



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

## Help us Celebrate 35 Years of COTS With Hops for Homes!



**27 APR** | **6 - 10**  
**THURSDAY** | **PM PM**

It's COTS' 35th Anniversary and we can't wait to celebrate this milestone at our annual Hops for Homes fundraiser. We hope you'll join us **Thursday, April 27th at Brewsters Beer Garden in downtown Petaluma** for music, food, beer, retrospectives, programming, and so much more.

For tickets and to RSVP, visit [cots.org](https://cots.org) or scan the QR code below!



## SPRING NEWS 2023



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Spotlight: JUMP | Hops for Homes | I Know The Difference COTS  
Makes | Giving Drives Innovation





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Dear COTS Friends and Family,

As I reflect on my first month as the new CEO at COTS, I can't help but be grateful for this incredible opportunity to serve our community. I find myself humbled by the compassion and professionalism of each of our team members, and encouraged by the desire of our clients, community partners, and supporters to continue our history of championing innovative solutions to homelessness.

COTS will continue to grow to meet the evolving needs of those we serve. We will continue to nurture and support an expert workforce dedicated to ending homelessness. We will partner with our community to generate meaningful change through unique solutions. Above all, COTS will remain steadfast in its mission, ensuring a community where everyone has a place to call home.

Sincerely yours,

Chris Cabral, CEO

# In This Issue



# Meet the Board



We sat down with COTS Board Member Camille Kazarian, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Summit State Bank, to find out more about her experience on the board. Camille has been serving since October 2021.

Anything I can do to help related to accounting is very rewarding from my perspective.

**Is there anything in your life in particular that drew you to homeless services/helping others?**

Helping others understand and prevent addiction is very near to my heart. My family has been personally affected by addiction and I want to do whatever I can to help address the effects of this crisis. Addiction impacts everyone. My son is 11 and I want to stop the cycle of addiction with us. Every person deserves to have a safe place to sleep for the night, a place they can call home, and a family/community they can go to that cares about them.

**During your time on the board (or prior to), have you spent any time volunteering, either with COTS or other organizations?**

Prior to joining COTS I used to enjoy volunteering at my son's school and we would also volunteer at homeless shelters. Helping others in the community was a bonding experience for the two of us. However, it all went away when the COVID pandemic hit and I was not able to help in the same ways I used to. For a while I was struggling finding ways to help others, so the timing of joining COTS worked out perfect - I welcomed this opportunity with open arms.

**How has your time on the board affected you? What have you gotten out of it?**

Occasionally I will take a stand back and look at the progress COTS continues to make. I look at where

they were long before I joined, where they have gone in the past 2 years, and the bright future ahead for this organization, and I continue to be impressed. The employees and volunteers at COTS are what makes this organization run so well and help so many. I believe any path to success starts at the top and permeates down through the organization. We recently had a change in CEO. I was impressed with the effectiveness of our former CEO who recently retired, and I am equally impressed with our new CEO, Chris Cabral. They each have a unique set of experiences and skills that will lead their teams and COTS as a whole to ongoing successes. I believe the people who work for and volunteer at COTS do this work out of compassion, kindness and selflessness. When you operate under these motives, the level of success you can achieve is infinite. I applaud this culture and everyone who helps to makes our vision a reality.

**What has your experience of the board been as a whole?**

I have sat on a lot of boards and seen a myriad of dynamics at play. When it comes to COTS, what I experience most is the cohesiveness and collaboration among the board, our employees, volunteers, and the communities we serve. COTS truly celebrates everyone's unique skills and life experiences. I feel like I am treated with respect for being uniquely me. The Board also takes time to educate me on what I can do to understand the issues we are dealing with and how I can help further the cause.

**How did you find out about COTS?**

I lived in Sonoma County most of my life and went to school in Petaluma, so I have been familiar with COTS and how they contribute to our community for as long as I can remember. When a COTS Board member reached out to me about joining the board, I was honored to be considered for such an integral and compassionate cause.

**What made you want to sit on the board at COTS?**

What is not to love about this organization?! The mission and purpose of COTS really speaks to me and the people behind it are an incredible group of individuals who are driven to help others. I want to help our community, but I cannot do that on my own. I felt that joining an organization like COTS would be the best option because they are so well organized and know how best to use our skill sets to access the resources they need to help others.

