



free from homelessness and family violence

# NEWSLETTER

## OUR COMMUNITY IS KIND!

**F**or over a year, Community Impact LAB members (pictured) have gathered every month to cook a delicious, healthy meal for the women and children living at our San Leandro Shelter.

Community Impact LAB grew out of a desire to create opportunities for parents to take action against inequity and injustice, to pursue new ventures and develop skills, and to build a village of compassionate families. A cornerstone of the group is that parents participate in an array of activities alongside their children.

"Food is a universal love language that Community Impact Lab has been speaking for over a year," says CIL founder Xouhua Bowen. The first Tuesday of every

month, families convene in a member's home, and prepare a delicious meal for the 30 women and children at the shelter. "These few hours spent together gives us the opportunity to send love to our community through a delicious and healthy meal."

If you are interested in participating in CIL, email [info@communityimpactlab.org](mailto:info@communityimpactlab.org) or visit [www.communityimpactlab.org](http://www.communityimpactlab.org)

"Families volunteer with their kids because eating nutritious, fresh food is a privilege too many families aren't afforded," Xouhua says. "Marginalized women and kids



photo: Lorie Curtis

deserve more. We show our love and compassion through food!"

*To learn more about serving as a dinner cook for our San Leandro or Midway Shelter, please contact Lorie Curtis at 510-924-3092 or [lcurtis@bffc.org](mailto:lcurtis@bffc.org).*

## "I'M WORTH THE TIME."

### SUCCESS STORY FROM LATRESE FOWLER

**W**hen you meet Latrese Fowler, words that leap to mind are Poised. Engaging. Warm. She says that was not the case when she arrived at the San Leandro Shelter.



Latrese Fowler

"I was depressed and under terrible stress," she remembers. To make matters worse, she had a fractured foot. Latrese had left her husband because of abuse. For a while, she could afford the rent on her new place. After a dramatic rent hike, she was evicted. Two years of homelessness followed. Being homeless was bad enough. Worse was seeing her son only rarely. When Latrese became homeless, her ex-husband gained custody.

The judge told Latrese that he would change the order if she could show she had a place to live. "My son Cameron wanted to live with me again," she says. "He'd say angrily, 'If you cared, you'd get a place to live.' Rather than feeling motivated, I got more depressed."

Latrese's health issues worsened. After an 11-hour surgery on her foot, she contracted an infection, which led to a week's stint in the ICU. Back at the shelter, her depression was worse than ever. "I'd call my nephew, Edward, for moral support. He'd talk me through it," she remembers. Shelter manager Genevieve Sotelo

encouraged Latrese to try again for custody. "I felt ashamed for my ex to know how my life had gotten," Latrese says. She swallowed her fear and tried for more time with her son.

The staff at San Leandro Shelter made sure Latrese attended support groups. She was encouraged to make a success plan and stick with it. Her determination grew. Latrese received a little over \$300 monthly from General Assistance. With encouragement, she saved nearly every penny. She attended appointments and court dates using public transportation. She reached her goal of saving to furnish an apartment. She also purchased a 20 year-old car for \$200.

Building Futures helped Latrese apply and get approved for a Shelter Care Plus voucher. At last, she had a place to call home. "A year ago, I was homeless, depressed, and flattened by medical issues. Now I have a place. Last month, I drove my son to pre-prom photos at the Rose Garden." Cameron has graduated and is living with her while he prepares to attend Sacramento State University.

Latrese's nephew Edward remembers, "She used to call me, crying. Now I call her for advice. My aunt is testimony: A woman may have her back against the wall, but with the faith of a mustard seed, nothing is impossible."

Today, Latrese is happy to help her sister, a single mom, by babysitting. "But my biggest pride is my son seeing me rise to my feet," she says. Her plan for the future is focus on her health. "I finally feel I'm worth the time. Building Futures helped beautiful things to happen."

