

## VETS HELPING VETS

By the time you read this newsletter, eight unhoused veterans will no longer be living on the street and will have moved into housing, thanks to a \$600,000 gift from an anonymous donor.

This donation was facilitated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Chapter 1555 of Chico. It all started with a conversation between the VFW's Larry Wahl and CHAT Vice President and Co-Founder Bob Trausch.

Bob said Larry approached him after a memorial service with the desire to seek more housing for homeless veterans. As a veteran himself, Larry was highly motivated to help other veterans. (Bob is a veteran, as well.) Larry suggested that maybe the VFW could help with this. CHAT already had housed veterans in two of its locations, but there were many more on its waiting list.

Larry then introduced Bob to Mike Halderson, president of the local VFW chapter. What followed, Bob said, "Was a perfect marriage between the VFW and CHAT."

First came a \$300,000 check, and then another, all from an anonymous donor, but given through the VFW. This allowed



*Checking out the kitchen in one of two houses purchased to house veterans are (left to right): CHAT Treasurer Sheldon Praiser, CHAT Vice President Bob Trausch, VFW President Mike Halderson, CHAT Board member Ron Aker, VFW member Larry Wahl, CHAT Executive Director Nicole Durmmond, and CHAT Social Services Coordinator Amber Benedict. Photo by Bill Mash*

CHAT to purchase two houses, each with four bedrooms and two bathrooms. CHAT will pay some of the cost, but the majority was supplied through this incredibly generous donation.

CHAT will continue to provide social services to these two new veterans' houses, as it does for all its residents.

Bob said the entire experience was a classic example of how CHAT operates: "CHAT finds a problem, then we look for a so-

lution." He added, "These veterans were there for us. Now it's time for us to be there for them."

If you want to help with housing vets, or for more information, Bob would welcome a call at 530-518-8509.

**Keep up to date with all things CHAT! To receive email news updates from us, please send your address to [info@chicohousingactionteam.net](mailto:info@chicohousingactionteam.net)**

## THE SEASONS CHANGE AND CHAT'S WORK CONTINUES

By Nicole Drummond  
CHAT Executive Director

As we transition through seasons it's a natural time to pause and evaluate. The days are getting shorter and there is more time of cool darkness. I encourage you to go inside yourself and review how you use your energy and resources. What do you focus on in your daily life? Is it in line with your core self or are you just reacting to what life throws at you? Contributing to your community can do as much for your own wellbeing as it does for those receiving the gifts of your time, money, energy, compassion, or resources.

CHAT is consistently directing resources and energy to create a multitude of solutions for the community. We support individuals being housed in a variety of ways that meet the needs of different populations.

CHAT does this work with a filter of sustainability. What decisions can we make that will benefit or lessen the impact on the environment? What decisions can we make that will allow as many residents as possible to remain housed permanently? What financial decisions can we make to ensure CHAT continues to serve this community over the long term? What decisions can support employees and volunteers to thrive and continue to share their gifts? How can we best support our residents with individualized, specific tools and resources so they can be the best version of themselves?

These are questions we ask often across multiple decisions every day to ensure we are doing everything we can to improve the likelihood that everyone in our community has access to housing they can truly afford.

CHAT staff and volunteers actively cultivate relationships with many organizations and individuals that make everything we do possible. As the weather gets colder, we are grateful to all the organizations in our community that will provide shelter to those who are currently unhoused. We look forward to continued collaboration with other groups to move as many individuals as possible to permanent supported housing.



We are grateful to all our donors that keep CHAT sustainable and functioning. We are grateful to all the volunteers who endlessly dedicate their energy to keeping this complex organization functioning. We are grateful for our staff, who show up every day with dedication and passion. We are grateful for you – this community that supports this great and necessary work.

This newsletter contains information about our current and upcoming projects. Everhart Village is currently in production. We know we can count on our community to continue to make this unique and necessary program a reality.