**What are you excited to bring to your work on the board that is uniquely you?**

I love accounting and finance, and working with numbers has always been something I have enjoyed doing professionally for the past 24 years.



# Going the Extra Mile for Permanent Housing

Last June, Barry Peelen became the first case manager for the Studios at Montero (SAM), COTS' new Permanent Supportive Housing project in cooperation with Burbank Housing, set to open in May 2023. Equipped with a masters degree in Public Policy and a passion for serving his community, Barry found the perfect fit at COTS.

What's a typical day look like for him? He spends most days following up with clients and the Housing Authority to check on applications. Most future SAM residents meet with Barry multiple times as he helps them move through the arduous application

that most of the time, it's just easier to meet them."

Getting applications approved can at times be challenging, but so rewarding once complete. Barry recently helped a young man who was living at SAY (Social Advocates for Youth) and hoping to move to SAM. "He had a really hard background...and I think he'd lost faith in ever really getting housing," Barry said. "When I met him, he had none of the stuff he needed [for the application]. He didn't even have his own ID or anything" - a problem he often runs into when helping clients.

**"I think he'd lost faith in ever really getting housing. It's cool seeing someone go from being pretty much disinterested....[to] super excited. Those ones are always really rewarding."**

process. "I usually have at least one or two points of contact for a client," he says. "I always have all these feelers out, in the form of emails and voicemails and texts that I've sent out to people, and people just get back to me when they can.

"Lately, I've had a lot of clients who are in the Mary Isaac Center, either at the shelter or in Recuperative Care, so I'll meet with them in the morning," he says. After that, "I go out and meet whoever I'm supposed to meet, wherever, which is all over the place, from Guerneville to Los Guilicos."

From one end of the county to the other, Barry always takes the extra steps necessary to meet potential residents where they're at. "Most people don't have transportation," he adds, "and they were missing appointments [because of it]. I found

Together with the client's case manager at SAY, Aelean, Barry got the client his ID and Social Security card, necessities for SAM approval. "We managed to get on that stuff, but he really engaged in the process as we went on," Barry said. "It's just cool seeing someone go from being pretty much disinterested....[to] super excited. And then he got approved this week. Those ones are always really rewarding."

Particularly for younger people coming from the foster care system, trauma, instability, and lack of family support can lead to general distrust of the system and resistance to services, which is why it's so important to step in and help. "Something that I like best about working with that age group is that it's an essential time to intervene [because] they're at a point where it can either get better, or it's probably

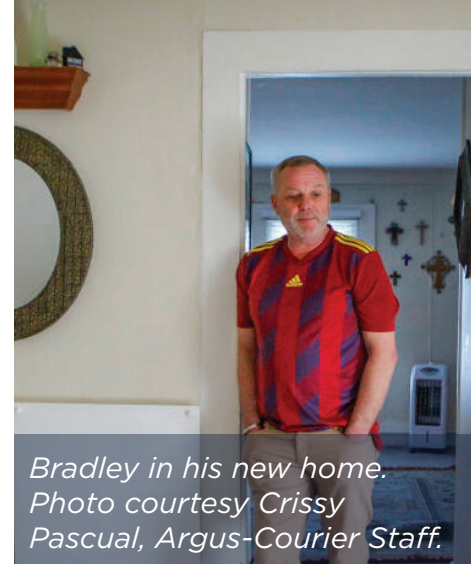


gonna get a lot worse," Barry says. He expects about 18 out of 60 SAM residents to be young adults. - that's nearly a third of the total population. We are thrilled at the opportunity for this early intervention and to provide stability in resident's lives.

So, what does Barry hope for when SAM opens this May? **"I hope we can foster a sense of community**, so it's not only business," he says. And the team has big plans to do just that, from resident ambassadors to a community garden, there will be plenty of opportunities for residents to make real connections outside of their case manager.

"At the end of the day, [moving into SAM]...is a positive development in their lives," Barry adds. "I want to try to have that not get lost in all of the processes that we're all going to be doing. I want there to be some kind of celebratory spirit about the fact that, hey, this was a difficult thing for everybody involved here. And this is great."

