



PO Box 2744
Petaluma CA 94953

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

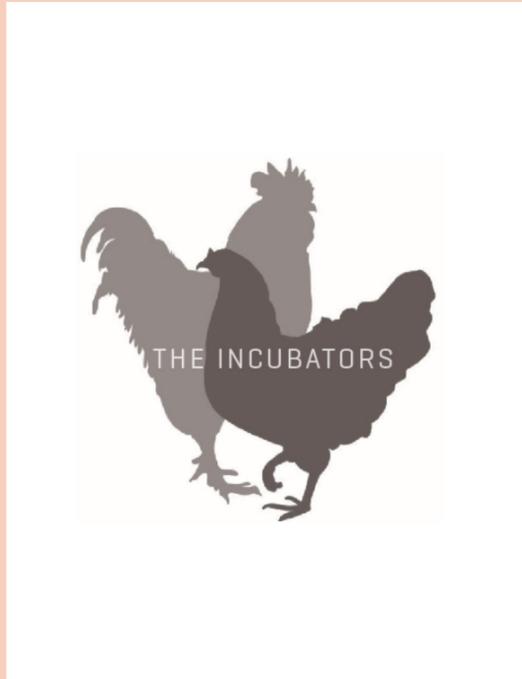
- William Wordsworth



SPRING NEWS
2024



Meet the Board | More Seniors are Experiencing Homelessness
| Finding Home Again | Growth in Recuperative Care
| Do Good, By Doing Well | COTS exists because homelessness exists
| Hops for Homes | Help Welcome Our Clients Home | A New Way of Giving



Our biggest
fundraiser of the
year!

A benefit supporting COTS' initiatives to help families and individuals find
and keep housing.

25 APR
Thursday

6 - 10
pm pm

Brewsters
229 Water Street North
Downtown Petaluma

With live music from The Incubators!

For tickets, registration, and parking information
visit cots.org or scan the QR code



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A Note From Chris

Dear COTS Supporters and Friends:

In the picturesque landscapes of Sonoma County, there exists a population often overlooked—people experiencing homelessness. As our region continues to grapple with housing challenges, organizations like COTS continue to provide critical services for unsheltered individuals and families.

In recent years, the number of unsheltered seniors in our community has increased. This demographic experiences homelessness differently because of unique health concerns, diminishing social networks, and financial insecurities. In response, COTS has tailored its services to address the specific needs of this population.

At the heart of COTS' efforts lies a commitment to wraparound support, encompassing shelter, nutritious meals, and a pathway to permanent housing. Here, they can access healthcare coordination, case management, and other supportive services tailored to their unique needs.

Historically, COTS' supportive housing programs serve more than 40% of people over the age of 55—this number has seen a steady increase since 2018. Through partnerships with local agencies and innovative program models, COTS is expanding its permanent supportive housing program by more than 30% in 2024.

COTS has expanded this program to include Santa Rosa, CA. This expansion offers housing and the necessary wraparound services for residents. From healthcare coordination to social engagement programs, this program serves as a pillar of support empowering individuals to improve their health and self-sufficiency.

Beyond this expansion, COTS will continue to work alongside public officials and other nonprofit agencies to advocate for policy change to address the root causes of homelessness. We seek to enact systemic reforms prioritizing affordable housing, healthcare access, and social supports.

As members of the Sonoma County community, we have a collective responsibility to support our neighbors. We invite you to join us in ensuring everyone has a place to call home. To learn more about different ways to give, please visit us at www.cots.org.

Warm regards,



Chris Cabral



Annie Nicol, graduate from the UC Davis FNP-PA program in 1990, has been in community Nursing since graduation. She credits her parents for inspiring her community involvement, as well as her personal encounters with poverty.

“Be part of the problem or part of the solution” is the directive that echoes from her past and leads her daily choices. Annie’s passion is fanning the fire of resiliency in her clients, strengthening community safety nets, and teaching others how to listen without judgment.

She continues to contribute to her community through active participation in community meetings and boards that support our unhoused community. Annie is currently the Petaluma Health Center Director of Homeless Services for the Petaluma Health Center clinic at Mary Isaak Shelter in Petaluma. This position allows her to share the goals of shelter care with providers with staff from the Petaluma Health Center.

“I attended a Petaluma Community meeting in the mid 90’s inviting community members to give back to their community. Familiar with COTS programs I began volunteering at the Opportunity Center in Petaluma, a homeless navigation site. I arranged a small grant for fresh fruits and vegetables for the clients, screened for TB, and administered flu vaccines to drop-in clients.”

