



PO Box 2744
Petaluma CA 94953

And homeless near a
thousand homes I stood,
And near a thousand tables
pined and wanted food.

- William Wordsworth



COTS News

Please be our guest at

THE COTS HOUR

A fundraising breakfast
benefiting homeless
families, veterans, and
adults in Sonoma County

NEW DATE!

8 a.m., Thursday, **December 5**
Petaluma Veterans Memorial Auditorium
1094 Petaluma Blvd S, Petaluma



2 a note from
chuck

3 engaging
with heart

4 cots kids
+ landlord spotlight

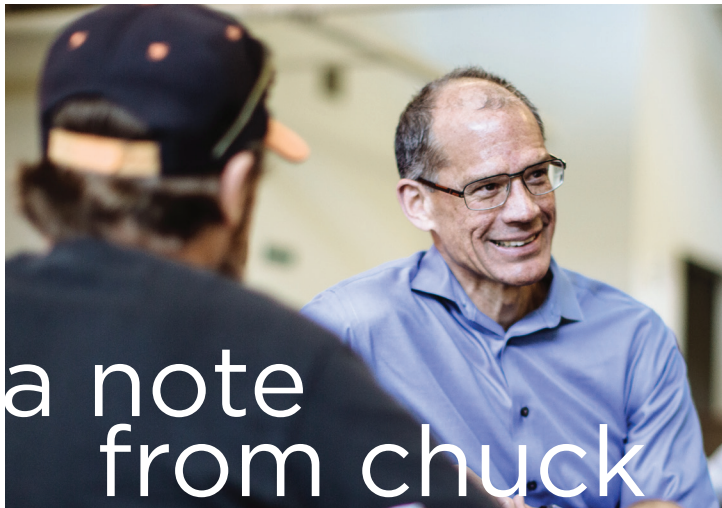
6 volunteer
spotlight

7 spread the love
this holiday season



FALL
2019





a note from chuck

Dear Friends,

Before the bustle of the holidays begins, I like to pause and remember the things and people I'm grateful for. Through the recent fires, I have been touched and strengthened by the way this community steps up to help its neighbors in need. The moment we put out calls for volunteers and donations in October, as we welcomed evacuees and individuals living on the Joe Rodota Trail, we received calls and pledges of support. My gratitude for our COTS family is endless – and that's what this newsletter is about. I hope the stories you'll read here sustain and cheer you through the holiday season as much as they do me.

COTS staff fills my heart with gratitude every day. In this newsletter, you'll hear from someone who has one of the biggest jobs at COTS—especially during the holidays. Diana Morales has worked with our clients for many years. She recently accepted the position of Community Engagement Specialist and brings warmth, welcome and competence to everything she does. I know you'll enjoy working with her.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of COTS. Patricia Moats, who is a lead chef two nights a week, was kind enough to

share with you her reasons for volunteering and the insights she's gained from three years behind the stove.

I'm also grateful to the landlords who rent to us and our clients. In these pages, you'll meet local real estate agent Peg King, who rents a beautiful four-bedroom to our Integrity Program, allowing us to house five people at rents affordable to them. To give you an idea of just how crucial landlords are to our work, we're sharing words from children who've moved into stable, permanent housing thanks to COTS' programs. What a difference it makes for them to have permanency and security.

I remain grateful for the many donors who choose COTS as their instrument to do good in the world. You are the power behind our work, and we are deeply thankful for the investment you make in our organization and our clients. In these pages, Blair Kellison shares with us the reasons he and his wife choose to support COTS. Whether you donate, volunteer, advocate or all three, know that we are honored to have you in our COTS family.

Most importantly, I am thankful for our clients. Every day, they persevere against tremendous odds. I marvel at our shelter residents' helpfulness, their forbearance as they navigate the tough steps it sometimes takes to get into permanent housing. I admire the parents in our Rapid Re-Housing program, many of whom are working several jobs to keep their families housed.

A volunteer once called COTS "The Island of Miracles." She said, "Each day, some wonderful thing happened in my heart as I watched people's lives changed for the better." Thank you for supporting our Island of Miracles. It is a wonderful place to share with you.

Until we end homelessness,

Chuck Fernandez

Chuck Fernandez, CEO



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Diana Morales was COTS' Employee of the Year in 2018. She won the honor because of her competence and her kindness toward our clients and her colleagues. Diana worked at the front desk, often late into the night, juggling many duties, the most important of which was to listen to our residents and encourage them. Recently, she took the job of Community Engagement Specialist.

What do you do for COTS?

