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You Are Opening Doors to Recovery

The generosity of you, our donors, is one of Sun Street Centers’ greatest strengths. Your support gives us the resources we need to bring innovative solutions to the tough issue of substance abuse, such as our new campaign “Keys to Success” which assists homeless families that are attending our family recovery program at Pueblo del Mar. The key represents the family’s first step toward their long term recovery as they acquire the skills needed to stay clean and sober.

A living example of how your support is changing lives is DeeDee who attended the family recovery program Pueblo del Mar in 2009 with her three daughters and whose story is featured in this newsletter. You can also read about our recent Spring Brunch Gala at Tarpy’s Roadhouse and the impact that your support has had on our staff members Annalisa Mitchell and Jorge Quiroz. Thank you for opening doors to recovery by supporting the individuals and families that seek help at Sun Street Centers. Your support is changing lives.

Excellence in Supervision Award
Annalisa Mitchell

It is thanks to our hardworking staff that we are able to offer the highest quality of DUI instruction in Monterey County. We are immensely proud that staff member Annalisa Mitchell has been chosen for the national and highly prestigious Excellence in Supervision Award. It is no surprise that Breining Institute selected Annalisa Mitchell, long-time DUI counselor at Sun Street Centers, for their Excellence in Supervision Award, which was established to recognize alcohol and other drug (AOD) and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and education programs that have demonstrated ongoing commitment to standards of excellence in clinical supervision. For the past 9 years, Annalisa has been teaching the effects of driving under the influence to hundreds of individuals who have been given a DUI. “We are all responsible for taking care of our community. This is what I care about and this is how I choose to help my community,” Mitchell says. Her tireless energy is contagious as she mentions that she has never worked a day in her life because to her, working with DUI clients is just an extension of who she is as a person. Congratulations to Annalisa!

Children & Youth Award
Jorge Quiroz Rubio

Your support helps create the leaders of tomorrow! Salinas Prevention Coordinator, Jorge Quiroz Rubio was awarded the 2015 Children Abuse Prevention Council (CAPC) Children and Youth Award at the April 8, 2015 CAPC Breakfast at CSUMB. Jorge was recognized for his leadership skills and dedication to the prevention of substance abuse and bullying in youth. A former bullying victim himself, Jorge decided to take action. He developed a presentation and researched resources on how to address the dual issue of bullying and substance abuse. “I just want say that the reason why I do this type of work is because I want to be the person I needed while I was growing up, and I want to thank Sun Street Centers for giving me the opportunity to do that.” said Jorge in receiving the award. Jorge has made an incredible impact on the lives of over 200 middle and high school students in Salinas who have not only learned about the dangers of bullying but the connection between bullying and subsequent substance abuse in youth. (Pictured above with Jorge is Board Member, Dora McKean and CEO, Anna Foglia.)

In Memory Of Jorge Salazar

We are saddened at the sudden passing of a very active volunteer for Preventing Alcohol Related Trauma in Salinas (PARTS). Jorge Salazar was a tireless volunteer for the past 5 years, helping to advocate for our community, especially our youth. He was also very active in Building Healthy Communities and most recently he was involved with the planning and construction of a new skate park for youth at La Paz Park to help divert them from drug and gang activity and have a positive and healthy outlet for their energy.
Thank you to those who attended our recent Spring Brunch Gala on May 2nd at Tarpy’s Roadhouse. The sun was shining, the food was fantastic and everybody had a blast! The Spring Brunch Gala was made possible thanks to generous sponsorships from PMB Helin Donovan, Allison Ryan, as well as Board Member, Pat Wilkinson and her husband, Marshall Powell.

Guests were treated to an exquisite selection of brunch bites that included mini Eggs Benedict with Black Forest Ham, Chicken Sausage and Waffles with Maple Jam, as well as Greek Yogurt, Raspberry and Granola Parfait and Chocolate-dipped candied Bacon all expertly prepared by Executive Chef Todd Fisher who also wowed guests with his demonstration of how to create the perfectly poached egg.

We then asked our guests to get hands-on as two teams of volunteers showed off their crepe-making skills in a friendly competition. With a sweet and a savory crepe version ready to pass judgment, our volunteer judges had a difficult time picking a favorite. After much deliberation (and many additional nibbles) the savory crepe was selected as a winner.

The event was completed by the testimony of keynote speaker Helen Ramirez who shared her personal journey of hope and healing and the premiere of Sun Street Centers’ new video sharing the success stories of several former clients in long-term recovery, including Jeff Green, Nancy Silva, Tessa Friesen and Mark Dodson.

