

Mothers' Day themed fundraisers aid 2 Tucson groups that help homeless

Loni Nannini Special to the Arizona Daily Star
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Two local shelters are staging Mother's Day-themed fundraisers that offer the opportunity to purchase gifts with extra kick — the ability to help homeless women and men.

First up is the “Love is the Answer” online auction, which opens Thursday, April 28, at loveistheanswer.givesmart.com and continues through May 1. The virtual auction benefits Sister José Women's Center, a shelter dedicated to serving homeless women.

“We are the only women's shelter that accepts women and their pets, and that is a big deal for them. Many women will stay on the streets if they can't bring their pets with them, and that is so dangerous. The number of assaults on homeless women is sad and shocking,” said Nicola Hartmann, chief operations officer.

Founded in 2009, the shelter serves women ages 18 and older and houses up to 40 homeless women and their pets nightly; it also offers day services such as showers, laundry, meals and other resources on site at 1050 S. Park Ave. Additionally, the center will offer a summer cooling station beginning May 2 to provide shade, air conditioning and cold drinks from noon to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday for women and their pets in need of respite from the heat.

An average of 70 women each day utilize services at the center. Hartmann said that the numbers continue to increase and that rising rents are resulting in more elderly and first-time homeless women on the streets.

“Many of these people are on fixed incomes and they have been evicted. We had one woman in a wheelchair with her cat who is in her late 70s. It is so sad. People show up with everything they have and just don’t know what to do. This is a time in life when they should be relaxing and they have to worry about where they are going to stay and where they will end up,” said Hartmann.

Hartmann hopes that promoting awareness — about both the upcoming fundraiser about the center itself — will result in answers to the problem of homelessness.

“We are always trying to get the word out so people know what we are doing and understand the plight of these women who are often hidden in the community. When you see homeless people, you are more likely to see men; women hide more because they fear for their safety,” said Hartmann.

What: Love is the Answer video presentation and online auction

When: Online auction begins April 28 and continues through May 1.

Video presentation begins at 3 p.m. May 1

Where: Register online at loveistheanswer.givesmart.com

Cost: Participation in the auction and viewing of the video presentation are free; \$100 per person for a VIP Celebrate Love ticket, which includes delivery of your choice of a box of red, white or sparkling wine and gourmet popcorn delivered to your door. Tributes and sponsorships are also available.

Note: Festivities include a video presentation at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 1, featuring an inside look Sister José Women’s Center and its dedication to compassion, dignity and respect for homeless women. The event also features a silent auction that begins April 28 and continues through May 1, with all proceeds benefiting the shelter. For information or to make a donation, visit www.srjosewomensshelter.org/spring2022/ or contact Brenda Druke at bdruke@sisterjose.org or (520) 909-3905.

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