

mercy HOUSING

CALIFORNIA NEWS

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SUMMER 2017

LETTER FROM BOARD CHAIR TANGERINE BRIGHAM



Few veterans think that leaving home to serve in the armed forces can mean coming back to homelessness. Unfortunately, homelessness is more likely to strike veterans than other populations; veterans make up 7% of the U.S. general population, but almost 13% of the adult homeless population. Every night, thousands of homeless veterans sleep in parks, shelters, cars, and on the streets.

Mercy Housing California is committed to reversing this trend. We have partnered with several communities to develop housing specifically for homeless and at-risk veterans. In this issue of Mercy Housing California News, you'll meet Robert, a veteran who after a hard-fought battle with substance abuse, became sober and moved into Mather Veterans Village in Rancho Cordova, California. You'll also learn about how our partnerships and programs help veterans across the state.

As someone who works in the healthcare field, I have seen firsthand how housing promotes better health. When you don't have a clean, safe, stable home, it's nearly impossible to manage your health. For veterans who are homeless, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and/or struggling with substance abuse, taking care of yourself becomes even more difficult.

We must view the lack of affordable housing as an epidemic. Combating the spread of any epidemic requires both treatment (in this case, more affordable housing) and prevention (policies that prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place).

Mercy Housing California has a strong, proven treatment for the epidemic of veteran homelessness – permanent supportive housing. It dramatically transforms the lives of those who have bravely served our country, but now live with little hope on our streets.

We're not alone in our quest to help end veteran homelessness; we collaborate with public agencies and service providers to deliver innovative and successful supportive programs. The community of partners and friends committed to ending veteran homelessness continues to grow and we're grateful to work alongside others on this collective effort.

As Chair of the Mercy Housing California Board, I was given the opportunity to write this letter during the sabbatical of Doug Shoemaker, Mercy Housing California President. Doug returns in late summer to continue our fight for more affordable housing for those who need it most. You'll hear from him in our next issue.

Live in Hope,

Tangerine Brigham
Chair, Mercy Housing California Board

HEALTH AND HOUSING

Paving the Way for Community Partnerships

Social determinants of health – such as economic stability, physical environment, and access to social support systems – play a larger role in determining a person's health than their genes or biology. In recognition of this fact, both healthcare organizations and community developers are rethinking how to improve health and economic outcomes for the nation's most vulnerable populations.



“We are prepared as a society to pay millions for pharmaceuticals that are not nearly as impactful on health as housing. What will it take for us to decide to make the investment in housing?”

- Steven Henry, United HealthCare

Housing is a major social determinant of health, but there are often barriers to successful collaboration between the housing and healthcare sectors, including a lack of shared language and silos at local, state, and federal levels.

At April's *Innovations in Health and Housing Convening* in Los Angeles, Mercy Housing joined health, housing, finance, and policy experts to discuss ways in which the health and housing sectors can collaborate on creative solutions to tackle

current obstacles and promote community health. The convening was co-hosted by The California Endowment, The Kresge Foundation, Mercy Housing, and the Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF).

In July, Mercy Housing worked with these groups to publish a report exploring some of the most promising strategies. The report profiles nine case studies in which healthcare and housing sectors partner to bring housing and better health to the most vulnerable populations.

[Read more about the report at mercyhousing.org/Publications](https://mercyhousing.org/Publications)

VOLUNTEER CORNER

We are always in need of volunteers of all ages and skill levels!

We're looking for enthusiastic people to help with a variety of programs, such as:

- ♥ After school programs for kids
- ♥ Art therapy classes for people with special needs
- ♥ Physical exercise classes for seniors
- ♥ and more...

Individuals, groups, and businesses welcome! Volunteer groups can leave a lasting impact at Mercy Housing by participating in a property upkeep or beautification project, helping with a community meal, or assisting with holiday celebrations. Each activity generally accommodates 10 - 15 volunteers.

