



THE WAY HOME
Transition House

HOUSEWORK

news from transition house • santa barbara, california • fall 2025

Helping Children Succeed in School Can Prevent Future Homelessness

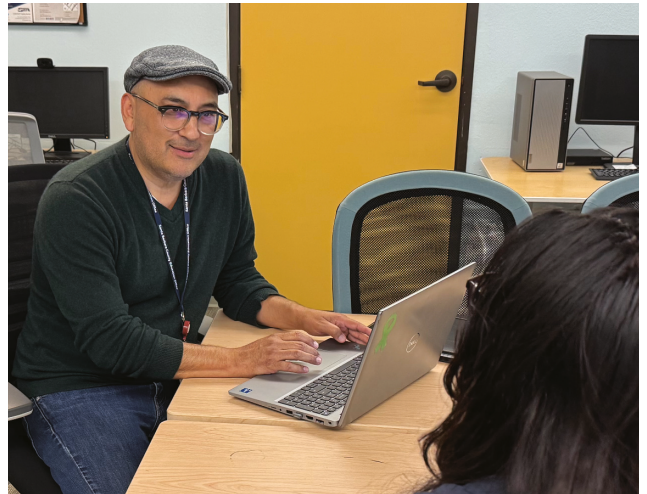
By Kathleen Baushke, Executive Director

Transition House knows that the odds are stacked against homeless children. Nearly half (48%) of students experiencing homelessness are chronically absent, a rate that is 22 percentage points higher than all students. The average graduation rate for homeless students is 68%. This is nearly 19 percentage points below all students. Youth without a high school diploma or GED are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness later in life, making the lack of a high school diploma/GED the single greatest risk factor for experiencing homelessness as a young adult—and making education a critical prevention strategy. (*School-*

*house Connection, 2025
Fact Sheet: Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness*)

A host of factors can contribute to academic failure when families lack a fixed address. Children may be deprived of a quiet place to study, and missing the technology and school supplies needed for learning. Parents may not have the transportation to get their children to school each day. In addition, it may be very difficult for parents to communicate with their child's teachers if they lack a telephone or computer. Finally, the crisis of homelessness can understandably cause parents to prioritize finding housing, or finding a job, over the educational needs of their children. In the past, these factors caused children experiencing homelessness to struggle at school, and often led to academic failure.

In 1987, congress passed what became the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the first major federal response to homelessness. Along with providing funding for shelters and services, the Act also focuses on the educational rights of children in an effort to mitigate the impacts of homelessness.



The Santa Barbara County Education Office's school liaison, Gerardo Ayala, supports families with school-aged children throughout their stay at Transition House.

The McKinney-Vento Act requires local educational agencies or jurisdictions to provide a dedicated staff liaison to work with families of school-aged children experiencing homelessness.

The liaison's role is simple: they are responsible for providing students experiencing homelessness with access to the services and support due to them by law with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the experience of homelessness in no way interrupts a child's right to access education—the same right enjoyed by housed children.

In recent years, the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) has provided the McKinney-Vento liaison to Transition House, and we know from history how critical the liaison is to families in our shelter. This year, Transition House has stepped forward to partner with SBCEO and share a

Transition House Board of Directors

Nancy Rapp, *President*

Kristin Linehan, *Vice President*

Lynn E. Goebel, *Secretary*

Andy Carnaghe, *Treasurer*

Rob Kooyman

Kelsey McAuliffe

Ed Northup

Anita J. Peca

Clarissa Montenegro Uhl

Pat Wheatley

Jessica Yacoub

Continued on page 2

portion of the cost of this position.

In this article, we want to introduce Gerardo “Gera” Ayala, the SBCEO liaison, and tell you more about the work he does with families in our shelter and transitional housing programs.

Gera has over 17 years of experience working with homeless and low-income families. He holds office hours at both Transition House and at SBCEO, and spends two evenings per week at our emergency shelter.

Within the first week of entering the shelter, new families are introduced to Gera who informs them of services they are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Act, and assesses their school-related needs. He continues to meet regularly with parents throughout the family’s stay in our program to help with school enrollment, registration and any other school-related matters. Gera also interfaces with Transition House case managers and our children’s program staff, ensuring that relevant information is shared, and appropriate services are provided.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES

Enrollment and Registration

Enrollment and registration are now largely online procedures, which can be difficult for parents with minimal experience using technology or without access to a computer. Gera can help. If parents struggle with the online process, he will provide guidance. His office at Transition House has additional computers readily available for parents to utilize for this purpose.

