

## New Beginnings receives grant to assist veterans

SANTA BARBARA — Local nonprofit New Beginnings has received a \$16,000 grant from the Disabled Veterans National Foundation that will be used to support the agency's Supportive Services for Veterans Families program.

The program helps to prevent eviction and house homeless veterans and their families throughout Santa Barbara County, according to a news release.

"We are so very grateful to the foundation for their support of our community and for their commitment to serving our nation's most vulnerable veterans," Kristine Schwarz, Executive Director of New Beginnings, said in a statement.

Since 2013, New Beginnings has operated its SSVF Program, a program primarily funded through the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, throughout the county. The goal of the national SSVF Program is to end veteran homelessness throughout the country. Services provided include housing stability counseling, rental payment assistance, employment support, landlord engagement, benefit acquisition, and short-term case management.

Over the past eight years, New Beginnings has served over 1,000 veterans and their families and has provided close to \$1,000,000 in temporary financial assistance to veterans to help them to maintain or move into housing.

"We are proud to support New Beginnings, as they continue to make a positive impact in veterans' lives," Joseph VanFonda, CEO of the Disabled Veterans National Foundation and retired U.S. Marine Sgt. Maj., said in a statement. "We would like to congratulate and thank them for their commitment to assisting the men and women who served in defense of our country."

— Mitchell White

## Land Development Team launches online permitting system

Starting Monday, residents of Santa Barbara will no longer have to drop off paper plan sets or application fees in person at the

Community Development or Public Works counters.

The Land Development Team launched an online permitting system that accepts the submission of most Building, Planning and Public Works applications and permits.

Santa Barbara's new Accela Citizen Access Portal launched in spring of this year, and it allows applicants to track the progress of their project applications and city activities from start to finish.

This will reduce the time needed for the review of plans and permits and simplify the building permit application choices.

The online citizen portal is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week to submit plans or pay fees.

Through an On-Demand permitting process, applicants will be able to apply, pay and instantly receive their building permit online without a staff contact, starting with "Like-for-Like" roofing replacements and eventually moving to water heater and furnace replacements and new small residential solar photovoltaic systems.

Training materials on navigating the online system are available online now, and a On-Demand permitting system training session is planned for later this fall.

Those attending will learn an overview of the ACA permitting system, how to submit applications, upload documents and plans, make payments and track the project's status.

For building permit services, visit <https://www.santabarbaraca.gov/gov/depts/cd/building/acabuildingpermits.asp>.

For public works, visit <https://www.santabarbaraca.gov/gov/depts/pw/engineering/permits/default.asp>.

For planning applications, visit <https://www.santabarbaraca.gov/services/planning/planningesubmittals.asp>.

— Grayce McCormick

## Rental assistance still available

A total of \$1.3 million in rental assistance is still available for Santa Barbara County residents through the United Way of Santa Barbara County.

The rental assistance, offered in partnership with the county, provides grants to eligible residents and families living in

unincorporated areas. The applicants must meet specific requirements to receive the funds, which were made possible by the county through federal grants received from the CARES Act.

In total, the county was provided \$46 million in funding through the CARES Act. The county Board of Supervisors set aside \$7.5 million of the funds to assist with local "vulnerable populations," with \$2 million going to emergency rental assistance to help those who have lost jobs or experience a cut in income due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Families can receive up to \$1,000 in rental assistance per month for up to three months. Payments would go directly to landlords to ensure the assistance is used for rent payments.

Residents of the following unincorporated areas are eligible to apply: Burton Mesa; Casmalia; Cuyama; Eastern Goleta Valley; Gaviota; Isla Vista; Los Alamos; Los Olivos; Montecito; Orcutt; Santa Ynez; Summerland; and Vandenberg Village.

"When someone loses their job it quickly leads to food insecurity and threatens other basic needs for themselves and their families. This soon transitions to literally trying to keep a roof over their heads," Steve Ortiz, President and CEO of United Way of Santa Barbara County, said in a statement.

Michael Kling and his family were one of the local recipients. After he and his wife lost their jobs in the spring, they were able to get by for a few months using unemployment benefits and their savings but that soon dried up. They were grateful to learn about the rental assistance program.

"This has been a little bit of a ray of sunshine, I think, to give us that extra housing security," said Mr. Kling, whose three-month rent assistance ends after next month. "Knowing that everything's taken care of now through November, as we go up into the holidays... it's made a big difference to us."

Families or individuals seeking the assistance must have lost income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and live in unincorporated areas of the County and can check if their address is eligible using this map from United Way. Eligible families must also fall below certain income thresholds. To check eligibility requirements and to apply visit [www.unitedwaysb.org](http://www.unitedwaysb.org).

— Mitchell White