

Del Norte Mission Possible named 'Nonprofit of the Year';' Assemblymember Jim Wood recognizes organizations' efforts to help the homeless

August 11, 2020



Nervous and unsure, the dirty, bedraggled man approached the Crescent City motel where showers and personal care items were offered weekly to homeless people. He did not have an appointment, but his friends who brought him there were willing to give up their spots.

“It was clear he needed a shower and it’s my personal goal that anyone who comes looking for a shower is not turned away,” said Daphne Cortese-Lambert, director of the nonprofit Del Norte Mission Possible. “Everyone deserves a shower and a chance.”

The man emerged from the shower “looking like a new man,” Cortese-Lambert said. He received a used pair of oversized shoes and pants that were too big and “walked off so proud and grateful.”

“I have no idea what each person is going through until I begin to hear his or her stories,” she said. “I am thankful for the lessons that the participants teach me each week.”

It’s true stories like this that inspired California Assemblymember Jim Wood this week to name Del Norte Mission Possible “Nonprofit of the Year” for his district, which includes Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Trinity and Sonoma counties.

“Given the critical need for resources and support for individuals and families who are struggling without a home or shelter, I’m honored to recognize Del Norte Mission Possible as Assembly District 2’s Nonprofit of the year,” Wood said.

Every year since 2014, Wood chooses a nonprofit that makes a difference in the lives of his constituents. “Under the dedicated leadership and commitment of Ms. Cortese-Lambert and the support of community partners and generous donors, people in Del Norte County have access to the support they need to improve their circumstances,” he said.

The “Nonprofit of the Year” celebration was started in 2016 by the California Association of Nonprofits (CalNonprofit), which honors organizations selected by various California legislators. “The goals are to highlight the great work of nonprofits around the state, bring them into closer relationships with their legislators, and to elevate the nonprofits’ profile in Sacramento,” said CalNonprofits spokeswoman Christina Dragonetti.

In 2019, a record-breaking 102 legislators selected a nonprofit in their districts. Because of COVID-19 pandemic, the traditional celebration luncheon in Sacramento will be done online this year.

Del Norte Mission Possible was established in 2019 to provide shelter, case management, and connection to support services for the homeless. It is managed by one paid employee, Cortese-Lambert, and a volunteer board of directors. The nonprofit works closely with individuals, city and county agencies, other nonprofits and churches to develop locally based solutions that address the growing homeless epidemic.

In one week in July, Cortese-Lambert talked with 125 homeless people and offered at least 162 various services such as food, clothing and basic essentials, she said. The showers, located at Coastal Inn and Suites in Crescent City, “had 30 participants and continues to be an excellent opportunity for relationship-based case management,” she said.

Cortese-Lambert’s daily experience with homeless people is full of challenges, such as dealing with a recent drug overdose, domestic violence and COVID-19 issues. However, there are many successes, such as man who recently landed a new job and a place to live after receiving guidance from Cortese-Lambert.

As with many nonprofits, Del Norte Mission Possible works on a shoestring budget and is dependent on receiving help from many community partners. Wild Rivers Community Foundation has been a constant collaborative thinking partner, serving as a much-needed conduit for resources and has supplied deep technical assistance since the inception of Del Norte Mission Possible.

Earlier this year, the nonprofit received \$15,000 in grants from the COVID-19 Response Fund established by Wild Rivers Community Foundation and Humboldt Area Foundation. The money helped supplement the shower program and helped address the need for increased services and management support during the pandemic.

The Department of Health and Human Services is a key supporter, providing reimbursement for staff time and the hotel room, and The California Endowment has provided a Small Grant for basic services. DNATL Community Good Council provides snacks and Starbucks provides coffee for the shower program.

Cortese-Lambert often collaborates with the Department of Health and Human Services and Behavioral Health to connect people to the longer-term help they need, and she has been working with Seven Angels Last Stop Services, a nonprofit organization working to create a transitional housing program in Del Norte County.

“It truly is a community effort,” Cortese-Lambert said. “We couldn’t do it without our community partners and supporters who join together to make this program a success.”

Donations are always needed. Donations of money can be made online via delnortemissionpossible.org or by mail, and personal care items and small size men’s clothing only can be left in the blue bin at 183 Lighthouse Way in Crescent City.

For more information call Daphne Cortese-Lambert at 707-954-7319. The address for Del Norte Mission Possible is 900 Northcrest Drive, PMB 74, Crescent City, CA, 95531.