

New Beginnings Winter News



New Beginnings' 2024 Annual Gala - A Night of Theater, Community, and Compassion Featuring Tom Griffin's *The Boys Next Door*



On November 2, 2024, New Beginnings proudly hosted its Annual Gala, featuring a moving production of *The Boys Next Door* by Tom Griffin. As part of our annual fundraising series designed to engage and educate the community on critical social issues, this year's focus was on mental health and permanent supportive housing.

The performance, directed by Jenny Sullivan with Rod Lathim as dramaturg, featured a standout cast that brought humor, heart, and poignancy to the stage. In just two days of rehearsal before the start of the evening show, the team pulled off a remarkable feat. Michael Nouri, John Kassir, Matt Cook, Sam Trammell, Chris Butler, Romy Rosemont, W. Earl Brown, Felicia Hall, Devin Scott, Nancy Nufer, retired Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson, and retired Judge George Eskin all delivered memorable performances that captivated the audience and underscored the play's themes with authenticity and compassion.

Sponsors were treated to an elegant dinner at Bouchon before the show, where they enjoyed expertly prepared cuisine and connected over their shared commitment to New Beginnings' mission. After the performance, a lively reception gave attendees the opportunity to mingle with the cast and reflect on the play's powerful message.

The Boys Next Door follows four men with mental disabilities living in a group home, supported by a dedicated social worker on the verge of burnout. Through a series of heartfelt and humorous vignettes, the production offered a deeply human look at the daily realities of those living with mental health challenges – mirroring the very work New Beginnings does every day through counseling, housing support, and case management.

(Continued on page 4)



Message from Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Greetings! I hope that this finds you all engaging in a healthy practice of self-care. The times, they are a-changing!

Incredibly, New Beginnings just celebrated our second year anniversary in our new south county collaborative center. We are nearing our first year anniversary in our Santa Maria office, and five years in Lompoc. We continue to grow, expanding our staff and services countywide. We need all of the volunteers we can get these days; in every area, with clients, on site, in the field, in the office. Please let us know if you have some time on your hands and want to get more involved.

2025 promises to be our busiest year yet, with veteran surge events, bringing Santa Barbara County ever closer to ending veteran homelessness; more Safe Parking spaces and effective collaborations countywide; great success with our most recent Vehicle Encampment Resolution project; and increased intake staff for our counseling clinic and life skills programs so that we can minimize wait times and connect more community members to critical mental health counseling.

This fall we will be welcoming back award-winning UK comedian Jonny Donahoe who will be reprising his role in the acclaimed one-character show, *Every Brilliant Thing*. Jonny and Paddy Gervers will also perform their newest show, *Jonny and the Baptists*, both at the Center Stage Theatre, this October 23rd – 26th. We hope to see you all there. And in the meantime, we hope to see you in partnership, in collaboration, and in good health and humor every day and then some.

– Kristine

From Struggle to Strength: Sam's Journey to Overcoming Anxiety and Building Confidence

Sam* came to New Beginnings seeking individual therapy to understand and address their anxiety and depression. These challenges were deeply rooted in their work life, childhood experiences with authority figures, and longstanding patterns of people-pleasing behavior. Sam also expressed a strong desire to cultivate self-compassion and build confidence in their roles both as a parent and an employee.

As Sam started their therapeutic work with New Beginnings' Counseling Center, their therapist suggested that they also utilize our Life Skills Parenting & Education Program through our Anxiety Skills Group. Through this group, Sam gained valuable insight into the physical symptoms of anxiety they experience, as well as effective tools to regulate these feelings. Techniques such as breathing exercises and sensory grounding methods – like listening to music or going for walks – proved helpful during moments of heightened anxiety.

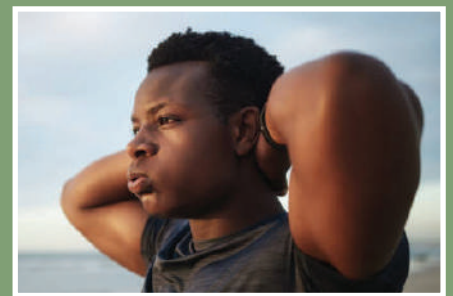
The group setting provided Sam with a safe and supportive space to share their personal experiences with anxiety. At

first, they were quiet and hesitant to open up, feeling nervous about speaking in front of others. However, over time, Sam grew more comfortable, eventually forming meaningful

connections with other group members. By the end of the program, Sam not only found solace in the community but also contributed by sharing valuable resources from the Santa Barbara and Goleta areas – many of which were free or affordable – that had positively impacted their own mental health journey.

