



free from homelessness and family violence

NEWSLETTER

Welcome Home, Rachel!

The first thing you notice about Rachel Jones is her sunny disposition. “I don’t have Alzheimer’s. I say I have ‘sometimers,’” laughs the attractive senior citizen. “It’s all the medication I have to take.”

For most of her life, Rachel has been afflicted by ill health. But her hard work and enthusiasm helped her become a professional candy maker, trained by her father in the running of a high end chocolate-making business. “We supplied the Palace Hotel, the Fairmont, and the Mark Hopkins. Our specialty became boxes crafted from chocolate,” she says.

Unfortunately, her health problems worsened, causing her business to fail. Eventually Rachel lost her home. She rented an apartment next. Then she lost that, too.

Rachel lived in her van at the San Leandro Marina for four long years. The public bathrooms were her source of water to keep clean. But through it all, Rachel’s natural optimism helped her keep going. She had her dog, Slick, and that helped, too.

Rachel says she felt safe, once she established friendships with a group living in similar circumstances. One of them—who has become her best friend—told her about April Showers, a shower and hospitality program held at the Boys

and Girls Club every other Sunday.

That was where Rachel met Building Futures’ Homeless Outreach Coordinator, Jose Garcia. “Being with Rachel reminds you to enjoy the small things we take for granted,” says Jose. “Those small things are precious to those who have little.”

Rachel received permanent housing, furnishings, and ongoing support through our Welcome Home San Leandro program. (See article below.) Her favorite thing about her apartment? “The view of the hills and the wild turkeys outside. The peace.” She adds with her characteristic laugh. “I love doing my dishes; cleaning my bathroom. But my very favorite thing to do? The laundry!”



Rachel and Slick today

ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN SAN LEANDRO

Last year, the City of San Leandro launched a Homelessness and Housing Task Force to create a plan for San Leandrans living on the street. One result was the San Leandro Warming Shelter which has been open during rainy nights or cold weather for the past two winters. The shelter is staffed by Building Futures and hosted by the First United Methodist Church of San Leandro. April Showers is our valued partner in this effort. Guests are sustained by meals and donations provided by faith groups and community leaders.



Building Futures didn’t stop there. We joined forces with Alameda County Housing and Community Development—and were awarded 25 vouchers to provide permanent supportive housing for homeless, disabled San Leandro residents. The City of San Leandro then helped us advocate for street outreach funding from Alameda County Social Services.

Next, San Leandro Mayor Pauline Cutter connected us with the Rental Housing Association of Southern Alameda County, forging Northern California’s first Homeless Housing Compact. Already, several—like Rachel, above—have been linked with permanent housing!

Building Futures seeks donated items for Welcome Home San Leandro clients as they are housed. If you can donate dish sets, silverware, sheets and towels, toilet paper, or new cleaning supplies, contact Kaeleigh 510 357-0205, ext. 205, or kthorp@bfwc.org.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I started at Building Futures 23 years ago, a volunteer fresh out of college. Back then, we were a single overnight shelter for homeless women and children.

We have sure grown! Today, Building Futures—65 employees strong, with a \$3.5 million budget—provides an array of services to help our clients live free from homelessness and family violence.

Across our emergency shelter, domestic violence outreach, supportive housing, and housing assistance programs, our highest priority is linking our clients with a safe place to call home.

Our newest program, Welcome Home San Leandro, houses disabled and chronically homeless San Leandrans. Rachel Jones, one of the program's first clients, is profiled on page one, where you can also read about the evolution of Welcome Home San Leandro.

Meanwhile, our San Leandro Shelter, Sister Me Home safe house, and Midway Shelter are going strong and operating at capacity. You'll read about a Midway client's success on page three (see Natassia's story).

Building Futures remains committed to building public awareness of intimate relationship violence. During February's Teen Dating Violence Awareness Week, we mounted a major campaign called Love is Respect, which culminated in a teen-led event at the Barbara Lee Health Center. See page four for news of our awareness activities and outreach in San Leandro and Alameda.

The need for our services continues to burgeon—amplified by the challenge of the East Bay's exploding rental market. Our housing staff has had to be creative and entrepreneurial to maintain our powerful housing outcomes.

What keeps me going in this challenging housing climate? When everyone—our staff, donors, volunteers, cities, county departments, and partner agencies—pulls together to make a positive difference.

The very best thing is knowing that when our clients have a stable home, they can get back into the community. When a person who has been homeless for five years tells me with tears in their eyes, "I'll have a bedroom, living room, bathroom, and kitchen. In fact, you know what? I'll have a key!"

Sincerely,



Liz Varela



OUR MISSION

To build communities with underserved women and children where they are safely and supportively housed, free from homelessness and family violence.

