

## A WINTER WISHLIST



**THE COLD AND WET MONTHS** lie ahead for our men and women who are homeless. If you can donate any of these basics, please know they will go to immediate use for a person in need who will be very thankful for the dignity and comfort you give.

- ✓ New packaged underwear, socks, hats, scarves, and gloves
- ✓ Food (no glass) – proteins such as tuna & canned chicken, chili, canned fruit, and power bars.

You may purchase items online for delivery to or drop off in person at: 10641 San Fernando Road, Pacoima, CA 91331

If you need assistance, call (818) 686-7360. Thank you.



## A GIFT IN YOUR WILL MAKES A NEW FUTURE POSSIBLE FOR PEOPLE LIKE PALOMA.

Your gift of any size to MEND in your will is a beautiful way to ensure your values endure while supporting the life-transforming work you make possible. This act of generosity extends far beyond your lifetime and serves as a powerful testament to the legacy you desire to leave behind. If you've already taken the step to include MEND – Meet Each Need with Dignity in your will – thank you for sharing your love and hope.

If you have any questions or need additional information, call Chanya Blumenkrantz, Chief Development Officer, at (818) 686-7320 or you may reach her at [chanya@mendpoverty.org](mailto:chanya@mendpoverty.org).

Scan the QR code for more information:



## BECOME A MONTHLY HERO TO THE PEOPLE YOU HELP SERVE

WE INVITE YOU to join our growing community of heroes who are making a monthly donation to fuel the work that we do. You can sign up on our website, [www.MendPoverty.Org/donate](http://www.MendPoverty.Org/donate) or call Scott Mikels at (818) 686-7353 and he'll be very happy to help you.



Scan for a direct link

# MEND matters



With dignity and respect, MEND's mission is to meet the immediate needs of individuals and families and increase their access to opportunities that strengthen their capacity to thrive.

[mendpoverty.org](http://mendpoverty.org)  
WINTER | 2024



## HOPE...AND A FUTURE, BECAUSE OF YOU.

**I LOVE THIS TIME OF THE YEAR.** The holidays are over. The new year is still unfolding. And the stillness of winter – in addition to saturating the sky with the most beautiful LA sunrises and sunsets – lends to a time of reflection and contemplation.

For millions of people, maybe even you, this time of the year is a chance to release the burdens that may be holding us captive, to explore a new path, correct wrongs, and rewrite our lives.

It offers hope and optimism. A belief that, no matter how challenging the past may have been, tomorrow is a clean slate.

Finally, Valentine's Day comes around this time of the year, offering a powerful reminder that it is named for a 3rd Century Priest who gave love *to the poor and oppressed*.

For the vulnerable people you help us serve throughout the year (some of who you'll meet in this newsletter), your support is not just a financial contribution; it's an expression of love that changes lives.

This is the good that you are doing.

*Janet*

Janet Marinaccio  
President & CEO



# TIDINGS OF COMFORT & JOY BECAUSE OF YOUR KINDNESS

**PALOMA'S STORY IS A TESTAMENT** to how your faithful support makes it possible for MEND to serve a family facing a sudden, and desperate situation.

Two months ago, right before MEND shut down for the holidays, we were alerted to the plight of a mother who was homeless with two small children. Fleeing domestic violence, Paloma and her 6 and 3 year old toddlers had nowhere to go. They needed everything—safety, food, shelter and someone who would listen.... and help.

Paloma had reached out to local shelters, but as is often the case during December, nothing was available. Luckily, she had secured a 10-night stay at a motel in Tarzana through a local organization that serves domestic violence survivors.

When MEND's community ambassadors located her, they hand-delivered a care package with food, hygiene items, blankets, rain ponchos, clothing, and gifts for the children. The humanity this represented brought Paloma to tears. Then they sat down and listened.



The 2-week motel stay she'd secured was enough to bring her into the new year, but she was desperate for a longer term solution.

Because of kind people like you, MEND got to work and secured a 27-day stay for the family at a safe and family-friendly location. This temporary arrangement offered immediate relief, ensuring that Paloma's small family had a roof over their heads beyond the critical holiday period.

