The Trauma Factor

Studies confirm that many homeless families have experienced trauma in the form of violence, abrupt separation from loved ones, and abuse. At Contra Costa Interfaith Housing (CCIH), we see first-hand the effect that trauma has on homeless families. Children display a range of behaviors that both disturb and confuse. Mothers are seemingly paralyzed by feelings of depression and being overwhelmed. Homelessness is just the tip of a colossal iceberg of problems. Consider some startling findings of a recent 30 month study of mothers and children in shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing.1

- 93% of mothers had a history of trauma; the most common being physical and/or sexual abuse
- Trauma symptom severity and low self-esteem were the only two predictors of residential stability after 30 months
- Many of the children struggled with physical and emotional problems
- The majority of mothers had major depressive symptoms

See Trauma on page 4

Teens Stepping Up in Pittsburg

There's a movement happening in East County and three inspiring young students are behind it. Theophilia, Sunali, and Michael are the first generation of college applicants in their families and while they await college replies, they are giving back to their community.

Theophilia moved from Ghana three years ago to Los Medanos Village (LMV) in Pittsburg. “I have only been in America for a couple of years. When I was growing up in Ghana, I never thought I would have these opportunities. Since I have been at Los Medanos Village Apartments, I have been able to get the help I need and make new friends.” Rosemary Hatcher, youth enrichment coordinator at LMV, shows these seniors that getting into college is possible. Together they are moving through the college application process, taking the SATs and ACTs, and touring local universities. “These kids are very bright and dedicated, and now they are helping out in Homework Club by tutoring younger children.”

See Teens on page 3

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Several years ago, we reached out to Dr. Ellen Bassuk, an expert on the impact of poverty and homelessness on families, to vet our model for supportive services. Consistent with Dr. Bassuk’s research, we noted that many homeless families had extraordinary challenges and that children were particularly affected. She agreed that formerly homeless families needed more than just housing and that our evidence-based model of supportive services was equally critical. Today, our model includes trauma-informed services, mental healthcare, and structured approaches to violence prevention, parent education, and academic enrichment. This latest research (see “The SHIFT Study” referenced on page 1) on the relationship between trauma and homelessness makes sense to us. And the solutions include housing with intensive support.

Spring is a time of reflection, revival, and hope. It is a time to jettison inertia and imagine the possibilities. Through a strategic planning process, CCIH’s Board, volunteers, and staff are renewing our commitment to provide more housing that is deeply affordable and services that promote self-worth, autonomy, and hope. We are energized and inspired by those who are working to transform their lives. And of course, none of this is possible without you - our community partners, volunteers, and donors that help make it all happen. Thank you for your continuing involvement and support of this important mission.

With gratitude,

Louise Bourassa, RN, MS

How Affordable is Contra Costa?

Rent in Contra Costa is rising. The general rule is that affordable rent should be no more than 30% of gross annual income. For a person making minimum wage or living on a fixed income, even housing that is subsidized and deemed “affordable” is out of reach. Here are examples of rents in “affordable” housing complexes relative to a minimum wage earners monthly gross income of $1,386.

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<th>“Affordable Housing” with a 20% subsidy</th>
<th>“Affordable Housing” with a 50% subsidy</th>
<th>Garden Park Apartments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Contra Costa</td>
<td>$1,578</td>
<td>$1,262</td>
<td>$789</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average Rent1</td>
<td>114% of monthly income</td>
<td>91% of monthly income</td>
<td>30% of income</td>
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<td>“Affordable”</td>
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<td>Housing”</td>
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<td>Apartments</td>
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At Garden Park Apartments, residents have the good fortune of paying 30% of their income to rent – no matter what their income. Most people in the county do not have that luxury, contributing to the tragedy of homelessness. ■

Ruby Boots Tops $130,000 to Support Homeless Families

In its most successful year yet, net proceeds from Ruby Boots raised more than $130,000 to support affordable housing and on-site supportive services at our four service sites in Pleasant Hill, Concord, Pittsburg, and Bay Point. On February 1st, more than 250 friends and supporters came together at the Contra Costa Country Club to bid up live and silent auction items, play the wine toss, Super Bowl pool, and dance the night away.

A big thank you to auction co-chairs Barbara Hodgkinson and Joan Toney, and the fabulous Ruby Boots committee who made the evening a resounding success! ■

LEFT: Marilyn Bayer shows off her skills at the Wine Toss. CENTER: Board member Michael Bealmear and his son, Todd, enjoy the live auction. RIGHT: Senator Mark DeSaulnier recognizes 2014 Children’s Choice Award Winner Rabbi Roberto Graetz of Temple Isaiah for his outstanding service on behalf of children.
Case Managers Give Hope and Change Lives

Families coming from the streets are used to operating in survival mode, and all of a sudden they are in an apartment with rules and structures and have to think about paying bills and buying groceries. Learning how to plan ahead takes work, especially when they are already stressed with life, dealing with addiction recovery, mental health challenges, and learning to parent,” explains Tangia Elieff, clinical case manager at CCIH.

