

## EVERHART VILLAGE WORK GAINING MOMENTUM

Events moving Everhart Village from a promising idea to an exciting reality are in full swing:

A 72-foot-long mobile community building has been constructed off site and is undergoing internal work and finishing touches. The building has two meeting rooms, two ADA compliant bathrooms, a kitchen with two refrigerators and stoves, laundry facilities, and a lounge/ living room.

As construction volunteers work on Hickory Sheds to transform them into sleeping cabins, another shipment of sheds is on its way. We thank George Santos for use of his construction yard to store the sheds.

CHAT supporters have responded generously to the crowdfunding campaign, "The Road to Home," to build the roadway that needs to be completed before the sleeping cabins and community building can be moved on site.

The Chico City Council has unanimously approved that the City of Chico will pay sewer hookup fees. Program Manager Amber Benedict and CHAT Executive Director Leslie Johnson have submitted grant requests.

Butte County Behavioral Health and CHAT are finalizing an agreement for sharing responsibilities in provision of services to Everhart Village occupants.

Everhart Village is a collaboration between CHAT and Butte County Behavioral Health, providing an emergency shelter facility for Behavioral Health clients who are homeless. The shelter, comprised of 20 single-occupant sleeping cabins, will be located in Chico, on a parcel of land owned by Butte County and adjacent to existing Behavioral Health facilities. The project has been named Everhart Village in memory of CHAT co-founder Dan Everhart.

Behavioral Health clients will stay in the cabins while working toward their mental health goals with County staff. In addition to building, managing, and maintaining



*This Community Building for Everhart Village will include a variety of services, including laundry and kitchen facilities.*

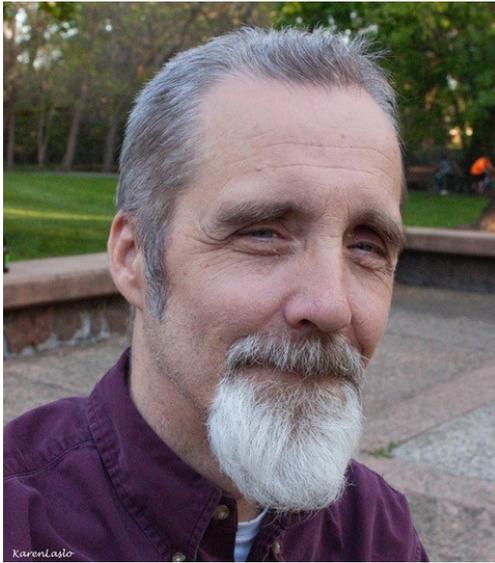
the facility, CHAT will provide a variety of supportive programs for shelter users.

The idea behind Everhart Village is that people living with a mental illness have a much better chance of stabilization if they live in a secure place in which they can easily access a variety of services, rather than while living on the streets

The village will be ready for occupancy sometime in 2022. One factor that will decide the exact opening date is funding the biggest and most expensive part of the job – bringing infrastructure to the site. CHAT will pay local construction companies to install water lines, sewer lines, and electrical service. Recognizing that, CHAT is working on fundraising, and is running a GoFundMe campaign through November 12. For more information, see page 7.

In October CHAT, led by Everhart Village Program Manager Amber Benedict, held an online public forum. Many details about the village were discussed. The forum was recorded and may be viewed at <https://youtu.be/xJJFOC9wKPk>.

## DAN EVERHART'S LEGACY



Dan Everhart. (Photo by Karen Laslo)

Where did Everhart Village get its name? The village is named for the late Dan Everhart, a remarkable activist involved with many social justice issues.

“Without a doubt, Dan was the catalyst that started CHAT,” says CHAT Executive Director Leslie Johnson.

Dan was very concerned about homelessness. About 8 years ago, he brought together a group of people to talk about it, including Leslie and current CHAT Board members Bob Trausch and Sheldon Praiser. They discussed solutions, including tiny houses.

Then, late in 2013, a cold spell hit Chico; so cold, that the group feared unhoused people could die from temperatures in the low 20s. Leslie recalls that Dan, who was President of the Chico Peace & Justice Center Board, “held up a set of keys, and said, with a twinkle in his eye, ‘I have the keys to the Peace Center.’ We opened up the Peace Center that very night to 32 homeless people who were sleeping unsheltered, and the momentum of CHAT has never slowed down.”

