

New Beginnings Winter News

New Beginnings produced *Every Brilliant Thing*, starring Jonny Donahoe, for our Annual Benefit, focused on mental health.



New Beginnings continued our annual benefit model this year of using experience and education to discuss the most critical issues facing our community by producing the internationally acclaimed stage production of *Every Brilliant Thing*, starring Jonny Donahoe, who also co-wrote the play in collaboration with Duncan Macmillan, at the Center Stage Theatre in Santa Barbara.

Every Brilliant Thing is a humorous and heart-warming performance about a boy growing up in the wake of his mother's mental illness. The interactive, one-person show has played more than 600 times on four continents, including five months off-Broadway at the Barrow Street Theater. *Every Brilliant Thing* has been replicated by dozens of comedians throughout the world, and HBO produced a documentary based on this powerful and well-delivered message.

We produced three performances (September

23, 24 & 25) with nearly 400 attendees, and each show included a reception with beverages, hors d'oeuvres and live music. The Saturday night show also included a dinner for event sponsors at Bouchon Restaurant with Donahoe prior to the performance. For seventy-five minutes, the show inspired laughter, tears and insights into the struggles of a young boy trying to help his mother, who is battling mental illness and is suicidal.

In *Every Brilliant Thing*, the boy tries to bring joy into his mother's life by creating an ever-expanding list of "brilliant things" to celebrate life. At the tender age of seven, the list is relatively simple as he begins his lifelong journey of list-making after his mother's first suicide attempt. Donahoe distributed individual "list" items to patrons as they filled the theater before the show's start. The play cleverly engaged audience members through their brief but valuable participation. The tightrope of balancing comedy and tragedy is achieved as the story unfolds and

attendees become acutely aware of individuals' mental health issues.

To our delight, our audiences were sincerely touched and impressed with the performance and information about our counseling services. As a result, we received almost one hundred unsolicited donations from new donors who attended the show. *Every Brilliant Thing* ended up being our second most successful fundraiser ever, following our event with Harrison Ford in 2018.

Kristine Schwarz, Executive Director of New Beginnings, stated that "Subjects like trauma, grief, depression, and loneliness can be very isolating and often make it difficult for a person to articulate what they are feeling, and sometimes it is easier to express heavy emotions by using music, drawing, or an artistic depiction to communicate a profoundly overwhelming emotion. It can get people to think differently about the issue of mental health or homelessness."

(cont. page 3)



Message from Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz

Dear Friends of New Beginnings,

This holiday season, in memory of Joseph, a long-time staff member we lost this past September, I'd like to share a poem with you from his celebration of life:

The Dash

A Poem by Linda Ellis

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.
He referred to the dates on his tombstone from the beginning...to the end.

He notes that first came the date of his birth and spoke of the following date with tears,
but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For the dash represents all the time that he spent alive on earth,
and now only those who loved him know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not how much we own, the cars, the house, the cash.
What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left that can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real, and always try to understand
the way other people feel. And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and
love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile...
remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash,
would you be proud of the things they say about... how you spent your dash?

My deep and sincere gratitude for all of you who spend your dash with New Beginnings! Merry Holidays!

– Kristine

Team Members of the Safe Parking Program® and Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program Speak to Congress in Washington, D.C.

In July, our team traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend the National Alliance to Ending Homelessness conference. The conference brought together service providers, stakeholders, those with lived experience of homelessness, as well as others to learn from one another, discuss best practices, and share new innovations in the field. Our Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program Manager and Lead Case Manager, Victor Virgen, reflected on his experience stating, "it was valuable to be participating with partnering agencies, providing a continuum of care, and gathering together for a national conference." One of the most vital takeaways focused on the urgent need for service providers to reincorporate the concept of shared housing in order to address homelessness.

Additionally, New Beginnings supported the The Naomi Schwartz Safe Parking Program Act. The early roots of this nationally recognized program were started here in Santa Barbara with the Honorable Susan Rose, Chair of the New Beginnings Advisory Committee.



Pictured left to right: Cassie Roach, Victor Virgen, U.S. Congressman Salud Carbajal, & Kristine Schwarz.