I'm the Community Engagement Specialist. I started in September. What I do is right there in the title. I'm here to engage the community in what we do here at COTS and how we do it. So many people want to help. I'm that bridge to help them come in and see what we do and how they can get involved.

I'll give people tours, I'll answer questions, I'll come speak to groups, I'll go to events.

I'm looking forward to working with all the businesses and groups who provides goods or services for us. I want to make sure they know how grateful we are and how much of a difference their gifts make.

A big part of my job is working with our volunteers, who are wonderful. I schedule them in a variety of jobs. Our biggest need is at Mary's Table, where we've just expanded our community meal program. We're also building other opportunities because we're trying to increase our programming for children.

Why were you interested in this work?

I've worked at COTS for several years. But I first came to COTS as a resident. I was living in the shelter. My self-esteem was shot. I couldn't even look up from the ground. When I went through the food line, the volunteers always had a big smile for me. They asked me how I was doing, and I had to hold my head up to answer them. And doing that every day—that helped. The volunteers made a beautiful quilt for me which I still have on my bed—a thing of such beauty for me! I couldn't believe it. They helped me find clothing, and that helped me hold my head up, too. Volunteers helped me in the Rent Right class, they helped me open my eyes about the challenges of living here in Sonoma County. Volunteers helped me get



engaging with heart

ready to go back into the working world. They helped me find a job. They were integral to getting back my self-esteem.

I truly believe and always have believed that our volunteers hold us up and allow us to do our jobs. They are like the bones of COTS and all our programs. So, I am thrilled to be doing what I can to strengthen the volunteer program and support our wonderful volunteers.

"Our volunteers hold us up and allow us to do our jobs. They are like the bones of COTS and all our programs."

How has your experience serving our Mary Isaak Center residents helped prepare you for this job?

The most important skill for my job is listening. That's the number one thing whether I'm working with residents or volunteers. My job is not about me. My job is helping COTS and helping the people who help COTS.

What's your dream for this job?

When I get up in the morning, I go over my gratitude list. I want to always remember how great it is to get up and do work that gives me such pleasure. At the end of the day, I don't know who's helped more—me or the people I've been helping all day. I get to lay my head on the pillow every night and fall into a deep, happy sleep because I know I've done what I can.

I want to make sure volunteers feel the same way. I want to help create an

atmosphere where our volunteers get up in the morning and they smile and say "I'm going to serve food today." Or, "I'm going to clean out the fridges or read to the children." I want them to smile and say, "Today is the day I rake leaves." I want them to be fulfilled and embraced in their roles.

Who has inspired you?

My former mother-in-law. She was a nurse her whole life. Her home is literally a place where family goes to live out their last days. She has suffered so much loss but helped with the passing of so many. She's amazing: kind, soft-spoken, smart, and interested in everything. She learned Spanish in her 70s so she could communicate better with her patients. She taught me how fulfilling it is to help others. It's a two-way street. You help others and in return, you get a feeling of completeness. Mind, body and spirit are all taken care of when you help other people.

What would you say to someone who's interested in learning more?

I am so proud to work here. I believe in what we do. I want to tell the world, "Look, this is going on! Let me show you what we're doing here!" I really believe in this. I'm one hundred percent in.

I would encourage people to get in touch, come over and see what we do here and get involved doing something they like to do.

To find out more about volunteering with COTS, contact Diana at volunteers@cots.org or (707) 765-6530 x136, or visit cots.org

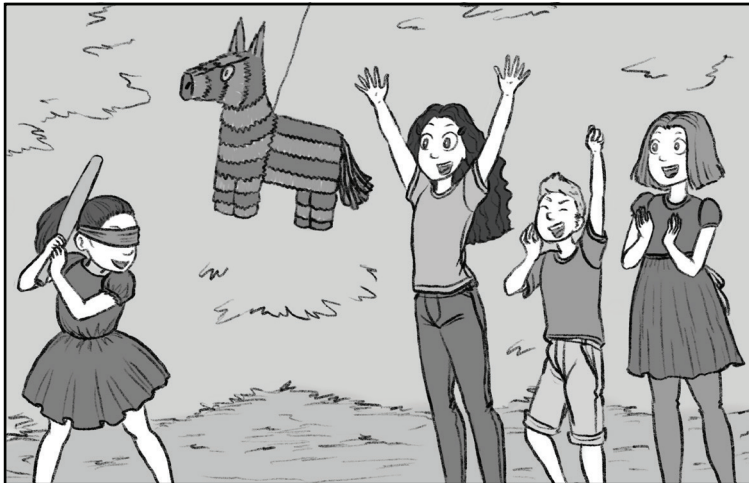
We asked kids who've been COTS residents to tell us what's better about living in a home of their own



I can play hide and seek here and it's so big my brother and sister can never find me.



