

New Beginnings Summer News



Staff, Counselors, and Board Members Rise to the Occasion During the Pandemic

Housing Retention Specialist, Rhandi LaChonce, gearing up to help one of her clients move from an encampment to a motel.

As soon as the pandemic started, we adapted our service delivery model and expanded our service offering to ensure the safety, health, and well-being of our clients. Our most important priority early on was to protect our medically vulnerable, unsheltered clients from contracting the virus. To date we have sheltered and continue to shelter more than 25 people in motels county-wide. We have transitioned more than 10 of our clients living in motels to permanent housing and are hoping to move all of these clients into long-term housing during this time.

Addressing food insecurity has been another major focus area for us, as many of our clients have lost their jobs or are seniors or are people who have a disability. Twice per week for more than three months, our Safe Parking team distributed hundreds of pounds of groceries and essential supplies to 70 of our unsheltered clients. During this time, staff and board members also delivered food twice per week to our seniors,

our medically vulnerable clients, and to our veteran clients living at Johnson Court, the newly established veteran housing complex in Santa Barbara – part of the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara.

In North County, our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program Manager, Victor Virgen, has ensured food security for his clients, and on one occasion, delivered food to more than ten of his clients living in motels in a single afternoon. To supplement the food we were purchasing from the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, we purchased \$10,000 of food out of pocket and have also received more than 175 boxes of items from donors through our Amazon Wish List that we were able to distribute to our clients. In total, we have fed 135 people weekly through our efforts.

Programmatically, we consolidated our Safe Parking clients into fewer lots where they can access

a restroom facility 24/7, and also so that they can practice social distancing. We were also immediately able to transition all of our counseling clients to our new telemental health platform, which we were in the final stages of implementing in early March. We have met all fee reduction requests associated with job loss, provided accelerated training to more than 40 of our mental health professionals, and built a telemental health platform operating at the highest security standards.

We are grateful to the Santa Barbara Foundation, United Way, the Hutton Parker Foundation, and other foundations and community members for providing us with essential funding through the COVID-19 Joint Response Effort. We also would like to thank the Zegar, Kind World, Barker, St. Francis, and DVNF Foundations, as well as the Starfish Housing Committee and our many donors who have supported our work during this time!



Message from Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz

Dear Friends of New Beginnings,

The coronavirus, the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent protests, and other recent events have exposed many vulnerabilities in our communities and homes, raised our collective consciousness, and brought to light inequities and systemic failures that New Beginnings works to address every day. While we may have different perspectives on how to solve many of the challenges we face, we can agree that in these past few months, we have all suffered some degree of uncertainty, disruption, isolation, loss, and fear. Communities of color and others among us have clearly been disproportionately impacted.

New Beginnings will continue to address the underlying conditions that have exacerbated oppression, marginalization and poverty and that lead to housing and food insecurity, addiction, domestic violence, and untreated mental illness. We will continue to embrace unity, inclusion, respect, communication, integrity, empathy and kindness. We will help those who cannot help themselves; people who are less capable, less fortunate, and less resourced, creating the space for everyone to have a voice.

We cannot make an impact without your partnership and support. Please help us to reduce barriers by considering renting to a homeless family or individual, opening up your parking lot for safe parking, employing our low-income neighbors, or volunteering your time to deliver food and supplies to medically vulnerable and isolated seniors. Support funding for social services and interventions that raise people out of poverty and embrace our working together as a unified community to effect lasting change.

Thank you so much to the many organizations and people who have stepped up and buoyed us these past months. Your support, help, and friendship means the world to us and is so very much appreciated. Be well, stay safe and please engage in regular self-care!

-Kristine

New Beginnings Extends Its Reach and Expands the Safe Parking Program

To address the rising number of people living in their vehicles, the County of Santa Barbara has provided us with several years of funding to expand our Safe Parking Program in South County and to develop the program in North County, specifically in Lompoc and Santa Maria. The expansion will be carried out this year, and we have recently opened a new office in Lompoc for our North County Case Managers, which includes staff from both our Safe Parking and Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program. This growth represents a major milestone for Safe Parking, as we become the first agency in the country to develop a countywide Safe Parking Program at scale. In the next few years, we will need to develop contracts with multiple cities, create relationships with new foundations, and develop a donor base in North County to financially sustain the expansion of the program in the long run. If you know of any parking lot owners in Lompoc or Santa Maria who would be open to partnering with us, please reach out to us by contacting 805-845-8492!