Here at COTS, we are thrilled at the progress the SAM team is making. **To date, 33 applications have been approved and they are on track to have the remaining units filled by the end of June.** Stay tuned for more updates about this incredible program!



*Bradley in his new home. Photo courtesy Crissy Pascual, Argus-Courier Staff.*

## People's Village: One Year Later

It's been one year since People's Village began welcoming its first residents, and already we've been overwhelmed by its success. To date, the program has served 53 clients, with seven moving on to permanent housing, and three going into detox/treatment.

One People's Village graduate, Bradley Brown, was recently interviewed by staff at the Argus Courier. After staying at the Steamer Landing encampment, Bradley first moved into COTS' Temporary Placement Center in the winter of 2021, and recently was able to secure permanent housing. "I got better help, much better help, here," Bradley says in the article, of his experience with COTS staff, Petaluma police, and community members.

"Bradley utilized many of the COTS supportive services to increase self-sufficiency and realize success,"

COTS CEO Chris Cabral said in the article. "We are all so proud of him and the hard work he put in to gain

Randy Clay, thanking them for their help. The card reads:

**"Stacie by far has helped the most, aided by the wisdom and work-history Randy has brought to her attention. Eileen has performed miracles through Red Tape Club, and gives me hope that one day I may be documented once again."**  
—People's Village Resident Matthew

permanent housing."

"There's hope," Bradley added. "There is. You gotta put in the work though. You can't expect everything to be given to you. You have to do the work and accept the help too."

Read the full article on our Facebook at facebook.com/sonomacountycots, and make sure to follow us on social media!

Recently, Bradley also sent a thank you card to Stacie Questoni and

*"Stacie + Randy: Thanks for helping provide a safe place to grow! I enjoyed my 11 months in the People's Village and 3 months at the family shelter [temporary placement center]! I got a lot done that would have been much more difficult on the streets! You're the best. Many thanks, Bradley."*

You can read more about one of our People's Village clients who moved into permanent housing on page 6!

To date, People's Village has:

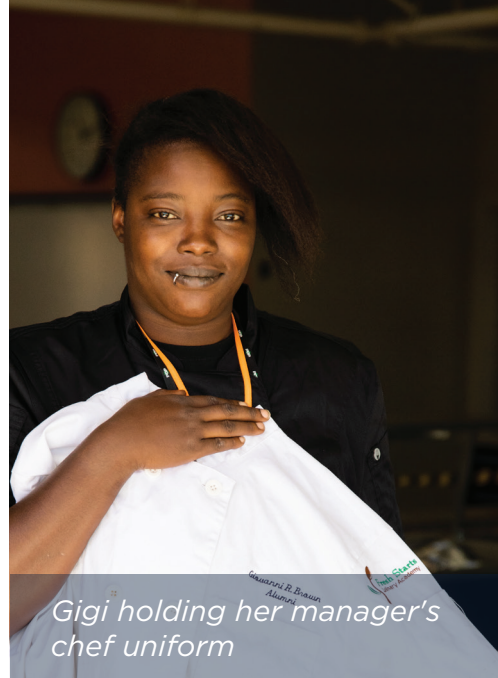
served	moved	transitioned
<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
clients	people into permanent housing	people into treatment

cots.org 5





Gigi outside Mary's Table with friend and mentor Chef Janin



Gigi holding her manager's chef uniform

## Client Story: Gigi

Gigi came into this world a fighter. “I am a miracle baby, technically,” she says, standing inside her People’s Village unit. “I wasn’t supposed to be here. My mom was told by doctors that she couldn’t have a child.”

Gigi was born a month and a half premature, on December 30, 1993. “I was the size of a preemie baby but somehow weighed the amount to

with a cousin, then a friend of her father, both of whom physically abused her. “Me and my dad have been homeless on and off....But I was basically just...couch surfing, not really having like a stable spot.”

In 2008, she and her father moved in with her aunt in Santa Rosa, where Gigi attended high school. This offered a brief respite, until she

Francisco,” she says. “And then [my ex] broke up with me when I came back. So I moved into my friend’s mom’s house and [stayed] there for three years.” And life didn’t let up after that. In 2021, her fiancé tried to kill her. The next month, November, she was told to leave her home. “Then I had a seizure and died in December, and was homeless basically from there.”