I have room for my dinosaurs.



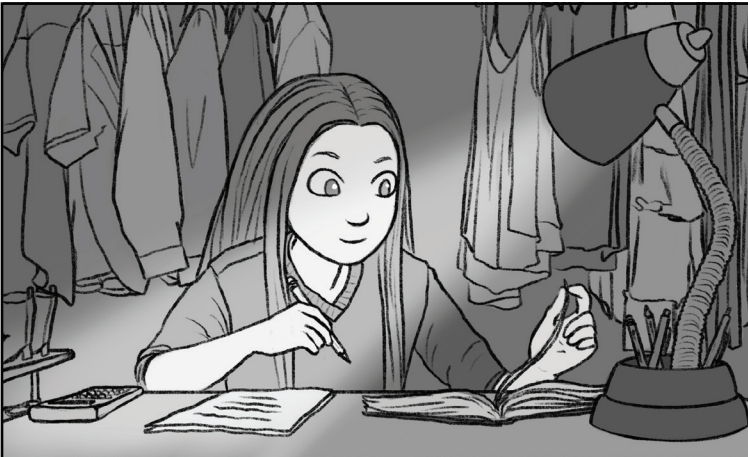
Our cousins come over for parties or to play.



I can hang up my drawings. I do anime characters and animals and flowers. I like to use colored pencils or markers—not crayons.



If somebody's watching a movie, I can do something else. If somebody's doing homework, I can go somewhere else and make noise.



I have my own office for doing homework. It's my parents' walk-in closet. It's way easier to study.



I can have friends over for sleep overs. We build forts and play video games. I like Zelda: Breath of the Wild, Super Mario Odyssey, and Super Smash Brothers Ultimate.

rent to cots

Landlords and property owners who entrust us with their most valuable assets play a huge part in the battle to end homelessness. **Thanks to dozens of local landlords, we've been able to house hundreds of adults and children** while providing property management and oversight to ensure that units are well cared for and rent is paid on time.

If you have a property for rent and you'd like to talk to one of our landlords about their experience with COTS, please get in touch with **Linda Perry at lperry@cots.org or (707) 765-6530 x 104.**



Not as many people knocking on the bathroom door to tell you to "hurry up!"

landlord spotlight: peg king



Local real estate legend Peg King is also a landlord—a landlord who rents to COTS' Integrity Housing program.

We currently house seven people in Peg's four-bedroom house. Two have lived there the entire time the house has been part of COTS program. The rent is affordable to them at their entry level wages.

Peg and her husband Cliff have supported COTS for years. "We just firmly believe that everyone deserves to have a roof over their heads, and the way COTS operates, we think it's worth supporting," says Peg. Three years ago, the couple were working to rent the home through Kerry Davison of Mahoney-Davison Property Management. Like the Kings, Kerry is a COTS supporter and she introduced them to the Integrity Housing program.

"It worked for us," Peg says. "We weren't necessarily looking for top dollar because we didn't want to remodel, so we took a chance on the program."

Peg has a busy career and wants to enjoy time with her husband of 42 years and her many grandchildren. "If there were problems with the rental, I couldn't continue doing it," she says. With COTS, her rent arrives on time each month, our housing staff inspects the property frequently, and our housing case manager Debbie Robbins helps residents navigate shared housing and their own health, career and personal challenges.

Many thanks to Peg and to all our landlords! We are lucky they do business with their hearts as well as their heads.



Petaluma native Patricia Moats volunteers twice a week at Mary's Table at COTS as a lead dinner cook. That means she comes in and takes charge just before our chef goes home for the day. She's assigned an assortment of ingredients and a few suggestions, but she has wide latitude in what she and her team make for the evening meal to serve over 100 people.

"There's a lot of creativity on the spur of the moment, and we really like that," Patricia says.

A small farmer herself, Patricia puts a premium on using as many fruits and vegetables as possible.

She leads by joking, kidding and cajoling—not fiat—and laughter is louder than the clatter of pots and pans when Patricia is in charge.

"I hate to brag, but all of us on my team, sometimes we are so amazed that no matter how complicated and time-consuming a menu might be, we always get the meal out on time. We are ready to serve by 5 sharp. It just all comes together." Every day, Patricia can count on at least one miracle to ensure that the meal is incredible. On a recent Friday, for example, some volunteers from The Coast Guard showed up out of the blue just when Patricia was short-staffed. "It's a triumph every meal. We look at each other and say, 'We did that!'"