New Beginnings has made tremendous strides in the last year to expand its operations throughout the county. Our Donald J. Willfong Community Counseling Center now features a telemental health platform that will allow us to provide our services to people who live in health professional shortage areas of the county. Recently, we began using the platform to offer counseling services to first responders at no cost. Earlier this year, we began offering on-site supportive services to veterans living at Johnson Court, which further solidifies us as a leading service provider for low-income veterans in our community and allows us to strengthen our long-standing relationship with the Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara. We understand how much need there is Santa Barbara County and are excited that we are positioned to grow our impact and reach more people with our services.



A Senior Veteran Moves Into His New Home

Rich* is a 73-year-old veteran who occasionally spent his evenings sleeping in an acquaintance's garage. He did not have a rental agreement, and when the pandemic started, Rich was forced to move out immediately because his landlord feared that Rich could contract the virus and bring it home with him. Shortly after becoming homeless again, Rich was referred to our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program by numerous service providers.

Fortunately, we had just received guidance from the Department of Veteran Affairs that we could place medically vulnerable homeless veterans into motels and provide emergency housing assistance. We moved Rich into a motel for over a month, and during this time, we had staff and board members deliver meals to Rich twice per week. Our goal from the beginning was to move Rich into Johnson Court because there was an available space and he met all of the criteria. Our team spent weeks gathering all the required documentation and assisting Rich in applying for permanent supportive housing. It was especially challenging due to the shelter-in-place order.

Forty-four days after becoming homeless, Rich was approved to move into the unit, and we



arranged transportation so Rich could move into his new home. After three years of experiencing housing insecurity, Rich was finally housed at the beginning of May into his new unit that he will be able to live in for the rest of his life. Rich loves to read books about philosophers, ancient and current military and world history, numerology, and the secrets of the universe. His goal is to focus on transitioning from being homeless to being housed and wants to build friendships with his neighbors and become a good neighbor himself.

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

Supporting a Senior Battling Cancer

Sylvia is one of our Safe Parking clients who just passed away this August after fighting cancer for several years. Sylvia was a business owner who refurbished old vehicles, and due to her cancer and deteriorating health, was unable to continue working and lost her income. She became homeless two years ago when she could not keep up with her mortgage payments. She moved out of her house, moved all of her possessions into a storage unit, and moved closer to Santa Barbara in order to be near her doctor.

Without an income, Sylvia chose to live in her vehicle in our Safe Parking Program. We helped her apply for permanent supportive housing, and she spent two years in our program waiting for her voucher to

become available. This past January, we were able to identify an apartment that she could move into and that would accept a voucher. Staff and board members helped Sylvia clear out her storage unit so she could donate items she did not need and helped her move some of the remaining items into her new home. New Beginnings also provided Sylvia with short-term financial assistance to help with the security deposit and move-in costs.

While Sylvia spent many weeks in the hospital this year seeking medical treatment, she was able to live in her new apartment for several months. A week before her passing, Sylvia called one of our staff members to let her know that she deeply appreciated all that our agency had done for her, but that she felt tired and ready to go. According to staff, Sylvia is incredibly sweet, and even when she's weak and can't smile, she expresses gratitude through her words and always has a positive attitude. She never stopped fighting.