### WANT TO JOIN OUR BOARD?

CHAT is accepting applications for our Board of Directors and Advisory Board. We are looking for individuals with the skills and interest to help guide us through a challenging and exciting time.

Our first wish is for a Treasurer. Sheldon Praiser has done a great job since CHAT began, but he would like to step down from that position to concentrate on other CHAT work. We would love to find someone with experience as a CFO, accountant, or business manager. Last year, we instituted an annual audit and tightened up financial processes. There also is an opening to serve as Board Secretary.

We are recruiting for several additional Board members. The Board meets once each month and engages in strategic planning, looking out for CHAT's fiscal health, and instituting and overseeing policies. We welcome folks who have backgrounds in social work/mental health, housing issues, non-profits, and/or fundraising.

We have started an Advisory Board. These folks would be available to be called on when we need advice in such areas as accounting, strategic planning, and legal issues.

CHAT strongly encourages applicants with lived experiences as it pertains to our mission. We also encourage applications from people of color, LGBTQIA+, women, people with disabilities, gender nonconforming people, and/or formerly incarcerated people. CHAT values diverse voices. If interested, please email us at [info@chicohousingactionteam.net](mailto:info@chicohousingactionteam.net).

## BRING ON THE BACKHOES AND BULLDOZERS! EV CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

Bring on the backhoes and bulldozers – work at the Everhart Village site has begun! After more than two years of planning and lining up all the permits and permissions, grading, paving, water line installation, electrical connections and sewer lines are happening. Depending on the weather and any unexpected complications, Everhart Village should be up and running early in 2023.

Everhart Village is a unique collaboration between CHAT and Butte County Behavioral Health that will provide shelter to people receiving treatment for mental health diagnoses. Twenty sleeping cabins and a 72-foot modular community building will serve as a transitional home for these individuals, who otherwise would be living on the streets. The village will provide them with stability and a safe place while Behavioral Health staff and CHAT social service workers help them get back on their feet and into more permanent housing.



*Everhart Village Program Manager Caitlyn Patterson displays the project plan.*



*Everhart Village Construction Manager Gary Lee (left) and CHAT Vice President Bob Trausch on the morning the heavy equipment rolled in.*

## VIC & PAT ESTRADA – OUR SUPER VOLUNTEERS

If there is such a thing as “model volunteers,” Pat and Vic Estrada fill the bill. Hardworking, organized, and knowledgeable, they are key to the smooth running of CHAT’s warehouse.

The couple works at the warehouse at least once a week, and often more. They organize household items on shelves, accept and log furniture donations, clean the bathroom, mop the floor, and repair donated items. They’ve been doing this for more than four years. Somehow, they find time to also volunteer at the Chico Animal Shelter.

“Vic and Pat are rock stars! They know more about the warehouse and the donations than I will ever know,” says CHAT Volunteer Coordinator Hannah Booth

Why do they do it? Pat Estrada says, “Instead of complaining about how bad things are, we want to help provide a solution.”

Their volunteering goes back to CHAT’s first warehouse, in 2018, which was a fraction of the size of the current warehouse and came with many challenges. “It was so crowded, some things couldn’t even be seen,” Pat recalls.



*Volunteers Vic and Pat Estrada have worked in CHAT warehouses nearly every week for more than four years.*



*Warehouse volunteers Pat and Vic Estrada unpack, sort, organize, and record houseware donations.*

When CHAT started renting its current warehouse, the Estradas finally had space to put things on shelves, where they could be visible and properly labeled. But it wasn’t a smooth transition. The new warehouse needed a thorough cleaning. “We cleaned, we swept, we must have mopped the floor six times,” says Pat. They spent four weeks moving items to the new warehouse, one car load at a time.

The Estradas enjoy working with Hannah, whom they already knew from their work at the animal shelter, where she was the volunteer coordinator before coming to CHAT. They appreciate the written procedures she has instituted and the proper auditing of what goes in and out of the warehouse.

