

# Winter 2018 NBCC News



*Harrison Ford with Board of Directors*

## Celebrating 50 Years of Service with Harrison Ford

New Beginnings celebrated its 50 Years of Service on September 23rd at an intimate private event featuring the legendary actor Harrison Ford. The celebration began with a mimosa reception with live jazz followed by a luncheon for 32 dedicated donors at the Historic Earle Ovington Terminal at Santa Barbara Airport. Guests enjoyed an aviation theme and an extraordinary interview with the iconic actor, pilot, and environmental activist Harrison Ford, led by local resident Cheri Steinkellner, a well-known TV writer/producer.

The interview highlighted Mr. Ford's passion for aviation, commitment to conservation,

and his unique point of view at this once-in-a-lifetime experience. Mr. Ford congratulated New Beginnings on the organization's long-term commitment to individuals, families, and veterans. In response to being asked about the importance of our mission, he shared:

"You are serving your community in ways, particularly with the homeless and veterans, that I am especially impressed with. The idea of finding a safe space for people who are living out of their vehicles to park their cars at night is so smart and simple that one wonders why it hadn't been figured out before, but you have to summon the political persuasion and will in the community to do it

and you have, so I thank you for what you are doing and for letting me be a small part of it."

Esteemed guests included New Beginnings' Board President, Diane Pannkuk and board members: Mark Cardona, Dan Engel, Terence Ford, Ziad Elkurjie, Jacqueline Kurta, Kathryn Le Page, and Ann Marie Plane as well as Executive Director Kristine Schwarz, Clinical Director Crystal Ramirez, the Honorable Susan Rose, David Jackson, Sasha Ablitt, Marybeth Carty, Julianna Friedman and City Councilman Jason Dominguez. Guests received an autographed poster and a photograph with Mr. Ford. The event was co-produced by Judi Weisbart and Judy Hawkins.

## Message from Executive Director, Kristine Schwarz



Dear Friends of New Beginnings,

As we reflect upon our 50 years of service providing an essential safety net for community members, we are humbled by the impact we have made and by the life-changing stories we hear each day from our clients.

This year we have found that our services are needed more than ever as housing becomes more scarce and expensive and the need for mental health services continues to rise. We are dedicated to ensuring that we meet this increased demand and are aware that this is only possible with the sustained and generous support from our community.

We are pleased to share with you our winter newsletter and wish you the best upcoming holiday season.

-Kristine Schwarz

## Life Skills Parenting and Education Program Empowering Women

New Beginnings' Life Skills Parenting and Education Program is a core program that focuses on providing its participants with effective and healthy parenting and essential life skills. Recently, we held an eight-week Women's Empowerment Group for individuals living in the City of Santa Barbara Housing Authority-managed apartments. The Housing Authority told us that it was the most successful group they have had in a while. All participants who started the group attended every session and finished the group together, sharing enthusiastic feedback such as:

*"I learned a lot about myself and how to not be so hard on myself and my kids."*

*"I learned so much from being around these other women, hearing about their struggles, and knowing that I am not alone."*

*"We developed a sisterhood, and it helped me focus on wellness – so grateful."*

New Beginnings also regularly facilitates a Life Skills Group at Villa Majella, a maternity home for homeless women facing unsafe situations.



These women often struggle with a variety of difficulties that may have left them without a job and other vital resources to support their pregnancies. We provide access to a therapeutic and psychoeducational group that empowers these women to identify and strengthen their internal resources as they progress through their pregnancies and prepare for motherhood. Though each woman has unique circumstances, it is not uncommon for them to share similar struggles; together, they gain perspective and a renewed sense of empowerment that helps them build confidence, prepare for their children, and pursue employment and housing opportunities.



## Veteran Achieves Lifelong Goals with the Support of New Beginnings

After serving in the United States Army as a Cannon Crewmember for three years, David completed his active duty at his last station in Germany in 1992. A few months later, despite working odd jobs, David could not afford a place to live and became homeless living on the streets in Philadelphia.