Although McKinney-Vento students have the right to immediate enrollment, they are not exempt from providing birth certificates, immunization records or proof of residency. By law, they have a grace period of at least a month to provide these documents. For families that have lost immunization records, Gera can assist in obtaining them, or

schedule a doctor’s appointment if the child has not been immunized.

From time-to-time, other documents are required by the school—for example, in domestic violence situations when there is a restraining order, the order must be provided to ensure the child is not released to the perpetrating parent. Gera helps parents gather and present this information.

Transportation

Over 90% of Transition House families come from the greater Santa Barbara area. McKinney-Vento law allows students to remain in their school of origin when the family moves outside their district boundaries. While it is beneficial for structure and consistency for children to remain in their school of origin, transportation becomes a big issue for parents, especially those who do not own a vehicle or are working multiple jobs. Gera helps to secure safe transportation to and from school.

School Disputes

From time to time there might be student performance or behavioral issues that require meetings between parents and school personnel. Gera can serve as a facilitator or an advocate for the family in such meetings, and work with the family to resolve any concerns.

Attendance

School attendance can be a significant issue for many families. Gera works hard engaging with parents to ensure that the student attends school on a regular basis. He emphasizes the importance of prioritizing their child’s education. It is not uncommon for a child who is experiencing the trauma of homelessness to want to be with his or her parent(s) at all times. Fear that a parent will not pick them up after school is also not unrealistic. If necessary, Gera can arrange support,

including onsite clinical counseling, so attending school is a safe and positive experience for each student.

Afterschool Programs

Afterschool programs are very important since children may have nowhere to go when parents find full-time employment. Gera helps coordinate enrollment in afterschool programs, such as A-OK (onsite at schools), and Fun in the Sun, as well as the YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, and other private programs that offer scholarships or sliding scale fee schedules.

Accessing Additional Supports

Gera will help families secure other resources as needed to ensure school success. Examples include:

- Providing additional resources and referrals for students experiencing a disability.
- Helping secure tutors for students who need academic support.
- Making referrals for basic medical and dental services.
- Assisting with college applications and interfacing with SBCC.
- Helping parents access resources to pay for graduation, prom tickets, field trips, or sports program costs.

Measurable Outcomes

SBCEO and Transition House work together to ensure and track school enrollment, attendance and access to services wherever possible. Consistent school attendance and improved parental engagement are our primary goals.

By working together, SBCEO and Transition House, along with the experience and expertise that Gera brings to his role as the School Liaison, we are able to help homeless children beat the odds by accessing the support they need to achieve school success. 

Introducing The Diane White College Scholarship Fund

On April 21st of this year, one of Transition House's longest serving volunteers and a powerhouse in our women's Auxiliary, Diane White, passed away. She was such an inspiration to so many of her fellow volunteers and to our staff that we created a legacy to carry on the spirit of her service: The Diane White College Scholarship Fund.

Diane began serving the local community as a member of the Santa Barbara Auxiliary of the Children's Home Society from 1983 to 1994, and then its successor group, the Transition House Auxiliary.

Diane served in leadership positions, including supporting and often chairing annual fund raising events for programs benefiting babies, children and teenagers living in poverty. Helping children

was her passion!

During the 41 years Diane supported the Children's Home Society and Transition House, she touched the lives of thousands of children. By raising money to fund our children's program offerings, Diane's efforts helped so many of these children grow up healthy and strong, creating the groundwork for them to become successful adults. Her hard work and dedication garnered the respect and admiration of all those she served with.

To continue Diane's work for children, we have established the Diane White College Scholarship Fund using donations from her family, friends and our supporters. It will be a low-barrier source of grants to students to help cover costs for homeless teenagers enrolling in college, so that they may

realize their dreams and have the opportunity to escape the poverty they grew up in.

The design of the scholarship application is complete and we have begun advertising the opportunity to our eligible families with students.

The staff at Transition House intends to work hard in the future to sustain this Fund so that Diane's passion for helping children will be realized for many years to come. It is a fitting legacy for Diane White—a truly remarkable woman! 🏠



Teenagers currently living at Transition House, along with those who have lived here in the past two years, will be eligible to apply for this opportunity.