We recently checked in with Paloma, to see how she's doing. We learned that she has not given up. Following multiple calls to local agencies, she's finally on a promising waitlist for long-term housing. She is very grateful for the kindness she received during a very tough time for her family and is looking forward to rebuilding her life.

## GRIT, PERSEVERANCE & RESILIENCE

**BRENDA RECALLS TURNING TO MEND** for food as a 15 year-old teen mom. Her abusive father was gone, her mother couldn't cope, and she and her two siblings were forced to work to survive.

Challenging times followed—80-hour weeks, single parenting, finishing high school late, some encounters with the juvenile justice system, and a dustup that sent her to jail as an adult.

Through it all, Brenda remained determined to power through.

She says: "There's nothing lower than the bottom of the barrel. From there all you can do is look up." Last year, at age 28, she made a conscious choice to start over. To leave the daily hamster wheel, and to try her hand at business with her partner, John.

But they needed assistance to make the leap. To get food and critical support to make it through those lean early months. Brenda circled back to MEND, just as she had 13 years ago.

"Sometimes we're scared or embarrassed to ask for help because we're not where we want to be," Brenda shares.

MEND offered sustenance, connections, and encouragement. But Brenda and John's hard work and ingenuity were the real drivers. They started small, with car detailing, and moved up to pressure washing and disinfecting entire parking lots of rental

moving trucks. They seized the chance to learn more, gaining knowledge and skills from all the corporate vendor training and group experiences they could get.

Recently, the couple created an LLC, made flyers, and started knocking on doors.

"It hasn't been easy, but we've made it work," says John.

Now they're planning to level up—adding more parking lots, hiring another crew, and expanding beyond just the two of them.

Demonstrating just how far they have come from the days when they leaned on MEND for food and other resources, Brenda and John are soon going to participate in a MEND Job Fair next month, to meet and open opportunities to people with the same drive and desire to overcome & succeed.

John is intent on this: **"We want to be part of [the solution]... to open doors for people in need of work."**

Thank YOU for helping people like Brenda & John rebuild their lives, and by doing so, extending opportunities to others.



*Lucia took two buses to get to MEND for the fresh groceries she was able to take home. She is very grateful for the help, especially during the holiday season, as she and her husband try to figure out where their next meal will come from.*



## VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

**Danny Sandoval shares:** "I was in sales, where the money you make is important...not what you do for others. Then a friend who worked here at MEND suggested volunteering. She's always recruiting. She said, 'I NEED you to come.' I didn't hesitate. She got her mom and other friends to come too!"

"I came to help with food distribution. I packed bags, and I saw the challenges people were facing. So many people coming to pick up food."

"I brought my son with me to volunteer. He's an only child, 13 year old—maybe a little bit spoiled. I wanted him to learn that not everyone gets to go to Target and just pick what they want for the holidays. I wanted to make it real, not just what his parents say about poverty. I made him wake up early to get here with me at 7:30 in the morning."

"He helped give out games and toys, and he saw the reality—so many people waiting in line and other kids so grateful for the food and games from MEND. He could see it in their eyes, in their body language—'We'll have real food for now, and a game too!' On the way home, he said, 'Dad [helping] really feels good.'"

"[Volunteering] here is fulfilling. You realize your problems are not so big. Most of us take food security for granted. We complain about standing in the grocery store line for 5 minutes, and these people are waiting for 2 hours! The lengths people go to overcome the problems they're going through! And we just take our privileges for granted."

**FAST FORWARD A FEW MONTHS.** Danny's car sales business was closing and he was at loose ends. Learning about a job opening at MEND, he applied and was hired!

He says: "I feel good, helping other people. When I tell people what I do, it's always a good conversation. Even at different Costco stores, where I go to, people know MEND. And then, obviously, I try to convince them to come and volunteer! We're always looking for more people to help! My sales pitch to them is that it'll feel good, it'll be fulfilling."

We welcome you to volunteer at MEND. Visit [MendPoverty.Org/Volunteer](https://MendPoverty.Org/Volunteer) or scan the QR code to learn more.

