

New Beginnings Fall Newsletter



Lending a Hand with the Help of Blue Shield

New Beginnings' staff and board members were thrilled to partner with the senior leadership and Board of Directors of Blue Shield of California, as well as board members of their foundation, to assemble and distribute nearly 100 care backpacks for our clients experiencing homelessness. The opportunity was a result of Blue Shield staff and board members wanting to give back to the community while they were in town for a company retreat.

The project was a team-building effort and required nearly 50 guests to break into small groups, unload dozens of boxes from

several vehicles, and set up the supplies for assembly. The care backpacks included non-perishable food, toiletries, first aid kits, hand warmers, and other items uniquely useful to people experiencing homelessness. For our volunteers, the project was a fun and rewarding team-building activity that included friendly competitions and wonderful 80s music playing in the background.

After the backpacks had been assembled, we invited our clients to come pick up the backpacks and meet our volunteers. Our volunteers were able to connect with our clients on an individual level and

create long-lasting memories. It was most meaningful to surprise our clients with an offering they didn't expect and to see the smiles on their faces as they saw how many people had volunteered their afternoons to support them.

We are proud to announce that this event was one of the highlights of our summer and are grateful to Red Cross, Direct Relief International, McDonalds, and Trader Joes for donating items, and for the leadership of Blue Shield of California and their foundation for volunteering their time and making this opportunity possible for our clients.



Message from Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz

Dear Friends of New Beginnings,

Each of our newsletters focuses on one of our four core programs: this issue highlights our Life Skills Parenting and Education Program, a long-standing series of psychoeducational groups in the community. Through Life Skills we work with expectant mothers, young men in juvenile detention, parents struggling with how to discipline their children, and veterans coping with post-traumatic stress. We offer these services at no cost to both the participants and the sponsoring agencies. Our goal is to help program participants develop the skills necessary to be able to meet the challenges that every-day life inevitably throws at us - stress and frustration, disappointment and rejection, and fear and loss.

Our goal is also to encourage program participants to find new ways of thinking, communicating and problem-solving; to build confidence through self-reflection, collaboration and cooperation; to analyze their options, understand why they make certain choices and learn to make healthier decisions; and to learn how to remain calm, even in the face of considerable provocation. Building life skills at any age is essential to exercising sound judgment and maintaining long-term stability, wellness, and success.

There is great value in learning how to better understand ourselves; and how to bridge the gap between basic functioning and abilities, so that we can achieve what we are capable of in life, and ultimately thrive. Thank for helping us to make this a reality for the individuals and families we serve.

-Kristine Schwarz

Incorporating Best Practices into the Life Skills Parenting and Education Program

The quality of the parent-child relationship dictates how the brain and neurological systems are developed and heavily influences psychological, emotional, and physical health outcomes. New Beginnings Clinical Director, Dr. Crystal Ramirez, is a leading expert in this topic and spoke at the International Psychohistorical Association's Annual Conference, a collaboration with NYU's Silver School of Social Work in New York City. In her presentation, Dr. Ramirez shared strategies for helping families navigate childrearing through an understanding of attachment and the historical parenting practices that disrupt early attachment.

Dr. Ramirez also shared her findings at our educational luncheon in August and discussed how they have been implemented into our Life Skills Parenting and Education Program, which offers psychoeducational groups that teach parents about attachment theory and how to define effective parental roles. Through partnerships with Villa Majella, St. Vincent's, and Transition House, among



others, we offer these classes to homeless parents with young children or with children on their way.

Counselors from New Beginnings lead these classes, and in some cases provide individual counseling, so each parent is able to address their underlying personal struggles while they work in a group setting to learn how to become better parents.

The fStop Warrior Project

Members of our military live together as members of a tribe. Their mission is to protect one another at all costs. While the military does a phenomenal job at training our nation's heroes to succeed when deployed, not nearly enough emphasis is placed on their transition to civilian life. Life after service can pose a unique set of challenges, including both physical as well as service-connected mental health issues, unemployment, and feelings of social isolation. If unaddressed, these challenges can lead to substance abuse and homelessness.

