



HOUSEWORK

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One Woman's Experience at Transition House

The following is an excerpt from a paper on stereotyping recently written for a college course by a past Transition House client named Elisa.

When I used to hear the word “shelter” the first thing that came to my mind is that shelters were only for homeless people. I always thought that homeless people were those who live and sleep in the streets or under a bridge because they can't afford to pay for a place to live or for food. I thought everyone that was categorized as homeless had either a drug or alcohol addiction. I also never thought that one day I would be considered to be a homeless person.

In 2011, I was living with my son's father. Before I moved in with him I had spent almost four years in a foster home with quite a few rules, and about two years in a program for former foster youth. I also had a case manager and a support group. My relationship with my partner was not a healthy relationship. There was a lot of violence, even after my son was born. I thought that our baby was going to make our relationship get better, but I was wrong. Instead things got worse. My partner then decided he wanted to separate and start a relationship with another girl.

In March 2012, my son and I were on our own. I was working a job that paid minimum wage and couldn't afford all the expenses I had such as daycare, diapers, food, and especially the rent. During this year my son and I struggled a lot financially and we often moved from place to place until we ended up renting a space in a living room. Then in October 2012, our landlord gave me a notice in the middle of the month saying that I could only stay there until the end of the month. I felt sad and stressed. I couldn't believe I had to look for a place again. The next day I went to work and talked to one of my coworkers. I was telling her about my situation and she said she was living in one of the Transition House apartments. She encouraged me to apply for the program.

My experiences have made me realize that I was wrong about the Transition House program and the people who live in there.

She believed the program would help me and my son. I was afraid because I believed homeless shelters were dangerous and I was scared of living with a lot of rules. I went on to rent another living room until I finally got tired of that lifestyle and decided to seek help. I went to the main office and put myself on the waiting list for the program.

In July, I received a call from the Transition House shelter director and he gave me the news that I could move in that afternoon at 4:00 pm. As I was packing that day I was feeling very confused about whether to go or not. I then remembered what my coworker said to me and that was to at least try, and that if I didn't like it I didn't have to stay there. The shelter director welcomed me and helped me with my luggage. I only had a few possessions since we were not allowed to take valuable things to the shelter for safety reasons. As we went inside the building the first thing I saw was the dining room and there were a lot of nice tables and chairs. He then introduced me to a case manager who gave me a tour in the shelter and read me the program rules. There were in fact a lot of rules, but they all made sense. The case manager mentioned that for as long as I stay there I would be considered a homeless person. I asked, “Why is that?” and he said it was because my income was too low to support my son and myself. I felt bad but I told myself it wouldn't be for long. Before signing some paperwork I asked if I could leave the shelter if at any time I didn't feel comfortable. The answer was yes, and that no one is forced to stay there if they don't want to. When I went to the room I was assigned to, I saw two bunk beds, two closets, a dresser and a TV to share; it was actually not bad at all. As I started unpacking I tried to think positively even though I felt so alone and scared. Dinner time was at 6:30pm and everyone went

California's Homeless Families Continue to Struggle with Poverty and a Lack of Housing Options *By Kathleen Baushke, Executive Director*

This month, the Institute for Child Poverty and Homelessness (ICPH) released its biennial report, the American Almanac on Family Homelessness 2015. ICPH was founded in New York City in 1990 with the aim of “increasing the quantity and quality of information about family homelessness in the United States by conducting rigorous, professional research about this growing population with the ultimate goal of informing and enhancing public policy.”

Not only does ICPH produce analysis of data and information, it also provides information about successful service programs, as well as failed policies and outcomes.

The Almanac provides state by state information on family homelessness including information on household income, social safety net benefits and housing. States are also ranked according to factors in education and public policy that either help or hinder homeless families.

In California, there are only 20 affordable and available rental units for every 100 extremely low income households that need one. In addition, minimum

wage as a percentage of the wage needed to afford a two bedroom apartment is only 31%—in California, the hourly wage needed to afford a two bedroom unit is \$26.65.

In the last several years, California has seen a 78 percent increase in school-aged children living in “doubled-up” households. Doubled-up households are forced to move into housing with other persons due to the misfortune of losing their own housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. These situations are not considered reasonable, long-term housing options. Transition House regularly serves clients who enter the shelter after sleeping in a friend’s living room or garage. It is reported that for every homeless school-aged child living in a shelter, there are 12 more living in doubled up situations.

Funding sources for homelessness services, particularly the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), continue to push programs like ours to move people quickly into rental housing. Of course, that is our mission. But HUD has not kept pace with the increased demand for affordable housing assistance.

Shelter programs continue to be asked to address the consequences of things beyond our control, such as wage inequality and a lack of sufficient affordable housing. Some would say that this is unique to Santa Barbara, but it is not. As the Almanac shows, this is happening across the country.


ICPH does include ideas for action in the Almanac to help address family homelessness. Some of those items include passing legislation to increase federal funding to the National Hous-

ing Trust Fund to increase the supply of affordable housing along with policy changes that will increase access to education for homeless students to help break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

ICPH also hopes that HUD will expand its definition of homelessness to include those in “doubled-up” situations. Currently, those people are not considered by HUD to be homeless, although other federal agencies do recognize this population as homeless.

