



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL  
SOCIETY OF MARIN

We are ending  
chronic homelessness  
in Marin



## LEARN ABOUT CARLENE

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# At St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, Carlene found help

**CARLENE WAS 56** and had a serious drinking problem. She lost her friends, her home, her job, and ended up living on the streets of Marin for many years. Carlene tried to get help but bounced in and out of detox programs and shelters without success.

After becoming completely blind in one eye and beginning to lose sight in her other eye, Carlene kept drinking to ease her pain. She sustained many injuries due to walking into traffic or falling that resulted in frequent hospital visits and police arrests. Looking at Carlene, it was impossible to imagine that she would live much longer.

Undaunted, our supporters never gave up on what might be possible for Carlene. They helped us launch our Housing Outreach Team (HOT) program, that began by helping her move into a motel room with consistent support from an experienced case manager.

Thanks to our supporters, St. Vincent's provided the shelter, food, and supportive

services that Carlene needed to get better safely—off the streets. Carlene's health began to improve, eliminating her emergency room visits. Her thinking cleared, and she eventually gave up drinking altogether.

### THE SOLUTION TO CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IS HOUSING

Carlene's case manager helped her find a long-term solution so she could live independently despite her blindness, including a federal housing voucher, medical care, rental deposit, and basic furnishings. Because our supporters believed in the "impossible" Carlene is now living in good health in her own apartment with a live-in caregiver and a whole new chance for a better life.



**"IT FEELS LIKE I HAVE FINALLY WOKEN UP FROM A BAD DREAM. SOMEONE DOES CARE. THANK YOU FOR HELPING ME."** —*Carlene*

## STREAMLINED STRATEGY

Our Marin collaborative is successfully housing the most vulnerable people in Marin **42% faster** than before by meeting weekly with 12 community partners, finding solutions to veteran and chronic homelessness — one person at a time.



FROM  
HOMELESS  
TO HOUSED



By using coordinated **housing first** strategies with our community partners throughout Marin, County officials report that Marin has **reduced chronic homelessness by 28%**.

## THE WIN-WIN FOR MARIN

### HOUSING FIRST SAVES \$14 MILLION

**By dramatically reducing the costs of repeated hospitalizations and incarcerations**, our community saves approximately \$42,706 per person each year when supportive housing is found for one chronically homeless person suffering from complex mental health and physical disabilities.

Right now, St. Vincent's and our collaborative partners' *housing first* strategy is saving our community approximately \$14<sup>1</sup> million annually by housing 329 of these vulnerable individuals.

Un-housed cost per person	\$62,473
Housed cost per person	\$19,767
Total savings per person	\$42,706*

Taxpayers benefit from reduced costs and *everyone* benefits from a more **positive business environment** and improved community health and well-being.

### HOUSING FIRST SAVES LIVES

**Poor health is both the cause and result of homelessness.**

Although weather-related deaths are rare for people struggling to survive on the streets, many curable diseases become life-threatening when untreated, including heart disease, cancer, liver disease, HIV/AIDS, pneumonia, and tuberculosis.<sup>2</sup>

The average **life expectancy** for people experiencing homelessness is **only 42-52 years, compared to 78 years** for the general population.

When chronically homeless people with complex health, mental health and physical disabilities have *supportive* housing they can access critical medical treatment and preventive care without resorting to using costly ambulances or hospital emergency room services.

<sup>1</sup> \*Based on Santa Clara 2015 6-Year Study [www.destinationhomesc.org/homenotfound/](http://www.destinationhomesc.org/homenotfound/)

<sup>2</sup> [www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/health.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/health.html)



# Is there **good news** in Marin about veteran and chronic homelessness?

**IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR CHRISTINE PAQUETTE TO SEE THAT THE WAY MARIN COUNTY WAS TRYING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH ITS HOMELESS CRISIS WAS ALL WRONG.**

For the people struggling with homelessness for the longest time, the system wasn't working. As the executive director of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, Paquette knew someone had to shake it up, to turn it on its head. Not only to help get chronically homeless people off the streets with a roof over their heads—but to give them dignity with a decent place to live.

Like many of you, I looked at homelessness as this headache-inducing problem that seemed impossible to solve. In the Bay Area, for example, it's just gotten worse and worse, increasing by double digits in most places in 2019. But not in Marin. Incredibly, the number of chronically homeless people on the streets here has gone down by 28%.

Is this an anomaly, or have Paquette and the county's **Marin Alliance to Solve Homelessness** (MASH) found a cure for chronic homelessness that could be a model for the rest of the country?