Honoring our Landlord of the Year: Stacey Rushing

From left to right: Former Board President and Current Board Member, Diane Pannkuk, Congressman Salud Carbajal, Landlord of the Year Stacey Rushing, Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz, and Board Member, Guy Smith



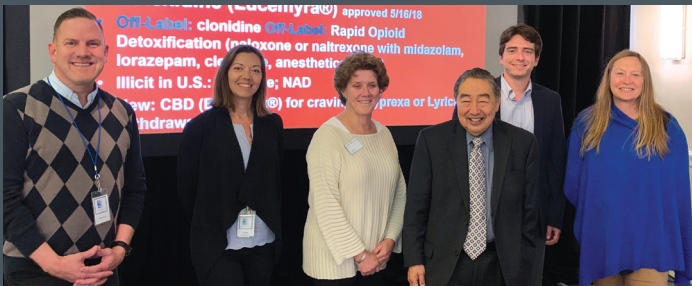
In January, New Beginnings organized a luncheon for landlords and property managers to learn more about how our staff partner with landlords to end homelessness for our clients. We were very fortunate that our Congressman, Salud Carbajal, was willing to speak on our behalf and help motivate landlords and property managers to work with organizations such as ours to assist individuals, families, and veterans who are in need of housing.

We also presented our second Landlord of the Year Award to one of our exceptional landlord partners, Stacey Rushing, who has partnered with us to house our veteran clients in Lompoc. In addition to recognizing the achievement of exceptional landlords, we use this award to inspire prospective landlords to work with us so we can change the lives of our clients.

Recruiting private landlords is no easy task, but without them, we would not be able to house the vast majority of our clients. By providing short-term financial assistance, as well as wraparound supportive services to our newly housed clients, we help ensure that each of our clients can retain their housing in the long run.

We work with dozens of landlords throughout Santa Barbara County and have moved more than 2,500 community members into long-term housing through our two housing programs. If you are a landlord or know of any landlords, we encourage you to reach out to us via <https://sbnbcc.org/landlords/>! If you are a part of a community group, faith-based organization, or social club, and you are willing to make an introduction for us, we would be happy to present to your group and discuss our agency and our landlord partnership program.

New Beginnings Establishes a Collaboration to Bring the Leading Expert in Addiction, Dr. Darryl Inaba, to Santa Barbara



From left to right: Counselor, Ray Sullivan, Clinical Director, Crystal Ramirez, Board President, Jackie Kurta, Dr. Inaba, Development Manager, Michael Berton, and Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz

Earlier this year, New Beginnings initiated a collaboration with the UCSB Alcohol and Drug Program, Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, the Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, and UCSB Counseling and Psychological Services to bring the world-renowned expert on addiction, Dr. Darryl Inaba, to Santa Barbara to provide multiple days of training to our local clinicians. Funding for this important event was provided by the SAMHSA – California Department

of Health Care Services (DHCS) Youth Opioid Response Grant (YOR CALIFORNIA).

New Beginnings hosted a day-long training and made it available for free to our counselors, staff, and local area clinicians. The training explored the evolving science of addiction and helped to explain how it is changing the way we look at and treat substance-related and addictive disorders. Afterwards, Dr. Inaba provided training to our collaborators, as well as to middle school children at a local youth center.

Dr. Inaba is the co-author of *Uppers, Downers, All Arounders*, a textbook on addiction and related disorders that is used in more than 400 colleges and universities. He has been honored with over 90 individual awards for his work in the areas of prevention and treatment of substance abuse problems and is a Lifetime Fellow at the Haight Ashbury Free Clinics, where he served as a Director in the 1960s. It has been our goal to bring Dr. Inaba to Santa Barbara for several years because he is such an engaging and knowledgeable speaker. We are very grateful to our collaborators and funders for making this training available for our mental health professionals.

Thank You to Ron Nielsen for Significantly Improving our Clinical Procedures!

In 2011, Ron Nielsen, a graduate student pursuing his doctorate in Clinical Psychology at Antioch University, Santa Barbara, began volunteering as a counselor at New Beginnings for his practicum. While Ron discovered that individual therapy was an effective way to improve the lives of his clients, he wanted to leave a larger impact on the agency. At the time, New Beginnings was in need of a new relational database system to analyze mental health outcomes and to meet the reporting requirements demanded by new government funding sources. "New Beginnings is a complex organization," Ron said. "It has been both interesting and challenging as it has grown and changed over the years."

In an entirely volunteer capacity, Ron developed the agency's first relational database system and designed it in a way so that it would be adaptable to meet new reporting requirements. For the last nine years, he has managed this database, which has been critical in allowing us to sustain our funding and to improve our outcomes and our analysis of client demographics. Over time, the database evolved to support several areas of the clinic system and was very important this year as we have transitioned to our new Electronic Health Record System and Telemental Health Platform.