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SEEKING LEADERS!

Building Futures' Board of Directors seeks experienced, enthusiastic individuals to help steward our agency and its work. Ideally, Board candidates will have a background in nonprofit finance or human resources, law, real estate and/or nonprofit development, or mental health. Absolutely essential is a belief that everyone deserves a safe place to call home. To learn more, contact n.heastings@comcast.net or 510-521-8534.



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Goal = Achieved

Natassia's spotless apartment and ready smile belie the Oakland native's troubled history.

She describes herself as having been a spoiled kid, "the one who always had candy for the whole neighborhood." The spoiled kid became a wild teen, then an adult who "partied too much." When Natassia's drinking destroyed her marriage, she lost custody of her two young daughters. Back at her father's house, her drinking worsened, causing her to lose a string of jobs. When her father retired to another state, Natassia was left homeless.

With nowhere to go, Natassia lived in her car. There began a period of hopelessness. "That was my lowest point," she says. "I was really scared. I drank more, just to sleep."

The day Natassia began living at Midway, her life began to change. She received support for quitting alcohol—but always relapsed. "I missed my daughters so much," she says. When she learned she was pregnant, her resolve to change grew. "We worked extremely closely with Natassia," said Midway Shelter coordinator Genevieve Sotelo. "She needed extra help and some very tough talk."

Natassia quit drinking—for her unborn baby and for her daughters. Soon she was employed as a caretaker for elderly clients.

Natassia says that Midway staff encouraged her sobriety every single day. She also received mental health services and joined Alcoholics Anonymous. Through our rapid re-housing service funded by Alameda County Social Services



"If you put your mind to it and work hard, Building Futures won't give up on you."

— NATASSIA

CalWorks program, Natassia qualified for rental assistance and supportive services that will last a full year.

In February, her application for a small two-bedroom apartment was accepted. She has given birth to a healthy baby girl and has regular visits with her two daughters. She is seeking shared custody of her daughters. Her next goal is to prepare for work as a medical assistant. She is proud to serve as an example of setting a goal and achieving it. "I will never be homeless again," Natassia says.

When asked the best thing about having a place to call home, she answers without hesitation. "Fixing breakfast," she says. "Preparing pancakes for my kids, in my own kitchen." Natassia continues with emotion, "I would say to anyone who needs help: If you put your mind to it and work hard, Building Futures won't give up on you."

IT'S OUR VILLAGE. LET'S MAKE IT BETTER.

ESTATE PLANNING: How Would You Like to Be Remembered?



As a member of the Building Futures family, you have already begun your legacy of help and hope for those regaining their lives after homelessness and family violence. You can continue this legacy with a planned gift that will extend your values after you are gone. **A simple bequest is a powerful statement of your belief that your neighbors in need deserve a second chance.** After your family is cared for, please consider including Building Futures in your estate plan. Suggested language is as follows:

"I give and bequeath to Cornerstone Community Development Corporation, dba Building Futures with Women and Children, of 1395 Bancroft Avenue, San Leandro, CA 94577, the sum of \$ _____ (or a specific item of property such as real estate, stocks or bonds, automobile, etc.) to be used as its Board of Directors determines."

It's simple to do—and means so much.

This message not intended to serve as legal or financial planning advice. Please consult your attorney or financial advisor. Our nonprofit tax ID number is 94-3100741.

TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Throughout the month of February, Building Futures conducted Teen Dating Violence Awareness activities in the communities we serve. We are proud to have worked closely with our partners in the San Leandro and Alameda Domestic Violence Task Forces. Special thanks to Alameda Family Services and the San Leandro's Barbara Lee Health Center!



YEAH student leaders led fun, educational outreach activities at Alameda High School.

**“Two-thirds
of teens who
are in abusive
relationships never
tell anyone about
the abuse...”**

(Teen Dating Violence
Awareness Proclamations
presented in Alameda
and San Leandro)



San Leandro High School teen leaders and Barbara Lee Center staff at the February event

THESE THANKS ALSO BELONG TO YOU

**“You picked me up when I felt I
couldn’t stand. I will never forget
what you did for me and my
children.” –Marnie**

**“I got a chance to grow up while
in the shelter. Now I’m looking
forward to the future.” –Jamila**

**“The Parent Support group
helped me to think out loud, in a
safe place, to recognize how my
stuff effects my child.”
–Rosemarie**

**“Thank you for the garden!”
–Yvonne**

**“It’s surreal to finally be in my
own place after two years. Can’t
thank you enough.” –Tess**

**“Thank you for never giving up
on me, and for loving me until I
could love myself.” –Jill**

