

CHAT, CHICO STATE TEAM UP TO HOUSE LOW INCOME STUDENTS

The limited supply of affordable housing in the Chico area causes stress to many people. College students are no exception.

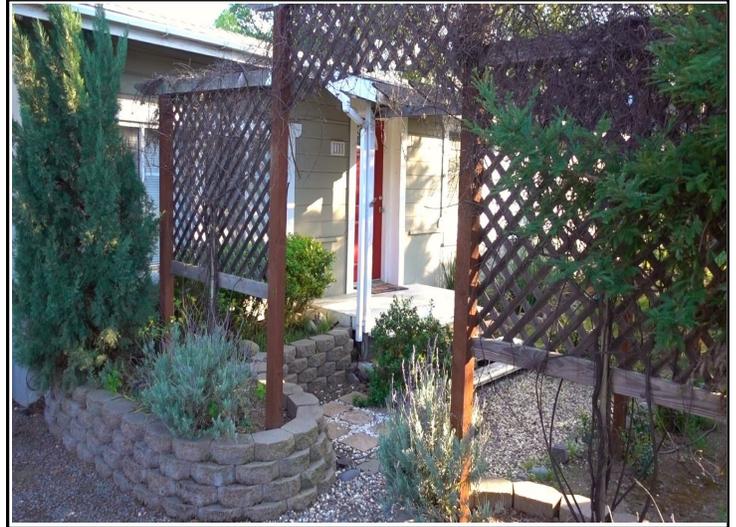
The California State University 2018 "Study of Student Basic Needs" reported that an estimated 500 students at California State University, Chico (CSUC) experience homelessness or displacement during an academic year. A shockingly high number of students live in their cars or "couch surf."

That's why we at CHAT are excited about a new collaboration with CSUC, one that will provide secure, affordable housing for a minimum of 16 students. This program, called Redwood Housing, includes rental subsidies to make the rent affordable. We chose the name "Redwood" to represent our belief that, with proper support and nurturing, there is no limit to the height of our students' achievements.

The California State University system is providing funding for this student housing program, by way of a state Rapid Re-housing Partnership Grant, specifically intended to help relieve and prevent student homelessness. CHAT is working closely with Joe Picard, Administrator of the CSUC Basic Needs Office. Joe collects student applications and takes care of all record-keeping.

For its part, CHAT works to find and lease the houses. As of mid-May, we already have four students sharing a house through the program and have leased a second house, which in June will be home to four more students. CHAT already houses four students in our Housing Now master lease program. We look forward to this major expansion of our student housing capacity, especially because the funding gives us the opportunity to

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Home, Sweet Home. Thanks to CHAT's Redwood Housing Program, this house is home to four low-income Chico State students.

COVID-19: CHAT'S WORK CONTINUES

In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, Chico Housing Action Team has continued its work to house individuals and families who would otherwise be homeless or living in shelters. We're now providing a homes to 158 people in 44 locations throughout Chico.

First and foremost, CHAT's response to the Coronavirus has been the health and safety of our residents. On March 4, two weeks before the governor's shelter-in-place order, Mark Alvidrez, our Housing Coordinator, provided hand soap and a packet of information to each CHAT location. The packet consisted of information about COVID-19 and directions on proper hand washing and other prevention tips from the Federal Center for Disease Control. On March 21, two additional information pamphlets were sent to all residents.

One of our Chico State interns, Amber Benedict, is

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COVID-19 RESPONSE

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maintaining at our office a collection of gloves, masks, and cleaning supplies. She coordinates the distribution of these to our residents.

We have continued our weekly supplemental food distribution to residents. All food volunteers wear gloves and masks. In order to help with social distancing, there are fewer people in the sorting room. All delivery volunteers are instructed to set down the food on the doorstep, knock on the door, and stand back at least six feet.

On the administrative side, all CHAT meetings are held online, through Zoom. Staff and volunteers are predominately working from home.

COVID-19 has been a hardship on everyone, but it is especially dangerous for unhoused individuals, who have little or no access to protective equipment and places to practice good hygiene. We look forward to the day where all people have a safe, secure place to live, especially during a public health emergency.



