



Martin Murphy interviewed by Elva De La Torre

What does a bicycle commuter do when he's not forecasting severe weather? Volunteer at Primavera's Men's Shelter. Martin Murphy has been doing just that for the last eight years. Every Wednesday evening, Martin hops on his bike, heads for the Shelter, and performs intakes with first time clients.

Tonight, like almost every night, the line to get into the 100-bed facility is long. Men from all walks of life, young and old, gather at the door. The shelter managers greet the men and direct the first timers over to Martin. With a wide smile, Martin greets the

newcomers then leads them through a series of questions to determine how the Shelter staff can best assist them. This is usually when Martin learns more about how they ended up here, with Primavera, seeking shelter.

Martin says he is continually struck by the stories he learns from the men staying at the Shelter. One particular experience that has stayed with Martin was an intake interview with a young man from Bosnia. Although there was a translator present, the trauma this man was dealing with came through. "I could not begin to imagine how difficult this man's life was at this moment; in a new country, struggling with a new language, and sleeping in a homeless shelter," says Martin. He thought about the kind of strength this man needed to have in order to confront and overcome this type of adversity. Although this case was unique, it highlighted a common theme to the lives of most of the men at the shelter; overcoming incredible adversity. Martin is still visibly struck as he thinks of it, "I don't know that I'd be able to do [what that man did]."

Like many Primavera volunteers, Martin's involvement with the organization began through his church. In 1992, while at the University of Arizona, he attended services at The Newman Center. The church held holiday clothing drives for Primavera, and Martin became involved with these drives. This led him to volunteer to serve holiday meals. He's been at the shelter for every Thanksgiving and Christmas meal since then. He enjoys the holiday events because he gets to see other volunteers as well as Primavera staff. In 1997 Martin began his weekly gig at the Shelter. In addition to his volunteer time Martin also supports Primavera financially; he even donated his vehicle to the organization!

As is the case in most of Primavera's programs, the Shelter could not function without the help of volunteers like Martin. Shelter Manager Dana Tyner says, "Martin's my fastest intake worker." He says it with a sense of pride. Martin's help not only eases the work of the staff, it makes it possible to serve the men more efficiently. Martin says he enjoys working with Shelter staff as well as interacting with the clients, many of whom are repeat customers and know Martin by name.

And that's what keeps Martin coming back week after week; knowing that even through his short contact with these men, he's doing something that might make a difference in their lives. As Martin peers over my shoulder at the men that have gathered to see him he says it's important to "do what you can."