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I hope you're finding fun ways to enjoy the summer months. This is a time of energy and anticipation at Building Futures. Here are three important updates to give you an idea why:

**1. One-Stop Hubs are coming!** Alameda County is poised to launch 6-7 centralized hubs where people experiencing homelessness can receive assessment, support, and intake to shelters. Building Futures will play a leadership role in two of these hubs. The first is The Family Front Door, serving Oakland-based families. We have served as a key partner in this pilot program for over a year. The second hub will serve the Mid-County area. We'll conduct phone assessments for the entire area, and provide direct services for San Leandro and Alameda. We're preparing for the new model, which streamlines services needed most by Alameda County residents experiencing homelessness.

**2. Redwood Hills Townhomes Groundbreaking.** For a year, we've worked with Satellite Affordable Housing Associates on their Redwood Hills project: a 28-unit condo development in Oakland's Laurel District. "SAHA" broke ground on the site last month. Redwood Hills will open in fall 2018. Building Futures will staff an office at the site, providing needed support services to those who live there.

**3. Jazz it Up! 2017 a Hit:** Thank you to all who participated in Jazz it Up! this year. What a night! With your help, we raised \$55,000 to support our programs and services. You can view photos on the "events" tab of our website ([www.bfwc.org](http://www.bfwc.org)) or on our Facebook page! ([building.futures.san.leandro](https://www.facebook.com/building.futures.san.leandro)). We are also deeply grateful to the business leaders who sponsored the event or donated silent auction items—and to all who came!

Many know Building Futures as a provider of shelter for women and children. Thanks to our community's kindness and support, we are that and much more. Our programs and services help individuals and families address the obstacles they face to being safely housed. **Housing ends homelessness.** Your support for Building Futures really is an investment in improved lives and communities!

Sincerely,



Liz Varela



Jazz It Up! 2017 Event Committee  
photo: Marilyn Hulbert

## OUR MISSION

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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 [lvarela@bfwc.org](mailto:lvarela@bfwc.org).



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# ENDING HOMELESSNESS IN SAN LEANDRO



*Daniel Gardner, Homeless Outreach Case Manager, and Jose Garcia, Homeless Outreach Coordinator*

## SAN LEANDRO STREET OUTREACH TEAM

Our street outreach team provides help for San Leandro residents who are unsheltered and living on the street. Alongside SLPD officers, we connect people to our Winter Warming Shelter, medical care, mental health services; and access to income, food, laundry, and identification cards. Building Futures hosts a weekly laundry day. Clients are also served through monthly visits from the Alameda County Healthcare van. The City of San Leandro leads case coordination meetings with service providers including April Showers, Swords to Ploughshares, and the SLPD. Housing assistance and referrals are provided for those who qualify.

## IN HIS OWN WORDS: AUGUST ANGLEMYER

*August has been a Building Futures client for over a year. Recently he visited us after an absence of several weeks. He was in markedly improved health. He came because now that he is working, he wanted to present Building Futures with a donation of \$200. We are grateful for the gift—and happy to see August doing so well. August's own words follow:*

I grew up all around the East Bay, in a series of group homes. After that, I lived wherever I could. I was getting lunches at the St. Vincent de Paul lunch program, at the same church where Building Futures has its offices. I was in poor health and drinking a lot. Building Futures gave me a mailing address, access to food, and a bus pass when they were available. What helped me most was the positive reinforcement I received every time I came to Building Futures.

My confidence grew. I applied for a job as a piano mover. After a brief phone talk, I was told I could come in for work the very next day. It's funny, because since then I have seen them conduct many interviews before hiring. But I got to prove myself on the job.

I currently rent a room and can cover my basic needs. I may qualify for help getting a studio though Building Futures. That is what I'm working toward.

If there was a good part about being homeless, it's that I can understand and feel compassion for people and what they have been through. A negative thing was when someone, wanting to help me, would urge me to do something that would take advantage of someone else. I never wanted to do that. No matter how much I've struggled, I've always tried to better myself.

