

New Beginnings Fall News



Celebrating 20 Years of Safe Parking: A Memorable Anniversary Luncheon



In June, 2024, New Beginnings proudly celebrated a major milestone – a Luncheon celebrating the 20th Anniversary of our Safe Parking Program. The luncheon, hosted at the beautiful Santa Barbara Woman's Club with delicious lunches provided by Lunch Box Yum, was a grand affair that highlighted two decades of the Safe Parking Program's life-changing work.

The Luncheon also honored two individuals who have been pivotal in the success of our Safe Parking Program: the Honorable Susan Rose and Congressman Salud Carbajal. Their unwavering commitment and tireless advocacy have been instrumental in the program's establishment and ongoing impact. Susan Rose's visionary leadership and continued dedication, and Congressman Carbajal's legislative and ongoing personal support, have helped ensure the program's sustainability and effectiveness.

The event was attended by over 160 participants, including keynote speaker, Dr. Michele Wakin, who delivered a presentation on her research into the original Santa

Barbara "Hobo Jungle". As one of the founding case managers of the Safe Parking Program, Dr. Wakin's insights into the program's origins and evolution provided context for understanding its significance and impact. Her reflections on the program's journey showcased the progress made and the crucial, ongoing need for community support.

The 20th Anniversary celebration was both a tribute to our past achievements and a look forward to the future.

Today, the Safe Parking Program manages 200 spaces in 31 parking lots throughout the cities of Santa Barbara, Goleta, Carpinteria, Lompoc, and the neighboring unincorporated areas of the county. Each of these lots has entered into a written agreement with New Beginnings, who has indemnified them against any liability. Since the program's inception in 2004, there have been no major incidents or damage to any of the participating lots or neighborhoods.

(Continued on page 3)

Thank You to Our Sponsors

*We are sincerely grateful to all
of our event contributors.*

Defender Sponsors

Charles & Eileen White Read
Jon Kechejian & Sandy Schoolfield
Zegar Family Fund

Advocate Sponsor

Glenn & Amy Bacheller
Mary Becker
Judith Hopkinson
Sara Miller McCune
The Hutton Parker Foundation

Supporter Sponsors

Andrew & Liz Butcher
Lloyd & Richard Dallett
Maureen & Dave Ellenberger
Kait Hamilton
Mary Howe-Grant, Ph.D.
Montecito Bank & Trust

In Kind Sponsors

Lazy Acres
Doug Margerum



Message from Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Greetings and I hope this finds you all well! Amazingly, we have already completed another incredibly busy and productive year. As I reflect upon the year's accomplishments, challenges and celebrations, I remain in awe of all that our staff, volunteers and clients have achieved in 2024.

In 2024, our Safe Parking Program celebrated its 20th year of service, remaining the leading and role model best-practice program for serving families and individuals living in their vehicles nationwide. Due in large part to the support of our county and cities Housing and Community Development Departments, our many supporters, donors and community partners, and an incredibly skilled and dedicated staff, we were able to deepen and strengthen our work with this population with new funding designed to eliminate the need for vehicle encampments. Our Supportive Services for Veterans Program has significantly reduced the number of homeless Veterans in Santa Barbara County and has the real possibility in 2025 of ending Veteran homelessness through our work with an unprecedented local and regional VA partnership. And our Community Counseling Center and Life Skills programs are providing mental health services to a record number of clients both at our expanded south county collaborative center and through new and existing long-term community partnerships. Satellite offices in Lompoc, and for the first time ever in Santa Maria, have further supported these efforts.

2025 provides new opportunities with an engaged and devoted team, impending struggles with the ever-changing funding environment, and the potential of effecting real and lasting change in Santa Barbara County. As always, our appreciation and gratitude for everything you do in partnership with us is immeasurable. Merry merry to all. Be safe, self-care, and be silly and easy and kind to each other.

– Kristine

STAFF SUMMER CELEBRATION: *A Fun-Filled Day on the Double Dolphin!*

At New Beginnings, we believe in celebrating the incredible efforts of our dedicated team, and this summer, we had the perfect opportunity to do just that! Our hardworking staff enjoyed a fabulous and well deserved day off for our Summer Holiday Party. We sailed aboard the Double Dolphin Cruises, setting sail from the picturesque Santa Barbara harbor, followed by a delicious lunch at The Anchor Rose.