Today, Sam expresses significant gratitude to New Beginnings, their counselor, and to the Anxiety Skills Group – saying that they never thought they would be in the mentally healthy place that they are today.

**Client's name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.*

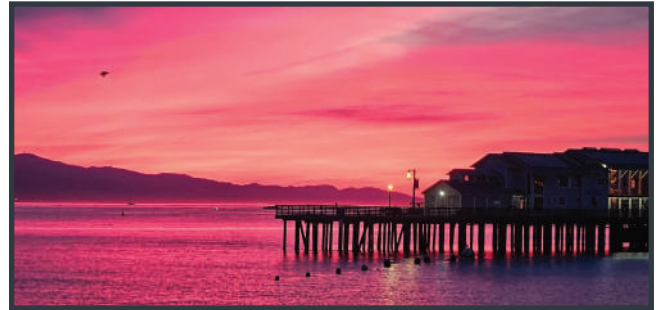


New Beginnings Participates in Santa Barbara County's Annual Homeless Point-In-Time Count

On the early morning of January 22nd, New Beginnings' dedicated staff and volunteers woke up at 3 a.m. to participate in Santa Barbara County's annual homeless count. With a start time of 4 a.m., our team hit the streets, driving through designated neighborhoods from Carpinteria to Santa Maria to help tally the number of individuals and families living in their vehicles.

This effort is a vital part of understanding the scope of vehicular homelessness across our county. By conducting this count each year, we can ensure we have an accurate snapshot of the number of people affected, which is crucial for securing grants and resources to help those in need. The data gathered also enables us to adjust our strategies and respond quickly if new areas with higher concentrations of vehicular homelessness are identified.

After hours of navigating dark streets and engaging with individuals who are often overlooked, the morning ended on a positive note. Volunteers and staff came together for a delicious community breakfast - a chance to decompress, share findings, and connect. It was an opportunity to reflect on the important work being done and discuss ways we can continue to support the most



vulnerable in our community.

The homeless count is not just about numbers – it's about ensuring that we have the right tools and information to advocate for those experiencing homelessness. New Beginnings is proud to be part of this crucial effort and remains committed to using this data to better assist those in need. We are grateful for the volunteers and community partners who continue to support our mission and look forward to working together to make a lasting impact.

Join Us as a Sponsor for Our 2025 Annual Fundraiser!

We're thrilled to announce **New Beginnings' 2025 Annual Gala on October 25th** – and we are in active search for Event Sponsors. This year, our focus is on the growing need for mental health services. The demand for mental health care has reached critical levels, and we are dedicated to providing accessible support to those in need.

Your support helps us continue our mission to address mental health, end homelessness for families, seniors, and individuals living in their vehicles, and provide essential assistance to veterans and their families.

This year, we are so excited to welcome back Jonny Donahoe for two performances of **Every Brilliant Thing** (October 24th & 26th), plus a special **preview (October 23rd)** and **Gala performance (October 25th)** of an all-new show: **Jonny and the Baptists: The Happiness Index** – making its Santa Barbara debut exclusively for our Annual Gala!

As a sponsor, you can play a key role in helping us raise the necessary funds to continue our essential work and raise awareness of mental health issues. As an added benefit, you will also receive complimentary tickets to the unique Gala Performance on October 25th, additional tickets to a performance on another date of your choice, access to our exclusive Sponsor Dinner on October 25th, recognition through our marketing channels, and more...



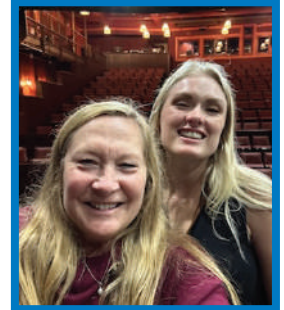
For more information or to become a sponsor, please contact us at development@sbnbcc.org or at (805) 963-7777 x122

The Boys Next Door...Cont.