She went back to a mental hospital in January, followed by a stay in a crisis residential unit (CRU) for 30 days in February. “And then I went to The Rose, which is a family and women’s shelter.....I only stayed there for a week before I went back to the CRU residential unit.”

She found COTS through a friend she met at the mental hospital. “Originally, I didn’t want to come all the way out here in Petaluma,” she says. “I just wanted to stay in Santa Rosa. But the other shelters were either full or they weren’t accepting people because of COVID. Or they just didn’t call me back or answer the phone.”

met her ex-boyfriend. “He wouldn’t let me go outside at night,” she says. “He was controlling what I ate, when I ate, and how much...but I was like, I have no money and I need a place to stay. I was trying to save up money but most of my money went to him.”

She became homeless again after a series of personal crises, starting with a mental health break in 2018. “I got sent to a mental hospital in San

**“I’m happy to share [my story] because people just gotta apply themselves a little bit here and then good things happen.**

go home the next day. So they let me go home,” she says. Then, three months later, her mother collapsed in their home. “My dad tried to revive her. But she was pronounced dead at the same hospital that I was born in.”

At only 28 years old, she has been through a lot in her life. She has bounced between homelessness and abusive homes, first staying

While staying at COTS, Gigi decided to help out in the kitchen at Mary’s Table. That’s where she met COTS’ head chef Janin, who recommended she attend Homeward Bound’s culinary school, the same chef training program Janin herself graduated from. “At first I was like, I’m probably not even going to finish,” she recalls. “[But I thought], ‘I’m gonna be here for six months, I gotta do something other than just sit on my butt all day.’ So I went. And then next thing I knew, I’m running home every day like ‘look what I made, look at all the cool stuff I made!’ So now I love it.”

After she had been at the Mary Isaak Center for almost six months, she was able to secure a unit in the People’s Village, a week before her shelter exit date This allowed her to focus on her training at Homeward Bound, as well as her mental and physical health, something she had a hard time doing while staying in the congregate setting of the shelter. “It’s just the best thing ever, you know; I don’t worry about my mental stuff. I still worry about the seizures that I have every once in a while. We know that it’s triggered by how I’m feeling and panic attacks, so as long as I’m just cool and calm and I take my meds I’m fine.”

She has since graduated the program and passed the manager test, and has been working at Homeward Bound in the Key Room, a fully functioning kitchen and event space that not only caters for outside events but also provides dinners for Homeward Bound’s affiliate shelters. “I get \$22 an hour for doing something that I love in a place that I like, and I’m happy about,” Gigi says. “The saying is, if you find something you love, you never work a day in your life; that’s where I’m at right now. And I’m only 28!”

The first time we talked to Gigi was last October. She had just secured her People’s Village unit, and was hopeful for the future.



Now, Gigi is living in her own place, an apartment she rents thanks to a partnership with Buckelew, and her spirits continue to look up. “This is also my first time living by myself,”

**“It’s nice to say ‘my place.’ This is my place, just me. All me, all mine. I did this. I got here. It’s nice. It’s really nice. I’m happy that I was able to move in.**

she says. “This is a big transition for me. I’m used to being around like a bajillion and three people and waking up in the middle of the night....But now, it’s quiet. I like it.”

Though she’s still getting settled (when we spoke to her last, she’d only been moved in a week), she now has room for all her things, and is excited to have designated spaces for different items – a kitchen, a living room, a bedroom, a bathroom. “This is a giant castle to me compared to what I’ve been dealing with,” she laughs.

Sometimes, when she’s talking to someone, she pauses and savors the feeling of having her own place. “It’s nice to say ‘my place,’” she says. “This

is my place, just me. All me, all mine. I did this. I got here. It’s nice. It’s really nice. I’m happy that I was able to move in.”

Talking to her, you would never know she has been to Hell and back. She smiles, laughs, tells funny stories, and shows off her Pokémon plushie collection. “It’s the little things, that’s what gets me by,” she says. “There’s always a silver lining to everything, you know. Just know that it’s a roller coaster; for every down, there’s an up. It’s been [a ride]. But right now I’m going up, I’m goin’ to the moon!”

“I’m not gonna lie, I’ve tried to kill myself a couple of times,” she adds. “But now I’m like, You know what? I don’t want to die, I don’t want to do

that anymore. I’m doing a lot better. I talk to a therapist and psychiatrist, make sure I take my meds. I just try to just center myself and do me.