Finally, ICPH wants to see funding dedicated specifically to family homeless. The federal government has targeted funding to two homeless populations—veterans and the chronically homeless—and the number of homeless in those demographic categories has decreased. The same targeted funding is needed for families.

While the work homeless shelters face with limited resources for successful solutions to homelessness can sometimes feel overwhelming, it is important to remember that we must try to successfully serve as many families as we can. For the sake of those who are experiencing homelessness, we cannot afford to become discouraged.

To learn more about homelessness, visit ICPH’s website at www.icphusa.org. There you can find a copy of the 2015 Almanac of American Family Homelessness. 



Kathleen Baushke
Executive Director

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downstairs to the dining room since all the bedrooms were on the second floor. I went and sat at one of the tables all alone and wasn't sure what to expect. I looked around and didn't see any bad people; I saw families and single moms with their children ready to line up to get their meals.

It was not easy, but it was definitely a very helpful program for me and my son. During my stay at the shelter I was able to receive help from a case manager with whom I had to meet once a week to set goals, work on budgeting, and fill out affordable housing applications. I also qualified for full time daycare at Transition House's infant care center for my son Taylor at a low cost. Therefore I started working more hours at my job and was able to start saving money. All the residents had a mandatory parenting

class once a week, with babysitters provided for the children. I joined the job club to gain skills for a job interview and also learned how to make a resume and a cover letter. I also got help applying for the St. Vincent's Family Strengthening Program for single moms. I was able to stay at the shelter for up to four months then I qualified to go to the second stage of the program.

I moved in at the Firehouse on November 11, 2013. This place was nicer, had fewer rules, and had later curfew, but what I liked the most was having my own room. My son was actually accepted at a preschool that same month and everything was just getting better for my family. The following week I got a call from the St. Vincent's program for an interview. My case manager and I were very excited about it. I went to the interview, got an orientation of the program and everything went well. I

was accepted in the program and was told to be ready to move in by January 2014. Since then I have still been working, building my savings and have begun attending a program at SBCC for single moms at night.

My experiences have made me realize that I was wrong about the Transition House program and the people who live there. Ever since I left the program I have been very thankful and want to make sure that when I tell other people about Transition House, they know it is a great program that can help you a lot. This program helped me to get to where I am now. I now have housing that is secure for at least two years as long as I am cooperative, responsible and follow the program rules. My son and I are very happy to be at the St. Vincent's Program and appreciative of the time we lived at Transition House. 🏠

Women's Fund Provides Air Conditioning for Our Shelter

The Santa Barbara Women's Fund awarded \$50,000 to T-House to purchase air conditioning units for our emergency shelter. During the summer, temperatures in the shelter occasionally soar to over 85 degrees. The heat was a barrier to success for many who were unable to sleep or to study. Food providers in the kitchen also suffered. Thankfully, the shelter is now more humane, as demonstrated by children's art created the night after the air conditioning was installed. 🏠



Mad Hatter Luncheon Helps Transition House Auxiliary Raise \$100,000 for Our Children's Programs

The Transition House Auxiliary's annual Mad Hatter luncheon was held in April at the Bacara Resort and Spa to raise money for the agency's Children's Programs. Emceed by Andrew Firestone and featuring the music of pianist Gil Rose, the luncheon was enjoyed by guests who put on their best to celebrate this year's Mardi Gras theme.

Transition House appreciates our fabulous Auxiliary members along with the support of our sponsors, silent auction donors, friends and guests who work hard every year to provide meaningful programming for children during their stay at Transition House. ⬆



Auxiliary President Wendy Clapp

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Gail Shannon

Computer Lab Gets New Furniture

Transition House was fortunate to receive a grant for new furnishings for our onsite computer lab from the Alice Tweed Tuohy Foundation. The funding allowed us to create more private work areas along with two semi-circle computer clusters for use by our teenagers for homework. The new furnishings replaced tables facing the walls that were built over 15 years ago. Thank you to the Alice Tweed Tuohy Foundation for supporting our technology offerings! ⬆





Transition House board members Gayla Visalli, Vice President, and Jim Buckley, President



L to R: Cindi Zanardi, Verna Gindoff, Missy Sheldon, Event Chair Florence Michel, Kathryn Dinkin, Diana Kruse, Judy Cresap, Wendy Clapp, and Mimi Veyna

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The Holidays are Coming!

You are invited to be a Secret Santa this year for a child or family living at Transition House!

Help make this a special Christmas for the homeless families in our community. Adopt the wish list of a family or a child and purchase their holiday gifts.

**Contact Nicole Janowicz to receive your wish lists
Phone: 805.966.9668 ext. 115
Email: holidays@transitionhouse.com**



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Transition House's Help-a-Kid No Ball a Great Success

This year's Help-A-Kid No Ball netted over \$80,000 for Transition House. This year's non-event featured four exciting raffle packages. Thanks to those of you who bought tickets and thank you to those businesses and individuals who donated to the raffle.

Raffle Prize Donors

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Thank you!



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thanks to
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