

# New Beginnings Winter News

## New Beginnings on the Front Lines Ending Homelessness

*Housing Navigator Orion Brutoco with New Beginnings' recently housed client named Kent. Read Kent's story on page 5.*



New Beginnings' staff and volunteers have been on the front lines this past year to ensure safety and end homelessness for unsheltered individuals, families, and veterans throughout the county. We placed over 50 seniors and veterans with underlying health conditions into motels, as well as over 60 people in general. We organized a biweekly food distribution at our agency for five months to address food insecurity and provided over 1,800 meals to 201 clients. Behind the scenes, we adapted to a new remote workforce and identified creative solutions for ensuring the continuity of our programs.

When the County of Santa Barbara launched Project Roomkey, the statewide initiative that houses unsheltered seniors with underlying health conditions into motels, our Safe Parking Program team accepted a new contract to transition these clients into permanent housing. We added two staff members to our team, and to date, we have moved 36 individuals from Project Roomkey into permanent housing. We are still working on housing the remaining individuals who still are

part of Project Roomkey. As part of our contract, we will be providing housing retention services to all of our housed clients for a year. Our staff is grateful to the on-site County of Santa Barbara team for assisting in our efforts.

For our Safe Parking Program, we consolidated clients into fewer lots for several months to ensure that our clients could access the lots 24/7. We continue to provide shelter to approximately 150 people each night in 26 lots. To address the growing number of people living in their cars (1 in 2 of the unsheltered homeless population live in their vehicles throughout the county), the County of Santa Barbara provided us with initial funding to expand the program in South County and to develop a program in North County over the next three years. We are currently working with local government officials in North County to identify appropriate lot locations and remove barriers to the program's success. In the meantime, we opened a new office in Vandenberg Village and added a case manager to our team who conducts outreach and case management.

Since March, our Supportive Services for Veteran Families team housed 94 veterans and their family members, prevented homelessness for an additional 24 veterans and their family members, and provided nearly \$750,000 in financial assistance. We also added a Healthcare Navigator to our team. Since February 2020 we have served as the on-site supportive services provider for 16 formerly homeless veterans at Johnson Court, the all-veteran housing development.

This past year has been one of the most challenging years in our history. Demand for our services has skyrocketed, and the issues we encounter with clients have become much more severe. We have risen to the occasion and adjusted how we deliver services to ensure that our programs remain accessible to all. We successfully expanded our programs and have further positioned ourselves as one of the leading agencies in Santa Barbara County focused on ending homelessness. We are thankful to our staff and volunteers and the foundations and donors who support our work.



## Message from Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz

Dear Friends of New Beginnings,

What a year it's been! Words that immediately come to mind are overwhelm, gratitude, patience, and humility. Since February of 2020, New Beginnings commenced our supportive services contract at Johnson Court, the all-veteran housing development, which opened two weeks before the March shelter-in-place began; we built and launched a new Electronic Health Records System; we implemented and launched a new telemental health system for 36 counselors, 12 clinical supervisors, hundreds of clients and a handful of incredibly resolute staff; we opened a new office in North County to expand our Safe Parking Program and house our Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program operations; we prepared for and received our CARF accreditation renewal; we partnered with the county to house vulnerable seniors through Project Roomkey; we delivered food twice weekly for five months to over 200 people; we launched a new website; we developed a planned giving program; and we even managed to hold a fundraiser at the local drive-in, all the while battling COVID and the grievous losses that accompanied it.

I say well done! And thank you. Thank you for overlooking missed emails and delayed info. Thank you for helping us to secure funding. Thank you for always being quick to reply, and for lending advice or a helping hand, even though you had just worked a 12-hour day. Thank you for being there this year. Thank you for stepping up, and showing up, and believing our collective work means more now than ever. Stay safe out there and be well.

– Kristine

## Matching Grant Opportunity

To support our Safe Parking expansion efforts, a donor has provided us with a matching grant challenge and will match up to \$10,000 in total. The grant and matching donations will have two purposes: (1) To establish a flexible fund where we can offer emergency financial assistance to our clients and (2) To fund a research initiative to evaluate our Safe Parking Program and establish our program as an evidence-based practice. We have two donors who have already provided a match of \$4,500 in total. Please consider donating now to help us reach our \$10,000 goal!

