

Inside View

FAMILY
STABILITY
STARTS
WITH
HOUSING

Finding a way to keep children safe



When Josie's work hours were cut, she and her husband Ron panicked. Even though her sharp drop in pay was temporary, their budget was already stretched too thin.

How could they pay next month's rent and keep a roof over their children's heads?

A friend suggested they contact St. Vincent de Paul Society for help. Within a few days, two SVDP volunteers visited Josie and Ron in their home and listened to their story. After verifying their income and lease requirements, SVDP volunteers immediately provided a check to Ron and Josie's landlord and just like that, their crisis was over.

Josie was so surprised by how quickly help was given she cried and hugged the volunteers, making it hard for them to leave!



FAMILIES FACE MANY CHALLENGES

Every day in Marin, families struggle to endure financial setbacks, changing circumstances and rising housing costs.

For 72 years, trained Society volunteers have found a way to effectively intervene during a crisis and prevent eviction.

Last year **200** Society volunteers made more than **1,700** home visits throughout Marin and prevented homelessness for **4,685** people, including **1,640** children.

LEADING VOICE

INSIDE TODAY



A YEAR AGO, we reported in this newsletter that the Society had permanently housed 29 people who were experiencing chronic homelessness in Marin. In addition to housing, these people receive ongoing case management to help navigate the inevitable bumps that come with starting a new life after many years (and sometimes decades) of homelessness. Today, we are happy to announce that our community effort has now **housed an additional 43 people, for a total of 72 chronically homeless people housed to date!** We are proud to celebrate this milestone with our community partners at the Marin Housing Authority, the County of Marin, Homeward Bound, Ritter Center, the City of San Rafael and many others.

Clearly, our efforts are working. So now we ask ourselves, **“What will it take to continue this upward trend and achieve our goal of ending chronic homelessness in Marin by the end of 2022?”**

To remain successful, we know that we must to do everything we can to ensure that the people we have housed in our St. Vincent de Paul Society units will stay housed. With your donations, the Society hired a full-time housing case manager who helps support all the tenants currently housed in our units. This case worker helps our clients connect with the services they need and set personal goals. She helps them with budgeting, communication skills, and driving to doctor’s appointments. This provides the support they need to stay off the streets, out of our hospitals, and out of our criminal justice system, for good. Your donations prove that we can do the humane thing AND save community dollars, too



With your generosity, the Society launched a “bridge housing” program which replaces our previous REST shelter program. Bridge housing is an evidence-based approach which provides rooms for up to 14 people at a time who are coming directly off the streets and need a place to stay before accessing permanent housing. Why are bridge housing units so vital? When our HOT outreach workers are trying to assist people experiencing chronic homelessness and get them into permanent housing, the challenges are numerous: trying to find these people on the street every day; struggling to communicate with them when they do not have (or have lost) their phone; attempting to compile the documents needed in order to obtain a housing voucher; and assessing their health for an appropriate housing solution. With bridge housing units we can help people get off the streets and stabilize faster, better and with more humane treatment while continuing to help them find more permanent housing.

As always, we could not do such amazing work without the steadfast support of people like you! Our donors and volunteers are here with us every day as we face these challenges, shoulder to shoulder, in this effort to find lasting solutions that work for each individual situation. We are grateful for your support and partnership in helping us to end chronic homelessness in Marin by 2022.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Christine Paquette, Executive Director

EVERYONE BENEFITS

Jasmine did not believe we could help her

JASMINE had always known she could turn to her parents for guidance on raising her children Shiloh and Lindy. When Jasmine's marriage ended, her parents wanted to help but their apartment was much too small to add three more people. Suddenly, Jasmine's worst fear was realized. She and her children became homeless.

No longer able to afford childcare, Jasmine had to stop working to look after her children. Without an income, she felt defeated. By the time Jasmine came to our Housing Help Desk, she had given up hope.

Thanks to you, the Society specializes in addressing the complex issues that cause and perpetuate homelessness. When our housing counselors discovered how much Jasmine's parents wanted to help, we brought the family together and proposed a new plan. This set the wheels in motion to improve everyone's circumstances. You found a way for this extended family to pool their resources.

Counselors quickly helped find a larger apartment for all five of them to share. You paid their security deposit and first month's rent to get them started. After that, this family began to thrive!

With supportive grandparents at home, Shiloh and Lindy had loving childcare at no cost. Jasmine was able to go back to work and contribute to household expenses. Her parents felt productive and closer to their grandchildren in their new live-in roles.