“I’ve had people say that I wasn’t going to amount anything or I wasn’t going to accomplish stuff or whatever. But I graduated high school with a 4.0, without trying. I went to two different culinary schools...I’m a certified massage therapist.

“I like to help people, put a smile on people’s faces. Handing them food that’s tasty, giving them a massage or giving them a good mixed drink, it’s just icing on the cake.”





JUMP volunteers with COTS kitchen staff at Mary's Table in November 2022



A group of JUMP volunteers at JUMP Days of Service

# Volunteer Spotlight: JUMP

Here at COTS, we love all of our volunteers, but groups help out in a very special way. One such group is JUMP (Join Us Making Progress), an entirely student-based volunteer organization from Sonoma State. The group is divided into two branches: Days of Service, which consists of one-time service events, and Community Connections, which is a semester-long commitment. Membership changes with the

They also host service events for Homeless Awareness Week every November, where homeless service providers, including COTS, are invited to come on campus and share about their current offerings. **"We usually try to do that to bring awareness, especially nowadays,"** says Days of Service Director Nadia Hernandez. **"I know that a lot of students on campus are facing food insecurities, housing**

job on cleaning the dining room, hitting all behind the back splashes, all the windows, all underneath by the baseboards, all the seats underneath the tables, washing the walls, sweeping mopping, all that good stuff."

"They're just an amazing group of kids," Janin adds. "The fact that they want to come and spend their time here and learn about us and see what we're doing over here and to care to be here says a lot. They like to serve the clients. And they talk to the clients, and the clients like them, because they ask them where they're from, and why they're here. And they sit down and they have conversations, and that's really nice."

For Janin, having groups like JUMP come in is a lifesaver. "They're a big help," she says. "I get all my prep done the week that they're here. And they really free up my time to do other things, like making phone calls to vendors, seeing what else we could get, or things that we could use, and giving me time to look up recipes."

She also feels it benefits the clients to have groups like JUMP here. **"I think the clients feel good when**

**“ Organizations like COTS really depend on their volunteers. It's a great experience. Also, the people who work there are very passionate. And they really care about the community and people and giving back.**

student body, but the group has maintained its connection to COTS for some time now, coming back with different students year after year.

This year alone, volunteers from JUMP's Days of Service have come to COTS five different times, mostly to Mary's Table, but also at the Kids First Family Shelter.

**insecurities, a bunch of different things. We wanted to give them a place where they can ask questions and have these issues addressed."**

When JUMP comes to Mary's Table, Janin makes sure to put them to work. One of their last Days of Service, "We rolled 300 beef enchiladas," says Janin. "They helped me roll 24 pans of enchiladas! And we just did a really good, detailed

**they see other groups coming in and taking care of it,"** she says. "Some of them feel like, 'hey, this person just came and cleaned all the walls, let me wipe that up.' Like, 'look how hard these people worked to volunteer their time to do this for us;' [and it helps them] take some ownership and appreciation for where they live."

Both Nadia and Bryan Nunez, JUMP Days of Service Coordinator, volunteered at COTS recently, and spoke highly of their time in the kitchen. "I really enjoyed volunteering there, because it's very hands on," says Nadia. "I like that we were able to prep the food, and it was nice seeing how much planning goes into the meals. I also really like to see how Janin runs the kitchen. I know she has a lot on her plate, and she's always running around everywhere. I know that takes a lot of work and effort. And I know that volunteers are a crucial part of COTS."

**"It's great to give back to the community,"** adds Bryan. "COTS is a great place to go and volunteer. It was very welcoming. It's a great opportunity for people to give back to the community and have fun with it, too."

When asked if there was anything she'd want to share with somebody who was thinking about volunteering at COTS, Nadia said: "I'd tell them to really go for it. I think that it's impactful; organizations like COTS really depend on their volunteers. It's a great experience. Also, the people who work there are very passionate. And they really care about the community and people and giving back. I think it's good for people to align interests, and be around people who also value the same things, and you definitely find that at COTS, people who care. We live in a society where not enough people care."