If you're interested in giving back to your community, visit mercyhousing.org/california/volunteer or email Rebekah Kornblum at rkornblum@mercyhousing.org



The 'Home is Just the Beginning' Event

This summer has been a special season for the residents of San Francisco's Sunnydale neighborhood, thanks to the success of Mercy Housing California's *Home is Just the Beginning* event this past March. With the first phase of construction scheduled to begin in early 2018, we're thrilled to share what's ahead as we partner with the more than 700 families who call Sunnydale home in preparation for the transformative work that will forever strengthen their neighborhood. ♥



Photos from the 'Home is Just the Beginning' event



Growing Hope: A Community Garden

Sunnydale's community garden provides more than a beautiful space; it gives residents nutritious food, job skills, and an opportunity to build relationships. The garden's benefits are many: thanks to cooking classes offered onsite, residents are better equipped to cook healthy meals with their produce. The garden will also employ five resident leaders, giving them

important work experience. Perhaps most importantly, by working side-by-side, residents of all ages and backgrounds can build relationships with one another and make their community stronger. As Sunnydale undergoes significant construction and change over the next several years, the garden will provide a safe and stable community space for the neighborhood. ♥



Doing More By Doing It Together

Along with local partners, residents, and community groups, Mercy Housing is transforming the Sunnydale neighborhood and the Visitacion Valley community in southeast San Francisco. In partnership with the community and with people like you, we're finding new ways to improve educational and health outcomes, make the streets safer, and help connect residents to the economic prosperity that surrounds them.

We know we can do more by working together, leveraging everyone's skills and resources. To help build unity and improve public safety, we're collaborating with local churches, community activists, law enforcement officials, and others to provide creative outlets for teens and young adults. This summer, the neighborhood coalition helped teens find summer jobs and adults prepare for full-time employment in the physical reconstruction of Sunnydale. ♥

Want to learn more about Sunnydale?

Would you or your employer like to join us in the efforts? Contact Mary Kelley to see how you, your friends, family, and contacts can be a part of the transformation in Sunnydale: makelley@mercyhousing.org



PHILANTHROPY CORNER

A huge thank you to these new first-time corporate and foundation donors to Mercy Housing California!

- ♥ Bothin Foundation
- ♥ California Health Care Foundation
- ♥ Century Housing
- ♥ The Freda B. Runyon Foundation
- ♥ Give Something Back
- ♥ New Directions for Veterans via LISC
- ♥ The River Cats Foundation
- ♥ The Sundt Foundation
- ♥ TCA Architects
- ♥ William G. Irwin Charity Foundation



SPOTLIGHT ON VETERAN HOUSING

HOME OF THE BRAVE

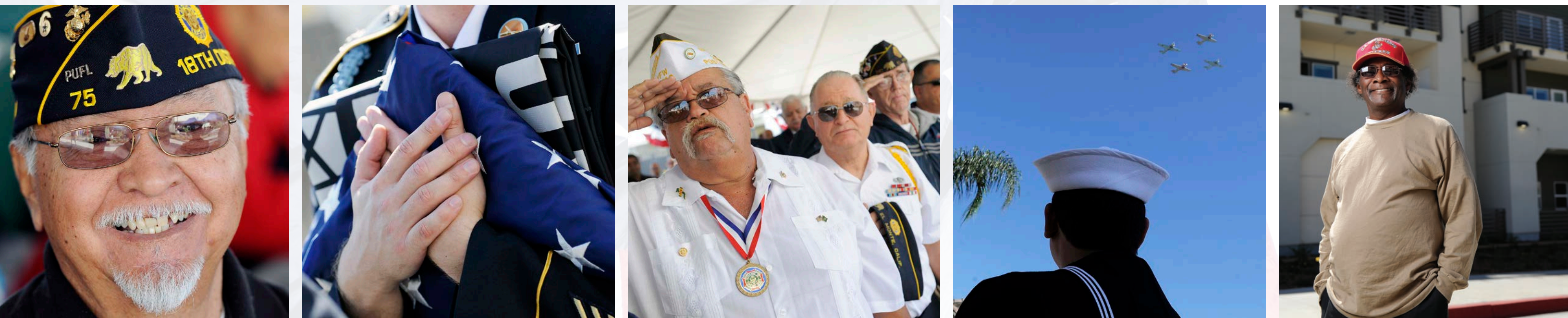
One in four homeless veterans in the United States lives in California, spending their nights under overpasses, on streets, and in encampments on Skid Row in Los Angeles and in the Tenderloin in San Francisco.

