

Foot Notes

Volume 3, Issue 2

743 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS OF SERVICE

June 2010

Neil Patrick Harris wins \$100,000 for Food on Foot!



By \$84 Club Member ~ Maria Ferrari

Actor and longtime Food on Foot supporter Neil Patrick Harris won \$100,000 for Food on Foot playing in the Jeopardy! Million Dollar Celebrity Invitational. On April 15, Neil defeated CSI: New York's Hill Harper and former WNBA player Rebecca Lobo to win \$50,000 for Food on Foot in the quarterfinal. On May 5th, Neil faced off against Jane Kaczmarek & Cheech Marin in the semifinal round. He came in second and was able to bring his total winnings up to \$100,000.

This is not the first time Harris has used his aptitude for trivia to help the homeless and hungry of Los Angeles. Harris played Celebrity Jeopardy for Food on Foot in November 2006, winning \$50,000 for the cause in a face-off with Bebe Neuerth and James Denton.

Neil describes Food on Foot as "this amazing, small grass-roots charity . . . it provides food and job opportunities for the homeless in and around the Los Angeles/

Hollywood area." Before his quarter-final round, Harris was modest about his chance of success. "With celebrity Jeopardy, the questions are a little dumbed down. So it's less about how much you know and more about how much you can get in the vibe of the button. It's all about the karmic vibe of the button."

When he is not winning money for Food on Foot, Neil is an accomplished actor whose credits include Broadway, the CBS sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* and the title role in Joss Whedon's musical web series *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*. In 2009, he hosted the 63rd Tony Awards and the 61st Primetime Emmy Awards, as well as performing the opening musical number at the 82nd Academy Awards.

Winnings will be used for FOF's Work for Food program which assists the homeless in becoming self-sufficient individuals who are working full-time jobs and no longer in need of government assistance!

If you have a full-time minimum wage job opportunity for one of our WFF workers, please contact us immediately at info@foodonfoot.org

Welcome aboard to our newest \$84 Club Members!

APRIL

Craig Banaszewski
Nikki Rice
Norman Golightly
Paola Portillo
Rachel Kennedy
Star Rial & Ian Grieve

MAY

Erika Roldan
Peggy & Briggs Palmer
Michelle Templin
Judy Bart

Thank you for your generous support!

MISSION STATEMENT

Since 1996, Food on Foot is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing the poor and homeless of Los Angeles with nutritious meals, clothing, job opportunities, and assistance in the transition to employment and life off the streets. Food on Foot is the last resort for many of the individuals who come to us. We work with men and women whose deep emotional problems have led to lives of homelessness, substance abuse, incarceration, and an utter lack of belief in themselves.

Unimpeded by traditional funding models, we invest the tremendous amount of time needed to build our workers' confidence and help them overcome their fear of success – at the same time building partnerships with potential employers who will give our graduates the opportunities they need.

CHALLENGES OF FOOD ON FOOT'S SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAM

By \$84 Club Member ~ Kevin Sullivan



For most people, Sundays are a day of rest. But for the members of the work for hire program at Food on Foot, Sunday is a work day. At 10:00 a.m., participants line up at the Gay and Lesbian Center, and for the next five hours they will pick up trash around Hollywood. Their payment for a job well done comes in the form of gift certificates for food at McDonald's. But these people are looking to earn something more: the opportunity to advance within the program and someday find themselves off the streets and self-sufficient once again. This goal begins on Sunday mornings. From there, workers hope to be promoted to working five days a week. As they advance through the program, they have the chance to become what's known as a "gray shirt." Here, they swap their everyday green work T-shirts for gray ones and assume a supervisory position on the daily work force. Food on Foot then works with them to find permanent employment and a new home, getting them off the streets for good. Summarized like this in a paragraph, it sounds easy. But in reality, the challenges faced by the workers, and by the team at Food on Foot, are enormous.

Participants who come to work on Sundays are mostly homeless, living in their cars, in storage lockers, on the streets of Los Angeles. Their lives are exposed to the world, and safety is a precious commodity. They run the risk of being robbed, beaten and harassed. They average only a few hours of sleep at night. Many arrive at Food on Foot exhausted and with black eyes and bruises. For them, every moment of every day is about survival. Our daily concerns are nothing compared to theirs; they focus on where they will sleep at night, where their next

meal is coming from, and if they will be able to get in line early enough at a nearby shelter to ensure a weekly shower.

Committing to Food on Foot on Sundays presents them with different challenges. Like anyone going to work in the morning, these workers have to learn to focus on the job at hand if they want to succeed. But even as they advance through the work for hire program and attain the prized gray shirt, workers still find themselves confronting obstacles they might not have expected: themselves. Many of our participants have been homeless for years; once they find themselves off the streets and facing the routine of daily employment again, they become overwhelmed. What we would call "normal life" is anything but that to them. They can succumb to self doubt and attempt to sabotage their chances at succeeding in this new life. Or give in to panic and run away from the new responsibilities they face.

Our participants require much support, and this is the challenge faced by Food on Foot. The program not only handles every day occurrences, like purchasing the workers clothing for interviews, or renting them storage lockers to protect their belongings while they work, but also provides much deeper and more emotional support (such as therapy, basic life skills training and admission into 12-step programs). It is difficult for many workers in the program to shed years of behavior in just a few months, but these people have proven that they are survivors. We know they are capable of overcoming years of bad choices, bad behavior and bad luck, and simply need support, understanding and encouragement to continue on their journey. Food on Foot is there to provide them with the assistance they need as they retake control of their lives.