For his dissertation, Ron chose to analyze our intake process to provide data-driven support for changes to our intake procedures to improve them so that more people would

matriculate into long-term counseling. His study evaluated two intake procedures that have been used at the counseling clinic at various times in our history to determine what best suits the needs of our clients and increases efficiency for staff and counselors. He discovered that the most important variable in clients attending a first session and continuing counseling was having an appointment scheduled with their counselor at the time of first contact. This information compelled us to enhance our intake procedure so that clients can, when appropriate, confirm an appointment when they first call, not in a few days or weeks when we have completed a formal intake interview. As a result, we have improved our matriculation rates significantly!

We thank Ron for his accomplishments and for volunteering his time for nearly a decade to improve the efficiency and increase the capacity of our Counseling Center. "His efforts helped create the foundation we needed to be able to implement our new digital infrastructure this year. New Beginnings could not have met all of our reporting and data collection requirements without Ron's help and guidance over the years," said Executive Director Kristine Schwarz. "We are indebted to Ron for his volunteer efforts. He has been, and continues to be, an incredible asset to our organization."

Telehealth Can Have Its Advantages

Ava* is a middle-aged woman who has suffered from severe anxiety and panic attacks since she was a teenager. She has lived in Santa Barbara for about two years and has found it very difficult to keep a job and maintain her relationships due to her mental health challenges. Last summer, when she began counseling at New Beginnings, Ava indicated that even taking a trip to the store to buy essentials was a harrowing experience because she would become incredibly anxious and felt like her behavior was being scrutinized by those around her. These emotions would manifest themselves physically and Ava would experience difficulty breathing, would turn red, and start sweating.

Over a period of eight months, Ava made considerable progress with her counselor and learned coping strategies that helped her to successfully manage her anxiety out in public. Once the pandemic erupted, we were very fortunate to be able to transition Ava to our telemental health platform immediately. Putting the sessions on hold would have been a huge setback. You would think that her anxiety would increase drastically during this time; however, Ava has found a new purpose during this time. She is re-connecting with her friends through social media and offering tips to people experiencing anxiety and sharing her successes. This ability has improved Ava's mental well-being and has helped her to discover purpose for the challenges she has experienced for most of her life for the very first time.

Telemental health can be challenging for counselors because they cannot observe nonverbal communication as easily as they can in person. In the case with Ava, our counselor has found that Ava is more at ease in the comfort of her own room. There are other benefits as well. As an example, Ava's counselor can be on the phone with her while Ava is venturing out of her home. In that way, our counselor can observe the anxiety in real time and gain a deeper understanding of it. **Name has been changed to protect client confidentiality.*



Lot Monitor Outreach Workers



The Lot Monitor Outreach Worker position for our Safe Parking Program is one of the most unique roles at New Beginnings. The program runs nightly 365 days per year and requires one to find the right balance between monitoring, ensuring compliance, and establishing trust with program participants. For the past seven years, we have employed the same two lot monitors – Bob Strojek (pictured on the left) and Joseph Mastroianni (pictured on the right with two clients).

Bob joined the program eight years ago with extensive experience in security and facilities management. Today, he also serves as the Facilities Lead for the Santa Barbara Red Cross and as an Instructor and Chair of the Community Emergency Response Team for the County. Bob sees ensuring the safety of our clients as his number one priority. He typically completes his rounds early in the morning and does spot checks in the evening or the middle of the night. Bob prefers to keep mostly to himself while patrolling, viewing his role as one of maintaining security. He is not one to ask personal details about how one became homeless and says that keeping his distance allows him to perform his job duties best and ensure our clients comply with all the rules of the program.

Bob also focuses his time on doing street outreach and distributing flyers to people living in their cars who are not in our program. He says that connecting these people to our services is one of the most rewarding aspects of his job. Bob has also been instrumental in ensuring our agency uses best practices when it comes to health and safety and provides training multiple times per year to our staff members.

