



The late Dan Everhart.

Airport) for a future project and helped organize a coalition of groups and individuals interested in helping the city establish a sanctioned campground for the homeless, but Johnson said there hasn't been further movement with the effort.

CHAT's operating model includes site managers at each location, regular check-ins, and help with life skills and connecting to social services.

"We've come to understand that it takes most people six months to a year to overcome the mental and emotional damage done by living unhoused," Trausch said. "So we give people the time they need and we work with them. We don't just put people in houses and let them fail, we show them that we'll be there to make sure they succeed."

CHAT's track record has led the organization to receive support from all corners of a community deeply divided by issues surrounding homelessness, Trausch added. That wasn't the case, however, with Simplicity Village, a tiny-house community CHAT was well on the way to establishing in South Chico before it was waylaid by a lawsuit filed by the owner of neighboring Payless Building Supply, Frank Solinsky. Simplicity Village would have provided housing for up to four dozen homeless seniors.

"We learned a lot of lessons from that," Trausch said. "We were a naive organization in some respects; it was a new project for us and we were excited. We still think it would have been great and [gotten] people off the street, but other people had different perspectives on what was allowed or not allowed on that property."

"In the end," Withuhn added, "it was a matter of spending the money people had donated to us to house people or to fight in court. When people give you money to house people, there's something sacred about that."

As for Everhart Village's moniker, none of the CHAT members could remember whose idea it originally was, but all agreed it was perfect for the project.

"Dan had such a heart for helping people who were homeless; it was so important to him," Johnson said. "He was the one who brought [the founding members of CHAT] all together to start talking about homelessness. He was there when we started the first Safe Space [shelter] during a cold snap [in winter 2013], when it was just a warming center at Chico Peace and Justice Center and before it became its own organization. He was the one who got us talking to people about tiny houses."

"Basically, he really was the spark plug for CHAT," she said, "and we all agreed we wanted to honor him this way." □

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between us and the county.

"We know from talking to the police that the people on the streets that have the most difficulty are those with mental illness," he continued. "They need medicine and sometimes their medicine gets stolen, they can be victims of violence, all those things."

"Our hope is they will be able to go on from here to transitional and then permanent housing. While they're in transition here, they'll be getting the education and treatment they need [from Behavioral Health]."

## Learning curve

Since its formation in 2013, CHAT has been successful in providing housing for homeless folks, with much of its work done under the radar. The organization currently manages roughly 60 rental properties throughout Chico that provide homes for about 160 people as part of its Housing Now program, according to Trausch. Everhart Village is not the first foray into housing people with mental illness, as CHAT currently manages a duplex dedicated to that purpose.

CHAT's other initiatives include the Camp Fire Housing Access Model Program (CHAMP), which began in February and already houses 30 Camp Fire survivors; Redwood Housing, a collaborative effort with Chico State to house low-income and homeless students; and Hand Up Supportive Housing (HUSH), which offers discounted rent and supportive services for families.

CHAT recently informed the city of Chico that the organization would be interested in the land formerly occupied by Silver Dollar BMX (which is in the process of building a new facility near the Chico Municipal

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