

CHAT DISTRIBUTES FOOD TO 40 HOUSEHOLDS EVERY WEEK

It's Saturday morning. Forty boxes are lined up on tables, ready to be filled. Labels and signs for each box provide the CHAT location/house number and the number of adults and children in the household.

Donald and Mary, CHAT residents, drive up with their van filled with food. (For more about Donald and Mary, see page 5.) Ron's big pickup truck rolls in with more boxes of food. A volunteer crew carries the food in and sorts it into the boxes.

During the sorting, there's a constant commentary:

"Look, a whole carton of cookies. There's gonna be some happy kids this week!"

"Hey, I found something gluten-free for Janet!"

"We have a new family that just moved in; be sure to give them extra food."

"CHAT 14 residents love to bake – give them the flour and baking soda."

When everything is sorted, CHAT volunteers and residents, vehicles filled with food boxes, set out to deliver to 40 locations.

The person who keeps all these moving parts running smoothly is Kathy Weeks, a CHAT Board member who serves as Food Coordinator.

Kathy estimates she volunteers 10 to 12 hours a week on food distribution work. She says, "I have the best job in CHAT and I love it!"

Kathy got started with food distribution to people in need in the 1980s and has been doing it ever since. "Helping people with healthy food has always been a passion of mine," she explains. "I

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Volunteers sort food into boxes for each household.

SIMPLICITY VILLAGE UPDATE

CHAT is ready to build a tiny house village for homeless seniors (55+), to house 40 people in 33 tiny homes. This community will include shared kitchen, laundry, and bathroom facilities. The plans are based on successful communities in other cities.

The Chico City Council approved the village for a south Chico site. However, after an unsuccessful appeal to the Council and Planning Commission, a neighboring business owner filed a lawsuit against the City. As of press time for this newsletter, the issue was still in the legal process.

Please be assured that we are holding your donations for this project. Regardless of the lawsuit's outcome, Simplicity Village will be built.



BREAKFAST WITH CHAT
ALL YOU CAN EAT

ARC Pavilion
2030 Park Ave.
8:30 - 12:30 Sunday, Feb. 16
Adults \$15 ages 12 & under \$8
5 and under free

Menu: Pancakes, scrambled eggs
sausages, fruit salad, coffee, tea
juice *All organic*
Real maple syrup



THANK YOU, CHAT DONORS!

In our last newsletter, we put out a call for sustaining donors, who give a set amount monthly. Since then, we've added 18 more, for a total of 50. Our goal is 100 sustaining donors, so we're halfway there!

There are two ways to become a monthly donor: **Go to the CHAT website donation page at bit.ly/chatdonate.** It's secure, goes directly to our PayPal account, and lets you set up monthly recurring donations.

-OR-

Have your bank automatically send us a check from your account each month. You'll need to give them our account number and routing number – to obtain that, email nball-park@comcast.net.

Of course, single donations are always appreciated. Either donate through our website at the link above or mail a check to us at CHAT, PO Box 4868, Chico 95927. THANK YOU!

FOOD PROGRAM

(Continued from page 1)

love seeing people get excited about what food and other household items I am able to procure for them."

Trader Joe's has been a mainstay for the program, donating 25 to 50 boxes of food every Saturday. Six times a year, CHAT is one of the agencies benefiting from the Chico Food Project's "Blue Bag" program. On "Blue Bag" days, CHAT volunteers pick up approximately 150 large canvas bags full of non-perishable food, transport them to CHAT's food sorting site, sort the items, and deliver two to three large boxes of food to each CHAT residence. That process takes all day, but Kathy's crew is up to the task.

Volunteers have different reasons for getting involved. For Jim and Patrice, it's personal. Their son has been homeless. "It's a rough world out there," says Patrice, "and we want to help." As a CHAT resident, Donald wants to "give back." For Nancy, it's partly her Christian faith.

Not just content with food from Trader Joe's and the Food Project, Kathy has developed a collaborative relationship with the Wildcat Food Pantry at Chico State, which helps food-insecure students. She also utilizes the Solano Contra Costa Food Bank and the Butte County Food Bank in Oroville. She's found diapers for CHAT families with babies and has procured entire cases of soup and canned fruit. She's gleaned walnuts and persimmons from a generous CHAT supporter's orchard.

Kathy has a deep aversion to wasting food. If she has too much of something, she'll take it to the Wildcat Pantry. If something is spoiled or the package has been opened, she gives those items to a woman who has two pet pigs.

Thanks to Kathy and her dedicated crew, nearly 150 Chico residents are provided with food every week.

NEW PROGRAM HELPS CAMP FIRE SURVIVORS OBTAIN RENTAL HOUSING

It's been more than a year since the Camp Fire devastated parts of Butte County, destroying thousands of housing units in the process. But many fire survivors still face obstacles to obtaining rental housing, due to an inability to produce a security deposit, along with first and last month's rent, or for some other reason, such as insufficient credit history.



