WORKING HIS WAY TO INDEPENDENCE

Jamal knew exactly what he wanted when he came to the Cov. “I wanted to live on my own, be independent, pursue my dreams, become a man,” he shared.

Working diligently with his case manager, he set goals that would lead to him achieving his dream of independence. After several weeks in the site's Emergency Shelter, he transitioned to “Rights of Passage,” the Cov's Transitional Housing program.

While at the Cov, Jamal was working at Oracle Arena, the home of the Golden State Warriors, as a parking attendant. Though that was not the position that he ultimately wanted, he worked hard, and was awarded with a position in the arena’s customer service department.

“I love the customer interaction,” Jamal told us, “I work the same spot every game, and we have regular customers who know my name and treat me like family. They tell me it is nice to see me and I feel like I make their experience better. That is my favorite part!”

At the Cov, we know the value of unconditional love and absolute respect, and are thrilled that he feels not only at home with us, but also in his workplace. We can see the difference it is making in his life. Recently, he has been promoted as supervisor of guest services! Jamal is using the Cov’s resident savings program, to make his goal of moving into his own place a reality. He is also attending college (just one class away from earning his AA degree) and pursuing his dream of being a professional baseball player. But, if that doesn’t work out, he has his sights set on a career as a sports broadcaster.
Adam Finds His Way!

Adam was removed from his mother’s care at only five years old. Bouncing from foster home to foster home, he ended up homeless, on the streets, with an undiagnosed mental illness. The stress of the street, self-medication, and his untreated mental illness brought Adam to the point of despair and desperation.

“I am who I am, and I’m a great person.”

Shortly thereafter, he arrived at CHC, having auditory and visual hallucinations. Staff acted quickly to stabilize Adam. “They were willing to do everything to make me feel better,” he said. At the Dr. Richard & Patricia Meehan Medical Clinic, our doctors were able to quickly diagnose and begin treatment for his schizophrenia. In the year that he spent at the Cov, Adam worked diligently to earn his GED, embraced internship opportunities, and was finally able to let his gentle, inquisitive nature flourish. Through an internship at CHC’s campus café, he realized his love of cooking. He developed a great amount of confidence and is now applying to culinary academies. “I am who I am, and I’m a great person,” he said.

All Adam needed was for someone to pay attention to him, and offer him unconditional acceptance, just the way a family should. Now an Alumni of the Cov, he visits often and continues to access resources when he needs them. Every time he comes back, he lights up the campus with his infectious smile and laughter. CHC is just as blessed to have Adam be a part of our family, as he was by his experience here!

PLANTING SEEDS OF POSSIBILITY

Loving someone for who they are, despite their circumstances or how they are behaving is extremely difficult for most of us. But for Asuena Montes, it comes naturally. Asuena has been with the Cov for 15 years, and serves as the Intake Case Manager, the first point of contact for most youth who come to CHC. She greets young people with warmth, listening intently to make sure that she meets their most immediate needs, after many have spent their last night on the cold streets.

“It’s not about the program in the beginning. My job is to welcome and assure them that they’re entering a safe place,” says Asuena. Once youth hit their stride in the programs that are offered on campus, they work with staff other than Asuena. Yet, that doesn’t change the impact that she has had on them and, conversely, that they’ve had on her. She recalls a particular youth who struggled to really engage with the Cov’s programs and returned to the streets twice. The third time he came to her office to recommit to a positive change, she could see that something was different. “It was one of those great moments that allows me to see the role we play in people’s lives!” Asuena exclaimed.

NEW CLOTHES INSPIRING NEW DREAMS

When Joe Emory was approached by his friend to sponsor him in CHC’s Young Professionals Sleep Out event, he said, “yes.” When he was invited to our Thanksgiving celebration, he said “yes” again. “The moment I stepped foot on campus, the amount of love and care I felt from everyone was just incredible!” exclaimed Joe. Joe is the senior employee relations manager at Hot Topic, Inc.—the major apparel company that can be found across the country. On top of his busy professional life, Joe spends his own time mentoring current and former foster youth.