After a couple of years, David took a Greyhound bus across the country to chase the California dream. He ended up in the San Fernando Valley working part-time as a maintenance technician for a solar panel company. David struggled to adjust to civilian life and alternated between couch surfing and living in multiple homeless encampments. After living this lifestyle for 20 years, he relocated to Santa Barbara.

David survived on the streets of Santa Barbara for four years – sleeping behind a local department store and supporting himself financially by recycling and with his \$130 monthly disability payment from the VA. He preferred to keep to himself, refused to sleep at shelters, and had limited interactions with local service agencies. In August 2017, David heard of New Beginnings from the Restorative Police Officers, a special task force that helps the homeless avoid being cited, and enrolled in our Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program.

It was difficult to maintain regular contact with David to ensure he came to his scheduled appointments as he did not have a cellphone. Although our staff would often not hear from David for weeks, he always expressed how much he wanted to secure housing and employment and to enroll in classes at Santa Barbara City College. David's SSVF Case Manager helped him obtain a phone, join the waiting list for the local Housing Authority, navigate unpaid illegal lodging tickets, and apply for a higher disability rate from the VA. Unfortunately, David had broken his foot and was also diagnosed with cancer at this time, so our staff helped him arrange transportation to his medical appointments.

During last year's natural disasters, road closures and public transportation disruptions made it



challenging for David to attend his evaluation appointments with the VA. Determined to assist him in obtaining his much-deserved disability payments, our SSVF Case Manager drove David to Port Hueneme for his final appointment with the VA. Five weeks later, David received a letter detailing his increased disability benefits.

David was awarded a 90% VA service-connected disability compensation rating for various physical and mental disabilities, payable to him for the rest of his life in the amount of more than \$1,700 per month with six months of back pay. This drastic increase in income empowered David to secure his own housing.

After experiencing homelessness for 24 years across three cities, David moved into permanent supportive housing in Santa Barbara on August 30, 2018. He could afford his own security deposit and has continued to make his monthly rent payment without financial assistance. In addition, our SSVF team has recently assisted David in another one of his goals; David enrolled at Santa Barbara City College to attend classes for the upcoming spring semester. With the dedication and support from our SSVF staff, David has incredibly turned his life around and demonstrated that it is never too late to achieve his lifelong goals.



## Health Access and Care Coordination (HACC) Client Success Story

Kim, a Housing Authority of the City of Santa Barbara resident, had not been to a doctor's appointment in more than five years. Although she had pain and tightness in her legs, she was unwilling to schedule a doctor appointment because she had a bad experience with her most recent provider.

Her HACC Case Manager completed a home visit with Kim and discussed her concerns. After establishing some trust, the case manager successfully encouraged Kim to schedule an appointment with a local provider, who had formerly been a partner on the HACC project. After the first visit, it became clear that Kim's pain was likely the result of extremely high blood pressure, and she was immediately placed on medication to help alleviate the pain. Kim expressed how happy she was with her physician and with the care that she had received. She continues to have monthly check-ups with her new physician to ensure she remains healthy.

## Stopping the Cycle of Anger

Earlier this year, Tim came to New Beginnings' Community Counseling Center after seeing an advertisement for our Anger Management Group. He was seeking help because he felt that his rage was out of control and had been causing problems at home with his wife and newborn son. Tim had been abused by his father and never wanted to hurt his wife or son, so after punching a wall a couple of times, he knew he needed to get help. In the group, Tim learned he was not alone and that his anger was a normal reaction to the abuse he experienced from his father. Throughout the group sessions, Tim learned how to identify and control his emotions and express his anger in healthier ways, improving his relationship with his wife and son.

Tim also discovered the importance of processing the pain he experienced as a child, which led him to sign up for individual counseling sessions at New Beginnings. He spent the first several sessions crying, something he had not done in years because crying always made his dad more angry. Tim realized that his father was not a bad person and had used anger to cope with his own childhood struggles. Tim concluded that both his parents could not care for him in the ways he needed them to because of how they were raised and due to the life hardships they had experienced.

