



## The Living Room

**CAMPUS NEWS**  
June 2020



## It takes a village

*Cindy Pasko | Executive Director*

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.” Well, he should have seen what we are going through right now! He would have been thrilled for the opportunities!

On March 16, we closed our campus after receiving the news of the COVID-19 shelter in place order for Sonoma County. We fed our participants, cleaned up, and released the staff to go to their homes. Later that same day we began to receive emails from over 100 volunteers letting us know that they would also be sheltering in place indefinitely. **Difficulty.**

It was clear that even though the County deems us an “essential service” we could not operate our campus, the 20+ programs and our food service with only our staff. It was also crystal clear that we would not be allowed to open our campus for onsite service. **More difficulties.**

Over the next week a lot of time was spent checking in with the Health Department, Sonoma County and City of Santa Rosa staff, other local agencies (who were either closed or short staffed themselves) and monitoring the quickly changing CDC and federal guidelines. The quandary was in trying to figure out how to be able to operate and still keep staff, volunteers and our participants safe.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The Living Room has served an average of

**120**  
**HOT LUNCHES**  
and  
**70**  
**BREAKFAST BURRITOS**  
per day since re-opening in early April.

We served  
**2,969**  
**MEALS IN APRIL**  
and  
**3,769**  
**MEALS IN MAY.**

Since re-opening, Volunteers have served over

**525**  
**VOLUNTEER HOURS.**

We are starting to see some cherished volunteers come back as well as welcoming many new faces!

During that week, with the staff still at home, I participated in a brisk bartering system with other local nonprofits. We were able to share food, masks, hand sanitizer, diapers, clothes and other items. Whoever had, gave, and we all benefitted. Those newly forged or renewed relationships have developed into true partnerships. **Opportunity!**

By March 28, most of the staff had returned to work, and within a week we created a new method of service. We got to work completely tearing our campus apart in order to reimagine ourselves and be able to serve hungry, frightened people from out of our front building windows.

Together we worked out each obstacle and on April 6, we began to serve two hot meals (a breakfast burrito and a hot lunch), pet food, care kits, mail, limited clothing and supplies. Because many agencies were either closed or limiting service, we realized we could not give food and supplies to hungry women and then turn hungry men away. Therefore, we decided to serve anyone who came to our windows! We are still doing that.

### **Opportunity!**

Since this began, we have had to cancel every fundraiser we had on the books. However, many donors have stepped into the gap with donations to help make up the difference and we are looking at ways to reimagine our fundraising events.

### **Opportunity!**

In the midst of this unbelievable set of COVID-19 difficulties, we have taken the opportunities wherever we have found them. We have expanded what we are doing and we have many ideas for expanding our services even further.

### **Here are a just a few ideas that look towards the future:**

- Opening a food distribution pantry for people who have the ability to prepare food, but are having food insecurity issues.

- Opening a Living Room Thrift Shop.
- Reopening our onsite shower and laundry services to women and children by appointment.
- Holding limited classes, groups and counseling in our outdoor areas.
- Hosting Job Fairs for our participants.

It is clear that The Living Room will not ever be exactly the way it was before COVID. The good news is that we are currently serving more people than we did before. The harder news is that there are more people in need of help, and it will likely get worse before it gets better. We have gained new partners and new opportunities to keep serving women and children. We will simply need to do it a different way.

### **Opportunity!**

We believe we have a clear way to proceed and reopen the campus in a limited way. Our outreach and depth of services will only increase. Social distancing and COVID-19 safety protocols will guide what we do and how we do it. I hope that you join us as we continue mining the economic and health concerns we are facing for some truly amazing possibilities — for ourselves, The Living Room, and our neighbors!



## A Final Farewell

It is with very heavy hearts that we say our final goodbyes to our friend and long time participant Jodi Broderson. Jodi was an active member of The Living Room family for many years. She will be remembered as a kind woman who always had a friendly word and a helping hand. She had many friends and will be missed.

Our hearts and prayers are with her family and friends.

## Seek out the beauty in the world — look for the helpers

Kelly Keagy | Communications Manager



Who could ever have predicted that we would all be living through times like these? I know I am not alone in having to give myself a pep talk (on a regular basis) so that the daily news cycle does not overwhelm me. In the words of Fred Rogers' wise mother **“Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.”**

In my life I have made it a habit to look for the beauty in the world. Because if you are looking for it, you are bound to see it everywhere.

All of us here at The Living Room have been coping with the situation by getting busy. Our focus and mission is to not only provide comfort and help this fragile community with their day-to-day survival needs, but also to be a positive force for enacting change in their lives. If you

are ready for it, if you are willing to do the work, we want to help you find a way to remove the roadblocks.

**Here are a few of the victories we have had the pleasure to witness since we re-opened on April 6, 2020.**

We have had a participant move from one of our transitional houses into housing of her own. This is not something we take credit for (she did it on her own), but it is an accomplishment to celebrate. We have seen this amazing woman take her life from trauma and despair to independence and confidence. Not only is she working, living independently and sharing custody of her son, but she has also come back to The Living Room as a volunteer. It is a beautiful thing to behold.