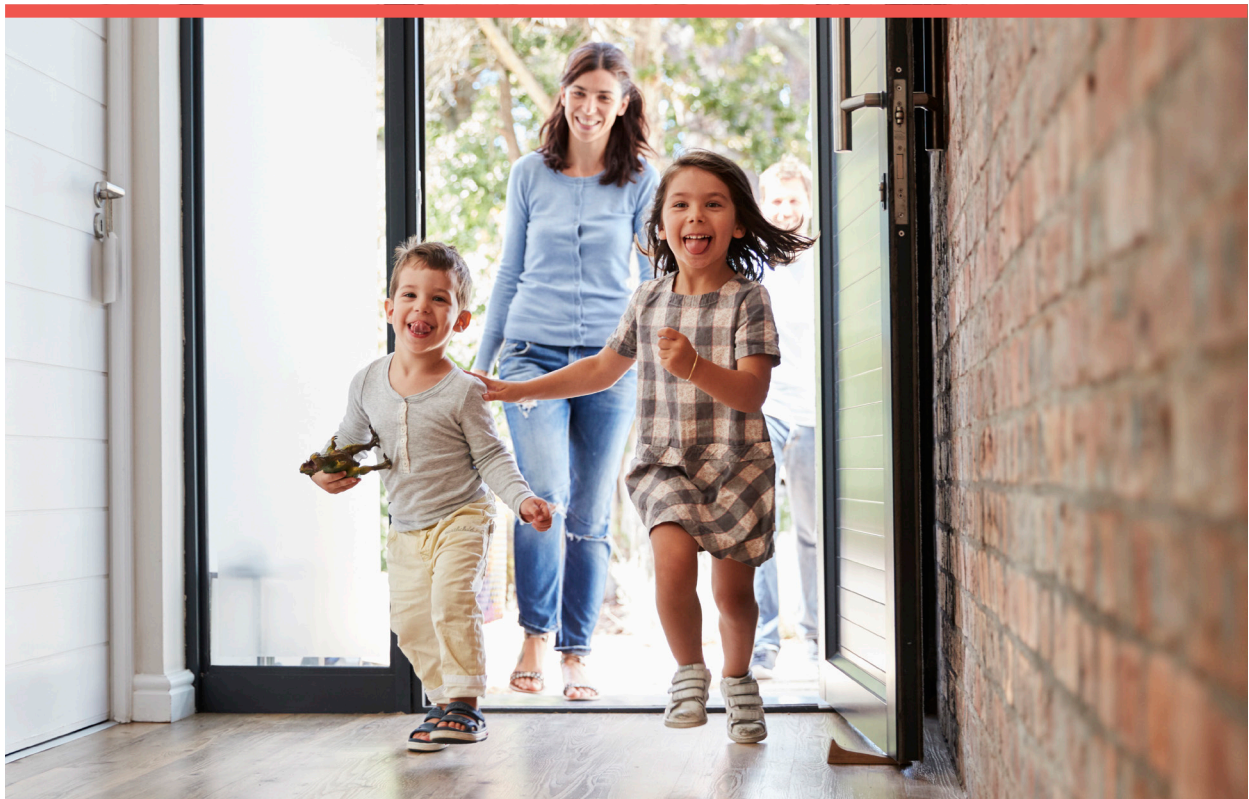
Today, Jasmine continues to receive expert counseling in follow-up visits to the Help Desk, learning how to manage her budget, shop smarter and save for future emergencies.

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING WORKS!

Creative problem solving allows SVDP's Housing Help Desk team to implement practical solutions for each family's unique set of difficult problems.



Last year, you found a way to secure sustainable housing for **51** extremely low-income homeless families, helping **69 adults** and **81 children** find their way back home.



HOT TEAM SPOTLIGHT: CHARLOTTE AND JEFF

THE SOCIETY'S HOT TEAM BUILDS TRUST.

HOMELESS OUTREACH TEAM (HOT)

Charlotte Stanton and Jeff Helvig bring a unique combination of education, experience, and personal determination to the daunting task of ending homelessness for the most vulnerable people on our streets.

CHARLOTTE STANTON



You can often find Charlotte out on the streets, carefully working to build trust with individuals who are barely surviving outdoors. She begins by simply saying hello and opening her heart to them without judgement. At first, most people are suspicious of her interest. They have been let down in the past with broken promises and false hopes. When the timing seems right, she

helps them fill out the “Vulnerability Index” used by HOT to make sure that the people with the highest level of difficulties get supportive housing and services first.

“Expecting people with multiple disabilities to show up for appointments just doesn’t work. Our HOT Team brings services directly to the streets. We qualify people for essential housing subsidies and medical care, including help recovering from trauma and isolation. It takes patience and often several attempts before someone begins to trust that we can help.”

Charlotte came in on the ground floor to implement HOT, a countywide collaborative that SVDP launched in 2016 to house people experiencing chronic homelessness. She grew up in Oakland and was homeless as a teen. Life turned around for her when she discovered her passion for helping others. After graduating from Mills College with a degree in research and psychology, a research job at Stanford opened Charlotte’s eyes to her preference to work hands-on with people in need.