Dan was born in 1958 in Indiana. As a young man, he fell from a balcony, which resulted in quadriplegia and life in a wheelchair. It didn’t keep him from earning college degrees. He overcame drug and alcohol abuse and was proud of his sobriety. And he went on to a full life of passionate activism. He passed away in 2018.

Dan was involved in the Occupy Movement, ACLU, and many other organizations. He attended many City Council meetings, speaking out on behalf of unhoused people and other marginalized communities.

Says Leslie, “I’m happy we are naming Everhart Village after Dan, because he was a real inspiration to our organization and our community, and this is a great way to honor his legacy.”

## CHAT IS BEST OF CHICO!



For many years, the weekly newspaper *Chico News & Review* has produced an annual “Best of Chico” issue. Thousands of readers vote for organizations, businesses, and individuals in various categories, such as restaurants, health care providers, etc. In early October, the newspaper’s staff notified CHAT that we are the recipient of this year’s “Best Charitable Cause” award! We are very grateful to everyone who voted for us to win this award.

## FAMILY MOVING AHEAD

Jaydon has lived in a tent. He's lived in a car. He's attended 23 different schools. And, next May, he is graduating from Chico High School with "A" and "B" grades on his academic record. He has a job and a girlfriend, and looks forward to life after high school and continuing his involvement in theater arts as a singer and actor.

If ever there has been a case of persistence and resiliency, it's the Green family, who have been CHAT residents for several years.

Jaydon's dad, Poney, is celebrating two years of clean and sober living. Teri, Poney's wife and Jaydon's step-mom, has had her own issues. But their relationship has survived the stresses of homelessness and addiction – they now have been married 10 years.

Poney and Teri met in Sacramento. They were both employed and shared a nice apartment. Due to what Poney calls "bad choices," they ended up unhoused, living in a tent next to a creek. Poney says drugs and alcohol brought the family to the point where they were "just surviving." Adding to the family's problems were a series of serious illnesses that caused Poney to be hospitalized several times, due to pneumonia and a nearly-fatal infection.

Teri is from Chico, which is why the family ended up here. Teri says her family confronted her and Poney with an intervention. In the spirit of "tough love," they sent Poney to rehab in Redding and sent Teri to another program. Meanwhile, Jaydon lived on and off with his mother when things got bad. Somehow, he persevered.

Teri and Poney met some CHAT representatives at the Jesus Center. They were placed in CHAT's first shared house. They found a second family there and bonded with the other residents.

Then they had an opportunity to have a CHAT house



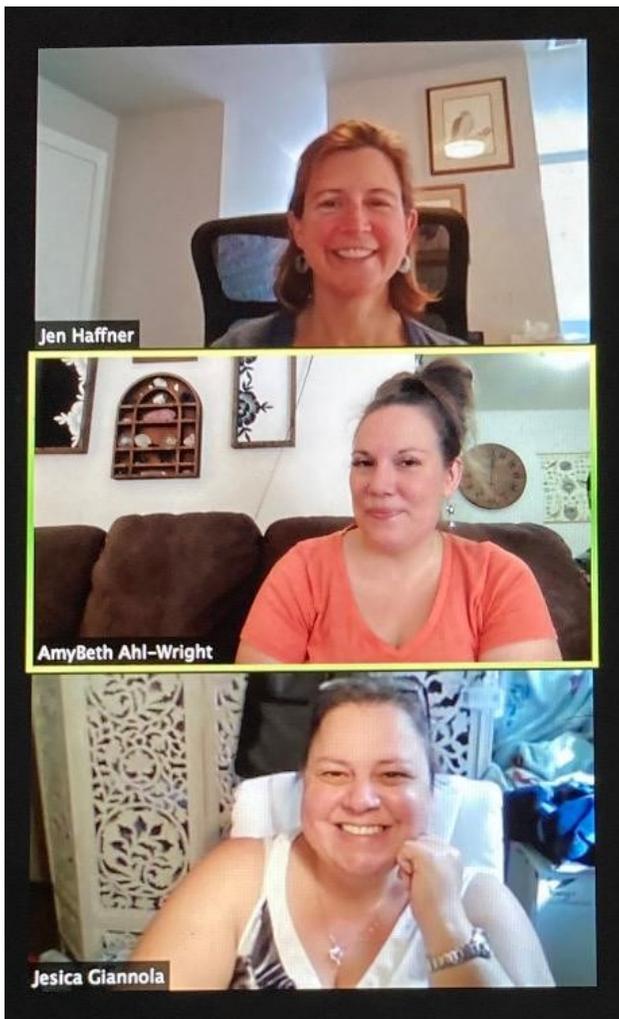
*The Green family (left to right), Poney, Teri, and Jaydon, in front of the house they rent from CHAT.*