The day was a perfect escape, with stunning coastal views and the rhythm of the ocean providing a refreshing backdrop. As the team enjoyed the sunshine and the gentle sea breeze, it was clear that this event was more than just a fun outing – it was a heartfelt way to express our appreciation for the dedication our staff brings to New Beginnings.

Our Summer Staff Celebration is also an essential outlet to prevent burnout, and promote team building and positive connections. It allows staff to step away from their daily routines, recharge their energy, and return with renewed enthusiasm and creativity. By providing these moments of rest and enjoyment, we support their well-being and ensure they can continue to bring their best to our mission.

This celebration was not only a chance to express our gratitude, but also a reminder of the importance of self-care in sustaining long-term success. Our staff's unwavering dedication is the heart of New Beginnings, and by investing in their happiness and health, we strengthen our collective impact.



New Beginnings Unites with Community Supporters for Strategic Planning



In late August, New Beginnings alongside Resolute Associates LLC. hosted a pivotal focus group meeting, bringing together 34 dedicated community supporters and stakeholders for a collaborative session aimed at shaping the organization's future. This gathering was a significant step in crafting a 5-year strategic plan that will further guide New Beginnings in its mission to help the most vulnerable within Santa Barbara County.

The focus group was a melting pot of diverse perspectives and expertise - including local government employees, longtime donors and sponsors, past and current board members, staff, and volunteers of New Beginnings' programs. The primary goal of the meeting was to solicit input on key areas such as: program development, community engagement and marketing, and generating a wider plan to support and continue New Beginnings' significant growth. By actively involving community

members in the planning process, we ensure that our strategic goals resonate with those we serve and reflect the collective aspirations of the community.

The results of this focus group were significant, and the members' feedback will be instrumental in crafting a strategic plan that not only addresses the immediate needs of the community, but also sets a forward-thinking vision for the next five years. Key themes that emerged included enhancing outreach and marketing efforts, ways to expand New Beginnings' scope of care through the Santa Barbara Community, and implementing more sustainable practices within the organization.

The enthusiasm and dedication demonstrated by all participants was truly inspiring. As we move forward with the strategic planning process, the insights gained from this focus group will serve as a foundation for making informed decisions and setting attainable and achievable goals.

New Beginnings extends heartfelt gratitude to everyone who participated and shared their valuable perspectives. Your involvement is crucial in helping us navigate the future and continue our mission to provide quality, affordable counseling, shelter, case management, and education that strengthen our community and provide our clients with the ability to lead healthy and productive lives.

Stay tuned for updates on the progress of our strategic plan and upcoming opportunities to engage with and support New Beginnings! Together, we can build a brighter future for our community.

20th Anniversary Luncheon *(Continued from page 1)*

The Safe Parking Program connects the chronically homeless to shelters and services that will get them off the streets and into safer environments. Program staff distribute more than 450 pounds of food each month and offer a rapid rehousing component that provides case management to transition program participants into permanent housing and employment. Additionally, through the program, staff offers job tutoring and resume preparation and facilitates outside agency connections as needed to help participants gain employment or obtain government benefits. On a case-by-case basis, New Beginnings writes grants on behalf of clients to help them obtain cash assistance to pay for medical and dental expenses, and other costly, but life-changing assistance.

Thank you for standing with us and being part of this significant milestone. Here's to many more years of progress and positive change, as we continue to create new beginnings and make a meaningful impact in our community.



A Veteran's Journey from Homelessness to Harmony - New Beginnings' SSVF Program

Terry, a veteran, found himself homeless after the loss of his wife. As a Santa Barbara local, he was unable to afford rent on only one income, and was forced to move into his vehicle. For over a year, Terry worked with our Safe Parking Program, but was struggling to get by on a fixed income.

In October of 2023, when New Beginnings learned that Terry was a veteran, the team quickly connected him with our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program and was able to provide him with housing assistance through the SSVF Rapid Rehousing program. This included rental assistance, housing navigation, and support in securing a prioritized housing voucher through the VA Supportive Housing (VASH) program.

As a senior on a fixed income with limited resources, Terry was also dealing with food insecurity. New Beginnings connected him with the Food Bank's Older Adult Nutrition Program and the Unity Shoppe's "Unity Delivers" program, ensuring he had access to fresh, nutritious food. With his mobility challenges, as Terry relied on a walker, New Beginnings arranged for transportation through Easy Lift, making it easier for him to attend medical appointments and manage his health, which includes diabetes and mental health issues. The SSVF Team supported him in establishing care with his doctors, ensuring he was adhering to his medications and keeping up with follow-up appointments.