CHAT food distribution volunteers Patrice and Jim Goubert wear protective gear to keep themselves and CHAT residents safe.

CHAT IS HOUSING 158 PEOPLE

As of this newsletter's publication, CHAT is providing affordable housing for 158 people at 44 locations in Chico – houses, duplexes, apartments, and trailers. For each program listed below, CHAT holds the master lease and pays all landlords each month. Participants pay a low monthly fee to help CHAT to recoup rents and other costs.

Here's a breakdown of the numbers for each program:

Housing Now – Our original housing program, which houses both individuals and families. The first house opened in 2015.

30 locations, 78 adults, 19 children

HUSH (Hand Up Supportive Housing) – HUSH is supported by a state grant. Participants are very low income families who pay no more than 30% of their income in fees. They receive extensive case management, with the goal of the family gaining financial planning skills to transition to permanent housing.

11 locations, 18 adults, 39 children

Redwood Housing – Our newest program, in collaboration with California State University, Chico. Eventually it will house a minimum of 16 low-income California State University, Chico students.

2 locations, 4 students

COLLEGE STUDENTS HOUSED

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provide the more intensive case management, life skills training, and roommate problem-solving strategies needed to ensure student success.

We are pleased to help people in our community who want to further their education but are hindered by minimal financial resources to provide for their basic needs.

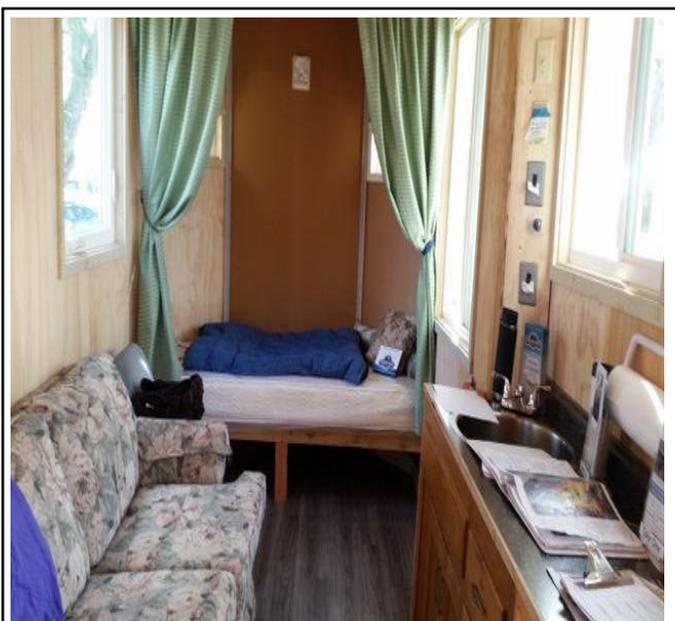
CHAT SEEKS A NEW SITE FOR TINY HOUSE VILLAGE

CHAT is still actively pursuing land for a tiny home project. Unhoused residents in many cities are finding stability and a roof over their heads in tiny house villages. Chico can join these success stories!

Our original plan for a tiny house village, Simplicity Village, on Notre Dame Blvd. in Chico, gained widespread community support and was approved by the Chico City Council. However, a neighboring business owner filed a lawsuit to stop the project on that site. As we did not want to spend the funds donated by hundreds of our supporters on fighting a lawsuit, we decided to look for another site.

We have four tiny houses completed or almost completed. People with construction expertise are ready to help. We're holding the funds we've received for the project, including 23 tiny house sponsorships from businesses, faith communities, service groups, and individuals.

There is a housing crisis. Unhoused people have died on the streets right here in Chico. We firmly believe tiny houses are part of the solution – a bridge from the streets to permanent housing. We will keep you informed of our efforts.



The interior of one of CHAT's tiny houses.

WE NOW HAVE OUR OWN OFFICE!



CHAT's office is located in this building on Rio Lindo Ave.

March 13 marked a new chapter in CHAT's growth as an organization – we now have our own office.

Up until then, Donna Dawson of Chico generously allowed us to use her office for more than two years, for a very small monthly fee, plus utilities. This was instrumental in giving us a chance to launch our programs and solidify our fundraising efforts before taking on a monthly office rent.