One new way that our community supports veterans in their transition to civilian life is through the fStop Warrior Project. Led by New Beginnings' board member, Terence Ford, fStop partners with the SBCC Extended School of Learning to provide post-9/11 veterans with a free, three-month, college-level course in digital photography. By the end of the program, veterans gain a professional and artistic skillset, as well as new relationships with their peers from all military branches.

At fStop, there is a level of intensity to learning digital photography that many veterans have grown accustomed to through their training in the military. Providing veterans with a challenging activity that they can master with the support of a team re-creates one of the most rewarding experiences of serving in our military. Perhaps more importantly, fStop strengthens the veteran community and connects veterans to others who they are able to relate to and who they otherwise would not have had the opportunity to meet.

If you were to visit the program, you would be surprised to discover that fStop has an exclusive classroom! The walls are covered with the veterans' photography. Having



fStop Graduation Class - Summer 2019



Photo Credit: Rob Robinson

their own space creates a safe environment for the veterans and is a key aspect of the program. To support the project, New Beginnings' doctoral-level counselor, Ray Sullivan, is conducting assessments to measure the therapeutic value of the program.

"Photography can provide the opportunity to replace upsetting, negative images in a veteran's memory with new, creative, and positive life views that focus on who they wish to become," says Terence Ford, a professional photographer who since 2009 has conducted similar projects for veterans at the Pathway Home in Yountville, CA and embedded at the Alpha Company BEQ at the Wounded Warrior Battalion at MCB Camp Pendleton.

The project is generously funded by the SBCC Extended School of Learning, the SBCC Foundation, Ford's fStop Foundation, and longtime sponsor Canon USA. fStop has been such a success that it is being offered again this fall and the program may eventually be extended to other at risk populations that could benefit from its therapeutic value.

Community Counseling Clinic

Thirty-six volunteer masters and doctoral level counselors, supervised by fourteen volunteer clinical supervisors, provided over 4,000 hours of counseling hours to 435 individuals this past fiscal year. An additional 238 individuals were connected to other services, received referrals, or were assisted in other ways by our clinic. The average cost per counseling session was \$14. Our ability to offer such a low sliding scale is due to the support we receive from the Towbes, St. Francis, Walter J. and Holly O. Thompson, Carleton, Mosher, and Volentine Foundations, as well as the City of Santa Barbara Human Services Department.



Our Partnership with SBNC

This past year, New Beginnings began a collaboration with Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics to offer long-term psychotherapy to patients seeking substance use treatment at their newly-formed Bridge Clinic. One of these individuals, a senior named Roger*, had been coping with alcohol dependence for six decades, and after a DUI, knew it was time for a change. To address the psychological aspects of addiction, an essential component for maintaining his sobriety in the long run, Roger was referred to New Beginnings to receive immediate and accessible individual counseling at a fee that he could afford.

Today, Roger continues to see his counselor, has weaned off intermediary medications, attends AA meetings every day, and is starting his own business. He has even reconnected with his son, who visited from out of state for a week, and met his grandson for the very first time and took him to Legoland. Roger is now able to support himself and looks forward to a brighter and healthier future and new relationships with his family.

**Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.*



Adopting an Electronic Health Record (EHR) System

With the help of three incredibly generous donors, New Beginnings has finally secured close to \$100,000 in funding needed to transition our counseling clinic from a paper-based system to an EHR system with an online client portal. The new system will increase our efficiency, improve timely access to our clinic, and empower us to strengthen our collaborations with medical and social service agencies. EHR implementation will not only allow us to achieve the long-term impact of improved mental health outcomes but will also enable us to increase our capacity to serve more low-income individuals and families. This digital transformation represents a critical milestone in our ongoing effort to improve mental health outcomes in the community. Our sincere thanks to the two individual donors, and the Bower Foundation, who made this transition possible!