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## VIC & PAT ESTRADA

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Others have noticed the Estrada's major contributions to CHAT. Food Program Coordinator Kathy Weeks, spends a lot of time at the warehouse. "Vic and Pat have made a huge difference for all of us at the warehouse," she says. "Since I store food there, I must keep things clean. Pat mops our floors every week and keeps her eyes open for dropped trash and other vermin attractors."

"We're glad to help. We enjoy helping the community," says Vic.

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## NEW COORDINATOR WELCOMES VOLUNTEERS

To Hannah Booth, CHAT's new Volunteer Coordinator, volunteers are the lifeblood of CHAT.

"CHAT is unique in that it began as an all-volunteer run organization," she says, "There is a powerful and special history of what volunteers have accomplished." Although there are now paid staff, there are plenty of ways for volunteers to help.

Hannah is working on making it easier for volunteers to get involved. People who want to help can go to CHAT's website at <https://www.chicohousingactionteam.net/volunteer>.

There you'll find a list of ways to help and a registration form. Volunteer trainings are held once a month.

"There's a really good spirit here," says Hannah. "My job is to create a sustainable culture of volunteering. I want to give our volunteers the training and encouragement that will empower them."

Hannah says one of the best ways volunteers can help is by spreading their knowledge about CHAT. She is ramping up CHAT's tabling presence – which fell dormant during the Covid pandemic – at the Saturday Farmer's market and other venues. She

explained that she wants tabling to be more than handing out pamphlets and newsletters. She wants to help volunteers learn how to engage with the community, answer questions, and heighten awareness of CHAT projects.

Hannah's previous experience as volunteer coordinator for the Chico Animal Shelter for several years has served CHAT well. "She's just who we needed," says CHAT Executive Director Nicole Drummond. "We are so fortunate to have her."

Hannah is improving procedures and organization at CHAT's warehouse. (See article on this page about volunteers Vic and Pat Estrada.)

**Donations are accepted at the warehouse only at a specific time (Wednesdays, 1:00-3:30 pm) each week and must be currently needed to set up households in new CHAT residences. Because warehouse space is limited, if you have gently used housewares or furniture to donate, please first send a photo and description to [furniture@chicohousingactionteam.net](mailto:furniture@chicohousingactionteam.net).**



*CHAT Volunteer Coordinator Hannah Booth poses with her dog, Marley. Before joining the CHAT staff, Hannah was the volunteer Coordinator at the Chico Animal Shelter.*

## FOUR YEARS LATER, CHAMP STILL ASSISTS CAMP FIRE SURVIVORS

**By Jennifer Haffner**  
**CHAMP Program Administrator**

November 8, 2022, is the four-year anniversary of the Camp Fire, which tore through Paradise and surrounding areas, leaving the landscape and the community forever changed. Four years later (and several wildfires since) there remain many Camp Fire survivors who have yet to find permanent housing or any sense of the stability that they once had.

Thanks to generous donations from California Community Foundation, United Way, Global Giving, and North Valley Community Foundation, CHAT created and continues to operate its Camp-Fire Housing Access Model Program, better known as CHAMP. The program began in January 2020 and has funding to continue through May 2023.

CHAMP staff assist Camp Fire survivors with obtaining affordable, permanent housing through both landlord incentives (including a \$500 signing bonus and a \$4,000 damage reimbursement fund) and payment of rental application fees, first month's rent, security deposit, and potential rental assistance, among other things. The program also provides case management, and mediation services when needed, for the first year of tenancy.

It is getting harder for CHAMP to assist clients with the continued housing crisis and our community's lack of affordable housing. The Camp Fire destroyed more than 13,000 housing units. In some people's minds, four years should be sufficient time to find housing. Yet 13,000 housing units, let alone 13,000 affordable housing units, have not been created in our region in the last four years.