(Continued from page 1)

The October 2024 gala welcomed over 200 community members and raised more than \$100,000 to support our programs. In the past fiscal year, New Beginnings served 2,125 unduplicated clients across Santa Barbara County. These funds will directly support our mission to provide stability, healing, and hope for those most in need.

It was a night that entertained, inspired, and reaffirmed our shared dedication to compassion, community, and lasting change.



*Thank
you*

We are grateful for, and would like to thank all of our 2024 Annual Fundraiser Sponsors:

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From Tragedy to Triumph: Lorena's Journey of Healing, Hope, and New Beginnings



Lorena and her boyfriend had been living a peaceful life in Santa Ynez when the pandemic hit, upending everything. Like countless others, both of them lost their jobs, and soon after, their tenants lost their income as well. With no steady income and limited savings, they were forced to leave their home. All their belongings went into storage, and with what little money they had left, they purchased a van, thinking it would provide temporary shelter as they navigated this new chapter.

But in 2023, and in the span of just a few months, Lorena lost both her boyfriend to cancer and her van in a tragic rollover accident. Grief-stricken, isolated from family and friends, and with nowhere to turn, Lorena found herself living in her car, struggling to find stability.

During this dark time, Lorena found herself in an abusive relationship. She made repeated attempts to leave, but with no safe place to go, she often found herself returning to the volatile situation. It was after one particularly violent encounter that Lorena saw an ad for New Beginnings' Safe Parking Program. Desperate for a

place where she could sleep safely, she reached out and enrolled. The program provided a confidential, secure location for Lorena to park each night, offering her the safety and peace of mind she desperately needed.

Through the support of the Safe Parking Program, Lorena was connected to a case manager who helped her access crucial resources through New Beginnings' Counseling Center and Domestic Violence Solutions. She began seeing a counselor at New Beginnings, whose support made an incredible impact on her healing. "I love my counselors," Lorena shared, her voice filled with gratitude. "They've made such a big difference in my life. I am just so thankful."

Lorena also began working with New Beginnings' Multi-Disciplinary Team, receiving guidance on substance abuse recovery, as well as assistance with employment and benefits. Each resource she accessed became a stepping stone toward rebuilding her life.

In November, just before Thanksgiving, and nearly four years after losing her home, Lorena received the news she had been waiting for: with the support of Safe Parking Housing Navigators, Lorena was finally going to move into an apartment of her own. With New Beginnings covering her deposit and CenCal assisting with the furnishings, Lorena was able to fill her new apartment with the essentials, turning it into a true home. Today, Lorena has been sober for over a month and has big dreams for the future. She is excited to return to school and pursue culinary classes – something she's always wanted to do.

Lorena's journey has been one of profound hardship, but also one of incredible strength, resilience, and hope. With the support of New Beginnings and its Safe Parking Program, she has found a path to healing and recovery.

Breaking Free: Tom's Journey from Struggle to Success



At just 23 years old, Tom* came to New Beginnings Counseling Center feeling like he had reached his breaking point. Struggling with severe Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Tom was trapped in a relentless cycle of compulsive behaviors driven by overwhelming

anxiety. Without a support system, and with little belief in his own abilities, he felt isolated, exhausted, and on the verge of giving up his dream of becoming a lawyer.

Tom began working with his New Beginnings counselor, who guided him through an effective treatment approach that included Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). With the support of

his counselor and the guidance of the licensed therapy supervision team, Tom embarked on the transformative process of Exposure Therapy.

Through gradual steps, Tom began with imagined scenarios, moved to virtual exposures, and ultimately confronted his fears hands-on. This approach helped him break the cycle of compulsive behaviors, rebuild his resilience, and restore his belief in his own strength.

Today, Tom is thriving. He has secured a paralegal position and was recently accepted to the law school of his dreams. His journey serves as a powerful reminder that, with the right support, transformation is always possible – even in the darkest moments.

At New Beginnings, we are proud to be part of Tom's incredible story. Programs like ours, and the funding that makes them possible, ensure that clients like Tom can experience lasting change and hope for the future. Thank you for your continued support.

**Client name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.*

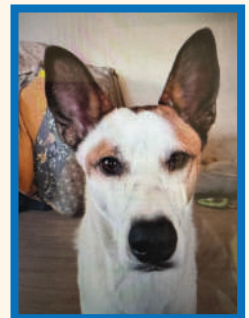
Healing Through Grief: Bill's Journey of Loss, Support, and Acceptance

Bill, an Army veteran, recently faced the sudden death of his beloved dog, Trevor. The loss intensified his grief and made it difficult to cope, exacerbating prior mental health challenges and leading him to withdraw from daily life. Struggling with depression, anxiety, and self-blame, Bill found it difficult to process the overwhelming emotions of his loss.