Our other lot monitor outreach worker, Joseph, joined the program six years ago and has lived in Santa Barbara since 1972. Previously, he was a commissioned officer and an Army Rotary Wing Aviator. Joseph was struck by an automobile in 1988 and spent thirteen years in rehabilitation. He celebrated his recovery by biking 3,844

miles from Santa Barbara to Boston, raising funds for several charities.

Joseph views his position through a different lens; he enjoys getting to know his clients on a personal level. He says that by establishing rapport with clients, he helps to encourage them to come to him with needs or problems so that our case managers can help address them before they escalate. Joseph believes that getting to know the Safe Parking client community, while at the same time maintaining solid boundaries, is the best way to monitor this underserved community. The significance of the rapport Joseph builds with clients was exemplified in 2018 when one of our clients, Carol Inman, passed away in her vehicle. Her family, out of gratitude for the program and its support provided to Carol, trusted Joseph to sell her possessions and donate the money to a fund created to support Carol's fellow clients in the program. Joseph gets tremendous personal satisfaction from getting to know his clients and to creating working relationships with them.

While Bob and Joseph approach their job differently, the program and our agency have benefited immensely as a result of these differences.

Make a Difference

Make a difference in our Santa Barbara community for our most vulnerable citizens by remembering New Beginnings Counseling Center with a simple bequest in your estate plan. For bequest language to use and share with your attorney, call Michael Berton, Development Manager, at 805.963.7777 x112 or email him at mberton@sbnbcc.org.

Steve Baird – New Board Member

Based in Santa Maria, **Steve Baird** is a Marine veteran and former client of our Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program. After being housed through our program, Steve went on to become Operational Director of Camp Flores, a home for veterans in Santa Maria, and has helped to house more than 20 of our veteran clients over the years. For this achievement, Steve was honored as our first ever Landlord of the Year in 2019. Steve has dedicated his life to supporting veterans and also runs a nonprofit called Echo Vets / Band of Brothers that unites veterans in North County through sports and provides other support.



“We are so honored to welcome Steve Baird to our Board of Directors, as Steve’s personal experience with our Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program and ongoing dedication to provide housing opportunities connects him so directly to our work.” – Jacqueline Kurta, Board President

Karen Kelly – New Board Member

Karen Kelly is a Digital Marketing Consultant and has more than 15 years of experience in online marketing. She runs her own digital marketing agency and has consulted for dozens of companies, including Appfolio, the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department, and Lynda.com (now LinkedIn Learning). Karen also spent more than 11 years working at Citrix in a variety of marketing positions. Her specialties include web strategy, partner development, search engine marketing, lead generation, and social media. Karen lives in Santa Barbara with her husband Christopher and her three teenaged triplets.



“Karen Kelly is a wonderful addition to our Board. Her extensive experience in marketing and communications will provide our Board of Directors with valuable expertise that will expand the impact of our agency’s work.” – Jacqueline Kurta, Board President

Thank You to Miranda Field, Clinical Supervisor

In practice since 1986, and providing clinical supervision since 1988, Miranda has served as Clinical Director for a number of counseling centers in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara, including our own New Beginnings Counseling Center from 2001 to 2005 and CALM. Miranda has also been a Clinical Supervisor for New Beginnings for over 12 years and wrote the original curriculum for and launched our Life Skills Parenting and Education Program.



Miranda’s current focus is in researching intersecting fields of trauma and attachment theory, mindfulness, and somatically based practices. While maintaining a general practice, Miranda specializes in healing early trauma, including childhood sexual abuse and early attachment injuries, as well as couples therapy.

“Miranda shares her vast clinical knowledge in an approachable, compassionate manner allowing me to critically think and discuss cases. I have grown as a therapist under Miranda’s supervision and appreciate her collaborative style of supervision.” – Julie Roman, New Beginnings Counselor

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at the Drive-In

October 22, 6-9 PM

West Wind Drive-In, Goleta

Join us for an evening of cinema and more as we help educate community members about the important issues our programs address.

There will be physically distanced parking and protocols in place to protect your health and safety. For more info, visit www.sbnbcc.org/drive-in or call (805) 963-7777 x112.



Our 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.



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