



Building Futures

NEW MAILING ADDRESS:

PO Box 2334, San Leandro, CA 94577

510.357.0205 • www.bfwc.org

free from homelessness and family violence

April 10, 2020

Dear Friends,

I hope you and your loved ones are keeping well and safe. Small, encouraging signs of our human connection are there when we look. Have you noticed hand-drawn rainbows in the windows of neighborhood homes? Once I learned about the teddy bears that families were setting in their windows, I began to see them.

COVID-19 and the *stay at home* order present daunting challenges. New rules to contain the pandemic have thrown households into new practices and priorities. Yours. Mine. The same is true for Building Futures' shelters, housing site, and emergency services.

At the Sister Me Home safe house, most residents who work have lost their jobs. Court dates, custody hearings, and housing are all on hold. "Residents are trying to keep telehealth appointments," says our safe house Program Manager, who supports residents fleeing domestic violence. "It's a huge challenge, because it's assumed everyone has a smart phone, and many of our residents do not."

A home of 30 people is a complicated scene at the best of times. The San Leandro Shelter's four senior citizens and six residents under four years old are especially vulnerable now. The Shelter Manager says her staff are balancing tough new stay-at-home rules with the need to sanitize surfaces every two hours. They've even stepped forward to care for the children of a resident who fell into depression.

*I am turning to you now to ask for your help. Your donation will be used to help the most vulnerable among us to stay safe in this extraordinary time. **Please give as generously as you possibly can.***

Keeping the shelter residents safe in a time of social distancing and stay-at-home orders calls for stringent new rules—enforced with compassion.

The risk rises for domestic violence survivors forced to stay home with their abusers. Our domestic violence crisis line (1-866-292-9688) is serving more callers each day.

Many we serve are elderly or have pre-existing health conditions. This makes them especially vulnerable to the coronavirus.

The individuals and families who count on Building Futures—already coping with homelessness and domestic violence—are facing income loss and the structures of social distancing and sanitary measures. With libraries and other public spaces shuttered, there are far fewer places for those without shelter to find refuge and access sanitation.

Building Futures is there, with expanded services to keep adults and children safe. Rather than scale back, we're doing *more*.

- ➔ We've expanded **trauma-informed services** for 175 adults and children in Sister Me Home, and the San Leandro and Midway Shelters and Bessie Coleman Court housing site.
- ➔ We've **increased technology** so residents and clients can access virtual services like telehealth.
- ➔ We've implemented **heightened sanitation measures** to uphold the safety and well-being of community members.
- ➔ We're providing daily **activities and academic support** for children and adolescents we serve at our shelters and housing site.
- ➔ We're **shopping for vulnerable clients** at risk of COVID-19 exposure.
- ➔ We're **bringing food and sanitation supplies** to hundreds of adults and families who live on the street, are newly-housed, or are on the edge of homelessness.

I am proud of the ways Building Futures has adapted and expanded our response to this global pandemic. The changes come with added pressures... and added costs. We cannot do this without your help!

The mothers at the shelters are modeling positivity for their kids. "Through it all, there has not been a single argument," says San Leandro Shelter Manager. She remembers a mother offering to take the children into the yard to play. From inside, the staff members' spirits were lifted at sound of the kids' laughter. Outside, she was greeted by a beautiful sight: the tarmac filled with chalk drawings of flowers, houses, people holding hands ... and rainbows.

Please send your most generous gift today, or give online at www.bfwc.org/donate, so we may continue to serve the most vulnerable among us. A (virtual) hug to you and your loved ones.

With Sincere Gratitude,



Liz Varela
Executive Director

P.S. The COVID-19 crisis makes clear what Building Futures' family members like you have always known: *We're all in this together.* **Please send your special gift today.** Thank you.