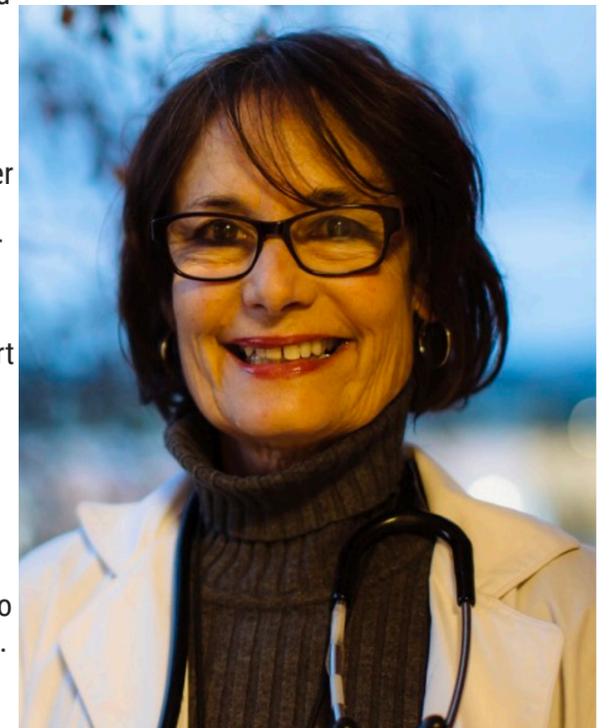
When COTS built a large homeless shelter in 2004, Annie saw that a space was created to expand health care. In 2005 she approached St. Joseph Health System for grant funding through St. Joseph Community Benefit Department and Mobile Van. The funding was granted and a homeless healthcare program blossomed with the St. Joseph team’s assistance.

St. Joseph’s team then handed over the patient list and management of the shelter clinic to Petaluma Health Center. This shift to Petaluma Health Center allowed a relationship with a primary provider to develop, connecting patients to insurance plans and other support services.

As COTS and other community agencies joined the mix, the network for homeless community members to receive care multiplied. This partnership remains today, built on

collaboration and a mutual goal to end the war on poverty and homelessness.

My daily blessing is remembering that you never know who your next teacher will be. “Every day is full of new lessons, and I thrive by learning from everyone I encounter. I am deeply troubled by the trauma and despair seen in our work, but I am also greatly inspired by the resilience and tenacity to make a change that so many in our community possess.”



More Seniors are Experiencing Homelessness

How COTS serves this growing, vulnerable population

At a time when they should be settling comfortably into retirement to enjoy the leisurely activities of their golden years, seniors are instead falling into homelessness for the first time—a disturbingly growing trend seen nationwide.

This increase in older adult homelessness is evident in the Recuperative Care (RC) program at COTS Mary Isaak Center.

According to HMIS data, in 2022, just more than half (52%) of RC clients were over age 55. In 2023, this number grew to 67%.

Recuperative Care also recently served its oldest client ever: 82-years-old.

“We’re seeing this new group of older adults in the homeless population,”

says Julia Gaines, COTS Sr. Recuperative Care Manager. “They are entering homeless after spending decades in a blue-collar career, maybe once owning a home. This group doesn’t have mental health or substance abuse issues, or a criminal record. These seniors simply got sick, became disabled, or couldn’t afford their home, and without anyone to support them, they became homeless.”

This is exactly what happened

to COTS shelter client Linda Guajardo, 73. “My husband died, and then I had a stroke,” she says of how she came to COTS in 2023. “I didn’t want to come to a shelter, but I had no choice,” she says sitting in her new apartment. “Turns out it was the best thing I could have done.”

Because they are experiencing homelessness for the first time, seniors often don’t know about services available in their communities, and are sometimes hesitant to ask for help. “Connection to resources is a key part of the services we provide,” says RC staff.

With accessibility, mobility and cognitive issues, seniors have higher rates of food insecurity and transportation barriers, and are particularly vulnerable to victimization, especially if on the streets.

“When you’re older, you can’t carry all your stuff everywhere,” says Linda, recalling her time spent living on the streets. “So, people end up stealing it from you. They’ll take whatever they can grab.”

Serving older adults in shelter comes with unique needs and challenges. They are more likely to be suffering from common age-related ailments and mobility issues—vision and hearing loss,



Above: Former COTS' RC Client, Linda G holds her keys and a welcome home bag as she prepares to move into her new housing!

dementia—all of which can cause imbalance and a high risk for falls. Some seniors may actually require 24/7 care at a skilled nursing facility (SNF), but it’s a challenge for hospital discharge planners to find SNF beds for patients on Medi-Cal in Sonoma County.

Julia says the key to serving older adults is homelessness prevention. “The best line of defense is their primary care doctor, who can assess them for housing and financial instability and connect them to services like COTS before they lose their home,” she says.

“Meanwhile, we will ensure that the seniors that walk through our doors have access to health care, pathways to housing, and are treated with respect and dignity.”

