.

(We never know what magic might ensue when the paper rolls off the press each morning. Sometimes all it takes is getting information into people's hands, and good things happen. That's always our hope, but knowing it really makes our day.)

There are some 7,000 homeless people in Santa Clara County, based on recent counts, and only 1,000 emergency beds. EHC and InnVision, the other major shelter provider here, also invest in permanent solutions for individuals — strategies that are proven to work. But there will always be a need for emergency shelter. And the recent gifts to EHC still don't close its budget gap, let alone assure the beds will be there next year.

In this terrible recession, nonprofits across the valley are seeing an increase in demand for services and a decrease in gifts from donors. Thousands of residents who are elderly, disabled or mentally ill and once relied on social services to help them stay in their homes or keep jobs are being cut off.

Countless others in this rich valley could do what the Costellos and Shah and Krisnan did, if they were similarly moved by the plight of the poor who are casualties of the state budget crisis. We hope these gifts will inspire them.