Nearly 10,000 veterans are homeless in California – more than anywhere else in our nation. Nationally, more than 1.4 million veterans live below the poverty line, and another 1.4 million live slightly above it. Mental health conditions such as depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) affect veterans at a higher rate than civilians. Poverty, mental health conditions, and physical disabilities put many veterans at especially high risk of becoming homeless.

Though veterans continue to be overrepresented among those experiencing homelessness, there's hope. Since 2009, proven models such as permanent supportive housing and innovative service partnerships have reduced the number of homeless veterans by 46% across our nation.

Permanent supportive housing combines affordable housing, health care, and supportive services designed to meet the unique and heightened needs of the most vulnerable: the chronically homeless and those with multiple barriers to housing, including veterans. Partnering with leading veterans service providers, Mercy Housing offers integrated care and community-based support to our veterans. Since opening in 2014 and 2016, respectively, El Monte Veterans Village and Mather Veterans Village provide homes to nearly 100 veterans. Responding to the layered needs of our veteran residents – unemployment, mental health issues, substance abuse, and family disintegration – these communities offer high-quality, culturally competent, intensive treatment in a safe, secure, and nurturing environment. With 90 homes for veterans across the state, we know the work to house the brave men and women who served are nation is far from over. That's why we're proud to add 230 more homes for our vets over the next three years. ♥

SPOTLIGHT ON VETERAN HOUSING



A Note from Our Partners:
New Directions for Veterans

BY COLONEL (RETIRED) YVETTE KELLEY, PRESIDENT & CEO OF NEW DIRECTIONS FOR VETERANS



The number of homeless veterans in Los Angeles County increased by 57% from 2016, according to a recent report by the Los Angeles Housing Services Authority. As a result, each night more than 4,800 veterans sleep on the streets. To reverse this tragic trend in Southern California, Mercy Housing has partnered with New Directions for Veterans

(NDVets), a nonprofit dedicated to empowering veterans and their families to lead productive and fulfilling lives since 1992. NDVets' partnership with Mercy Housing California has helped get more veterans off the streets and into the housing they need and deserve. Many veterans living in Mercy Housing California communities have suffered mental and physical wounds from combat and have struggled with substance abuse and/or homelessness. Because of the success of the El Monte Veterans Village model, we look forward to working

with Mercy Housing at Pico Robertson Senior Community, Baldwin Rose Veteran Family Housing, and another veterans community in Placentia over the coming years. Together, we are committed to designing service-enriched communities that empower veterans with the home and resources they need to find stability and hope. Through its partnership with Mercy Housing, NDVets provides services to 40 formerly homeless and disabled veterans at the El Monte Veterans Village facility. The permanent supportive housing facility is

one of our most successful sites. The residents have integrated successfully into the El Monte community, dispelling negative stereotypes about homeless people. Our veterans are now active and involved members of the community – even helping to improve the area. From advocating for veterans to creating a positive and supportive environment, Mercy Housing has proven to be an invaluable partner who has made it possible for NDVets to continue to provide veterans with the care and support they need to live the lives they deserve. ♦

Veterans
Housing Crisis
BY THE NUMBERS

- More than **40,000 veterans** experience homelessness nationwide.
- 1.4 million veterans** are at risk of becoming homeless due to poverty, lack of support, and overcrowding at transitional shelters.
- 10% of veterans** experiencing homelessness are women.
- The number of **veterans experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles rose 57% in 2017**, compared to 2016.

