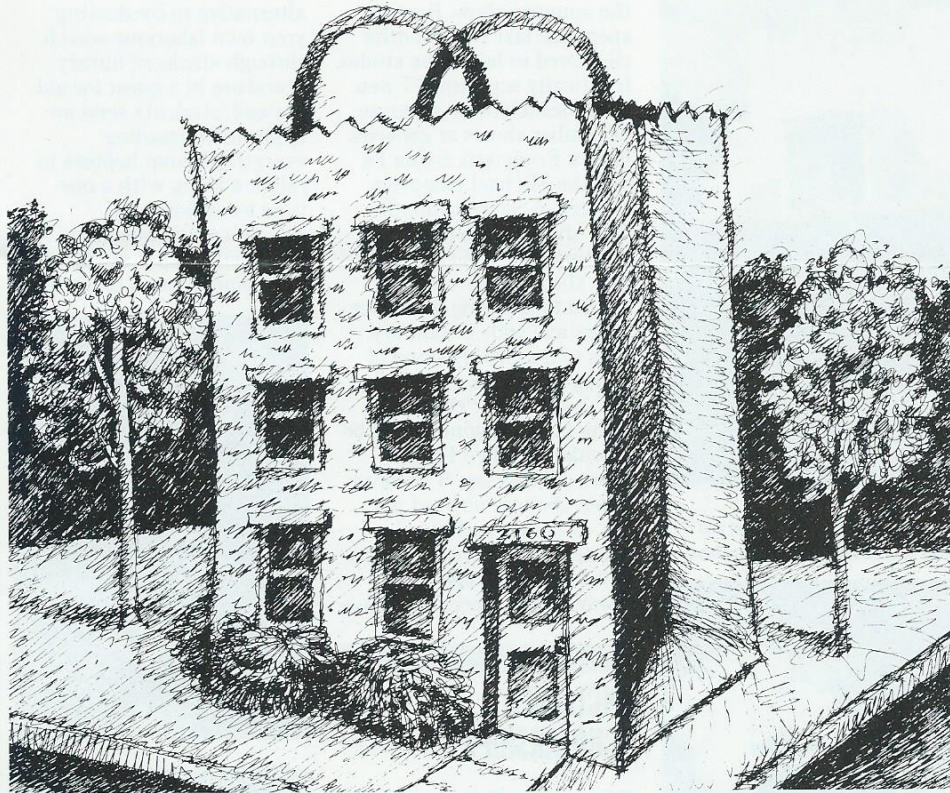


CITY LIGHTS



D O W N T O W N
HELP FOR THE HOMELESS

As the homeless population continues to soar and stretch existing services, the federal government has stepped in to help. In Sacramento, a 12th Street motel—condemned last year as unfit for human habitation—has become the unlikely site of a model program designed to help the homeless become self-sufficient.

With the help of Bay area developer Norman Leal, who put up more than \$20,000 in “rehabilitation” costs, and additional funding through a \$157,300 loan from the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, the Midtown Motel at 700 12th

Street has been converted into 20 studio apartments for single homeless persons.

Under a federal demonstration project through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Sacramento and some 20 other communities around the country with such housing programs will receive federal reimbursement for the difference between rents collected (occupants, who must meet strict standards, will pay 30 percent of their incomes) and the local market rate.

Each unit is simply furnished with a bed and dresser and includes a separate bath. There are also shared kitchen and laundry facilities. Residents must

**A once condemned
midtown motel**

**becomes an
apartment house for
the homeless.**



sign a one-year lease, and an on-site manager, also a formerly homeless person, will be responsible for day-to-day management of the complex.

“Our goal is to get people back into society,” says

Stephen Whitney-Wise, manager of homeless programs for the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, who says the project is designed to help homeless single people “transition” into or back into the work force.

Individuals must be free of drug and drinking problems and be referred by local homeless shelters where they have previously resided for 30 days. Both men and women are eligible, but not families. On announcement, the program received a flurry of interest. By mid-October, 100 applications had already been received for the 20 slots, although the facility did not publicly open until October 20.

Whitney-Wise says the average age of Sacramento’s single homeless people is 24 to 41; most are white males, and an estimated 50 percent are Vietnam veterans.

“They lost employment through automation or some other upset in their lives—it could be a divorce or the death of a spouse, or it could be that they grew up in a broken home,” he says. “They have a lack of connection into a family unit. When they started skidding, they went all the way down.”