Every Brilliant Thing Performances... Cont.



Pictured left to right: Judi Weisbart, Jonny Donahoe, Paddy Gervers, Kristine Schwarz, & Linda Rosso.

The event generated a significant amount of local press, with a cover story in the *Independent*, and prominent coverage in the *Santa Barbara News Press*, *Montecito Journal*, and the *Voice*. Our goal was to inform and enlighten our audiences and the community about mental health issues and the additional programs we provide for our low-income community in need. Based on the overwhelmingly positive feedback, we believe that we accomplished this!



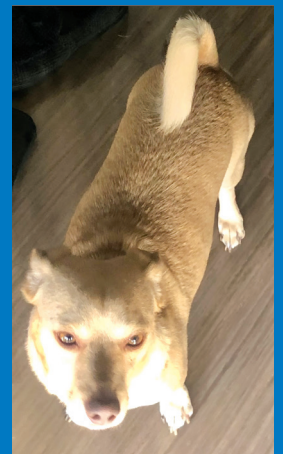
Thank You to Our Sponsors

We are sincerely grateful to all of our sponsors who made it possible to produce *Every Brilliant Thing*.

The Coeta and Donald Barker Foundation	Jackie and Paul Kurta
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Emotional Support Animals at Johnson Court

In recent years, emotional support animals (ESA) have become more and more utilized in the provision of mental health treatment. Jeff and another veteran at Johnson Court are currently benefiting from this support. Their providers recommended that they match with an ESA in order to aid in their mental health treatment, but neither veteran thought this to be possible. They did not have the financial means or resources to acquire the recommended ESA on their own. The Johnson Court Supportive Services Specialist worked with Jeff, and the other veteran, to connect them with community resources aimed at matching Veterans with service and/or ESAs. Additionally, New Beginnings provided the necessary funding for the animals. Both Veterans are now connected with ESAs, which has greatly improved their quality of life.





Pierre Claeysens Veterans Foundation 25th Annual Military Ball

On November 5th, 2022 our staff attended the Pierre Claeysens Veterans Foundation's 25th Annual Military Ball. Our staff was honored to be present to acknowledge and listen to Beyond the Teams, a group of former SEALs, who shared their inspiring story: The Teams Behind the Mission.

A Return to the Concept of Community Care

During my time working at New Beginnings, I co-facilitated a very meaningful process group called Community Circle. For nearly its whole time, the group had four members, and the meetings every week were particularly meaningful for these members. One member, in particular, has left a great impression on me. Each week, she would show up with a smile and a kind gesture, with a beautiful chakra scroll behind her. As other members would share struggles, she often gave kind reflections, showed deep empathy, and held the space with grace. She would resonate with others and share how she made it through tough moments.

This group began as a COVID isolation support group but became something different over its nearly 3-year lifespan. By the time I joined, the group was almost like a family. Home was the feeling after our beginning mindfulness exercises, where everyone would return and speak of the relief they felt to be in a place where they could speak freely, or not speak at all, and still be welcomed. Most would bring problems or struggles periodically or reflect on the state of the world with challenge, but this one member who I mentioned always brought kindness and joy, and support.

One week though, she finally took the floor and shared what she was struggling with. She had been shouldering such a heavy load and bringing only joy and positivity. As she shared the inner struggle, she tried so hard to hide, one by one the rest of the members offered to help. This member was having trouble finding access to water she could drink, and one member offered to buy her water and bring it to her door. Another offered to carry groceries up her stairs for her, so that she wouldn't have to struggle.

Another offered to help her repair clothing that was torn, of which she couldn't get more. The community came alive at that moment, and this sweet woman just cried. She told

us she had nowhere else where she could bring these problems, and no one else that came to lift her like the group just had. With my own tears, I realized then that this was much more than a process group for these women, it was a lifeline. Post-COVID, so many of us have found ourselves completely ripped away from community, isolated, and struggling to make sense of a world that is unfamiliar to us. Aloneness threatens to consume us. But here, once a week, these four women found a space to be honest, be accepted, be supported, and reclaim the skills of community care.