SPOTLIGHT ON VETERAN HOUSING



MATHER VETERANS VILLAGE

Mercy Housing California (MHC) is proud to have partnered with the City of Rancho Cordova, Veterans Resource Center (VRC), Sacramento County, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and VA Northern California Health Care System on the opening of Mather Veterans Village in 2016.

And though the property is a beautiful addition to the community – and the first home in a decade for many of its residents – it is the

services that truly make Mather Veterans Village special. Creating a “village” environment, the three-phase development is planned with onsite support and resources that will serve the 100 permanent supportive units and the 50 transitional beds that will make up the project upon completion.

The collective work of MHC and VRC is already transforming and bringing stability to the lives of those who moved into the first 50 apartments last year.

AN INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP

As part of our commitment to serving our veterans, Mercy Housing has partnered with VRC as the experts in the field. VRC works exclusively with veterans and brings a culture and service model that is specialized in addressing the most serious needs often experienced by veterans – including post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and other chronic health issues. Recognizing the special bond

The collective work of MHC and VRC is already transforming and bringing stability to the lives of those who moved into the first 50 apartments last year.

of our service men and women, VRC can tap into a sense of community and use it to create

both formal and informal networks of support.

By co-locating permanent supportive housing and the transitional beds, which will be completely operated by VRC, Mercy Housing and our partners were able to leverage resources available in South Sacramento dedicated to transitional housing and make them available for all residents. Located steps away from the VA Medical Center, Mather residents can easily access primary and specialist healthcare, clinical psychiatric services, workforce training, and other supportive services.

Thanks to our partnership with VRC, Mercy Housing residents have reconnected with families, improved their health, tackled substance abuse issues, gained full access to their VA benefits, and even, in some cases, moved on to market rate housing.

Helping residents maintain stable housing, VRC provides a full-time case manager and clinical staff to work with residents, build relationships, and connect them to appropriate supportive services including a food bank,

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SPOTLIGHT ON VETERAN HOUSING



Mather Veterans Village

»» CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

resident-led Bible study, AA meetings, and other groups.

“We think of the case manager as a navigation system. The resident is the captain—they set their personal goals. Every resident knows where he or she wants to be,” says Kevin Walker, Case Manager, Veterans Resource Center. “My role functions much like a GPS and helps them identify the best way to get there, staying alongside them the entire way, and being there in case we need to course correct.” ♦



MEET ROBERT: MATHER VETERANS VILLAGE RESIDENT

It Takes **A Village**

I’ve been a methamphetamine addict since I was 12 years old. I had been homeless for years and consider myself a “professional schlepper.”

As I was trying to get some help, I first went through rehab at River City Recovery for 110 days. Then after transitioning to the Sacramento Veterans Resource Center (SVRC) for five months, someone came in and told us we might be eligible for some new affordable housing.

I remember being filled with anxieties as I waited for this housing. On June 1st 2016, I got a call that I needed to pack up my bags and get myself to Mather. I was the first veteran to move in from SVRC.

“This is the best place for a lot of the homeless veterans out there.”

Since I’ve been here, my mind has been blown. This is the best place for a lot of the homeless veterans out there. Not

only do you have your own place to live, but along with that comes a set of responsibilities. We’ve all come in with our different issues, but the staff here has helped a lot of us deal with them.

When I first moved in, I didn’t unpack for four months. That’s because I struggled with mental health issues and never lived in my own place before – a place where

I paid rent, where I had my own things, where I knew I could settle in. This place here, even though it took a long time to get here, is God sent.

Three years ago, I started my recovery because I knew I had a problem. Now, I’m onto achieving new goals. I’m focusing on getting permanent employment. Soon, I’ll be joining a job training program here in Sacramento. But in the meantime, I’m part of a special program where I pitch in, clean up the grounds here in the morning, doing a little bit of maintenance as I get ready to prepare for a custodial job training program.

For those that have never visited, I really encourage you to come by and see this community. It’s tight knit because we’re all veterans. We have a breakfast club in the morning, and when the weather cools down we all come outside and sit around and talk together in the evening. We look out for each other.