We now have a paid staff and there are several committee meetings per week. At our former office, it wasn't unusual to have two separate meetings at the ends of our single conference table. Paid staff had to scramble to find a place to work and it was hard to schedule confidential interviews with potential residents. Two staff members had to set up shop in what essentially were storage rooms.

After undertaking a month-long search, we found an office in central Chico, near the freeway and on bus lines. Staff have individual offices and there is a large meeting room. Ironically, due to COVID-19 restrictions, we haven't been able yet to fully use this new facility. Sometime after the shelter-in-place orders end and it is safe to do so, we will host an open house party at the office.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING— CHAT’S SUPPORTERS MAKE IT HAPPEN

It is with your support that individuals and families obtain and retain housing and stability through CHAT. There are many ways to help.

We’re now able to accept donations of **vehicles**, running or not. When you give us a vehicle, we can sell it, or we might make it available to a resident so he or she has transportation to go to a job, take children to school, attend medical appointments, etc.

Do you know of a **property** that we can purchase for a reasonable price or a landlord willing to rent to us? If so, please call Bob at 518-8509.

Financial donations are always welcome. We’re in the midst of a special appeal to help us offset decreased income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We’ve had to put all fundraising events on hold and some of our residents have been laid off from their jobs and are unable to pay rent.

We’re looking to recruit more **sustaining donors** – those supporters who automatically donate a set amount every month. Our goal is 100 sustaining donors, which provide a significant financial base to keep our programs going for many years to come. And we’re more than halfway there, with 55 “sustainers” as this newsletter goes to press!

There are two ways to become a monthly donor: **Go to the CHAT website** at <https://www.chicohousingactionteam.net/> (click on the yellow “DONATE ONLINE” Box) You’ll see an option to set up monthly recurring donations from your credit or debit card. **OR, have your bank automatically send us a check** from your account each month. You will need to give them our account number and routing number – to obtain that, email nballpark@comcast.net.

You also can make a **one-time gift** at the website link above or by mailing a check to CHAT, PO Box 4868, Chico, CA 95927.

Some of our supporters have thoughtfully made **donations in memory of or in honor of** loved ones. We will send an acknowledgement of your gift to whomever you choose.

We and our residents thank you for your consistent and sustaining support!

FEATURED VIDEO – WHAT’S HAPPENING NOW AT CHAT

A quick and easy way to catch up with what CHAT’s been doing lately is to watch our featured video, produced by our friends Stacey and Gerard at Respectful Revolution. In just six minutes, CHAT co-founder Bob Trausch guides you through a summary of our most recent activities.

Here’s the YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/2zEfFeaT4xl>. Additional videos produced by Respectful Revolution can be viewed on the CHAT website at <https://www.chicohousingactionteam.net/videos-chat-news>.



A CHAT residence, from our featured video.

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR TALENTED CHAT RESIDENTS

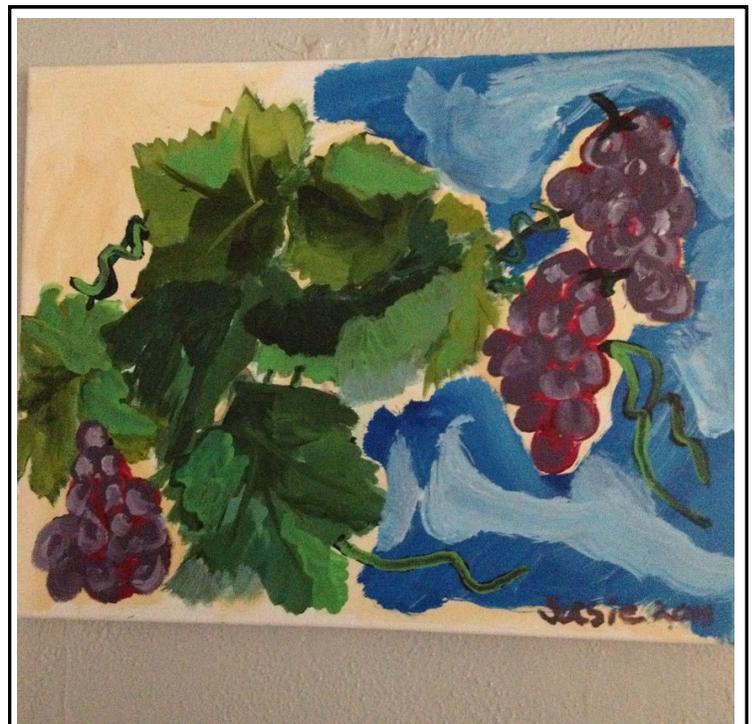
At Chico Housing Action Team, we take the word “team” seriously. Everyone has an important role to play: volunteers, staff, donors, Board members, landlords who rent to us, and our residents. In that spirit, we enjoy sharing our residents’ creativity with you. Here, one of our residents shares a poem she wrote, while another shows a piece of her artwork.