Fortunately, Bill lives at Johnson Court, a Veteran Permanent Supportive Housing Complex, where he was already connected to New Beginnings' Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program. The dedicated staff provided the support he needed to address both his grief and mental health, helping him begin to accept his loss and work through his emotions.

As part of his healing, Bill engaged in activities and forums to express his feelings. Dewane, New Beginnings'

SSVF Supportive Services Specialist, played a key role in his recovery, offering consistent encouragement and support. Bill also attended group therapy, worked with a VA Healthcare Specialist, and connected with other residents who had experienced similar losses.



Through these efforts, Bill found relief from the grief, depression, anxiety, and emotional turmoil that had overwhelmed him. He began enjoying long walks, talking with fellow veterans, and spending time in the Community Garden, where he shared memories of Trevor with others who understood his pain.

Today, Bill has embraced a more positive outlook, realizing that healthy grieving is about accepting the loss and cherishing the memories, not "getting over" it. He's even considering adopting a new dog, finding strength in creating new memories while honoring Trevor's legacy. Reflecting on his journey, Bill says, "Healthy grieving doesn't mean that you forget or 'get over' your friend. It simply allows you to accept that they're gone and eventually smile at their memory."

Expanding Hope: \$150,000 Grant Fuels Growth in Mental Health Services at New Beginnings



The power of collective giving was on display on May 20th when the Women's Fund of Santa

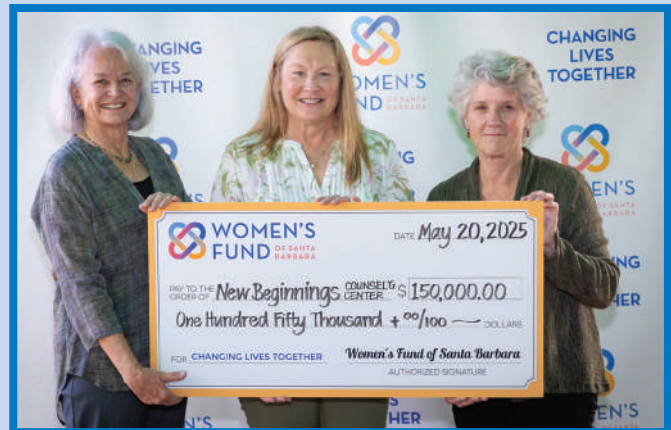
Barbara awarded an unprecedented \$1.25 million in grants to 11 local nonprofits – including New Beginnings – showcasing the power of collective giving in the Santa Barbara community. This accomplishment was made possible through the generosity of 1,426 local women members who have combined their charitable contributions into a substantial grants pool.

On a spirited evening at the iconic Lobero Theatre, more than 500 members, guests, sponsors, and community supporters gathered to celebrate and learn about the vital projects funded this year. Board Chair Carolyn Jabs welcomed attendees and said, “The Women’s Fund is based on a deceptively simple premise: together, when we pool our resources, we can achieve far more than we ever could alone.”

Since its inception, the Women's Fund has awarded a staggering total of \$12,845,000 in grants to 163 programs at 73 nonprofits, positively impacting over 100,000 women, children, and families. This year's significant grants pool underscores the ongoing commitment of local women to enrich the lives of those in need and strengthen the fabric of south Santa Barbara County. Grant recipients will tackle some of the most critical needs facing our community. New Beginnings will receive \$150,000 over two years to increase our mental health care staffing.

Over the past few years, especially since the pandemic, the need for mental health support has only grown. People are reaching out more frequently and staying in care longer. The challenges they face – grief, isolation, trauma – are real and deeply felt. And their willingness to seek help is an act of courage we strive to honor.

That's why this \$150,000 grant from the Women's Fund is so transformative. It will allow us to expand our intake coordination team from one to 2.5 full-time staff. These are the people who take that first call, assess urgent needs, and carefully match each individual with the right counselor – someone they can trust. With this support, we will improve client intake, reduce wait times and serve approximately 860 clients annually.



