



Aubrey and Lisa enjoy the home provided by CHAT's Hand Up Supportive Housing (HUSH) program.

HUSH FAMILIES "GRADUATE"

There aren't any gowns and mortarboards, and there isn't a band playing "Pomp and Circumstance," but Case Manager Amanda Gaylord has been celebrating the "graduations" of families in CHAT's HUSH (Hand Up Supportive Housing) program.

HUSH was established in spring 2019 through a two-year grant. It provides temporary homes, on a Housing First basis, to families. Housing First means the only requirement for entering the program is at least one child in the family is under the age of 18. The philosophy behind Housing First is to place un-housed people into housing and **then** work on their issues, such as addiction and mental/physical health diagnoses. This model has reduced homelessness in most places where it's been applied. Many of these families were living in the Torres Community Shelter or in their cars before finding housing through CHAT.

Participants are offered services, including case management, financial mentoring, how to find employment, supplemental food, and others. The

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DONORS KEEP CHAT ON TRACK THROUGH COVID CHALLENGES

Judy (not her real name) lives in a room in a house leased by CHAT. Before that, she lived on the streets. Her income is only a few hundred dollars a month. She heard about CHAT's Annual Appeal and request for monthly donors. Recently, when a CHAT volunteer stopped by her house, she handed him a \$5 bill and asked to become a monthly donor, in gratitude for how CHAT has helped her.

This kind of generosity is what has kept CHAT running – and thriving – during the Covid-19 pandemic that dominated our lives in 2020. When the pandemic hit, our Fundraising Committee had to scramble to change its plans. CHAT's popular "tribute" concerts by local musicians had to be canceled, along with all other live events. Grants covered some programs, but how would we continue to take care of the other expenses involved in housing more than 180 people and assisting more than 40 Camp Fire survivors with our landlord incentive program?

What kept us going? **You** – our supporters. You stepped up and helped with a special appeal in April and then again by watching and contributing to an online virtual concert in September. And now you are donating generously to our Annual Appeal. Our entire CHAT family is beyond grateful – our residents, volunteers, staff, and Board of Directors.

How You Can Help

The Annual Appeal takes on special significance this year. This end-of-the-year request for support has always been an important part of our income. **If you have not made your 2020 gift yet, we ask that you please do so today, in the spirit of the holidays and of helping others.**

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HUSH GRADUATIONS

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goal is for these families is to eventually leave the program to rent a home on their own and become self-sufficient. Three families recently achieved this goal and others are getting close.

Sometimes special needs come up and Amanda and her team work to fill them. For example, one young mother had never learned to drive. A CHAT volunteer worked with her, regularly taking her out in his car for practice runs. Now she has a driver's license. In another case, Amanda went grocery shopping with a HUSH resident, showing her how to plan a week's menu and select healthy food that can be purchased on a limited income.

The graduations have delighted Amanda, as her diligent and caring work with these families is paying off. "It's awesome that these families are now sustainable," Amanda says. "It's bittersweet in that I'm going to miss them, but I'm so proud of them."

Amanda is especially pleased for a couple with three young children. They came to CHAT directly from the Torres Shelter. One of the children has Down's Syndrome and needed heart surgery. Amanda connected the family with Far Northern Regional Center, and the child eventually underwent successful surgery. Amanda helped the mother obtain SSI for a disability. The father now attends Butte College. Finally, Amanda assisted the family in getting a Section 8 housing voucher and they have now moved into a 4-bedroom, 2-bathroom apartment.

In another case, Amanda was able to set up Section 8 status for a CHAT apartment that has been occupied for two years by a single mom and two children. In this way, the family graduated from HUSH to more permanent housing without having to move.

Amanda says, "My job is amazing – I've found my happy place. Serving these families is the best."

DONORS / ANNUAL APPEAL

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We're especially grateful for monthly donors – we call them "sustainers." These folks provide us with a steady source of income and cut down on the time and resources we need to spend fundraising. We have long felt that obtaining 100 such donors is a good goal. At the end of 2018, we had 31 sustainers. As of this newsletter's publication, we are up to 83. We would love to hit our goal of 100 by New Year's Day. Of course, one-time gifts are also most welcome.

To donate by credit or debit card, please go to the CHAT website at <https://www.chicohousingactionteam.net/> and click on the yellow "Donate Online" box near the top of the page. That will take you to a form where you can choose to make a one-time gift or set up a monthly donation. If you prefer to pay by check, please make it payable to "CHAT" and mail it to CHAT, PO Box 4868, Chico CA 95927.

As an incentive to charitable giving during the pandemic, **the Federal CARES act has made it possible for those who do not itemize deductions to write off up to \$300 in charitable donations made by December 31.** CHAT is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, so your gift qualifies for this write off.

Thank you from the entire CHAT team for the support and best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

WEEK OF GIVING RESULTS

CHAT's participation in North Valley Community Foundation's Week of Giving (December 1-7, 2020) resulted in \$8,008.84 toward our programs. We received \$7,008.84 in individual donations and \$1,000 in incentives from the Foundation. Thank you, donors and North Valley Community Foundation!

