



# Berkeley Food & Housing Project

Spring Newsletter 2012

## Letter From the Executive Director Terrie Light

Dear Friends,



It might surprise people to know that, as Executive Director of the Berkeley Food & Housing Project, I spend my days surrounded by data and statistical reports. From the federal government to our local government, people want to see data and outcome-based services. Therefore, we generate a staggering array of statistical reports that attempt to monitor the progress of our clients as they move through our services on their path back to stability, employment and permanent housing.

Some statistics are interesting, some are meaningful, and some are troubling. For instance, while the population of Berkeley is 6% of the total population of Alameda County, we have 13% of the County's homeless population within our City limits, and a large proportion of them are what is classified as "chronically homeless." A statistic that is troubling is one that shows an alarming rise in the number of unsheltered homeless adults – mostly men.

However, there are other statistics that let us know how productive we have been. Last year we served more than 125,000 meals to more than 2,000 clients, and we helped 545 families move into – or maintain – permanent housing. We also kept our Men's Shelter vacancy rate to less than 1% through the use of our nighttime shelter reservation phone line.

For me, however, the reality is that whenever I look at statistics, what I really *see* are the faces of our clients. What I *think about* are the hours of work that we invest in every client we see. Those are things that statistics alone cannot convey.

Nevertheless, when I was recently asked to say what it is that BFHP *does*, I found myself responding without mentioning a single statistic.

- ◆ We provide a safe place for the homeless and the hungry to rest and find shelter.
- ◆ We validate their humanity and reduce their isolation.
- ◆ We find the resources necessary to restore them to the fullness of life.
- ◆ We re-unify families.
- ◆ We provide an address – a point of contact – through which they can begin to reconnect with the world.

These are the things that are at the heart of our *humanitarian* mission. One of the things that I am most proud of in our work here at BFHP is the *compassion* that we extend to the neediest of our citizens. As long as there is food to serve and an unoccupied bed in one of our facilities, no one is turned away. Nevertheless, there is a tension between our humanitarian mission and the part of our mission that is measured by government funders, which is the speed with which we move clients through our system.

The fact that you are receiving this newsletter means that you support and know about our work. While much of our funding comes from government sources, those sources are declining. At the same time, we are seeing an increasing number of men, women and young people turning to us for help.

As we approach the end of our fiscal year on June 30<sup>th</sup>, your support is more important than ever. As you read more about our work in this edition, please take a moment to make a contribution by using the enclosed return envelope. Each year, we must raise more than \$450,000 from individuals in order to maintain a balanced budget. I often characterize our agency as "low-cost and high-impact." What that means is that more than 80% of our funds flow directly through to aid our clients. Your dollars have a direct impact on the lives of others.

It has been said before but bears repeating: we cannot do this work without your support and understanding.

Warmest Wishes,

Terrie Light  
Executive Director

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## Cynthia Geddes, a Lifetime of Service

After almost two decades of volunteer service with the Berkeley Food & Housing Project, Cynthia Geddes is stepping down this year as coordinator of the Men's Overnight Shelter volunteers. During her service, Cynthia has built up BFHP's volunteer resources at the Men's Overnight Shelter so that staff can now rely on volunteer groups from the community to purchase, prepare and serve meals to clients almost every day of the year. This has allowed BFHP to conserve its resources while also giving community groups a chance to be a part of BFHP's mission to ease and end the crisis of homelessness.



Cynthia was first introduced to Berkeley Food & Housing Project when she was in search of a place for students at the College Preparatory School to volunteer. College Preparatory, the school that Cynthia's children attended, had no community service program, so Cynthia had resolved to start one herself. It was Cynthia's goal to not only give students an opportunity to serve, but an opportunity to build connections with the people that they were serving. She chose to bring the students to BFHP because, at that time, it was the only agency in the area that would allow volunteers to eat with the shelter residents. Students from the school have been volunteering at BFHP on a weekly basis ever since. Cynthia went on to create an expansive volunteer program for the students and then joined College Preparatory School's

staff as the Director of Community Service. "The kids get more than the men do," Cynthia explained "It makes them better people. It's a gift to them really...they could have read till the cows come home, but wouldn't learn what they did by sitting down next to someone," she said.

Cynthia did not stop her community service efforts at the College Preparatory School. She also volunteered individually, and eventually took over coordinating all of the meal service groups at the Men's Overnight Shelter. In this position, she worked to support existing meal service groups and recruit new groups so that the program could continue to grow. Cynthia said that through her service, the most important thing that she learned, and hopes that others learn, is that "anybody can become homeless...it's not a state of mind or something...bad things can happen to anybody and it is the responsibility of the society to make sure everyone is as well taken care of as possible." We will miss you Cynthia!

### Volunteers Plant the Seeds of Kindness

On April 19, 2012 we held our annual volunteer appreciation event, where we celebrate our many dedicated volunteers. We presented several of our volunteers and groups with special awards highlighting their contributions to BFHP. Attendees also took part in the creation of a volunteer reflection tree. This tree is made up of the volunteers' reflections on what it means to be a volunteer. To see pictures from the event, visit us at:

<http://www.facebook.com/BerkeleyFoodandHousingProject>

## Feeling Inspire & Looking for More Ways to Help Your Community?

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### We Need Volunteers!