## New Beginnings Holds Annual Fundraiser at West Wind Drive-In

In October, New Beginnings held their annual fundraiser at the local drive-in and showed the 1991 comedy-drama film *The Fisher King*, starring our local celebrity and philanthropist Jeff Bridges, the legendary Robin Williams, and Mercedes Ruehl. Our goal was to inform community members how trauma and mental illness impact individuals and their loved ones. Prior to showing the film, we showed a compilation of interviews from staff and volunteers chronicling how the pandemic has impacted their work. We also showed a panel interview created for the evening that featured the film's writer, Richard LaGravenese, and Mercedes Ruehl, to provide our guests with unique insight into the film.

Close to 200 community members attended the fundraiser, and we were pleased that we could bring everyone together in a safe fashion to honor our work in the community. The evening also included special prize



giveaways, such as a weekend stay at the Pine Mountain Club, which was generously donated. We appreciate everyone who attended the event and look forward to continuing our model of educating community members about our work through cinema and the performing arts.

Sponsors included the Coeta and Donald Barker Foundation, the Lehrer Family, Lloyd and Richard Dallett, Deirdre and Will Arntz, Glenn and Amy Bacheller, Cottage Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine, Lalla and Rinaldo Brutoco, Bryant & Sons Jewelers, Edhat Santa Barbara, Jackie and Paul Kurta, Northern Santa Barbara County United Way, Noozhawk, the Omega Point Institute, Pine Mountain Club, Santa Barbara Venture Partners, and Charlie and Eileen White Read.

# Counseling Center Demonstrates Resiliency and Expands Footprint

Thirty-six volunteer masters and doctoral-level counselors, supervised by 14 volunteer clinical supervisors, provide telehealth and in-person counseling services to approximately 600 individuals each year at our counseling center. By April, we successfully moved over 200 active clients to our new telemental health platform, which we were in the final stages of implementing in early March. Funded by Cottage Health, the telemental health platform, provided through a partnership with Zoom Video Communications, also extends our center's reach by allowing us to provide our services to community members who live in health professional shortage areas of the county. To ensure all of our new and existing clients could afford counseling, we lowered our fees significantly for individual clients, especially clients who experienced job loss. Despite experiencing over a 70% reduction in anticipated clinic income from April to September, we met all fee reduction requests and have continued to ensure that nobody is turned away due to an inability to pay.



“*My counselor at New Beginnings has been a wonderful partner on my journey to improving my mental health. We met as many aspects of my life went through upheaval. Chronic illness had created a new reality that I wasn't willing to face. However, my counselor helped me learn how to embrace the life I have and find happiness in being myself. I feel that my life has been reopened. I will truly miss working with my counselor and am only ending therapy because I am leaving California. She is a joy, and her kindness has made the process of starting therapy approachable and comfortable.*”

## A Woman Builds a New Future by Addressing Trauma

Shari\* is in her mid-50s and struggles with bipolar disorder. When she began seeing a counselor at New Beginnings in June, Shari was on the verge of becoming homeless and could not control her emotions during sessions. Shari had multiple traumatic experiences in her life that led her to believe that she was a victim. Over the past five months, she has made tremendous progress by learning how to address these traumatic experiences through therapy. Shari has learned through therapy that only she can make positive changes in her own life. She no longer identifies as a victim. Shari presents herself entirely differently during sessions and is much more open, energetic, and in control of her emotions. She has learned not to let trauma define her and has become much more aware of her emotional state. Shari looks forward to continuing to make progress with her counselor and making positive changes in her life.

\*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.





# What is Rapid Re-Housing?

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) is an evidence-based housing intervention that helps individuals and families quickly exit homelessness and return to permanent housing. The intervention employs the Housing First model and is offered without preconditions. The idea is to house people as quickly as possible and then wrap them around services that promote their long-term well-being and success. In practice, the intervention includes housing identification, landlord engagement, case management, and short-term financial assistance. A large and growing body of evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of the RRH model. Rapid re-housing is the most successful and popular housing intervention to address homelessness that has come forward in the last 20 years,

Both New Beginnings' housing programs, the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program (SSVF) and the Safe Parking Program, use the RRH model to end homelessness for clients. We serve as the leading RRH service provider in the county. Over the past 15 years, New Beginnings has successfully housed over 2,000 clients through the RRH model and has provided more than three million dollars in financial assistance.



**Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) ends homelessness** for families and individuals.

<b>FIND LANDLORDS &amp; APARTMENTS</b>	<b>HELP PAY FOR HOUSING</b>	<b>CONNECT TO JOBS &amp; SERVICES</b>
Help people quickly find housing within one month or less.	Help people pay for housing short term; longer-term help an option.	Help access services so people can stay in housing.

The **Core Components** of Rapid Re-Housing help people **find** housing fast, help **pay** for housing, and **connect** to jobs and services.

For more information, please visit [endhomelessness.org/rapid-re-housing-works/](http://endhomelessness.org/rapid-re-housing-works/)

Rapid re-housing is designed for people who can stabilize on their own and who do not need a housing voucher. For our clients who we assist in obtaining housing vouchers, we provide case management and financial assistance for security deposits and other move-in expenses as well. Lastly, our landlord network is critical for our success. If you are a landlord or property manager and are interested in partnering with us, please call (805) 963-7777 x112.

# How Rapid Re-Housing Works

U.S. Navy veteran Corey is a single father who recently gained full-time custody of his adorable two-year-old daughter. Corey and his daughter were both living at Transition House earlier this year. As a full-time material handling specialist at a local manufacturer, Corey wanted to find an apartment in Santa Barbara near his daughter's child care center. Corey became connected to our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program, and our team quickly helped identify an apartment. Although Corey did not qualify for the apartment, our staff successfully negotiated with the property manager.

Our SSVF team provided financial assistance to help cover the security deposit, secured furniture donations, and helped Corey and his daughter move into the new apartment. Unfortunately, the day after



moving in, Corey lost his job. Fortunately, Corey began a new position as the AmeriCorps volunteer for our SSVF program. Corey is also looking for a new job, is going back to school, and looks forward to building his life with his daughter.

# What is Housing Retention?

Once our clients are successfully housed, our next step is to ensure they remain stably housed. Housing retention is critical and does not get as much attention as it deserves. Our program staff help clients outfit their new homes with appliances, beds, furniture, and other household items, often donated to our agency. Moving into a home with all of these items helps our clients feel welcome in their new home and reinforces a positive mindset. Our staff periodically conduct site visits, make referrals to medical providers, and assist clients in applying for benefits and jobs. Staff also serve as an intermediary between the landlord and the client.

Over time, our clients take more ownership over their new lives with our support and begin taking the initiative to set life goals. Many of our clients return to school, start new jobs, get back in touch with family and friends, and pursue personal interests. We play a motivational role and remain in contact with the client to help them succeed holistically in all aspects of their lives. Seeing our clients make positive changes in their own lives is the most rewarding aspects of our work and is a critical component of our mission.



## New Partnership Strengthens Our Housing Retention Efforts

New Beginnings is thrilled to announce a new partnership that enables us to provide donated furniture and other household items to recently housed clients. The Northern Santa Barbara County United Way provided our agency with the opportunity to arrange for a volunteer to pick up donations weekly from Bed, Bath, & Beyond and Pottery Barn. The items include vacuums, dish sets, bedding, and small furniture. One of our board members pays for the storage unit, while another board member's husband picks up the items every Friday. To date, we have distributed close to \$100,000 in items to clients who we have recently housed. Providing our clients with the opportunity to pick out items for their new home makes a huge difference for our clients because it positively changes their mindset.

## How Housing Retention Works

Kent is an older gentleman with underlying health conditions who was living in a motel sponsored by the county for several months, as part of the Project Roomkey initiative. New Beginnings' Safe Parking team identified housing and provided financial assistance to transition Kent into permanent housing this past year. Two of our staff members have provided housing retention services to help ensure that Kent is successful in his new home. One essential aspect of housing retention is assisting clients in increasing their income. Staff connected Kent to a local primary care physician, so he no longer will need to drive out of town to receive

medical care. Our staff has also helped Kent apply for utility assistance discounts, obtain a more affordable phone plan, and has provided emotional support for Kent to move sentimental items out of his storage unit, so he no longer needs to pay for storage. These changes have increased Kent's income and sense of financial security, allowing Kent to focus on improving his physical and mental health. Kent has an optimistic attitude about his future and is grateful to have a dedicated team supporting him. Kent enjoys playing piano and guitar and is currently working on recording an album of original music he plans to sell to increase his income.