On any given day, a case manager is a career counselor, parenting teacher, nutritionist, therapist, tutor, and more. A good case manager is constantly teaching and modeling necessary skills and is open to whatever is needed in the moment.

According to Tangia, the most important skill a case manager can have is empathy. “You have to be able to understand where families are coming from, such as the mental health issues they are dealing with or the history of traumas they’ve experienced. And you must have a desire to empower and uplift them. Otherwise you might say, ‘oh they’re just lazy.’ People with difficult pasts may feel beaten down by life and lose hope. It’s our job as case managers to help them live the life they’ve always imagined, to give them hope no matter how hard the past has been.”

Help End the Cycle of Poverty and Homelessness

Most families experience homelessness due to a job loss, medical issue, or rising rent they can no longer afford. Contra Costa Interfaith Housing helps families retain affordable housing and offers supportive services that allow families to land back on their feet. Most will progress to better living situations.

Some individuals, however, were in shelters or foster care as children; or suffer from mental health issues or addiction. These families, many with children, require more intensive services and intervention to ultimately break the intergenerational cycle of poverty as we respond to meet their most basic needs. We need your help!

**A GIFT OF $2,500** will allow a year of transportation for GPA residents.

**A GIFT OF $5,000** will provide six months of life changing support services for an entire family at Garden Parks Apartments (GPA).

**A GIFT OF $100** will pay for four hours of housing advocacy support for a homeless individual or family.

**A GIFT OF $250** will provide six months of life changing support services for an entire family at Garden Parks Apartments (GPA).

**A GIFT OF $1,000** will provide a family in East County or Lakeside Apartments in the Monument Corridor of Concord one year of case management support and youth enrichment.

**A GIFT OF $500** will pay for 20 hours of case management to help residents remain housed at any of our four program sites.

**A GIFT OF $250** will pay for 10 hours of homework club to help our children succeed in school.

**A GIFT OF $100** will pay for four hours of housing advocacy support for a homeless individual or family.

Please visit our website at [www.ccinterfaithhousing.org](http://www.ccinterfaithhousing.org) to make a gift online. We very much appreciate your partnership and support!

**New Computer Lab a Welcome Resource**

Thanks to the support of Temple Isaiah’s Women of Isaiah, Garden Park Apartments (GPA) has a new computer lab benefitting adults and students alike. Accessible internet and word processing is a vital resource for GPA residents. “The computer lab is a welcome resource and will be central to student success at our after school homework club,” says David Carson, youth enrichment coordinator. Likewise, parents can easily access online resources, as well as build their resumes and seek employment opportunities. Thank you, Women of Isaiah, for making the computer lab a reality!

**Teens continued from page 1**

Sunali, a budding scientist, is taking AP physics and awaiting her reply from UC Berkeley. She enjoys helping fellow residents with math homework. “Working with elementary and middle school kids has been a part of my learning process. Now that I’m a senior and hope to go to U.C. Berkeley, this experience will be a useful skill when collaborating with my classmates.”

Michael has been instrumental in the summer science camp at LMV and continues to help students during homework club. “Tutoring made me realize how hard teachers work and has given me a new appreciation for them. When I graduate from high school in June, I want to pursue a B.S. in Criminal Justice. When I complete my B.S. program, I hope to gain an entry-level position in the F.B.I.”

These students are paving the way for their future, and it’s looking bright.
Upcoming Events

MAY 3
MORAGA JUNIOR WOMEN’S CLUB
GARDEN TOUR
Purchase tickets at moragajuniors.org. Proceeds benefit CCIH.

MAY 4
DONOR AND VOLUNTEER
APPRECIATION PARTY

MAY 14
INTERFAITH BREAKFAST
Learn more about the impact of supportive housing on homeless families with special needs as part of the East Bay Housing Organization’s Affordable Housing Week. Faith community representatives are invited.

JUNE 1
CHAMBER MUSIC SERIES
Presented by St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church. Proceeds help empower CCIH at-risk families to lead independent and self-sufficient lives.

To learn more, call 925-944-2244 or visit us online at www.ccinterfaithhousing.org.

Volunteers in Action

Pictured from left to right: Volunteers from Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church work hard to complete phase one of our community center expansion landscaping project; Enthusiastic members of the B’nei Mitzvah class from Beth Chaim spread tanbark in preparation for a community garden; Congregation B’nai Shalom families beautify Garden Park Apartments; Ahmadiyya Muslim Community prepares and serves a delicious meal for GPA families.

Trauma continued from page 1

At CCIH, we successfully integrate the notion of trauma-informed services in our work. Intuitively, we understand that severe depression, histories of childhood abuse, and neglect impact the ability of families to remain stable in housing and in life. We are not surprised that this study found a direct relationship between homelessness and trauma. According to this study, the effective response to family homelessness should include: housing first, case management to address immediate needs, comprehensive assessments, parenting support and skills training, mental health services, and child-centered services and programs.

Our program at Garden Park Apartments incorporates all these elements. In partnership with a community of friends and supporters, CCIH continues to approach family homelessness with this comprehensive model. With our compassionate support, families can overcome the trauma factor and lead independent and productive lives.