# **Branching out**

### Homeless service providers partner, expand programs for emergency sheltering in Chico and Oroville

#### For the first time in Safe Space Winter Shelter's

six-year history, the homeless individuals it serves will find refuge under one roof this rainy season instead of moving from church to church.

This is thanks to a \$189,877 grant-funded partnership between Safe Space and the Torres Community Shelter that'll provide beds for about 50 people. Though the location has yet to be determined, this is a significant development, says Angela McLaughlin, president of Safe Space's board of directors. She was anticipating a second short shelter season for the organization this year—churches it has used are still housing Ridge schools post-Camp Fire. Plus, the grant will fund a paid case manager and shelter monitors, placing less demand on volunteers.

"We're pretty excited about it. I think it's a good opportunity for both [organizations]," McLaughlin said. "[Safe Space has] historically served a segment of the population that doesn't fit in with the other shelters. ... By being able to collaborate with a partner that already has those day services and case management [and] social workers in place, we can really move people forward."

This wasn't the only news in the service provider realm this week. The Butte Countywide Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) made grant funding recommendations on Monday (July 15) totaling just over \$1 million for local organizations focused on sustaining, expanding or creating new emergency shelter services. This was the first year the body decided to create one application for multiple state and federal funding sources to streamline the process.

The recommendations were approved by a majority of the CoC board, coordinator Jennifer Griggs told the CN&R. Four agencies applied; all were awarded except the Jesus Center.

Catalyst Domestic Violence Services and the Torres Shelter each received shelter operating funds—\$207,000 and \$226,060, respectively.

During this process, the CoC also decided where to divide remaining Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP) funds—approximately \$450,000 had been returned to the CoC by the Jesus Center earlier this year after the center pulled out of a 24/7 low-barrier shelter partnership with Safe Space. Three projects were considered: Safe Space's new partnership, an expansion of services at the Oroville Rescue Mission, and a new program for temporary housing for families living at the Torres Shelter.

What follows is a formality—the CoC's recommendations have to be rubber stamped by local, state and federal agencies, then contracts will be signed and the organizations can get to

### Changes also are in store for the Torres Shelter's

parent organization, the Chico Community Shelter Partnership, which this week was reborn as True North Housing Alliance.

Joy Amaro, the Torres Shelter and True North's executive director, said that over the past two decades, the organization has experienced tremendous growth in the number of people it serves, as well as the programming it offers, such as transitional and permanent supportive housing.

"We really want to show the community and our donors what we do ... we do so much more than just sheltering," Amaro said. She added that the name change also is indicative of the organization's plans to expand services outside of Butte County, including a potential project in Tehama County.

The aforementioned housing project for Torres families is called Aurora North Bridge Housing, which will serve 36 individuals, or about nine to 12 families. It'll provide temporary housing with wraparound case management, according to Amaro. She hopes to get families settled in within a month: This week, she met with architects to ensure the home is ADA-compliant. It's slated to receive \$136,326 for operations and staffing.

"Having a permanent location that families can come to while they're awaiting permanent housing is huge," Amaro said. "It's providing an environment that is a lot safer and a lot healthier for our children. And that's critical because they've already gone through so much trauma in their little lives."

Plus, it frees up space at the Torres Shelter. For the past couple years, the facility has taken in more folks when Safe Space is at capacity.

#### Also on Monday, the Oroville Rescue Mission was

awarded \$317,875 to bring three additional staff members on board for three years, including a fulltime case manager, night-time shelter monitor, and data-entry specialist tasked with bringing the organization into an already established countywide coordinated-entry system for homeless clients. It also will allow them to replace an old freezer and purchase a larger cold storage unit to support its food distribution program for families in need.

Annie Terry, Oroville Rescue Mission's family services coordinator, says she is excited about the grant funding—the organization's first—which will improve and expand the services the nonprofit offers to clients and help it progress toward a goal of establishing a 200-bed low-barrier shelter in the city.

Right now, the organization's antiquated, overcrowded facilities are sheltering approximately 60 to 80 people per night, Terry said, and its men's and women's shelters comfortably hold about half that number. They regularly set up cots wherever they can find room to offer more people a safe, warm place to sleep, she said.

"By a long shot, there's not enough [shelter beds]," Terry said. "We want to do the best job possible to effect change in the [highest] number of people's lives. ... I think these are the first steps toward us being able to do that."

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## Against detention

Hundreds of protesters from throughout the region—including many from Chicodescended upon the Yuba County Jail in Marysville on Friday (July 12) to protest the incarceration of people seeking asylum. In the past year, detention centers across the state have ended their contracts with ICE, forcing the federal government to search farther to house immigrants seized at the U.S.-Mexico border. Yuba County is the last one remaining in Northern California, according to the ICE website. As sunset approached, a group from Jewish Voice for Peace compared the treatment of asylum-seekers to the early days of the fascist regime in Germany. And Chicoan Ali Meders-Knight spoke about how Native Americans were treated and the government's imprisonment of them. PHOTO BY CHARLES FINLAY