TamRa Wich'Ma

Realizing the seriousness of this problem, CHAT has obtained a grant to

establish a program to help fire survivors, the Camp Fire Housing Access Model Program (CHAMP). This new program provides landlord incentives to rent to individuals and families that have been impacted, directly and indirectly, by the fire. CHAMP is modeled closely after a very successful landlord incentive program in San Diego.

We've hired TamRa Wich'Ma to administer the grant. She's hit the ground running, working with CHAT Acting Executive Director Leslie Johnson to define the program's parameters and doing outreach to potential tenants and landlords, in collaboration with the North Valley Property Owners' Association.

These are CHAMP's landlord incentives:

Leasing Bonuses – up to \$500 for each unit newly leased to CHAMP applicants.

Application Assistance – up to \$40 may be paid directly to landlords to cover application costs, such as credit reports and application fees.

Damage Reimbursement Fund – up to \$5,000 is available to reimburse landlords for loss of rent or damage to units in excess of the security deposit.

Security Deposits – helps tenants pay security deposits with a value of up to two months' rent.

Landlord Liaison – CHAT provides a dedicated staff

that will offer individual customer service to our valued landlord partners.

Good Tenant Program – All applicants will work with a CHAT staff member to gain a greater understanding of what constitutes a good tenant and neighbor.

Supportive Services – Applicants receive at least one year of case management support services from the CHAMP staff in personal and professional life goals.

Mediation Service – Available at the discretion of the landlord while tenant is living in the unit or upon move out.

Please contact TamRa for more information, at TamRa@chicohousingactionteam.net.

WELCOME, TARA AND MARK

CHAT welcomes two new staff members to our Housing Now program. Housing Coordinator Mark Alvidrez and CHAT 3 House Manager Tara D'Augelli are leading the five-year-old program. Mark will work closely with teams of CHAT volunteers to make sure the houses are running smoothly and residents' needs are met. Tara's focus is on CHAT 3, a duplex that houses individuals with mental health needs.

Housing Now provides homes for 85 residents in 27 Chico locations. CHAT rents houses and apartments from participating landlords; residents pay an affordable monthly fee.



Mark Alvidrez



Tara D'Augelli

RESPECTFUL REVOLUTION VIDEOS SHARE CHAT'S WORK

One of the best ways CHAT's work gets shared is through videos professionally produced by the Respectful Revolution project. The project's founders, Gerard Ungerman and Stacey Wear, have used their creative talents to travel around the world, documenting people doing good.

The couple started Respectful Revolution in 2012. Says Stacey, "We were so tired of the media focusing on the negative, when we were constantly meeting everyday people who were doing amazing things! We started traveling to find these stories, and they are everywhere."

Featuring short-format video, Gerard and Stacey produce portraits of people who take action for the benefit of others and, ultimately, the planet. Stacey explains, "We feel these stories need to be told so the actions can be seen and replicated. Our intent is to be inclusive, non-partisan and to cover as wide a range of subjects as possible."

Stacey and Gerard have produced approximately 250 videos. Their YouTube channel has nearly 11,500 subscribers and 2 million views. Respectful Revolution has produced dozens of videos for CHAT. In addition to YouTube, CHAT videos can be viewed on our website or our Facebook page. Each issue of this newsletter will feature one or two videos.

CONNECT WITH CHAT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Our talented computer consultant, Theresa O'Connor, has revamped and updated the CHAT website at chicohousingactionteam.net/. The website includes links to short videos produced by Respectful Revolution. Also on the website, you will find the latest news about housing issues and our projects. You can sign up there to volunteer for CHAT. Be sure to check out our Facebook pages, Chico Housing Action Team and CHAT Simplicity Village. We're on Twitter, too: <https://twitter.com/>

Featured Video – Dennis' Story

Dennis, a musician, lives in CHAT housing. His life was turned upside down after a near-fatal auto accident. Like many CHAT residents, he is a survivor of trauma and ultimately found it impossible to afford housing. His life was going from bad to worse until he met CHAT's Bob Trausch & Leslie Johnson. See Dennis' story at <https://youtu.be/yzxbT3PTPQ4>.



Featured Video – Thankful for a Roof at Last

Every November, CHAT and Faith Lutheran Church team up to bring together CHAT residents, volunteers, and staff for a holiday dinner. Church members cook and serve turkey, gravy, and potatoes, and residents bring side dishes to share. In this video, meet CHAT residents and volunteers at the dinner. Fostering a sense of community is important to CHAT, and this holiday dinner is a good example. Watch the video at <https://youtu.be/QZWbn9fCtZU>.



CHAT RESIDENTS GIVE BACK

Note: In each newsletter, we feature the residents of one of our CHAT housing locations. In this issue, we meet the family living in CHAT House #9.