To the Women's Fund and to our incredible lead researcher, Sabina White – thank you for this extraordinary gift. You're not just helping us grow our staff. You're helping us hold space for healing, one family at a time.

A Christmas Celebration at Johnson Court: Honoring our Veterans with a Heartfelt Feast



This past December, the residents of Johnson Court gathered together for a festive and heartwarming Christmas dinner. Fifteen residents came together to share a delicious turkey dinner, generously donated by Buellton's Senior Center. The evening was filled with laughter, camaraderie, and the spirit of community as everyone celebrated the season with good food and even better company.

Johnson Court, an affordable permanent supportive housing development in Santa Barbara, serves a vital role in our community, providing stable housing for homeless Veterans. Johnson Court offers 16 studio units designed specifically for very low and low-income Veterans. This development is especially meaningful because it honors the legacy of the Johnson family, whose father served in the military – a fitting tribute to Veterans in need of a home.

The growing demand for affordable housing for Veterans is a nationwide issue, and Johnson Court is doing its part to address it. With an average age being 52.9 years among Santa Barbara's homeless Veterans, and many of whom live with disabilities or severe trauma and/or mental health issues, the need for such facilities has never been greater. New Beginnings is working diligently to reach "Functional Zero" homelessness for Veterans by 2026, but for now, Johnson Court remains a safe haven for those who need it most.

A key part of Johnson Court's success is the dedicated work of Dewane "Dazz" Brown, New Beginnings' SSVF Supportive Services Specialist who assists the residents with case management and social service needs. Dazz's commitment to the well-being of the Veterans at Johnson Court is unparalleled, offering guidance and support to help them navigate the challenges they face while reintegrating into stable housing.

Dewane "Dazz" Brown's life story is one of service, resilience, and dedication. After graduating high school in 1989, he enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1990, where he served with distinction. Dazz was deployed during

Operation Desert Storm in Iraq in 1991, and again during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2009, where he participated in one of his toughest assignments as part of a Combat Field Medic Team in Gardez, Afghanistan. His military career also included working on construction projects for military hospitals, and in recognition of his exemplary service, he was named Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for Air Combat Command in 2011.

Dazz retired from the Air Force in 2013, and earned his Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Allied University. After his military service, Dazz continued to serve Veterans in civilian life, working as a Project Manager for the Department of Defense from 2014 to 2023. His work took him to various locations, including California, Hawaii, Korea, and Chicago, where he improved the lives of Veterans and their families. In 2019, Dazz completed his Master's degree in Business Administration from Trident University, furthering his ability to make a positive impact on the lives of those he serves.



In 2023, Dazz relocated to Santa Barbara and began his role as a South County SSVF Case Manager for New Beginnings. In this position, he helps Veterans and their families secure stable housing and avoid the cycle of homelessness. His dedication and wealth of experience are instrumental in helping the residents of Johnson Court build a better future for themselves.

The Christmas dinner at Johnson Court was a perfect reflection of the warmth and support that this special place offers to our Veterans. Thanks to the generosity of Buellton's Senior Center and the tireless efforts of Dewane "Dazz" Brown, the Veterans at Johnson Court enjoyed a Christmas to remember. With the ongoing support of New Beginnings and the local community, these brave men and women are one step closer to a stable and fulfilling life.

Vera Cruz Village Christmas Party: A Heartwarming Celebration with New Beginnings' Marie Doettrel

This year's Vera Cruz Village Christmas party was a delightful success, bringing together around 21 clients for an afternoon of festive fun and meaningful connections. The event served as a special occasion to introduce New Beginnings' employee, Marie Doettrel, our dedicated Employment and Benefits Specialist, and highlight the resources available to help increase income, promote self-sufficiency, and improve overall life satisfaction – all wrapped up with a festive Christmas bow.

After the introductions, the festivities continued with three fun holiday games that had everyone in high spirits. Vera Cruz Village residents enjoyed a lively raffle, with several lucky winners walking away with exciting prizes. To top it off, staff gave out thoughtful gifts to everyone in attendance, spreading a bit of holiday cheer to all.

A true highlight of the day was the introduction of Marie Doettrel, whose role at New Beginnings has had a profound impact on the lives of many. Marie, an expert in employment and benefits, shared her wealth of knowledge with our community members. Her ability to navigate the job market, build resumes, and prepare clients for successful interviews has led to countless success stories. Marie's work also extends to managing benefits and providing essential resources for case managers, ensuring that our clients have access to everything they need during the intake process.

