Dear Friend of Berkeley Food and Housing Project,

Recently, our agency participated in an extraordinary collaboration with California Shakespeare Theater when a group of six talented actors gave a spellbinding performance of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* for our clients in our Multi-Service Center on Bancroft Way.

During that performance we watched the faces of our clients come alive with joy, with humor, and a deep appreciation for the words of Shakespeare. Afterwards, an 85-year old resident of our Women’s Center said to one of our managers, “please don’t think just because I’m homeless that I can’t appreciate something as beautiful as this play.”

Every person we serve is a human being with a history and a story of their own. While we work tirelessly to repair the practical circumstances of their lives, that particular afternoon we engaged in what I call the *repair of the spirit*.

While this was a beautiful interlude, the reality is that our clients are experiencing the reduction of food stamps benefits (due to the recent passing of the Farm Bill) and the stratospheric increase in rents all across the Bay Area, making their transition into permanent housing even more challenging.

Nevertheless, last year alone, we successfully moved more than 200 individuals and families from homelessness into permanent housing and served more than 2,000 clients through our continuum of services. We could not accomplish this without the work of our dedicated staff, the support of the community, and the financial contributions from our friends and donors.

In this issue, you will read about the dramatic increase in our services to homeless veterans, thanks to a $1 million grant from the Veterans Administration. We are proud to be joining forces with the VA in support of their goal to end veterans’ homelessness by 2015. As a result of the grant, I am pleased to announce the grand opening of our new auxiliary office in downtown Richmond. BFHP is growing beyond Berkeley as the quality and impact of our work is being recognized.

You will also learn more about the work of our Employment Specialist Crystal Cremer, whose work is just one component of what we refer to as “wraparound services” – all the various kinds of support that must be mustered for each individual to return to the fullness of life.

We believe everyone in our society has the right to food and housing, and that given the right tools and conditions, most people have the desire and ability to move themselves forward.

With your help, we can transform lives one human being at a time, and break the cycle of hunger and homelessness.

Sincerely,

Terrie Light
Executive Director
Shakespeare comes to BFHP

In February, we hosted a special performance of *Twelfth Night* as performed by California Shakespeare Theater’s all female cast. We invited clients from the Women’s Shelter, Men’s Shelter, and Russell Street Residence for the show along with a special dinner and the chance to mingle with the cast and crew.

“In school I was never into Shakespeare, but seeing it up close was wonderful,” said audience member and BFHP client Yolanda. “I wasn’t gonna miss it for nothing in the world. I had to take care of some business for my housing but I came right on back. Sometimes you gotta take care of your heart.”

The *Twelfth Night* cast and crew toured the show to non-traditional spaces in the Bay Area including juvenile detention centers, youth development groups, and public libraries.

“A lot of arts events in the Bay Area aren’t particularly welcoming of underhoused people, even though they deserve access to the arts just as much as anyone else, and enjoy the entertainment,” said BFHP Director of Advancement Jim Huntley. “We look forward to hosting more events like this for our clients in the upcoming year.”

Why volunteer at BFHP?

“I volunteer at BFHP because so often it’s easy to get caught up in the small issues that surround my life. Volunteering keeps me grounded and reminds me that the world is so much bigger than my little problems. I also strongly believe in Margaret Mead’s words, ‘a few caring people can change the world.’”

- Tatum

“I volunteer because Berkeley has a reputation of trying to make the world a better place to live and I wanted to do my small part by helping give back to our community. I enjoy volunteering because it is refreshing to work with such polite people who are genuinely happy to see me show up every week.”

- Matthew

If you’re interested in volunteering with Berkeley Food & Housing Project e-mail Mallory at mwood@bfhp.org.
Berkeley Food & Housing Project is thrilled to announce the launch of ROADS Home. ROADS Home (Regional Outreach, Advocacy, and Support) will help veterans and their families who are homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness in Contra Costa, Solano, and Alameda counties access housing, employments, medical and mental healthcare, government benefits, and other components that prevent veterans and their families from falling into homelessness.

“When you go into the military, you get basic training, which helps you transition from being a civilian into being in the military,” said ROADS Home Program Manager Natalie Siva. “But when you get out, there’s nothing to help you transition, and there’s not a lot of services to support people. Many vets struggle with PTSD, substance abuse, and not being able to translate their experience into getting a job that will support them.”

ROADS Home is designed not only to provide veterans with permanent housing, but to help them re-acclimate to society. One day while Natalie and ROADS Home case manager Kyle were on their lunch break, they approached a man named Joseph who Natalie recognized from seeing him holding a cardboard sign by the freeway. It turned out Joseph was a homeless veteran and was seeking out resources but having trouble making connections.

“If you do just one thing this week, show up at ROADS Home at 9 am tomorrow,” Kyle told him. Sure enough, Joseph showed up the next morning and said, “I don’t ever wanna drink again.” With Kyle’s assistance, Joseph checked into a detox clinic and will soon be on his way to transitional housing. Joseph is among the first of many homeless veterans who ROADS Home will help get on their feet and move permanently out of homelessness.

“This program marks significant growth in BFHP’s capacity to serve veterans. We served 28 veterans in 2013 through the veterans specific service of our GPD [transitional housing for vets] program. With the addition of ROADS Home, we will serve over 200 veterans this year in veteran specific programming.” said Director of Client Services Lara Tannenbaum. “We’re excited to step up to provide expanded services for vets, particularly in Contra Costa and Solano counties where there is more dire need.”

BFHP is partnering with Anka Behavioral Health to manage healthcare and other supportive services at ROADS Home. ROADS Home is made possible by a $1,007,000 grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs, and aims to prevent or end homelessness for 200 veteran households in its first year.

Russell Street Residence Receives Funding Award

BFHP’s Project THRIVE (Teaming Housing Residents with Interest-Based Volunteer Exercises) has been funded for $100,000 by the Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services. Over the course of 18-months, Project THRIVE will apply interest- and skill-based volunteer and recreational activities to increase the quality of life and decrease the isolation among Adults and Older Adults residing in its Russell Street Residence an adult residential facility serving chronically homeless persons living with serious mental illness.

“We’re excited to use this award to work directly with Russell Street Residents in identifying and cultivating their interests and skills,” said Director of Client Services Lara Tannenbaum. "Volunteering is an effective way to decrease social isolation and help people feel connected to a broader community."

Project THRIVE will identify clients’ interests & skills both through ongoing direct input from clients and recreational activities like sports, gardening, and arts and crafts.
DID YOU KNOW?

Although more than 70% of our annual budget comes from public funds, we must raise more than $500,000 every year from individual donations.

Our fiscal year ends June 30th and every gift counts! Please take a moment and make your donation today using the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for your support!