This is what New Beginnings offers to me, a return to a concept of community care. This group was deeply transformative for me, as it completely rearranged my notions of what purpose therapy can serve. Therapy can be community care, community building and an opportunity to build deep and meaningful relationships.

Molly Brenner, PhD, Pacifica Doctoral Student, New Beginnings Counselor

Philip's Story

Philip is a 72-year-old Army veteran who has been experiencing homelessness for approximately the past fifteen years. His journey began in a van, and after it broke down, he moved into an RV. In November 2018, he enrolled in our Safe Parking Program®. Philip received a housing opportunity nearly four years after registering in Safe Parking.

He was anxious about the decision to obtain housing but moved forward and transitioned into his one-bedroom apartment with his dog, Shadow. Upon moving in, we purchased a bed for Philip, and he began the process of furnishing his apartment to his liking. Philip called his case manager after about three weeks and stated how happy he was to be in his own place. He likes his neighbors and was invited to spend Thanksgiving dinner with his new friends. He said he isn't sure who enjoys his new home more – him or his dog Shadow.



John's Story

John*, a veteran, and his long-time partner Miranda* have been homeless on and off for the past ten years. Miranda suffered a stroke about 20 years ago, and John has been her caretaker. Unfortunately, living in a shelter would require the couple to split, which is impossible because Miranda does not feel comfortable having anyone else care for her other than John. During the pandemic, they lived in a hotel funded by the government. Unfortunately, they could not secure permanent housing at the time, and when the funding ran out, they started living in a U-Haul they were renting. They lived in the U-Haul for almost two years before being connected to New Beginnings for assistance in finding housing. This past May, they were approved for low-income housing in Lompoc and moved into their new apartment. Our SSVF team helped the couple obtain all necessary documents, including their birth certificates, to secure their housing through the county. We also provided financial assistance to help the couple pay for their security deposit and helped pay for some of the storage fees. John and Miranda are beyond thrilled to be housed and are so grateful for our program and for the support they received from the community.



Improving Parenting Skills Through Grounding



Betty* resides at Santa Barbara Transition House, a residential and social services program for families experiencing housing insecurity, with her son. She is a single mother, works two jobs, and articulated difficulties with getting everything done day-to-day while also being mentally and physically present with her son. Betty participated in a 12-session Life Skills Parenting Group at Transition House and was able to learn essential grounding exercises and practice them weekly to improve her parenting skills and her relationship with her child. Additionally, throughout the 12 weeks, she learned how to better engage in self-care activities, including the importance of getting enough sleep, eating regular meals, and engaging in physical activity each day, and learned the impact this has on her parenting skills.

**Names have been changed to protect client confidentiality.*

Matching Challenge!

Through January 31st, donors are invited to match the generous \$25,000 matching gift from Sandy Schoolfield and Jon Kechejian for the relocation and expansion of our south county office towards our need to raise \$250,000 for this effort.

Dear Friends of New Beginnings,

As this year comes to a close, it is with great joy that we announce a generous matching grant to support the opportunity for New Beginnings to relocate to a larger office. We are currently located in two different offices that are quite far apart and that house all of the administrative staff, the Counseling Center, the Safe Parking Program, the Life Skills program and our Supportive Services for Veterans Program. Not only are we needing additional office and desk space, but we are also confident that we can better serve our clients if all of our services are co-located – the continuum of care that New Beginnings provides is best offered in one nurturing and supportive space.

Long time New Beginnings supporters Sandy Schoolfield and her husband Jon Kechejian have made a \$25,000 matching grant available for the purpose

of supporting the agency's ability to secure this new space in which to grow and flourish. Please help us make this \$250,000 donation possible by going to www.sbnbcc.org, scrolling down to "Matching Challenge" and offering your donation today!

Thank you for your support and happy holidays to you and your loved ones.

We made The Giving List!

The Montecito Journal has a featured article in their annual Giving List Publication that can be viewed at <https://www.givinglistsantabarbara.com/2022/11/26/safety-for-those-who-need-it-most/>. The article highlights our work with homelessness and our matching challenge request.



