

FROM THE

ROOFTOPS

SPRING / SUMMER 2014



MOUNTAIN VIEW EMERGENCY FAMILY SHELTER

Hope for Homeless Families

Henry and Elizabeth have been homeless on and off for the past four years. Unable to maintain work, they've bounced between friends' and families' houses, sometimes sleeping in their car or a motel—when they could afford it.

If their future seemed uncertain before, it became increasingly apparent when the couple found out they were having a baby.

They began seeking help and, in December, only two weeks after the birth of their baby boy, they moved into SHELTER,

Inc.'s Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter.

At Mountain View, every bed in every room is occupied, with about 10 families living in the shelter at once. And when the weather turns chilly in

the fall, extra beds are set up in the living room to allow more families like Henry and Elizabeth to take shelter from the cold.

"If we didn't have somewhere to lay our heads we would probably be living in our car," says Henry.

At Mountain View, residents receive more than just a cot to sleep on and a hot meal. For an average of 90 days, each family works with a case manager one-on-one to identify barriers preventing them from overcoming homelessness. They also have access to an employment specialist, parenting and nutrition classes, tutors and counseling.

Since moving into the shelter, Henry has met regularly with the employment specialist to identify career options. He has gotten his forklift license and has a renewed faith in the future. "I think we're going to make it."

"Mountain View is one of the greatest places I've ever had a chance to go to," says Henry. "I didn't know places like this existed."

That's because they don't—at least not in Central and Eastern Contra Costa County. Mountain View is the area's only

emergency shelter that houses men, women and children—allowing homeless families to stay together. Unlike many shelters, Mountain View serves mostly young families with the average age of a child around 5 and the average age of a parent around 28.

"We offer a critical service to the homeless in this county," said Terry Webb, the Case Manager at the facility. "I've seen hundreds and hundreds of families come through here. Rarely do I see the same people come through a second time. The idea to end homelessness works."

The shelter relies heavily on volunteers and donated items. Despite thousands of donations in food and supplies, every year the shelter struggles financially and faces an uncertain future. This year is no different.

We're asking you, our readers, to consider giving a little extra this year so that Mountain View can continue to serve homeless families. Please help us raise \$25,000 towards our \$78,000 gap by June 30th. Over 140 men, women and children rely on the shelter every year and the facility is an important step for homeless families working toward self-sufficiency.

While Mountain View's services are free to residents, the cost of housing and caring for a family is not. For just one person, it costs an average of \$41/day. Over a three month period, that amounts to \$3,690.

You can help invest in the future of a child and a family by giving one safe night to a person in need for \$41. Or giving a whole week of security for \$287.

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DONATE Support the Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter, by returning the envelope inside with your donation, visiting shelterincofccc.org or scanning the QR Code with your phone.



UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING CLEANING SUPPLIES DRIVE

Help keep our facilities clean by donating new cleaning supplies.

- Laundry Detergent
- Paper Towels
- Sponges
- All-purpose Cleaner
- Window Cleaner
- Brooms/Mops/Buckets
- Toilet Bowl Brush
- Garbage Bags

Contact TheresitaG@shelterincofccc.org for more info. Donations can be delivered to 1815 Arnold Drive in Martinez 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday.

SWING FOR SHELTER

MONDAY
JULY 21ST, 2014

Help end homelessness at the 23rd Annual Swing for SHELTER Golf Tournament. A golf scramble format will be followed by no host cocktails, a silent auction and dinner. *Not a golfer but still want to enjoy the festivities? Join us for dinner!*

To register, visit shelterincofccc.org and click on special events or contact Elaine at (925) 957-7566 or ElaineC@shelterincofccc.org.

HIKE FOR SHELTER

SUNDAY
OCTOBER 19TH, 2014

Enjoy sweeping panoramas of the East Bay while hiking to end homelessness with SHELTER, Inc. on Mount Diablo. With three trail options, the event has something for all hiking abilities!

For more info, visit shelterincofccc.org and click on special events or contact Chris at (925) 957-7598 or ChrisF@shelterincofccc.org.

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Imagine you're a single parent with two children, working hard but barely making ends meet. Your asthmatic daughter comes down with the flu and is out of school for two weeks. There's no one who can stay home with her but you. However, you don't get paid sick time and that means your monthly income just got cut in half. Now the rent is due and you simply don't have it. Rather than facing the humiliation of eviction, you pack your kids, clothes and a few toys and quietly leave your apartment one night, going to stay with a friend who offers her couch. You keep going to work and your kids to school, but it will take you months to save up enough for a deposit on a new place. And then your friend's landlord finds out you're staying there and threatens to evict her so you have to leave. Now where do you go?