Marie's expertise has earned her recognition from several outreach organizations in the community, and her contributions to New Beginnings continue to make a positive impact. With a Bachelor's in Psychology and an Associates of Arts in Social Science, Marie plays a vital role in supporting the diverse needs of our community.

Vera Cruz Village is a Permanent Supportive Housing project in Santa Barbara, providing 28 new affordable studio units and a two-bedroom manager's unit, alongside free supportive services to residents. With case management, educational classes, and health and wellness programs available at no charge, Vera Cruz Village continues to serve as a beacon of support for those in need.

We're grateful to everyone who joined us at the Christmas party and look forward to the continued success of our community, with Marie leading the way in creating brighter futures for all!



New Beginnings' Staff Holiday Party: A Tradition of Care, Connection, and Community

This December, New Beginnings' staff gathered at the picturesque Muni Winery in Santa Barbara for their annual holiday celebration – a cherished tradition filled with warmth, laughter, and connection. Employees, along with some of their partners, contributed homemade dishes to a potluck, making for a memorable evening of shared meals and heartfelt moments.

For years, this event has been a special opportunity for staff to step away from their daily responsibilities and take a breather after a year of hard work. As an organization committed to supporting those experiencing vehicular homelessness, homeless veterans, and individuals seeking low-income mental health services, the work can be difficult and emotionally demanding. The team's unwavering dedication to helping some of Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable members requires immense compassion but can lead to burnout if self-care isn't prioritized.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, the team was treated to live music by *Rarely Seen Trio*, featuring one of our former volunteer clinical supervisors, Dean Janoff. Their performance brought energy and joy to the evening, getting toes tapping and creating a celebratory spirit that perfectly captured the essence of the gathering.

The holiday party serves as more than just a celebration – it's a vital way to nurture the health of our team. It's a reminder of the importance of self-care and community, ensuring staff stay connected and resilient. Taking the time to recharge empowers us to continue fulfilling our mission with renewed energy and focus in the new year.

This gathering was a time to reflect on the impact the team had made over the past year, while also providing a moment of joy and relaxation. Sharing a meal, swapping stories, and simply enjoying each other's company helped strengthen the bonds between coworkers, reinforcing the sense of support that is so important in the work they do.

As the year came to a close, New Beginnings' staff could look back on the lives that they had touched, and look forward to continuing their mission in 2025. By taking the time to celebrate and connect, New Beginnings ensures that its team is not only focused on their important work, but also on each other. This tradition of care and connection is a crucial part of addressing burnout and making sure that the work of caring for Santa Barbara's most vulnerable continues for years to come.



Safe Parking Family Story

In a story of resilience and hope, Jacob and Dahlia's* journey, marked by hardship and uncertainty, took a positive turn thanks to the timely intervention and dedicated assistance from the New Beginnings' Safe Parking team.



Pregnant, the couple moved back to Santa Barbara in hopes of finding stable work and reconnecting with their local family. But instead the couple found themselves living in a RV for over three months. Homeless and struggling, they were uncertain where to turn next. But then they became part of New Beginnings' Safe Parking Program, a lifeline that helped them secure housing and regain stability during a critical time.

The situation grew more urgent as Dahlia reached her third trimester of pregnancy. With their resources stretched thin and the birth of their child fast approaching, New Beginnings' rapid response became a game changer. Through the program, the couple was temporarily placed in a hotel, and just two days before Dahlia gave birth on January 29th, they were moved into stable housing – securing a place to call home on January 27th.

But the assistance didn't stop there. In addition to New Beginnings' Housing Navigators fast work in finding a stable home, the team also worked diligently to secure household donations, providing the couple with the items they needed to start fresh in their new home. Safe Parking Case Managers helped the couple address the poor condition of their cars, assisting with both vehicle documentation and necessary repairs so that they could get to and from work. This was another vital step in ensuring they could continue their journey toward self-sufficiency.

Today, with housing secured and a new sense of stability, Jacob and Dahlia are optimistic about their future. They feel confident that, with the support they received, they will be able to navigate the road ahead and sustain themselves.

*Client names have been changed to protect client confidentiality.

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