## Volunteer as a Group

Looking for an activity to do with a group? Come volunteer with us! Contact our Community Engagement Specialist, Diana Morales, at **volunteers@cots.org** or **(707) 765-6530 x136**, to find out more.

## Join Us for Hops for Homes!



Looking for another fun way to get involved as a group? Sponsor a table at Hops for Homes! Table sponsorship includes meals and beverages at a private table for eight, live music, plus your name in the program, and premium seating. PLUS your sponsorship pays for COTS staff to attend the event!

Tables are \$900, and can be purchased on-line at **cots.org/events**, or by scanning the QR code below:



For more information about table sponsorship, or other event sponsorship opportunities, contact **Erin Krueger, Development Director, at (707) 765-6530 x126 or ekrueger@cots.org.**

## Thank you to our sponsors!



more coming soon





# I Know The Difference COTS Makes

Michael and Gail Foulkes are not only long-time residents of Petaluma, but long-time supporters of COTS as well.

They first heard about COTS through our co-founder Laure Reich. Gail has a background in art, and the couple attended an art show hosted by Laure's husband, Jesse Reich. That evening they learned about COTS and our work to support the most vulnerable members

of the community. Michael, who spent years working at juvenile hall and with at-risk youth, recognized the vital role COTS had to play in our community.

Over the last twenty years, the Foulkes have been involved with COTS at varying levels including seeing firsthand how COTS can support members of our community.

Gail regularly holds art fundraisers at Aqus Cafe and donates a portion of the proceeds to COTS. She also helped create the mural that now hangs at our Kids and Families First Shelter (KFFS). Originally a community art project at Aqus, the mural found its forever home at KFFS. It's a beautiful project that brighten KFFS and reminds COTS of our incredible community.

Then, a close friend went through a difficult time and COTS was there to support that individual, not just to find housing, but also to find mental health support. COTS staff played an integral role in securing appointments and assessments needed for treatment and support. "It all started with COTS," said Michael. "First they took care of them, then helped them get the assessments they needed. Now they're doing amazingly well."

**“ It all started with COTS. First they took care of them, then helped them get the assessments they needed. Now they’re doing amazingly well.**

The Foulkes know that what we do at COTS works and is worth supporting. "You'd be hard [pressed] to find a better cause," Michael says. "As someone who's spent years involved, working with underprivileged society, I know the difference [COTS] makes to the recipients and the rest of society."

Gail and Michael are excited about COTS' new ventures The Red Tape Club, the Studios at Montero, and our work to provide health services. We are so grateful for Gail and Michael and all the support they give to COTS! To learn more about how you can support COTS, visit [cots.org](http://cots.org).



# Giving Drives Innovation

COTS is always striving to find creative solutions to address homelessness. The path to housing can vary from individual to individual and COTS must stay flexible and responsive to meet the needs of our clients and to further our mission.

The flexible funds of general support are key to achieving our goal to assist those experiencing homelessness in finding and keeping housing, increasing self-sufficiency, and improving well-being. With general support, our staff can identify new and innovative ways to support our clients.

COTS move to housing-focused is just one of the many examples of recent innovation. A housing-first only approach was not meeting the needs of our clients or enabling our staff to create lasting impact. COTS wanted more for our clients. After meeting with other service providers, COTS staff decided to make the move to Housing-Focused. While we are still a low-barrier shelter, clients must create an individual care plan and housing support plan as well as meet regularly with care managers to stay at MIC. Just months after starting, shelter staff have noted a remarkable change in the shelter.

"[Since moving to Housing-Focused] Clients have shifted to working on their goals and helping out with the needs of the shelter. Clients are attending case management

in greater numbers and are addressing their personal barriers to housing. Clients have been more eager to engage in resources and explore various forms of housing opportunities and employment. Care Managers are spending much more time helping individuals access resources than dealing with behavioral issues, which benefits everybody." Chris Inclan, Senior Shelter Services Manager

Your general support also allows us to invest in new solutions and technologies, so that COTS can ensure that our programs continue to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve. These new solutions can improve our organizational efficiency and allow staff to spend more time with clients than on data entry or other cumbersome administrative tasks. This leads to long-term success for COTS and a continued greater impact on our community.

We are grateful to our donors who support us each day. Your gifts make a lasting impact on our community. Thank you for your partnership in creating a community where everyone has a place to call home.

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