It's difficult to imagine losing your home, your possessions, your dignity. It's terrifying to consider the possibility of losing your children. Yet this happens every single day in Contra Costa County. The first place for many in the journey to get back up on their feet is SHELTER, Inc.'s Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter in Martinez. Scared, tired and hungry, families arrive at the shelter not sure what to expect and fearful they'll lose their children to foster care. Instead, what they find is a safe, nurturing place that provides a roof over their heads, case workers, tutors, employment specialists and therapists to start them on the road to ending their homelessness. For five consecutive years, at least 93% of the families moved from the shelter into housing—a remarkable achievement.

Every day, civic and faith groups, businesses, and scores of volunteers provide meals, clothing and support. Unfortunately, it is a constant struggle to obtain the financial support to cover all the costs to operate Mountain View. This year the challenge is even greater due to a dramatic reduction in Federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program (FEMA) funding, a result of reduced congressional funding allocations and the sequester. And, Mountain View operates without any county funding which was discontinued nearly 10 years ago due to a county budget crisis.

I know many worthy groups and organizations ask for your support, but I guarantee there are few that offer a better return on your financial investment than taking a family off the streets of your community and giving them shelter and services that will end their homelessness, in most cases, forever. Thank you for considering SHELTER, Inc. and our Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter in your philanthropic planning this Spring.

Thank you for your generous and continuing support.

Tim O'Keefe

THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS MOUNTAIN VIEW CONTRIBUTORS

- Anonymous Local Private Foundation
- Ark Foundation
- Bernard E. & Alba Witkin Charitable Foundation
- Dean & Margaret Leshar Foundation
- Emergency Food & Shelter Program (EFSP)
- First 5 Contra Costa
- Five Bridges Foundation
- Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County
- Kaiser Permanente
- The Mervyn Brenner Foundation, Inc.
- Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church
- Parish of St. Joan of Arc
- Quest Foundation
- San Ramon Valley Kiwanis Foundation
- St. Timothy's Episcopal Church

FEEDING THE BODY AND MIND

Three volunteers cook dinner for families staying at Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter.

Sarah, a single mother of two, listens, taking careful notes as she learns about nutrition.

“No one ever taught me what was healthy and what wasn’t. I’m learning how to prepare healthy food for my family,” says Melissa a mother with one child.

On a recent Monday, they were among 18 others at the Mountain View Emergency Family Shelter in Martinez attending Food Smarts nutrition workshops. Hosted by Leah’s Pantry and funded by Kaiser Permanente, Food Smarts empowers homeless parents and their children to make positive changes in their diet and lifestyle.

“Our definition of self-sufficiency includes stable income and housing, as well as having the tools to make good choices, whether serving and eating healthy foods or putting a priority on being physically active,” says Tim O’Keefe, SHELTER, Inc.’s Executive Director.

Families also learn by example, observing volunteers working in the shelter’s large kitchen. Community and faith organizations

come together every day, donating, cooking and sharing meals with residents. “Volunteers are incredibly important to our organization; our food budget is less than \$1,000 a year, but we feed over 40 people, three times a day,” says Site Coordinator Martie Steinmetz.

White Pony Express is one organization that helps, delivering over 4,500 lbs. of fresh produce to the shelter since October 2013. The nonprofit is run completely by volunteers, toting extra fresh food from orchards, grocery stores and restaurants to people who may otherwise go without.

“The belief is in not creating more, but in sharing what is already there,” says White Pony Express’ Co-organizer Gary Conner.

Nutrition and shelters do not always go hand in hand; many serve inexpensive, high fat, high carb, canned food, but SHELTER, Inc. serves the whole person, inside and out. O’Keefe explains, “When we give parents and children the tools to make healthier choices, we know they are likely to continue making healthy choices after they leave our care and are in their own homes.”



SUCCESS STORY:

A Family Transformed

Tiffani was only 15 years old when her family was evicted from their home. Her mother used drugs and had abandoned the family, leaving Tiffani to fend for herself. Despite having been a straight A student, Tiffani dropped out of school and moved in with her boyfriend. She began using drugs, became pregnant, bounced between friends’ homes and in 2010 ended up in jail. The experience was a rude awakening, motivating her to enter a drug treatment facility where she was referred to SHELTER, Inc.

In April 2012, she moved into Mountain View Emergency Shelter where she received counseling and learned life management skills. Her boyfriend Chris saw Tiffani’s progress and enrolled in SHELTER, Inc.’s program as well. Less than a year later, they moved into a permanent home with their two children. “This place saved our lives,” she said. “To know we’re on the right path now, it’s a gift every day of our lives.”



Volunteer Mike Hegeler hands out information at a veteran's resource fair.

PROGRAM UPDATE:

Simple Acts Make Huge Impacts

Volunteers are the heart of every nonprofit, and for community based organizations like SHELTER, Inc., they're imperative. Whether volunteering once a week or once a year, every individual is a critical component of the organization's success.

In the Veteran's Service's Program, also known as Supportive Services For Veterans Families Program, a small group of volunteers are taking on the important task of listening. Members of this group often have good listening skills and a great deal of compassion.