“This is the high point of the week for me,” exclaims Donald, as he unloads dozens of boxes of food from his van at CHAT’s Saturday morning food distribution. Every week, Donald, often accompanied by his wife Mary and one of their children, transports food to 10 to 12 CHAT residences. As a CHAT resident himself, he enjoys giving back to the program that has given a hand up to him and family.

Donald and his wife Mary, their three children, and Donald’s brother, Kevin, live in a house together as part of CHAT’s Housing Now program. The children – ages 8, 3 and 2 - don’t have to travel far to see their grandmother. She lives right next door, along with her partner.

The family had a rough time for a while, living in their car. Kevin says, “Without CHAT, we’d probably still be living on the streets.” The family is making the best of having a home. Donald is working to improve his family’s financial stability – he’s now the IHSS (In-Home Supportive Services) worker for four clients. It’s a big commitment of time and responsibility, but he enjoys caregiving.

The children enjoy the house and having a big yard. Kevin says, “It’s a real good feeling to see the kids happy.” Donald reflects on the hard times, and says, “Losing a place to live is like losing a loved family member. The hardest part about being homeless is people looking down on you.”

Donald has no intention of ending his food distribution work: “Even when we’re able to move out of a CHAT house, I will still do this.”

To view a video featuring Donald and his family, produced by Respectful Revolution, go to the CHAT website video page and click on “CHAT Portraits: The Harwood Brothers.”



CHAT resident Donald organizes food boxes.



Donald’s wife Mary unloads food from their van.

WHO WE ARE

Chico Housing Action Team (CHAT) is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, 530-520-6412, PO Box 4868, Chico CA, 95927, info@chicohousingactionteam.net

Facebook Pages: Chico Housing Action Team & CHAT Simplicity Village

Website: www.chicohousingactionteam.net/

CHAT Staff: Leslie Johnson, Acting Executive Director; Mark Alvidriz, Housing Coordinator, Tara D’Augelli, House Manager; TamRa Wich’Ma, CHAMP Program Coordinator; Amanda Gaylord, HUSH Program Case Manager; Dan Joseph, Maintenance.

CHAT Board of Directors: Bill Kurnizki (President), Alan Mittman (Vice President), Sheldon Praiser (Treasurer), Nancy Park (Secretary), Ron Aker, Lorraine Forster, Greg Hubbell, Dan Joseph, Stevi Mittman, Bob Trausch, Kathy Weeks, Charles Withuhn.

Housing Action Editor: Nancy Park

OUR MISSION STATEMENT:

CHAT’s mission is to ensure that everyone in our community has access to housing they can afford.

HAND-UP SUPPORTIVE HOUSING PROVIDES HOMES TO 12 FAMILIES

When Amanda Gaylord, Case Manager for CHAT's Hand Up Supportive Housing (HUSH) program, was asked what she liked about her job, she told a story.

She wanted to talk about a young family she met while she worked at the Torres Homeless Shelter in Chico. The family had been moving from shelter to shelter. Amanda could see that one of the children had Down Syndrome, but the family's homelessness had prevented him from receiving early intervention. In addition, the child needed heart surgery.

Shortly after that, Amanda transitioned from case management at the Torres Shelter to her position at CHAT. CHAT found a house for the family. Right away, Amanda connected the child with a primary care physician, a pediatric cardiologist, a respite worker, and a team from Far Northern Regional Center. He underwent successful heart surgery and has started school.

The parents are doing better, too. The young father has started school (with honors). The mother is about to obtain her first driver's license, thanks to a CHAT volunteer who has been giving her driving lessons.

"I just adore this family, and I know they just needed a little hand up to succeed," says Amanda.

Twelve families (totaling 19 adults and 36 children) have been housed through HUSH in less than a year. Recently, the program celebrated its first "graduates" – one of the families was able to move out into regular housing. CHAT obtained funding for the program in spring 2019 by applying for a state grant.

Amanda notes that the families are now connected to a variety of resources, such as Far Northern, Early Head Start, Baby Steps, and Strengthening Families.

"It has been such a blessing to go into people's lives and homes," says Amanda. "Building trust isn't always easy, but we have come a long way."



HUSH program case manager Amanda Gaylord

CHICO WOMEN'S CLUB BENEFIT FOR CHAT



CHAT thanks the Chico Women's Club and the Bioneers for designating CHAT as the beneficiary of a series of programs on environmental issues.

On Jan. 30, "Solutions," will feature taped talks from Kenny Ausubal (Bioneers Co-Founder), Paul Hawken (Project Drawdown), and Climbing Poetree (Spoken Word Activists). Chico City Councilmembers Alex Brown and Karl Ory will speak about the Chico Green New Deal.

On Feb. 6, "Youth and Indigenous Voices," will feature Ali Meders-Knight (Mechoopda Tribe), Meleiza Figueroa (student), May Boeve (Ex. Dir., 350.Org), and Robin Kimmerer (Wisdom of Plants).

Programs begin at 7 pm at the Chico Women's Club, Pine & E. 3rd Sts. Sliding scale donation: Free - \$10.