*Best wishes, August!*



*August today*

## THE SAN LEANDRO WARMING SHELTER

For the third year running, Building Futures and April Showers/Interfaith Homelessness Network partnered with the City of San Leandro on an overnight winter warming shelter. On nights when the weather was forecast for 40 degrees or colder or a 50% or greater chance of rain, the Warming Shelter was open. Guests received dinner, a warm, safe place to sleep, and breakfast. Our friends at First United Methodist Church hosted the shelter. This year, the site was also open every Wednesday, whether or not it was raining. In all, 131 San Leandro residents accessed the program, which was open 77 nights. The average number served each night was 30, but on several nights, the shelter provided refuge for up to 39.



*Volunteer dinner cooks from Bishop O'Dowd's Rugby team*

The Warming Shelter was funded by the City of San Leandro and Alameda County Social Services. Caring community members heroically responded to the call for supplies. Volunteers provided dinner every single night the shelter was open. Many thanks to all who made this service possible!

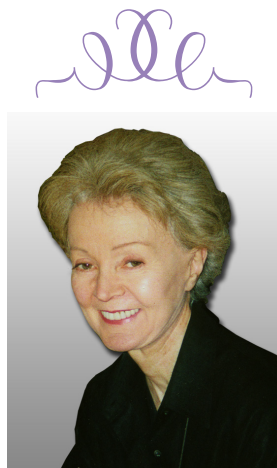


# OUR COMMUNITY MAKES LASTING GIFTS

## JOANNE MCKRAY: A LEGACY OF HELP AND HOPE

**D**onors, volunteers, and other stakeholders have made Building Futures a part of their lives. If you serve as our partner through volunteering or donations, you have already begun a legacy of help and hope. After your family is cared for, please consider including Building Futures in your estate plan.

A longtime friend of Building Futures passed away in December. Joanne McKray was a generous donor, with a special interest in Midway Shelter. As a volunteer, world traveler, and teacher, Joanne reached out to many who crossed paths with her in life. For several decades, she taught choral music, world cultures, and anthropology at Skyline High School.



*Joanne McKray*

"I knew Joanne through her many philanthropic works in Alameda," says Building Futures Board member Gayle Thomas. "She inspired everyone who met her."

As part of her estate plan, Joanne directed part of her Individual Retirement Account to support our work. By including Building Futures in her will, Joanne continues to help individuals in crisis, extending values beyond her time with us.

Most planned gifts are simple bequests. Designating a bequest to Building Futures is a powerful statement of your belief that your neighbors in need deserve safety and stability. 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 or stocks) to be used as its Board of Directors determines."

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

## EVERYONE COUNTS!

**E**very year, Alameda County conducts a point-in-time count of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. "EveryOne Counts" records the number of people staying in shelters and transitional housing on a given night in late January. The count also estimates the number of people who are unsheltered and living outdoors.

Building Futures staff members always help conduct EveryOne Counts. In January, volunteers arose at daybreak to walk the streets in the dark. In all, they recorded 5,629 people experiencing homelessness. 3,863 were unsheltered—living in tents, parks, vacant buildings, underpasses, and cars. 50% of those interviewed said they had lived in Alameda County for ten years or more before becoming homeless. Homelessness is not a choice: only 2% said they were not interested in being housed.

In Alameda County, the median asking rent is now \$2,593. This is 300% of the maximum Cal WORKS grant, seven times the maximum General Assistance grant, and nearly three times higher than the maximum SSI or Disability income.

The stark reality makes clear why Building Futures' programs and services are so critically needed today. "The dignity of people experiencing homelessness ... the dignity of our neighborhoods and our communities, is at stake," says EveryOne Home Executive Director, Elaine de Coligny.

Visit [www.everyonehome.org](http://www.everyonehome.org) for more details on Everyone Counts, Alameda County's plan for addressing the need, and ways you can get involved. Visit [www.bfwc.org](http://www.bfwc.org) for details on the work you support through your generous partnership with Building Futures.



*From left to right: Alameda County Supervisor Wilma Chan, Elaine de Coligny, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf*