Looking back over the past year it is important to us to focus on all we have accomplished and the people that we have helped. Seeing the impact in our client's lives has been a silver lining in an otherwise difficult time.

Since the start of the pandemic, our free weekday community meal has moved from a sit-down indoor event located at Lutheran Church of the Cross, to a to-go style meal which we hand out outside of our Dwight Way Center in Berkeley. We have expanded to serving five days per week and are handing out one hot meal and one bag lunch to each guest.

In June 2020 we opened the Berkeley Respite program which consists of 18 RV trailers and one shared house. Since the program opened we have been working hard to move clients on to permanent housing, including, most recently, client E.H. who will be transitioning to our Shelter + Care program where he will receive ongoing tenancy support services to help him maintain his housing.

Our Safer Ground program opened in July 2020 as 69 rooms in two Berkeley motels. At the end of 2020 we had to shut down services at one of the motels, but we are happy to report that thanks to strong partnerships with Alameda County, the City of Berkeley, and other local service providers, all clients have a housing plan, and no one is going back to the streets. One of the households we have placed into permanent housing is R.W. with her adult daughter and 3 school-aged grandchildren. They joined the Safer Ground program in August 2020, and in February 2021, they all moved into their new 5-bedroom house in Berkeley with the assistance of a Berkeley Non-elderly Disabled (NED) housing voucher.

As of the end of February, we have housed 46 households just from these two programs. One thing the COVID-19 response has taught us is that when we all come together and treat homelessness as the urgent crisis it is, we can move more people off the streets quickly and efficiently.
EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Nate Guerra, Lead Outreach Specialist, Roads Home Sacramento County

Nate started doing social work in 2006 in Stockton, where he did gang intervention with at-risk youth. He moved to Sacramento in 2012, and when the Roads Home program came to that city in 2018, he had just started looking for a new opportunity. Since then he has been doing outreach to Veterans Experiencing homelessness throughout Sacramento county and the surrounding region.

Nate’s strength is in his ability to collaborate and build relationships, not just with clients, but with partners as well. His background in public relations has helped him make connections with people like Stephanie Voigtlander, who works at Show Up Sac, a mobile shower service in Sacramento.

Stephanie said of Nate, “[he] introduced himself to me and explained what your organization was all about and how we might be able to partner together to help out our veterans within our unhoused community. Since that initial meeting Nathan has consistently not only followed through with EVERYTHING he has ever told me, but has followed through with EVERY person that I have called for help with.”

Although not a Veteran himself, Nate has family ties to the military, in his grandfather who was a WWII combat Veteran. Nate remembers how his grandfather didn’t like the military, in his grandfather who was a WWII combat Veteran.

N.S. had been living on the streets in the Sacramento area for over 20 years. He was usually found sleeping under freeway overpasses and was well known to the Police Department. He had been bouncing around between programs and case managers for years, but struggled to maintain contact and keep his documents in good order. Each time he entered case management, he would have to start all over again.

Finally his name came up on a Continuum of Care priority list. Nate knew exactly who he was. He had met him before, while working with Sacramento Steps Forward. Nate volunteered to work with him again because they already had established a rapport.

Thanks to Nate’s help, N.S. was finally able to move into his own place in January 2021, but Nate’s job didn’t stop there. Shortly after he moved in, he began suffering from a serious infection in his hand, caused by the unhygienic conditions of living outside. His case manager couldn’t convince him to go to the hospital, so she called Nate, who was able to convince him to go in for treatment.

We asked Nate what he wanted people to know about the population he works with. “They are human, despite their mental health or addiction. Those things can be fixed if we all work together to fix it. Some people just need a helping hand.”

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

We had the pleasure to welcome two new Board Members in February 2021

Dr. Stephen Kirnon

Dr. Stephen Kirnon heads the Northern California office of Strawn Arnold Ashpitz Groover, a life science executive search firm, and serves on several biomedical boards. With more than 25 years of operational experience in biomedical organizations, Dr. Kirnon joined GSEP as an adjunct faculty for the new Social Entrepreneurship and Change master’s program.

Kirnon is a firm believer in the idea that social entrepreneurship should be a part of every for-profit business model, and has long been involved in both education and transformational leadership development. He is a trustee for the New England College of Optometry, and a member of the steering board for Pope John Paul II Catholic High School.

Prior to his current position, Kirnon served as president and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of both Pepgen Corporation and Target Protein Technologies, Inc.; president, COO and member of the board of Yamanouchi Pharma Technologies, Inc.; and president of the Drug Delivery Division of Cygnus, Inc.

Dr. Harrison Alter

Harrison Alter, MD, MS, FACEP retired January 2021 as Interim Medical Director of Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless in California. He was previously Vice Chair for Research in the Department of Emergency Medicine and Alameda Health System; an attending physician in the emergency department at AHS-Highland Hospital. He is a Clinical Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). Dr. Alter primary current role is as Founding Director and Director of Research of the Andrew Levitt Center for Social Emergency Medicine (levittcenter.org), a nonprofit research and advocacy institute. Prior to his current appointment, Dr. Alter was on the faculty of emergency medicine at the University of Washington and its Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, and served also for several years as an emergency physician for the Navajo Nation. Dr. Alter received his medical degree from UCSF, his Master’s in Health and Medical Sciences from UC Berkeley, and was a Robert Wood Johnson Medical Scholar at the University of Washington. He is a graduate of Brown University, with a concentration in Comparative Literature.

#HalfMyDAF 2021

Do you or someone you know have a Donor Advised Fund (DAF)? The #HalfMyDAF 2021 challenge is on!

This challenge was created in response to the unprecedented need brought on by the pandemic and the fact that over $120 billion is currently locked up in DAFs nationwide. By participating in this challenge and donating to BFHP from your DAF, you make us eligible for matching funds from the #HalfMyDAF organizers, potentially doubling your impact. This is the rainy day that DAFs were created for so become a #HalfMyDAF Hero today! For more information on this challenge, go to halfmydaf.com.

Veteran client N.S. opening the door to his new apartment

"[Nate] is out here serving and doing what he can to make a difference. When you're on the street so many people promise so much and NEVER follow through. The community doesn't expect anyone to do anything for them without expecting anything in return. Nathan's commitment and professionalism within our community has helped to bridge this gap and to show first hand that they do matter and we do care. They have come to trust and depend on us and that is a HUGE barrier to break down."

- Stephanie Voigtlander, Show Up Sac
The BFHP Hope Center Update

Progress on the BFHP Hope Center and Berkeley Way has been steady, and the second floor is now in place. Concrete was poured earlier in January and it is amazing to see our long-standing vision becoming a reality.

The BFHP Hope Center is designed to serve Berkeley's very low-income, disabled, and chronically homeless population through an innovative integration of housing and onsite support services. Planned in close collaboration with the City of Berkeley, it is a vital part of the overall plan to find housing and a permanent stable solution for the city's estimated 1,000+ people experiencing homelessness. The vision of the Center is to serve those facing food and housing insecurity in a space that provides safety, compassion, dignity, and welcome to those that need assistance in our community.

If you would like to follow progress or learn how you can help support this transformational project please visit bfhp.org/hope-center