



Berkeley Food & Housing Project

Fall Newsletter 2013

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From the Desk of Executive Director, Terrie Light

Dear Friend of Berkeley Food and Housing Project,

As autumn begins to touch the Bay Area and our lawmakers in Washington remain immersed in partisan politics, I can only think how it all touches the lives of our clients. Every person who comes to us for help is someone just like you and me. They are people with a history and a story, people with parents, people with children – but whose dignity has been compromised by the trauma of hunger and homelessness. I see the faces of the two clients who stood in front of 100 guests at our Fifth Annual Client Success Event, and told their own stories of amazing fortitude, bravery and commitment to regaining their wellness.

At the same time, I read the latest statistics from the Census Bureau and they are shocking. The share of Californians whose income falls below the federal poverty level (an annual income of only \$23,283 for a family of four with two children) **remained significantly higher than in 2006**, the year before the great recession began. Even more alarming is a more than **20% increase in the number of children living in poverty from 2006 to 2012**.

Clearly our work is needed now more than ever. In particular, we must continue to expand our capacity to reach and help even more people, and we are doing just that. All across the agency, our performance continues to reach new levels of success. We were recently recognized by Alameda County for the most improved housing outcomes of any shelter in the county. What that means is that **we work with homeless people in our shelters to rebuild their lives one step at a time, and return them to permanent homes of their own**. This is all thanks to the hard work and dedication of the staff who work here because they care about restoring dignity, stability, and wellness to their fellow human beings.



In this issue of our newsletter, you will be introduced to our new Director of Client Services, Lara Tannenbaum, who has returned to BFHP after more than twelve years working at Larkin Street Youth Services in San Francisco. Her vision, energy, and experience is a tremendous contribution to the agency. You will also read about a **\$1 million grant we have received from the VA to expand our work with homeless veterans** as we move well beyond Berkeley into Contra Costa and Solano Counties.

We could not do any this without the support of our friends and our donors. I am very grateful to all of you who stand behind our work and you help make it all possible through your generous donations.

With your help we transform lives, one human being at a time, and provide them a promising future.

Sincerely,

Terrie Light
Executive Director

BFHP Receives \$1,007,000 Award from Department of Veteran Affairs

In August BFHP received the exciting news that the agency was awarded a grant of more than a million dollars from the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs for Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF). Working in collaboration with Anka Behavioral Health Inc., BFHP will provide homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing services to 200 homeless and imminently homeless veteran households in Alameda, Contra Costa, and Solano Counties. The main program office for SSVF will be located in Richmond.

Said Executive Director Terrie Light, “an award of this magnitude represents a milestone in the 43-year history of the agency. We are energized by the prospect of housing chronically homeless veterans across three counties and restoring them to a life of dignity.”

Under the direction of Natalie Siva, the program team will be composed of outreach workers, case managers, housing specialists, and a part-time chaplain whose work we are beginning to see as an essential part of addressing the emotional and spiritual turmoil that many veterans experience upon their return from service.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee (California 13th Congressional District) said “I am so pleased to see that the Berkeley Food and Housing Project has been selected for this critical VA funding. As our economy continues to recover, we need to ensure that our veterans have jobs, adequate housing, and the support services they need to transition successfully to civilian life. This grant takes us one step closer to fulfilling our obligation to our local heroes.”



Senator Loni Hancock Guest Speaker at Client Success Event

State Senator Loni Hancock (D-California District 9) was the guest speaker at BFHP’s Fifth Annual Client Success Event on October 4th. Said Executive Director Terrie Light “this event is one of the most important in the life of our

agency. We come together every year to celebrate the success of our clients who have moved into permanent housing and maintained their housing for a year or more.” She went on to praise and thank Senator Hancock for her support and advocacy of the creation of the BFHP North County Women’s Center during her days as the Mayor of Berkeley from 1986 to 1994.

“Your success is an inspiration to us all” said Senator Hancock. “Everyone here today made a choice to go through a door and take advantage of opportunities to make a difference in your life.” Also on the program was Berkeley City Council Member Laurie Capitelli.



The event was held at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church and after the program the celebration continued with a meal prepared and served by BFHP chef Andre Green and a team of dedicated volunteers.