That success leads to the next in which a mother and her two children were able to move out of a family shelter (where they have been staying for 7 months) and into our transitional house. They are currently settling in and making it their home.

This little family is able to enjoy the simple things like planting flowers, collecting the items needed for day-to-day life and playing in their very own yard. The absolute joy on their faces to have a home of their own is the stuff that keeps us going. This remarkable Mother has hopes of going back to school to become a dental hygienist so that she can support her family, gain stability and achieve independence.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of Volunteer and past Board Member Marion Weinrieb, Board Member Liz Uribe and the generosity of our donors, we have almost completed a Junior Dwelling Unit at another one of our transitional houses. This is a gorgeous state-of-the-art studio apartment conversion. The intention is to provide transitional shelter and respite for a single mother and young child. Our team should have this ready to go in the next week.

Additionally, we have upgraded our existing tiny home and installed a new tenant. Both of our transitional houses are full and we have helped place over a dozen people into local shelters.

The beauty that we get a front-row seat to on a daily basis here at The Living Room is the magic of human resilience. When given the right kind of support, people are able to get their feet back beneath them, gain momentum and take control of their lives. A metamorphosis of sorts. For some, all they really ever needed was a helper.

Thank you for helping us do this work. Your efforts and generosity are another sort of beauty we are privileged to witness daily.

### Current Services Provided Daily

A hot meal which includes lunch and a breakfast burrito

Mobile Showers on Wednesdays courtesy of Redwood Gospel

Protein focused snack packs on Fridays to help get folks through the weekend

Hygiene products handed out daily

New socks, underwear, t-shirts and leggings

Pet Food

Dogwood Animal Rescue is here twice a week for more extensive pet needs

Street Outreach

Shelter placement assistance

PPE

Survival items such as tents, sleeping bags, rolling suitcases, backpacks etc. (As available)

## Current Needs

The following list of items needed as we navigate our new reality during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- ♥ Travel sized shampoo and conditioner
- ♥ Women's Underwear (new) all sizes
- ♥ Women's leggings (new)
- ♥ Blankets
- ♥ Sun screen
- ♥ Reusable water bottles
- ♥ Tents
- ♥ Sensible sandals, flip flops and tennis shoes (gently used)
- ♥ Flashlights
- ♥ Men's Underwear (new)
- ♥ Men's T-Shirts (new)
- ♥ Shaving Cream
- ♥ Tarps
- ♥ Towels
- ♥ Rolling carts
- ♥ Backpacks
- ♥ Pet supplies + food
- ♥ Flea protection
- ♥ Snacks — especially high protein types are appreciated
- ♥ Bicycle tire patch kits

**The listed In-kind items can be brought to our campus 1:00-3:00pm Monday through Friday.**

**Please keep to the list when donating in-kind. Our storage space is limited and we are not currently able to accept used clothing or household items.**

## Communication is key



Long-time volunteer and Food Services Manager Kelly Keagy has accepted a newly created position as TLR's Communications Manager

Before joining TLR as a volunteer chef on the Wednesday team, Kelly enjoyed a 30+ year career working as a Public Relations professional within the wine industry.

For the last two years she has balanced Food Services and Communications here at TLR. With the expansion of the food services department to include a food pantry as well as the kitchen duties, it became necessary to have a dedicated presence.

When asked about her feeling on making the change Kelly says, "As much as I've loved my time working in the kitchen and supporting our amazing volunteers, I am really excited to turn my energy towards helping to further TLR's messaging and goals."

*"We need joy as we need air,  
we need love as we need water,  
we need each other as we need  
the earth we share."*

— Maya Angelou

## Chris Bowser joins the team

Join us in welcoming Chris Bowser as the new Kitchen Manager at TLR. He brings with him several years of management experience from not only locally owned restaurants Beer Baron and Stout Brothers but as a Military Police Sargent in the United States Army.

When he's not in the kitchen, Chris is normally spending time with his friends and family, behind a BBQ and enjoying a beer from a local brewery.



*"I was drawn to the position out of a desire to give back.  
It felt like the right time to make a change."*

—Chris Bowser | TLR new Kitchen Manager

## Silvia Montero works her magic

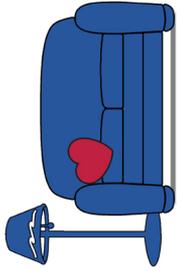
A native of the Bay Area, Silvia Montero grew up in the Fremont area and has lived and worked in Sonoma County for the last 20+ years.

Silvia has accepted a position as TLR's Outreach Coordinator working with the Care Team. Having worked at both DAAC and COTS, she brings a wealth of experience and abundance of passion to her work.

During her short tenure here at TLR, Silvia has already proven herself to be a valuable advocate for our participants. Using her knowledge and savvy of the system she has helped place over two dozen people in shelters....and it's only been two weeks.

A self-admitted workaholic, Silvia can be found hanging out with her grandbaby in her off time.





## The Living Room

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**Nurturing resilience.  
Building hope.**

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### OUR MISSION

Ease adversity and promote stability, dignity and self-reliance for women and children who are homeless, or at-risk of homelessness, in Sonoma County.

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**Thank you for your support.**