After several months of grieving the loss of the safe family he had always yearned for, Tim discovered that he could create that safe family for his son. He was inspired to be the father he wished he had – the father that held his son every day and told him he loved him, comforted his son when he cried, and read him books every night. Through the process of therapy, Tim forgave his father and found the strength to stop generations of family abuse and trauma.

## New Beginnings Attends Career Fair at Pacifica Graduate Institute

This past year, New Beginnings attended the inaugural Career Fair at Pacifica Graduate Institute to recruit counselors and staff to our Community Counseling Center. The event featured more than 30 organizations and was a great way for our staff to network at Pacifica and spread awareness about our causes.





# Staff News

## Development Coordinator Michael Berton

Michael, our new Development Coordinator, is looking to make a significant impact in our community by strengthening donor relationships, communications, and outreach efforts. Most recently, Michael served as a Proposal Writer at Yardi and as a part-time Development Specialist at the Channel Islands YMCA. Before this, he graduated the University of California, Santa Barbara with BAs in History and Economics with a minor in Professional Writing. He is excited about entering his new role and looks forward to working with staff, donors, board members, and the public to advance our mission.



## Safe Parking Housing Navigator Mark Smith

As a Housing Navigator, Mark assists homeless families and individuals referred to our Safe Parking Program® through Coordinated Entry. Mark brings to his role extensive experience as a Property Manager, Head of Security/Outreach/Residential Monitoring, and Resident Manager. He also served as Veterans Program Director at Antioch University and has held positions as a Commercial Bus Driver, Field Engineer & Site Lead, Records Manager, and Banker/Investment Coordinator. Previous to this, he served as a Loadmaster in the United States Marine Corps for approximately five years. Mark also holds a BA from Antioch University and is also currently an MBA Candidate.



## SSVF Program Coordinator Victor Virgin

Victor Virgin, our Program Coordinator for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, grew up in the Santa Ynez Valley and graduated from California State University Channel Islands with a BA in Psychology. He served eight years in the United States Marine Corps and was deployed overseas three times in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While in service, Victor worked with bona fide displaced refugees of war and served as a combat advisor mentoring and training the Iraqi Police and Security Forces. Victor's military services gave him the relatable experience needed to personally connect with the veterans in the SSVF program. Victor plans to pursue a MA in Clinical Psychology and hopes to open a holistic wellness center for veterans in the future.



## SSVF Case Manager Aileen Garcia

Aileen Garcia, our new SSVF Case Manager, is an Antioch University graduate with an MA in Clinical Psychology. She gained the interpersonal skills needed to work with a wide variety of clients experiencing difficult situations and also acquired the clinical skills needed to serve as an empathetic listener. Aileen became involved with New Beginnings in 2017 for a traineeship opportunity and fell in love with all of the different programs our organization offers. As the daughter of a US Army veteran, she jumped at the opportunity to be part of a team that assists veterans and their families.



## SSVF Case Manager Kristen Germann

As our new SSVF Case Manager, Kristen Germann is a Westmont College graduate with a BA in Psychology. While interning with counselors and recovery pastors in Fairbanks, Alaska, she gained experience working with individuals struggling with difficult life situations and who are suffering from trauma. Kristen is passionate about working with military veterans and is eager for the opportunity to be a part of the New Beginnings Counseling Center's SSVF team that works with veterans and their families who are experiencing or who are in imminent threat of becoming homeless.



## Safe Parking Case Manager Lori Marcel

Lori Marcel is our new Safe Parking Case Manager who provides a variety of supportive services to our clients and helps them in secure housing, employment, and other forms of assistance. She brings more than a decade of case management experience to New Beginnings and has held positions at the Mental Wellness Center, Community Solutions, Inc., the Santa Barbara Rescue Mission, St. Vincent's PATHS Program, and at The Faulding Hotel, Santa Barbara Community Housing Corporation. She also holds Associates degrees in Addiction Disorder Counseling and Liberal Arts from Santa Barbara City College.



## Mark Cardona - New Board Member

**Mark Cardona** is a commercial transactions attorney with a private practice based in Santa Barbara. Mark enjoys volunteering in the Central Coast community to support causes that offer services for mental health, education, and underserved populations. Mark received his undergraduate degree from UCSB and law degree from the University of La Verne College of Law. He enjoys spending his free time with his wife and dogs.