CHAT RESIDENTS GIVE BACK, HELP FEED UNHOUSED PEOPLE

“We’re serving more than a meal. We’re giving dignity, one human being caring for another,” says Benson, a CHAT resident who serves food to un-housed people at the City Plaza in Downtown Chico.

Benson, the first resident of one of the first CHAT houses, knows what it’s like to live on the streets. After he was settled in a secure home, he became an activist. In addition to serving food, he’s a member of the local ACLU chapter and often speaks about issues at Chico City Council meetings.

Every Sunday, Benson, along with his housemate Isaac, brings hot meals to the City Plaza. They start serving at noon, at the same time as Friends on the Street. The Friends provide portable foods such as sandwiches and fruit, as well as supplies to the weekly gathering of people in need. Benson and Isaac walk through the crowd with a cart loaded with 54 hot meals in clamshell containers.

For a long time, Benson took on this task by himself. He doesn’t have a car, so when he couldn’t get a ride, he dragged the cart more than a mile to the plaza. Then Isaac moved in earlier this year. He im-



CHAT resident/community activist Benson (left) serves food he cooked to a man at City Plaza in Chico.

mediately offered his help and his car. Benson says, “I didn’t even have to ask. Isaac just stepped up and volunteered.”

“Homeless in the plaza is exactly where Isaac and I would be if it weren’t for CHAT. CHAT has put us in a position to do this, to give back,” says Benson.

“We believe strongly in this. It’s a lot of work, but we get it done” Isaac says.



Once again, CHAT volunteers get the job done. Patricia and Victor keep CHAT’s warehouse neat and clean. The couple organizes donated household goods and furniture that are given to residents in CHAT’s houses.



Thanks to the generosity of a friend of CHAT, we recently were able to purchase this house in Chico. After a few repairs by our CHAT Maintenance Team, this 3-bedroom, 2-bath home with a large yard will be perfect for either a family or a group living situation. There is plenty of room in the back to build an ADU (Accessory Dwelling Unit) at a later date.

CHAT IS HOUSING 171 PEOPLE

As of this newsletter's publication, CHAT is providing affordable housing for 171 people at 54 locations in Chico – houses, duplexes, apartments, and trailers. For the first three program listed below, CHAT holds the master lease and pays all landlords each month. Participants pay a low monthly fee to help recoup rents and other costs. However, CHAT now owns four houses, so rent is paid directly to CHAT.

Housing Now – Houses both individuals and families. The first house opened in 2015. *36 locations, 83 adults, 23 children*

HUSH (Hand Up Supportive Housing) -Supported by a state grant, participants are very low-income families who pay no more than 30% of their income in rent. They receive extensive case management, with the goal of the family gaining financial planning and life skills to transition to permanent housing. So far, three families have “graduated” from the program and have rented other housing. *12 locations, 16 adults, 36 children*

Redwood Housing – In collaboration with California State University, Chico CHAT is providing homes to un-housed and low-income CSU, California State University, Chico students. *2 locations, 7 students*

CHAMP – This program has helped house more than 40 households by providing landlord incentives and financial assistance to Camp Fire survivors who have difficulty getting into permanent housing. Program staff are working with more than 50 additional households who are on housing wait lists. CHAT manages *3 of the residences, which house 6 Camp Fire survivors.*

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

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

TINY HOMES UPDATE

CHAT is still working on details of an agreement with Butte County to build and maintain a tiny house village for unhoused Butte County Behavioral Health Clients. CHAT and the County are in the process of getting all the necessary permits, agreements and contracts drafted and signed.

The village, named Everhart Village in memory of Dan Everhart, one of CHAT's co-founders, will include 15 to 20 tiny houses located on land adjacent to Behavioral Health facilities in Chico. Behavioral Health will refer clients to the village and will provide case management.

Funds that donated to CHAT's Simplicity Village tiny house plan (stopped by a lawsuit) have been saved and will go toward building Everhart Village. We will keep everyone posted as plans proceed.

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

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

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCd_dDVqD5w2mwrFjHZub3dQ

CHAT Staff: AmyBeth Ahl-Wright, CHAMP Case Manager; Mark Alvidrez, Housing Coordinator; Kendra Bonner, House Manager; Caitlin Davis-Rivers, Redwood Housing Case Manager; Dijana Fazlic, Finance Manager; Amanda Gaylord, HUSH Program Case Manager; Jennifer Haffner, CHAMP Program Case Manager; Dan Joseph, Maintenance Assistant; Theresa O'Connor, Communications Coordinator; Addison Winslow, Maintenance Assistant; TamRa Wich'Ma, CHAMP Program Coordinator.

CSU, Chico Intern: Amber Benedict, School of Social Work

Volunteer Staff: Leslie Johnson, Executive Director; Bob Trausch, Operations & Facilities Manager; Charles Withuhn, Tiny Homes Project Coordinator; Bill Kurnizki, Maintenance & Warehouse Coordinator; Kim Kurnizki, Bookkeeping; Nancy Park, "Housing Action" Editor; Kathy Weeks, Food Coordinator; Jill Lacefield, Volunteer Coordinator.

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