Since he began his relationship with the Cov one year ago, Joe has donated countless pallets of new Hot Topic merchandise, from shirts, to shoes, to watches. After realizing that there is a thriving Cov program in the Bay Area, he immediately began sending merchandise their way too. At a time in their lives when self-expression is a key part of their development, being able to wear the shirt of their favorite band, colorful skateboarding shoes, or a flashy watch, can go a long way to helping a young person establish their individuality and identity. Even more important, wearing new clothes, often for the first time in their lives, provides young people with the sense of dignity and value that they deserve.
Dr. Belzer: Over 25 Years of Love and Respect for Homeless Youth

One of the most overlooked needs for homeless youth, is their medical care. On the streets, there is very little access to any care, while the risk of communicable diseases and other issues are extremely high. That is why CHC’s recently dedicated Dr. Richard & Patricia Meehan Medical Clinic, is such a critical part of CHC’s services in Hollywood. But what makes the medical clinic truly special, is the committed care of Dr. Marvin Belzer. Dr. Belzer is an expert Adolescent Medicine physician at Children’s Hospital LA, and a professor of Clinical Pediatrics and Medicine at USC. Most importantly, he has been working with youth in CHC’s medical clinic for over 25 years!

Dr. Belzer is all too aware of the dangers that young people face on the streets, and has been drawn to the complexity of the needs of homeless youth for the entirety of his professional career. “Those of us who choose to specialize in young adult medicine really like the team approach that requires the genuine input of case managers, nurses, physicians, psychiatrists… everyone who knows the youth needs to be involved,” said Dr. Belzer. Approximately 90 percent of our youth who moved to stable housing destinations saw a doctor for the very first time during their stay at CHC. “You really have to accept youth where they are. Physical and mental health care are very foreign to most of the youth we see, and many are hesitant, but we counter that by letting them know that we’re here for them when they’re ready.” Through his care of youth, and collaboration with CHC staff, Dr. Belzer exemplifies CHC’s mission of treating all youth with unconditional love.

THE MATTHEW 25 PROJECT

The 25th chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew reads, “When I was hungry, you gave me food. When I was thirsty you gave me drink. When I was a stranger, you took me in.” Sister Margaret Farrell, CHC’s Spiritual Ministries Director in Hollywood since 2001, established the Matthew 25 Project in 2014 as a way to bring further awareness and assistance to residents of Los Angeles’ Skid Row. An area of Los Angeles with one of the nation’s highest density populations of homeless men and women, the project offers CHC staff and youth a chance to give back, and to appreciate the opportunity they have while at the Cov.

Once a month, Sister Margaret is joined by CHC youth who prepare food, gather water and supplies, and drive five miles to downtown. When they arrive, they hand out everything and take time to personally connect with the men and women that most people choose to ignore. Perhaps most importantly, we know our youth are choosing to give back, and not just worrying about their own basic needs.

Steps to Success at the Cov

**01**

With more than 3,500 contacts on the street each year, CHC’s Outreach Team offers help to homeless and trafficked youth in California.

**02**

Our Intake Team meets basic needs such as shelter, food, and medical care. Youth are then invited into a safe, loving environment.

**03**

Our youth are then paired with a case manager who helps create a plan specific to their goals and strengths.

**04**

From Youth Development to Career Support to Housing Placement, our youth are offered a range of support services to aid in their success.

**05**

CHC PROVIDES EACH YEAR:
- 45,260 nights of care
- Serves nearly 140,000 meals
- Over 500 medical visits

**OUTREACH**

**IMMEDIACY & SANCTUARY**

**CASE MANAGEMENT**

**SUPPORTIVE SERVICES**

**SUCCESS**
A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

The holiday season has always been my favorite time of year. Mostly, because there are so many opportunities to get together with family, and to appreciate how blessed we are. For the youth at Covenant House, the holidays often have a completely different meaning. Most our youth have never had families they could depend on. Most of their life experiences, up until now, have been full of pain and hardship.

Though it is absolutely heartbreaking to see that reality for so many young people, it is also thrilling to see how the same youth respond when they begin to experience grace and love from Covenant House staff and our community of support. They begin to understand that they are worth more than what they have experienced in their life and that they deserve to be valued for who they are. This is why “unconditional love” is the key to our mission. We are not just a shelter and service provider for homeless youth. We are a home for young people who have never experienced a loving family; a community of support for youth who have never been accepted. I recently overheard a youth tell a donor, “This is my home. This is really the first home I have ever had.” I could not have been more proud, hearing that this was his experience at the Cov!

This season we are so incredibly thankful for your support. Your support provides more than just a meal and bed... it gives young people the opportunity to experience acceptance and love for the first time in their lives. That love, grace and encouragement is what really gives young people an opportunity to see what they are capable of, and the courage to be able to pursue new dreams and independence for themselves. What an incredible gift to be able to give this holiday season!

Bill Bedrossian
President and CEO, Covenant House California

Covenant House is a 501(c)3 organization. Monetary donations are tax deductible as allowable by law. FEDERAL TAX ID: 13-3391210

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