of their own. Unfortunately, according to Poney, "The drinking got out of control and we went off the deep end." They were asked to leave. But a couple of people at CHAT decided to give them one more chance. And they've taken advantage of it.

Now, Poney and Teri both work at the front desk of a local motel. They both say they love their jobs. Poney also is taking three business and computer classes at Butte College. The family's faith is important to them. "There's been a lot of praying," says Poney. They have begun attending a local church.

Recently, Jaydon said something to his dad that touched his heart. With tears in his eyes, Poney recalls, "Jaydon said to me, 'Dad, I'm proud of you. I see what you're doing. You beat all the odds and you're breaking a chain'."

## FAREWELL, KENDRA & TAM'RA; WELCOME, NORMA & JESICA



Sadly, CHAT recently said farewell to CHAMP Program Administrator Tam'Ra Wich'ma, who did a fantastic job. Tam'Ra left to pursue a master's degree. CHAMP case manager Jennifer Haffner is the new Program Administrator. She's pictured at the top of the photo above from a CHAMP Zoom meeting. Below Jen is case manager AmyBeth Ahl-Wright. CHAT is delighted to welcome new case manager Jessica Gianola (bottom photo). Jessica brings extensive experience working directly with unhoused people and has dedicated her professional life to finding solutions to homelessness.

Harmony House Manager Kendra Bonner also left CHAT to return to college. Kendra established a great rapport with Harmony House residents; she will be missed. Fortunately, Norma Wilcox, a nurse with extensive case management skills, has stepped into the position. Welcome, Norma!

## CHAT CONGRATULATES T-SHIRT CONTEST WINNERS

CHAT is happy to announce the winning entries in our T-Shirt Design Contest! The #1 pick was "Connecting", an innovative design with interlocking puzzle pieces (pictured), by Illyse Zincone. Illyse received the \$300 first prize. Art Twink won the second prize of \$200. Tami Bourquin and Katharine Sherman tied for third place and received \$100 each.

Thank you to everyone who submitted a design. We received over 30 designs, and it was fun to see all the ways the artists envisioned the theme, "Housing for All." We also want to thank everyone who voted. More than 250 people participated.

We will have information soon on how folks can get one of these T-shirts. They should be ready in time for holiday gift giving.

### The winning CHAT T-shirt design, by Illyse Zincone:



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

## PROPERTY PURCHASES SECURE CHAT HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

The Camp Fire that destroyed the town of Paradise and surrounding areas caused many unforeseen changes and problems to individuals and organizations. CHAT was not an exception.

At the time of the fire, several previously unhoused residents were living in a house rented by CHAT. Unfortunately, some of the landlord's family members lost everything in the Camp Fire. Understandably, the landlord needed the house for her family.

After some scrambling around, CHAT volunteers were able to find homes for the displaced residents. This experience made it clear to the CHAT Board of Directors that owning some of the properties they were renting would bring stability and security to their programs and to the residents themselves.

As a result, CHAT now owns six properties. One of the houses was given to CHAT by Butte County Behavioral Health, which they received through a bequest. The purchase of the other properties was made possible by generous friends of CHAT, who loaned their own funds at low interest rates. As with all CHAT locations, the residents pay a reasonable monthly fee. That, and the incredible generosity of CHAT donors, covers the mortgages.

CHAT representatives carefully check out each possible purchase. CHAT volunteers with construction experience



*CHAT's property acquisition team of (left to right) Sheldon Praiser, Bob Trausch, and Ron Aker standing in front of CHAT's latest purchase.*

determine the physical condition of the building. The building must be safe and suitable for future residents. Financing must be solid and in line with CHAT's budget.

Four of the five CHAT-owned properties are occupied by a total of 11 adults and four children. The fifth property is being renovated, with an outbuilding being converted to a small cottage.