Finding Home Again

Jane* was a lively spirit on a path full of success until her world was turned upside down. Like so many others, the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic marked the start of a tumultuous next few years.

Jane owned her own business that was established in Petaluma almost two decades ago. However, the pandemic brought a drastic decrease in clientele and, after sustaining an injury to her wrist, she had to close her doors permanently.

As Jane approached her mid 70’s in age, she was without a sustainable income, as social security did not cover the cost of living. Luckily, Jane had savings she could tap into and for the next five years, she continued living in her home and prepared herself for what was to come next.

After moving her belongings into storage and attempting to file paperwork on her own to secure affordable housing, Jane was becoming desperate for help. With no hope or help, she started to starve herself and her body weight fell to 75 pounds.

After her savings were depleted and she was unable to secure stable, affordable housing, she was forced out of her home and onto the streets of the Petaluma community she had long been an integral piece of.

With no other solutions, Jane called a local shelter, COTS. Soon after speaking to a “kind”

individual on the phone about the waiting list for a bottom bunk placement in the shelter at the Mary Isaak Center, Jane saw a light at the end of the tunnel. Partnering with Eileen from the Red Tape Club, she filed her application to stay at COTS and was placed in COTS’ People’s Village.

Jane remained in People’s Village for 13 months, taking advantage of every single resource available to her.

Jane’s other key resource was again Eileen, in the Red Tape Club. Eileen helped her complete the paperwork she struggled to file on her own. Together they applied for PEP Housing, affordable housing for seniors.

“Gratitude is one word I would say for this place. Really. Gratitude is what I feel more than anything. Not to mention that the people who, are they are so there's so able to do their job.”

Jane was so appreciative of the access to resources and often tried to encourage other clients to use them too.

Then, her application results came in. After months of filing paperwork and meeting with her Eileen, Jane had been accepted into permanent, affordable housing. Joy poured out of her as she prepared to move out. “I grew in love here. I grew in respect of others and to other

people. . . . To see that they are people, many of them have just marvelous, beautiful qualities that are different than me.”

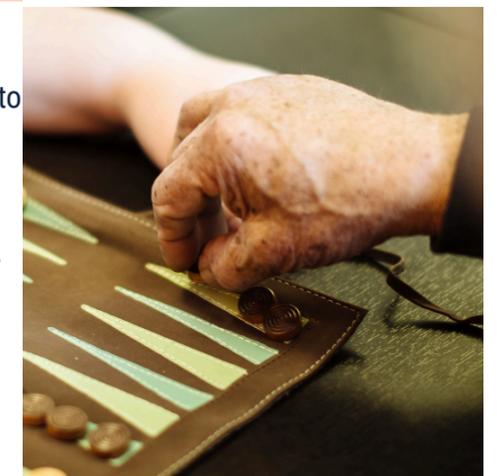
She made beautiful cards for everyone who had helped her at COTS, and hand delivered them to their office spaces before her moving day.

“I know where I’m going is a lovely place, and I feel honored to have been so fortunate as to get a residence like this.”

At 82 years of age, Jane was as excited as a kid in a candy shop looking forward to her new place. Jane is also planning on finding a way to contribute back to other people in need.

To read Jane's full story visit our blog at [cots.org](https://www.cots.org)

*Client's name has been changed for privacy.



Growth in Recuperative Care

In February, our Legacy Society gathered at the Mary Isaak Center for a delicious meal and a captivating chat with Pat Higgins, COTS' Lead Recuperative Care Specialist.

In 2014, COTS identified a new need facing the community. After being discharged, our neighbors experiencing homelessness needed a safe space to continue their healing journeys for injuries, illnesses, surgeries, etc. With continuous care, these individuals could heal well and reduce the number of returns to the hospital or calls for emergency services.

COTS sought to fill the gap and transformed the former library at the Mary Isaak Center into a respite unit of four beds. These four beds supported the community until 2017, when the unit had to close indefinitely.

Not giving up on COTS' goals, in 2020, the respite unit was reopened under the name of the Recuperative Care Unit (RC) and now had 6 beds. This unit continues to serve clients today with medical transportation, appointments, care, and other medical related needs.

Beyond medical services, COTS' Red Tape Club helps RC clients get their documents ready, such as IDs, medical cards, social security cards, etc. Additionally, the Red Tape Club assists in securing

6 cots.org



COTS would like to thank the Legacy Society members for attending and ensuring that we will be there to help our neighbors in need for generations to come.

employment, social security deposits, and understanding other legal jargon that may be standing in their way of becoming housed.

As their paperwork processes, COTS also gives RC clients access to housing assistance, substance abuse and recovery programs, and counseling as part of the whole person approach.

According to some of our previous clients, COTS' services are life changing. One specific client, who is currently housed, told Pat, "That if it wasn't for all the services, not only COTS' Recuperative Care [provided], but COTS in general provided, I wouldn't be housed right now, nor would I have the confidence to be housed".