Bring Joy to A Child This Christmas!

For families at Transition House, the holidays can be challenging. Parents are working hard to rebuild financial stability, yet children still wish for a magical Christmas morning.

Our Secret Santa Program makes their wishes come true! Each year, generous community members like you ensure that every child in our shelter experiences the magic of Christmas—by providing gifts like a soccer ball, cozy pajamas, art supplies, or gift cards.

Being a Secret Santa is simple:

Choose a child's wish list and shop for their gifts,
or
Let us do the shopping for you.

This holiday season, you can be the reason a child believes in magic. Your generosity will remind families that their community truly cares.

To learn more about how to get involved, contact:

Kellie Topar, Development and Volunteer Relations Manager

Email: Holidays@transitionhouse.com Phone: (805) 966-9668, ext. 128

Transition House Celebrates Our Volunteers

Transition House hosted our annual Volunteer Picnic on May 18th at beautiful Manning Park, where more than 100 volunteers gathered for a day of fun, connection, and gratitude. Guests enjoyed a delicious Santa Maria-style barbecue, prepared and served by Transition House staff. The perfect weather, great company, and tasty food made it a truly special afternoon.

Each year, we hold this event to honor our dedicated volunteers who give their time, energy, and heart to support our mission. Transition House simply could not operate without hundreds of our neighbors who help local families experiencing homelessness each year.

To all our volunteers—thank you for your generosity, kindness, and unwavering support. You are at the heart of everything we do!

If you are interested in joining our volunteer team, please contact, Kellie Topar, Development & Volunteer Relations Manager, (805) 966-9668, ext. 128, or ktopar@transitionhouse.com 🏠

Our dedicated volunteers, along with staff and client families, enjoyed a lovely afternoon of good food, fun games, service awards, and exciting prizes.





The artwork to the right was created by Sia, a talented former child resident of Transition House. We transformed his imaginative drawing of the shelter into a custom puzzle as a special gift of gratitude for our volunteers.

TRANSITION
HOUSE
is *more* than a shelter, it's
the *first* step toward
your *DREAMS**

The power of Planned Giving

Create a legacy that transforms the lives of homeless families for years to come.

A planned gift to The Léni Fé Bland Transition House Tomorrow Fund keeps hope alive for generations.



Plan today and leave a gift of hope for tomorrow.

To learn more, contact Kathleen Baushke at (805) 966-9668 or kbaushke@transitionhouse.com

This Year's Help-a-Kid No-Ball Was a True Treasure for T-House Kids

By Kellie Topaz, Development and Volunteer Relations Manager

A hoy, matesys! The 21st Annual *Help-a-Kid No-Ball* was a smashing success, raising over **\$225,000** to support children living at Transition House's emergency shelter.

Instead of hosting an extravagant party, we invited the kids of Transition House to dress up—so you didn't have to! This year, they donned their finest pirate gear, and “*Blimey—they had a great time!*” celebrating the occasion on behalf of all our supporters.

Thanks to your generosity, we not only met—but exceeded—our two matching fund goals. Every dollar raised goes directly toward helping children at Transition House, ensuring they remain safe, fed, and housed while also having access to meaningful programming during their stay.

We are sincerely grateful to our incredible donors and supporters who made this year's *Help-a-Kid No-Ball* such a treasure. 

RAFFLE DONORS

Arnoldi's Cafe
Benchmark eatery
Bettina
Bluewater Grill
Boathouse at Hendry's Beach
bouchon Santa Barbara
Brophy Bros. and On the Alley
Farmer Boy
Loquita
Lure Fish House
Olio Cucina Inc.
Rare Society
Santa Barbara Inn
The Lark
Third Window
Toma Restaurant & Bar

CORPORATE SPONSORS

American Riviera Bank
California Learning Center
CenCal Health
Montecito Bank & Trust
Pacific Premier Bank
Patagonia
Signature Aviation
The Towbes Group
Wadell Roofing Services
Yardi Systems, Inc.



Homelessness: Get the Facts!

