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A New Beginning for Santa Barbara's Most Vulnerable

While New Beginnings' work began with its counseling services more than 50 years ago, it has grown into a countywide service agency not only supporting mental health, but also the homeless and vets.

"We're here to serve our most vulnerable community members with their most pressing problems," says Development Manager Michael Berton. "We've identified those to be mental illness and homelessness. We've seen the veteran population struggle with these areas even more and have a dedicated program for them now."

A major turning point came in 2003, when the nonprofit partnered with the city and the county to launch the "Safe Parking" Program, which provides safe, overnight shelter in monitored parking lots for people living out of their cars. The 2020 homeless count found that 51% of Santa Barbara County's unsheltered residents were living out of their cars.

When Safe Parking was started, big media outlets including *Rolling Stone*, *CNN*, and *The Los Angeles Times* took notice, lauding the program as a way off the streets for those on the brink of homelessness. Since 2003, New Beginnings has moved more than 2,000 people into permanent housing, making Safe Parking a standout among myriad national initiatives aimed at mitigating the deepening homelessness crisis.

New Beginnings is also the leading nonprofit service provider for homeless veterans in Santa Barbara County, housing 100 veterans and their families each year, all while providing comprehensive services aimed at keeping them off the street.

The agency's 50-year-old Counseling Center in downtown Santa Barbara provides mental health counseling and psycholog-

"I have been homeless for 40 years. The day I found out I could move into a new home, I discovered I had cancer. I lost all hope and wanted to die. The staff at New Beginnings wouldn't allow it. I can't put into words what they mean to me. They are the most intelligent, passionate, and reliable people I've ever met. I now have my own home blocks away from my treatment center and know I have a whole team of people supporting me."

– David Keith



ical testing and assessment to more than 600 at-risk individuals and families in the greater Santa Barbara area each year. It's 30-plus masters and doctoral level counselors offer their services at an average of \$13 per session thanks to the nonprofits exceedingly lean operation: 91% of revenue is spent on programs and clients.

In 2020, the agency put more than a quarter of its \$2 million a year budget – \$600,000 – back into the community; buying mattresses for its homeless clients, renting storage spaces, and covering rental costs. Whatever it takes to help.

For donors looking to make an impact and who want to know that their money is going straight into helping people, Berton frankly says: "New Beginnings is the most bang for your buck." 📌

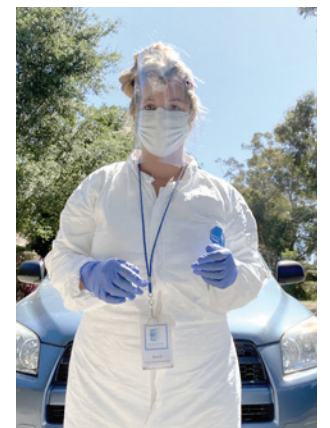


"It is tragic that mental illness and homelessness are so prevalent. Fortunately, our community has the resources and ability to address these issues head on. What we need is an organization to guide us. New Beginnings' leadership has the expertise, entrepreneurial spirit, and compassion needed to make real and long-lasting change in our community. I urge you to join me in advancing the mission of this wonderful organization."

– Honorable Susan Rose



Susan Rose, who helped launch Safe Parking when she was a County Supervisor, with her late husband, Allan Ghitterman, who served on New Beginnings' Board for many years and focused on the Counseling Center.



Safe Parking Goes Countywide

Every night about 150 people living out of their cars find a safe haven in scattered church, business, and nonprofit parking lots each night. The program keeps a low profile, with no more than one to fifteen clients at a site. They are in at 7 pm and out at 7 am.

New Beginnings is expanding Safe Parking into northern Santa Barbara County, where the needs are acute and growing. The agency spends roughly \$1,000,000 on the program per year. An initial government grant is providing seed funding for the expansion, so New Beginnings is seeking charitable donations and grants of at least \$250,000 to build program capacity.

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