Another client had been homeless for 15 years and dreamed of being in a home again, but he did not know how to make his dream come true. Now he has been housed for 6 months and accredits COTS with giving him the tools and confidence to succeed. As he is

fully employed and has advanced his position with a promotion, he pays it forward by volunteering in the kitchen at the Mary Isaak Center.

Last year, Recuperative Care's 6 bed unit served 50 individual clients, with 80% of them not returning to the hospital and 92% of them transitioning to the Mary Isaak Center, assisted living, or housing.

While we have seen a lot of success in RC, COTS has also identified two more emerging groups that can benefit from COTS' programs. There has been a large growth in seniors experiencing homelessness as well as those experiencing homelessness for the first time in their lives.

Considering the growing need for more care, COTS will expand the Recuperative Care unit from 6 beds to 20 this year!

Stay tuned for more updates.

Do Good, By Doing Well with COTS' Permanent Supportive Housing

Protect your rental property while providing housing to people in need.

Master leasing your property to COTS not only benefits your community but provides you as a landlord, a number of unique benefits.

COTS has leases over a dozen residential homes in Sonoma County, many of which have been rented for more than a decade. We provide Case Management staff to ensure tenants have the support they need to be successful tenants, and we provide maintenance staff to address small issues as they arise. Both services are at no cost and no hassle to the landlord—COTS will only contact the landlord for maintenance support for larger mechanical issues.

As a partner to COTS, you would not only be supporting your community, you can take advantage of our no-cost maintenance assistance, and our reputation as a reliable, long-term tenant.

You have access to a COTS employee representative 24/7, 365 days per year. We assure on-time rental payments from an established nonprofit right in your community. Recognition in COTS publications and appreciation events.

If you are interested in renting to COTS, Please Contact Property Manager, Ian Andrew at iandrew@cots.org or 707.765.6530 ext 101 or by scanning the QR Code on this page.



COTS exists because homelessness exists

COTS' Statistics for the 2022 - 2023 Fiscal Year



95,889 meals

served at Mary's Table
(an increase of 50% over last two years)



Over 1,000 people

served by COTS

264 people

people housed



80% of Recuperative Care clients

do not return to the hospital

“ There was understanding and [they] showed that somebody did care about you. [They] showed someone was willing to help you [even if] you're like me and can't read or write.”

-James, Former COTS' Client



HOPS FOR HOMES

For the second year in a row, COTS will be hosting our biggest annual fundraiser, Hops for Homes, at Brewsters Beer Garden in Petaluma. The benefit supports COTS' initiatives to help families and individuals find and keep housing. Tickets can be purchased on our

website or by scanning the QR code on the lower right hand corner of this page. The night will contain a COTS' client speaker, an auction, live music by The Incubators, food, and more!



April 25, 2024

6 pm - 10 pm

Brewsters

229 Water Street North
Downtown Petaluma

Can't make it to the event, but want to support COTS?

Set an example of philanthropy for our community and guests by sponsoring Hops for Homes!

To sponsor, email: ekrueger@cots.org



Buy Your Tickets Today!

Let's gather to create a community where everyone has a place to call home

Help Welcome our Clients Home

COTS is thrilled that so many of our clients are securing permanent housing. We are grateful to our many partners and the staff who make this possible. Moving into housing is exciting, but can be hard when you have been without a home for a while.

Many of our participants moving into their new home don't have basic household supplies or food - and are limited on cash to purchase these items. Welcome Home Baskets and Starter Food Kits can be a life-saver for these families and individuals as they get back on their feet.

Can your or your community group help build Welcome Home Baskets?

To learn more, please visit <https://cots.org/donate/in-kind/> or contact COTS' Engagement Specialist at: volunteers@cots.org or (707) 765-6530 x136



“ I'm forever thankful COTS was there for me and my kids”
- Lupe, Former COTS client



A New Way of Giving

Learn how our local real estate industry is giving back.

Agents for Change is a new partnership program between COTS and our local real estate community.

Real estate agents become members through a financial donation and receive several benefits including marketing materials, invitation to special events, promotion in COTS' publications and more. To learn more visit. www.cots.org

Thank you to our founding members and their commitment to serving those most vulnerable in our community.

- Bill Gabbert – Century 21 Epic
- Evan Kishineff – Century 21 Epic
- Karl Bundesen – Century 21 Epic
- Tony Lander – Century 21 Epic

Become an Agent for Change!



ways to give



ONLINE, CASH, OR CHECK



APPRECIATED SECURITIES & STOCKS



LEAVE A LEGACY



MATCHING GIFTS



MONTHLY GIVING

To learn more about giving to COTS, visit cots.org/ways-to-give, or contact Erin Krueger, Director of Development, at