CHAT is excited about its most recent purchase, shown in the photo above. A former fraternity house, each of this building's three stories is a complete apartment, with four bedrooms, a kitchen, and a bathroom. This building will become home to 12 people.

## FOOD PROGRAM VOLUNTEER KNEW HOMELESSNESS HIMSELF

Ron White has had plenty of motivation for his four years of volunteer work with CHAT's Food Program.

"it's hard not to realize that it can take just one major event to make you homeless," says Ron, a former Paradise resident who survived the 2018 Camp Fire, which destroyed his home. Fifteen years earlier, all his belongings were lost in a house fire.

Ron has been friends with Kathy Weeks, the Food Program's Director, for more than 40 years, since they both lived in San Jose. Kathy moved to Chico. Later, Ron retired



CHAT Food Program Volunteer Ron White

*(Continued on page 8)*

## FINDING A HOME AT LAST – A CAMP FIRE STORY

Tim Wilson and Cindy Mitchell rented a home in Paradise for many years. But on November 8, 2018, the Camp Fire swept through the town. They, along with their 16-year-old dog Brutus, managed to escape, but they lost everything.

When Tim and Cindy applied to CHAT's CHAMP (Camp Fire Housing Access Model Program) program in November 2020, they had been living in a FEMA trailer in Gridley for a year and a half. They had been out of the rental market for a long time and had no current contact information for their previous landlord, which meant they could not provide rental history.

CHAMP has been able to help more than 92 households. CHAMP staff help Camp Fire survivors who have been unable to find permanent housing. In addition to financial aid to survivors in the form of move-in costs, CHAMP offers incentives to landlords, including a cash incentive signing bonus of \$500 and access to a damage reimbursement fund. CHAMP's services also include case management, as needed, for the first year of renting.

CHAMP Program Administrator Jen Haffner, who serves as Tim and Cindy's case manager, is impressed by their determination. Jen says, "They have been among the most diligent clients that I have worked with. They submitted over 25 rental applications everywhere in Butte and Glenn Counties."

The couple had a Section 8 housing voucher. Jen helped get them extensions, but they ultimately lost the voucher because they couldn't use it before it expired.

Then Tim and Cindy agreed to let Jen help them obtain copies and review each of their individual credit reports, since credit had been one of the main barriers for the couple's rental applications being accepted by rental agencies and private



*CHAMP Program Administrator Jen Haffner (left) visits Camp Fire survivors Cindy Mitchell and Tim Wilson as they move into their new home. Their faithful dog, Brutus, is in the foreground.*

landlords. Together, they contacted each creditor, negotiated down the debts, and then Tim and Cindy paid each one off and substantially repaired their credit.

With good credit, they were approved at Chico Gardens Apartments, which participates in the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, which provides affordable housing for lower income people. CHAMP paid the application fees for Chico Gardens along with the first month's rent and security deposit.

Says Tim, "We are forever grateful for all the work, time, and effort that Jen put into helping us reestablish a home. Without her giving us that guidance it might not have happened."

Jen has enjoyed working with the couple. "They really are great people and so appreciative of the assistance that they received from CHAMP," she says.

## YOUR DONATIONS TO CHAT HOUSE PEOPLE, ALLEVIATE SUFFERING

From the very start, individual donations have been the lifeblood of CHAT's work to house people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Any size gift, be it one-time or monthly, makes our work possible. From now until the end of 2021, there are two opportunities for you to make a difference in what we, together, can accomplish.

Donations to the Everhart Village crowdfunding campaign, "The Road to Home," will pay for a 120-foot paved road into the village. We have a good start on funding the village sleeping cabins, thanks to the sponsorship money donated for Simplicity Village (which, unfortunately, was stopped by a lawsuit). But infrastructure costs are high – in addition to the road, funds will be spent primarily for electricity, water, and a sewer line.

The crowdfunding campaign runs from October 11 to November 12. The GoFundMe link is [bit.ly/everhartvillage](https://bit.ly/everhartvillage). If you are reading this after November 12, you can still help build Everhart Village by clicking the "donation" button on the CHAT website at [www.chicohousingactionteam.net/](https://www.chicohousingactionteam.net/) or mailing a check to CHAT, PO Box 4868, Chico, CA 95927. Just indicate that your donation is for Everhart Village.