She is a powerful advocate for each person she guides through HOT to housing.

“To me working with people ‘where they are at’ sometimes means sitting right down on the pavement to talk with them.”

ON THE STREETS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

JEFF HELVIG



Jeff came to HOT with a degree in psychology plus twenty years of case management experience at Buckelew Programs, a mental health housing provider. Jeff is pursuing his master's degree in social work from Boston University while working with those who are hardest to serve through HOT.

Jeff says, "I really like this work, solving different challenges every day. It is exciting for me to see such tangible results."

He described an older woman struggling with schizophrenia and substance abuse who kept cycling through the system. Jeff met her after she

successfully completed a detox program but could not maintain her recovery when she returned to the streets.

Jeff enrolled her in HOT. She stayed in one of SVDP's bridge housing units while Jeff helped her qualify for a housing subsidy, find a long-term housing solution, and get the medication needed to stop the hallucinations she was experiencing. He was heartened to see her chatting with friends recently in a way that showed how much her condition has improved since they met.

"Charlotte and I walk hand in hand with these folks who are hurting. We see firsthand how consistency, persistence, kindness, and flexibility get the results needed to help people lead the decent life they deserve."

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING WORKS!

The HOT Team now serves as the foundation for a triage-based coordinated entry system across Marin, prioritizing housing for those with the most complex problems.



Two years after initializing HOT, this collaboration with our partner organizations has resulted in supportive housing for **72 people** previously experiencing chronic homelessness.



Eye to eye with crisis



TERRI AND STEVE share a volunteer shift at SVDP's Housing Help Desk, offering financial aid, housing counseling, and practical problem solving to people experiencing homelessness.



MEET TERRI GECK

Terri can see how meaningful it is for people to be heard and receive concrete assistance.

She says, "Every person I sit down with has a unique story. I often marvel at how one bad decision or unfortunate accident can have a terrible cascading effect. It just breaks my heart."

She notes that listening without judgment got easier with practice. She has tremendous respect for the resilience and motivation of those she meets.

"I'd love to see our elected officials spend a day at the Help Desk to understand what it is really like to live on the edge."

Terri volunteered at her children's school while they were growing up, and now works part time at a dentist's office. She got involved at the Help Desk after hearing inspiring success stories from her husband Duane, an attorney serving on SVDP's Board of Directors. Now she is the one bringing home the stories!

Although she did not know what to expect meeting face-to-face with people experiencing homelessness, it turns out Terri learns something new each day. She likes gently walking people through the process of describing their difficult and often painful situation, so she can understand how to help. Sadly, most people she sees have lost their homes and are struggling to get back on their feet. The focus of the Help Desk is to figure out how to end each person's homelessness, and Terri is heartened to know she helps move people toward that housing goal.

She says, "I feel so grateful for everything I have. I've been lucky my whole life, and I'm happy to give back."

MEET STEVE RAYBURN

Steve grew up in San Anselmo. An Army veteran, he retired three years ago from PG&E, and now enjoys the time he and his wife can spend caring for their many grandchildren.

In addition to his weekly stint as a counselor at the Housing Help Desk, Steve has actively volunteered at his beloved St. Raphael parish for 25 years where he regularly makes home visits to prevent homelessness. Steve believes he is called to service. His 26-year-old son, who died in an accident a few years ago, often said, *"Life is hard, be nice to people."* Today Steve believes he is living out his son's legacy.

"So many people we see in our community, just need a little help. They have so much potential."

For example, Steve described a young woman with an infant who fled an abusive marriage and called SVDP for help. While eligible for a housing subsidy, she had no personal possessions or furniture for the empty apartment. Steve and other SVDP home visit volunteers provided the basics to turn her empty room into a home where she and her child could begin their new life. No longer alone, this sweet young family is now flourishing.

Steve says, "This work is truly a blessing. At SVDP, we believe in helping people as much as we can."

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING WORKS!

Director of Client Services, Connie Borges, provides expert training and knowledge for Housing Help Desk volunteers to tackle complex situations. Connie's decades of experience and gift for problem solving are invaluable to finding housing solutions.



Data shows that **secure housing** is the most important step to improved health and self-sufficiency.

Bequests Provide Housing

Last year the Society received two very generous bequests from the **Estate of Kenneth Edlin** and the **Estate of Gail M. Suchocki**. These gifts were used to purchase a house in Novato to provide community living for people experiencing chronic homelessness. This five-bedroom home will be used now and into the future to provide supportive housing for people who are unable to live independently.

For more information, or to receive a complimentary Estate Planning Organizer, please contact Deputy Director Suzanne Walker at 415-454-3303 x 17 or swalker@vinnies.org.





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Together, finding a way to end suffering every day.