Through it all, Terry began to find a sense of community with the SSVF Team and within his new home. He speaks fondly of the support he received from his neighbors, who helped him with daily errands, and even encouraged him to pick up a guitar. At a community party, Terry's neighbors gifted him a brand-new Fender guitar - and he was able to start playing music again. It was an honor when one of the SSVF's Team, also a musician, helped him tune it, and Terry shared a beautiful song. Terry's journey truly demonstrates the harmony and beauty that can come from help and a powerful community.

The Honorable Susan Rose Educational Luncheon Series



New Beginnings holds five *Honorable Susan Rose Educational Luncheons* annually, offering valuable opportunities for community discussions on vital social and human service issues. At each luncheon, we also highlight one of our key programs, giving attendees a closer look at the impact we make in the community. These in-depth forums feature open Q&A sessions, allowing participants to engage directly with agency staff, clients, and leadership. Held at various eateries and social clubs in Santa Barbara and Santa Maria, the luncheons are designed to foster collaboration and insight into local challenges. It's an excellent chance to stay informed and connected with the issues that matter most - if you are interested in learning more, please reach out to our Development Department at development@sbnbcc.org, or by phone at (805) 963-7777 ext. 122.

A “New Beginning” for Safe Parking Client

In 2021, as COVID wreaked havoc, Sharon faced numerous health issues, including spine fractures, edema, high blood pressure, and borderline diabetes. A hairdresser for over 30 years, she had also worked full-time as a barista. After being advised to stay off her feet, she transitioned to driving and making home deliveries. Unfortunately, as her income dwindled and isolation deepened, she found herself unable to afford housing and was forced to move into her car with her cat, Elton. She longed for stable housing and to feel safe again.

When she entered New Beginnings’ Safe Parking program in 2023, Sharon shared deep feelings of embarrassment and fear, crying that “No one knows I’m living in my car!” But with Safe Parking came new feelings of relief and safety. She knew that she was headed back to housing security.

Now, a year later, thanks to New Beginnings, Sharon is living in her own studio apartment—her cat Elton by her side. Secure and thriving, she is excited to share, “There’s no more hiding that I was living in my car!” She’s thrilled to

be able to invite friends over, cook, and attend daily activities without worrying about where to stash her clothes or belongings. “And the best part? I know Elton is safe while I’m at work. He has a home now too!”

Sharon’s new apartment transformed her life.

With the ability to prepare healthy meals, she’s been able to cut carbs and sugars in half, she’s lost weight, and her blood work is normal. She feels safe and secure again, and expresses immense gratitude for the staff and hard work of New Beginnings’ Safe Parking Program.



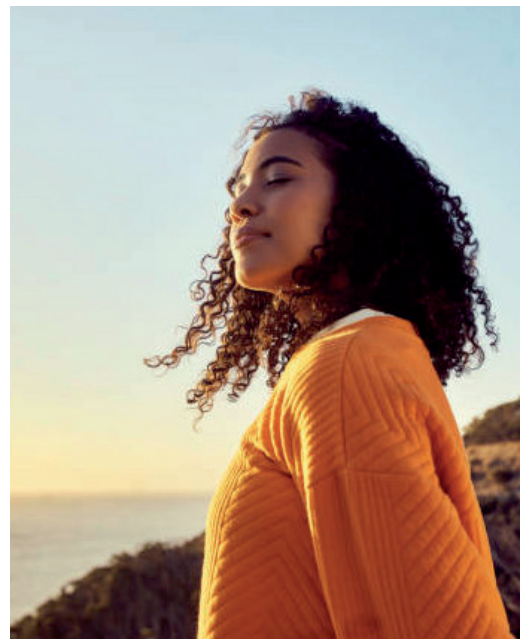
Finding Emotional Strength Through New Beginnings

Jordan* entered into therapy through New Beginnings’ Counseling Center after realizing a dramatic pivot in her life was necessary. She felt stuck in her day-to-day routine, and felt depressed over a lack of motivation. During her first few sessions, she was not clear on goals for herself. She knew that she wanted to improve, but her ideas for improvement did not seem to fulfill the desire for change that she had been longing for after so many years.