We ended the event by introducing our newest campaign “Keys to Success”, which supports our family recovery program at Pueblo del Mar in Marina. Contributions of $250 and up will be able to have a key engraved with their name that will become part of a large display in the lobby of the Nancy Dodd Community Center at Pueblo del Mar for the public to see.

If you are interested in adopting a family in recovery and sponsoring a key, please contact Anna Foglia at 831-753-5144 afoglia@sunstreet.org.
A PHOENIX rising from the ashes

“The most important thing I learned at Pueblo was to do one thing and to just keep doing it no matter how insecure I was and no matter how much I thought I couldn’t do it”

Born and raised in Salinas, DeeDee lived with her alcoholic father, her stepmother, brother and three step-siblings. Her mother had left the family years prior and “DeeDee was convinced that she was dead. Though close with her brother, DeeDee did not always feel like she fit in with the rest of the family. At age 13, DeeDee found out that her mother was still alive. She ran away from home and joined her mother in Vancouver, WA where she owned a biker bar.

Mushroom Parties and Marijuana
Living with her mother actively introduced DeeDee to the world of alcohol and drugs. She picked up smoking and would steal her mother’s silver coins to pay for cigarettes. For her 16th birthday, her mother threw her a ‘shroom party. “My mom preferred me to do ‘natural’ drugs. When she first found out that I was smoking cigarettes, she decided to introduce me to marijuana instead because it was natural and, in her opinion, less harmful.” After a bad trip that ended her in the hospital, DeeDee stopped all drugs and would not touch them again for another decade. When her mother decided to immigrate to Mexico, DeeDee stayed behind and soon after got married. She was 17. A few years later at age 21, DeeDee’s first daughter Sierena was born.

Husband Roulette
DeeDee’s first marriage quickly took a violent turn. “He threw me down a flight of stairs when I was 7 months pregnant and put me in the hospital for almost a week – it was really bad…” The marriage was dissolved after a few years and soon thereafter, DeeDee married again but things didn’t get better. After having her daughters Tahja Rae and Savannah, her husband left DeeDee for her best friend and took all three kids with him. After an agonizing two weeks, DeeDee regained her kids, packed them up in a camper van and set out on the 12-hour drive to Salinas, CA.

Hell’s Angels and Meth
As an 8th grade dropout with three young children and a camper van as a home, DeeDee needed a job. She started bartending at the American Legion in Prunedale and soon added another bartending job at the Rodeo Inn. Exhausted from late working hours, long commutes and the demands of family life as a single mother, she felt she lacked the energy to keep up – and found it in methamphetamine. Less than six months after her move to California, DeeDee was a full-blown addict. When she met Chris, a member of the local Hell’s Angels, it was love at first sight. The relationship lasted for over a decade but took a bad turn after a bad accident caused Chris to lose his short-term memory and left him in a coma for several days. Her once loving partner became aggressive and violent towards her – to the point that she fully expected to be killed by his own hands.

A Window of Opportunity
It was pure coincidence that Chris was charged with drug and arms possession but it put an end to the relationship. DeeDee and her children stayed in hiding for a year to escape Chris’ reach through the Hell’s Angels. The tactic worked but DeeDee’s drug consumption was getting out of control. “When I was with Chris my drugs were very controlled but now I was constantly around people who smoked, slammed and snorted meth. I even had my dealer living with me.” When her boyfriend asked her to drive him to a parole appointment, DeeDee reluctantly agreed. He was taken into custody and the car searched. When the officer found a satchel of drugs and asked DeeDee if it was hers, to her own surprise, she found herself saying “yes”. Being bailed out from jail after a few days by her drug dealer, DeeDee realized that this was her chance to change things for the better. She refused the drugs her dealer was offering her and instead started the detoxification process on her own.

Finding Recovery at Pueblo del Mar
Stopping a decade-long drug habit is no easy feat and it took DeeDee several months and the support from Narcotics Anonymous (NA) to pull through. One day at an NA meeting, she was handed a post-it with a phone number and the words Francisco at Pueblo. Too scared to go, DeeDee missed her first appointment but was given another chance. A few weeks later, she and her three daughters moved into a 2-bedroom townhome and DeeDee’s recovery began.

The Phoenix Rises
Encouraged by staff, DeeDee started to take self-defense classes at Hartnell and added pottery and typing classes when told that she’d receive financial aid if she became a part-time student. DeeDee finished her GED in 2007 and in 2014 graduated with her Master’s Degree in Business Administration. She is currently working on her credentials to become a certified drug and alcohol counselor and still returns to Pueblo del Mar to partake in alumni activities.

It is because of your generous support that the Pueblo del Mar program exists. Since its inception over 15 years ago, donors like you have helped hundreds of families find hope and recovery. Thank you for your giving. You are changing lives.