They say ‘It takes a village to raise a child.’ Well, it’s taking this whole village – the entire staff, all the programs, all the connections, these homes – to elevate these 50 veterans to a completely different level of life, happiness, and prosperity. ♦



Youth Leadership Brings New Purpose to Community



When Veronica Switzer joined the Mercy Housing California team at Carter Terrace in San Francisco as a Resident Services Coordinator, she realized that to help create a vibrant community, she would need to earn the trust of the community's youth.

Veronica decided to start a youth leadership program with five teenagers. She encouraged them to take ownership of their community and supported them as they looked for ways to help and improve their neighborhood. Now, the group has expanded and its members are often seen helping residents with groceries, leading neighborhood clean-ups, and volunteering at food pantries.

"I want them to see the world beyond themselves and connect

with people outside of this community," says Veronica.

So, in addition to taking many of the youth on their first boat ride or to their first baseball game, she is helping connect them to programs in the larger San Francisco Bay Area.

BREAKING BARRIERS

In turn, the youth have helped break down years of barriers and obstacles in the Visitacion Valley community. Acutely aware of their surroundings, the youth at Carter Terrace are well-aware of the divide in the larger community.

A new pen pal campaign is bringing together kids from Carter Terrace with youth

who, though close in location, have been distanced by stereotyping. In partnership with the Boys and Girls Club, the program is helping youth improve their writing skills and build genuine relationships with their community.

UPLIFTING RESULTS

A group of brothers who attend the youth leadership program experienced several life-changing events that forced them to become adults at a young age. Veronica has watched these brothers, like many of the children at Carter Terrace, grow and learn during their time in the program. Because of the safe space that the youth leadership program offers, they have become more receptive to others, speak more confidently, are better able to understand their own feelings, and help hold each other accountable.

"The onsite center and program helps kids be kids while giving them the skills and guidance they need to make sense of the world around them and help them become problem solvers," Veronica explains.

Camino Del Mar

In partnership with Abode Communities and the Housing Authority of Los Angeles, Mercy Housing kicked off the construction of 88 new townhome-style apartments for families in the Fall of 2016. Now nearly halfway through construction, Camino Del Mar will complete Phase 4 of the revitalization of the New Dana Strand area in Wilmington – creating a community of affordable homes, resource centers, and gathering spaces for hard-working families and future generations.



623 Vernon Street Apartments

Once the winter rains finally stopped, construction has moved along steadily on 623 Vernon Street Apartments in Roseville – a four-story, mixed-use community in the city's historic core. Scheduled for completion in the summer of 2018, the brick-clad building will face the downtown streetscape and add 58 apartments and 2,900 square feet of commercial space to the popular neighborhood.

Transbay Block 7 Project

The Transbay area of San Francisco will soon have a new neighbor in the completion of the Transbay Block 7 Project. About 60% through construction, both buildings have been topped out and will be ready to open in early spring 2018. The Transbay Block 7 Project consists of two multi-family residential buildings comprised of 120 affordable units, around a grade-level landscaped courtyard. The project includes a 4,000 square foot child care facility to serve the residents and the community.





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MERCY HOUSING CALIFORNIA 2017 REAL ESTATE HIGHLIGHTS

GRAND OPENINGS

55 Laguna **SAN FRANCISCO**
40 Homes for LGBT seniors

The Arc Mercy Community **SAN FRANCISCO**
15 Homes for people with developmental disabilities

Bill Sorro Community **SAN FRANCISCO**
67 Homes for families

The Arbor at Hesperian **SAN LORENZO**
77 Homes for seniors

NEW CONSTRUCTION

The Openhouse Community at 95 Laguna
SAN FRANCISCO 40 Homes for LGBT seniors

Pico Robertson Senior Community **LOS ANGELES**
148 Homes for seniors and senior homeless veterans

Baldwin Rose Veteran Family Housing **EL MONTE**
55 Homes for homeless veterans and families

180 West Beamer Street **WOODLAND**
80 Homes for families

