

February 2018

Dear Sustaining Partner,

I wonder if you agree when I say Victor Hugo's *Les Miserable* is the most comprehensive written example of love, redemption, restoration and grace outside the Bible? In the body of the story we clearly see examples of what all these qualities look like in daily life. Unlike our desire to see everything "prettied up," Hugo depicts life as anything but always beautiful. However, through the story a clear message of truth and beauty is conveyed: It is in fact the things we cannot see which are worth all the effort required to extend and receive authentic love. Beauty is revealed when we realize each person bears the image of God and is therefore unique and valuable.

I've seen the stage play and the film, *Les Miserable* numbers of times because I love it: the music, the writing, the story line. The one line toward the end when Jean Val Jean's life is nearly over: "To Love another person is to see the face of God" is what I think wraps up Hugo's message to his audience. In the end, even the ruthless, self-righteous Javert begins to understand God's love isn't based on performance. We are loved only because we are each created in His image and therefore worthy, valuable and necessary to one another's stories.

I need my neighbor who believes abortion is a good thing to remind me relationships are more important than winning an argument. You need the friend with an attitude to help you understand people usually have a back story often manifested in anger or aggression. Each morning as we sit around the table in my office before we open, we remind ourselves every client who comes to us is worthy of our very best because she is created in God's image to be loved and to learn to love. LOVE literally makes the world go round---His name is JESUS!

It is in His name I greet you this first of February when we're in the dead of winter in a world full of promise as we continue to open our doors to those who are desperately in need of not just material goods. This week I reviewed exit surveys. Tears filled my eyes when I read "Respect" in answer to the question, "What is the most significant thing you received today?" I love, love, love to see the faces of our clients when they're leaving or read their reviews on our Facebook, Yelp, Google, etc. pages. No one ever leaves us without hearing "God loves you and so do we. Let us help you." Our clients know we mean what we say.

So, I thank you, our partner for joining us as we serve our very needy community which include many families without dads. I recently showed my friend a beautiful video depicting the years of encouragement, support, love and sacrifice moms invest in a son or daughter's life which enable them to become a professional athlete capable of Olympic competition. He said, "This is wonderful, but why no dads?" Good question.

The importance of a dad active in his family is minimalized in our society. Moms are important for nurturing, but we often fail to recognize the presence of a dad is critical for many significant reasons. Part of our ministry to families is to encourage the parents to get along and work together for the sake of the children. We hope for the result to be a married mom and dad. We have several pastors who will perform the ceremony without charge and a partner who will pay for the license. But even this is not enough unless they both see their value, separate and together. Therefore, I'll mention again how great our need is for men willing to invest a little time in the lives of young men in our community and to be a presence here at our facility by stepping forward with an offer of volunteer hours. Pregnancy is NOT just woman's issue. Our dads need to understand they are important to the success of their children. We need men to demonstrate what it is to be a man. If you've been raised by women how would you know?

We hosted our official Open House last month and were pleased to welcome a respectable number of interested folks who came down to meet us and tour our facility. You are welcome to schedule an appointment for a tour and to get more information about what we do. I'll remind you again we always need volunteers willing to give us your time and skills. Call Wendy at 909-382-4550 to discuss your interest. There's a place for you down here.

February is "Donate a tea cup or tea pot" month in anticipation of our annual ladies' tea August 18, 2018. If you have these items to donate just pack them up and bring them down during these hours. Monday: 1:30 PM-7:30 PM. Tuesday-Friday: 9:30 AM – 3:30 PM.

Next event is our annual Walk for Life on Saturday, April 21, 2018. If you're interested in serving on the committee for this or any other event call Laura McGreal at (909) 382-1494. She'll be happy to hear from you. If you want to participate, sponsor sheets for the walk will be available by March 15, 2018.

"We love Him because He first loved us." We love our clients because He first loved us!

Love one another...Happy Valentine's Day

For Life!

Lisa J Stiefken
Executive Director