By Kathleen Baushke, Executive Director

Recently we have seen rhetoric in the national media and from some federal sources about homelessness that paints an inaccurate picture of those experiencing a loss of housing. It is Transition House's intent to provide more data and information not only about the homeless families we serve, but also about how our industry serves homeless individuals and families across the nation. We'll share information where we can through our mailings and

in social media. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have further questions about what we know and the population we serve.

Here are some facts:

- Within the past decade, homelessness was on the decline. Targeted investments in deeply affordable housing, voluntary wraparound health services, and income support contributed to large reductions in veteran homelessness: they demonstrate how policies

and programs can end homelessness among all groups. (*National Alliance to End Homelessness*)

- However, in 2024 after the end of federal COVID-19 relief programs, homelessness increased nationwide by 18 percent due to low incomes, an inadequate supply of affordable housing, weak safety nets and more. (*National Alliance to End Homelessness*)

- In Santa Barbara County's 2025 Point-in-Time Count, an annual effort that counts as many homeless folks in shelters, staying in cars or living on the

Continued on page 8



SHELTER OPEN HOUSE & DONATION DRIVE

**Thursday, November 6th
Between 11:30a.m.-1:00p.m.
434 E. Ortega Street**

**Located down the block from our admin office.*

Help us restock much-needed supplies for families, and if you're curious, enjoy a quick tour of the Transition House shelter.

We would gladly accept new or like-new items.



Prefer to shop new?
Check our Amazon Wish List for preferred items, or use it as a guide for local shopping.



WE CAN ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

Pillows (standard)
Sheets (twin & full)
Comforters (twin & full)

Blankets
Bath Towels
Washcloths

HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT WE CAN ACCEPT? CALL (805) 966-9668

Unfortunately, we cannot accept clothing, toys or furnishings, but our friends at Catholic Charities can on Monday through Saturday from 9:30AM to 3:00PM at 609 E. Haley St. Please call ahead to them at (805) 966-9659 before donating furniture to see if they currently have space.



THE WAY HOME Transition House

425 E Cota Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 966-9668
www.transitionhouse.com

Nonprofit
US Postage
PAID
Santa Barbara, CA
Permit No. 800

Homelessness: Get the Facts!, continued from page 7

street as possible on one designated night in January, the number of families with children counted was 146 (households). This was a significant jump from prior years—in 2024, the count was 125; in 2019, the count was 115 (*County of Santa Barbara*). Point-in-Time Counts by nature typically under-count families as they do not include situations where people are doubled up (living on sofas or in garages, etc., without lease protections).

- Homeless people do not commit crimes at a rate higher than housed people. Homeless people commit offenses often related to survival such as sleeping or camping in prohibited areas, trespassing, loitering, and more. These are sometimes referred to as homeless status offenses. While **unsheltered** persons are statistically more likely to be arrested than other people—with nine times as many saying they had spent at least one night in jail in the previous six months often for homeless status offenses—they are also far more likely to be victims of crime, particularly violent crime. (*California Policy Lab*)

The term “homeless” describes a multi-dimensional demographic. Families experiencing homelessness face unique characteristics and challenges. At Transition House, we hope by sharing accurate information about homelessness, we can help to promote a better understanding of the struggles these families are coping with and help to foster a more compassionate approach across our communities to helping them. 🏠

2025 CORPORATE PARTNERS

We are grateful to the local, regional and national businesses that support our efforts to fight poverty and increase affordable housing opportunities for our most vulnerable neighbors. Please support these businesses if you can. Thank you to all!

Deckers Outdoor Corporation

Folded Hills Winery

Montecito Bank & Trust

Santa Barbara Home Improvement Center

Santa Barbara Rental Property Association

Yardi Systems, Inc.

American Riviera Bank
Bec Builders, Inc.
California Housing and Youth Services
California Learning Center
Casa Dorinda
CenCal Health
DIANI
HUB International
Jordano's
Nasif, Hicks, Harris & Co., LLP
Nvidia Corporation
Pacific Premier Bank

Patagonia
Santa Barbara Plaza
Self Enquiry Life Fellowship
Signature Aviation
Target Circle
Tileco Distributors, Inc.
The Towbes Group
Toyon Research Corporation
Underground Hair Artists
Wadell Roofing Services
Yoga Soup



To learn more about the benefits of being a corporate sponsor, please contact Gina Whitefoot, Associate Director, at gwhitefoot@transitionhouse.com or (805) 966-9668, ext. 120.