Of course, Everhart Village is not CHAT's only program. In recognition of this, we have our annual End-of-the-Year Campaign, which supports all of CHAT's work and sets us up for a productive New Year.

Please consider becoming a monthly donor. Monthly donors give us a reliable source of income. To do this by debit or credit card, please go to our website, [www.chicohousingactionteam.net/](https://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 182 monthly donors, with a goal of exceeding 200 by the end of the year.

Donations of goods and services are welcome. Gently-used furniture and household goods often are needed for our CHAT residents. If you have items to donate, please email a description to [info@chicohousingactionteam.net](mailto:info@chicohousingactionteam.net). If you have a vehicle you no longer want, running or not, you can donate it to CHAT by filling out the form at <https://careasy.org/nonprofit/>

## LIONS CLUB GENEROSITY BENEFITS CHAT FOOD PROGRAM

Thanks to the Chico Breakfast Lions Club, CHAT's Food Program will be able to safely store and distribute more dairy products, meat, and other perishable food.

After CHAT Food Program Coordinator Kathy Weeks spoke at a Lions meeting about the food program and its limitations due to inadequate refrigerator space, club members voted to purchase a commercial refrigerator of Kathy's choosing. The donation is for \$3,673.19.

Thank you, Lions Club!



Lions Club Vice President Gary Mitchell presents CHAT Food Program Coordinator Kathy Weeks with a check for \$3,673.19.

## FOOD VOLUNTEER RON WHITE

*(Continued from page 5)*

and purchased a mobile home in Paradise and the friends were reunited. It was Kathy who offered Ron a place to stay after the Camp Fire.

By then, Kathy had joined the CHAT Board of Directors and began coordinating the Food Program, which delivers boxes of food to CHAT residents each week. She asked Ron to help. He's now a mainstay at the weekly Saturday morning food sort – he misses only two or three weeks a year. He volunteers 15 to 20 hours a week, including traveling to various food distribution sites, sorting food, moving boxes and tables in the warehouse, and much more.

The day of the Camp Fire it took Ron five hours, often driving through flames, to get from Paradise to Chico. An avid photographer, he took photos the entire way that were stamped with the time and location. Three fire agencies used his photos as part of the forensic information about the fire.

In addition to the fires, Ron suddenly lost his wife to a heart attack at the age of 41. As a child, he was very sick, with ailments that included epilepsy and encephalitis. A doctor told his parents they shouldn't expect him to live long enough to become a teenager.

But Ron persevered and became very athletic. He joined a swimming club and won over 100 ribbons. He took up rock climbing, running, back packing, and biking.

Reflecting on the residents his volunteer work helps, Ron notes, "Everybody has their own story. It's idiocy for people to say the majority of homeless people are there by choice. I've been through a few crises of my own. I can relate."

## 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:** Leslie Johnson (Executive Director); AmyBeth Ahl-Wright (CHAMP Program Case Manager); Mark Alvidrez (Housing Coordinator); Amber Benedict (Everhart Village Program Manager); Caitlin Davis-Rivers (Redwood Housing Case Manager; Everhart Village Staff); Dijana Fazlic (Finance Manager); Amanda Gaylord (HUSH Program Manager); Jesica Giannola (CHAMP Program Case Manager); Jennifer Haffner (CHAMP Program Coordinator); Dan Joseph (Warehouse Manager); Theresa O'Connor (Communications Coordinator); Addison Winslow (Maintenance Assistant); Norma Wilcox (Harmony House Manager); Stacey Wear & Gerard Ungerman, AKA Respectful Revolution (Contracted Videographers).

**Interns:** Bryan Hester, Sawyere Lamontagne, Hailey Newman, Anthony Scott.

**Volunteer Staff:** Bob Trausch (Operations & Facilities Manager); Sheldon Praiser (Treasurer); Charles Withuhn (Tiny Homes Project Coordinator); Kim Kurnizki, (Bookkeeping); Nancy Park ("Housing Action" Editor); Kathy Weeks (Food Coordinator); Cathy Webster (Maintenance Coordinator)

**CHAT Board of Directors:** Ron Aker, Lorraine Forster, Leslie Johnson (President), Dan Joseph, Nancy Park (Secretary), Sheldon Praiser (Treasurer), Bob Trausch (Vice President), Bob Van Fleet, Kathy Weeks, Charles Withuhn.

---

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

---