***“New Beginnings is incredibly grateful for his legal experience, and we are excited to welcome him to our board.”***

**– Diane Pannkuk, Board President**

## Clinical Supervisor Appreciation

**Dr. Paul Guido** has volunteered with New Beginnings for many years and brought a wide variety of clinical experience. One of his clinical interns shared that, “Dr. Paul Guido has been patient and diligent in helping me develop my psychodynamic approach to therapy with a range of clients in terms of cultural backgrounds and severity of symptoms. He has also helped me understand when more directive interventions are necessary for acute concerns.”

**Dr. Paul Kroekel** served as a long-term volunteer Clinical Supervisor at New Beginnings and helped train many of our counselors. He retired from volunteering when he moved away from Santa Barbara. One of his clinical interns shared that, “Paul has been instrumental to my learning at New Beginnings. I have gained great insight into my clients’ cases through his supervision and curiosity about my clients. I am grateful for the time that I was supervised by Paul and the clinical support that he provided. The insight and questions that Paul provided me with allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of not only my own clients but also of myself.”

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### NEW BEGINNINGS' PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- Donald J. Willfong Community Counseling Center
- Life Skills Parenting and Education Program
- Safe Parking Program®
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program

### MANAGEMENT TEAM

Kristine Schwarz, MFT, LPCC  
*Executive Director*

Crystal Ramirez, Ph.D, MFT  
*Clinical Director*



## A Family Reunited

New Beginnings' Safe Parking Shelter and Rapid Rehousing Program recently housed a client, Christian, who experienced a difficult adolescence that led him to the criminal justice system as a young adult. While in the system, Christian had time to reflect and grow as an individual; once released, he continued to improve himself, immediately secured employment, and has been fortunate to work for the same company for several years.

Since enrolling in Safe Parking, Christian has shown tremendous dedication and perseverance and has proved to himself that he can overcome the limitations of his past. Christian's greatest motivation is spending time with his young daughter, and he is deeply committed to becoming the best version of himself and providing the best possible life for his daughter.

Safe Parking staff have been instrumental in encouraging Christian to continue to persevere through the stigmas and judgments associated with his history. For this reason, Christian was very hesitant to apply for affordable housing. It took much convincing from our staff, who helped Christian change his perspective and continue with the application process.

After a few months, we were elated to discover that Christian had been awarded a subsidized two bedroom unit. Christian also secured a security deposit through Safe Parking, which allowed him to transition into housing sooner. Today, Christian helps raise his daughter part-time and has a safe place to watch her grow up and achieve his dream. He has shown that he is a dedicated father who has done everything within his power to make a new life for himself and his daughter.

Christian's story is a great example of how necessary it is for our case managers to help our clients restore their humanity and the dignity that they deserve by showing them that they are much more than just their circumstances and history. We are privileged to help our clients along the way to becoming whole again.



Safe Parking  
Program® Featured  
on HBO's VICE



Our Safe Parking Program® was the recent focus of HBO's VICE News, bringing to light the increasing number of Americans forced to live in their vehicles. New Beginnings has effectively captured the attention of local and national media and has expanded awareness for mental health and the vehicular homeless. We are successfully advancing our case across the nation and have grown tremendous awareness. Feedback we have received include:

*"Bravo!!! Safe Parking is such a great program. It saved my life in a serious time of rocky Stepping stones. Thank you."*  
– Safe Parking Client

*"I know it's not a lot, but I live paycheck to paycheck now. I saw your story on VICE. Today, it's her, tomorrow it could be me. Thank you for your services."* – Donor

*"Mark and I loved the piece on HBO. It was great. You are doing such important work in SB."* – Gabi Hayes, *Skid Row Marathon* documentary producer





**NEW BEGINNINGS**  
COUNSELING CENTER

**New Beginnings Counseling Center**

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**New Beginnings' staff, board, and clients thank you for your generous and continued support.**



**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.**



**NEW BEGINNINGS**  
COUNSELING CENTER