

Street Spirit

April 2003

Simple acts of kindness sometimes can give a deeply needed sense of hope and acceptance to homeless people who often feel shunned and neglected by mainstream society, especially in these days of compassion fatigue. Recently, in Berkeley, one simple act of generosity and sharing by the gourmet restaurant La Note, struck a grace note in the lives of several homeless women who were invited in for a sumptuous meal and treated as honored guests. The restaurant staff all volunteered their time and energy to create a lovely evening out for women who usually must eat in meal lines. The menu listed the "Dinner in Honor of Our Special Guests," describing the courses in French with English translations. It was a delicious dinner, beautifully presented, at the charming French Restaurant La Note at 2377 Shattuck Ave in Berkeley. The dessert was a scrumptious cake donated by Masse's bakery at 1469 Shattuck Avenue. The "special guests" were the women staying at the Berkeley Women's Shelter nearby on Dwight way, invited by the restaurant owner, Dorothee Mitrani-Bell. "I know there are a lot of women struggling out there... Sure I give a lot of donations, but I wanted to do something personal."... Meghan declared that "the talking and the laughter" among the clients and the restaurant staff "will forever be embedded in my memory." .. "I think they felt really special that night, like somebody appreciated them, and recognized the stress and tension that they are under as homeless women."