Initially, Jordan was showing frustration that her carefully crafted weekly routine was not making her happier. But, through therapy and hard work with her counselor, Jordan’s beliefs about herself shifted more with each session. As Jordan incrementally grew more vulnerable in sessions, she paralleled this vulnerability in life outside of the therapy room. Her willingness to examine her own thoughts helped her participate in her life in a way that is aligned for herself. This openness has helped her in accepting herself as well as other people.

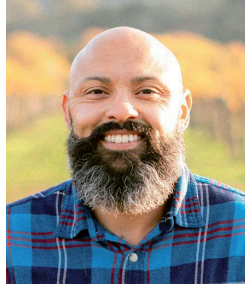
Through this journey with New Beginnings, Jordan is learning what she is truly capable of, and she is consistently taking action to build the life that she wants.

**Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality*



From Entry Level Positions to Director - the Stories of New Beginnings' Leadership

Victor Virgen: In December 2017, Victor Virgen began his journey with New Beginnings as a North County Case Manager, helping veterans overcome barriers to stable housing. Each day presented new challenges and successes, fostering resilience and hope. As a veteran himself, Victor's work with veterans struggling with housing deepened his understanding of their unique struggles and ignited a passion for advocacy.



In August 2018, Victor was promoted to SSVF Program Coordinator after several colleagues left for further education. Instead of hiring a replacement, Victor embraced the role's responsibilities, and he transitioned to an administrative position while continuing case management despite the involved, steep learning curve. Through ongoing training and collaboration with community partners, he expanded his skills and commitment to veterans.

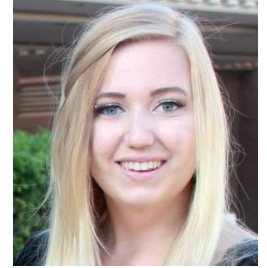
A significant challenge arose in 2020 when a primary SSVF staff member transitioned to a sheriff role on the same day the "Shelter in Place" order was issued. For nearly four months, Victor managed the SSVF program alone, covering the county while adapting to remote work and training new staff. Despite the pandemic, he ensured veterans received housing, emergency shelter, and essential services.

In December 2020, Victor was promoted to Program Manager, becoming the first SSVF Program Coordinator to achieve this role. He participated in the 100 Day Veterans Challenge and helped establish the Santa Barbara County Veterans Collaborative, where he serves as Treasurer and Co-Lead of the Housing and Homeless Working Group. He also contributes to the Greater Los Angeles and Outlying Areas' VA One Team Pilot Project, helping develop policies for potential nationwide implementation.

In October 2023, Victor was promoted to Veteran Services Director and promoted Jamie Naylor, who joined during the pandemic, to Program Manager. Under his leadership, the SSVF program grew from three to 13 staff members.

Victor credits his success to the unwavering support of New Beginnings Executive Director Kristine Schwarz, the dedicated staff, community partners, and his family, all of whom recognized the commitment needed to make a difference.

Victoria Garfield: New Beginnings also celebrates Victoria Garfield, who has been an integral part of the team for seven years. Victoria's background adds a unique dimension to her role - she graduated from UCSB in 2016 and then developed her bookkeeping skills over a year while working at a Santa Barbara tax firm. Her journey to grant writing has been anything but linear, showcasing how New Beginnings fosters personal and professional growth in a rapidly expanding environment.



Victoria joined in 2017 as the Office Manager in the small Carrillo office, where her role encompassed daily bookkeeping, financial oversight, and HR tasks such as onboarding and time-card processing. Victoria excelled in the role, and within two years, she was promoted to Operations Manager, allowing her to expand her impact within the organization.

Before the pandemic struck in March of 2020, Victoria had plans to relocate to work remotely in Arizona and purchase a home. At that time, New Beginnings was preparing for a transition, as the then contracted Grant Writer was retiring - and Victoria was able to step into the role of Grants & Compliance Manager with her move. This marked the beginning of her journey into grant writing, where she began drafting foundation grants, managing applications and reports, and has taken over the role of government grant reporting and reimbursement - a massive project that she dedicates a significant amount of time to each quarter.

When Victoria first joined the grants team, the budget was less than \$1 million. Today, it has impressively surpassed \$12 million, reflecting the hard work and success of the organization.

As the organization continues to grow, Victoria looks forward to the opportunities that lie ahead and is excited to help shape the future of New Beginnings.

