

Kimberly Meriweather (left) recently moved into a home with three of her children—pictured are Charles Steele Jr. and Courtney Morrison and dog Baby Bear—with the help of the Chico Housing Action Team and Torres Shelter.

PHOTO BY ASHIAH SCHARAGA

she found the family a parent-child interaction therapist to help Charles manage his behavior and facilitate family communication.

Gaylord says she feels blessed to share the journey with these families. Seeing as the shelter is full, “this program couldn’t have come at a more beautiful time, because these families deserve the housing and they’re working hard.”

CHAT also has been busy fundraising for its Simplicity Village tiny-home community. The nonprofit has thus far raised \$43,000 toward its \$100,000 target; four tiny homes have been built and about five more have been sponsored.

The goal is to break ground by August, Johnson said, and to get its first residents housed before the year’s out. It’ll all depend on funding: Because the property on Notre Dame Boulevard is undeveloped, there are significant costs to set up utilities. The completed project is slated to include 33 homes for about 45 seniors (some will be couples) with a central laundry room, restrooms and kitchen.


CHAT floated the idea of a tiny-home village five years ago. City staff began working with the organization on the concept in November 2017, but official support arrived in October 2018, when conservative former Councilman Andrew Coolidge joined his liberal colleagues in declaring a shelter crisis, paving the way for CHAT’s project (and allowing organizations to apply for the HEAP funds). The location on Notre Dame Boulevard, however, did not receive a green light until the new council was sworn in this last December.

Johnson said there was some “reluctance and resistance” to Simplicity Village at first because people were worried it would establish a shanty town.

“I think as a society we’re willing to start looking at alternatives and figure out other ways to house people [now],” Johnson said. “We can go smaller and still have good, solid, nice-looking homes for people ... that are of a more modest size and a modest cost.”

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