## New Permanent Supportive Housing Services Contract at Johnson Court



Due to our expertise serving veterans, New Beginnings accepted a new contract with the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara to provide supportive services and housing retention to sixteen formerly homeless veterans living at Johnson Court. The permanent supportive housing model helps address the needs of individuals who have experienced chronic homelessness or suffer from severe physical or mental health disabilities. In contrast, rapid re-housing services are more short-term and focus on addressing an individual's immediate needs.

Our dedicated on-site staff member meets with veterans individually to ensure that they are successful in their new homes and receive the support they need from service providers. This year, we have developed a community at Johnson Court by partnering with veterans groups to host small gatherings on holidays, such as Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. When it is safe to do so, we will be organizing monthly workshops. We are in need of volunteers who are open to helping our on-site staff member serve clients or who can gather donations. If you are interested in playing an active role as a volunteer, please call (805) 963-7777 x112.

## New Beginnings Opens New Office in Vandenberg Village

We are excited to have opened a new office to support the expansion of our programs in North County. Our new office in Vandenberg Village houses our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) and Safe Parking Programs' North County case managers. Approximately 55% of the veterans we serve in SSVF are in Lompoc and Santa Maria, and we are grateful to now have an office where we can conduct case management. The office will also support our growing Safe Parking team as we expand the program into North County. If you have any connections with landlords, parking lot owners, philanthropists, or community groups in Lompoc or Santa Maria, please call (805) 963-7777 x112. We will need to develop relationships with these groups to expand our programs and to market our services effectively.





## Thank You to Dr. Ciara Murray-Young

**Dr. Ciara Murray-Young** served as one of our volunteer counselors and staff members for more than ten years! Originally having practiced psychology in Ireland, Ciara moved to Santa Barbara with her family and went back to school to get a doctorate in Depth Psychology. Over the years, Ciara has served in several positions at New Beginnings and was most recently providing trauma-informed therapy to veterans involved in Veterans Treatment Court. Ciara received her doctorate in 2019 and is planning to establish a private practice to work with both adults and children.



***“New Beginnings’ sliding scale model makes counseling available to everyone in our community. The Counseling Center’s impact is immeasurable, and the training program for counselors is excellent! I deeply enjoyed providing long-term therapy to clients, which is a unique service New Beginnings can provide. One of my favorite populations to work with is veterans. Their sense of service to others, to the point of putting their lives on the line, is humbling. While I am sad to leave, I look forward to seeing how New Beginnings evolves over the next ten years and continuing to support this one-of-a-kind precious community resource.” – Dr. Ciara Murray-Young***

## Thank You to Dr. Dyan Colven

**Dr. Dyan Colven** has been a Clinical Supervisor at New Beginnings for the past two years. Dyan has a doctorate in Clinical Psychology and previously worked as a clinician at the Vista del Mar Outpatient Program in Los Angeles for 15 years. Dyan has also taught mental health awareness to medical students at UCLA and served as a Clinical Supervisor at the Rosa Parks Sexual Assault Crisis Center. Dyan is tremendously passionate about supervising counselors at New Beginnings and sharing her wisdom about psychology. Dyan is one of approximately a dozen volunteer clinical supervisors that provide instruction to our counselors and oversee therapeutic practices.



***“I am extraordinarily pleased and grateful to have Dyan as my first supervisor. She is kind, thoughtful, perceptive, and wise. She is never in a rush and always creates an atmosphere of trust and safety. I am free to learn in her presence because I know I can make mistakes and think things through without incurring displeasure. Dyan encourages me to continue to explore and gently enlarges my vision.” – Counselor***

***“I could not have hoped for a better supervisor than Dyan. She is patient, wise and humble. She leads by example, and I have been shaped so much by her instruction.” – Counselor***

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## New Beginnings

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On behalf of our clients, we express our sincerest gratitude to our donors and the foundations who financially support us. We are also grateful to employees from Banana Republic, Gap, and other stores for purchasing gifts for three families and four veterans in our programs last holiday season! We wish you and your loved ones a happy and prosperous year and hope you enjoy our newsletter!

*Thank you*



New Beginnings' mission is to provide quality, affordable counseling, shelter, case management, and education that strengthens our community and provides our clients with the ability to lead healthy and productive lives.



# NEW BEGINNINGS