Butte County had a housing crisis prior to the Camp Fire. The fire's impact only exacerbated that crisis and placed enormous pressure on

surrounding public and social services. Yet there are some bright spots, including the continued support of CHAT donors, volunteers, landlords, and community organizations who work with CHAT and CHAMP to house grateful Camp Fire survivors. Since January 2020, CHAMP staff have assisted 125 households with securing permanent housing.

Described below are some of the program's successes. Let's celebrate their stories!

***Survivor of two fires:*** After losing his housing *twice* from wildfires, this individual found himself in a FEMA trailer for Bear Fire survivors and running out of time before his FEMA housing closed. CHAMP worked closely with the individual's Disaster Case Manager and was able to pay the security deposit, first month's space rent, and the towing fees to move a purchased trailer to a local mobile home and RV park. CHAMP also paid the remaining rent owed to FEMA.

***Another survivor moves back to the Ridge:*** This fire survivor very much wanted to return to the Ridge and held out hope until she found the perfect housing unit. CHAMP helped her secure the unit by providing the security deposit. This individual looks forward to completing the last bits of getting her old life back on track and restarting her career as a physical therapist and is even considering fostering older teens now that she has the room. She also has expressed an interest in potential roommates and has encouraged CHAMP to contact her with other Camp Fire survivors that may be a good fit in her home.

***A Paradise native finds stability:*** After several years of bouncing around from location to location, this individual began working with CHAMP. Staff contacted numerous landlords and property management companies on his behalf. He was finally able to move into a rental unit in Chico, taking advantage of the CHAMP program's landlord incentives. At the time of the fire, this individual was

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## CHAT IS SINGING THAT SWEET SUSTAINABILITY SONG



**By Theresa O'Connor**  
**CHAT Communications Manager**

CHAT has always valued sustainability and we've decided to intentionally pursue sustainability in all the work CHAT does. The biggest move towards sustainability, in terms of costs, is acquiring our own properties for residents to live in. This year, several houses we were leasing were sold by their owners, requiring us to quickly find new affordable residences for everyone who would otherwise be displaced and likely made homeless. Most of those properties had three or four residents. According to CHAT Property Manager Kris Evins, we've had to find new residences for 21 people this year due to properties being sold. We are committed to the goal that nobody in a CHAT residence will ever be made homeless against their will. This will get easier as we acquire more of our own properties. We now own 11 properties and are always interested in acquiring other reasonably priced multi-bedroom homes.

Another move towards sustainability, that's a big deal for folks working inside CHAT but not visible to the outside world, is implementation of a property management software package called AppFolio. This is a comprehensive application that lets us track all our properties -- their leases, rents, owners, repairs needed, payments made, payments due, and so many other details that used to require paper documents or separate pieces of software. Assistant Property Manager Jen Hendrick says, "AppFolio represents a huge step in making CHAT more sustainable, as it's now far easier for everyone inside the organization to find the property information they need, and easier for residents to pay rent electronically". AppFolio also tracks maintenance requests and lets staff and residents submit maintenance requests electronically. This was a huge project to transition to this system and it's made CHAT staff more effective at their jobs.

Another sustainability strategy we're working on includes replacing our old gas-powered maintenance tools with new electric and battery-powered tools, like the wonderful new electric lawn mowers shown on this page. We're also hoping to get some more solar

panels installed on our residences. The two new veterans' homes we just acquired already had solar panels installed, which is cutting our utility bills.

Last but not least, we're becoming more financially sustainable every day, thanks to our sustaining monthly, quarterly, and yearly donors. We love our sustaining donors because they give us a reliable source of income and the confidence of knowing our community is really invested in us. To become a monthly donor by debit or credit card, please go to our website, [www.chicohousingactionteam.net/](http://www.chicohousingactionteam.net/), click on the "Donate" button, and indicate the amount you wish to give monthly. You also can have your bank issue a check each month and mail it to us at PO Box 4868, Chico, CA 95927. We currently have 175 monthly donors, with a goal of exceeding 200 by the end of the year. If you're not a monthly donor already, we'd love to have you join the club and invest in CHAT!