Cassie Roach: Cassie began her journey with Safe Parking in August 2015, where she quickly discovered her passion for the mission. By January 2016, her dedication led to a full-time position as a case manager, and by July of the same year, she stepped up as the program coordinator, overseeing program operations.



Under Cassie's leadership, Safe Parking has experienced remarkable growth. When she joined, the team consisted of just two full-time staff members, and the program operated on a budget of under \$300,000. Today, Safe Parking boasts four full-time case managers, serves clients countywide, and has a budget exceeding \$3 million. The program has also successfully launched a separate rapid rehousing initiative, increasing its impact from housing 50 to 60 individuals annually to over 100 individuals for the past two fiscal years.

The team has expanded significantly, now including 14 full-time staff members and four part-time client liaison/lot monitors, all dedicated to addressing vehicular homelessness. Safe Parking has gained national recognition as a leading model for supporting individuals and families facing this issue. The State of California has also acknowledged its success, awarding nearly \$8 million to help resolve vehicle encampments through the California Encampment Resolution (CERF) Project, which has allowed the program to hire 25 additional staff members.

Throughout her time at Safe Parking, Cassie has deepened her commitment to social work, recognizing the vital role that New Beginnings and Safe Parking play in the Santa Barbara County community. This inspired her to pursue a master's degree in social work at Cal State Los Angeles, which she earned in May 2024. Cassie has since returned as the full-time Safe Parking Program Director, now overseeing significantly expanded operations. She is also pursuing licensure while leading efforts to end vehicular homelessness in Santa Barbara County.

Brenda Lang: Brenda's journey at New Beginnings began in the spring of 2022 when she joined the team through a staffing agency. Shortly after, she was hired as Office Manager, bringing with her a wealth of experience from the non-profit animal welfare sector. Driven by a passion for supporting the community, Brenda was deeply moved by New Beginnings' mission and the unwavering dedication of its staff.



As the organization rapidly expanded, Brenda's role quickly evolved to meet the growing needs of the agency. When it became clear that the team needed a larger, more supportive office space to accommodate increased staffing and programming, Brenda took on the challenge of finding the perfect location. After an extensive search, New Beginnings moved into a 15,000+ square foot space in Santa Barbara, complete with large conference rooms, a community kitchen, and informal workspaces. The agency also expanded its presence with additional offices in Lompoc and Santa Maria, further enhancing its accessibility to clients and providing more creative workspaces for staff.

Brenda's promotion to Operations Director reflects her hard work, dedication, and commitment to supporting her colleagues and the organization's mission. Her ability to navigate challenges and find solutions has played a key role in New Beginnings' continued growth and success. We are proud of Brenda's accomplishments and look forward to all she will continue to achieve in her new role.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jacqueline Kurta, MFT, Psy.D.
President

Dan Engel
Vice President

Mark Cardona, J.D.

Secretary

Ziad Elkurjie

Treasurer

Suzanne Grimmesey, MFT

Stasia Huiner, M.B.A.

Kathryn Keene

Julie LeVay

Diane Pannkuk, M.B.A.

Warren B. Ritter II

Scott Sanford

Ronnie Shahbazian

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Hon. Susan Rose – *Chairperson*

Alberto Arroyo

Jim Baxter

Marc Borowitz

Patty Bryant

Brynn Crowe

Patricia Duffy

Allan Ghitlerman (In Memoriam)

Mary Howe-Grant, Ph.D.

Kathryn LePage, M.A.

Karen Lehrer, MFT

Seymour Lehrer

Mike McCarthy

Bruce W. McRoy, J.D.

Fred Morguelan, Ph.D.

Marilyn Rickard Schafer

Das Williams

Michael Young

Maria Zate

Judi Weisbart

Fundraising Consultant

MANAGEMENT TEAM

Kristine Schwarz, MFT, LPCC
Executive Director

Shana Burns, MFT
Clinical Director

Victoria Garfield
Grants Administration Director

Joel Goforth
Homeless Services Director

Brenda Lang
Operations Director

Cassie Roach, MSW
Safe Parking Program Director

Victor Virgen
Veteran Services Director



NEW BEGINNINGS

New Beginnings

530 E. Montecito Street, Suite 101
Santa Barbara, CA 93103

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Goleta, CA
PERMIT NO. 800



Thank you

Thank you so much for your support of our work! 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.



NEW BEGINNINGS