We are devoting this issue of our newly redesigned newsletter to our work with homeless veterans and their families. Working in collaboration with the VA, we have been able to open two new offices—one in Richmond and the other in Vallejo—to expand our work with veterans to those in need in Contra Costa and Solano counties. This program, officially called ROADS Home, is part of the VA’s national effort to eliminate homelessness among veterans by 2016.

One of the issues affecting veterans, particularly combat veterans, is what we have come to call “moral injury.” To address this, our Chaplain, M.A. Sempari and her team of workers literally “take to the streets” to reach out and talk with veterans wherever they are. You can learn more about her work on page 3. You can also read a moving account of how we helped one female veteran with seven children to find a stable home for herself and her family.

In addition, I am particularly proud to announce that BFHP has been awarded a major contract from the City of Berkeley to run the City’s Homeless Crisis Resolution Center. What this means is that BFHP will henceforth serve as the single point of entry for all homeless men and women and their access to homeless programs. This will require a major reorganization of both our staff and the way we deliver services. Over the next six months we will be ramping up in order to officially launch this new model on January 1, 2016. In the meantime, we hope you’ll save the date for our 45th Anniversary Tribute event to be held at the David Brower Center on October 1, 2015.

Terrie Light
Executive Director
VETERANS IN OUR COMMUNITY:

HOW WE HELP VETERANS

- Transitional housing for up to 9 months
- Street, encampment and venue-based outreach
- Housing search and placement
- Time-limited financial assistance
- Supportive services, including health care, financial planning, legal, employment and child care

FINDING THEIR WAY HOME

Offering compassionate and practical support for homeless veterans who’ve given so much for our country.

For the people who come back from serving our country in the military, having a place to call home can often be the most difficult aspect of their return. But for the last four years, BFHP has helped veterans in our community find their way home by giving them the kind of care, support and shelter they need.

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Working in partnership with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), we’ve been able to come together and work collaboratively to create real solutions for the homeless veterans in our community with minimum waste of our resources and maximum impact.

And with the second year of $1 million-plus funding we’ve gratefully received from the VA for the Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, we’ve even been able to expand our reach beyond Alameda County, working to bring hope and homes to veterans in Contra Costa and Solano counties.

Since the SSVF program opened its doors in January 2014, BFHP has helped more than 450 people get on the road to home. In addition to our numbers, we’re most proud of the compassionate and practical support we give to our clients. “Beyond offering them transitional housing and working with them to pay for permanent housing—up to nine months for low-income veterans—we help them with anything that leads to or maintains their housing stability,” says Natalie Siva, manager of BFHP’s veterans’ programs. “That could be helping them pay for repairs on the car they use to get to work, an outfit for a job interview, or food. For example, we had a family recently who didn’t have the money to feed their four kids. So we went and got them groceries and then connected them with a food bank.”

One of the staff who works hard to make a difference in our veterans’ lives is LaVerne Haywood, a housing specialist at SSVF. Haywood has a unique ability to convince landlords to rent to our veterans, especially those hardest to place: veterans with multiple evictions, bad credit, and no income. Haywood has built a pool of at least 60 landlords we work with to find real and permanent homes for veterans most in need. “This is especially important because we’re in the Bay Area, where rents are the highest in the country and the market is incredibly hard to navigate,” says Siva. “Whenever LaVerne comes in to talk to landlords, her friendly face and smile and powerful way of speaking about our work opens doors. And if we don’t let these landlords down, they continue to rent to us for other clients.”

All of the work we’re doing to end homelessness in our veteran community is part of a wider effort to both identify and help homeless vets.

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