*This lawn mower is one of the electric tools CHAT has purchased in order to cut back on fossil fuel use.*

## CHAMP HELPS FIRE SURVIVORS

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living in his family home in Paradise taking care of his parents, who both had serious health issues. His father died within one year after the fire and his mother is now in a care facility. This individual grew up in Paradise and had lived there his whole life. In his own words, “I’m a new father, and a very kind, loving, considerate person working to get back to my family. I am trying find a place to establish myself in Chico near my daughter and her mother in order to be a parent and partner and find some happiness again. After the Camp Fire I have struggled to find a new rhythm to life and need some help with building a foundation.” This individual was finally able to secure permanent housing in Chico near his daughter and his partner and has begun to build that foundation.



*Some (but not all) of the CHAT staff recently posed for a photo in front of the CHAT office.*

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

**Chico Housing Action Team’s mission is to ensure that everyone in our community has access to housing they truly can afford.**

## WHO WE ARE

**Chico Housing Action Team (CHAT)** is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, 530-399-3965, PO Box 4868, Chico CA, 95927, [info@chicohousingactionteam.net](mailto:info@chicohousingactionteam.net)

**Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/chicohousingactionteam/>

**Website:** [www.chicohousingactionteam.net/](http://www.chicohousingactionteam.net/)

**Instagram:** [https://www.instagram.com/chico\\_housing\\_action\\_team/](https://www.instagram.com/chico_housing_action_team/)

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/ChicoHousAction>

**YouTube:** [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd\\_dDVqD5w2mwRfjHZub3dQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd_dDVqD5w2mwRfjHZub3dQ)

### CHAT Staff

#### Administration Team

Nicole Drummond (Executive Director), Hannah Booth (Volunteer Coordinator), Caitlin Davis-Rivers (Grants Manager), Kris Evins (Property Manager), Yesenia Gallegos (Data Coordinator), Amanda Gaylord (Property Management Field Liaison), Sarah Graham (Director of Finance-Development), Jennifer Hendrick (Assistant Property Manager), Leslie Johnson (Assistant Director), Jamie Lynch (Accountant), Theresa O’Connor (Communications Manager), Amanda Starkey (Office Manager)

#### Resident Support

Amber Benedict (Social Services Director), Sharice Atkins (HUSH Program Manager), Jessica Diaz (Wildflower Housing Support Coordinator), Pedro Esparza (Housing Support Coordinator), Bryan Hester (Housing Support Coordinator), Sawyere Lamontagne (Housing Support Coordinator), Izzy Lashley (Housing Support Supervisor), Jericka Roshell-Carson (Housing Support Coordinator), Angel Taylor (Lead Housing Support Coordinator), Cassi White (Redwood Housing Case Manager), Norma Wilcox (Harmony House / Mental Health).

#### Everhart Village

Doug Calbreath (Volunteer Electrician), Ken Dickson (Volunteer Construction Coordinator), Gary Lee (Construction Manager), Janice Lee (Volunteer Plan Designer), Caitlyn Patterson (Program Manager)

#### CHAMP Team

Jennifer Haffner (CHAMP Program Administrator), Jessica Gianola (Case Manager), Jess Hiller (Case Manager)

#### Maintenance Team

Tommy Boswell (Maintenance / Construction Lead), Arrow Jordan (Maintenance / Construction Worker), Mason Benedict (Warehouse Support Staff)

#### Contracted Videographers

Stacey Wear & Gerard Ungerman, AKA Respectful Revolution

### CHAT Board of Directors:

Ron Aker, Leslie Johnson (President), Joaquin Jordan, Sheldon Praiser (Treasurer), Bob Trausch (Vice President), Kathy Weeks (Food Program Coordinator), Charles Withuhn (Tiny Homes Project Coordinator)

“Housing Action” Editor – Nancy Park