Led by Felton Mackey, Outreach Specialist for the Veteran's Services Program, the group is visiting shopping centers, veteran's resource fairs and V.A. clinics to share information about SHELTER, Inc.'s services for homeless veterans.

Though their tasks sometimes involve posting flyers in businesses, the main responsibility of the group is to engage veterans in conversation and listen to their stories.

"The more you talk to them, the more you understand what they've been through," says Chris Maher, a former board member at SHELTER, Inc. and current volunteer.

By listening, the volunteers are able to build trusting relationships with veterans and determine whether SHELTER,

Inc. has services that will be helpful. Building trust is a crucial part of helping veterans feel comfortable enough to call for support.

"I like to let them know to research us," says Mackey. "I tell them, I'd like for you to look us up to see if this is something that can help you."

Sometimes, veterans will make the first step toward getting help by calling SHELTER, Inc immediately.

"That's a call they don't make easily. They want to put it off," said Maher. "It's key to get them to get it done while you're there."

SHELTER, Inc. has served over 300 veteran families since 2011.

Making that first phone call is the first step toward gaining access to housing, employment and health services, and a hopeful future.

"You can see their eyes light up when you help them," says Mike Hegeler, a volunteer and veteran.

If you know of a veteran who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, please have them call (925) 957-7579.

MEET THE NEW BOARD MEMBERS



LOUISE EVENSON

Louise served 20 years in the financial industry as a general agent for Lutheran Brotherhood and later as a group vice president at American Express Financial Advisors. Most recently, Louise retired after serving five years as a deployed major gift fund raiser for Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Louise's passion for volunteerism is apparent in her extensive list of activities, including serving on the alumni board of Concordia College and on a variety of church related boards in social services.

Louise has volunteered for SHELTER, Inc. for the past two years and serves on the Development and Swing for SHELTER committees. Louise and her husband, Paul, live in Alamo.



DR. MARY STAUNTON

Originally from Chicago, Mary moved to the Bay Area in 1989 when she was stationed at Travis Air Force Base. After her service in the Air Force, Mary joined Kaiser Permanente and settled in Walnut Creek.

She gives her parents credit for passing along their values of service to others and emphasis on contributing to one's community. In her work as a psychiatrist, Mary has served many different communities and has learned the importance of teamwork.

Since joining the Development Committee in 2010, she's gotten acquainted with SHELTER, Inc.'s team and has heard the success stories. As Associate Physician in Chief of Kaiser Permanente's Mental Health Services, Mary is proud of the hospital's long history of supporting SHELTER, Inc.



CORPORATE SUPPORT: Payless ShoeSource

As anyone with children knows, their feet may look small but they grow fast. For parents and children without homes, purchasing new shoes isn't always a possibility. Thankfully, every year since 2008 Payless Gives Shoes 4 Kids program has granted SHELTER, Inc. gift certificates to distribute to SHELTER, Inc. children.

This spring, over 45 children joined staff and volunteers at Payless ShoeSource in Pittsburg to choose a pair of shoes for their very own. For the children, choosing their own pair of shoes is more than a just a trip to the store. It's an empowering experience that allows the kids to take a sense of ownership and pride in their decision. The event is a hit every year and the children can be seen jumping around showing off their new shoes for weeks afterward.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT: From House to Home

On February 23rd, Walnut Creek United Methodist Church celebrated their 200th Extended Family Move-In. Once a month, since 1994 the congregation has generously provided all of the furnishings for a new family moving into a permanent home. Often, families make it through a SHELTER, Inc. program and into a place of their own, only to find they have very little to furnish their new apartment. From furniture and bedding to toiletries, volunteers from the church thoughtfully transform each place from a house into a home.

A huge thank you to all the volunteers and donors from the Walnut Creek United Methodist Church for their continued support of SHELTER, Inc. and for making an impact in their community.



DONOR CORNER: THANK YOU

SEPTEMBER 1, 2013 – MARCH 31, 2014

\$50,000 & ABOVE

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And to the 1,438 other donors, who we are limited by space constraints from listing, and made personally significant contributions up to \$2,499, your contributions will be acknowledged on the website at the end of the year!

LEAVE A PERSONAL LEGACY

When you review or create your estate plan, remember to consider the personal legacy you can create when you make a charitable gift. Naming SHELTER, Inc. as a beneficiary in your will, life insurance policy or retirement account is an ideal and simple way to leave a legacy that is a testimony to your personal values, while also providing support to SHELTER, Inc.



For more information, contact Cynthia Dial at CynthiaD@shelterincofccc.org

**Are you looking to make
a larger impact in your
community?**

SUPPORT
FOR SHELTER

Join Support For SHELTER, a group of like-minded individuals working together to support SHELTER, Inc. by supporting fundraising and awareness events.

Contact Julie Davis at mimi95@pacbell.net or (925) 932-5222 for more info.