

Halfway House Helps Many

Pope John Award To Mimi Silbert--Work At Delancey Street

Mimi H. Silbert, the inspiring and dynamic leader of San Francisco's famed Delancey Street Foundation, where she serves as President and Chief Executive Officer, has been named the recipient of the 1991 Pope John Paul XXIII Award according to Public Relations Chairman Albert Teglia.

Mimi Silbert was chosen by the committee for the Federation's highest honor primarily for her work with the Delancey Street Foundation an internationally acclaimed residential treatment center for former felons and substance abuse, serving 700 adult and juvenile residents in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Mexico and North Carolina.

In addition, Mimi Silbert was acclaimed for her work in helping thousands of people turn their lives around and became viable members of the community. Her work as a consultant to prisons, mental health programs, halfway houses and police departments has also been nationally acclaimed.

Said Chairman Albert Teglia: "Mimi Silbert certainly is a prime example of what the Pope John XXIII Award is all about as she personifies the qualifications and guidelines of this prestigious award and certainly her work has the spirit which furthers the brotherhood of man."

Thanks to the dedication and idealism of Mimi Silbert, the Delancey Street Foundation is now in ensconced in a three acre complex along San Francisco's famed waterfront where a 30 million dollar complex has been built containing 177 apartments, garage space, 60,000 feet of retail stores and a restaurant.

Many people were responsible for the development, many donating their services such as plumbers, electricians, pile drivers, and general contractors. Mimi Silbert convinced the laborers, carpenters and all the unions to send a few skilled workers to train selected Delancey Street members who in turn would teach each others and help to construct the project.

In addition, she received help from the legislature in re-zoning the three acre sight on the waterfront. Her most outstanding accomplishment may have been in obtaining a 10 million dollar unsecured loan from the Bank of America who realized the importance of her work.

Delancey Street was founded in 1972 by John Maher and Mimi Silbert both of whom wanted to develop a rehabilitation program "run by ex-cons for ex-cons."

Prior to that time Mimi Silbert had attended schools in her native State Massachusetts and graduated from the State's university. She then studied in Paris, married and had two sons, both of whom are in college now. She earned a double doctorate at the

University California in psychology and criminology and then taught at the University and at San Francisco State. She has also published books and articles on her work.

Both Silbert and Maher discussed the possibility of running the organization like of family where the residents and the program would help the newer arrivals who in turn would do the same for the next residents. They also decided that they would have their residents earn their keep and not rely on government aid.

From this humble beginning the center has developed into one of the most successful drug treatment programs in the country. At the present time, some 700 Delancey Street residents are involved in the program.

The philosophy behind Delancey Street is simple: help your fellow man as much as you can, especially the ones who are most in need of help. As one person has said: "most of the Delancey Street residents never had a safe moment in their lives. Mimi provides that safety and love with picnics, movies and fun trips and dinner together and studying and learning about the work ethic - all those things you would have learned in the family."

The foundation's name comes from Delancey Street in New York City's lower east side where the first European immigrants resided upon arriving in America.

Many articles and personality profiles have been written about Mimi Silbert applauding her work. Over the 17 years since its inception thousands of addicts and sellers have graduated from Delancey Street. They have bought homes and reared families, become firefighters, electricians, mechanics, construction



workers, teachers, lawyers, police officers, and sometimes emulated their founder by becoming criminologists.

The success rate at Delancey Street is a spectacular one with 75% of the people graduating from the program.

Today, Delancey Street has a fleet of trucks, and the foundation has branched out into commercial ventures such as restaurant and, vocational training, furniture design and retailing. The Foundation also provides transportation services for senior citizens and the handicapped. The project is managed and staffed by Delancey Street ex-cons and former druggies and the business nets over 2 million dollars a year.

Mimi Silbert's philosophy is very simple as she says: "It costs us less than \$10,000 a year to house and feed a person at Delancey Street. That is half the price of holding someone in jail. And we don't use taxpayers' money."

Mimi Silbert's Delancey Street Foundation has been called a "model for juvenile justice programs" and former San Francisco Police Chief Frank M. Jordon has said: "Delancey Street is the finest program I know of for rebuilding lives."

Mimi Silbert has directed the evaluation of over 100 projects in the National Institute of Mental Health, The Menninger Clinic, The Law Enforcement Administration Act, John D. Rockefeller Foundation, and the California Office of Criminal Justice Planning

She has appeared as the "Person of the Week," on the ABC World Night News, and has been honored with professional awards by many organizations on the city, county, state and national levels.