We are the shadow people

By Elizabeth Moore

We are the shadow people
You see us
but we have no real human form
We hide in alleyways
Sleep restlessly in dark places
you don’t really allow us to have
We are the shadow people
We smell of hopelessness
Desperation
The stink of Abuse and abuses
Our quiet cries left to fall on deaf ears
You hate us
The mere sight of us sends you running for authority
As if the powers that be can save you
from your silent guilt
We are the shadow people
We’re not people
We’re a problem
An issue
A political tag line
We are the shadow people
An eye sore on your pristine street corners
We are the shadow people
What you don’t realize is we
are you
One slip off your ivory tower
and you’ll find yourselves
among the shadow people
We are you
Begging for survival
Like your own shadow we follow you always

We’re so close you can taste
the bitterness of our existence
We are the shadow people
We scare you not because we are so different
But because we are so similar
We are the shadow people
Always there but invisible
to the masses unless we dare invade and mar your
delicate so easily shattered crystal palace
We are the shadow people
You call for change but your words fall empty
As in the same breath you demand we be punished
Pushed to the edges of nowhere
We are the shadow people
Driven into the oubliette and out of sight
We are the shadow people
Lost souls forever forgotten and left to the streets
We are the shadow people
Please
Please
Please
Have the strength to bring us into the light
Do not forsake our despairing state of being
We are the shadow people



Still life painting by Susie Cain Smart

CAMP FIRE SURVIVORS FIND HOUSING THROUGH “CHAMP”

A year and a half after the Camp Fire destroyed thousands of dwellings, many fire survivors still face obstacles to obtaining rental housing they can afford. Even before the fire, there was a shortage of affordable housing in Butte County.

In January 2020, CHAT launched a new program to help fire survivors still struggling to get into housing. This program, called CHAMP (Camp Fire Housing Access Model Program), is entirely funded by a grant from the California Community Foundation. CHAMP is a landlord incentive program which provides financial and other incentives to encourage landlords to rent to people who lost their housing because of the Camp Fire.

In only five months we have served 16 households in our community.

The landlord incentives include an upfront bonus for signing a lease with CHAMP clients, a promise that each CHAMP tenant will receive a good tenant training program, ongoing case management to help the tenants keep on top of their responsibilities, help with paying the deposit, and a commitment that CHAT will act as a liaison between landlord and tenant, should issues arise.

CHAT has the ability, where appropriate, to hold a reserve fund of \$4,000 for each house, to cover the landlord's expenses in case of property damage or non-payment of rent. These incentives may be provided individually or as a package.

For more information please contact Program Administrator TamRa Wich'ma, at TamRa@chicohousingactionteam.net.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

THANK YOU, ED CALDWELL

Ed Caldwell produced the print version of this newsletter, and the two issues before it. He's also printed other CHAT materials. What's special about this is Ed has not charged CHAT for these services! This kind of generosity means the world to a non-profit organization.

Ed operated Ed's Printing before retiring a few years ago. He kept some equipment and still does a few jobs. Over the years, he's been a true Chico hero, printing materials for good causes at reasonable prices. He has been very active in the community, including many years of service on the Board of The ARC (which assists developmentally disabled people).

Ed, we salute you and thank you!

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 Administrator; 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