The tide began to turn in 2016 when Paquette and her colleague Howard Schwartz helped launch the **Homeless Outreach Team** (HOT), a

collaborative effort that brought together various nonprofit organizations, law enforcement and government agencies and got them all working together together to end chronic homelessness. As she says, "one person at a time," beginning with the most hard-core cases.

"Now the most desperate people on our streets are getting the help they need," says Andrew Hening, director of homeless planning for the City of San Rafael, praising St. Vincent's as an "innovative and dedicated partner."

At 55, Paquette is no newcomer to Marin or the homeless issue. She grew up in Tiburon, graduated from Redwood High in 1984 and went on to get a bachelor's degree in English from UC Berkeley. In college, living near Peoples' Park, she saw homelessness close up.

Later, balancing the demands of being a mother of two children with a career in public service, Paquette first raised money to support the work of St. Vincent's and became executive director in 2013.

For her work to end homelessness, she was honored in 2020 with a Heart of Marin Excellence in Leadership Award by the Center for Volunteer & Nonprofit Leadership in San Rafael.

**Q The Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) helps the neediest people first, the chronically homeless. But wasn't that always the case?**

**A** In the past people said, "It feels almost impossible to help the people hardest to serve, so we'll do our best to help everyone else." But that was backwards thinking. So, we actually turned that system upside down. Now the people we're going to help first are the people who are the hardest to serve. And, by doing that, MASH has permanently housed more than 329 people that everyone said were too tough to help. We've housed them in Marin and they're staying housed at a 94% success rate, higher than the nationwide average of 85%.

**Q How often does the collaborative meet and who's involved?**

**A** We meet every week for at least two hours. More than 12 agencies get together, including Marin County Health and Human Services. We also have a whole team focused on housing veterans. St. Vincent's received a Kaiser grant which gives us a full-time veteran's outreach person out there every day. As a community, we will soon end veteran homelessness in Marin.

**Q During the lock down, were you able to serve meals at your free Dining Room?**

**A** When the governor said to go home, I worried about what that meant for St. Vincent's and the people who rely on us. But by the next day we were serving takeout meals and the county was pitching in to help us with emergency food until we were able to supply hot to-go meals ourselves.

**Q The pandemic was hard on everyone, particularly people experiencing homelessness. But were there some silver linings that actually helped your effort to house people? I'm thinking of the state's Project Homekey, which turns motels into shelter for homeless people.**

**A** This is the first time we've been able to put groups of people experiencing homelessness into motel programs. There have been a lot of silver linings in the



homelessness services arena because of Covid. Sometimes we look at each other and say, “Can you believe we’re buying motels?” We didn’t think we’d ever get that kind of support.

**Q There has also been some community confusion and opposition to programs like Project Homekey. Is there pushback from people who say, “Fine, we want to end homelessness, but we don’t want homeless people living on our block or in our neighborhood?”**

**A** Sure, that’s understandable. When we launch housing programs in Marin, they are exceptionally well-run. Once we get the chance to show residents how people can live together without conflict, we see neighbors creating welcome baskets for our clients, because they realize that nothing terrible is happening and it feels good to give people a new chance for a decent life.

**Q Let’s put a human face on this issue. Is there a particular case that stands out in your mind as an unlikely success story, one that really moved you?**

**A** There are so many, especially since we’ve been working with this collaborative. But there is one story of a woman who was mentally ill and on the streets screaming every day. The police knew her, the businesses knew

her. Our case manager was able to locate a place in Nevada for her to live on her \$1,000 monthly disability income. We paid our dining room staff to help truck her stuff in a U-Haul. She showed up to our office on moving day with a little goldfish in a plastic bag, ready to go. She’s been living in her own apartment and paying her own bills for many years now. With a roof over her head, she was able to turn things around.

**Q Let’s say you end chronic homelessness in Marin. Wouldn’t that make Marin a magnet for every homeless person who wants to be housed by you?**

**A** That’s a great question. There has been a lot of research on that very topic, including researchers who have put GPS trackers on people experiencing homelessness to understand how people move around. When they become homeless in Marin, they stay in Marin because it is the area they know. When they become homeless in Sonoma County, they stay in Sonoma County. We can end chronic homelessness in Marin without worrying about a migration. Instead, our work can be a model for other communities to end homelessness in their own areas.

