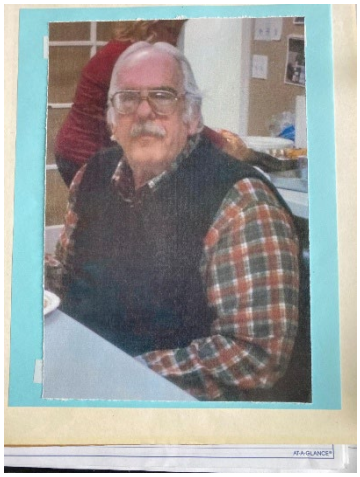


(left to right) Roberto Garcia, Martin Dodd, John Bokanovich, Jess Calderon, Meg Kenly, Gordon Horne in the Fellowship Hall at Salinas Men's Residential (2000's)

History Corner:
The Power of 'Welcome Home'

Written by Jorge Rubio

When **Gordon Horne** walked through the doors of Sun Street Centers for the first time in **April 2004**, he wasn't looking for a career. He was looking for help. More than twenty years later, he now serves as Clinical Supervisor II. His story is not only one of recovery, but also a glimpse into Sun Street Centers' history and the values that continue to shape the organization today.



Gordon's connection to Sun Street Centers began a year earlier. Just two days after moving to California from Hawaii in 2003, he received a **DUI** and was required to enroll in Sun Street Centers' DUI Program. During classes, his instructor, **Bernard Scherer** (pictured on the right), often talked with him about the residential program. At the time, Gordon was struggling and wasn't ready to hear the message.

Not long afterward, while detoxing at **Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula**, he met a nurse named **Anne Bispo** who again encouraged him to consider Sun Street Centers. Hearing the same message from a second person made an impact. Gordon agreed, and CHOMP paid for a taxi to bring him to the residential program. One of his very first memories of arriving remains vivid today.

When he first entered the doors of the program, he remembers someone approaching him, greeting him, and wrapped his arms around Gordon and told him "**Welcome home!**" At the time, Gordon remembers thinking it wasn't really his home. But over the years, he came to understand exactly what that greeting meant.

"It's a home where people feel like family and one of my brothers greeted me warmly."

That sense of belonging became a defining part of his recovery experience. After completing residential treatment, Gordon continued into the long-term recovery program known as **7 Suns** and later supported peers who were also finding their footing in recovery. Along the way, he learned

lessons that would stay with him for life, including a saying often shared by a program director at the time:

"Change happens when the pain of the present becomes so painful that people become motivated to change."



As Gordon's recovery journey continued, he had the opportunity to get to know Sun Street Centers founder **Martin Dodd**. One memory that stands out is hearing Martin speak during an anniversary celebration. Martin shared that Sun Street Centers existed because he felt called to do something for people who were struggling and less fortunate than himself. That message of giving back resonated with Gordon and reflected the heart of the social model approach that still guides the agency today. When Gordon talks about Martin, it is clear that the relationship left a lasting impact.

"He really made me feel special. It seemed even though he had a full plate and his agenda was completely packed with things do that he always made time for me."

What Gordon remembers most, however, wasn't any single counselor or staff member. It was the environment itself.

"The environment at Sun Street was more powerful than any one particular counselor. The environment needed to be protected and the environment would be what ended up causing me to change."

Over the years, Gordon has watched Sun Street Centers evolve from a much smaller organization into the agency it is today. He remembers a time when the entire staff numbered around 60 employees and monthly meetings could fit inside **Andy Church Hall**. Today, the organization serves thousands of individuals and families across the region, yet he believes something important has remained unchanged.

"We really believe that the clients are the experts of their own lives."

That belief, along with the **social model principles** of compassion, dignity, and peer support, is what Gordon feels Martin and Nancy Dodd would be most proud to see still thriving today.

Looking back, Gordon is grateful not only for his own recovery, but for the opportunity to give back to the very place that helped save his life.

"I really didn't deserve this recovery. I didn't earn this recovery. It was basically a gift from God and the only way I can keep it is by giving it away."

For newer employees, volunteers, and community members, Gordon hopes the lesson is simple: focus on what's right in people, not what's wrong. It's a philosophy that has been part of Sun Street Centers since the beginning and continues to guide its work today.

As our History Corner continues to share stories from those who helped shape Sun Street Centers, Gordon's journey shows that the agency's history is not just found in buildings, programs, or milestones. It lives in the people whose lives were changed here and who, in turn, have dedicated themselves to helping others find the same hope, healing, and sense of home they once found themselves.