Y & H Soda Foundation Provides Funding for Employment Specialist

Thanks to a generous grant from the Y & H Soda Foundation, we have been able to hire an Employment and Income Specialist (EIS). Said Lara Tannenbaum, Director of Client Services, “this position adds an important component to our array of wraparound services because it provides specific assistance in helping our clients meet their housing placement and stabilization goals, which includes increased income.”

The new EIS, Crystal Cremer, is responsible for linking clients to mainstream benefits, employment, workforce development partners for more intensive vocational training assistance, and coordinating with the Agency’s Housing Case Management Team to facilitate a client’s successful transition to permanent housing. As we continue our mission to end community homelessness, we are mindful of the importance that access to sustainable and viable income sources has to play in a household’s long-term success. We are thrilled to have Crystal join our team and will be sure to update you on her work over the next few months.

Berkeley Food and Housing Project provides homeless and struggling members of our community with a comprehensive range of practical services, without judgment or restrictions. Our unique approach includes partnering with our clients to help them develop skills to move forward in their lives.

Introducing Lara Tannenbaum, our new Director of Client Services

When we asked Lara about why she was drawn to social work, she paused to reflect for a moment as she looked out the window of her new office overlooking Berkeley's busy Bancroft Way, "You know, when I was an undergraduate, I worked over the summer in a youth program in the South Bronx. At that time, the South Bronx had the dubious distinction of being the poorest Congressional District in the entire United States."



"In many ways, I look back on that as a life changing experience because it opened my eyes to the shocking inequality in this country. I wanted to do something, to be a part of some process that accomplished change and made communities like that a better place."

In fact, this is Lara's second job at Berkeley Food and Housing Project. After graduating from UC/Berkeley with her Masters of Social Work, one of Lara's first jobs was as manager of the Women's Emergency Shelter. "At that time, in addition to the bunk beds we had cots and mattresses on the floor. Even then, BFHP was a vibrant agency with tremendous promise but because of my experience in the South Bronx, I felt drawn to work with youth."

For the next twelve years, Lara worked in various positions at Larkin Street Youth Services in San Francisco, an agency whose mission is to intervene in the lives of homeless youth between the ages of 12 and 24 before they become homeless adults. "It was at Larkin Street that I learned to be a manager, to be a supervisor, and to really *do* program development," said Lara.

When we asked Lara why she was drawn to return to Berkeley Food and Housing, she said, "Well, of course after twelve years I felt I was ready for a change, but I knew that I wanted to continue working to address homelessness. I was also struck and impressed by the amazing growth of BFHP and the agency's tremendous success in providing permanent housing for homeless adults."

Welcome back, Lara Tannenbaum!

Be a Part of BFHP at the Holidays

The holidays are a very important time at BFHP and they provide wonderful opportunities to volunteer. You can help serve a meal on Thanksgiving day (Nov. 28th) or at our Christmas Community Meal (Dec. 20th) or any day from Monday through Friday at 2362 Bancroft Way. You can also volunteer as a group to purchase food, prepare and serve a meal at our Men's Emergency Shelter. For more information on volunteer opportunities, contact Mallory Wood at bfhpsvolmanager@gmail.com

While financial contributions are the most important way you can support BFHP, in-kind donations are also very important to us. These donations go directly to our clients. During the winter, we are always in need of:

- knit caps
- men's and women's (new) socks
- mittens or warm gloves.

Please check our website for other items that we need on a seasonal basis.



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2362 Bancroft Way
Berkeley, CA 94704
www.bfhp.org

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If you would like to only receive the electronic version of this email please contact May Tulin at mtulin@bfhp.org

BFHP Receives Grant from National Funder to Support Veterans Program

We are pleased to announce that we were recently awarded a grant from The Home Depot Foundation in support of our Men's Housing Program (MHP), located in the Veteran's Memorial Building in Downtown Berkeley. The MHP is home to a 36-bed shelter serving homeless men, in addition to a transitional supportive housing program serving 12 male veterans for up to 24 months.

Funding will support facilities improvements to the indoor shelter space and the outdoor courtyard area. The project is designed as a volunteer-driven, "for veterans, by veterans" initiative, so BFHP is actively looking for veteran volunteers interested in supporting the project.

If you are a veteran and interested in supporting Berkeley's homeless veterans through this project, please contact Mallory Wood, Volunteer Coordinator, at 510-809-8506 or via email at mwood@bfhp.org.

Thank you to The Home Depot Foundation for its support of our mission and for its longstanding commitment to our veterans. On behalf of our clients, we salute you.