The triumph is not just culinary. "Every meal is a chance to help people feel better," Patricia says. Recently, for example, Taco Night turned into a fiesta when volunteers streamed mariachi music into the dining room and residents and other diners began to dance. "It was spectacular! It's the kind of thing people need."

Patricia's prep teams and service teams often include COTS residents. "This has been the best part of the job for me,"

Patricia says. "If I didn't volunteer there, I might still feel uncomfortable around people who are homeless. There are so many stereotypes. But I discovered that there are a lot of really nice people at COTS that have had some pretty bad luck or made some bad decisions. They're wonderful people. They work hard and they want the same things I do."

"Whatever you give, you get back. If it comes from the heart, you're going to get that back, and that's just a beautiful feeling."

"There's so much gratification in working with my team and with residents. All of it makes my life better. Whatever you give, you get back. If it comes from the heart, you're going to get that back, and that's just a beautiful feeling."

An accident of fate brought Patricia to COTS three years ago. Newly retired from the U.S. Postal Service, Patricia was taking advantage of her freedom and rafting on the Russian River. Heading home, she took an illegal left turn and was cited by the Highway Patrol. She chose 16 hours of community service for COTS instead of a fine. "I had fun, so I stayed," she says. She's given us nearly 700 hours of her time and talent since then.

The rest of her time? Patricia swims, grows fruits and vegetables and does yoga. Most importantly, she helps care for her 7-month-old granddaughter.

If you're thinking of volunteering at Mary's Table, "Jump in," Patricia advises. "You'll have fun, you'll meet wonderful people, you'll get an understanding for what people are going through."

share the holidays with us!



Help us make the tables groan

What are the holidays without a few feasts? If you'd like to help serve at Mary's Table on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's, please complete a volunteer application by November 2 at cots.org AND email volunteers@cots.org.

If our holiday slots fill up fast, never fear: the holiday spirit abounds every day at COTS. Come join us!



Trot out your turkeys

Every year, you trot over with enough turkeys for COTS to serve holiday meals to all our residents and to anyone in the community who needs a good meal. Plus, we can provide meal fixings to all the residents in our permanent housing programs. Please stay tuned to social media and other channels for information about turkey donations this year.



Presents, presents, presents

Who knows better than a mom or dad the exact gift a little girl or boy will want? Nobody, that's who! That's why COTS opens a Holiday Free Store every year and counts on the community to help us stock it. Our families in shelter and in permanent housing can shop for the toys and clothes and books they know their kids will love. We're serving over 200 children this year! **Please visit cots.org for a list of items that are always popular.**

ways to give all year round

Gifts to COTS are tax-deductible, and there are a variety of ways to make a gift to suit individual donor objectives. The Development Office welcomes inquiries about ways to structure your gift and invites you to consider the giving options listed below.

Federal Tax ID: 68-0176855



ONLINE, CASH, OR CHECK



APPRECIATED SECURITIES & STOCKS



MATCHING GIFTS



LEAVE A LEGACY

To learn more about giving to COTS, visit cots.org/ways-to-give, or contact **Jamieson Bunn**, Director of Development, at jbunn@cots.org or **(707) 789-6380**.

why I give: blair kellison



Blair is the CEO of Traditional Medicinals, a Sonoma County company which is the largest maker of organic, fair-trade teas in the nation. Traditional Medicinals is a B-Corporation, which means that in addition to focusing on sustainability, the company utilizes fair labor practices throughout its operations across the globe. Blair and his wife, Laura Kellison, a Petaluma psychologist, together support a variety of local causes, including Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) and COTS.

As a business person, when it comes to committing philanthropy dollars, I can't help but be attracted to well-run organizations. COTS has a gem of a business/organizational model at the core of all its wonderful activities. They spend their budget so wisely and leverage so many other organizations and companies in their work.

COTS is like the hub of a wheel of help for the homeless – they pull in and coordinate so many resources that

individually are limited in scope but brought together do amazing things for the COTS residents.

COTS' success is no accident. It starts with Chuck, their executive director, and cascades throughout the entire organization.

Traditional Medicinals has a volunteer day each year, and this year I volunteered in the kitchen. *[Blair and his colleagues got a look at the daily routine in the kitchen, from food pick-ups at stores, to sorting, chopping, cooking and serving well over a hundred people at each meal. Blair loved meeting the kitchen staff and our regular volunteers.]* You have to see it to believe it, and you have to eat the food to appreciate how great it tastes.

I can't express enough how important it is for every member of Sonoma County to support the work of COTS. Making a difference is what we all want to do in our family, our work, and our philanthropy, and do it with passion and purpose.

THANK YOU TO OUR 2019 BUSINESS SPONSORS!