Joseph Carl Mastroianni

September 24, 1941 – September 17, 2022



Joseph came to interview at New Beginnings in May, 2014, applying for the lot monitor position in the Safe Parking Program. In the interview, Joseph shared that he was a native of Woburn, Massachusetts, and Brooklyn, New York, and a commissioned officer and Army Rotary Wing Aviator, flying Medivac helicopters in Vietnam,

Petroleum Helicopters in Louisiana, and Air General Helicopters in Boston. He moved to Santa Barbara in 1972 and was hired as the manager of the Old Santa Barbara Pier Company, supervising the reconstruction of Stearns Wharf, after its destruction by a fire that year.

In 1988, Joseph was struck by an automobile while walking across 3rd Avenue in New York City, suffering life-threatening injuries, which forced his retirement. He then spent more than a decade rehabilitating from subsequent surgeries and began writing and acquiring other skills that eventually lead him to use his executive and management abilities to participate in community projects for the advancement of the arts. In 1997, he resurrected the then defunct Santa Barbara Center for the Performing Arts, serving as Executive Director during its reorganization.

In 1998, Joseph celebrated his recovery by riding a bicycle 3,844 miles from Santa Barbara to Boston, raising funds for the American Heart Association and the National Children's Cancer Society. Joseph fully recovered and stayed in optimal physical condition until not long before his passing. Joseph had a huge extended family here in California, on the east coast and in the U.K.

Joseph worked as a lot monitor for the Safe Parking Program for the last eight years of his life. He passionately, commendably and without fail showed up every night, throughout the night, to monitor his lots to ensure the safety and security of the vulnerable folks living in their vehicles. He fiercely advocated for our clients to have more support, more access to vehicle repairs, gas cards, and food cards, more respect, and more decency. Joseph took great pride in his work and was always available to help a client out, whatever the need be. Joseph saved lives, valued souls and helped so many of our clients over the years know that they were not alone.

In honor of Joseph, New Beginnings has established a Joseph Mastroianni Memorial Fund. This fund will provide vehicle repairs, gas and food cards, and the other basic necessities that people living in their vehicles need to survive.

We had great affection for Joseph. He was a shining example of service and selflessness. We are so grateful to him that he chose to spend these past eight years giving back to New Beginnings. We miss you, Joseph. Rest in peace dear sweet friend.

Warren B. Ritter II

Self-Care New Beginnings Experience

I am **Warren Ritter**, a New Beginnings (NBCC) Board Member, and I had the distinct pleasure of attending the summer staff Self-Care event aboard the Double Dolphin 50-foot sailing catamaran. It was a gorgeous day and a magical time that began with staff and board members becoming better acquainted before boarding and setting off on our journey. The staff get-together was an extraordinary event in terms of fun and experience, along with strengthening the bonds between employees and board members.



During our relaxed time sailing out on the sea, I had the opportunity to engage with staff team members by asking a fundamental question; why they chose to work for NBCC? Learning more about their motivations and commitment to helping the homeless/displaced individuals and hearing their passion and belief in our mission was sincerely inspiring.

As I was speaking to one individual, we suddenly got wind that there were dolphin AND whale sightings near our location. As we turned in their direction, to our delight, there was a massive school of dolphins swimming right along our boat! It was an enchanting experience that we will all take with us.

Following our sea excursion, we strolled to a nearby restaurant and were able to enjoy fellowship with the entire group as a whole. It was here that I truly began to understand the importance of the culture of NBCC. Through my experience as a board member on numerous non-profit boards, there is a close connection with mission, vision, and values. That said, there is often a disconnect between board and staff members of an organization.

During this experience, sharing the meal and having a memorable time together created a renewed sense of how important the people on the ground are. The individuals who are out in the trenches, interacting day to day, making sure the organization continues to thrive, and ensuring that our clients are adequately advocated for are the actual life source of the organization. NBCC is cultivating a culture of caring and symbiotic partnerships that involves all facets of the organization, which makes for a productive and cohesive existence.



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Thank you so much for your support of our work! We wish you and your loved ones a very happy Holiday Season and New Year. Please make a donation today to support our mission of strengthening our community by empowering individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency and resiliency.



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.