Obviously, the 20 units at Midtown will house only a miniscule percentage of the area’s homeless, who are housed temporarily—if they are housed at all—in a variety of voucher and shelter programs throughout the county. Last year alone, according to Whitney-Wise, the agency provided housing for 11,000 persons, mostly single individuals but also many families.

“That’s the only problem with this,” says Whitney-Wise of the midtown



project's 20 units. "We will have to turn a lot of people away."
—Sigrid Bathen

The San Lorenzo church (above) and artist Sarah Beserra's mini likenesses.

A R T W O R K

THE CHURCH LADY

When Sacramento sculptor Sarah Beserra first saw the ancient adobe church five years ago, she felt something akin to religious awe.

"I remember thinking, this can't exist—it's too perfect," Beserra says of 225-year-old San Lorenzo church in the Picuris Pueblo of northeastern New Mexico. "It was just like a big sculpture."

The stunning beauty of the stark white church against purple mountains made a lasting impression on the 42-year-old artist. When she returned last year to find the church in ruins, victim of neglect and heavy winter rains, Beserra became obsessed with rebuilding it.

So she built a San Lorenzo church of her own—one 14 inches tall and made of clay.

Taking a year's leave from her over \$65,000-a-year job as a contract lobbyist for



George R. Steffes Inc., Beserra sculpted 20 clay impressions of adobe New Mexican churches and convinced a Santa Fe gallery to showcase her work last summer. The show sold out within two months and Beserra donated the proceeds, \$4,000 in all, to the Picuris restoration fund. The restoration will require an estimated \$100,000 in all and is expected to take place over the next few years.

"The donation gave me a sense of preserving a piece of tradition," Beserra says now. "I travel quite a bit all over the world and I've always

had a sense that we don't have anything really old here. But when you go to the Southwest and see the churches that are as old as some in Spain, you realize that we've got that culture and history right here."

Bolstered by the success of the summer show, Beserra spent the last four months cloistered in her home studio, frantically sculpting 27 new churches for three separate December shows at galleries in San Francisco, Santa Fe and the Michael Himovitz Gallery in Sacramento. In fact, she's had so much fun crafting the mini chapels, that she's not sure she'll return to lobbying when her sabbatical ends in January. "It's real scary thinking of giving up such a good living. But," she says, "the worst thing I can imagine would be to wake up when I'm 90 years old and say, 'I've never taken chances or lived my life, or done the things I wanted to do.' I've got a real adventuresome spirit—I always want more." —Todd Stein

E D U C A T I O N

UNCLAIMED SCHOLARSHIPS

If Doctor Doolittle were still around today, he might well qualify for a college scholarship. The good doctor's gift for talking to the animals—in particular, the domestic variety of American honeybee—could earn him some help in defraying the high cost of a college education.

The American Beekeeping Association is just one of hundreds of obscure institutions nationwide that sponsor scholarships for college-bound students. But because few students know the opportunity exists, millions of dollars' worth of aid goes unclaimed each year, says Annette Hubbell, founder of Education Futures, a San Diego-based scholarship, grant and loan search firm. In fact, if

Doolittle were in the market for a scholarship today, chances are he would not even have heard of the \$1,000 beekeeping award for an essay on "Talking to Honeybees."

Hubbell's firm (619-748-3236) provides an easy alternative to conducting your own laborious search through stacks of library literature in a quest for aid. Instead, students send an application detailing everything from hobbies to religion along with a one-time fee of \$49, and Education Futures promises to return a list of at least 10, and sometimes as many as



N E W P R O D U C T S

BUTTERFLY OPTIONAL

When Sacramento grocer, part-time inventor and "cerebral engineer" Bud Guess decided he'd had enough of the grocery business, it struck him that a butterfly might be the perfect vehicle for escape. Admired for its ephemeral beauty and sovereign independence, the butterfly, Guess was convinced, would make a great bowtie.

Bowtie? That's right; now sharp dressers with a penchant for the peculiar can flaunt their individuality with Guess's new invention, the "Buttertie" bowtie. Featuring six winged patterns, from the majestic Monarch to the delicate Spicebush Swallowtail, the trendy eveningwear is made by Ralph Marlin (creators of the famous "fish tie") and sells for \$12.50 at Mixed Bag, 2404 K Street and How Tacky, 2525 J Street. —Todd Stein