With students gone, we will need a lot more summer help! Here are some of our greatest volunteer needs for this summer:

#### Volunteer as a Group

- ◆ Purchase, prepare and serve a meal at our Men's Shelter
- ◆ Organize a donation drive
- ◆ Help paint and clean our facilities

#### Volunteer as an Individual

- ◆ Serve a meal at our Quarter Meal
- ◆ Teach a fitness class
- ◆ Provide administrative support

To volunteer contact our coordinator at 510-809-8506 or email [volunteers@bfhp.org](mailto:volunteers@bfhp.org)

### Donations Needed!

BFHP cannot take all in-kind donations but below is a list of our current needs:

For a new exercise program:

- ◆ Small hand weights
- ◆ Stretch bands
- ◆ Movable door frame pull up bars
- ◆ Exercise balls
- ◆ Jump ropes

For ongoing shelter needs:

- ◆ Razors & shaving cream
- ◆ Toothbrushes & toothpaste
- ◆ Diapers

For clients who are moving out of the shelter:

- ◆ New bedding
- ◆ New slow cookers & tea kettles
- ◆ Pots & pans
- ◆ Dish sets & flatware
- ◆ Glassware
- ◆ Dressers

To donate contact Whitney at 510-809-8585 or email [whubbard@bfhp.org](mailto:whubbard@bfhp.org)

## Employment Services at BFHP

In August 2011, thanks to a generous grant from the Y&H Soda Foundation, the Berkeley Food & Housing Project was able to hire an Employment Services Coordinator, Phoebe Watts. This new, part-time position was created to build relationships between BFHP and employment services agencies in the community. These new partnerships will help BFHP adapt to the growing employment support needs of our clients. In order to organize this base of support, Phoebe coordinates with agencies like Rubicon, Women's Initiative, The Bread Project and Swords to Plowshares. These agencies work with BFHP to offer clients employment help in the form of resume assistance, job training programs, career counseling and classes on entrepreneurship.



Phoebe came to this position with a Master's in Public Administration and 10 years of experience in employment services. She is currently working on obtaining her second Master's degree – this time in Social Work. Her impressive qualifications will be critical in helping the agency strategize the growth of BFHP's employment services program. Clients have been very welcoming of Phoebe and the services she brings to both the Men's and Women's Shelters. She says it is very rewarding when one client that has worked with her refers another client for employment assistance because it confirms that "the clients really believe in what I'm doing." However, she goes on to say, the absolute best part of her position is when she gets that phone call and hears those great words: "I got the job."

## BFHP Participates in Poverty Panel at the Pacific School of Religion



Feuy Saechao, one of BFHP's Case Managers, spoke as part of a panel of Asian-American women who came together to address issues of poverty and homelessness in the Asian community. In recent years, we have seen an increase in homeless Asian-Americans coming into the BFHP Multi-Service Center for the meal program, housing, financial support and employment

opportunities. Said Feuy, "As a Case Manager, when I see Asian-American clients their problems are often exacerbated from issues of language, immigration status and a sense of shame about their situation that is part of the culture." Accompanying Feuy on the panel was one of our clients from

Transitional Housing, an Asian-American woman who has three children and is currently struggling with homelessness. "Our Asian clients often find themselves estranged from their families and feel they cannot turn back to them for help," said Feuy, "and, in addition, their work history is often undocumented, which makes it even more difficult to help them find employment."

## Continuing to Serve Homeless Berkeley Vets

Shortly over a year ago, BFHP launched its Veteran's Transitional Housing program, effectively known as "Welcome Home – Berkeley Vets," as a complement to its existing Men's Overnight Shelter. The program provides a much-deserved, long-overdue space for 12 veteran men to stabilize as they access case management and connect to employment and permanent housing opportunities. For those who have done so much, this is the very least that we can do.



Since its March 2011 launch, 10 men have successfully secured permanent housing and five (5) have secured employment. While these stats are important and tell a story, the real story is in the faces and voices of the vets themselves.

For Brian\*, the program has been a great experience. "You get from it what you put into it," he voices. A 70s Army veteran, he has been with the program since its beginning. Soon, however, he will have a place to call his own. Case managers and staff have been able to link Brian into government programs like HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) and utilize BFHP's Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) monies, which will allow Brian the peace of mind of knowing much of his move-in costs will be relieved.

For Wayne\*, one of the most heartening aspects of the program has been the chance to connect with his fellow military brothers, many of whom share similar stories of struggle, sacrifice and hope. "I'm with a bunch of great guys," he says, "who come from all walks of life." "We stay together – we share things." This comes natural to Wayne, who is a former fraternity member, father of two and 12-year Navy veteran. "It takes a special act of humanity to help someone," he says, adding that, "without Terrie, we'd all still be out wandering—physically, mentally and emotionally."

Still, for others, much more remains to be done, and as an agency, we are committed in supporting our veterans achieve success stories such as Brian's and Wayne's.

Veterans, we salute you! Your service demands ours.

\*Some names have been changed.

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### You're Invited

Please join us for a celebration of the  
20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
The North County Women's Center  
Thursday, May 31<sup>st</sup> from 4:30 – 6:00 PM  
2140 Dwight Way, Berkeley, CA 94704



Berkeley Food & Housing Project is proud to  
celebrate 20 years of service to homeless  
women and children, providing food, shelter,  
and transitional housing.

Light refreshments and beverages will be  
served. A short program of remarks will  
begin at 5:00 pm and will feature  
Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates, and Suzoni  
Camp Former NCWC client and current  
BFHP board member.

RSVP to Whitney Hubbard: [rsvp@bfhp.org](mailto:rsvp@bfhp.org)  
or 510-809-8585 by May 18th



Save the Date: Thursday August 2, 2012  
Rejuvenation Grand Opening Party

Please joins us to celebrate the opening of  
Rejuvenation's new Berkeley store.  
Berkeley Food & Housing Project is  
honored to be chosen as Rejuvenation's  
Berkeley charitable partner. A silent  
auction will be held during the grand  
opening party with all proceeds to benefit  
Berkeley Food & Housing Project.

To learn more about Rejuvenation or the  
grand opening party please visit  
[www.rejuvenation.com/berkeley](http://www.rejuvenation.com/berkeley)

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