A New Beginning for Debbie

"I feel like I owe my life to Cassie [Safe Parking Program Coordinator/Case Manager] and Erica [Housing Navigator]. I would've never gotten a place without them," says Debbie, one of our clients who just moved into a new apartment. At the time, Debbie had been living in a nursing home while recovering from multiple surgeries to her leg and foot, which required over three months of hospitalization.

Prior to being in the hospital, Debbie was a client of New Beginnings' Safe Parking Program and had been living in her van with her 167-pound dog, Beejaye. By providing rapid rehousing services, which includes housing identification, short-term intensive case management, and short-term financial assistance, New Beginnings was able to continue to work with Debbie while she was in the hospital and help her identify a unit that she could move into once she had recovered.

Debbie has just moved into the unit and has made a successful transition, due in large part to donors and foundations such as the Change a Life, Kind World, Latkin, and Mosher Foundations, as well as the City of Goleta and the City and County of Santa Barbara, that enabled New Beginnings to assist with move-in costs, such as the purchase of a new fridge, couch, wheelchair, and walker. New Beginnings' Housing Retention staff will continue to meet with Debbie to ensure that she retains her housing and that she has all of the resources she needs to succeed in her endeavors.



Our Safe Parking Program®

operates
136 spaces
in 24 parking lots

sheltering more than
150 individuals
and families every night

THIS YEAR, OUR CASE MANAGERS:

connected
40 clients
to employment

housed
72 households

established
78 individuals
on public benefits



As the leading service provider for very low-income veterans in Santa Barbara County, we enrolled 101 veterans in our Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program this past grant year, housed 95 veterans and their family members, and provided light-touch case management to an additional 148 veterans.

Housing a Family of Five in Under a Month

Rob*, a father of three with another child on the way, had just graduated college and had a month to find a new unit for his family before being required to exit student housing. Having just been hit by a vehicle, Rob was still in recovery and had a difficult time finding a full-time job, which made it impossible to meet the income requirements he would need to secure a new unit.

As a veteran, Rob became connected to our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. Within a week, staff had identified a 3-bedroom townhome with a playground and community pool that would be perfect for Rob and his family. Although the unit was a few hundred dollars above the threshold our short-term financial assistance would allow for, staff were successfully able to negotiate rent because the landlord felt confident that staff would be there to ensure that Rob could increase his income and sustain the unit in the long term.

Our SSVF program has continued to provide case management and temporary financial assistance so Rob can afford the unit while he increases his income. Due to the generosity of private foundations and donors such as the Coeta and Donald Barker, Williams-Corbett, Henry Mayo Newhall, Mark and Dorothy Smith, Edwin and Jeanne Woods Family, and the Roy & Ida Eagle Foundations, as well as the County of Santa Barbara Human Services Fund, New Beginnings was also able to cover the costs for minor vehicle repairs, which enabled Rob to focus more fully on his recovery from his injury, attend job interviews, and take care of his family. Rob is now employed full time, had his fourth child, and is very close to being able to afford the unit on his own. He has expressed an incredible amount of gratitude for all of the services he has received and is tremendously excited to embark on the next chapter in his life.

*Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.

Jeff Moody - New Board Member

Jeff Moody is the former owner and CEO of Moody & Associates, Inc. (Moody's). Based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Moody's is a family owned and operated business that provides environmental and geological consulting. During Jeff's time as CEO, he grew the company from one office with 7 employees to three offices with 120 staff members. Upon moving to Southern California, Jeff became exposed to the homeless epidemic in America for the first time. Now retired, Jeff has found his next challenge – applying his knowledge and abilities towards the homeless issues prevalent in Santa Barbara County.



“We are delighted to have Jeff on the board of New Beginnings. His high-level organizational skills will immeasurably aid us in taking New Beginnings to an even higher level of serving this community.”

– Diane Pannkuk, Board President

Steph Burke - New Board Member

Steph Burke manages operations for a leading endodontist and has a track record of community involvement in both education, local government, and non-profit organizations. Notably, Steph has interned with the Human Rights Watch and with Senator Hannah Beth Jackson's Office. Steph has also tutored students in their writing at SBCC and was previously a Sales Representative. After working as a professional and volunteering for nearly eight years, Steph enrolled at UC Berkeley and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Philosophy. While in school, Steph spearheaded the development of several student-led diversity initiatives to bring philosophy to younger students and broaden coursework.



