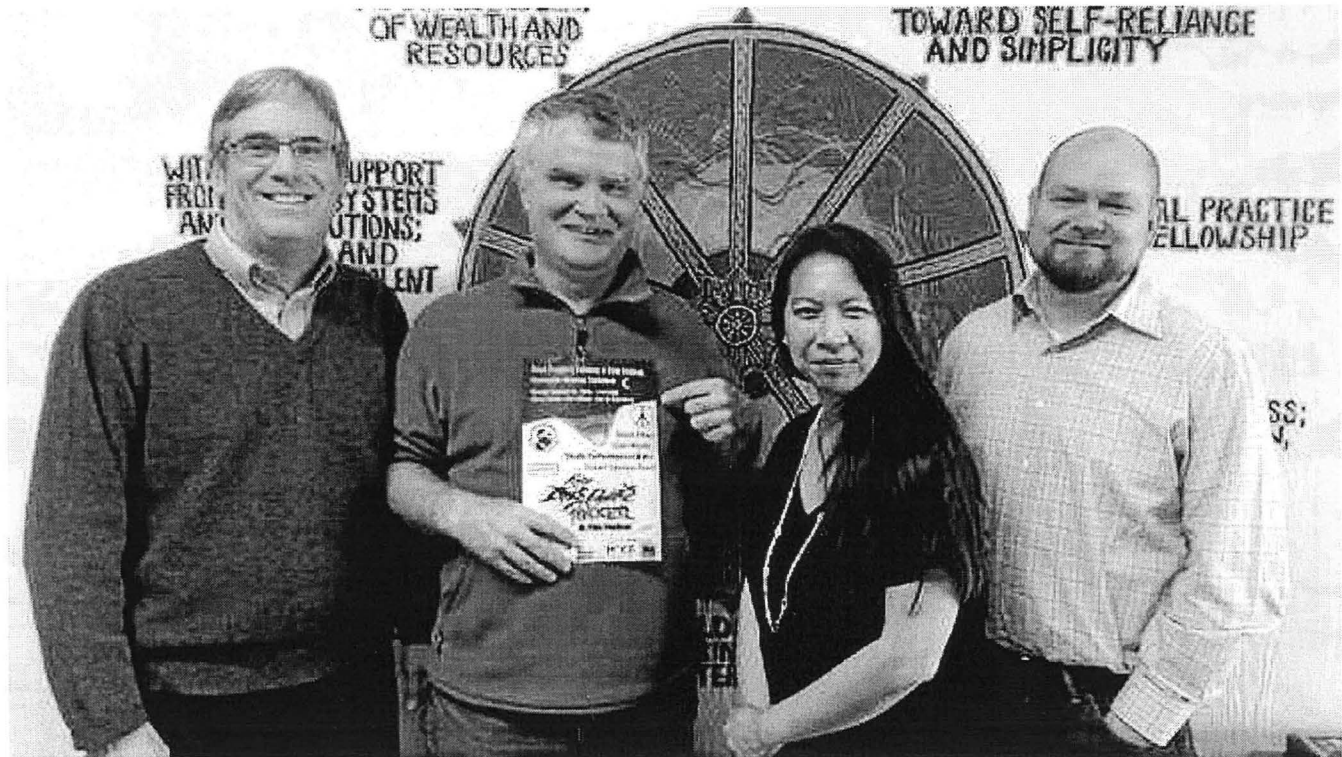


Poor People's Palooza spotlights affordable housing issue with panel, film, music



Ed Mayer, Bill Mash, Tam Le and James Coles are part of the team behind the third annual Poor People's Palooza and Film Festival. It's a conference, concert, documentary film showing and dinner geared toward shining a light on the lack of affordable housing in Chico. Ashiah Scharaga — Enterprise-Record

By **Ashiah Scharaga**, *Enterprise-Record*

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Chico >> Two years ago, formerly homeless veteran Bill Mash took to the City Plaza with signs and free food to teach people about affordable housing. He wanted to help people understand what it was, and why it was important that everybody had access to it.