**Q All of this sounds expensive when you first hear about it. How much is all of this costing? Or does it actually save money?**



**A** Studies show it costs about \$60,000 a year for a person to be homeless on the street due to hospital, incarceration, and other costs. We have seen people with 20 ambulance rides a year needed from downtown San Rafael to Marin General at \$2,000 per ride. And that’s not even counting the cost to area businesses. Keeping a person housed costs about \$20,000. So, we’re saving millions of dollars by doing it this way and we’re saving lives at the same time.

**Q It sounds like you’ve come up with a winning formula.**

**A** After a while with MASH, we got to the point where we could say, “Wait a minute, we have identified the client, we can get him or her an ongoing case manager, a landlord is willing to house that person and, thanks to the Marin Housing Authority, we have a housing voucher so they

can afford to stay housed.” It was an amazing moment when we realized that together we may have found the answer. So far, very few communities across the country have been able to put together a formula like this.

**Q When you speak to groups, I imagine a question you often get asked is how can I help?**

**A** When residents understand the complexity of homelessness, this is a huge asset to us. If you want to volunteer, that is wonderful. If you can send us a donation, we promise to use it wisely. But, in the end, just by understanding that housing first is the solution, we know we can count you as part of our team. While there’s more work to be done, we invite everyone to join our effort to end this terrible suffering in our community forever.



## COLLABORATION: KEY TO SUCCESS

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### ENDING HOMELESSNESS

**Our single collaborative focus is to end veteran and chronic homelessness in Marin. We're nearly halfway there!**

Together, we formed the Marin Alliance to Solve Homelessness (MASH) to secure permanent supportive housing solutions tailored to each person's specific needs. At our weekly meetings, our goal is to house at least six (6) chronically homeless people per month, no matter how complicated each situation may be.

We have already housed 329 vulnerable people with a successful housing retention rate of 94%.

*This is one of several houses St. Vincent's supporters have opened to get more people off the streets.*

### MARIN ALLIANCE TO SOLVE HOMELESSNESS

Adopt A Family of Marin  
Bucklew Programs  
Catholic Charities  
City of San Rafael  
Community Action Marin  
County of Marin  
Downtown Streets Team  
Homeward Bound of Marin

Marin City Health & Wellness Center  
Marin Community Clinics  
Marin Housing Authority  
North Marin Community Services  
Opening Doors Marin  
Ritter Center  
St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin





## JOIN US: BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

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### JOIN US TO END VETERAN AND CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS IN MARIN

Your gift right now is critical to **building on five years of proven success**. Marin County's community-wide effort has already **housed 329** veteran and chronic homeless people and overhauled our County's "system of care" to become more effective. Let's keep going!

Individual gifts make a huge difference by providing emergency gap funding. Because government grant funding is strictly limited, flexible **emergency gap funding** from donations is key to securing long-term housing solutions. For example, gifts can be used to secure a few nights in a hotel room for a vulnerable person just exiting a hospital while waiting for a housing unit. Flexible dollars can also be used for temporary storage, rental deposits, temporary rent, or move-in costs for things like bedding and essential furnishings or cookware. Donations are sometimes needed to cover travel expenses for a client to reunite with family members for a housing solution outside the area.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please join St. Vincent's campaign to end veteran and chronic homelessness. We invite you to give as generously as you can by:

1. Using the enclosed gift envelope for your tax-deductible donation
2. Giving online: [www.vinnies.org/donate](http://www.vinnies.org/donate)
3. Contributing by mail: St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin, PO Box 150527, San Rafael, CA 94915

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin is a nonprofit charitable 501(c)(3) organization, all donations stay in Marin. EIN #94-1207701



*St. Vincent's team of professional case managers works seven days a week to locate and help people navigate their way to find safe, supportive housing solutions.*



**JOIN US: BE PART OF THE SOLUTION**

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## Now, if you've read this far, meet Mitch...

Thanks to our supporters, St. Vincent's helped Mitch, a veteran who had been homeless for several years, to access a housing voucher from the Veterans Administration and search for his family. Then our case managers broke through some bureaucratic barriers that made it possible for Mitch to move into a cottage in northern California—reuniting him with the daughter he thought he had lost forever.



**A top priority for St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin is to end all veteran homelessness this year. Again, we invite you to be part of the solution for ending homelessness in Marin.**

**PLEASE GIVE**

[www.vinnies.org/donate](http://www.vinnies.org/donate)

St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin

PO Box 150527, San Rafael, CA 94915

*Note: The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Marin extends its deepest appreciation to our donor who contributed the funds for this booklet to increase community support for ending homelessness.*



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