“New Beginnings is delighted to welcome Steph Burke to the Board of Directors. Steph has a long history of community involvement in both education and non-profits. We are confident that Steph will bring a fresh perspective to the table.”

– Diane Pannkuk, Board President

Susan Wax - Clinical Supervisor

Dr. Susan Wax has volunteered as a clinical supervisor at New Beginnings for the past four years. She brings over 30 years of clinical experience as a psychologist, specializing in psychodynamic psychotherapy with individuals and advanced therapy with couples. She has training as a Divorce Mediator and has worked extensively with divorcing families. Dr. Wax is a former Associate Faculty member of Antioch University and has taught graduate and undergraduate courses, as well as community-based courses for the Santa Barbara courts. She served as clinical supervisor for UCSB Hosford Clinic for several years. She is a Board Member for The Fund for Santa Barbara and previously served as a Founding Board Member of SB-CASA and on the Board of The Children's' Creative Project.



“It's been an honor to work with Susan over the past two years. Susan's patience and capacity for deep listening make her a phenomenal role model for our counselors. We are privileged in the field of psychotherapy to learn from someone with so much experience about the nature of our complex and ever evolving human relationships.”

– Crystal Ramirez, Clinical Director

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Crystal Ramirez, Ph.D, MFT
Clinical Director

Life Skills Parenting and Education Program

Serving 107 families this past fiscal year, our Life Skills Parenting and Education Program provides a series of tailored psychoeducational classes at no cost to low-income and at-risk individuals and families by forming collaborative partnerships with area safety-net organizations. We provide our services directly at the facilities of our community partners to ensure access.

This year, our program was offered at:

- Villa Majella (homeless mothers)
- Transition House (homeless families)
- Housing Authority of City of Santa Barbara (low-income individuals)
- County Department of Behavioral Wellness (youth and families impacted by serious mental illness)
- St. Vincent's (homeless mothers)
- 4kids2kids (sex trafficking survivors)
- Los Prietos Boys Camp (incarcerated youth)

Three Strong Mothers

Gabi, Liz, and Isabella* had several things in common. They all had been emotionally and physically abused as children, were exposed to drugs at an early age, and had parents that were in and out of prison. As teenagers, each had started using substances, were forced out of their homes, and soon after became pregnant. Lacking income, knowledge about how to be an effective parent, and access to substance and mental health counseling, all three women lost their children to the foster care system.

Upon arriving to Villa Majella, a home for homeless mothers, Gabi, Liz, and Isabella were all pregnant again and desperately wanted to address their issues so they could care for their children. They all truly believed they could turn their lives around for their children and their futures but needed the support to do so.

Through our Life Skills Parenting and Education Program, the women enrolled in a free group parenting class that provided them with hands-on skills that helped each to define effective parental roles, end destructive behaviors, shift their thinking, and develop new perspectives to change their lives. Each woman also received individual counseling at Villa Majella from a



New Beginnings counselor and participated in a substance use treatment program.

They are all now drug free, re-establishing relationships with their families, and are enrolled in college courses. Gabi wants to be a drug and alcohol counselor; Liz wants to be a nurse; Isabella is focusing solely on motherhood and recovery for now. They are all close to reuniting with their children in the foster care system, have given birth, and are committed to becoming present and healthy mothers.

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

New Beginnings Counseling Center
324 East Carrillo Street, Suite C
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

2019 Annual Fundraiser

Friday, November 1, 2019 - 7:30pm at The New Vic

FOOD AND SHELTER

by Jane Anderson



Food and Shelter is the fanciful but heartrending story of a homeless family who spends the night at Disneyland.

To purchase individual tickets or learn more about sponsorships, please visit www.sbnbcc.org/annual-fundraiser/

Directed by Jenny Sullivan

Food and Shelter is presented by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc., a Concord Theatricals Company.

New Beginnings Counseling Center's 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.

