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## SECOND & FLUME

by **Melissa Daugherty**  
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# A worthy resolution

I miss a lot of things about working downtown, but this time of year—for the past couple of years, anyway—I get especially nostalgic for the CN&R's old digs at Second and Flume streets.

Each holiday, our office hosted an angel tree for kids living at the Esplanade House, and without exception, the paper's readers would come through with amazing presents. Bicycles, Barbies, baby dolls, you name it. There are a lot of generous Chicoans.

There's always something special about buying presents for children. But when they're strangers, it forces you to tap into your inner child by imagining their joy upon unwrapping what may be their best—potentially their only—gifts of the season.

It's a pretty humbling exercise when you think about it. Aside from the Christmas after the start of the pandemic when, like many Americans, both my husband and I were laid off, I've been privileged to be able to give my son pretty much whatever he's desired. Within reason, anyway—he's in elementary school and once asked for a car. The kid dreams big. Fortunately for me, he's never been disappointed on December 25th, even during that lean year.

The thought of kiddos not getting to experience holiday magic ... well, that kind of breaks my heart. For those of you who helped bring other people's children happiness this season, I thank you.

One of the other things I miss is organizing a yearly drive for toiletries, the kind of products most of us take for granted in our everyday lives. It's something I started when I became CN&R editor-in-chief just about a decade ago, after realizing it was an unmet niche among the seasonal donation efforts—most focused on nonperishable food, for good reason, in this food-insecure region.

However, in our case, everything was to be distributed to organizations involved in homeless services. Considering the vilification of the unhoused permeating Chico at the time, thanks in large part to social media echo chambers and local politicians—namely, City Councilman Sean Morgan, who once tried to prohibit food giveaways in the town square, City Plaza—I was a bit wary of how it would be received.

I was pleasantly surprised, then, when our office was flooded with supplies: boxes upon boxes of little hotel shampoos, conditioners and soaps that readers set aside, as well as bags filled with toothbrushes, toothpaste, lotion, etc., that people purchased explicitly for the effort.

Over the years, the donations went to various organizations, such as the Torres Community Shelter, the Esplanade House and the Jesus Center (back when, under different leadership, its main purpose was serving as a soup kitchen; it stopped that effort well over a year ago, along with clothing distribution, showers and mail services).

The CN&R's new office isn't open to the public, unfortunately, so the tradition hasn't continued. But plenty of local groups, large and small, can use the public's support to carry on their good work.

Top of mind these days is the low-barrier Safe Space Winter Shelter, which rotates between churches that, ahem, truly do the Lord's work by opening their doors to the destitute. Throughout the cold months, Safe Space provides overnight accommodations, a hearty dinner and to-go breakfasts to folks on the streets. The nonprofit is largely run by volunteers and is always in need of more, from meal providers to general operational crew (learn more at safespacechico.org).

The holidays may be over, but I hope the generosity of the season carries on into 2023. If you're into resolutions, you probably couldn't make a better, more rewarding one than volunteering. Just a suggestion.

*Melissa Daugherty is editor-at-large for the Chico News & Review*