That act of social activism has grown into the third annual Poor People's Palooza and Film Festival, which is Jan. 18 at Chico Country Day School, 102 W. 11th St.

know and go

What: Third annual Poor People's Palooza and Film Festival.

When: 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Jan. 18.

Where: Chico Country Day School, 102 W. 11th St., Chico.

Prices: \$10 general admission, \$25 for general admission and the festival DVD. Tickets can be purchased online at eventbrite.com or at the door.

It's a concert, documentary film showing, conference and dinner rolled into one. It's still geared toward teaching people about the impacts of a lack of affordable housing in Butte County, and how the community can find solutions.

"That is the primary cause of homelessness," Mash said. "At the end of the day, unless you've housed somebody, there's still homelessness."

Someone has affordable housing if 30 percent or less of their income is directed to rent and utilities, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

In Chico, about 50 percent of the population directs more than 30 percent of their income into rent and utilities, said Ed Mayer, director Housing Authority of Butte County. About 30 percent directs at least 50 percent of their income to rent and utilities.

"Basically, we do not have enough housing to support the growth of the community," Mayer said. "We have to have the community open its heart and awareness for its own citizens in this struggle."

The event is hosted by nonprofit advocacy organizations North Valley Housing Trust and Without a Roof's Youth for Justice program. It will feature local youth performances and artwork, a presentation on poverty and a panel of community experts.

Panel members include Mayer, Mash, City Councilor Tami Ritter, North Valley Housing Trust Executive Director James Coles and Northern California Legal Services managing attorney Jennifer Haffner. The panel will have free form discussion and take questions from those in attendance.

Event organizer and Housing Trust advisory committee member Tam Le said she wanted "a neutral, almost informational type of event" compared to a City Council meeting, "where everybody is very angry on both sides."

"It's something everybody needs to know about," she said. "And we want to make it fun, too."

Short films, which will be weaved throughout the event, were produced by Mash. He interviewed and recorded about 375 homeless people living on the streets of the north state, capturing their lives and getting to know them "to tell the story of homelessness," he said. The films highlight about 35 of them.

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Butte County Access Center is also showing Mash's films Jan. 13 through 17 at 10 a.m. and 8 p.m.

The night's live musical performances include former homeless Butte College student Carrington Scott Forbes, local singer Mark Johnson, alternative punk band Radio Relapse and a duet of Lorna Such and Bradley Relf. Attendees will also be able to enjoy a spoken word set by Courtne Burns, storytelling by Celine O'Malley and the signature pencil artwork of Kay "Happy Growly" Alba. All of the youth have been paid to perform through fundraising efforts, Mash said.

The variety show "gives lots of people different ways to connect with the issue," Coles said.

This event is partially sponsored by the Housing Authority of Butte County and Western Regional Advocacy Project. Money raised will support North Valley Housing Trust and Youth for Justice.

Since its foundation in 2012, North Valley Housing Trust says it has raised \$1.2 million to build and rehabilitate affordable housing for those who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Without a Roof, also founded in 2012, aims to support those experiencing homelessness and poverty. Its program, Youth for Justice, offers a safe environment Wednesdays at the Chico Peace and Justice Center for those 18 to 30 to receive food, mentoring, bus passes, employment opportunities and moral support.

For more information, contact North Valley Housing Trust at nvhtinfo@gmail.com or 592-1120. A full schedule of the event can be found on the Facebook [event page](#).

Contact reporter Ashiah Scharaga at 896-7768.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ashiah Scharaga covers general news and government in Chico. She graduated from Chico State University in 2015 and kicked off her career writing for The Sacramento Bee. Off the clock, she often trades her pen and notebook for a stage and script. Reach the author at ascharaga@chicoer.com or follow Ashiah on Twitter: [@AshiahD](#).
