

Interview with People for the Poor Co-founder Caroline Scherrer

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Q: People for the Poor provides outreach for three soup kitchens and five homeless shelters in Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Cumberland counties. How did you become involved with the organizations that you serve?

A: With the homeless shelters, I started asking people why they were in the area. Then I started calling these places and asked to speak with their supervisors, to see if they were in financial need. I asked them to send me literature about their organizations.

As far as the soup kitchens, I knew about the Cathedral Kitchen in Camden, but I wasn't familiar with any others. So again, I asked around and researched. Through a friend of mine, I discovered a soup kitchen in Vineland; my friend serves soup there on his day off from work.

I found out about another soup kitchen in Camden, and when I contacted them, the supervisor asked me if I'd ever been homeless. I was so surprised by the question. I told him no, and the reason he asked that was he couldn't believe that someone would just start up a charity for the poor if they weren't poor themselves once.

Q: Why did you decide to do that?

A: I don't know. It's just something I felt I HAD to do.

You know, I've gone around to many restaurants to have them donate a "dinner for two" as part of the golf tournaments that (Co-founder) Mike (Scott) and I establish for fundraising. I can't tell you how many times I've heard from restaurants that I'm, say, the 16th person representing a cause – say, to support a youth soccer team – to solicit a donation. And I tell them, "Yes, but THEY are going home tonight and will be able to have dinner." Did you know it costs \$4.18 to feed one person for a day?

Q: On Feb. 13, People for the Poor organized a benefit dinner at the Coastline Restaurant in Cherry Hill, where you awarded \$1,000 each to eight organizations that help the poor. Why did you decide to stage this benefit when you did?

A: Most people are generous toward the needy around Thanksgiving and the holidays, but nothing happens in February. We're in the dead of winter, it's cold, people need shelter and need to eat. I wanted to do this benefit this month, because the money could be put to immediate use by these shelters and soup kitchens: buy paper products, pay a heating bill, whatever was necessary.

MORE INFORMATION

- For more information contact Caroline Scherrer at 856-228-5365 or log onto www.PeopleForThePoor.org